



RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT INTRODUCTION

The Recreation and Open Space chapter, or “element” of a comprehensive plan, is required by State Law. This Element is required to indicate a comprehensive system of public and private sites for recreation, including, but not limited to, natural preservation areas, parks and playgrounds, parkways, beaches and public access to beaches, open spaces, waterways, and other recreational facilities. The facilities identified by this Element also demonstrate Seminole County’s consistency with the principles of the Central Florida Regional Growth Vision.

Seminole County officially began its parks system in 1969 with the passage of a \$1.6 million bond issue resulting in the acquisition of four (4) major park sites: Lake Mills; Sylvan Lake; Red Bug Lake; and Sanlando. Prior to 1969, the County operated special facilities which met a specific need such as boat ramps, but no developed park sites. In the early 1970’s, the County created the Parks and Recreation Division to provide for development and maintenance of both existing and new park facilities. The County also established a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to provide feedback to assist the Parks and Recreation Division in developing the County Parks System.

As of 2008, Seminole County manages a variety of park and recreational facilities, trails, and natural lands ranging in size from less than one (1) acre to 1,600 acres. The types of parks available include community, neighborhood, mini-parks, special use parks and facilities, linear parks (recreational trails), and passive resource parks (natural lands).

In 1990, the voters of Seminole County approved an ad valorem tax to fund over \$20 million dollars in bonds for the purchase of environmentally sensitive lands, primarily for preservation, and where compatible, for passive recreational uses. Additionally, in 2000, voters approved a second referendum providing \$20 million dollars for trails acquisition and development, and an additional \$5 million for acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands.

Seminole County currently maintains approximately 1,263 acres of existing public parks, over 6,633 acres of natural lands and 98 miles of trails providing both active and passive recreational opportunities to all Seminole County residents. These areas are comprised of 5 (five) existing community parks, ten (10) neighborhood parks, eight (8) special use parks (including a golf course), and five boat ramp parks maintained by the County. Providing water access via five (5) boat ramp parks is strongly valued by our residents. The County also maintains access for passive recreation such as hiking, mountain biking and equestrian use, at eight (8) Wilderness Areas and one (1) Preserve.

To assess the current park system and identify user preferences, the County conducted a survey of residents and park users in 2020. Referring to the results of the survey and the completion of an updated Trails Master Plan in 2021, the County will be embarking on an updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 2023.

The County’s long-range parks program was previously based on the development of a system of community parks, which provide both active and passive facilities and serve residents Countywide. The Capital Improvements Element of the Comprehensive Plan establishes 3.6 acres per 1,000 in population for total park acreage and 1.8 acres per 1,000 in population of developed park acreage. The County’s population is approaching 430,000 residents. The County will continue to evaluate options for the provision of future active recreational facility needs through updating and implementing a Countywide Parks and Recreation Master Plan that will meet the recreational needs of a growing population.

Primary sources of information used to produce this element include the following:

- A. 1987 Parks Survey Report



- B. 1998 Parks Survey Report
- C. 1999 Recreation and Open Space Master Plan
- D. Parks Master Plans
- E. Spring Hammock Management Plan
- F. Seminole County Parks and Recreation Department
- G. Trails Master Plan 2021 Update
- H. Wilderness Areas Management Plans
- I. 1990 and 2000 Voter Referendums and related ordinances
- J. Leisure Services Master Plan Update 2018
- K. 2015 Needs Assessment Survey Engagement Survey
- L. 2020 Public Opinion and Needs Assessment Survey



RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

The County shall provide a high quality recreation and open space system that provides lands, facilities and programs to adequately serve the needs of the current and future residents of Seminole County, and establish and maintain a system of open spaces which preserves significant environmental lands, protects wildlife habitat corridors, and provides passive recreational opportunities.

OBJECTIVE REC 1 PARK SITE AND FACILITY PROVISION

The County shall provide a system of park sites with a variety of both user-oriented and resource based facilities and recreational programs to serve the needs of current and future County residents through regular reviews and updates of the Countywide Park Master Plan.

Policy REC 1.1 Community Parks

The County shall continue to provide, through implementation of the Capital Improvements Element, a system of community parks that includes a community park within a 10–20-minute drive of every County resident, and provides that 30-40% of every community park should remain in open space for passive recreation, wildlife habitat, aesthetics, etc.

Policy REC 1.2 Regional Parks

The County shall continue to rely on the State of Florida to provide regional park facilities such as the Wekiwa Springs State Park, the Little Big Econ State Forest, and the Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park.

Policy REC 1.3 Reserved

Policy REC 1.4 Large Development Recreation Requirements

The County shall continue to enforce existing County Land Development Code recreation and open space requirements for planned developments and large residential developments to ensure trail connectivity, school/park linkage opportunities.

Policy REC 1.5 Park Adequacy

The County shall continue to assess park adequacy, future facility needs and user preferences and willingness to pay through, at a minimum, the following methods:

- A. Continued input from the Parks and Preservation Advisory Committee, special interest groups, and public meetings; and
- B. Park surveys conducted on a five (5) year basis in conjunction with updating the Parks and Recreation System Master Plan.

Policy REC 1.6 Park Facility Inventory

The Parks and Recreation Department regularly updates their park and facility inventory through the park master plan process.

Policy REC 1.7 Park Availability

The County shall continue to expand accessibility and assess other alternatives to increase the availability of recreational facilities to the public.

Policy REC 1.8 Park Master Plans

The County shall continue to develop specific plans for future park sites to



meet user demands and to identify and preserve environmentally sensitive areas. Guidelines for active uses adjacent to environmentally sensitive areas shall include, at a minimum, provisions for buffers, lighting, setbacks, and native landscaping.

Policy REC 1.9 Spring Hammock Preserve

This property is jointly owned with the State of Florida. Through an agreement with the Seminole County Public Schools, it houses the Environmental Studies Center that provides environmental education programs for third and fifth graders. The Spring Hammock 10 Year Land Management Plan was updated and approved by the State in 2016.

Policy REC 1.10 Historical Sites

The County shall endeavor to ensure the preservation of, and where appropriate, provide access to significant historical sites on County owned and managed land through land management and parkland master plans.

OBJECTIVE REC 2 ACCESSIBILITY

The County shall ensure adequate and safe public access to all County parks and recreational facilities, including vehicular, pedestrian, trail, bicycle, and handicapped access.

Policy REC 2.1 Park Access Special Populations

The County shall ensure that future park sites and recreational facility improvements provide for accessibility to all users and shall ensure the adequate provision of vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian accessways, including the implementation of the Countywide Greenways and Trails Master Plan.

Policy REC 2.2 Park Access Pedestrian

The County shall continue to evaluate its criteria to require pedestrian connections to public park sites and to require installation of additional pavement width with new development and the expansion of public roadways.

Policy REC 2.3 Access Requirements

The County shall continue to review and amend Land Development Code requirements for development of open space and recreational facility level of service requirements for planned developments, mixed use developments, and residential developments to ensure adequate vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle access is provided to on-site and adjacent park sites, and where applicable, connections to the County's greenways and trails.

Policy REC 2.4 Transit Access

The County shall coordinate with LYNX and other appropriate transportation providers to evaluate and expand, if necessary, transportation routes to parks and recreational facilities to provide access to and from residential and urban areas to parks for all groups including the handicapped, lower income residents, senior citizens, and the general public.

Policy REC 2.5 Public Awareness

The County shall continue to expand ways to enhance the public awareness of parks and programs through a variety of print and electronic media formats such as the County's website, brochures, newsletters, public television, social media, etc.

Policy REC 2.6 Waterway Access

The County shall continue to ensure access to waterways associated with the



County's Parks and Facilities; provided, however, the County may regulate no wake zones and speed zones in accordance with the law including, but not limited to, the rules of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

OBJECTIVE REC 3 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RESOURCE COORDINATION

The County shall maximize the use of public and private resources in the provision of park and recreational facilities to meet current and future demands.

Policy REC 3.1 Neighborhood Park Provision

The County shall continue to require planned developments and large residential developments to provide and maintain neighborhood recreational facilities and open space as a part of the development review process.

Policy REC 3.2 School Facility Joint-Use

The County shall continue, through interlocal agreements, to evaluate the opportunities for the joint use of existing school and County recreational facilities and shall pursue the location and design of future park sites.

Policy REC 3.3 Private Facility Use

The County shall continue to provide interlocal agreements and cooperate with private recreational organizations for use of County parks and facilities in order to provide a variety of recreational programs.

Policy REC 3.4 Private/Not for Profit Facility Use

The County shall continue to make parks and recreation facilities available to private and not for profit groups for cultural programs, special events, and festivals, which serve the public interest.

Policy REC 3.5 School Board Environmental Study Center

The County shall continue to support the School Board's Environmental Study Center at Spring Hammock Preserve to promote natural studies and environmental and historical awareness including proposals for expanding existing programs.

OBJECTIVE REC 4 LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS

The County shall continue to establish programs and enforce standards to ensure the acquisition and development of community, regional, and neighborhood park facilities to meet current and future demand. These levels of services standards will be re-examined during each System Master Plan update.

Policy REC 4.1 Levels of Service

The County shall adopt and maintain the following levels of service through the implementation of the Capital Improvements Element, the development approval process and ongoing operations of the Parks and Recreation Department.

- A. Total Park Acreage: Seminole County shall ensure that sufficient park acres are available to meet future growth demands by maintaining the current level of service of 15.7 acres per 1,000 residents Countywide within urban community park sites.
- B. Developed Acreage: To ensure that adequate park facilities are provided to accommodate growth demands, Seminole County shall continue to maintain the current level of service of 1.8 developed park acres per 1,000 residents for total park acreage needs. This standard includes both



active and passive recreational facilities.

Policy REC 4.2 Service Area Park Facilities

The adopted service area for park facilities is countywide as depicted in ***Exhibit REC: County Parks and Facilities***.

OBJECTIVE REC 5 TRAIL PROVISION

The County shall continue to implement its Trails Masterplan to ensure safe access to park sites and shall evaluate available opportunities for the acquisition and development of bike/trail networks which will link park sites, schools, and adjacent municipal/urban centers with pedestrian and bicycle trails.

Policy REC 5.1 Bike/Trail Provision

The County shall coordinate with the Metropolitan Planning Organization, Florida Department of Transportation, County municipalities, School Board of Seminole County, and other appropriate agencies to study and implement options for future coordinated provisions of a bike/trail network.

Policy REC 5.2 Recreational Trail Development

The County shall continue to develop and maintain the signature trails, which include the Seminole Wekiva Trail, the Cross-Seminole Trail, and the Flagler Trail, as well as others identified in the Trails Master Plan 2021 Update. These efforts shall include, at a minimum, application for available grant funding for trail development from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, other sources of government and private grants, and voter-based referenda.

Policy REC 5.3 Abandoned Railroad Acquisition

The County shall continue to evaluate abandoned CSX Railroad rights-of-way for potential public use benefits and pursue acquisition if appropriate and feasible.

Policy REC 5.4 Road/Bike Lane Provision

The County shall continue to evaluate and amend, if necessary, the Land Development Code regulations and public road design standards for bike paths in conjunction with roadway design and improvements.

Policy REC 5.5 Florida Trail/Rails to Trails

The County shall coordinate with the Florida Trail Association, the Rails to Trails Conservancy, the Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Greenways and Trails, and other organizations involved in the acquisition and development of trail systems within Seminole County.

Policy REC 5.6 Flagler Trail

The County shall continue to allow the use of the Flagler Trail property by the Florida Trail Association and shall encourage the expansion of the Florida Trail within Seminole County.



OBJECTIVE REC 6 FUNDING OF THE ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF OPEN SPACE AND PARKS.

The County shall continue to fund the acquisition and development of parks, open space and recreational facilities through the use of a variety of funding sources, as available, including the general fund, grants, partnerships with schools, municipalities, and developer contributions and user fees.

Policy REC 6.1 Park Funding

The County shall explore other sources of funds for acquisition and development of park lands in addition to the General Fund. Sources may include developer commitments, grants, partnerships with school and municipalities, user fees, and impact fees to supplement the General Fund allocations for the acquisition and development of parks, trails, and open space.

Policy REC 6.2 Recreation Grants

The County shall continue to pursue State and federal grants, including funding from the Florida Communities Trust program, for the acquisition and development of recreational and open space lands and facilities.

Policy REC 6.3 Donation/Matching Funding

The County shall continue to pursue donations of land and matching funds to secure grants for the acquisition and development of park sites and facilities.

Policy REC 6.4 Natural Areas Acquisition

The County shall continue to pursue the complete acquisition and preservation of Natural Areas through the Florida Forever Program, the Seminole Forever Program, or its successor program, impact fees, other grant funding, general fund, referenda, and other appropriate mechanisms.

Policy REC 6.5 User Fees

The County shall apply the concept of user fees to offset the cost of maintaining and programming facilities where appropriate.

Policy REC 6.6 St. Johns Water Management District Acquisition

The County shall coordinate with the St. Johns River Water Management District (District) to designate priority open space areas for acquisition under the District's Five Year Land Acquisition Program.

Policy REC 6.7 Bond Referendum

The County may consider the option of a bond issue to fund acquisition of additional park land and open space, and development of additional trails to maintain adopted level of service standards.

OBJECTIVE REC 7 OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

The County shall develop a system of open spaces through the preservation and/or acquisition of significant lands, native habitat and habitat of endangered, threatened and species of special concern, and through the development review and approval process.

Policy REC 7.1 Open Space Standards

The County shall evaluate and amend, as necessary, the standards upon which Policies ***FLU 2.1.1 Environmentally Sensitive Lands*** through ***FLU 2.1.4 Conservation Easements, and Policy FLU 4.1.3 Urban Open***



Space, On-site Recreational Amenities and Buffering Performance Frameworks for Infill/Redevelopment Areas are based, and the Land Development Code's provisions to implement those policies, based on the findings of Evaluation and Appraisal Reports.

Policy REC 7.2 Environmentally Sensitive Lands Overlay

The County shall protect Environmentally Sensitive Lands through continued implementation of Policies ***FLU 1.1 Environmentally Sensitive Lands*** through ***FLU 1.4 Conservation Easements***, Policies ***FLU 12.8 Compliance Agreements Between Seminole County and the Florida Department of Community Affairs*** and ***FLU 12.9 Wekiva River Protection Area Environmental Design Standards***, and ***Objective FLU 13 Protection of the Natural resources of the Wekiva Study Area*** and its policies as a means of preserving locally significant wetlands and major open space areas by maintaining the mosaic of high quality wetland habitat found in the Wekiva and Econ Basins, the Lake Jesup Basin, and the East Rural Area of Seminole County.

Policy REC 7.3 Wekiva and Econlockhatchee River Protection Zone

The County shall enforce all clearing and building setbacks or protection/buffer zones and areas along the Wekiva River, and Econlockhatchee River and such other water bodies as imposed by rules of the St. Johns River Water Management District, any State agency or as may be otherwise imposed by law, provided that a minimum 200 foot clearing and building setback shall be set along the Wekiva River, as measured from the ordinary high water elevation or the landward limit of established conservation areas, to serve as a scenic and environmental buffer to maintain the status quo of the natural environment and prevent public harms.

As additional protection, development activity (including the placing or depositing of fill within wetlands and the one hundred (100) year floodplain identified by FEMA), within the Wekiva River Protection Area shall be prohibited except in cases of overriding public interest. Where wetland values are degraded due to overriding public interest, mitigation efforts shall occur. Floodplain impacts will require compensating storage.

Policy REC 7.4 Natural/Environmental Land Acquisition and Preservation Programs

The County shall continue to coordinate with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and all other appropriate agencies to establish and revise regulations and programs for the acquisition and preservation of natural/environmental lands.

Policy REC 7.5 Agency Coordination

The County shall work in conjunction with the State of Florida, the St. Johns River Water Management District, the Nature Conservancy, the Trust for Public Lands, and other appropriate agencies involved in conservation lands to create a Countywide system and a Greenways/Trails/Blueways system.

Policy REC 7.6 Acquisition Program-Local Assistance

The County shall support and assist in the acquisition of projects significant resource areas located within Seminole County, including, but not limited to, Spring Hammock Preserve, Wekiva buffers, and the Lower Econlockhatchee River Projects. This support may include joint acquisition, development of conceptual management plans and property management. Acquisition and assistance programs to be pursued shall include the Florida Forever Program and its successor program, the Trust for Public Lands as well as the Nature



Conservancy, State of Florida, and St. Johns River Water Management District.

Policy REC 7.7 Significant Open Space and Natural Lands Acquisition

The County's Natural Lands Endowment and Bond fund has been depleted. The County shall pursue other avenues for funding that may include general fund, grants, bond referenda, the Seminole Forever Program, and impact fees, for the acquisition of significant native habitats, open space areas, and greenways. Lands to be acquired shall be designated based on criteria developed with a Board appointed advisory committee and adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, and shall include, at a minimum, consideration of:

- A. Vulnerability to development;
- B. Species diversity and habitat completeness;
- C. The rarity and abundance of habitat types;
- D. Animal and plant species designated by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory and other agencies as endangered, threatened and of special concern;
- E. Long term management; and
- F. Passive recreational use potential.

Policy REC 7.8 Central Florida Regional Growth Vision (How Shall We Grow?)

The County shall endeavor for consistency with the principle of preserving open space, recreational areas, farmland, water resources, and regionally significant areas, as established by the 2007 Central Florida Regional Growth Vision (How Shall We Grow?).

Policy REC 7.9 Open Space Standards for Private Development

The County shall assess, during each Evaluation and Appraisal Report, the need to update the definitions, standards and guidelines within the Seminole County land development regulations for open space requirements for subdivisions, other new developments and redevelopments to implement the policies of this Comprehensive Plan.

OBJECTIVE REC 8 SCENIC ROADWAYS

The County shall continue to preserve the visual quality of scenic roadways in Seminole County.

Policy REC 8.1 Scenic Road Designation

The County shall designate roadway sections or entire roadways as scenic roadways based upon:

- A. Amount of existing vegetation cover and development along the roadway;
- B. Number of curbcuts, traffic signals, and other obstructions to through traffic movement; and
- C. Future land use designations assigned to properties along the roadway.

Policy REC 8.2 Scenic Roads-Development Standards

The County has adopted standards for development along designated scenic roadways. Standards shall include, at a minimum:

- A. Building setbacks and heights;



- B. Signage, lighting, and outdoor advertising;
- C. Curbcuts and utilities in the right-of-way;
- D. Fences and walls, and other structures within the setback; and
- E. Minimum tree size, tree removal restrictions, and supplemental landscaping requirements.

Policy REC 8.3 Joint Projects

The County shall continue to pursue interlocal agreements and joint projects with municipalities and private agencies for the designation, implementation and funding of scenic roadway programs where appropriate.

Policy REC 8.4 Joint Funding

The County shall identify and determine the feasibility of alternative revenue sources for the implementation of scenic corridor programs.



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