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**RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT**

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# RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

## I. INTRODUCTION

Palm Beach County's 2,023 square miles make it one of the largest counties in the State of Florida and larger than the State of Rhode Island. With a population of over one million people residing mostly in the eastern half of the Palm Beach County, it is the third most populous county in Florida. The County continues to be one of the fastest growing counties in the State and to attract more than three million visitors annually. Thus, the County's size along with the diversity of its growing populace generate myriad recreation and open space needs that are served by the County's recreation and open space system.

Fortunately, Palm Beach County encompasses many significant natural resources such as eastern Lake Okeechobee, vast federal and state conservation and/or wildlife areas, the Loxahatchee River and Slough, the Intracoastal Waterway, and some of the finest Atlantic Ocean beaches in the State of Florida, all within an hours drive of the County's population. These resources, along with the County's 8,000 acres of parks and tens of thousands of acres of environmentally sensitive lands, other municipal park systems, and County School District facilities, provide public access opportunities to wide array of natural, cultural and recreational facilities. In addition, privately owned or operated facilities such as golf courses, clubhouses, pools, marinas, and campgrounds are available throughout the County, albeit in some cases on a more limited basis than public facilities. Together these resources comprise a broad based and functional Countywide recreation and open space system that contributes to the health and welfare of the population, links vital natural resources, and supports a high quality of life for Palm Beach County residents.

The Recreation and Open Space Element (ROSE) guides the County's capital program to meet the ever-increasing demand for parks, beaches, recreational facilities, and open space necessary to serve new development and to maintain the quality of life enjoyed by existing residents. To accomplish this goal, additional parks and recreation facilities will be provided commensurately with future population growth, existing deficiencies will be addressed with available funds, accessibility will be increased to the many components of the recreation and open space system, and additional environmentally sensitive lands will be acquired and/or protected. Unless otherwise indicated, the Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for implementation of the Goal, Objectives, and Policies of this Element. Community involvement and public input have been an integral part of the ROSE's development. The public review process used to adopt the amended ROSE complies with other general Comprehensive Plan requirements.

## **A. Purpose**

The purpose of the Recreation and Open Space Element (ROSE) is to ensure that the County adopts a long-range plan to provide an adequate Countywide system of parks, recreational facilities and open space to serve existing and future populations. The ROSE provides the Goals, Objectives and Policies (GOP) necessary for establishing Level of Service (LOS) Standards and other important planning guidelines to ensure that an adequate system of parks, recreational facilities and open space is available for County residents both now and in the future.

The ROSE calls for the adoption and monitoring of LOS Standards to ensure that issuance of new development orders and permits does not result in a reduction of Park and Recreational facility levels of service below adopted County standards. Since the deletion of Chapter 9J-5, Florida Administrative Code, parks concurrency is now optional and Palm Beach County has decided to maintain parks concurrency.

## **B. Assessment & Conclusions**

Palm Beach County has traditionally assumed responsibility for providing a portion of the overall park, recreational facility, and open space needs for both County residents and visitors. The County continues to place major emphasis on acquisition and development of Countywide-level Regional, Beach and District Parks that are the most cost efficient to build and operate, and that provide the greatest and most diverse active and passive recreational opportunities for all County residents. To a lesser extent, Local-level community and/or neighborhood parks that have more limited active recreational facilities are provided only in urbanized areas where limiting conditions preclude larger park facilities. State and federal conservation areas and waterways, along with the County's environmentally sensitive land acquisitions, account for most of the open space resources.

The single GOAL of the ROSE is to provide a Countywide system of parks, recreation facilities and open space to serve existing and future residents. The objectives of the ROSE are grouped into three main policy areas and prioritized as follows based on Countywide and Local-level needs and future commitments for funding:

Objectives 1.1 Long Range Planning and Funding, & 1.2 Level of Service Standards. These objectives and policies contain the highest priority commitments and measurements of the Plan's effectiveness, providing for the evaluation and oversight of the planning process, annual funding commitment and adoption of Countywide LOS standards.

Objectives 1.3 Community Parks, & 1.4 Open Space. These two objectives set forth general planning policies that address the strong community interest in Community Parks and Open Space lands for which there may be current funding but no long term recurring dedicated capital funding source nor has an LOS been established.

Objectives 1.5 Recreational & Cultural Opportunities, & 1.6 Intergovernmental Coordination. These objectives provide guidelines for those desirable programs that increase recreational and cultural opportunities, and help establish mutually beneficial partnerships with other public or private agencies involved in the delivery of similar recreational and open space services. In most cases there are no direct annual funding commitments made by the Board for these programs.

The Map Series of the Comprehensive Plan includes MAP RO-1.1, Existing and Future Conditions Map (2011-2030) reflects existing parks and the addition of new parks proposed between the years 2011-2030. The map includes descriptive legends, inventories of existing and proposed parks to be developed in the future.

In summary, the County's primary role will continue to be the provision of Regional, Beach and District parks and related active and passive recreational facilities to serve existing residents and projected future needs. Community Parks and/or neighborhood facilities that address existing deficiencies will also be considered in targeted regions of the Urban/Suburban Tier on a case by case basis as available funding permits.

The Goal, Objectives and Policies of this Element are intended to provide clear guidelines for the planning and implementation of a capital program to meet future park, recreation and open space needs and maintain the high quality of life in Palm Beach County. Specifically, additional acres of Regional, Beach and District parks with their associated active and passive recreational facilities will be planned to best serve areas where continued population growth is projected. This will be accomplished through the establishment of levels of service, and the collection and allocation of park impact fees from new residential development.

Second, those areas with existing park and/or active and special recreational facilities deficiencies will be addressed on an individual basis as funding becomes available from ad valorem, bond, grant or other non-impact fee funding sources. Recent funds approved by the Board of County Commissioners include the 1995 \$25.3 million Park Revenue Bond, the 1999 \$25 million Recreation and Cultural General Obligation Bond, and the 2004 \$50 million Waterfront Access and Preservation Bond. These bonds provide funding for County, municipal and other community park projects. These sources represent a substantial commitment of funds by the County for projects to help correct existing deficiencies.

The County's 1991 \$100 million Environmentally Sensitive Lands Acquisition General Obligation Bond Program resulted in the purchase of thousands of acres of native habitat area since the Element's adoption in 1989, and offers new opportunities for non-consumptive passive recreational opportunities. In 1999 the \$150 million Conservation Lands Acquisition General Obligation Bond was passed to purchase open space, farmlands and environmentally sensitive land. In conjunction with other public recreation and conservation lands these ESL acquisitions will form the core of a linked open space system throughout the County and region. The need to increase public accessibility to recreational and open space resources will be addressed by developing partnerships and cooperative agreements with schools, local, state and federal agencies, nonprofit groups and other public and private providers of recreational and cultural facilities.

## II. GOAL, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

### GOAL 1 PROVISION OF PARKS, RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE

It is the **GOAL** of Palm Beach County to provide a Countywide system of parks, beaches, open space and recreational and cultural facilities that is conveniently distributed, readily accessible, and adequate in number to serve the current and future needs of the County's population. This goal will be achieved through the implementation of the following Objectives and Policies.

#### OBJECTIVE 1.1 Long Range Planning and Funding

The long-range plan to guide development of its recreation and open space system including a planning process that encourages public input, adoption of a 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan, and annual funding that ensures adequate recreational opportunities are available to the public Countywide.

**Policy 1.1-a:** The County shall maintain, and incorporate as part of the Map Series of this Comprehensive Plan, Map RO 1.1, Existing and Future Conditions (2011-2030) identifies existing and future locations for each of the County's Regional, Beach, District, and Community Parks. This map and the respective supporting data will be assessed and updated at intervals consistent with the Evaluation and Appraisal process, or more frequently as necessary to reflect changing conditions.

**Policy 1.1-b:** The County's park planning process shall encourage public participation and comment through public hearings, meetings and user surveys that help assess the local and Countywide recreational needs of its residents.

**Policy 1.1-c:** The recommendations of Citizen Advisory Groups and/or Review Committees as may be established or sanctioned from time to time by the Board of County Commissioners will be considered in the appropriate stages of the recreation and open space planning process. These groups and committees currently include but are not limited to the following:

- Historic Resources Review Board
- Tourist Development Council
- Loxahatchee River Coordinating Council
- Impact Fee Review Committee
- Palm Beach MPO Bicycle, Greenway, Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Linked Open Space Task Force
- Community Center Advisory Groups

**Policy 1.1-d:** The County shall utilize the best available methods and sources of funding for the acquisition, development, operation and maintenance of parks and recreational facilities in order to lessen its need for ad valorem taxes. Currently available methods and sources of funding include but are not limited to the following:

- state and federal grants
- park impact fees on new residential development
- bonds and other long range financing techniques

- acquisition or lease of other government lands
- surplus land/property sales
- civic site dedication's and/or cash-outs
- private property donations
- revenue sharing including the Florida Boating Improvement Fund
- private/public trusts and partnerships
- user fees and tourist bed tax
- interlocal and mutual use agreements with other agencies

**OBJECTIVE 1.2 Countywide Park Levels of Service**

The County shall establish Countywide Park Level of Service Standards for total and developed acres of Regional, Beach, and District Parks, and for active and passive recreational facilities to ensure that adopted Levels of Service are met concurrent with new development.

**Policy 1.2-a:** The County shall maintain minimum LOS Standards (see Table 1.2-1) for total and developed acres of Regional, Beach, and District Parks for the Countywide population.

**Table 1.2-1  
Countywide Park LOS Standards 2011-2030**

|                            | LOS 2011                    | Projected LOS 2030 | Required LOS |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| <b>Park Classification</b> | <b>Total Acres/1000</b>     |                    |              |
| Regional                   | 4.12                        | 3.31               | 3.31         |
| Beach                      | .35                         | .29                | .29          |
| District                   | 1.52                        | 1.22               | 1.22         |
|                            | <b>Developed Acres/1000</b> |                    |              |
| Regional                   | 2.91                        | 2.43               | 2.43         |
| Beach                      | .22                         | .18                | .18          |
| District                   | 1.00                        | .82                | .82          |

Park Acreage ÷ Population (per 1,000) = Level of Service

**Policy 1.2-b:** Countywide Park Impact Fees shall be utilized to help fund acquisition and development of Regional, Beach, and District Parks needed as a result of new residential development in Palm Beach County.

**Policy 1.2-c:** The County shall assess and update Countywide Park LOS Standards at intervals consistent with the Evaluation and Appraisal process or more frequently as necessary to reflect changing conditions.

**Policy 1.2-d:** Recreation facilities shall be planned and developed to ensure the availability of active facilities within 5 miles and passive facilities within 10 miles of most residents within the Urban/Suburban Tier. For all Tiers outside of the Urban/Suburban Tier, both active and passive facilities will be planned and developed to ensure that facilities are available within 10 miles of most residents.

### **OBJECTIVE 1.3      Local-level Parks**

The County shall plan for the adequate provision of Local-level Parks (ie. community and neighborhood) in the unincorporated areas by maintaining, in the Unified Land Development Code, minimum requirements for on-site park acreage in new residential developments and the provision of community parks in areas of existing deficiency that are not adequately served by other available facilities.

**Policy 1.3-a:** The County shall require a minimum of 2.5 acres of neighborhood and/or community recreation areas per 1,000 persons to be developed in conjunction with all residential development in the unincorporated area through the provisions of ULDC Article 5, as may be amended.

**Policy 1.3-b:** The County shall maintain a plan for addressing neighborhood park needs for those unincorporated areas within the Revitalization and Redevelopment Overlay. Project acquisition and development for these areas will be included in annual updates of the Capital Improvement Element (CIE) subject to the annual appropriation of funds by the BCC for such purposes.

**Policy 1.3-c:** The County shall encourage the development and operation of Local-level parks by special districts, nonprofit groups, and private interests to help meet local recreational needs.

**Policy 1.3-d:** The County shall utilize available acquisition and funding sources such as land development civic site dedications, surplus land sales, grants, etc., to adequately provide for the Local-level park needs of current and future residents.

### **OBJECTIVE 1.4      Open Space**

The County shall ensure that lands are set aside in new developments for open space, and that environmentally sensitive lands are protected for inclusion in the Countywide GLOSS.

**Policy 1.4-a:** The County shall develop planning strategies for a GLOSS network that include but are not limited to consideration of the following components:

- Conservation Areas and Preserves
- Natural Areas
- Parks and recreational facilities
- Commercial recreation areas
- Civic, cultural and educational facilities
- Lakes, blueway trails and canal systems
- Bikeways and trails

- Greenways
- Wildlife corridors
- National Scenic Trails – the Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail and the Ocean to Lake Greenway, and
- Waterways

**Policy 1.4-b:** The ULDC shall include specific open space definitions and standards that address protection of open space, native ecosystems, and the use of native landscape buffers, consistent with the requirements of Sec. 163.3202(1), Florida Statutes.

**Policy 1.4-c:** *Policy deleted in Amendment Round 07-2*

**Policy 1.4-d:** The County shall adopt site specific management plans for resource based parks within the County’s park system that include design criteria for recreational facility development and provide those means of public access to cultural and/or natural resources found on site that do not exceed recognized activity carrying capacity or use guidelines.

**Policy 1.4-e:** The County shall assist other agencies in planning passive recreational facilities within County-managed linked open spaces and greenways that will facilitate public access to parks, environmentally sensitive lands, conservation areas, and other open space resources.

**Policy 1.4-f:** The County’s "Greenways and Linked Open Space System" map will be used as a guide in the park planning and design process to ensure that open space linkages are incorporated and alternative means of park access are provided for the public.

## **OBJECTIVE 1.5      Recreational & Cultural Opportunities**

The County shall develop and/or expand park facilities that allow for public access and appropriate use of recreational, cultural, natural, historic and archeological resources.

**Policy 1.5-a:** The County shall promote public access to County parks, recreational facilities, beaches, shores, and waterways through the provision and/or expansion of vehicle and bicycle parking areas, boat ramps, bikeways and pedestrian ways. All parks and recreational facilities shall utilize barrier-free design and be consistent with federal Americans with Disabilities Act requirements and other state and local building codes.

**Policy 1.5-b:** The County shall develop recreational trails and/or interpretive centers in parks with unique cultural, natural, historical or archeological resources. These facilities will provide learning experiences for County residents and also support local eco-tourism efforts.

**Policy 1.5-c:** The County shall continue to develop, and, where appropriate, provide funding for other public agencies to develop additional recreational and cultural facilities that are available to the public on a nondiscriminatory use basis.

**Policy 1.5-d:** The Palm Beach Cultural Council shall be responsible for maintaining and implementing the Comprehensive Cultural Plan for Palm Beach County.

## **OBJECTIVE 1.6      Intergovernmental Coordination**

The County shall improve its communication, coordination and cooperation with all providers of parks, recreational facilities, and open space, including federal, state, regional and local agencies, and where possible the private sector, to ensure that Countywide needs are adequately served.

**Policy 1.6-a:** The County shall continue to work in cooperation with the School Board in identifying Community School/Park sites that will best serve the educational, cultural and recreational needs of County residents and shall continue to maintain joint use agreements to make the use of these facilities more readily available to the public.

**Policy 1.6-b:** The County shall monitor existing interlocal agreements for park facilities with federal, state, local governments, the School Board and other public or private entities to ensure that the continued use of jointly funded facilities are available to all County residents on a nondiscriminatory basis.

**Policy 1.6-c:** The County's Tourist Development Council shall help support programs in cooperation with local agencies and citizen groups that organize various artistic, cultural, athletic, and recreational activities, facilities or events that publicize and/or promote Palm Beach County as a tourist destination.

**Policy 1.6-d:** The County shall pursue the use of utility sites where possible for recreational and open space purposes and coordinate these efforts with the Solid Waste Authority, Water Utilities Department and other local utility agencies.

**Policy 1.6-e:** The County shall participate in land acquisition and management efforts with federal, state, regional and/or local agencies, specifically including the Loxahatchee River and Slough corridor restoration, the South Florida Water Management District's (SFWMD) East Coast Buffer, and other projects of regional scope that are intended to provide public passive recreational opportunities.

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## Recreation and Open Space Element Amendment History

| Round | Description  | Adoption   | OrdNum  | Effective  | Note*      |
|-------|--|------------|---------|------------|------------|
| 89-1  | Adopted  | 8/31/1989  | 1989-17 | 9/11/1989  |            |
| 90-1  | Stipulated Settlement Agreement Amendments to find Plan in compliance  | 9/18/1990  | 1990-32 | 10/4/1990  | Settlement |
| 91-2  | Park impact fees; ordinance reference  | 12/16/1991 | 1991-48 | 12/27/1991 |            |
| 95-2  | Linked Open Space Program  | 12/6/1995  | 1995-58 | 2/6/1996   |            |
| 96-1  | Levels of Service and Funding for Community Parks  | 10/4/1996  | 1996-33 | 11/22/1996 |            |
| 97-1  | EAR Minor Text Revisions   | 9/22/1997  | 1997-32 | 12/3/1997  |            |
| 97-2  | EAR Re-write   | 11/17/1997 | 1997-49 | 10/28/1998 |            |
| 00-1  | To revise and update.  | 9/18/2000  | 2000-31 | 11/14/2000 |            |
| 05-1  | ULDC References Update   | 8/25/2005  | 2005-26 | 11/1/2005  |            |
| 06-1  | Waterfront Marine Service  | 8/21/2006  | 2006-19 | 10/23/2006 |            |
| 07-2  | Greenways and Linked Open Space  | 11/26/2007 | 2007-27 | 1/28/2008  |            |
| 12-1  | To make general updates including to revise level of service for regional, district, and beach parks, and to delete recreation facility tables and data, and to update and combine the Existing and Future Parks maps into a single map in the Map Series. | 7/23/2012  | 2012-22 | 8/31/2012  |            |

\* NIE means not in effect - not within element