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<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>DEFINITIONS</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>GOAL REC 1</b> .....	<b>4</b>
OBJECTIVE 1.0 CUSTOMERS.....	4
OBJECTIVE 2.0 COMMUNICATION .....	4
OBJECTIVE 3.0 FACILITY LOCATION.....	5
OBJECTIVE 4.0 FACILITY DEVELOPMENT.....	5
OBJECTIVE 5.0 TRAIL AND GREENWAY DEVELOPMENT.....	6
OBJECTIVE 6.0 ACCESS AND AVAILABILITY .....	7
OBJECTIVE 7.0 FINANCE.....	7
OBJECTIVE 8.0 PARTNERSHIPS.....	8
<b>GOAL REC 2</b> .....	<b>9</b>
OBJECTIVE 9.0 ASSURE PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE THROUGH PROTECTION OF NATURAL AREAS.....	9

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Public parks play an integral part in the quality of life in any community. They provide larger open areas for sporting activities, play, and relaxation than are available to most residential lots and constitute breaks in and relief from the built environment. They can be located within residential, business or industrial areas and may serve a neighborhood, the community at large, or the region. The Parks and Recreation Element documents the inventory of existing parks and recreation facilities and improvements, identifies standards of development, assesses needs and priorities based upon local standards and citizen input, and recommends a framework for development of an adequate parks and recreation system to meet the current and future needs of the community through the year 2025.

The primary focus of this element is to enhance existing parks, recreation, and open space opportunities for all Lake County citizens and visitors. This element is intended to identify the community's needs and priorities for the acquisition, development and long-term maintenance of an adequate parks and recreation system. The parks and recreation element will serve as a guide to the general locations and types of park areas and recreation facilities needed to adequately accommodate the existing and projected future needs of the community. There are different expectations and service requirements based on the nature of the urban, suburban, or rural character of the different areas within the county. Lake County will strive to locate facilities that address these differences.

The goal of the Parks and Recreation Element is to facilitate the development and management of parks and facilities for a recreation system that includes environmental lands, trails, and other recreational opportunities that meets the diverse needs of a growing community. It is also intended to provide a balance between public demands for recreation activities and facilities and available resources. Data that included population growth, demographic characteristics, safety, historical considerations and proximity to other population centers and major recreation areas were used in the formulation of policies. The most important considerations of this Plan were public desires and funding sources available to the County.

**DEFINITIONS**

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## **GOAL REC 1**

Lake County shall facilitate the development and management of parks and facilities for a recreation system that includes environmental lands, trails, and other recreational opportunities that meets the diverse needs of a growing community.

### **OBJECTIVE 1.0 CUSTOMERS**

The residents in Lake County are our most important customer.

#### **1.1 Parks and Recreation System**

Lake County will develop, operate, and promote a parks and recreation system that provides all residents with quality leisure opportunities.

#### **1.2 Lake County Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee**

The Lake County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board shall include citizen representatives to further the goal envisioned by this Element. A representative from the Public Lands Acquisition Advisory Committee (PLAAC) and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (B/PAC) shall also be included on the advisory board.

#### **1.3 Planning Process**

When developing new parks and facilities, Lake County shall include nearby residents and other interested parties in the planning process.

### **OBJECTIVE 2.0 COMMUNICATION**

Lake County shall develop programs to communicate the recreational amenities of Lake County to residents and visitors alike.

#### **2.1 Coordination**

Lake County Parks and Recreation shall coordinate with Lake County Economic Development and Tourism to help promote Lake County's parks, trails, cultural events, natural areas, and special events to visitors.

#### **2.2 Facility Development**

Lake County should support the development of top-notch athletic and community facilities to attract state, regional, and even national tournaments and events to Lake County. Such facilities should also be available to residents of Lake County for cultural and athletic programs when not hosting special events.

#### **2.3 Promotional Program**

Lake County shall develop and distribute a promotional guide for parks and recreation facilities, environmental lands, and trails owned and operated by the County. Such brochures and promotional materials should be available at all public facilities, schools, libraries, and other public facilities throughout the County.

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## **OBJECTIVE 3.0 FACILITY LOCATION**

There are different expectations and service requirements based on the nature of the urban, suburban, or rural character of the different areas within the county. Lake County will strive to locate facilities that address these differences.

### **3.1 Recreation Planning Areas (RPAs)**

Recreation Planning Areas (RPAs) will be established based on location, growth patterns, and the individual character of each particular area.

### **3.2 Partnership Plan**

Lake County shall work toward creating a model for a City/County/Private Partnership plan.

## **OBJECTIVE 4.0 FACILITY DEVELOPMENT**

Lake County will facilitate the development of a well-balanced system of community and regional facilities that include active and resource based recreational opportunities to meet a variety of needs for individuals as well as groups.

### **4.1 Park Classification System**

The park classification system in Lake County will be limited to community parks, regional parks, and special facilities. Parks will be further classified as either resource-based or activity-based.

### **4.2 Existing Parks**

Existing mini parks, neighborhood parks and parcels of undeveloped land less than 10 acres in size currently maintained by Lake County should be evaluated for potential phase out. Any new parks developed by Lake County shall be community parks or larger.

### **4.3 Level of Service**

The adopted Level of Service shall be 4 acres per 1000/population.

### **4.4 Park Facilities Inventory**

Lake County Parks and Recreation shall maintain an up to date inventory of all Lake County maintained park facilities.

### **4.5 Mandatory Dedication of Land for Recreation Space**

Lake County shall incorporate provisions within its Land Development Regulations which require new residential development to provide recreation space consistent with the Concurrency Management System. The provision of open space for activity-based recreation shall be in addition to the area required for open space.

### **4.6 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)**

Lake County will use, as a guideline, the activity standards suggested in the 'State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan' (SCORP) for Florida, as updated on a regular basis.

#### **4.7 Outsourcing**

Lake County should consider the possibility of outsourcing park maintenance for activities where appropriate.

#### **4.8 Phased Development and Renovation Plan**

Lake County will create and approve a phased development and renovation plan for the existing parks in the System to determine appropriate development of new facilities and/or phase out of parkland that does not meet the objectives of the Lake County Parks Master Plan.

### **OBJECTIVE 5.0 TRAIL AND GREENWAY DEVELOPMENT**

Lake County shall foster the development of a comprehensive greenway, blueway, trails, equestrian and bikeway system that provides scenic, eco-tourism, and resource-oriented recreation.

#### **5.1 Trails Program**

Lake County shall continue working towards implementing its trails program by coordinating with federal, state, regional, and local public agencies and private organizations.

#### **5.2 Equestrian Trails, Greenways and Blueways**

Lake County shall add equestrian trails, greenways and blueways to its trails and bikeways program to help connect natural resources and parks to the trail system.

##### **5.2.1 Interconnectivity**

Strive to interconnect existing dedicated open space areas, trails, pedestrian pathways, and where appropriate, utility corridors, in the greenways network.

##### **5.2.2 Incentives**

Provide incentives to private landowners to encourage their participation in the creation of the springshred greenways system.

##### **5.2.3 Greenway Land Acquisition Priority List**

Adopt a greenway land acquisition priority list to assist in identifying and coordinating the acquisition or protection of the elements of the greenway.

#### **5.3 Guidelines**

Lake County shall adopt as a guideline the Florida Bicycle Facilities Planning and Design Handbook by FDOT and the Florida Office of Greenways and Trails Reference and Resource Guide. These documents shall be used in the planning and development of trails.

#### **5.4 Maintenance and Operation Standards**

Maintenance and operation standards shall be developed and approved prior to new trail design and development.

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## **OBJECTIVE 6.0 ACCESS AND AVAILABILITY**

Lake County will ensure equal access and maximum availability to all facilities to the greatest extent possible, consistent with the protection of natural resources.

### **6.1 Access ways**

Lake County shall design, construct, and manage parks and trails with access ways that are compatible with the natural features and character of the individual park site.

### **6.2 Linkages**

Sidewalks, bikeways, and/or trails should be provided to link residential areas, community facilities, schools, and other park sites where feasible.

### **6.3 Parking**

Parking areas and bicycle racks, where appropriate, will be provided at recreation sites.

### **6.4 Barrier-free Access**

Lake County shall ensure the provision of disabled parking spaces and barrier-free access to activity-based parks and facilities, where practical and appropriate.

## **OBJECTIVE 7.0 FINANCE**

Lake County shall identify and implement methods to finance the on-going operation and management of its recreational facilities.

### **7.1 Streamlining of Facilities**

Lake County will streamline its parks and recreation facilities and programs to focus on providing larger scale facilities to supplement existing city recreation facilities, natural resource based parks, and a trails system linking them all together.

### **7.2 Revenue Generation**

Design of new facilities should incorporate revenue-generating opportunities that could offset operational costs and/or enhance the recreational experience of participants (i.e. concessions, rentals, etc).

### **7.3 Grant Program**

The County's grant programs should be refined to be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Master Plan and expanded to more adequately address the impact of unincorporated residents on municipal recreation facilities and programs.

### **7.4 Capital Funding Source**

Reliable and consistent capital funding source for recreation facilities and operations to help implement the policies contained in this Element will be evaluated.

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## **7.5 Fees and Charges**

The County shall adopt fees and charges, where appropriate, for the Parks and Recreation System that is fair and equitable to residents and visitors that use County facilities.

## **7.6 Facility Maintenance Costs**

New park development shall address the cost to maintain each facility prior to implementation. Design/maintenance techniques, materials, and procurement methods should be used that provide the most cost effective measures to develop, as well as maintain, the park facilities.

## **OBJECTIVE 8.0 PARTNERSHIPS**

Lake County shall develop and maintain partnerships with the municipalities, the Lake County School Board and the Lake County Water Authority as well as not-for-profit agencies and the private sector.

### **8.1 Coordination and Facilitation**

Lake County shall coordinate the development of recreational facilities and work with other agencies to facilitate recreation programs.

### **8.2 Alternative Funding Sources**

Lake County shall continue to investigate alternative funding sources and relationships to provide for public park facilities, programs, and management.

### **8.3 Co-location**

Lake County and the School Board should further work to co-locate sites for new and existing schools and parks where feasible. Lake County should work with the School Board to identify possible joint opportunities to provide athletic and recreation opportunities for students and citizens. A school/park design model should be developed to be used for planning such joint facilities. Lake County and the School Board should also work to identify existing school sites for possible improvements to better accommodate public recreation usage.

### **8.4 Mutual Use Agreement**

Lake County should work with the School Board to develop a model 'Mutual Use Agreement' for the use of school and park facilities for public use.

### **8.5 Interlocal Agreements**

Lake County shall coordinate with the County's municipalities and adjacent counties for the provision of public parks and recreational programming through the use of interlocal agreements.

### **8.6 Non-Profit Recreation Providers**

Lake County shall develop agreements with non-profit recreation providers such as the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club to provide recreational programming and facilities.

## **8.7 Joint Agency Funding**

Lake County shall pursue joint agency funding for the purchase, development, and management of public parks, environmental lands, and trails.

## **GOAL REC 2**

Lake County shall guide the acquisition, protection and management of lands for the development of parks, open space and the development of recreation opportunities.

## **OBJECTIVE 9.0 ASSURE PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE THROUGH PROTECTION OF NATURAL AREAS.**

Lake County shall assure the provision of open space through land acquisition and through designation of land for open space use on the Future Land Use Map.

### **9.1 Provision of Access to Lake County's Lakes**

Lake County shall ensure the provision of open space by public and private entities throughout the unincorporated area by maintaining access to lakes and waterways through maintenance and enhancement of its public boat ramp parks. Additional public boat ramp parks shall be provided when the demand caused by future residents warrants additional sites and facilities.

### **9.2 Protect and Preserve Environmentally Sensitive Lands as Open Space**

Lake County shall, through the Land Development Regulations, provide a mechanism to protect, acquire or otherwise set aside environmentally sensitive and environmentally endangered lands for use as passive recreation or open space. Protection can take other forms, including conservation easements. The protection and acquisition of these lands shall be consistent with the Conservation Element.

### **9.3 Participation in the Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) Program for the Protection and Provision of Open Space**

Lake County shall continue its assistance with the purchase of lands in the Wekiva River Protection Area and shall recommend through resolution one new CARL proposal, as identified in the Conservation Element, per year. Upon favorable receipt of this resolution, the County shall assist in the preparation of the CARL application.

### **9.4 Protection from Incompatible Land Uses**

The Land Development Regulations shall require through the site plan and development review process the protection of recreation and open space areas from incompatible adjacent land uses.

Land uses that are considered incompatible with recreation and open space areas include Industrial land uses. All other land uses shall use screening and vegetated buffers to control any off-site impacts to the adjacent recreation and open space site. Land uses near resource-based recreation sites shall be of a low density and intensity as defined in the Future Land Use Element. The required buffer for adjacent land uses shall be 100 feet. No structures shall be built within the 100 foot buffer and the buffer shall remain in permanent open space and

designated as such on a recorded plat for the property. Recreation and open space sites shall be of sufficient size to provide an on-site vegetated buffer of 100 feet from adjacent property lines. Resource-based recreation sites shall provide an on-site buffer of 250 feet to enhance compatibility between the recreation site and the adjacent land use.

### **9.5 Open Space Definition and Standards**

Lake County shall define open space as the land area that remains undeveloped or minimally developed, such as trails and boardwalks, as part of a natural resource preserve or passive recreation area and shall include land preserved for conservation purposes. Open space excludes water bodies, wetlands, lots, street rights of way, parking lots, impervious surfaces, and active recreation areas. No more than 50% of the pervious area occupied by a golf course may count toward the minimum open space requirement. Open space may include permeable stormwater management areas if enhanced as amenities using native vegetation.

### **9.6 Environmentally Sensitive Lands as Open Space**

Any required open space shall include the environmentally sensitive lands on the project site. Further, to the maximum extent practical, all development shall be clustered away from any environmentally sensitive lands.

### **9.7 Open Space Requirements for Planned Unit Developments**

Lake County shall continue to require within the Land Development Regulations that Residential Planned Unit Developments set aside 25 percent of the project site as open space. The provision of open space shall emphasize the utilization of existing natural areas containing native plant and animal species.

### **9.8 Open Space Definitions to be Consistent with Land Use Designations of the Future Land Use Map.**

Lake County hereby adopts the following definitions of open space types to be designated on the Future Land Use Map under the general categories of Institutional, Recreational and Conservation:

**Conservation Open Space:** Natural or Historic areas in need of protection from significant adverse impacts associated with the encroachment of development. Such areas include soils that are unsuitable for development. Conservation open space is defined in the Conservation Element.

**Utility Open Space:** Areas unsuitable for development because of the potential threat to public health and safety as a result of the presence of a public utility or service, and areas that are not suitable for development because of the presence of a man-made service that would destroy the character of the site and adversely affect the value of investments constructed thereon. Such areas include cemeteries, drainage canals, airport flight paths clear zones, and regional utility lines.

**Corridor Open Space:** This open space type constitutes areas separating development from transportation corridors, areas preserved for proposed transportation routes, and areas used to improve aesthetic character of a transportation corridor. Such areas include open areas adjacent to roadways and bicycle/pedestrian/equestrian paths, reserved rights-of-way for future transportation corridors, and abandoned railroad rights-of-way

Multiple-Purpose Open Space: This type of open space can serve one or more of the above open space types.