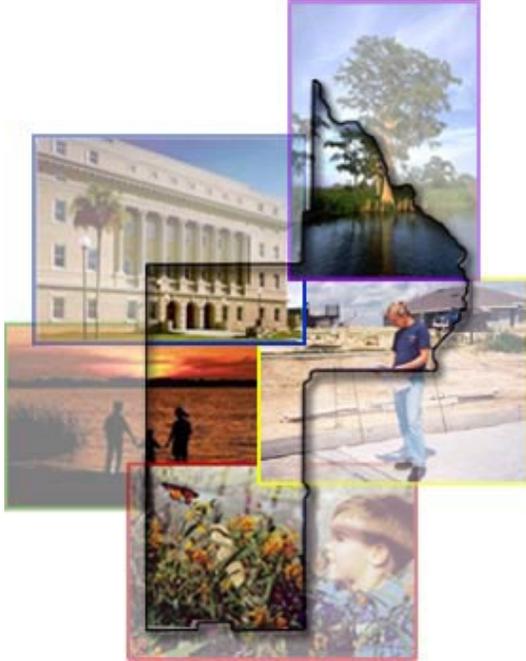


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Lake County Parks and Recreation Master Plan Executive Summary



1.0 Introduction

In April 2003, Lake County began developing a 10 year Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This document is a summary of the Lake County Parks and Recreation Master Plan and is presented here as a synopsis of the recommendations contained in the Master Plan. Starting a comprehensive recreation system from the ground up takes time. While Lake County has a parks and recreation division, it has lacked a clear sense of direction and purpose in terms of providing an efficient and comprehensive system of parks, recreation, and natural areas.

The Master Plan has been drafted with the objective of creating a framework for the delivery of recreation services, trails, and environmental lands to the citizens and visitors in Lake County, to narrow the focus of recreation delivery by Lake County and to work toward creating a countywide system of recreation that meshes well with the system of parks and recreation opportunities provided by the cities and towns in Lake County.

2.0 Planning Process

The planning process used for the development of the Master Plan had three major components, interviews with cities, towns, and other recreation providers, public workshops to gather input, and an analysis of the County's existing parks and recreation service delivery system. As the process progressed it became clear that the Master Plan needed to address trails and environmental lands in addition to parks and recreation facilities. Other issues became apparent after meeting with other recreation providers and stakeholders, particularly the lack of capacity in recreation facilities and the impact of unincorporated residents on the municipal recreation providers. This Master Plan seeks to correct these issues by creating a more efficient County system and focusing specifically on parks, trails, and environmental lands. The overall philosophy is explained in more detail within appropriate sections of the plan and its recommendations.

In February of this year, the project team formally presented the recommendations of the Master Plan at four public workshops held throughout the County. The Plan as a whole was well-received and the team was given excellent feedback on a variety of issues. Some suggestions were incorporated into the Master Plan, while others were considered but not necessarily included in the Plan.

3.0 Mission Statement and Objectives

As part of the development of the Master Plan, a mission statement and objectives were developed to help guide the development of the County's parks and recreation system. The County should consider the mission statement and objectives before making decisions related to the parks and recreation system. If the mission and objectives do not support a specific action, the action should not be carried out.

"Mission Statement: Lake County will 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."

The following objectives shall help to establish the steps necessary to provide quality recreation opportunities for both citizens and visitors to Lake County:

Objective 1.0 - The residents in Lake County are our most important customer.

- 1.1 Lake County will develop, operate, and promote a parks and recreation system that provides all residents with quality leisure opportunities.
- 1.2 Lake County should continue the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board made up of citizen representatives to further the mission envisioned by the Master Plan.

Objective 2 - Recognize the importance of communicating our presence to residents and visitors alike.

- 2.1 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 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 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.
- 2.4 A logo and signage program should be initiated that becomes an identifier for the Lake County parks and recreation system, strengthening the image and recognition factor by residents of, and visitors to Lake County.
- 2.5 Lake County should establish a recreation resource center or clearinghouse to provide the public with up to date information about all recreation providers, programs, and facilities.
- 2.6 Lake County should develop a presence on the County's website specifically for the Parks and Recreation Division that is updated regularly and contains useful information regarding programs, facilities, an interactive map, other recreation providers, volunteer opportunities, and upcoming events.



Objective 3.0 - 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 and will strive to locate facilities that address these differences.

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

3.1.1 **Northwest Lake County** (SR 27 Corridor) – This area (from the turnpike north) includes Lady Lake, Fruitland Park and parts of Leesburg in the north. Lake County should coordinate with the towns of Lady Lake and Fruitland Park to provide a regional park with facilities such as athletic fields and cultural/civic space.

3.1.2 **South Central Lake County** (SR 50 Corridor) – This area includes the towns of Mascotte, Groveland, Clermont, Minneola, and Montverde located along SR 50 in south Lake County. Rapid growth and a large number of residents interested in an active lifestyle characterize this area of the County. Team sports as well as individual sports are extremely popular. Lake County should consider partnering with the National Training Center to develop regional high quality athletic and wellness facilities, as well as coordinate with Mascotte and Groveland in developing their recreation facilities and programs.

3.1.3 **Southeast Lake County** (Four Corners/Citrus Ridge) – This area is uniquely situated in four (4) counties midway between the expanding Orlando and Lakeland urban areas. Unique issues face the developing area because of the many local governments and agencies with jurisdiction in the ninety square mile area. Lake County should plan for community facilities to support the expanding population as well as being an active participant in the overall planning for the area.

3.1.4 **Central Lake County** (Golden Triangle) – This area includes Mount Dora, Eustis, Tavares, Howie-In-the-Hills, Astatula, and southeast portions of Leesburg. This area is primarily urbanized and most municipalities are already providing significant recreation programs and facilities. The smaller towns of Astatula and Howie-in-the-Hills do not have extensive parks and recreation programs. Lake County's role in the area should be primarily to coordinate and partner with the public and private providers to provide facilities and programs.

3.1.5 **Northeast Lake County** (SR 19 Corridor) – This area includes Umatilla, Astor, Paisley, Lake Mack, and Sorrento/Mt. Plymouth as well as portions of the Ocala National Forest and Wekiva River Protection Area. The area is characterized by rural development. There are several well-established youth associations as well as the City of Umatilla who have the potential to partner with the County in providing facilities and programs in the area. Because of the number of unincorporated residents in the area Lake County should take on a more proactive role as a recreation provider with focus being on facility development.

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





Objective 4.0 - 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 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 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 Lake County shall consider increasing the adopted Level of Service from 2.5 acres to 4 acres per 1000/population.
- 4.4 The Lake County Parks and Recreation Division shall maintain an up to date inventory of all Lake County maintained park facilities.
- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 When developing new parks and facilities, Lake County shall include nearby residents and other interested parties in the planning process.
- 4.7 Lake County should consider the possibility of outsourcing park maintenance for activities where appropriate.
- 4.8 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 Master Plan.

Objective 5.0 - Lake County will foster the development of a comprehensive greenway, trails, and bikeway system that provides scenic, eco-tourism, and resource-oriented recreation.

- 5.1 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 Lake County shall add greenways and blueways to its trails and bikeways program to help connect natural resources and parks to the trail system.
- 5.3 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 development and planning of trails.
- 5.4 Maintenance and operation standards shall be developed and approved prior to new trail design and development.

Objective 6.0 - Lake County will ensure equal access and maximum availability to all facilities.

- 6.1 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 Sidewalks, bikeways, and/or trails should be provided to link residential areas, community facilities, schools, and other park sites where feasible.
- 6.3 Parking areas and bicycle racks, where appropriate, will be provided at recreation sites. The inverted U or other rack that supports two contact points of the bicycle should be the preferred style of bicycle parking. 6.4 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 - Lake County will promote our natural environment and all forms of recreation opportunities.

- 7.1 Lake County will strive to preserve its natural resources through land acquisition programs and best management practices of existing environmental lands.
- 7.2 The Lake County Public Lands Acquisition Advisory Council will recommend and prioritize properties for potential acquisition by the Board of County Commissioners.
- 7.3 Lake County will develop land management plans for all environmental lands acquired. Such plans will address access, restoration, and the types of amenities that can be developed consistent with the character and carrying capacity of the property.
- 7.4 Lake County will continue to promote access to water bodies and natural resources through the development and maintenance of public access points, swimming areas, boat ramps, and canoe/kayak launches.

Objective 8.0 - Lake County will develop, improve, maintain, and manage our facilities and resources in a manner that evokes a positive and safe image.

- 8.1 Lake County shall adopt development, maintenance, and management standards for individual parks, trails, and environmental lands.
- 8.2 A logo and signage program should be initiated that becomes an identifier for Lake County parks, environmental lands, and trails in order to strengthen the image and recognition factor of County facilities by residents and visitors alike.
- 8.3 Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) methods, programs and techniques should be integrated in the design and operation of County public parks, trails, and environmental lands.
- 8.4 In order to reduce vandalism and crime in Lake County parks, Lake County should consider methods to improve security in its park system by such means as maintenance and/or program staff, volunteers ('adopt-a-park' program), partnerships, and/or live-in park attendant agreements.



Objective 9.0 - Lake County recognizes that it is imperative to identify and implement methods to finance the on-going operation and management of our facilities.

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 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).
- 9.3 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.
- 9.4 A reliable and consistent capital funding source for recreation facilities and operations should be established to help implement the Master Plan.
- 9.5 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.
- 9.6 New park and trail 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 10 - Lake County recognizes that survival, growth and effectiveness will depend on the ability to focus on a formalized mission and the ability to 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.



- 10.1 Lake County shall primarily act as a coordinator for the development of recreational facilities and work with other agencies to facilitate recreation programs.
- 10.2 Lake County shall continue to investigate alternative funding sources and relationships to provide for public park facilities, programs, and management.
- 10.3 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 identify existing school sites for possible improvements to better accommodate public recreation usage.
- 10.4 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.
- 10.5 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.
- 10.6 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.
- 10.7 Lake County shall pursue joint agency funding for the purchase, development, and management of public parks, environmental lands, and trails.

4.0 Summary of Recommendations

This section outlines the recommendations contained in the Master Plan that will implement the mission statement and objectives spelled out in the previous section.



4.1 County's Role

- 4.1.1** The County's system of parks and recreation facilities will direct efforts and resources toward providing facilities that can efficiently serve the largest amount of people while consolidating resources. The County should also continue to coordinate with cities and other agencies to connect parks and natural resources countywide through a coordinated system of trails, blueways, and greenways.

Recommendation: Lake County will primarily focus on providing a coordinated system of regional and community parks, trails and environmental lands.

- 4.1.2** In order to refocus the Parks and Recreation Division on the provision of larger parks, neighborhood and mini-parks with limited recreational value to the community as a whole should be considered for elimination either through sale or transfer to another provider, homeowners association or private non-profit group.

Recommendation: Any park slated for sale or transfer should address the impact on the recreational services to nearby residents, especially access to lakes or other significant natural or cultural resources.

- 4.1.3** Proper planning and development of a parks and recreation system will require an understanding of the long term costs involved in operating and maintaining recreation facilities, trails, and management of environmental lands.

Recommendation: Lake County should develop individual management plans for existing and new park sites that address maintenance and staffing needs.

- 4.1.4** The County should act as a recreation facilitator for groups that use county park facilities rather than a direct recreation services provider. Recreation programs, such as youth leagues, special events or classes, should be provided by outside groups that coordinate with County staff regarding maintenance, scheduling, and other issues.

Recommendation: County facilities should be made available to outside groups or agencies that administer and run recreation programs. Such groups would need to meet certain conditions and abide by any regulations the County puts in place for the use of its facilities. It should be noted that County staff is already including a recreation coordinator position in its 04/05 budget.



- 4.1.5 To better serve the diverse needs of Lake County residents, park planning should be tailored to meet the needs of rural areas, urban areas, and high growth areas, all of which are present in Lake County today.

Recommendation: Create Recreation Planning Areas (RPAs) in the following areas.

- Northwest Lake (SR 27 Corridor)
- South Central (SR 50 Corridor)
- Southeast Lake
(Four Corners/Citrus Ridge)
- Central Lake (Golden Triangle)
- Northeast Lake
(SR 19/Umatilla Corridor)



- 4.1.6 Due to the lack of activity-based facilities serving unincorporated areas, consideration should be given towards locating activity-based facilities at regional resource-based parks such as PEAR Park. Any facilities proposed for PEAR Park shall be consistent with the conservation objectives of the park.

Recommendation: Appropriate recreation facilities should be incorporated into the development of PEAR Park. Recommended facilities could support indoor recreation, meeting space, instruction, and cultural arts programs.

- 4.1.7 Partnerships, joint facilities, cooperative arrangements, and other collaborations are creative ways of providing for needed recreational services, facilities, programs. Sharing of resources will assist Lake County in meeting the recreational needs of residents and visitors.

Recommendation: Develop partnerships with LCWA, National Training Center, non-profit providers, and cities to develop new or expand existing regional facilities.

4.2 Grants

The County's grant program is popular with the majority of municipalities and recreation providers who participate in the program. Other comments related to the grant program involved the relatively small amount given the impact of non-residents on city-sponsored programs and the inability to charge differential fees for non-residents. Through partnerships and cooperative arrangements, the County should be able to negotiate arrangements with recreation providers (municipal or not-for-profit) where the County contributes to the provision of recreation programs and facilities through grants, cost sharing, direct payments or other contribution.

Recommendation: The County's recreational grant program should be refined to promote the development of facilities and programs that further the goals of the Master Plan. Increasing funding and revising the requirements of the grant program should be studied and reviewed as part of the Comprehensive Plan evaluation process.

4.3 Level of Service

The tables below illustrate the impact of increasing the County's recreation Level of Service (LOS) from 2.5 to 4 acres per 1000 through the year 2020 (the Comprehensive Plan planning horizon). Based on population projections and the current LOS for Lake County, the recreation LOS can be increased to four (4) acres per 1000 without putting Lake County into a recreation facilities deficit. At the February workshops, many participants suggested that the LOS should be set even higher. The project team has chosen to leave the proposed LOS at four (4) acres per 1000 for the time being, but perhaps in the future Lake County may wish to increase the LOS or revise it to account for the increased facility development recommended in the Master Plan. New parks proposed in the Master Plan will require acquisition of approximately 500 acres of additional parkland by the year 2015.

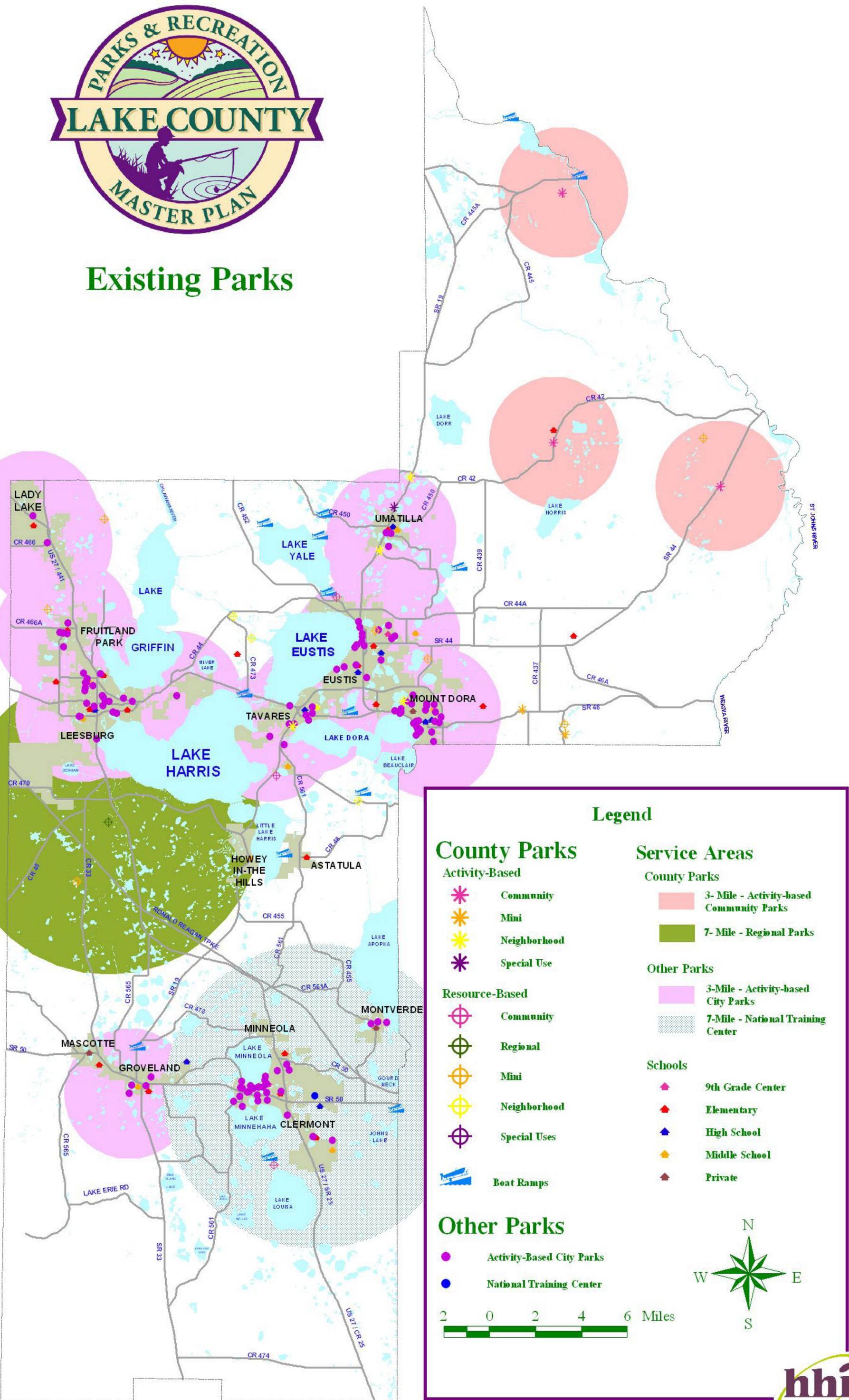
Recommendation: Increase the adopted Level of Service (LOS) for unincorporated areas from 2.5 acres per thousand to 4 acres per thousand. Language will be incorporated into the Master Plan recommending that the County consider an additional increase for the next evaluation period of the Comprehensive Plan.

Year	Uninc. Population	Existing Acres	(acres/1000)	(acres/1000)	Acres Needed	Deficiency
2000	120,169	532.91	2.5	4.43	300.42	232.49
2015	171,243	532.91	2.5	3.11	428.11	104.8
2020	183,833	532.91	2.5	2.89	459.58	73.33

			(acres/1000)	(acres/1000)		(Deficiency)
2000	120,169	532.91	4	4.43	480.68	52.23
2015	171,243	532.91	4	3.11	684.97	-152.06
2020	183,833	532.91	4	2.89	735.33	-202.42



Existing Parks



Legend

County Parks

- Activity-Based**
- Community
 - Mini
 - Neighborhood
 - Special Use

Resource-Based

- Community
- Regional
- Mini
- Neighborhood
- Special Uses
- Boat Ramps

Other Parks

- Activity-Based City Parks
- National Training Center

Service Areas

- County Parks**
- 3-Mile - Activity-based Community Parks
 - 7-Mile - Regional Parks

Other Parks

- 3-Mile - Activity-based City Parks
- 7-Mile - National Training Center

Schools

- 9th Grade Center
- Elementary
- High School
- Middle School
- Private





4.4 Future Parks

A total of six community parks and two regional parks are proposed in the Master Plan. The general location and service area of proposed parks are shown in the 2015 Parks and Recreation System Master Plan Map. Prototypical parks for community, regional, and school/parks are shown on the following pages. These prototypical designs are presented to give the reader an idea of what kinds of facilities and their development costs could be located on 50-acre, 150-acre, and 100 acre school sites.

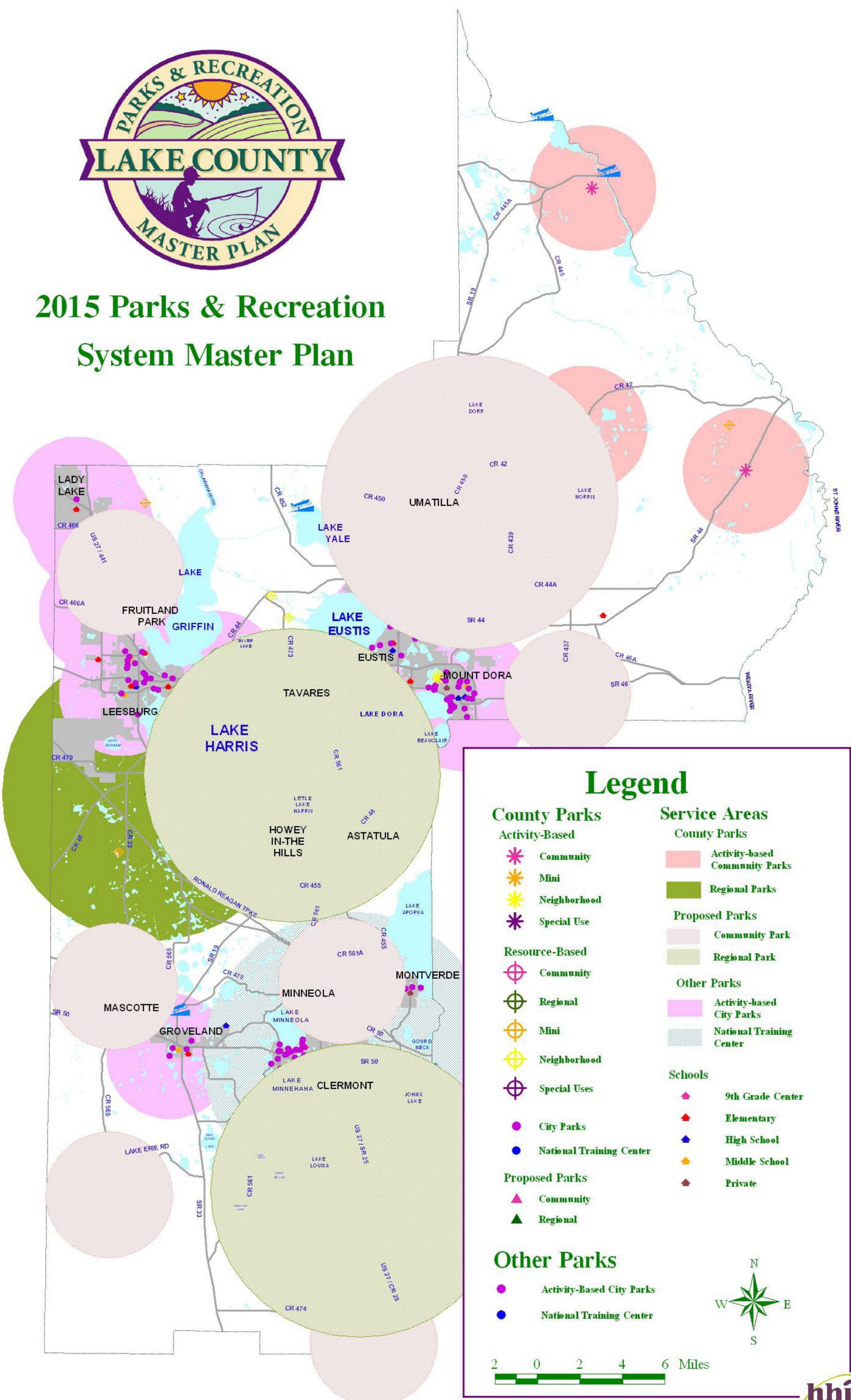
The locations of proposed parks shown in the 2015 Map are not exact locations, but rather suggested areas that currently lack facilities or where additional facilities will be needed in the future. Some proposed parks are lesser priorities and most likely will not be developed until after 2015, however, land acquisition for proposed parks should be considered immediately, even for low priority parks.

Recommendation: By the year 2015, Lake County should acquire 300 acres for community parks (6, 50-acre parks) and 200 acres for regional parks (2, 100-acre parks). Proposed parks are listed on the following pages.





2015 Parks & Recreation System Master Plan



Legend

County Parks		Service Areas	
Activity-Based		County Parks	
	Community		Activity-based Community Parks
	Mini		Regional Parks
	Neighborhood	Proposed Parks	
	Special Use		Community Park
Resource-Based			Regional Park
	Community	Other Parks	
	Regional		Activity-based City Parks
	Mini		National Training Center
	Neighborhood	Schools	
	Special Uses		9th Grade Center
	City Parks		Elementary
	National Training Center		High School
Proposed Parks			Middle School
	Community		Private
	Regional	Other Parks	
	Activity-Based City Parks		
	National Training Center		

Note: The proposed park in Umatilla has a larger service radius due to its size and the sparsely populated area it serves.



4.4.1 Community Parks

Northeast Community Park – The Town of Umatilla and other small rural villages are served in this area. During the workshops, activity-based facilities were considered a critical need. There are several well-established youth athletic associations in the area capable of running youth sports leagues and programs.

- Located southeast of Umatilla
- Tournament Sports Complex for sports such as football, baseball, and soccer.
- Multi-purpose Building
- Flexible Open Space

Central Southwest Community Park – This park would be considered a high priority for development since there are few activity-based parks in the area and the ones that do exist are at capacity. Partnership opportunities should be explored with the cities of Groveland and Mascotte or other recreation provider for this park. This park also has potential as a trailhead for the proposed trail running north/south from CR 470 to Mascotte.

- Located in the Groveland/Mascotte area
- Possible School-Park site
- Athletic facilities
- Skate park
- Potential trailhead site for proposed trails in area

Southeast Community Park – In addition to the proposed regional park to the north near Lake Louisa State Park, a community park and trailhead is proposed in the Citrus Ridge/Four Corners area to serve the growing population. Coordination with the many local governments in the area is imperative in terms of coordinating the provision of recreation opportunities. Land acquisition for a park in this area will be costly and therefore the County should make acquisition a priority. Development would occur towards the end of the Master Plan time frame.

- Located near CR 474 and US 27
- Athletic facilities
- Picnicking
- Trailhead
- Possible School-Park site
- Multipurpose Building





Northwest Community Park –There are several new parks in the area that have come online recently that include activity-based facilities. This park would be a lower priority in terms of development; however, the County should acquire an appropriate site in the area for future park development.

- Located between Lady Lake and Fruitland Park
- Tournament Sports Complex
- Multipurpose Building
- Multi-purpose Open Space

Sorrento Community Park - This park is proposed as activity-based and intended to serve the needs of the Mt. Plymouth and Sorrento communities. This park is a mid-level priority with acquisition and development planned between 2006-2010.

- Located in the Mt. Plymouth/Sorrento area
- Multipurpose Building
- Multipurpose Open Space
- Group Shelter
- Picnicing/Community Events
- Athletic facilities for practice and/or pick up games

Central Community Park/Trailhead – Several trails are planned for the area northwest of Montverde including the Lake Apopka Loop Trail and associated connections to the South Lake Trail and the Minneola Trail. Multipurpose facilities could be incorporated into a trailhead park to help meet some of the recreational needs of the area. Development of the park would be a lower priority; however, the County should acquire an appropriate site for such a park by 2010.

- Located near the intersection of CR 561A and CR 455
- Athletic facilities o Picnicking
- Concessions
- Trailhead

Southwest Community Park – This park would serve the rural areas south of Groveland and Mascotte. When population growth and demand warrant, the County should consider building a park in the area around Lake Erie Road and CR 565. However the development of this park would most likely occur outside the planning horizon of the Master Plan.

Prototypical Parks



50 – Acre Community Park

Minimum Area: 50 acres

Amenities:

1. Playground
2. Recreation Center
3. Basketball Courts (70' x 110')
4. Soccer/Football Fields (360 X 225)
5. Senior Baseball
6. Youth Baseball (250)
7. Youth Baseball (200)
8. Softball
9. Trail
10. Retention
11. Parking
12. Landscape Buffers

- Activity-based and resource-based facilities
- Development costs can range from \$150,000 to \$4,000,000
- Land costs will vary depending on location
- A dedicated funding source for land acquisition can be used as a match for Florida Forever program funds or other grant programs to defray land and/or development costs



4.4.2 Regional Parks

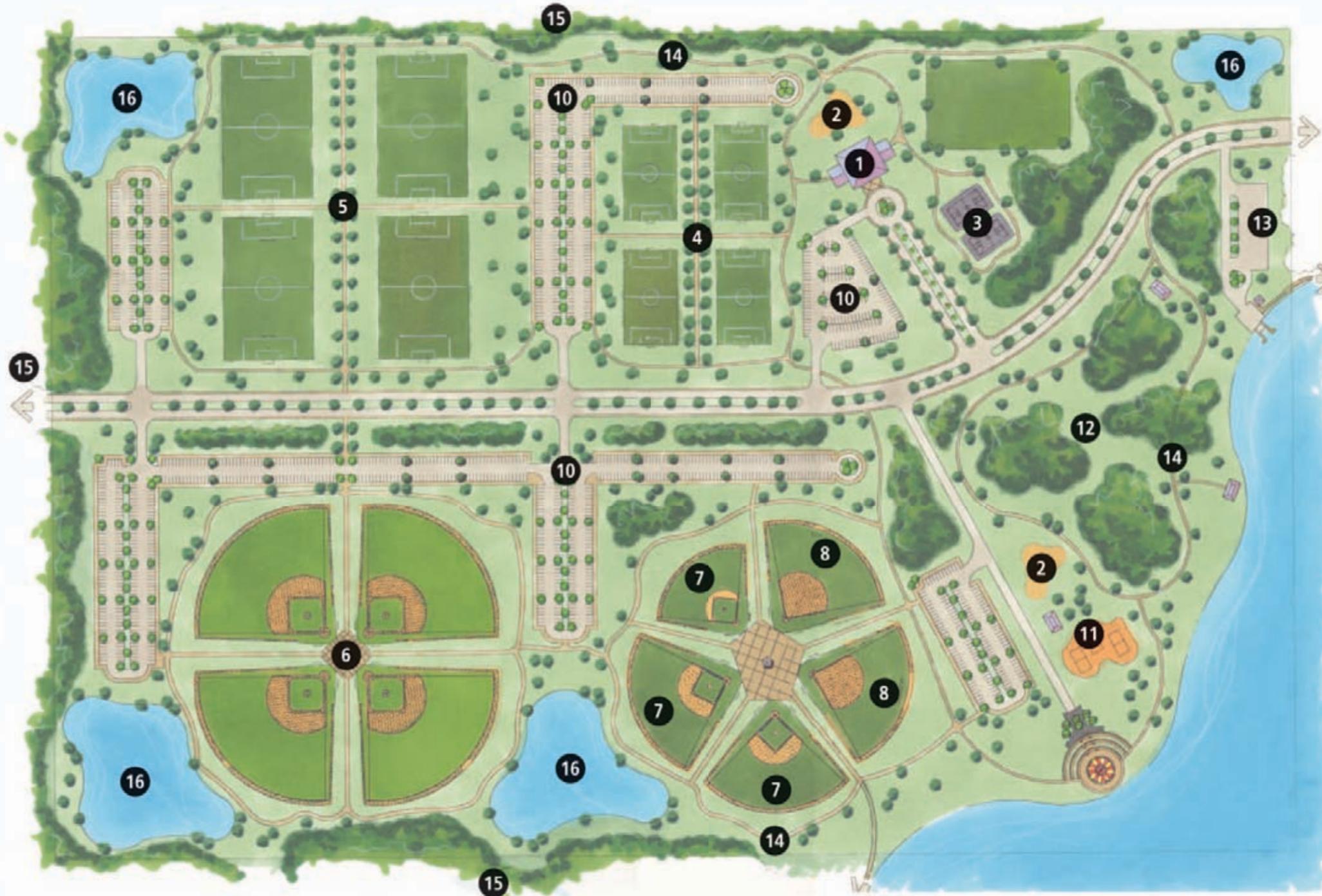
Southeast Trailhead/Regional Park – The development of a large regional park in the area south of Clermont near Lake Louisa State Park would complement the existing City of Clermont parks and the National Training Center.

- Located near US 27 and Lake Louisa south of Clermont.
- Possible School-Park site
- Tournament Sports Complex
- Trailhead for proposed South Lake Trail Extension
- Multipurpose facilities
- Outdoor special event space

PEAR Park – This park land already exists but has not been developed. The County is also in the process of acquiring additional acreage to expand the park to 315 acres. At the present time, this park is planned to be a resource-based park. Based on the need for additional activity-based facilities throughout the County, activity-based facilities may be appropriate, particularly indoor recreation. Activity-based facilities would need to be carefully located and designed so as not to impact environmentally sensitive areas and fulfill the conservation objectives of the PEAR Park Management Plan.



Prototypical Parks



150 + Acre Regional Park

Minimum Area: 100 acres

Amenities:

1. Community Building
2. Playground
3. Basketball Courts
4. Youth Soccer
5. Soccer/Football Fields
6. Senior Baseball
7. Youth Baseball
8. Softball
9. Amphitheater/Multipurpose Open Space
10. Parking
11. Volleyball
12. Picnic Area
13. Boat/Canoe Launch
14. Trail
15. Natural Areas
16. Retention

- Activity-based and resource-based facilities
- Development costs can range from \$2,000,000 to \$15,000,000 dollars
- Land costs will vary depending on location
- A dedicated funding source for land acquisition can be used as a match for Florida Forever program funds or other grant programs to defray land and/or development costs

4.5 Joint Facilities

The following are potential joint facilities/partnerships considered in the Master Plan

4.5.1 Hickory Point Regional Park currently provides a significant amount of activity-based recreation to the area. The County should explore the possibility of working with other local governments to implement recreational programs to expand the recreational potential of the facility. Due to its convenient central location, expansion of the park should also be considered to supplement the existing soccer complex with other athletic facilities and flexible open space that can be used for special events or festivals.

Recommendation: Lake County should work with the LCWA and other cities to create a partnership that expands the recreation potential and size of Hickory Point Regional Park.

4.5.2 Clermont Regional Park/National Training Center is quickly becoming a popular draw for state and regional athletic events. Additional tournament quality facilities are planned for the site. Through partnerships with the County or other recreational providers, these facilities could be made available to the public for regular league programs. Potential scenarios could include funding from the County for facility development with management handled by the National Training Center. There is an excellent opportunity for a formal public/private partnership.

Recommendation: The County should begin negotiating with the National Training Center (NTC) to develop a cooperative arrangement to provide recreational facilities and programs in the area.



4.6 Land Acquisition and Park Siting Criteria

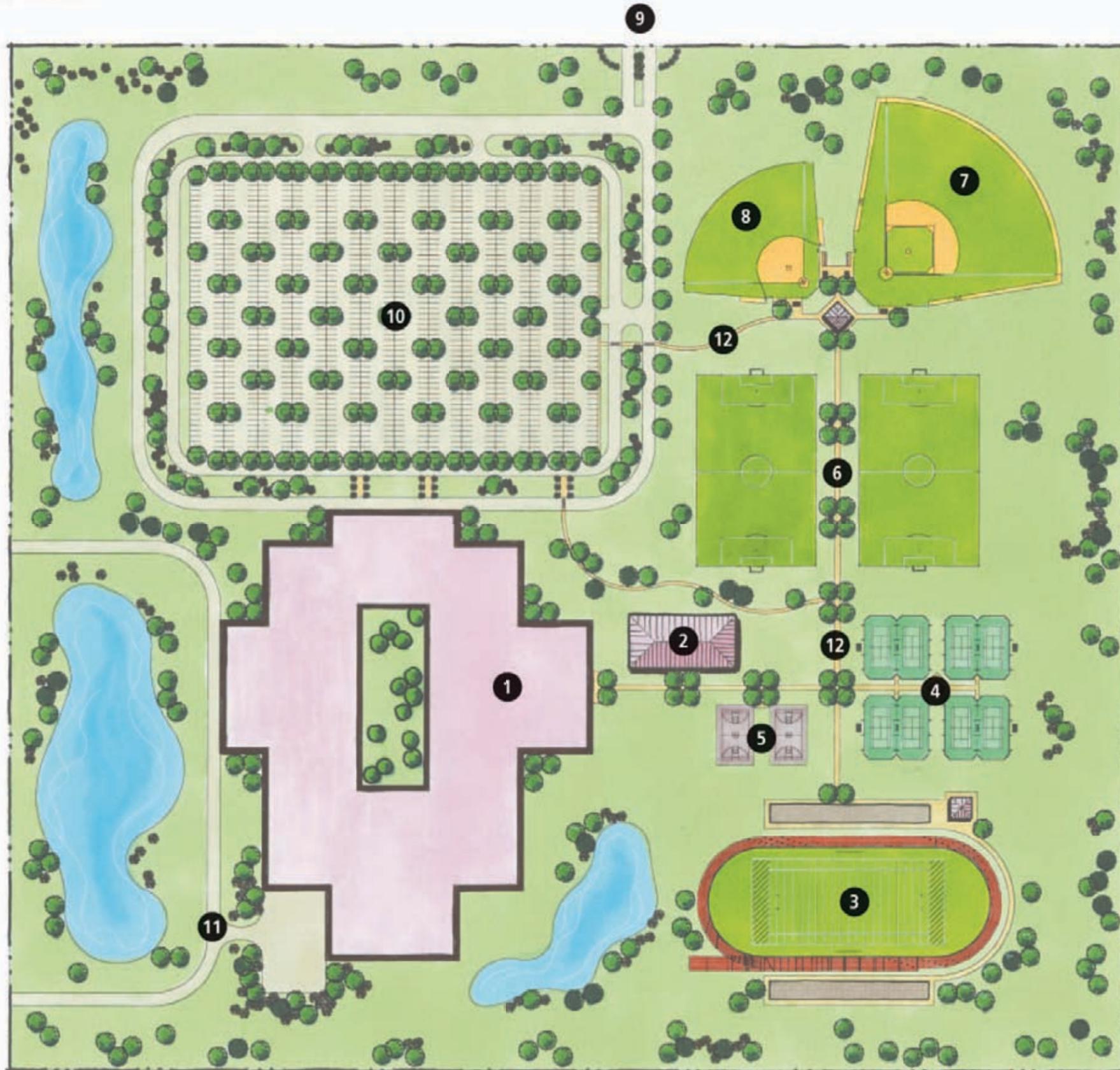
Land acquisition will be a key component of implementation for the Master Plan. Potential park sites should be evaluated before the County proceeds with acquisition. Items to be evaluated should include the useable acreage of the property, environmental conditions, proximity to users, expansion of existing parks, and other criteria.

Recommendation: Acquisition of additional land for parks should be based on one or more of the following criteria:

1. Acquire parkland where no existing facilities are located or where existing facilities do not meet needs identified in the Master Plan;
2. Acquire parcels large enough to accommodate a 50-acre community park or a 100-acre regional park in accordance with the recommendations of the Master Plan;
3. Priority should be given to expand the boundaries of existing County parks or to be adjacent to boundaries of parks owned/managed by other local, regional, state, federal, private non-profit, or private entities;
4. Natural or cultural resources should be included and/or protected when possible;
5. Lake County should only accept property or facilities that meets the minimum acreage needed to develop at a minimum a community-sized park;
6. Activity-based facilities should be considered for resource-based parks where appropriate so that natural resources are not adversely affected and protected;
7. Land should be accessible to existing motorized and non-motorized traffic circulation systems; and,
8. Acquisition furthers the Lake County Parks and Recreation Master Plan mission statement and objectives.
9. A decision matrix and evaluation form should be used (see sample form) to determine the feasibility of land acquisition as well as programs at County facilities. Sample evaluation forms are included in the full Master Plan.



Prototypical Parks



95 – Acre School/Park

Minimum Area: 75 acres Middle or High School Site
Amenities:

1. School Buildings
2. Gymnasium/Community Center
3. Football/Track Stadium
4. Tennis Courts
5. Basketball Courts
6. Soccer Fields (360' X 225')
7. Senior Baseball (325')
8. Softball
9. School Park Entrance
10. Parking
11. Bus Drop-off
12. Pedestrian Circulation

- Community/Middle or High School/ regional park in scale
- Designed to accommodate both the educational and recreational needs of the community
- Opportunity for joint ventures in areas where facilities are needed most



4.7 Trails

Proposed trails are shown on the Conceptual Trails Map. Possible trailhead locations are also shown. Based on input from workshop attendees and County staff the following trails are proposed in order of priority.

Recommendation:

- **Extend the Umatilla trail from Lake Dorr south to Lake Eustis along the abandoned railroad corridor**
- **Connect the South Lake Trail from SR 50 along US 27, past Lake Louisa State Park to the Citrus Ridge/4 Corners area**
- **Develop an East/West trail between US 27 and the VanFleet Trail along CR 474 4) East/West trail north of Lake Minneola to SR 19, creating a South Lake Trail Loop.**
- **Connect Florida Hospital Waterman to the planned Leesburg-Eustis Trail.**

4.7.1 Lake County is a very popular bicycling location for triathletes, competitive cyclists, and touring cyclists, particularly south Lake County. Many popular cycling routes are being impacted by increased traffic due to development which is creating conflicts between cyclists and drivers.

Recommendation: The County should continue to provide on road bicycle facilities along popular cycling routes. In lieu of such facilities the County should promote awareness of on road cycling through signage, adopt-a-road programs, and recognizing bicycle friendly businesses.

4.7.2 Some thought should be given to trails for motorized off-road recreational vehicles (motorcycles, four-wheelers, etc). This issue came up during the development of the SCORP and has been raised by a few individuals involved in the public meetings for the Master Plan. There is a lack of designated trails for off road vehicles, consequently, inappropriate areas are sometimes used for this activity. The state is providing funds for such trails to help prevent the use of environmentally sensitive lands for such activities.

Recommendation: Motorized recreational trails should be located in specific areas designated for motorized use and away from areas considered environmentally sensitive. Abandoned quarries, disturbed lands, and similar areas would be appropriate.



4.8 Blueways

Potential Blueways are identified for the County's largest lakes and rivers; see the Conceptual Trails Map for specific locations. Blueways were selected based upon proximity to existing recreational facilities and access points located on rivers and lakes. The Blueways proposed in the Master Plan will require additional study and coordination with local and state agencies to determine their feasibility and who should be responsible for maintaining them.

Recommendation: A Blueways committee should be established consisting of staff from Lake County, LCWA, SJRWMD, and other regulatory agencies, municipalities and citizen representatives should be created to study the feasibility of the conceptual blueways identified in the Master Plan.

4.9 Environmental Lands

Lake County recently created a Public Land Acquisition Advisory Council which is charged with determining appropriate land for acquisition. Such lands can be acquired to protect natural resources, allow public access, where appropriate, and allow for resource-based recreation opportunities. Florida Communities Trust (FCT) provides funding to local governments and eligible non-profit environmental organizations for acquisition of community-based parks, open space and greenways that further outdoor recreation and natural resource protection needs identified in local government comprehensive plans. The expansion of PEAR Park is being acquired through an FCT grant.

Recommendation: Lake County should develop acquisition criteria and revise the Comprehensive Plan as needed to best meet the acquisition criteria used by FCT and the Florida Forever Program.

4.10 Cemeteries

Over the years Lake County has become responsible for several cemeteries. Several of them have no clear ownership or a group identified responsible for record keeping and regulatory compliance. Landscaping and maintenance of cemetery grounds may be appropriate for the Parks and Recreation Division to provide. However, management of the cemeteries themselves, specifically active cemeteries, may not be an appropriate function of the Parks and Recreation Division. Volunteer groups are currently providing a lot of the needed documentation and management of the active cemetery currently under the responsibility of the County.

Recommendation: The County should work to identify cemetery owners and consider transferring responsibility from the County to a more appropriate group. Transfer of cemeteries to other parties should address compliance with state regulations.

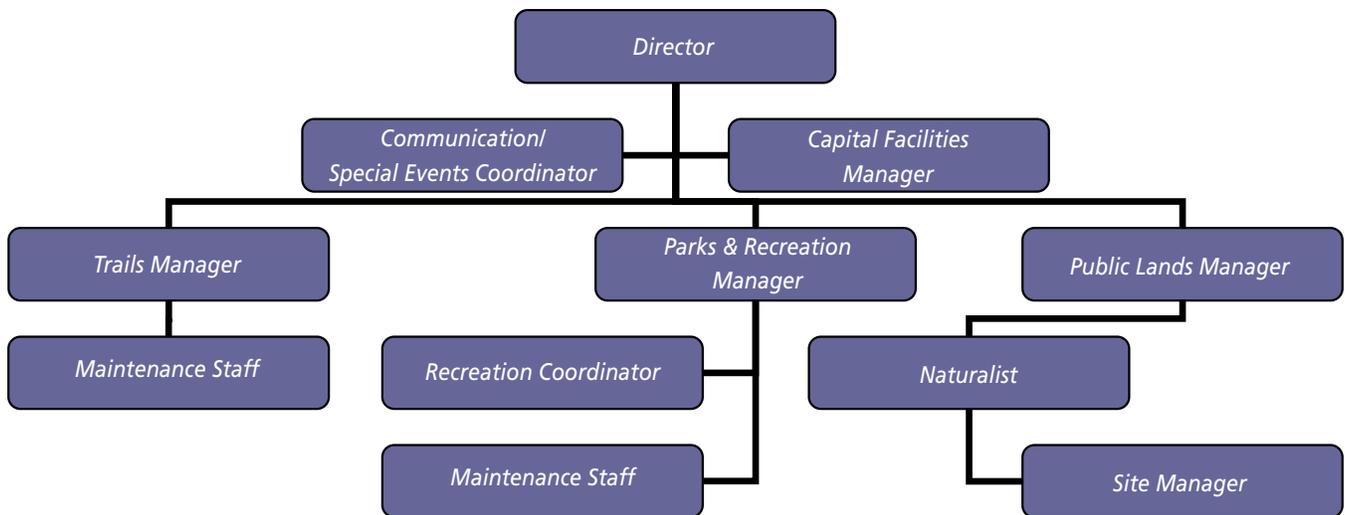
4.11 Management of Parks and Recreation System

Implementation of the Master Plan will involve coordination between many groups involved in the acquisitions, design, development and operation of the park system envisioned by Lake County. The following recommendations address the management structure needed to implement the Master Plan.

Recommendations:

- **Keep all three programs (parks, trails, environmental lands) within the same County department/division.**
- **Park Management Structure**
 - Director
 - Parks and Recreation Manager
 - Trails Manager
 - Environmental Lands Manager

Conceptual Organization Chart



- **Future growth in all three programs may justify the creation of a separate county department. However at this point in time the ability to share resources and equipment with Public Works is beneficial for parks staff, as well as for the emerging trails and environmental lands programs.**
- **Personnel needed in the short term include a recreation coordinator, three to five maintenance personnel, a public lands program manager, and a trails manager. All management personnel should meet the experience, education and skills needed to manage their respective program. Personnel trained in parks and recreation facility development should be assigned to coordinate the development and construction of new facilities or use construction managers on a contractual/consultant basis. The communications/special events coordinator should be responsible for coordinating with all three parks sections as well as other county departments for special events, grant submissions, and exploring partnership opportunities with other recreation providers, both public, and private. The trails manager should coordinate with interest groups, other county departments, and the newly created MPO.**
- **Bid packages for park maintenance contracts should specify the level of maintenance required to maintain County parks at an acceptable level. Standards should be established as part of individual park management plans developed by the County.**
- **Establish volunteer program for parks, environmental lands, and trails**

4.12 2015 Capital Plan

The capital plan is based on a 10 year planning time frame. Based on the new parks proposed in the Master Plan, implementation will cost an estimated \$30 million dollars for land acquisition and development. These figures are based on 2004 dollars.

Estimated revenues total approximately \$25 million dollars. Operations and maintenance were also estimated for implementation of the Master Plan. Estimates are based on an average cost of \$1500/acre per year or \$150,000 for a fully developed regional park and \$75,000 for a fully developed community park.

Operations and Maintenance for the park system is estimated to cost \$4.4 million dollars over the next ten years. Annual adjustments (3%) were incorporated into the estimates to account for increased costs in each subsequent year. It should be noted that these estimates are general and true costs could be higher or lower depending on conditions. There are a variety of ways grants can be leveraged to reduce the County's costs of development and land acquisition. Partnerships and cooperative arrangements can also offset the burden of operations and maintenance.

5.0 Conclusion

The Master Plan and its recommendations will provide the citizens of Lake County a guide for future parks and recreation development. This plan is intended to be dynamic and change with the community's future needs through monitoring and evaluation.