



ALACHUA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: 2011-2030 EVALUATION AND APPRAISAL ISSUE SUMMARY

April 17, 2018

STATEMENT OF ISSUE

Issue Area: Recreation Element

This paper will review and explore policy implications for the following issues:

- Review Parks Master Plan and options for updating and assess level of service (LOS) standards for recreation facilities;
- Assess need for activity-based recreation in Urban Cluster;
- Review policies to achieve greater shared use of school facilities for efficient provision of active recreation.

INTRODUCTION

Adequate parks and recreation facilities are necessary for vibrant, thriving communities. These facilities must be viewed in context of the overall community – not just as places and activities, but as important linkages and connections to history.

The Alachua County Countywide Recreation Master Plan was accomplished in two phases, with the second phase being completed in 2005. The implementation of the original Master Plan was largely hindered by the lack of funding. The update to the Master Plan is scheduled to occur in FY 2018-2019. With a funding source in place, this updated plan will have a more realistic approach to park system enhancements. The most recent voter-approved “Wild Spaces - Public Places” funding will provide for capital projects, maintenance and operation costs as part of an overall park improvement strategy. Every County park will be improved in terms of accessibility, activities and education.

Currently, the level of service for both activity-based and resource-based parks is determined by the countywide unincorporated area population and all of the County-owned and County-maintained parks. The current standards are based on a number of improved or developed acres per thousand of unincorporated area population.

The level of service standard for activity-based parks is 0.5 acres/1,000 unincorporated population and the standard for resource-based parks in 5.0 acres/1,000 unincorporated population. Both standards are being not only met, but exceeded. One of the contributing factors to the level of service standard is the extent to which a park is deemed developed or improved. Several activity-based and resource-

based parks are shown as being 100% developed. As part of the update to the Master Plan, that factor will be reconsidered based on a more realistic set of possibilities for each park. The shared use of school facilities for community recreation continues to be a challenge and an opportunity. Historically, the School Board of Alachua County has allowed the use of recreational facilities at schools on a case-by-case basis as decided by the school principal. This continues to be their policy. See the SBAC Policy below:

7510 - USE OF DISTRICT FACILITIES

The principal may approve the use of school property, facilities, and equipment for any group provided herein. The use of school property, facilities, and equipment shall not interfere with the educational program of the school. The principal shall be responsible for safeguarding the school property, facilities, and equipment; enforcing and informing groups of Board policies; executing property forms; and collecting payments.

In the recent past, the School Board has entered into interlocal agreements with municipalities to “share” responsibility for the upkeep/maintenance of certain facilities made available for community use.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES RELATING TO ISSUE

Recreation Element

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Develop and maintain an enhanced system of activity-based and resource-based recreational facilities that consist of a broad range of developed and protected sites and programmed recreation that is integrated by service area throughout the County from the neighborhood to the regional scale and accessible to all residents of Alachua County.

Policy 1.1.1 The County shall use the Park Planning Districts identified in the Alachua County Recreation Master Plan as service areas to analyze the recreational needs of different geographic areas throughout the County.

Policy 1.1.2 The County shall adopt and maintain, at a minimum, the following level of service standards for recreation: (1) 0.5 acres of improved activity-based recreation sites per 1000 persons in the unincorporated area of Alachua County; (2) 5.0 acres of improved resource-based recreation sites per 1000 persons in the unincorporated area of Alachua County. The level of service standards shall consider the location of the site and the population within the service areas for the park types, as set forth in Table 1 of this Element. The level of service standards shall account for changes in population due to annexation. The level of service standards shall include County funded or County developed facilities that are operated by other jurisdictions and shall include facilities provided by other entities for which Alachua County has cooperative use agreements.

OBJECTIVE 1.2

The County shall utilize recreation sites and funding mechanisms provided by the County, municipalities, State and Federal Governments, School Board of Alachua County, volunteer organizations and private groups to expand the recreational opportunities of Alachua County citizens.

- Policy 1.2.1** Alachua County shall expand the availability of recreational opportunities by seeking agreements with recreational facility and program providers to serve multi-jurisdictional areas based on the findings of the Recreation Master Plan. These agreements shall address issues that include provision of operations and maintenance, capital improvements and capital funding, liabilities and other appropriate issues.
- Policy 1.2.2** The County shall pursue interlocal agreements with the municipalities to provide joint recreation projects that most efficiently provide recreation facilities to all County residents.
- Policy 1.2.3** The County shall pursue agreements or contracts with the School Board of Alachua County to jointly provide neighborhood recreation facilities at or adjacent to school grounds which would promote the most efficient use of public lands to meet recreation needs. Such agreements will include provisions for capital improvements, operations and maintenance and liability.
- Policy 1.4.3** The County shall expand the availability of activity-based recreation opportunities in urban areas through improvement of existing County and city recreation sites, and Alachua County schools.

Capital Improvements Element

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Coordinate the timing and location of capital improvement projects with improvement projects of other agencies and jurisdictions and ensure that the [Capital Improvements Element](#) (CIE) is consistent with other elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

- Policy 1.1.5. Alachua County shall annually adopt and implement a financially feasible Capital Improvements Program which identifies and coordinates the timing of capital projects needed to maintain the adopted levels of service identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

Community Health Element

- Policy 1.2.1** Promote a healthy community by encouraging and supporting access to recreation and physical activity through a network of activity based parks and access to resource based recreation facilities.
- Policy 1.4.3** Co-location of Schools and parks shall be encouraged consistent with the [Recreation Element](#).

Intergovernmental Coordination Element

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Coordinate the Comprehensive Plan, the plans of the school board, other units of local government providing services, but not having regulatory authority over the use of land, and with the comprehensive plans of municipalities within the County, and adjacent counties.

Policy 1.1.5 The School Board of Alachua County shall locate sites for new public schools consistent with the criteria in the [Future Land Use Element](#) for siting new public school facilities. In order to facilitate coordination between the School Board and the County:

(b) Alachua County shall coordinate with the School Board of Alachua County through the Recreation and Open Space Advisory Committee and other committees to explore the expanded use of public school facilities for recreation and to develop and implement a standard use agreement.

Public School Facilities Element

Policy 1.1.4 Criteria for Evaluating Land Use Decisions

In reviewing land use decisions, the SBAC may address the following issues as applicable:

(c) The co-location of parks, recreation and neighborhood facilities with school sites;

DATA AND ANALYSIS RELATING TO ISSUE

Comprehensive Plan Definitions

Activity-based: sites that provide recreation which is user-oriented independent of location or the natural environment.

Resource-based: recreational activities that are essentially dependent upon the natural, scenic, or historic resources of the area provided the associated activities do not have significant adverse impacts on the ecological integrity or ecological or historical values of the resources in these areas.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING ISSUE

1. Coordinate the update of the Alachua County Countywide Recreation Master Plan with the City of Gainesville;
2. Address Level of Service Standard revision as part of Master Plan update;
3. Revisit the extent to which parks are considered “developed” or “improved” as part of the Master Plan update;
4. Utilize service areas or park districts to analyze the needs within the Urban Cluster area;
5. Identify targeted areas for the shared use of school facilities and pursue interlocal agreements accordingly.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Alachua County Countywide Recreation Master Plan, Phase II, October 2005

Centers for Disease Control Health Impact Assessments

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm>

National Park Service

<https://www.nps.gov>