





Parks & Public Places

Recreation and Open Space Element

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Introduction

The Parks and Public Places Chapter provides guidance to ensure the city's parks system presents opportunities for all residents and visitors; that parks are located and improved to meet the evolving needs of the community; that natural features are conserved and protected; and that parks and recreation impact fees are collected and expended to improve the parks system.

Trails, open spaces, and parks and recreation facilities provide important livability, sustainability, and economic benefits. City parks and recreational resources provide residents with opportunities to improve physical and mental health and improve social bonds. Trails, open spaces, and parks and recreation facilities contribute to a healthy local economy, impacting property value and attracting investment. The city's system of green spaces, natural areas, and waterfronts offer environmental benefits and help mitigate the impacts of major storm and flooding events. Trees and plants help reduce the urban heat island effect while open spaces and parks and recreation facilities can provide refuge and habitats for numerous wildlife.

Chapter policies focus on:

- Ensuring the city has trails, open spaces, and parks and recreation facilities that are equitably located and designed to accommodate and meet the diverse needs of the residents and visitors;

- Preserving areas with environmental, historic, or natural areas of significance; and
- Utilizing impact fees to improve the city's parks system.

Planning Context

Park Inventory

There are currently 109 city-owned and/or operated parks, including community, environmental, neighborhood, and open space parks and special facilities. Special facilities include baseball and softball fields, or other multi-use fields. The city's parks system supports numerous programs, such as athletic leagues and tournaments, special events, regional tourism, and environmental education. The city also controls approximately 380 acres of vacant land purchased for future neighborhood parks.

Figure 10. Parks Facilities



7 Community Parks



28 Environmental Parks



24 Neighborhood Parks



23 Open Space Parks



27 Special Facilities

Level of Service

The adopted level of service (LOS) is 4 acres of parkland per 1,000 persons within the city and is based upon nationwide standards which are starting to be phased out. The city currently has over 1,700 acres of parkland which equates to just over 15 acres of parkland per 1,000 persons, well above the adopted level of service.

Shifting Focus

With over 100 parks in its current portfolio, the city has shifted focus from new park development to renovation and renewal of its existing facilities. Some recent and ongoing projects are minor in nature, such as replacing aging playground equipment, while others involve significant changes and investment like those completed at Crest Lake Park. Equity and accessibility are also important concerns as evidenced by the recent purchase of beach wheelchairs and installation of three beach accessibility mats to facilitate movement on sand.

Into the Future

As the city navigates into the future, the focus should continue to be reconstruction and improvement of existing park facilities. Additionally, since nationwide LOS standards are being phased out, the formal adoption of local, performance-based standards should be considered. These standards would allow for the city to account for the varying geographical, cultural, and socio-economic characteristics when determining a LOS for a facility, and the department to remain responsive to shifting community priorities.

Master Plan Update

The city maintains a 10-year parks master plan, which was last updated in 2013. It provides guidance on the types and locations of parks. Since the master plan is currently aligned with national level of service standards, the city is exploring shifting to use community performance-based models, which provide greater abilities to remain responsive to community priorities. When the next master plan is approved, any necessary amendments to the *Comprehensive Plan* should be adopted as needed for implementation.

Evolving Needs

Plan goals, objectives, and policies are designed to promote trails, open spaces, and parks and recreation facilities that meet the needs of all potential users. Equity and accessibility are important factors shaping city decision-making regarding park access and circulation, the design and placement of play and sports equipment, and improvement and activities that serve users with diverse needs. Equity and equitable design should be considered as the city evaluates parks and recreational needs and prioritizes future investments.

New Opportunities

Vacant lands controlled by the city presents interesting opportunities which will be addressed in the city's park master planning effort. The decision to conserve the vacant land or develop it as a new park is based on numerous management conditions including existing community preferences, available fiscal resources, and the ability to maintain landscapes concurrent with adopted citywide standards and expectations.

Chapter Goals

This chapter contains four goals:

Goal PPP 1. Equitable Design

Promote the equitable design of trails, open spaces, and parks and recreation facilities to make it safe and easy for residents to be physically active, regardless of their age, race, ethnicity, income, ability, or disability.

Goal PPP 2. Parks Facilities

Ensure that trails, open spaces, and parks and recreation facilities are located throughout the city.

Goal PPP 3. Natural Features Preservation

Preserve and expand natural features of the city.

Goal PPP 4. Impact Fee

Utilize the parks and recreation impact fee to improve open spaces and parks and recreation facilities and to create new trails.



Crest Lake Park

Goal PPP 1

Promote the equitable design of trails, open spaces, and parks and recreation facilities to make it safe and easy for residents to be physically active, regardless of their age, race, ethnicity, income, ability, or disability.

Objective PPP 1.1

Ensure the city's system of trails, open spaces, and parks and recreation facilities equitably serves diverse community needs.

Policies

PPP 1.1.1

Ensure that parks and open space amenities provide equal opportunities for all users.

PPP 1.1.2

Consider a program that would assist residents with disabilities to easily access the city's trails, open spaces, and parks and recreation facilities.

PPP 1.1.3

Evaluate and update the *Aging Well Master Plan* as necessary.

PPP 1.1.4

Expand access to beach-friendly wheelchairs and the use of beach-accessible mats on public beaches.

PPP 1.1.5

Continue to provide accessible bicycle parking at all parks and recreation facilities and consider providing accessible bicycle parking within open spaces and along trails.

PPP 1.1.6

Promote healthy living through the use of trails, open spaces, and parks and recreation facilities for active and passive recreation, organized sports, picnic facilities, environmental programs, youth and adult programs, and special events.

PPP 1.1.7

Ensure parks and recreation plans account for the city's diverse population and needs.



Beach Wheelchair

Goal PPP 2

Ensure that trails, open spaces, and parks and recreation facilities are located throughout the city.

Objective PPP 2.1

To maintain an adequate level of service (LOS) for existing and future populations.

Policy

PPP 2.1.1

Continue to use four acres of parkland for every 1,000 persons as the parkland LOS and to determine the availability for development or redevelopment.

Objective PPP 2.2

Continue to increase the supply of trails, open spaces, and parks and recreation facilities in areas needing additional facilities.

Policies

PPP 2.2.1

Continue to acquire parkland where geographical deficiencies are identified.

PPP 2.2.2

Continue to review service radii and primary service guidelines for recreation facilities.

PPP 2.2.3

Continue to locate new community parks adjacent to arterial streets and/or transit routes whenever possible.

PPP 2.2.4

Continue to locate new neighborhood parks near schools, local or collector roads, and transit routes if feasible.

PPP 2.2.5

Continue to provide and expand recreation and open space opportunities in the Downtown and Clearwater Beach Activity Centers.

PPP 2.2.6

Continue to develop greenways and trails as identified in *Shifting Gears: Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan*.

PPP 2.2.7

Encourage the protection of existing lands designated as Recreation/Open Space (R/OS) on the Future Land Use Map and maintain the provisions of the city charter regarding the required referendum prior to approval of the sale of parklands to ensure adequate public recreation and open space lands within the city.

Objective PPP 2.3

Implement and periodically evaluate and update the city's *Parks and Recreation System Master Plan* to guide park development throughout the city.

Policies

PPP 2.3.1

Continue to implement the priority, medium- and long-term actions, and continuous actions/policies as detailed in the *Parks and Recreation System Master Plan* as funds become available.

PPP 2.3.2

Complete the process of updating the *Parks and Recreation System Master Plan* by the end of 2023.

PPP 2.3.3

Incorporate findings from the *Parks and Recreation System Master Plan* into the *Comprehensive Plan* by 2025.



Children playing basketball at Belmont Park

Goal PPP 3

Preserve and expand natural features of the city.

Objective PPP 3.1

Preserve natural open space areas which constitute aesthetic or ecological community assets.

Policies

PPP 3.1.1

Provide natural open space areas which have the diversity of resources necessary for nature study and the enjoyment of natural assets in order to assure environmental understanding whenever possible.

PPP 3.1.2

Continue to administer landscape, drainage, and impervious surface regulations in the *Community Development Code (CDC)* to maintain adequate natural open space within the city.

PPP 3.1.3

Continue to enhance and maintain existing or create new access to waterbodies.

PPP 3.1.4

Coordinate recreation planning with other plans concerning water quality, stormwater management, fish and wildlife management, and environmental education.

Objective PPP 3.2

Preserve, enhance, and maintain the city's existing and future trails, open space, and park and recreation facilities.

Policies

PPP 3.2.1

Preserve areas of ecological, historical, or archaeological value for open space and parklands when possible.

PPP 3.2.2

Continue to maintain environmental integrity of city-owned open spaces and parklands.

PPP 3.2.3

Continue to enhance city-owned open space and parkland areas by restoring degraded natural communities and eradicating non-native or invasive vegetation.

PPP 3.2.4

Create additional natural open space through green permeable areas in easements, traffic islands, etc., consistent with the city's *CDC*.

PPP 3.2.5

Utilize xeriscaping techniques where suitable in an effort to conserve potable water while providing aesthetically pleasing landscape.

PPP 3.2.6

Prohibit future land use categories with potential adverse impacts from locating near open space and parkland areas.

PPP 3.2.7

Encourage developments with potential adverse impacts to provide mitigation techniques to protect open space and parkland areas.

PPP 3.2.8

Designate appropriate city-owned lands as Preservation (P) or Recreation/Open Space (R/OS) on the Future Land Use Map whenever feasible.

Goal PPP 4

Utilize the parks and recreation impact fee to improve open spaces and parks and recreation facilities and to create new trails.

Objective PPP 4.1

Continue administration of the parks and recreation impact fee.

Policies

PPP 4.1.1

Continue to enforce the adopted impact fee requirements of Chapter 54 of the city's *CDC*.

PPP 4.1.2

Expend impact fee funds throughout the city for trails, open space, and parks and recreation facilities.

PPP 4.1.3

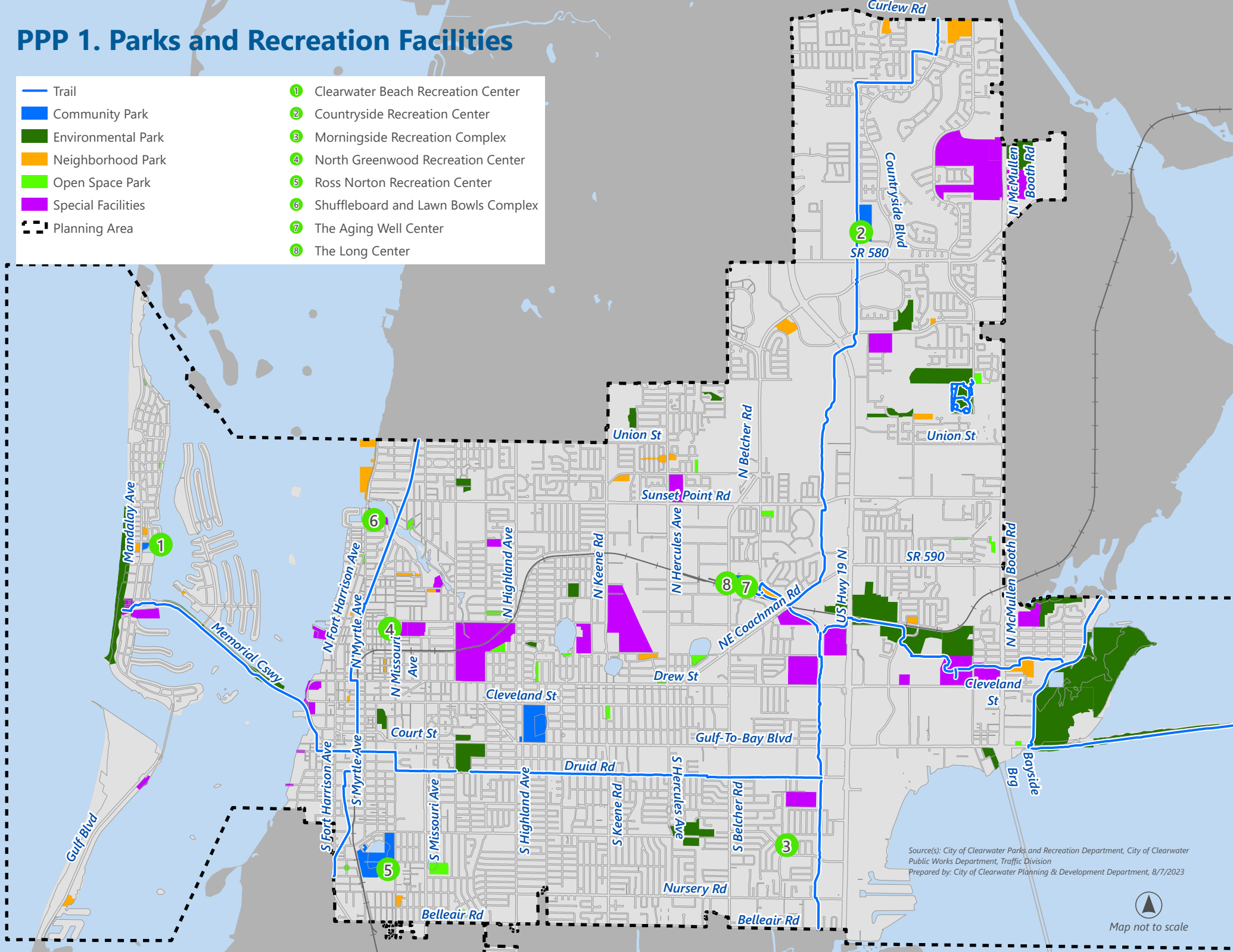
Provide a reduced impact fee to incentivize the development of affordable housing.



Bicyclist using the Ream Wilson Trail

PPP 1. Parks and Recreation Facilities

- Trail
 - Community Park
 - Environmental Park
 - Neighborhood Park
 - Open Space Park
 - Special Facilities
 - Planning Area
- 1 Clearwater Beach Recreation Center
 - 2 Countryside Recreation Center
 - 3 Morningside Recreation Complex
 - 4 North Greenwood Recreation Center
 - 5 Ross Norton Recreation Center
 - 6 Shuffleboard and Lawn Bowls Complex
 - 7 The Aging Well Center
 - 8 The Long Center



Source(s): City of Clearwater Parks and Recreation Department, City of Clearwater Public Works Department, Traffic Division
 Prepared by: City of Clearwater Planning & Development Department, 8/7/2023



