
RECREATION & OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

The purpose of the Recreation and Open Space Element is to plan for the comprehensive provision of recreational and open space opportunities for City residents in accordance with their needs. In addition, the location of Fort Pierce along the Indian River Lagoon and the Atlantic Ocean creates an opportunity for the City to increase its economic base through the provision of regional recreational facilities. The attraction of a regional population benefits the economy and the residents of the City directly as the recreational amenities provided will exceed those that are normally available in a community of this size. Thus, while servicing the needs of residents of Fort Pierce is important, the City also has a goal to serve a portion of the desires of a much larger population.

This element provides for an inventory of existing park and open space facilities and establishes a level of service of the future demand for such facilities from within and outside of the City. The future demand and needs are assessed, as well as plans devised for the programs and facilities necessary for their accommodation. The goals, objectives, and policies section of this element lists the ultimate desires of the community in the areas of recreation and open space and lists the specific measures to be taken by the community to meet those desires.

The inclusion of this element in the Comprehensive Plan reflects the City's interest, acknowledgement, and dedication to recreation lands and open spaces as a fundamental component of the community fabric and essential to quality of life.

Policy 7.1.4 requires the creation and maintenance of a complete inventory of public and private recreation lands and amenities. In addition to these public and private assets, the public schools within Fort Pierce can also be a source of recreation space but interlocal agreements with the school board are typically necessary. The projected park needs for the City are based on the estimated population over the 10-year (2035) and 20-year (2045) planning periods, and the level of service (LOS) for neighborhood and community parks separately. The results are shown in Tables 7-1 and 7-2. As part of the new inventory required in Policy 7.1.4, any potential deficit should be evaluated for how best to address it.

Table 7-1
Projected Neighborhood Park Need

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Level of Service</u>	<u>Acreage to Meet LOS</u>
<u>2025</u>	<u>51,352</u>	<u>1.75 ac/1,000 pop'n</u>	<u>89.9</u>
<u>2035</u>	<u>55,648</u>	<u>2.0 ac/1,000 pop'n</u>	<u>111.3</u>
<u>2045</u>	<u>57,871</u>	<u>2.0 ac/1,000 pop'n</u>	<u>115.7</u>

*Notes: 1. Population based on official population estimate as of April 1, 2025 by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida, and projections by the Shimberg Center for Housing Studies.
2. Level of service per Policy 7.1.1.*

**Table 7-2
Projected Community Park Need**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Level of Service</u>	<u>Acreage to Meet LOS</u>
<u>2025</u>	<u>51,352</u>	<u>2.75 ac/1,000 pop'n</u>	<u>141.2</u>
<u>2035</u>	<u>55,648</u>	<u>3.0 ac/1,000 pop'n</u>	<u>166.9</u>
<u>2045</u>	<u>57,871</u>	<u>3.0 ac/1,000 pon'n</u>	<u>173.6</u>

*Notes: 1. Population based on official population estimate as of April 1, 2025 by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida, and projections by the Shimberg Center for Housing Studies.
2. Level of service per Policy 7.1.1.*

The following Goals, Objectives, and Policies are hereby provided to steer the City of Fort Pierce toward a future of successful and adequate recreation and open space opportunities by accommodating the needs of existing and future residents and ensure the level of standard is upheld.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Goal 7

To provide park facilities, recreation programs, and open space resources that are safe, adequate, and accessible to all City residents, and that contribute to the character and quality of life that defines Fort Pierce.

7.1 Objective:

Provide a sufficient supply of park, recreation, and open space facilities to satisfy established level of service (LOS) standards.

7.1.1 Policy:

LOS standards for public recreation and open space facilities are hereby established as follows:

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Unit of Measure</u>
Neighborhood Park:	<u>2020 2025</u>	1.75 acre/1,000 population
	<u>2025 2035</u>	2.0 acres/1,000 population
	<u>2030 2045</u>	2.0 acres/1,000 population
Community Park:	<u>2020 2025</u>	2.75 acre/1,000 population
	<u>2025 2035</u>	3.0 acres/1,000 population
	<u>2030 2045</u>	3.0 acres/1,000 population

7.1.2 Policy:

The City of Fort Pierce shall schedule projects to address existing facility deficiencies and foreseeable facility needs as part of the Five-Year Schedule of Capital Improvements (SCI). The Capital Improvement Program shall be updated on an annual basis to reflect the identification, planning and completion of recreation and open space projects and facilities.

7.1.3 Policy:

Capital outlays for recreation and open space facilities shall be scheduled in chronological order according to the following priorities:

1. facility additions, improvements, expansions and/or replacements required to address preexisting LOS deficiencies;
2. facility additions, improvements, expansions and/or replacements required to mitigate forecasted LOS deficiencies; specifically the creation of additional neighborhood parks in strategic locations throughout the City;
3. opportunities to secure environmentally sensitive and pristine lands such as wetlands, waterfront properties, shorelines, and habitat of endangered species;
4. acquisition of lands that further the development of linked and continuous open space corridors;
5. provision of recreation and/or open space facilities that are geographically located within areas not presently served by such opportunities; and,
6. all other recreation and open space facilities not otherwise described above.

7.1.4 Policy:

By January 1, 2027, the City shall complete an inventory of all public and private recreation and open space land and amenities and evaluate the supply relative to the LOS established in Policy 7.1.1. The inventory and LOS analysis shall be updated annually.

7.2Objective:

Require a proportionate amount of open space and recreation area to be provided by both private enterprise and public agencies.

7.2.1 Policy:

The City of Fort Pierce shall require that all future site development, and modifications of existing development to the extent possible, incorporate perimeter and interior landscape areas as outlined in the City's Land Development Code.

7.2.2 Policy:

The City's Land Development Regulations will include public open space requirements for new development and modifications to existing development in all zoning classifications.

7.2.3 Policy:

The City of Fort Pierce shall require publicly accessible recreation areas to be incorporated within all planned residential developments, mixed use developments, and residential development. The size of the required areas and the corresponding amenities shall be consistent with standards incorporated into the Land Development Regulations.

7.2.4 Policy:

The City of Fort Pierce shall implement and review regulatory mechanisms to facilitate the accrual of financial and land resources for the provision of Neighborhood Park and Community Park facilities. Suggested mechanisms include, but are not limited to, impact fees, mandatory land dedications, preferential tax treatment, recreation and open space credits, and/or transfer of development rights.

7.2.5 Policy:

The City of Fort Pierce shall provide incentives for providing off-site publicly accessible recreation and open space areas as part of private applications for development approval. These incentives shall be established and enumerated within the City's land development regulations. Incentives may include such features as setback reductions, deviation from minimum lot dimensional requirements, inclusion of aquatic areas for purposes of calculating open space, and/or increases in permissible lot coverage, amongst other development characteristics and features as deemed acceptable by the City of Fort Pierce.

7.2.6 Policy:

The City shall require a proportionate fair-share contribution for recreational and open space facilities if the development contributes to a deficiency in the adopted level-of-service standard for parks and recreational facilities.

7.2.7 Policy:

The City shall establish and implement a regular evaluation of community park and recreation needs during the annual Capital Improvements Element update process, especially the needs of youth and seniors.

7.3 *Objective:*

Establish programs and procedures to continually monitor the quality and utility of all recreation and open space facilities within the City of Fort Pierce.

7.3.1 Policy:

The City of Fort Pierce shall maintain, renovate and rehabilitate existing facilities to prevent unplanned and untimely deterioration of physical assets and to maximize the benefit of past expenditures.

7.3.2 Policy:

The City of Fort Pierce shall develop [and maintain](#) a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to do the following:

- Inventory all publicly-owned recreation and open space facilities in the City
- Identify locational and accessibility criteria for locating recreational facilities with respect to neighborhoods
- Identify opportunities to develop new park facilities on City owned lands and acquire additional open space areas for public use
- Determine recreational amenity requirements for park facilities
- Establish a future vision for each such facility including recreation equipment, pedestrian accommodations and other physical improvements.

7.3.3 Policy:

The City of Fort Pierce shall continually solicit resident input to assess satisfaction with recreation and open space facilities, as well as prioritize acquisition sites. Findings shall be contained within the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and used to determine future installations and improvements at each publicly-owned facility and development of future facilities.

7.4 *Objective:*

Maximize the utility and function of recreation facilities and open space resources.

7.4.1 Policy:

The City of Fort Pierce shall encourage the strategic placement of recreation and open space facilities in a manner that coincides with and affords the preservation of existing native vegetation, visual corridors, and other quality natural resources.

7.4.2 Policy:

The City of Fort Pierce, as well as private parties and organizations, shall design and improve recreation facilities and open space areas in such a manner that respects natural environmental conditions, to the maximum extent possible.

7.4.3 Policy:

The City of Fort Pierce shall actively pursue the development of linear parks and integrated open space systems along waterfront properties. This shall be accomplished by collocating pathways, pedestrian accommodations and plantings alongside waterways and water bodies such as, but not limited to, canals, creeks, streams, rivers, lakes, channels and other water features. Public access to waterfront areas shall be secured through the recordation of access easements or land dedication as outlined in the Land Development Regulations.

- 7.4.4 Policy:
The City of Fort Pierce shall develop a Greenways and Trailways Program as part of the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan to ensure connectivity between existing and future recreation and open space areas in the City.
- 7.4.5 Policy:
The City of Fort Pierce, in conjunction with St. Lucie County, shall actively pursue the development of open space corridors that establish continuous linkages between park and recreation facilities, conservation areas, environmentally sensitive lands, non-vehicular pathways, natural water bodies, and other open space areas located throughout the city and extending beyond the city's municipal boundary.
- 7.4.6 Policy:
The City of Fort Pierce shall discourage development proposals that would degrade visual corridors or vistas, compromise peaceful enjoyment, or otherwise produce incompatibilities that may encroach upon public recreation facilities and open space resources. The Land Development Regulations shall be updated to account for this requirement.
- 7.4.7 Policy:
The City of Fort Pierce shall encourage the preservation of quality natural resources and environmental areas by requiring conservation easements as a condition of development approval.
- 7.4.8 Policy:
The City of Fort Pierce shall consider opportunities for educational exhibits and programs, observation areas and nature trails during the planning and design process for all future publicly accessible recreation and open space facilities and renovation of existing facilities.
- 7.4.9 Policy:
The City of Fort Pierce shall prohibit the encroachment of unrelated easements, dedications, reservations, encumbrances, utilities and tracts within the boundaries of required recreation acreages and facilities.
- 7.4.10 Policy:
The City of Fort Pierce shall require that recreation areas within all future residential developments be improved with pedestrian or multi-use pathways, recreation equipment, [trees](#), shade structures, and other pedestrian amenities.
- 7.4.11 Policy:
The City of Fort Pierce shall require that all future residential developments in excess of 100 dwelling units provide a community clubhouse, recreation

center or similar communal building [of an appropriate size](#) that is “hurricane hardened,” and equipped with a generator and accessory fuel storage system to supply power in the event of prolonged power outages.

7.5 *Objective:*

Provide unimpeded access to all public recreation facilities.

7.5.1 Policy:

All future dedications or purchases of land for public recreation use or purpose shall be located adjacent to a public right-of-way or access easement that provides a direct and continuous connection between publicly accessible lands.

7.5.2 Policy:

Pedestrian and bicycle access shall be incorporated into all future plans for new public recreation facilities and modifications to existing public recreation facilities.

7.5.3 Policy:

All existing and future parks and recreation facilities shall comply with provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

7.5.4 Policy:

The City of Fort Pierce shall support and encourage the provision of mass transit services and infrastructure at all public recreation sites.

7.5.5 Policy:

The City of Fort Pierce shall amend the Land Development Regulations to require all future development and redevelopment plans for public recreation facilities to incorporate bicycle racks and [where appropriate](#), vehicular parking spaces.

7.5.6 Policy:

To the maximum extent feasible, parking areas shall be located in proximity to the primary attractions of each recreation site. However, the City shall not require automobile access to neighborhood or smaller parks.

7.5.7 Policy:

The City of Fort Pierce shall require paved pedestrian access between all internal facilities and buildings, vehicular use areas and access points, and peripheral pathways at the site of all future park and recreation facilities.

7.6 *Objective:*

Establish strategies to effectively coordinate the retention of existing recreation and open space opportunities, as well as the development of future opportunities, to meet public demands.

- 7.6.1 Policy:
The City of Fort Pierce shall continue to exchange ownership and share maintenance responsibilities with St. Lucie County for recreation and open space facilities located within city limits.
- 7.6.2 Policy:
The City of Fort Pierce shall refrain from liquidating selling and/or otherwise disposing of recreation and open space lands located within existing city limits and future annexation areas.
- 7.6.3 Policy:
The City of Fort Pierce shall maintain cooperative relationships and seek to develop partnerships with both public and private agencies, groups, individuals, organizations and facilities that currently or may potentially offer recreation opportunities to City residents.
- 7.6.4 Policy:
The City of Fort Pierce shall pursue funding through recreation grants and bonds, as well as private donations and contributions, to meet local recreation needs.
- 7.6.5 Policy:
The City of Fort Pierce, in cooperation with St. Lucie County, shall coordinate efforts to facilitate the development of an urban-district park along or proximate to the western edge of the FPUA Urban Service Boundary.
- 7.6.6 Policy:
The City of Fort Pierce shall participate in the exchange of publicly owned land, excluding established recreation and open space properties, with private property owners as a method to secure attractive and/or desired property for the provision of public recreation and open space opportunities.
- 7.6.7 Policy:
The City of Fort Pierce shall evaluate the establishment of a Park and Recreation Trust Fund to accommodate financial contributions in lieu of land dedications for required recreation acreage. Financial contributions shall be considered and acceptable only in instances deemed appropriate by the City of Fort Pierce.
- 7.6.8 Policy:
In furtherance of an equitable distribution of recreation and open space facilities, the City of Fort Pierce, in cooperation with St. Lucie County, shall encourage the dedication, contribution and acquisition of land for neighborhood and community park facilities both in the western area of existing city limits and throughout the western portions of the City's future annexation area.

7.6.9 **Policy:**

Private recreation amenities provided as part of the development order approval process shall be maintained in perpetuity and accessible to residents of the development. Such lands and amenities shall not be sold or discontinued without approval by the City of equivalent replacement land and amenities.

7.7 **Objective:**

Establish parks and recreation facilities that are equally distributed throughout the City and accessible to residents of all neighborhoods.

7.7.1 **Policy:**

The City shall work to provide neighborhood parks according to the following criteria:

- be provided within a ½ mile of all residential neighborhoods
- be located on a minimum of 5 acres, where possible
- be connected to the surrounding neighborhoods, community facilities, and other parks through bicycle and pedestrian access
- provide opportunities for passive as well as active recreational facilities
- be developed in conjunction with school playgrounds, where possible
- be located on local streets or neighborhood collectors

7.7.2 **Policy:**

The City shall work to provide community parks according to the following criteria:

- be provided within 2 miles of all residential neighborhoods
- be located on a minimum of 15 acres, where possible
- be connected to the surrounding neighborhoods, community facilities, and other parks through bicycle and pedestrian access
- be served by public transportation, where possible
- provide opportunities for passive as well as active recreational facilities
- contain higher traffic generating recreational uses, such as swimming pools, recreation centers, athletic centers, and adult league playing fields
- have direct access from arterials rather than local streets
- provide protection for on-site natural areas