

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this element is to provide for the protection, maintenance and enhancement of existing recreation and open space resources and to plan for the needs of future populations, based on established level of service standards.

St. Petersburg began planning for recreation and open space needs in 1971, when a citizen's committee formulated a statement, Goals for St. Petersburg, which became the basis for a long-range Conceptual Plan, adopted in 1974. The first Recreation/Open Space element was a sub section of the Land Use Plan adopted in 1977. The current element was adopted in 1989. Revisions of the element were made per the recommendations of the 1996 EAR.

9.2 GOALS OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

GOAL-RECREATION/OPEN SPACE (R):

THE CITY SHALL RETAIN, PRESERVE, RESTORE AND DEVELOP THE CITY'S OPEN SPACE AND PARKLAND RESOURCES TO PROVIDE A VARIETY OF QUALITY LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES TO RESIDENTS AND VISITORS, WHILE PROVIDING MAXIMUM LONG TERM PROTECTION TO NATURAL RESOURCES SUCH AS VEGETATION, AIR AND WATER QUALITY, WILDLIFE AND AESTHETIC VALUES.

ISSUE: Provision of Services According to the Adopted Level of Service.

The City owns and maintains parks, recreation sites, open space areas and special facilities such as golf courses, libraries and stadiums. Using a level of service standard of 9 acres per 1,000 population, the City has an adequate supply of usable recreation and open space areas. The City recognizes that the provision of recreation and open space facilities requires appropriate maintenance of existing facilities.

OBJECTIVE R1:

The City shall ensure that parks, open space and recreation facilities are efficiently and adequately provided and effectively maintained for all segments and districts of the population according to the level of service standards established for the City.

Policies

- R1.1 The City shall adopt and maintain the following Level of Service standard: 9 acres of usable recreation and open space acres per 1,000 population.
- R1.2 The City will utilize as long-range guidelines the service radius areas for recreation equipment defined in Table 3 of the Recreation/Open Space element (TSD).
- R1.3 Existing facilities and open space will be adequately maintained by the City Department of Leisure Services including funding of routine maintenance projects in the General Fund and CIP program.
- R1.4 There will be no net loss of usable recreation and open space acreage as a result of land use plan changes and sale of parkland, or non-park uses. The revenues from the sale of parkland shall be used for the acquisition, development, of parkland.

- R1.5 Priority in parkland acquisition, development and upgrade will be given to sectors or neighborhoods which do not meet established guidelines for recreation facilities and open space.
- R1.6 The City shall evaluate the need for new and expanded recreational facilities based on the following criteria.
- Established services area radius for each specific facility (e.g. playgrounds-- 1 mile, swimming pools -- 2.5 miles etc.)
 - Major man- made or natural boundaries or barriers (physical barriers such as interstate highways or major roadways) and neighborhood association boundaries.
 - Land Use Compatibility
 - Demographic information taken from the Census Tracts (e.g. age, population size etc.)
 - Direct feedback and survey input.
- R1.7 The City shall evaluate the need for and prioritize the replacement, upgrading or repairing of existing facilities based on the following criteria: age, condition, annual maintenance requirements and the projected service life remaining for the facilities, as well as:
- The established service area radius for each specific facility (e.g., playgrounds -- 1 mile, swimming pools -- 2.5 miles, etc.)
 - Major man-made or natural boundaries or barriers (physical barriers such as interstate highways or major roadways) and neighborhood association boundaries.
 - Demographic information taken from the Census Tracts (e.g., age, population, size, etc.)
 - Direct community feedback and/or survey input.
- R1.8 Notification of plans for new or expansion of land area or facilities of parks within approximately ¼ mile of the City limits will be forwarded to the neighboring government and within approximately ¼ mile of a public educational facility will be forwarded to the School Board for comments pertaining to the proposed action in relation to their respective plans.

ISSUE: Access to Municipal Recreation and Open Space Sites

The City recognizes that vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle access to and the availability of information about municipal recreation and open space facilities is an important component of the provision of recreation and open space resources.

OBJECTIVE R2:

The City Shall, as improvements are made to individual parks, develop a plan for the park system to provide public access to all existing and planned recreational areas, especially waterfront areas, through vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian access facilities.

Policies

- R2.1 Parkland identified in the 1982 referendum map will not be eliminated without voter approval, and shall not be eliminated without amending the Recreation and Open Space Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

- R2.2 Waterfront access points will be well marked; additional waterfront public access points will be provided in the future while private property rights will be protected.
- R2.3 Public access to waterfront consistent with public safety concerns and private property rights shall be provided as described by Plan Objective CM9 and Policy CM9.1 through CM9.6.
- R2.4 The City shall continue to maintain and further develop bicycle trails.
- R2.5 The City shall continue advertising and promotion to increase awareness among permanent and seasonal populations about municipal recreation opportunities.
- R2.6 Access points to public parkland will continue to be required as a condition of site plan approval where appropriate.
- R2.7 The City shall continue to integrate transportation systems such as bikeways and public transportation to provide access to recreation and open space facilities.
- R2.8 The Department of Leisure Services will continue to mark City parks with consistent signage which identifies municipal parkland.

ISSUE: Provision of Semi-Public and Private Recreation Resources

There are many semi-public and private recreation facilities in St. Petersburg. These resources add quantity and variety to the recreation opportunities in the City. The City recognizes the need to coordinate municipal leisure opportunities with semi-public and private resources to assure distribution of facilities in the City and prevent duplication of services.

OBJECTIVE R3:

The City shall maintain and coordinate an inventory of private, semi-public and public recreational and cultural facilities to assure distribution and prevent duplication of services throughout the City.

Policies

- R3.1 Encourage the private sector to continue to provide recreational facilities and programs.
- R3.2 Coordinate innovative and cooperative recreational and cultural projects between the City and the private sector.
- R3.3 Utilize the site plan review process to assess recreation needs and provision of recreational facilities and open space in new development and redeveloping areas.
- R3.4 The inventory of recreational facilities provided by apartment and condominium complexes will be periodically updated.
- R3.5 Cosponsorship of recreational and cultural events, such as races, festivals and athletic events, using City facilities as a location for these events, will continue to be encouraged by the City.

- R3.6 The Department Leisure Services will increase the number of intergovernmental agreements with the Pinellas County School Board for public use of Pinellas County school property with St. Petersburg.
- R3.7 A comprehensive Cultural Plan, that addresses all aspects of culture, will be developed by the City's Arts Advisory Commission by January 31, 1999.

ISSUE: Provide 50% Green Permeable Open Space in the City

The City has set a goal of maintaining 50% green, permeable open space in the City. This goal will be met through maintenance of city parkland and enforcement of setback and landscaping requirements in the Zoning Ordinance.

OBJECTIVE R4:

The City shall coordinate public, semi-public and private resources to provide adequate, appropriate open space requirements of the Zoning Ordinance to maintain a Citywide total of 50 percent green, permeable open space within the City.

Policies

- R4.1 To maintain the goal of 50% green permeable undeveloped land suitable for passive recreation or conservation use (open space) in the City, the City shall continue to implement Chapters 29, 16-936 and 8-369, of the City Code, relating to vegetation, grounds improvement, and drainage; and the Supplemental Regulations of the Zoning Ordinance, relating to required open space areas and to revise the Code and Ordinances when necessary.
- R4.2 The City shall pursue designation and acquisition of open space areas in new and redeveloping areas through creation of green permeable areas in easements, traffic islands, etc. in compliance with the City's land development regulations.

ISSUE: Protect Natural Resources in City Parkland

Environmental preservation areas exist in many municipal recreation and open space areas. Preservation areas are inventoried in the Conservation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. The City recognizes the need to protect natural resources in recreation and open space areas.

OBJECTIVE R5:

Protect and enhance the City-designated preservation areas within recreation and open space facilities so as to encroach no more than 5 percent where allowed.

Policies

- R5.1 Environmental preservation areas shall be designated using the criteria defined in section of the Zoning Ordinance relating to environmental preservation.
- R5.2 Permit use of preservation areas which retain and/or enhance the natural characteristics for which the area was designated preservation.

- R5.3 Continue to promote environmental education, low-impact uses of preservation areas such as the Environmental Studies Area at Boyd Hill Nature Park.
- R5.4 Continue to implement the section of the Zoning Ordinance which identifies the process for application and evaluation of encroachment in preservation areas.
- R5.5 City-designated preservation areas will be preserved in accordance with the Supplementary Regulations of the Zoning Ordinance. A maximum of 5% encroachment will be permitted within parkland.
- R5.6 Environmental preservation areas within City parkland will be eligible for restoration with the Environmental Enhancement Program, which is implemented by the Planning Department.

ISSUE: Protect Archaeological Resources in City Parkland

There are many archaeological resources located within recreation and open space areas. These resources have been inventoried and are identified in the Recreation and Open Space element of the Comprehensive Plan. The City recognizes the need to protect these resources from adverse impact.

OBJECTIVE R6:

Protect all significant archaeological resources located on City parkland from development and theft.

Policies

- R6.1 The Department of Leisure Services shall be responsible for insuring that any proposed parkland development will not adversely impact a significant archaeological site.
- R6.2 The Archaeological Resources Management Plan will guide the Department of Parks and Leisure Services and the Development Services Department in determining which City parkland sites are significant and will be protected from encroachment, development, and theft.
- R6.3 The Department of Leisure Services will be responsible for insuring that individuals and groups do nothing that might damage the integrity of significant archaeological sites located on City parkland.

ISSUE: Assure Equal Access to Recreation Opportunities

Special populations such as elderly, physically and mentally handicapped and young children have unique recreation needs. Specific needs of special populations can be identified through a recreation survey. The City recognizes the need to provide equal access to recreation opportunities for all citizens of St. Petersburg.

OBJECTIVE R7:

The City shall provide adequate recreational opportunities for all persons within the community regardless of age, race, religion, ancestry, sex, place of birth, handicap or national origin and shall implement the improvements necessary to provide access to recreation facilities for all persons.

Policies

- R7.1 When a City recreation facility is renovated, handicapped accessible features such as wheelchair ramps, wheelchair accessible restrooms and paths will be added where feasible.
- R7.2 The City shall continue to provide therapeutic recreation programs and coordinate with community agencies serving young children, the elderly, and the physically and developmentally challenged.
- R7.3 New municipal recreation facilities will be designed and built to be handicapped accessible, under the advisement of CAPI, the City's task force on handicapped accessibility.
- R7.4 Reexamine recreation programs and their fee structures to ensure the needs of special populations, including the economically disadvantaged, are being met.
- R7.5 The City shall continue to create and provide recreational programs and activities specifically designed for pre-teen and teen involvement.