

**CITY OF OCOEE  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT  
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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Ocoee Parks and Open Space Master Plan (Master Plan) was adopted by the City Commission in September 2001 and served as the foundation for the update and revision to this Element of the Ocoee Comprehensive Plan. The data and analysis in this Element is the same as that contained in the Master Plan, and it has been formatted to follow a similar structure as that of the other Elements in the Ocoee Comprehensive Plan.

The Master Plan focuses on the long-range recreational land area and equipment needs of Ocoee residents, it contains an inventory of existing facilities and long-range population projections for the entire Ocoee-Orange County Joint Planning Area, not just the City limits, to create a comprehensive system of public and private site for recreation. Area-wide population estimates have been used to avoid unintended duplications in the provision of parks and to contemplate the impact of future annexations. The Master Plan identifies implementation strategies and prioritizes projects based upon the feasibility and desirability of individual improvements. The Ocoee Parks and Open Space Master Plan is consistent with the data and analysis requirements of Chapter 163.3177(6)(e), Florida Statutes.

Orange County, Florida has become one of the most attractive areas in the United States for those who seek warmth, sunshine, employment, and abundant recreational opportunities. As one of Orange County's preferred municipalities, the City of Ocoee is experiencing rapid growth and development. This combination of population growth and rapid land development has increased park demand at the same time that vacant land is being developed quickly.

With Ocoee's accelerated growth, the demand for more and improved recreation facilities and the need to protect valuable open space resources has become a principal concern among City officials and residents alike. Accordingly, this Element identifies and refines future parks and open space projects and identifies potential funding sources. It should be noted, however, that no recreational programs, activities, or goals are identified in this Element. Instead, this document discusses the land, equipment, and facilities requirements needed to facilitate recreation programs. There are several reasons for this approach.

First, recreation activities and programs frequently change to accommodate shifts in recreational trends and the fluctuating characteristics of the population (e.g., age, activity levels, family size, etc.). Second, new program needs may be identified later that did not exist when the Master Plan was completed or this Element updated. Lastly, recreation programming costs are generally small and do not involve large capital investments.

Accordingly, the day-to-day management and administration of recreational programs are the responsibility of the Recreation Director, Recreation Advisory Board, City Manager, and City Commission. While specific recreation programs are outside of the scope of this document, existing program demand has been considered in the analysis of existing and proposed parks and open space projects.

## **II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **A. Community Profile**

Ocoee is located in Central Florida about ten miles west of downtown Orlando. It is in the heart of West Orange County, adjoining the communities of Apopka, Windermere, and Winter Garden. Ocoee's population has grown tremendously from a population of 7,803 in 1980 to its current population of 24,391 as of April 1, 2000.<sup>1</sup> Much of the population growth has been attributed to easy access to downtown Orlando, Walt Disney World, and Florida's Turnpike. Ocoee's recent growth rate has resulted in a population increase of 91% between 1990 and 2000. Over the same period, Orange County's growth rate was 32%, Winter Garden's was 47%, and Apopka's was 97%.

Although Ocoee is relatively small in comparison to Orlando, accelerated growth is anticipated over the next five to ten years due to continuing national and regional growth patterns and migration trends. Apart from these general growth patterns, the City anticipates that the addition of the West Oaks Mall, the Western Expressway, and the recent popularity of West Orange County as a residential area will continue to spur further population and employment growth in Ocoee.

### **B. Economy**

In 1990, the Ocoee area included 6,500 jobs and 12,788 people. Today, the Ocoee area is an employment center that is home to approximately 8,900 jobs and 35,000 people.<sup>2</sup> Ocoee's largest employers are the West Oaks Mall, Sysco Food Services, Health Central Hospital, and the Central Florida Auto Auction. Based on populations projections total employment in the Ocoee planning area is expected to grow to 31,700 by the year 2020.<sup>3</sup>

### **C. Quality of Life**

Ocoee provides many amenities to residents, including conveniently-located schools, beautiful lakes, a public golf course, and recreational activities. Roughly two-thirds of Ocoee's elementary school students and one-third of Ocoee's middle school students ride their bikes or walk to school. Of the fourteen lakes in Ocoee, Starke Lake is the largest at 203 acres and the City recently renovated its boat ramps and constructed a new fishing pier. Forest Lake Golf Course is a par-72 championship public course featuring six of the best finishing holes in the Orlando area. Ocoee Recreation Department activities range from summer day camp to exercise classes and senior citizen activities.

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1. U.S. Census, 2000.

2. The Ocoee Joint Planning Area Population and Employment Numbers include portions of unincorporated Orange County that are adjacent to the City of Ocoee as depicted in the 1994 Ocoee-Orange County Interlocal Agreement (1990 estimates include only the City).

3. Ocoee Master Transportation Plan, Table E-1, page vi.

Despite the rate of current development, Ocoee has managed to maintain a "hometown" character. The provision of high quality services, adequate schools, and community aesthetics continue to be high priority issues with City leaders and citizens. The City of Ocoee has five elected officials, including a mayor, elected on a city-wide basis, and four district-based commissioners. The government operates under a city manager with approximately 250 employees. The City also provides central water and sewer services and has emergency response times that range from three to five minutes. The provision of quality City services has played an important part in Ocoee's continued growth.

#### **D. Transportation**

All roads lead to Ocoee. Ocoee is located at the western terminus of the East-West Expressway, Old Winter Garden Road, Clarcona-Ocoee Road and Silver Star Road. Other regional roads that pass through Ocoee include Maguire Road, Apopka-Vineland Road and Ocoee-Apopka Road. Transportation access is another factor that encourages Ocoee's accelerated population growth. The East-West Expressway also offers excellent access to downtown Orlando, the Orlando Executive Airport, and the University of Central Florida.

Additionally, Ocoee has a Florida Turnpike interchange at State Road 50. Accordingly, local residents have easy access to Interstate 75, the Orlando International Airport, and Interstate 95. Most recently, the Orlando Orange County Expressway Authority has completed the first leg of the Western Expressway (a major downtown Orlando bypass). The Western Expressway includes three interchanges in Ocoee at State Road 50, Silver Star Road, and West Road.

As discussed in the Transportation Element, LYNX provides Ocoee's transit services. LYNX is the regional transportation company serving the Orlando metropolitan area including Orange, Seminole, and Osceola Counties. In 1996, LYNX established public bus stops and four bus routes in Ocoee. Another route was added recently. All five bus routes serving Ocoee stop at the West Oaks Mall, and ridership on these routes has increased since they were established.

### **III. ANALYSIS OF EXISTING RECREATION FACILITIES**

The purpose of the Recreation and Open Space Master Plan is to develop a plan for a system of parks and open space areas that are readily accessible to all residents within the community. In order to adequately plan a parks system, the existing network of locally available parks and open space facilities should be evaluated for surpluses and deficiencies. Accordingly, this Section outlines the City's adopted level of service, parks and open space guidelines, analysis of park types, activity based recreation guidelines, and other recreation facilities.

#### **A. Level of Service**

Level of service is the term used for the measurement of community services. With respect to parks and open space provided by local governments, it has been common practice over the past forty years to measure services in terms of acres per population

rather than evaluating each park type or activity. The Ocoee Comprehensive Plan includes levels of service for the various services that the City provides (i.e., water, sewer, roads, police, fire, and recreation). The adopted level of service for parks and open space is four (4) acres per 1,000 population served. A supplemental set of parks and open space guidelines are identified for parks and open space areas in the following section.

## **B. Parks and Open Space Guidelines**

Although the City of Ocoee has adopted a level of service for concurrency purposes, it is useful to establish population guidelines for each type of park facility. The population-based parks and open space guidelines below are intended only to supplement the level of service analysis, not replace it. These guidelines establish a set of general criteria for determining the amount and types of parkland necessary to accommodate the recreational needs of Ocoee.

Florida's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recommends that communities use national and state parks and open space guidelines as a starting point and then adjust the guidelines to address local needs. DEP has classified parks into six categories. Following is a description of each of the six park types and facilities that exists within the City. The City has added the category of Natural Area Reservations to the list of park types as the preservation of natural areas are an important component to any park and open space network.

The guidelines shown in Table 1 were prepared in accordance with DEP recommendations using the state and national guidelines as a base. The following parks and open space guidelines are used later in this report to evaluate and assess potential parks and open space deficiencies and surpluses. Each of the seven park types are classified as either resource-based or user-oriented. Resource-based parks primarily offer passive recreation opportunities (e.g. picnicking, camping, or fishing) and conserve open space, natural resources, lakes, and wetlands. They may also provide active recreation at the same location but the park is primarily geared toward its natural amenities. User-oriented parks, on the other hand, may be located anywhere and are typically areas where users can congregate to participate in sports or other active recreation, hence the name user-oriented.

**Table 1**  
**Ocoee Parks and Open Space Population Guidelines**

| <b>Parks</b>              | <b>Orientation</b> | <b>Population Served</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Ornamental Parks          | Resource-based     | No standard              |
| Mini Parks                | User-oriented      | 3,000                    |
| Neighborhood Parks        | User-oriented      | 7,500                    |
| Community Parks           | User-oriented      | 10,000                   |
| Linear Parks              | Resource-based     | 15,000                   |
| Urban Open Space Parks    | Resource-based     | 25,000                   |
| Natural Area Reservations | Resource-based     | No standard              |



### **C. Analysis of Park Types**

The following section provides a brief description of each of the six park types. For each park type, the description provides the following information: typical equipment found; park orientation; service areas; park size; population served; and existing Ocoee parks that fall within each particular category.

#### **Ornamental Park**

Ornamental Parks are resource-based parks with passive elements such as fountains, gazebos, commemorative structures, statues, works of art, clock towers, plazas, sidewalks, benches, and landscaping. They are decorative community features typically located along major roadways, near scenic spots, or locations that establish visual connections between community edifices. Their size is generally dependent upon their function, but they may be less than an acre in size in certain locations.

Ornamental parks are designed as urban accent features serving the community at-large and, as such; there are no established standards for them. The Municipal Lakefront Park is the only Ornamental Park, located between downtown Ocoee and Starke Lake. The park includes the Withers Maguire House, City Hall, Community Center, boat docks, new fishing pier, a gazebo, a local veteran's memorial, open space and parking.

#### **Mini Park**

A mini park is a small user-oriented park that adds park service to neighborhoods that were originally developed without private recreation facilities. A typical mini park should serve as a "walk to" park that might consist of a playground, swings, playground equipment, play court, landscaping, parking area, perimeter fence, walkways, tables, and benches. Often, mini parks are located within three or four blocks of the population that they are designed to serve, typically up to 3,000 persons.

Generally, a mini park is up to two (2) acres in size. Ocoee owns two mini parks that serve the abutting neighborhoods: 1) Forest Oaks Park; and 2) Palm Drive Park. Since 1992, the City has required all new residential subdivisions to include private recreational facilities. Thus, the City has not created any new mini parks since 1992. There are approximately 65 acres of private park areas located within existing subdivisions.

#### **Neighborhood Park**

A neighborhood park is a medium size user-oriented park, but a conservation component may be included as an optional feature. Neighborhood Parks form the foundation for a Community's park system. Generally, they are located within walking distance of homes. Often neighborhood parks are located along local streets to avoid areas of traffic congestion.

Equipment typically found in these parks include swings, playground equipment, picnic areas, play courts, play fields, baseball and softball fields, parking areas, restrooms,

walking/jogging trails, swimming pools, soccer, and tennis courts. Parks range in size from two to ten acres and serve homes within a one-mile radius. It is estimated that these parks serve up to 7,500 persons.

Since neighborhood parks and elementary schools serve roughly the same population, it is desirable for neighborhood parks to abut elementary and middle schools. Ocoee has six neighborhood parks. Of the six parks, five are established parks: Russell Drive Park, Parkside/Coventry Park, Tiger Minor Park, the Sorenson Junior/Senior Baseball Fields, and Silver Glen Park. Hackney-Prairie Park is slated for development in the near future.

### **Community Park**

A community park is a large user-oriented park that provides a variety of active recreational facilities. Facilities usually included in such a park are recreation centers, gymnasiums, swimming pools, sports fields, tennis courts, boat ramps, parking areas, and restrooms. Optional community park elements are covered picnic areas, gazebos, pavilions, playgrounds, multi-purpose trails, and separate natural areas or open space. Community parks may be located anywhere within the City, but as a "drive to" facility, significant parking should be included in the site design.

Community parks are approximately 10 to 50 acres in size. They typically service homes located within two to five miles and up to 10,000 people. The City has six community parks, four of which are established parks: Vignetti Park, Beech Recreation Center, Central Park, and the Forest Lake Golf Club. South Park and Lake Apopka Park are slated for development in the near future.

### **Linear Park**

Linear Parks are usually developed around a natural resource such as a creek, river, wetland, abandoned or active railroad, mass transportation corridor, utility easement, or lakeshore. Linear parks are also often referred to as greenways, trails, or multipurpose trails. However, these facilities have specific definitions, so the more generic term of linear park is used. Linear parks may be located anywhere within the community, but trailheads should include parking in the site design and layout to accommodate users. Depending upon their location, linear parks may serve populated areas ranging in size from a single neighborhood to an entire city.

The benefits of a linear park system are numerous. Not only can they preserve valuable open space and natural habitat, they can also provide a natural environment for walking, jogging, and bicycling trails. They often serve as a transportation corridor and provide inexpensive exercise opportunities relatively free from automobile interference. Linear parks also create natural buffers between incompatible land uses and provide corridors for underground utility easements. Generally, portions of the land are reasonably priced due to existing natural resource development restrictions. The City of Ocoee does not own any linear parks. However, Orange County has established the West Orange Trail. Four miles of the West Orange Trail passes through the Ocoee planning area.

### **Urban Open Space Park**

Urban open space parks are areas containing ecosystems in a non-disturbed state with very few man-made intrusions. Within the urban environment, natural areas lend a certain aesthetic and functional diversity to a park network and urban hardscape. The benefits of natural areas are numerous and include preservation of wildlife habitat and opportunities for nature study. When flood plains are preserved as natural areas, they offer a resource to aid in the prevention of flooding. There are no space standards for natural areas within a City. The normal approach of standardizing is not practical or productive in this instance since it is dependant upon the specific environment of the area itself.

Cities should preserve urban open space that reflect the unique natural resources of the community. Urban open space parks should be limited to recreational uses for passive recreation, interpretation, and environmental education. It is important that natural areas not be perceived as surplus land that may be sold at a later date for development. There are a number of public and non-profit organizations that provide funding for the development of these types of parks. The City recently purchased wetland property along the shoreline of Lake Apopka. This 80-acre wetland area will be ultimately classified as a City-owned Urban Open Space Park (Lake Apopka Urban Open Space Park) in the future and will be used for passive recreation only.

### **Natural Area Reservation**

Natural Area Reservations (NARs) are very similar to Urban Open Space Parks, but may be either publicly owned or privately owned. NARs can be defined as areas that offer: independence; closeness to nature; a high degree of interaction with the natural environment; and areas which require no organization, rules of play, facilities or installation of equipment, other than those necessary to protect the environment. Benefits of NAR's are numerous and include the preservation of wildlife habitat, riparian habitat, opportunities for nature study, and provide buffers between uses.

NARs typically include floodplains, wetlands, scenic vistas, fish and wildlife habitats, natural resource areas, landmarks, and historic areas. The City's Land Development Code regulates development in environmentally sensitive areas by prohibiting development in the 100-year floodplain and strongly discourages development in wetlands. Should development in wetlands be unavoidable, destruction of the wetland must be mitigated.

Acquisition of NARs can be accomplished through dedication, fee interest purchase, conservation easement dedication, and conservation easement purchase. Conservation easements provide two primary purposes: reduce the amount of development than can occur on a property and assure that the property, environment, and open space values are preserved. Conservation easements are tailored to meet the unique characteristics of the property and run with the land in perpetuity.

The City has identified the remaining natural open space along shorelines of the Lake Apopka, Lake Meadow, Lake Bennet, Prairie Lake, and Shoal Creek for preservation

through NARs. The locations of these NARs are shown on Figure 18, a map of City and Area Parks. Acquisition of these areas can be accomplished through dedication, purchase, conservation easements or a combination thereof. Recreational development in these areas should be restricted to trails and other amenities having little or no impact on the natural environment.

With regards to the shoreline along Lake Apopka, the Avanti/West Groves subdivision (north the proposed Lake Apopka Urban Open Space Park) will dedicate a conservation easement (approximately 50 acres) for preservation of the wetlands and riparian habitat upon final plat approval. In addition, the City was awarded approximately \$600,000 of grant money from the St. Johns Water Management District for the acquisition and preservation of additional wetlands along the shoreline of Lake Apopka (Crown Point is approximately 100 acres), just south of the proposed Lake Apopka Urban Open Space Park. Staff has identified approximately 608 acres of area for Natural Area Reservations. The City owns or controls approximately 170 acres, anticipates dedication of or grant awards for approximately 238 acres, and purchase of the remaining 200 acres.

#### **D. Indoor Recreation Facilities**

In addition to providing outdoor recreation facilities, the City also provides indoor facilities to for its residents. The City currently has three existing and one planned indoor recreation facilities that offer a variety of programs. The three existing facilities include the Municipal Complex Community Center, Vignetti Park Recreation Center and the Beech Recreation Center. Future plans for South Park include an indoor recreation center. Although Ocoee does not have established standards for indoor recreation facilities, it is recommended that the City continue to provide additional recreation centers to meet the needs of the growing community.

Based on citizen input, the following indoor recreational facilities have been recommended: a senior center, a cultural arts center, and an environmental and recreation Center. These facilities would serve all residents of the City.

As indicated above, the City of Ocoee has a total of fifteen existing parks and open spaces in its current inventory. These parks and opens spaces are shown on Figure 18 in the City and Area Parks map. In addition, Table 2 lists each of the parks and open spaces by type, size, location, and provides an inventory the existing amenities.

**Table 2**  
**Inventory of Existing Recreation Facilities**

|    | <b>Park Summary</b>  | <b>Acres</b> | <b>Facilities</b>   |
|----|--|--------------|---|
| 1. | Municipal Lakefront Park<br>Serves: All ages, groups<br>Category: Resource-based<br>Abuts: Starke Lake         | 10           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ 1 covered pavilion</li> <li>❖ 1 stage size gazebo</li> <li>❖ historic structure</li> <li>❖ Veteran's Memorial</li> <li>❖ 13 benches</li> <li>❖ 10 tables &amp; 1 grill</li> <li>❖ 2 boat ramps, dock and fishing pier</li> <li>❖ 2 shuffleboard courts</li> <li>❖ recreation building/offices</li> <li>❖ restroom &amp; offices</li> </ul> |
| 2. | Forest Oaks Park<br>Serves: All ages, groups<br>Category: User-oriented<br>Abuts: Prairie Lake                 | 0.2          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ 1/2 basketball court</li> <li>❖ 1 set of swings</li> <li>❖ (no benches, tables, or parking)</li> </ul>   |
| 3. | Palm Drive Park<br>Serves: All ages, groups<br>Category: User-oriented   | 1            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ 1/2 basketball court</li> <li>❖ 1 volleyball court</li> <li>❖ 1 set of swings</li> <li>❖ 1 set of playground equipment</li> <li>❖ 3 benches</li> <li>❖ parking</li> </ul>  |
| 4. | Russell Drive Park<br>Serves: All ages, groups<br>Category: Resource-based<br>Abuts: Lake Peach                | 3            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ 1 set of swings &amp; equipment</li> <li>❖ 2 picnic tables</li> <li>❖ 5 benches</li> <li>❖ (no boat ramp)</li> </ul>   |
| 5. | Parkside / Coventry Park<br>Serves: All ages, groups<br>Category: User-oriented<br>Near: Lake Stanley          | 4            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ 2 sets of swings &amp; equipment</li> <li>❖ 1 pavilion/ 4 covered picnic tables</li> <li>❖ 10 benches/ 1 grill</li> <li>❖ 1 tennis court</li> <li>❖ 1 basketball court</li> </ul>  |
| 6. | Tiger Minor Park<br>Serves: All ages, groups<br>Category: User-oriented<br>Abuts: Shoal Creek                  | 5            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ 2 sets of swings &amp; equipment</li> <li>❖ 1 pavilion/ 2 covered picnic tables</li> <li>❖ 9 benches /1 grill</li> <li>❖ 1 lighted basketball court</li> <li>❖ 2 lighted tennis courts</li> <li>❖ restrooms</li> </ul>   |
| 7. | Silver Glen Park<br>Serves: All ages, groups<br>Category: Resource-based<br>Abuts: Spring Lake                 | 5            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ 4 picnic tables</li> <li>❖ 1 grill &amp; 1 bench</li> <li>❖ 725 linear feet of nature trail</li> <li>❖ parking area</li> <li>❖ (no boat ramp)</li> </ul>   |
| 8. | Sorenson Jr/Sr Baseball Fields<br>Serves: 13 to 18 year olds<br>Category: User-oriented<br>Near: Vignetti Park | 8            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ 1 lighted senior field</li> <li>❖ 1 junior field</li> <li>❖ 2 picnic tables</li> <li>❖ 1 concession stand</li> <li>❖ parking &amp; restrooms</li> </ul>  |

|     | <b>Park Summary</b>   | <b>Acres</b> | <b>Facilities</b>   |
|-----|---|--------------|---|
| 9.  | Beech Recreation Center<br>Serves: all ages groups<br>Category: User-oriented<br>Near: Lake Meadow                | 13           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ 1 regulation gymnasium/ exercise &amp; dance rooms/ showers</li> <li>❖ 2 baseball practice fields</li> <li>❖ 1 aquatic center</li> <li>❖ offices and conference room</li> <li>❖ restrooms and parking</li> <li>❖ 1 soccer field</li> <li>❖ 1 set of swings &amp; equipment</li> </ul>  |
| 10. | Vignetti Park<br>Serves: All ages, groups<br>Category: User-oriented<br>Near: Sorenson Fields                     | 22           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ 1 set of swings &amp; equipment</li> <li>❖ 8 picnic tables &amp; 2 grills</li> <li>❖ 10 benches</li> <li>❖ 2 lighted softball fields</li> <li>❖ 1 lighted basketball court</li> <li>❖ 2 lighted tennis courts</li> <li>❖ 1 volleyball court</li> <li>❖ 2 three-wall handball courts</li> <li>❖ recreation building &amp; concession stand</li> <li>❖ restroom &amp; offices</li> </ul> |
| 11. | Central Park Complex<br>Serves: All ages, groups<br>Category: User-oriented<br>Abuts: Lake Moxie                  | 23           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ 2 set of swings &amp; equipment</li> <li>❖ 4 covered picnic tables</li> <li>❖ 6 benches and 2 grills</li> <li>❖ 1 lighted football field</li> <li>❖ 2 concession stand and bleachers</li> <li>❖ 3 lighted baseball fields</li> <li>❖ 1 lighted basketball court</li> <li>❖ 2 covered pavilions</li> <li>❖ 2 lighted tennis courts</li> <li>❖ parking &amp; restrooms</li> </ul>        |
| 12. | Forest Lake Golf Club of Ocoee<br>Serves: All ages, groups<br>Category: User-oriented<br>Abuts: West Orange Trail | 60           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ 18 hole professional golf course</li> <li>❖ privately operated pro shop</li> <li>❖ club house with restaurant</li> <li>❖ driving range and putting green</li> <li>❖ parking &amp; restrooms</li> </ul>   |
| 13. | Hackney-Prairie Park  | 10           | Undeveloped   |
| 14. | South Park  | 10           | Undeveloped   |
| 15. | Lake Apopka<br>(a.k.a Coke Property)  | 40           | Undeveloped   |
|     |   | 214.2        |   |

Source: City of Ocoee Parks and Recreation Department, 2001.

## E. Activity Based Recreation Guidelines

Another guideline used to evaluate the Ocoee parks and open space system is the Ocoee Activity Based Recreation Guidelines. Activity based guidelines help to prioritize each of the various types of sports and activities within the system. They take into consideration a variety of activities popular in the Ocoee area, such as boating and fishing, baseball and softball, golf, soccer, football, visiting historic sites, walking, cycling, skating, and horseback riding. The guidelines summarized in Table 3 have been updated to reflect current conditions and priorities.

**Table 3**  
**Activity Based Recreation Guidelines**

| Activity Supported                            | Ocoee Guidelines                      |                   | State Guidelines*  |                    |                   |
|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
|   | Type of Facility                      | Population Served | Minimum Population | Maximum Population | Median Population |
| Baseball Little League                        | 1 field                               | 7,500             | 2,000              | 10,000             | 5,000             |
| Baseball Junior & Senior                      | 1 field                               | 10,000            | 2,000              | 10,000             | 5,000             |
| Basketball                                    | 1 basketball court                    | 5,000             | 500                | 20,000             | 5,000             |
| Bicycling & walking                           | 1 linear mile of paved trail          | 10,000            | 1,500              | 10,000             | 5,000             |
| Fishing, power boating, water-skiing, sailing | 1 boat ramp lane                      | 12,500            | 1,500              | 12,500             | 5,000             |
| Football                                      | 1 football field                      | 25,000            | 4,000              | 25,000             | 6,000             |
| Golf  | 18 holes                              | 62,500            | 25,000             | 65,200             | 25,000            |
| Horseback riding                              | 1 linear mile cleared trail           | 10,000            | 5,000              | 10,000             | 5,000             |
| Jogging/ Physical Exercise                    | 1 exercise/ par course trail          | 50,000            | 10,000             | 50,000             | 15,000            |
| Nature study & hiking                         | 1 linear mile of nature trail         | 10,000            | 6,250              | 10,000             | 6,700             |
| Picnicking                                    | picnic area (several tables & grills) | 5,000             | 5,000              | 10,000             | 6,000             |
| Playground Equipment                          | 1 play area                           | 5,000             | 500                | 15,000             | 10,000            |
| Racquetball & Handball                        | 1 racquetball / handball court        | 15,000            | N/A                | N/A                | N/A               |
| Shuffleboard                                  | 1 set courts                          | 12,000            | 1,000              | 12,000             | 3,600             |
| Soccer  | 1 soccer field                        | 7,500             | 4,000              | 25,000             | 6,000             |
| Softball Field (adult)                        | 1 field                               | 10,000            | 2,000              | 10,000             | 5,000             |
| Swimming Pool                                 | 4,800 sq. ft. pool                    | 35,000            | 1,000              | 50,000             | 25,000            |
| Tennis  | tennis court                          | 5,000             | 1,000              | 10,000             | 2,000             |
| Volleyball                                    | volleyball court                      | 10,000            | 4,000              | 12,000             | 6,000             |

\* As published by DEP in Table 6.4 of *Outdoor Recreation*, 1994.

Source: Ocoee Recreation Department, 2001.

## **F. Additional Recreation Facilities**

There are a variety of private recreation facilities and County owned parks in the Ocoee area that are used by Ocoee residents. The following is a list of both public and private parks facilities located in the Ocoee area.

- West Orange Trail is a 23-mile multi-purpose linear park, which will ultimately connect Wekiva Springs to the Lake County line through Ocoee.
- West Orange Park is a County Park, which includes a trail for skating, biking, picnic pavilions, equestrian trial, playground equipment, and soccer fields.
- Clarcona Horseman’s Park is a multi-purpose user-oriented park with show rings, stables, parking, campsites, and a new ATV racetrack.
- Lake Whitney Park (a.k.a. Belmere Park)—recently approved plans for the park include the addition of four ball fields and couple of pavilions.
- YMCA includes a recreation building, swimming pool, ball fields, and soccer fields.
- West Orange Girls Club is a private softball complex with five lighted softball fields, stadium seating, a concession stand, restrooms, and parking.

Additionally, there are four existing public schools, two proposed elementary schools, one proposed middle school and one proposed high school in the Ocoee area. The City of Ocoee has two Interlocal Agreements with the School Board to permit use of the recreational facilities after hours: one for Citrus Elementary and one for the proposed Elementary School at South Park (scheduled to open August 2002).

Staff intends to pursue additional Interlocal Agreements for joint use facilities for the proposed High School and Elementary School near Lake Apopka. It is estimated that the public schools cumulatively add another 30 acres of recreational facilities. Although these outdoor recreational facilities and open spaces are available to the general public and are sometimes included in level of service calculations by other communities, the City of Ocoee has not included them within our level of service calculation. We have only included private facilities to aid in planning for specific activities and new parks and open space areas.

## **IV. PROJECTED GROWTH**

### **A. Background**

Ocoee’s historic growth demonstrates a recent and substantial increase in population and employment. Since 1990, the City has annexed about 2,500 acres, approved roughly 5,000 new homes, and recorded 29 new single-family subdivisions. The City of Ocoee and Orange County entered into a Joint Planning Area Agreement in 1994 that formally identified areas suitable for future annexation and the corresponding land uses. Joint Planning Area boundary is shown on the land use maps in Figures 1 and 2 in the Future Land Use Element. It is anticipated that all the areas within the existing Joint Planning Area (JPA) will be annexed into the City by the year 2020.



The 1991 Comprehensive Plan projected the population of 22,357 for the year 2000, the official 2000 Census Count was 24,391, a difference of 2,034. The 1991 population projection for 2000 was extremely close and underestimated the projected population by only 8.33%.

## B. Projection Methodology

In 1997, the Planning Department developed population and employment projections for the year 2020 for the purposes of planning future facilities. The methodology involved two steps; the first step was a land use analysis and the second step was to compile the historic and 1997 population and employment figures shown in Table 5. The quantity and characteristics of 1997 development were authenticated against the 1997 population and employment data.

This information formed the base model for projecting land use, population, and employment. Once the projections were concluded, the City was divided into 97 geographic sub-areas called Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs). TAZs facilitate a more accurate existing land use inventory, assessment of future growth, and validation method for comparisons to traffic data from other agencies. This method was also used for the City's 1998 Long Range Transportation Plan update. The population for the entire JPA area in 1997 was estimated to be 35,105. In addition, the City projected the population for the JPA for the following years: 2005 (approx. 47,576), 2010 (approx. 57,701) and 2020 (approx. 70,239).

**Table 4**  
**Population and Employment Data in JPA, 1980-1997**

| Area                     | 1980    | 1990      | % Change | 1997      | % Change |
|--------------------------|---------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Ocoee Population         | 7,803   | 12,788    | 64%      | 35,105*   | 175%     |
| Ocoee Employment         | N/A     | 6,534     | N/A      | 8,892*    | 36%      |
| Orange County Population | 470,865 | 677,491   | 44%      | 777,556   | 15%      |
| Orange County Employment | N/A     | 350,953   | N/A      | 515,412   | 47%      |
| Metro Area Population    | 739,058 | 1,224,844 | 66%      | 1,428,620 | 17%      |
| Metro Area Employment    | N/A     | 612,750   | N/A      | 729,583   | 19%      |

Note: The Ocoee area includes portions of unincorporated Orange County; 1980 and 1990 estimates include only the City. Source: Ocoee Planning Department, 1997.

The JPA boundary was amended in the fall of 1999, which resulted in a change to the boundaries of the original JPA Map. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to the JPA added property in the northeast portion of the existing JPA and removed property from both the eastern and southwestern portions of the JPA. The boundary change to the JPA also resulted in a change in the 1997 population projections for 2005, 2010, and 2020. In addition, the JPA was again amended in January of 2001 with the City's purchase of the Coke Property.

The 4<sup>th</sup> amendment to the JPA resulted in changes to land uses to the JPA Map resulting in reduction of population in the northwestern area of the JPA. The net

result is a decrease in the anticipated population projections for the balance of the planning period. The initial 2020 (anticipated build-out) population projection, based on the original JPA, was 75,918. The revised 2020 population projection for the amended JPA is 68,200, which is a difference of 7,718.

**Table 5**  
**Projected Population in JPA, 1997-2020**

| <b>Area Population</b> | <b>1997</b> | <b>2020</b> | <b>% Change</b> |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Ocoee                  | 35,105*     | 68,200**    | 94%             |
| Orange County          | 777,556     | 1,231,100   | 58%             |
| Metro Area             | 1,428,620   | 2,078,400   | 45%             |

\*Based on original JPA boundary.

\*\*Based on amended JPA boundary; both include portions of unincorporated Orange County.

Source: Ocoee Planning Department, 1997.

### C. Level of Service

It should be noted that the level of service for parks and open space is generally based on useable developed acres accessible to the public. Parks provided by other jurisdictions, conservation areas, restricted access facilities, and private recreation areas are sometimes considered in the level of service calculation. The City does not include private recreation facilities, County facilities, conservation areas, or school sites in the level of service calculation.

Although these outdoor recreational facilities are used for recreation by the general public, Ocoee has not included them within the level of service calculation. The City has included approximately 60 acres of undeveloped park land in the calculation since improvements for 20 acres of park land were included in the City's Capital Improvements Budget for FY 2000 (10 acres for South Park and 10 acres for Hackney-Prairie Park) and has included an additional 40 acres of parkland adjacent to Lake Apopka in the LOS calculation. In addition, a portion (60 acres) of the 240-acre Forest Lake Golf Course was used in the level of service calculation since a fee is required to play the course.

Table 6 below identifies the numbers of acres of park land and open space the City will need by the year 2020 to meet the adopted minimum level of service standard based on the population projections. Acreages include undeveloped park and open space.

**Table 6**  
**Acreage Needed to Maintain Adopted LOS**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Population</b> | <b>Existing LOS Acres</b> | <b>LOS Acres Needed</b> | <b>Projected Acreage Difference</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2000        | 24,391*           | 214.2                     | 97.56                   | +116.46                             |
| 2005        | 46,973**          | 214.2                     | 187.89                  | +26.13                              |
| 2010        | 55,066**          | 214.2                     | 220.26                  | -6.24                               |
| 2020        | 68,200**          | 214.2                     | 272.8                   | -58.78                              |

\*City of Ocoee only.

\*\*Projected future population revised to reflect changes in 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment to JPA.

Currently, the City has adequate parkland and open space to maintain the desired level of service. The City has taken a proactive approach to purchasing land for parks and open space. The 2000 LOS calculation is 8.77 acres per 1,000 population, double the adopted LOS standard of 4 acres per 1,000 population. As evidenced in Table 6, the City will be able to maintain the minimum level of service standard for the next nine years without purchasing additional parkland and open space. However, as development continues at an accelerated pace, it is critical to purchase additional land before the remainder of vacant developable land is developed.

Based on the desires of the community, the City will continue to provide a level of service of not less than 4 acres of City-controlled and managed parks and open space per 1,000 residents in the future. It is anticipated that this level of service, in conjunction with recreational facilities at schools and private recreational resources, will adequately supply recreation and leisure opportunities to satisfy the demands of Ocoee residents. It should be noted that the proposed level of service assumes continued cooperation between the school districts, the private sector, and the City of Ocoee in the provision of leisure activities and opportunities.

#### **D. Projections**

The bulk of near-term residential growth is anticipated to continue to occur throughout the City, concentrating in the northeast, northwest and southern portions of the City. Accordingly, a majority of the population growth will occur along the Clarcona-Ocoee Road, Clarke Road, Ocoee-Apopka Road, and South Maguire Road corridors. Additional commercial growth is anticipated along West State Road 50, Ocoee-Apopka Road, and Old Winter Garden Road.

Based on the population projections and recent development submittals, Ocoee's residential growth is expected to increase dramatically in the next five years with a steady increase for the balance of the planning period. Handling the needs of the existing and future residents will become a major challenge to the City in providing required park and open space areas.

As the City continues to make plans for roadway and utility expansions to accommodate this influx of new residents, the City must also plan to meet the additional recreational needs of new and existing residents. Accordingly, approximately 60 acres of required open space land will theoretically need to be acquired within these rapidly growing residential areas of the community in proportion to projected population needs and space necessary for required types of facilities. However, the following analysis will demonstrate that an additional 25 acres, for a total of 85 acres, will be needed to physically accommodate the required facilities.

## **V. ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS**

### **A. Overview**

The long-range goal is for each portion of the City to fall within the service area of a linear park, neighborhood park and/or community park. In order to accurately assess the City's current and future parks and open space needs, an inventory of existing parks and open space and facilities was conducted. The assessment of needs is based on the existing recreational facilities, population projections, established goals and objectives, level of service standard, and demonstrates future park and facility needs that exist for the planning period.

The assessment includes the park and open space needs by park type, identifies the type of recreational facilities needed, provides a cost estimate based on the future parks and facility needs, and recommends park upgrades to existing City parks and the establishment of a Natural Area Reservations and a set of Recreational Development Standards. The assessment has been divided into five sections: Overview, Neighborhood Service Area Analysis, Park and Facility Analysis, Overall Park Upgrades, and Recreation Development Standards.

### **B. Neighborhood Service Area Analysis**

In order to accurately assess the City's parkland and facility needs for the planning period, the City was divided into twelve (12) Neighborhood Service Areas (NSAs). The locations of these NSAs are shown in Figure 19. Neighborhood Service Areas were chosen for the analysis because Neighborhood Parks form the basis for a comprehensive park and open space network. Neighborhood Parks are typically user-oriented, two to ten acres in size, and located along local streets. It is critical that neighborhood parks be strategically located within walking distance from area neighborhoods, thus making parks accessible to residents of all ages.

The NSAs were grouped geographically by traffic analysis zones (TAZs) and serve to provide a more detailed analysis of parkland and facility deficiencies for each NSA. The residential areas of the amended JPA are divided into twelve NSAs. The population projections were based on the City's Joint Planning Area and Future Land Use Map, and were projected for each NSA to determine the projected growth through the planning period (2020). Each neighborhood service area was further analyzed to determine if any surplus or deficiencies currently exist and to determine what deficiencies may exist by the end of the planning period.

#### **Neighborhood Service Area 1**

NSA 1 is located east of Lake Apopka, north of Fullers Cross Road, south of McCormick Road, and west of the Western Expressway. This area is basically undeveloped; however, with the extension of Orange County utilities and the completion of the Western Expressway, development in this area is imminent. The City has recently purchased approximately 358 acres of property (f.k.a. Coke Property) to be developed as a multiple-use development.

The City anticipates selling approximately 115 acres of the property to the School Board. Plans for the School Board include the construction of a high school and elementary school, bus parking and maintenance facility, and a work force education facility. City plans for the balance of the property include a large conservation area along the shoreline of Lake Apopka, City park, public safety uses, residential uses, and commercial and professional service uses.

One of the City's largest subdivisions, Avanti/West Groves (approximately 383 acres) is currently under review and includes a 6-acre private recreational facility. In addition, approximately 50 acres of wetlands along Lake Apopka will be dedicated to the City. The City has plans to work with the Orange County School Board to develop an Interlocal Agreement permitting City residents to use the Elementary School recreational facilities after hours and weekends.

Lake Apopka Park is proposed to be developed as a 40-acre combination resource-based and user-oriented Community Park, which will provide public access to Lake Apopka and connect to the West Orange Trail. In addition, a large portion of the wetland area along Lake Apopka is proposed as the Lake Apopka Urban Open Space Park. The population projection for this area is 5,814, which would require 23.26 acres of parkland to meet the adopted LOS standard.

Based on the analysis, the City will have adequate parkland in this NSA to accommodate future growth. However, the following recreational facilities are recommended for Lake Apopka Park based on the park size, activity-based recreation guidelines, and the Ocoee Recreation Department:

- Fields—1 football, 3 Senior/Junior League, and 4 Little League baseball
- Courts—2 basketball, 1 volleyball, and 1 tennis
- Trails—bike, horseback, and nature to connect to the West Orange Trail
- Areas—play, picnic, and Natural Area Reservations—Crown Point ( $\pm 100$  acres) and Magnolia Springs ( $\pm 10$  acres)
- 2 boat ramps to provide public access to Lake Apopka
- An environmental study center

## **Neighborhood Service Area 2**

NSA 2 is located east of the Western Expressway, north of the West Orange Trail, south of McCormick Road and west of Hobson Road. This area is undeveloped and is slated for future residential development. Amenities in the area include Lake Sims, Trout Lake and one Community Park—Forest Lake Golf Course. The golf course comprises approximately 240 acres, 60 of which are used for concurrency purposes, and services the entire planning area. The projected population for this area is 5,636, which would require 22.54 acres of parkland to meet the adopted LOS standard.

Based on the analysis, the City theoretically has adequate parkland to accommodate future growth, but not adequate recreational facilities. Accordingly, a 20-acre park in the vicinity of the West Orange Trail would provide the City with an opportunity to locate additional recreational facilities in this area. Based on discussions with Orange County,

the City and County anticipate locating a new park and trailhead in this area, in the vicinity of Lake Sims and the West Orange Trail. The following recreational facilities are recommended based on the proposed park size, activity-based recreation guidelines, and the Ocoee Recreation Department:

- Fields—1 soccer and 4 softball
- Courts—2 basketball, 1 volleyball, and 1 tennis
- Trails—bike, horseback, and nature to connect to the West Orange Trail
- Areas—play and picnic

### **Neighborhood Service Area 3**

NSA 3 is located east of Clarke Road, north of Hackney-Prairie Road, south of the West Orange Trail, and west of Apopka-Vineland Road. The area is characterized by residential development, with half of the area slated for future residential development. Currently, a new subdivision is under construction along Clarcona-Ocoee Road and another is under review north of Clarcona-Ocoee Road. There are no City owned parks in this NSA. However, Clarcona Horseman's Park is located to the north and offers picnicking and rental facilities. The projected population for this area is 5,004, which would require 20.02 acres of parkland to meet the adopted LOS standard. Land for a park was dedicated to the City adjacent to Lake Addah, but the land is unsuitable for a development as a park.

As this area contains no City parks, it is recommended that a 20-acre park be located in this area to meet the needs of future residents. The following recreational facilities are recommended based on the proposed park size, Activity Based Recreation Guidelines, and the Ocoee Recreation Department:

- Fields—1 soccer and Senior/Junior league
- Courts—2 basketball
- Trails—bike, horseback, and nature to connect to the West Orange Trail
- Areas—play and picnic

### **Neighborhood Service Area 4**

NSA 4 is located north of A.D. Mims Road, south of Hackney Prairie Road, east of Clarke Road, and largely west of the CSX Rail Road. Approximately one-third of this area is developed as residential and it is slated for more residential development in the future with a small pocket of neighborhood commercial at the intersection of A. D. Mims Road and Clarke Road. The NSA contains two City owned parks, one neighborhood park—Hackney-Prairie Park (approximately 10 acres undeveloped), and one mini park—Forest Oaks Park. Together, the parks comprise 10.2 acres and contain one-half basketball court and playground equipment. It is anticipated that Hackney Prairie Park will be developed as a user-oriented park used for active recreation and will provide public access to Prairie Lake. The projected population for this area is 2,778, which would require 11.11 acres of parkland to meet the adopted LOS standard.

Based on the analysis, this area largely has enough land, but is in need of additional recreational facilities. Conversely, the City will need another 10 acres of parkland to accommodate the additional facilities needed in this area and the proposed Natural Area Reservation adjacent to Prairie Lake. The following recreational facilities are recommended based on the proposed park size, activity-based recreation guidelines, and the Recreation Department:

- Fields—1 softball and 1 soccer
- Courts—1 basketball
- Areas—play, picnic, and Prairie Lake Natural Area Reservation ( $\pm$  80 acres)
- In addition, upgrades to Forest Oaks Park are recommended, which include the addition of a sign, benches, a grill, covered picnic pavilion, and upgraded playground equipment.

### **Neighborhood Service Area 5**

NSA 5 is located south of Clarcona-Ocoee Road and the West Orange Trail, east of Lakeview Avenue, west of Clarke Road, and north of A.D. Mims Road and Wurst Road. Half of this area is developed with scattered pockets of residential and neighborhood commercial. The area is slated for future residential development with some neighborhood commercial. This area is fortunate to have Lake Meadow and three City parks, two Community Parks—Beech Recreation Center, and the Vignetti Community Center, and one Neighborhood Park—Sorenson Field.

Together the three City parks comprise approximately 43 acres and contain the following amenities: four ball fields, two practice fields, soccer field, basketball court, volleyball court, two tennis courts, playground equipment, and an Aquatic Center. Future plans for the Beech Center include a soccer/tennis complex, which will include the addition of four soccer fields and four tennis courts. The projected population for the area is 9,945, which would require approximately 39.75 acres of parkland meet the adopted LOS standard.

Based on the analysis, this NSA is well served by existing City parks. No new City parks are recommended for this area. However, a 1.5-mile multipurpose trail and environmental boardwalk (to the West Orange Trail and provide access to Lake Meadow) and a soccer/tennis complex are recommended for the Beech Recreation Center. The recommended upgrades are as follows:

- Fields—4 soccer
- Courts—4 tennis
- Trails—bike, horseback, and nature to connect the Beech Center to the West Orange Trail
- Areas—play, picnic, and Lake Meadow Natural Area Reservation ( $\pm$  200 acres)
- In addition, upgrades to Vignetti Park are recommended, which include upgraded playground equipment and a sign.

## **Neighborhood Service Area 6**

NSA 6 is located south and east of the Western Expressway, north of Silver Star Road and west of Lakeview Avenue. This area is undeveloped with a few scattered pockets of residential communities and commercial development along Silver Star Road and the southern portion of Ocoee-Apopka Road. The majority of the area is located within unincorporated Orange County and is slated for future residential development with some neighborhood commercial areas. The City has received many inquiries for land use changes in this area as a result of the completion of the Western Expressway, based on the number of inquires, a small area study of this area is recommended before any land use changes are recommend.

This NSA contains one City owned Mini Park—Palm Drive Park. Palm Drive Park is one acre in size and contains playground equipment, a volleyball court, and one-half basketball court. In addition, the West Orange Girls Club is located on Ocoee-Apopka Road and is a privately owned softball complex. The projected population for this area is 3,884, which would require approximately 15.5 acres of parkland to meet the adopted LOS standard.

As this area remains to be developed, it is recommended that a 15-acre park be located in this NSA for future residents. The following recreational facilities are recommended based on proposed park size, activity-based recreation guidelines, and the Ocoee Recreation Department:

- Fields—1 Senior/Junior League and 1 practice baseball, and 2 multiple use fields
- Courts—2 basketball and 1 volleyball
- Areas—play and picnic
- In addition, upgrades to Palm Drive Park are recommended, which include the addition of a grill, upgraded landscaping, a covered picnic table, and upgraded playground equipment.

## **Neighborhood Service Area 7**

NSA 7 is located north of Silver Star Road, south of A. D. Mims Road and Wurst Road, east of Lakeview Avenue, and west of Clarke Road. This area is mostly developed with residential communities and scattered neighborhood commercial located along Silver Star Road and Clarke Road. Amenities in this area include Lake Moxie, Peach Lake, Spring Lake, and three City owned parks: one Community Park—Central Park, and two Neighborhood Parks—Silver Glen Park and Russell Drive Park.

Together the three parks comprise approximately 31 acres and include three ball fields, one basketball court and two tennis courts, playground equipment and a natural trail. The projected population for the area is 6,737, which would require approximately 26.95 acres of parkland to meet the adopted LOS standard.

Based on the analysis, this NSA is well served by existing City parks and facilities. No new City parks or facilities are recommended for this area. However, it is recommended that the City continue to require that new residential developments provide private recreational facilities for their residents. In addition, upgrades to Central Park Complex



are recommended which included a new sign, handicap accessible restroom, and resurfacing of the tennis courts and parking lot.

### **Neighborhood Service Area 8**

NSA 8 is located south of A. D. Mims Road, north of Silver Star Road, east of Clarke Road, and west of Lake Stanley. The majority of the area is developed with residential communities and slated for future residential development and neighborhood commercial along Silver Star Road. Currently, a grocery store with complementary retail uses and a new subdivision are under construction at the intersection of Clarke Road and Silver Star Road.

Amenities in this area include Lake Johio and one Neighborhood Park—Parkside/Coventry Park. Parkside/Coventry Park comprises four (4) acres and contains one basketball court, one tennis court, and playground equipment. The projected population for this area is 3,999, which would require approximately 16 acres of parkland to meet the adopted LOS standard.

Based on the analysis, it is recommended that a 10-acre park be located in this area for future residents. The following recreational facilities are recommended based on the proposed park size, activity-based recreation guidelines, and the Ocoee Recreation Department:

- Fields—1 practice/multiple use field
- Courts—1 volleyball
- Areas—play and picnic

### **Neighborhood Service Area 9**

NSA 9 is located north of the West Oaks Mall, east of Clarke Road, south of Silver Star Road, and west of the Rose Hill Subdivision. The area is characterized by residential development with a neighborhood commercial corner at the intersection of Clarke Road and Silver Star Road and pockets of undeveloped neighborhood commercial along Silver Star Road and Clarke Road.

There are no City owned parks in this NSA. However, the City does have an Interlocal Agreement with the Orange County School Board to use the recreational facilities at Citrus Elementary (approximately 3 to 4 acres) after hours and weekends. Facilities at Citrus Elementary include four basketball courts, one ball field, one play field, and playground equipment. The projected population in this area is 1,838, which would require approximately 7.35 acres of parkland to meet the adopted LOS standard.

As there is not much vacant land available in the area, it is recommended that the City work closely with the School Board to ensure that the facilities at Citrus Elementary are utilized to their maximum potential.

## **Neighborhood Service Area 10**

NSA 10 is located north of Maine Street, south of Silver Star Road, west of Clarke Road, and east of Bluford Avenue and Bowness Road. This area is mostly developed with established residential communities and scattered commercial uses along Silver Star Road, Clarke Road, McKey Street, Bluford Avenue, and Bowness Road. Only a few pockets of residential areas remain to be developed. Amenities in the area include Starke Lake, Lake Prima Vista, Lake Olympia and two City owned parks—Municipal Lakefront Park (ornamental park) and Tiger Minor Park (neighborhood park).

The two parks comprise approximately 15 acres and contain the following relational facilities: two boat ramps, dock, fishing pier, basketball court, two tennis courts, and play ground equipment. The City and Orange County School Board have discussed plans to leave the recreation facilities at Ocoee Middle School open after hours for general use. The projected population for this area is 5,907, which would require approximately 23.62 acres of parkland to meet the adopted LOS standard.

The majority of the area is already developed and little land is available for additional parkland; however, 10 acres of additional parkland is recommended in this general area to accommodate future residents, some of which should be added adjoining the Municipal Lakefront Park. In addition, Natural Area Reservations are recommended adjacent to Starke Lake, Lake Bennett, and Shoal Creek. The following recreational facilities are recommended based on the proposed park size, Activity Based Recreation Guidelines, and the Ocoee Recreation Department:

- Fields—1 Little league
- Courts—1 volleyball and 1 tennis
- Trails—bike, horseback, and nature along Starke Lake, Lake Bennet, and Shoal Creek
- Areas—play, picnic, and Starke Lake, Lake Bennet ( $\pm 8$  acres) and Shoal Creek ( $\pm 80$  acres) Natural Area Reservations
- In addition, the following parks and facilities are recommended for this area: a senior center; linear park and trailhead at Maine Street to preserve the historic brick street; and a cultural arts center and ornamental park in the downtown area, within the vicinity of the City Municipal Lakefront Park.

The City recently hosted a planning charette to create a Master Plan for the Municipal Lakefront Park. The Master Plan includes plans for an amphitheater, improved boat trailer parking, a park area, and relocation of City Hall to the southeast intersection of Bluford Avenue and McKey Street with a war memorial and fountain at the entrance.

## **Neighborhood Service Area 11**

NSA 11 is located north of Seminole Road, east of the East–West Expressway, south of SR 50, and west of Old Winter Garden Road. The area is characterized by commercial, institutional (Health Central Hospital), and professional service uses with established residential communities located south of Old Winter Garden Road. The character of this area is rapidly changing as Health Central Hospital hastens the trend in the area toward

professional services uses. No City owned parks are located within this NSA. The scant amount of residential development in this area is located in unincorporated Orange County. The balance of undeveloped property in this area, located within the City, is slated for future commercial or professional services development.

Based on the analysis, no City parks or recreational facilities are recommended for this NSA.

### **Neighborhood Service Area 12**

NSA 12 is located south of the Florida Turnpike, north of Gotha-Parkridge Road, west of Moore Road, and east of Windermere Road. This area is characterized with residential development with commercial and professional service uses at the intersection of Maguire Road and Roberson Road. The balance of the undeveloped land is slated for future residential development with complementary neighborhood commercial uses. Three new subdivisions are under construction in this area.

Amenities in the area include Lake Whitney and one City owned community park—South Park. South Park comprises approximately 13 acres (City park is 10 acres and the elementary school's park is 3 acres), and is proposed to be developed with 2 ball fields, soccer field, and playground equipment. The School Board has plans to build a new Elementary School adjacent to South Park. As with Citrus Elementary, the City has Interlocal Agreement with the School Board to use the recreational facilities after hours and weekends.

Future plans for South Park include a 5,000 square foot indoor recreational facility. The County has just approved plans to develop Lake Whitney Park (approximately 20 acres) in Belmere. Lake Whitney Park is located adjacent to Lake Whitney Elementary School and will include six ball fields. In addition to Lake Whitney Park, the West Orange YMCA is located at the intersection of Windermere Road and Roberson Road, and West Orange Park (approximately 40 acres) is located on Windermere Road, just south of the YMCA. The projected population for this area is 11,572, which would require approximately 46.29 acres of parkland to meet the adopted LOS standard.

Based on the analysis, the area is well served by City owned, County owned, and private parks and recreational facilities thus no additional parks or facilities are recommended for this area. However, plans for South Park include the following:

- Fields—1 softball\*, 1 Little League baseball, and 1 soccer
- Trails—bike, horseback, and nature to connect area neighborhoods with schools
- Areas—play and picnic

\*Orange County Public School softball field is not regulation size.

## **Neighborhood Service Area Summary**

The analysis demonstrates a need for additional Neighborhood Parks in Neighborhood Service Areas 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, and 10. These NSAs roughly encompass the Clarke Road Corridor and the Ocoee-Apopka Road Corridor, north of Silver Star Road. In addition, recreational facilities are recommended for NSAs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, and 12 to accommodate future residential growth. Finally, Natural Area Reservations are recommended for NSAs 1, 4, 5, and 10.

The facilities recommended for each NSA were based on the size of the existing/proposed parks and the location of the NSA within the City. Logistically, it is feasible to locate more than one large recreational facility (i.e., ball fields and soccer fields), in one area grouped together to create a complex, as opposed to scattering them through out the City, as demonstrated in the recommendations for NSAs 1, 2, and 5. Practice/multiple use fields were recommended for NSAs 6 and 8 due to their close proximity to area soccer and baseball fields. Practice/multiple use fields give area residents the opportunity to play pick-up baseball and soccer games while scheduled league games take place on the official fields.

Based on the 2020 projected population for the JPA (68,200) and an analysis of the City owned parks, the City will require an additional 58.78 acres of park and open space land by 2020, as shown in Table 6. As development continues to occur at an accelerated rate in Ocoee, it is recommend that the City acquire the additional park and open space land in the near future.

The 2020 population projection for the twelve NSAs is approximately 63,000 and demonstrated a need of approximately 252 acres for parkland. The population projections for the JPA differ from population projections used for the NSAs, because the NSAs only include those areas that are primarily residential in nature and do not included the scattered residential areas throughout the JPA and the Commercial and Industrial areas of the City. Conversely, the amount of park and open space land required to meet the adopted LOS is proportionate to the population projection. Thus a projected population of 68,200 will require approximately 272 acres of park and open space land.

Although the projected acreage deficit is approximately 60 acres, the additional recreational facilities needed to accommodate future growth can't be located within the existing parks. For example, 60 acres of the Forest Lakes Golf Course is used for concurrency proposes; however, the City can't place additional recreation facilities on those 60 acres. Based on the analysis, an additional 25 acres, for a total of 85 acres, is needed to accommodate the additional recreational facilities needed to meet the needs of future growth.

### **C. Park and Facility Analysis**

Table 7 identifies the number of existing facilities, current deficit, theoretical needs by 2020, and additional facilities needed by 2020. The Ocoee recreation system currently needs two additional soccer fields. The need for two additional soccer fields is based on new growth and remains un-funded. This need is a carry-over from the previous impact fee update and is legitimate for consideration for funding with the Parks and Open Space Impact Fee.

Table 8 identifies the projected park needs by type and the existing population served. The new park needs are as follows: three or four neighborhood parks, one community park, four or five linear parks, and two or three urban open space parks. The Ocoee Land Development Code requires all new subdivisions to provide private recreation facilities, thus City does not anticipate constructing any new Mini Parks.

Although there are no established standards for Ornamental Parks, it is anticipated that the City will create several new Ornamental Parks in order to reinforce community design standards. Ornamental parks are needed within the Downtown Redevelopment Area, Activity Center, Interchange Impact Areas, and along the State Road 50 corridor. In addition, the City anticipates developing an Urban Open Space Park adjacent to Lake Bennet to preserve shoreline, create a public walkway, and enhance the environment both aesthetically and functionally.

This Element also identifies the following five locations for new linear parks: Maine Street, Starke Lake, Beech Center, South Maguire Road, and Lake Apopka. The majority of the older and developed portions of the community are well served by existing parks. However, there are two primary areas that are under-served: 1) Clarke Road corridor north of Silver Star Road, and 2) Ocoee-Apopka Road corridor south of the Western Expressway (comprising NSAs 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8).

**Table 7**  
**Current and Future Recreation Facility Needs**

| <b>Activity Supported</b>  | <b>Existing Facilities</b>         | <b>Current Deficit</b> | <b>Theoretical Need by 2020*</b> | <b>Additional Facilities Needed by 2020</b> |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Baseball Jr/Sr League      | 2 fields                           | -                      | 7 fields                         | 5 fields                                    |
| Baseball Little League     | 3 fields                           | -                      | 9 fields                         | 6 fields                                    |
| Basketball                 | 5 courts                           | -                      | 14 courts                        | 9 courts                                    |
| Bicycling and walking      | 4 linear miles                     | -                      | 7 miles                          | 3 miles                                     |
| Boating etc.               | 2 ramps                            | -                      | 5-6 lanes                        | 3-4 ramps                                   |
| Football                   | 1 field                            | -                      | 2-3 fields                       | 1-2 fields                                  |
| Golf                       | 18 holes                           | -                      | -                                | -   |
| Horseback riding           | 4 linear miles                     | -                      | 7 miles                          | 3 miles                                     |
| Jogging/ Physical Exercise | 1 exercise/ par course trail       | -                      | 1 course                         | -   |
| Nature study and hiking    | 725 feet unpaved                   | -                      | 7 miles                          | 7 miles                                     |
| Picnicking Facilities      | 8 parks with 42 tables & 14 grills | -                      | 14 areas                         | 6 areas                                     |
| Playground Equipment       | 10 play areas                      | -                      | 14 areas                         | 4 areas                                     |
| Racquetball and Handball   | 2 courts                           | -                      | 4-5 courts                       | 2-3 courts                                  |
| Shuffleboard               | 2 courts                           | -                      | 6 courts                         | 4 courts                                    |
| Soccer                     | 1 field**                          | 2 Fields               | 9 fields                         | 8 fields                                    |
| Softball Field             | 2 fields                           | -                      | 7 fields                         | 5 fields                                    |
| Swimming Pool              | 8,580 sq. ft. pool                 | -                      | 1-2 pools                        | 1-2 pool                                    |
| Tennis                     | 7 courts                           | -                      | 14 courts                        | 7 courts                                    |
| Volleyball                 | 2 courts                           | -                      | 7 courts                         | 5 courts                                    |

\*Facilities needed by 2020 include current needs resulting from prior development that remains un-funded.

\*\*Beech Center soccer field has been included since it is a programmed improvement.

**Table 8**  
**Projected Park And Open Space Deficiencies By 2020**

| <b>Type of Park or Open Space</b> | <b>Existing Number of Parks</b> | <b>Population Served</b> | <b>Deficiencies By the Year 2020</b> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Ornamental Park                   | 1                               | N/A                      | N/A                                  |
| Mini Park                         | 2                               | 6,000                    | N/A                                  |
| Neighborhood Park                 | 6                               | 45,000                   | 3-4 parks / 25,000 population        |
| Community Park                    | 6                               | 60,000                   | 1 park / 10,000 population           |
| Linear Park                       | 0                               | 0                        | 4-5 parks / 70,000 population        |
| Urban Open Space Park             | 0                               | 0                        | 2-3 parks / 70,000 population        |
| Natural Area Reservations         | 0                               | N/A                      | N/A                                  |

#### **D. Overall Park Upgrades**

The City's existing parks and facilities require upgrades. With few exceptions, the playgrounds in existing parks need to be renovated to meet the rapidly changing safety guidelines established by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Additionally, some existing park facilities do not meet accessibility standards established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). All of the playgrounds in the Ocoee Park System require renovations to comply with the industry-accepted safety standards developed by the CPSC. In some instances, the remedy will require only minor modifications such as the addition of safety surfaces beneath existing play equipment, while other swing sets and play sets will need to be replaced.

In addition, the existing baseball and softball facilities in the Ocoee park system should be modified to accommodate expanded growth in baseball, girls softball, and adult softball. Also, additional practice fields are needed to accommodate Ocoee Little League, girls softball, and adult softball teams. The City should ensure that any new lighted ball field, or any light fixture replacement use light fixtures that reduce or eliminate light glare into surrounding neighborhoods.

#### **E. Recreation Development Standards**

A final recommendation is to develop Recreation Development Standards with a common theme that can be incorporated throughout Ocoee's Park System. The standards will facilitate the development of a consistent appearance of parks facilities throughout the community. It is recommended that Recreation Developments Standards be applied to all new City parks and facilities and that all existing parks and facilities be renovated in a manner consistent with the Recreation Development Standards. Recommendations for Recreation Development Standards include:

- The placement of directional signs at the nearest intersection to the park.
- Entry features, which include wooden identification sign and landscaping, located at the entrance to the park or in the parking lot.

- Paint all buildings, gazebos, and picnic shelters in a consistent color theme.
- New swings and playground equipment should be constructed of similar materials and be painted in one, or a combination of, the primary colors (red, green, blue, and yellow).

## **VI. PRIORITIES**

Parks and open space planning incorporates a spectrum of interests, including growth management, fiscal management, facility planning, transportation planning, and park design. The planning process used in the development of the Ocoee Parks and Open Space Master Plan officially began in 1998 with a workshop that included members of the City Commission, Recreation Advisory Board, and the Evaluation and Appraisal Report advisory group (a representative group of citizens from throughout the City).

In addition, a community meeting was held to discuss and recommend priorities. This process resulted in the creation of two new products: 1) a list of potential park projects that included new parks and trail projects, and 2) modified and new Goals, Objectives, and Policies based on those previously adopted in the Recreation and Open Space Element of the Ocoee Comprehensive Plan.

These priorities address the needs of the overall park system and reflect a commitment by the City to preserve the quality of life in Ocoee by maintaining a comprehensive network parks and open space. The following is a summary of the priorities.

- Continue to provide 4 acres of parks and open space per 1,000 population.
- Preservation of natural open space areas.
- Offer a variety of recreational activities and events for all ages and abilities.
- Parks and open spaces should be accessible to the elderly, handicapped, and economically disadvantaged.
- Establishment of a senior citizens center.
- Create a network of sidewalks connecting the City's historical sites.
- Develop connections to the West Orange Trail, and connections between historic sites, parks, open spaces and residential areas.
- Establish five (5) new linear parks in the following areas: 1) Shoal Creek, 2) Lake Bennet, 3) Starke Lake, 4) Lake Apopka, and 5) South Maguire Road.
- Avoid duplicating efforts and coordinate events/festivals with other organizations.
- Create ornamental parks at key locations within the City.
- Provide handicap access parking and bicycle racks at all parks.
- Prioritize sidewalk projects that improve access to parks.
- Pursue funding for park and open space facilities, including County, State, and Federal assistance programs and grants.
- Offer incentives to developers to provide land for the development of identified parks and open space areas.



## **VII. FUNDING STRATEGIES**

### **A. Introduction**

There are a variety of funding strategies that may be used by the City of Ocoee to implement the Ocoee Parks and Open Space Master Plan. This Master Plan identifies two types of recreation: user-oriented and resource-based. In order to effectively plan for needed capital improvements, and to systematically arrange for necessary financing through the budget process, a logical preliminary step is to inventory the various major sources of funding available to the City.

The only parks and open space areas that may be funded through the Recreational Parks Facilities Impact Fees or facilitated by granting impact fee credits are those associated with new residents and growth. All other parks and open space projects would need to be funded in other ways. Accordingly, this section also identifies potential local and non-local funding sources.

### **B. Existing Non-Grant Local Revenue Sources**

The following is a list of revenue sources which comprise a working inventory from which the City's capability to appropriate the needed revenue for capital improvements is assessed. It should be noted that the list includes all major financial resources available to the City and is not limited to revenue sources set aside for capital improvements exclusively.

- ❖ Property Taxes
- ❖ Franchise Taxes
- ❖ Utility Taxes
- ❖ Licenses And Permits
- ❖ Intergovernmental Revenue
- ❖ Charge For Services
- ❖ Fines And Forfeitures

### **C. City Revenue Sources**

- ❖ Property Taxes (Ad Valorem)
- ❖ User Charges
- ❖ Special Sources of Revenue
- ❖ Impact Fees
- ❖ Borrowing
- ❖ General Obligation Bonds
- ❖ Revenue Bonds
- ❖ Certificates of Obligation

- ❖ State Revenue Sources
- ❖ Revenue Sharing Trust Fund
- ❖ Other Shared Revenue
- ❖ Sales Tax
- ❖ Mobile Home Licenses
- ❖ Motor Fuel Tax
- ❖ Local Option Taxes
- ❖ County Local Option Gas Tax
- ❖ Federal and State Grants and Loans
- ❖ Pay As You Go

#### **D. Florida Department of Environmental Protection**

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection offers several assistance programs.

- The Bureau of Design and Recreation Services functions within the Division of Parks and Recreation assist local agencies in meeting, maintaining and enhancing public recreation opportunities by providing financial assistance to Florida's local government leisure service agencies.
- Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program is a competitive program which provides grants for development or acquisition of land for public outdoor recreation opportunities and are available to Florida's county governments, incorporated municipalities and other legally constituted local governmental entities.
- The Florida Greenways and Trails Acquisition Program was developed to acquire lands to facilitate the establishment of a statewide system of greenways and trails. The Florida Recreational Trails Program was created in 1979, and in 1987 the Florida Rails-to-Trails Program was created to acquire abandoned railroad rights of way and additions to the Florida National Scenic Trail for recreational purposes.
- The Historical Resources Museum Grant provides matching funds to assist Florida history museums with annual operating expenses and to support the development of educational exhibits relating to Florida history.
- The Recreational Trails Program is a competitive program provides grants for projects that provide or maintain recreational trails. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 included the National Recreational Trails Fund Act and established the National Recreational Trails Funding Program.
- Florida Communities Trust (FCT) provides State funding for the acquisition of community-based projects, urban open space, parks, and greenways that implement local government Comprehensive Plans. FCT grants are available through the Florida Forever Act.

- The Trust For Public Land provides grants for the protection and preservation of land for natural, historic, cultural, and recreational purposes.
- The Florida Boating Improvements Program (FBIP) is administered through the counties, but with State funds. FBIP assists in providing boating-related resources such as ramps, restrooms, and trailer parking.

### **VIII. CONCLUSIONS**

Over the last forty years, Ocoee has systematically built a balanced park system that addresses the passive, active, indoor, and outdoor recreational needs of the citizens.

In order to satisfy these needs, the City should continue to expand its park system and recreation programs offered to the community. Additionally, the City should work closely with the private sector to further identify and provide facilities to accommodate the special leisure-time needs of the corporate community.

This plan is to be utilized as a flexible tool that should be reviewed annually and updated every five years to continue to reflect the unique recreational needs of the City.

With the proposed additions to the park system outlined in this plan will come additional maintenance and operational needs in order to best utilize, manage, and care for both the new facilities and those that exist today. The proposed improvements contained in this plan will enhance the quality of life in Ocoee and help ensure that the City is able to keep pace with the growing recreational needs of its citizens.

## **IX. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES**

The following goals, objectives, and policies are provided to give direction for future community decisions regarding parks, recreation, and open space. These goals and objectives were established based on the adopted Recreation and Open Space Element of the Ocoee Comprehensive Plan and the adopted Parks and Open Space Master Plan, September 2001. The following goals, objectives, and policies were evaluated and revised based on input from the City Commission, Recreation Advisory Board, Planning and Zoning Commission, Evaluation and Appraisal Report advisory group, and community meetings.

### **GOAL**

**THE CITY SHALL ENSURE THE ACQUISITION, PROVISION, PROTECTION, AND ENHANCEMENT OF COORDINATED, EFFICIENT, WELL-MAINTAINED, DIVERSE, AND ACCESSIBLE PARK LAND, OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION FACILITIES DESIGNED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE CITY'S CURRENT AND FUTURE RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES AND ABILITIES.**

#### **Objective 1**

The City shall provide a comprehensive system of public and private parks and open space facilities that meet the demands of current and future residents.

##### Policy 1.1

The City of Ocoee's adopted level of service shall be 4 acres of parks and open space land per 1,000 residents.

##### Policy 1.2

The City shall actively pursue the acquisition of available land for future park developments in concert with the standards and priorities established in the Ocoee Parks and Open Space Master Plan, including the adopted level-of-service standard, to create a comprehensive system of public and private site for recreation. In order to best serve the citizens, the following issues shall be considered prior to the purchase of new land: 1) parks shall be located near the center of a service area; 2) parks shall be located near other public facilities; 3) park design shall maximize access and safety; and 4) the compatibility of adjacent land uses shall be evaluated.

##### Policy 1.3

Park and open space facilities shall not be converted to non-park uses except where the City Commission finds such conversion essential to protect the public health, safety and welfare. Where there is a reduction in area or facility capacity as a result of a conversion, additional facilities necessary to restore lost capacity shall be provided within one (1) year. Should a conversion be unavoidable in a Natural Area Reservation, as defined in the Recreation & Open Space Element, the mitigation will follow the standards

set forth in the Conservation Element and the Ocoee Land Development Code. [Wekiva Parkway and Protection Act (WWPA): Ch. 369.321(3), F.S.]

Policy 1.4

Existing parks and open spaces should be maintained in a manner which promotes a safe, clean, orderly, and aesthetically-pleasing atmosphere.

Policy 1.5

The City should consider the availability of existing recreation facilities and promote the optimum utilization park system and facilities.

**Objective 2**

Parks and open space facilities shall be provided for users of all ages and abilities.

Policy 2.1

The City shall offer a variety of recreational activities, in connection with park and open space facilities, by providing for (but not limited to) passive recreation, supervised recreation activities, organized youth and adult sports, and special organized events and festivals.

Policy 2.2

The City shall ensure that all park facilities meet the most current Consumer Product Safety Commission park safety guidelines and Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility standards.

Policy 2.3

The City shall provide accessible restrooms at all City parks in conformance with the Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility standards.

Policy 2.4

Parks shall be located near or collocated with public elementary and middle schools, libraries, community centers, and similar public facilities where the needs of such other facilities are compatible.

Policy 2.5

Parks and open space areas shall be accessible to the elderly, handicapped, and economically disadvantaged.

Policy 2.6

The City should establish a Senior Citizens Center providing activities and services needed and desired by senior citizens.

**Objective 3**

The City shall work with developers and the Ocoee Historical Commission to obtain funding to identify and preserve a network of historical sites.

**Policy 3.1**

The City shall ensure that historic sites are preserved, restored, and held inviolate against diversion to other uses except in instances of overriding public need, such as natural disasters.

**Policy 3.2**

The City shall work in conjunction with the Ocoee Historical Commission and private developers to preserve the historic resources identified in the Future Land Use Element of the Ocoee Comprehensive Plan.

**Policy 3.3**

The City shall preserve Maine Street, a historic brick street that at one time was the major thoroughfare connecting Ocoee to downtown Orlando.

**Policy 3.4**

The City shall establish and maintain a pedestrian sidewalk network connecting the historical sites identified in the Future Land Use Element of the Ocoee Comprehensive Plan.

**Objective 4**

The City of Ocoee shall create a network of linear parks.

**Policy 4.1**

The City shall create new multi-purpose paved trails to serve the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, skaters, and horseback riders within the City.

**Policy 4.2**

The City shall promote and develop connections to the West Orange Trail from neighborhoods and park and open space facilities.

**Policy 4.3**

The City shall create a system of off-road connections between historic, recreational, and residential areas where possible.

**Policy 4.4**

The City shall work to establish five (5) new linear parks in the vicinity of: 1) Shoal Creek (a.k.a. Maine Street area), 2) Lake Bennet, 3) Starke Lake, 4) Lake Apopka, and 5) South Maguire Road.

**Objective 5**

The City shall maintain a coordinated system of public parks and open space facilities that are compatible with local private recreation resources.

**Policy 5.1**

The City shall avoid duplication in the provision of services and take into consideration the availability of other resources before developing new facilities, including private and County parks and open space facilities.

**Policy 5.2**

The City shall encourage public participation in park and recreation planning, through the continued existence of the Recreation Advisory Board.

**Policy 5.3**

The City, along with local businesses and non-profit organizations, shall coordinate events and festivals with local art, cultural, and historical activities.

**Policy 5.4**

The City shall create a coordinated and consistent appearance of parks facilities throughout the community.

**Policy 5.5**

The City shall work with private and non-profit organizations to develop plans for a new senior citizens center, cultural arts center, and environmental center.

**Policy 5.6**

The City shall create new ornamental parks at key locations within the City where possible.

**Policy 5.7**

The City shall continue to require that new residential developments provide private recreational facilities, which are available to all residents within the subdivision.

**Objective 6**

The City shall provide improved public access parks.

**Policy 6.1**

The City shall prioritize sidewalk improvements that create or improve pedestrian access / safety as well as those that connect City parks to neighborhoods, schools, institutional uses, and commercial areas.

**Policy 6.2**

The City shall prioritize transportation improvements that create or improve off-road bicycle and pedestrian connections to and from City parks, neighborhoods, schools, institutional uses, and commercial areas.

**Policy 6.3**

The City shall encourage the construction of bike lanes in new roadway construction improvement projects where possible.

**Policy 6.4**

Handicap parking facilities and bicycle racks shall be provided at all City parks.

**Policy 6.5**

The City shall coordinate with other governmental agencies by continuing its membership in the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council, Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

**Objective 7**

Lands designated as Conservation or Open Space shall be protected from encroachment, development, and incompatible uses.

**Policy 7.1**

Public access to City parks shall be strategically located to protect and ensure the integrity of existing natural features.

**Policy 7.2**

The City shall acquire, protect, and maintain natural area reservations and conservation easements to protect open space, wetlands, lakes, and natural vegetation from development and incompatible land uses.



**Policy 7.3**

The City shall adopt incentives to encourage the provision of open space to protect natural resources areas within development projects.

**Policy 7.4**

Open space in parks shall be maintained to protect and preserve native habitats, and provide passive recreation opportunities and public access to water bodies.

**Policy 7.5**

The City shall enhance the recreational potential and aesthetic appeal of lakes, creeks, floodways, utility easements, storm water ponds, and wetlands where possible.

**Policy 7.6**

The provision of community access to shore lines shall be considered requisite to any and all shoreline development or development adjacent to a water body. The City shall encourage public access and exposure to lakes, significant physical features, and natural open space while enhancing and preserving the natural characteristics of the areas as described in the Special Development Plans and the Commercial and Industrial Development Standards of the Land Development Code.

**Objective 8**

The City shall provide parks and open space facilities in an economically efficient manner.

**Policy 8.1**

The City shall pursue funding assistance for park and open space facilities, including County, State, and Federal assistance programs and grants.

**Policy 8.2**

The City shall preserve, maintain, and enhance existing parks through the use of adequate operating budgets, user fees, and proper management techniques. All techniques used shall be reviewed annually to ensure proper operation.

**Policy 8.3**

The City shall continue to administer the Recreational Parks Facilities Impact Fee to provide for the elimination of future parks and open space deficiencies.

Policy 8.4

Developer incentives, impact fee credits, density transfers, and tax incentives shall be used to facilitate the acquisition and development of City parks identified in the Parks and Open Space Master Plan, as appropriate.

Policy 8.5

The City shall include funds for the acquisition, development, or maintenance of City parks and open space in its Capital Improvements Program.