

Executive Summary Document



Palm Point Nature Park

Programs & Events | Parks | Recreation Facilities | Natural Areas | Cultural Areas | Greenways | Trails | Centers | Pools

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Master Plan | November 2012
City of Gainesville Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following elected officials, staff, residents and consultants participated in the development of the City of Gainesville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Master Plan:

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Gainesville-Alachua County Cultural Affairs Board
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THE MISSION OF THE CITY OF GAINESVILLE PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENTS IS TO PROVIDE AND MAINTAIN THE NATURAL, RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS THAT MAKE GAINESVILLE A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND VISIT; AND THAT HELP SUSTAIN THE CITY ECONOMICALLY, SOCIALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY

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Introduction

The City of Gainesville has a diverse system of parks, recreation and cultural facilities. This Master Plan provides a blueprint for how the system can best improve and grow over the next twenty (20) years.

In recent years, multiple City departments have merged together to form the City of Gainesville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Department. An overarching goal of this plan is to identify strategies for the Department to become better integrated, both in terms of its facilities and programs but also its coordination.



The Historic Thomas Center; home to PRCA

Purpose

1. **Engage** the community and key stakeholders (over 1,500 citizens participated in this process);
2. **Assess** current and future needs for recreation programs; cultural and public art programs; recreation facilities and parks; and, marketing and volunteers;
3. **Define** core services, roles and balance between parks, recreation and cultural facilities and programs;
4. **Identify** new revenue sources to support operations and capital costs;
5. **Incorporate** best practices;
6. **Recommend** priority improvements, actions, and potential cost benefits;
7. **Align** the department for achieving accreditation through the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies; and
8. **Provide** an illustrative, usable, and unified master plan for the department.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Existing Conditions and Needs

Overall, the City of Gainesville's parks, recreation and cultural facilities are attractive and well maintained. There were few instances of litter or vandalism observed at the facilities visited. Many of the nature parks are in pristine settings, and some have interpretive elements, well maintained trails, and several new boardwalks.

In addition, the City is currently in the process of making improvements such as updating signage as well as incorporating more sustainable fixtures and materials within the parks. One of the most significant challenges system-wide is adapting and/or renovating legacy parks and facilities to be ADA accessible. There is also need to improve the overall quality of facilities, provide greater connectivity and activate parks with additional programming.

A tool used to evaluate the existing system were Level of Service (LOS) analyses of access, facilities, and acreage for both current and future populations. These analyses suggested that there is a need for the following types of facilities over the next twenty (20) years:

- Passive open spaces
- Picnic facilities
- Playgrounds/tot lots
- Walking/exercise paths
- Baseball/softball Fields
- Canoe/kayak launches
- Volleyball courts
- Football/soccer fields
- Indoor recreation centers
- Public meeting rooms
- Bicycling trails
- Tennis courts
- Basketball courts
- Swimming pools

These findings are also supported by the LOS acreage analysis. The City's Comprehensive Plan requires that the City maintain a LOS of 8.8 acres of park land per 1,000 residents. Currently the City provides 3,080 acres of park land, including over 2,200 acres as nature parks. In order to provide this same level of service for an increased population in the year 2030, an additional 127 acres of park land will need to be acquired.

According to two different public opinion surveys, Gainesville residents are generally supportive of the Department acquiring additional land for open space.

Top priority improvements included:

- Upgrading existing neighborhood and community parks;
- Acquiring open space for passive activities;
- Upgrading existing community centers;
- Upgrading existing youth/adult athletic fields; and
- Developing new walking/biking trails.



Participant filling out a survey at the Master Plan Kick-Off Workshop



Trails and Bikeways group during the Master Plan Visioning Workshop



OUR VISION IS TO BE SEEN AS THE KEEPERS AND HOSTS OF THE PLACES WHERE NATURE, RECREATION AND CULTURE MEET, OFFERING MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES FOR ALL. WE ALSO WANT TO BE SEEN AS CONTRIBUTORS TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY THROUGH ENHANCED PROPERTY VALUES, INCREASED TOURISM, AND A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE; AS CONTRIBUTORS TO SOCIAL EQUITY AND STABILITY, AS PROVIDERS OF AFFORDABLE PROGRAMS AND EXPERIENCES; AND AS STEWARDS OF THE ENVIRONMENT ON BEHALF OF THE COMMUNITY



Vision

The PRCA Vision 2020 for Gainesville's parks, recreation and cultural system is organized into six "sub-subsystems":

1. New and Improved Parks & Programs

The 20-year vision for parks is anchored in improved access, amenities and aesthetics at the City's existing parks. In addition, the vision also includes acquisition and development of eight new neighborhood parks.

2. Athletic Facilities & Programs

To streamline athletic fields and programs, a typology of four field types was developed: athletic fields (rectangular sports fields mostly for football, lacrosse and soccer), diamond fields (baseball and softball), recreation and/or practice-quality facilities, and tournament quality facilities. New facilities are prioritized in currently underserved areas mostly on the western and northwestern quadrants of the City.

3. Nature Parks, Programs & Environmental Education

The vision for Gainesville's nature parks and environmental education is to use education, interpretation and exhibits that create authentic experiences that focus on environmental appreciation, the ethical stewardship of natural resources and on the urban forest and its value to the City's quality of life. This will be accomplished through activating nature parks with small group activities and elevating experiences with nature system-wide.

4. Cultural Facilities & Programs

The vision for the City's cultural facilities and programs is to establish Gainesville as the "Cultural Center of Florida." In addition to increasing the numbers and types of cultural programs, the vision also recommends the development of a destination outdoor performing arts venue.

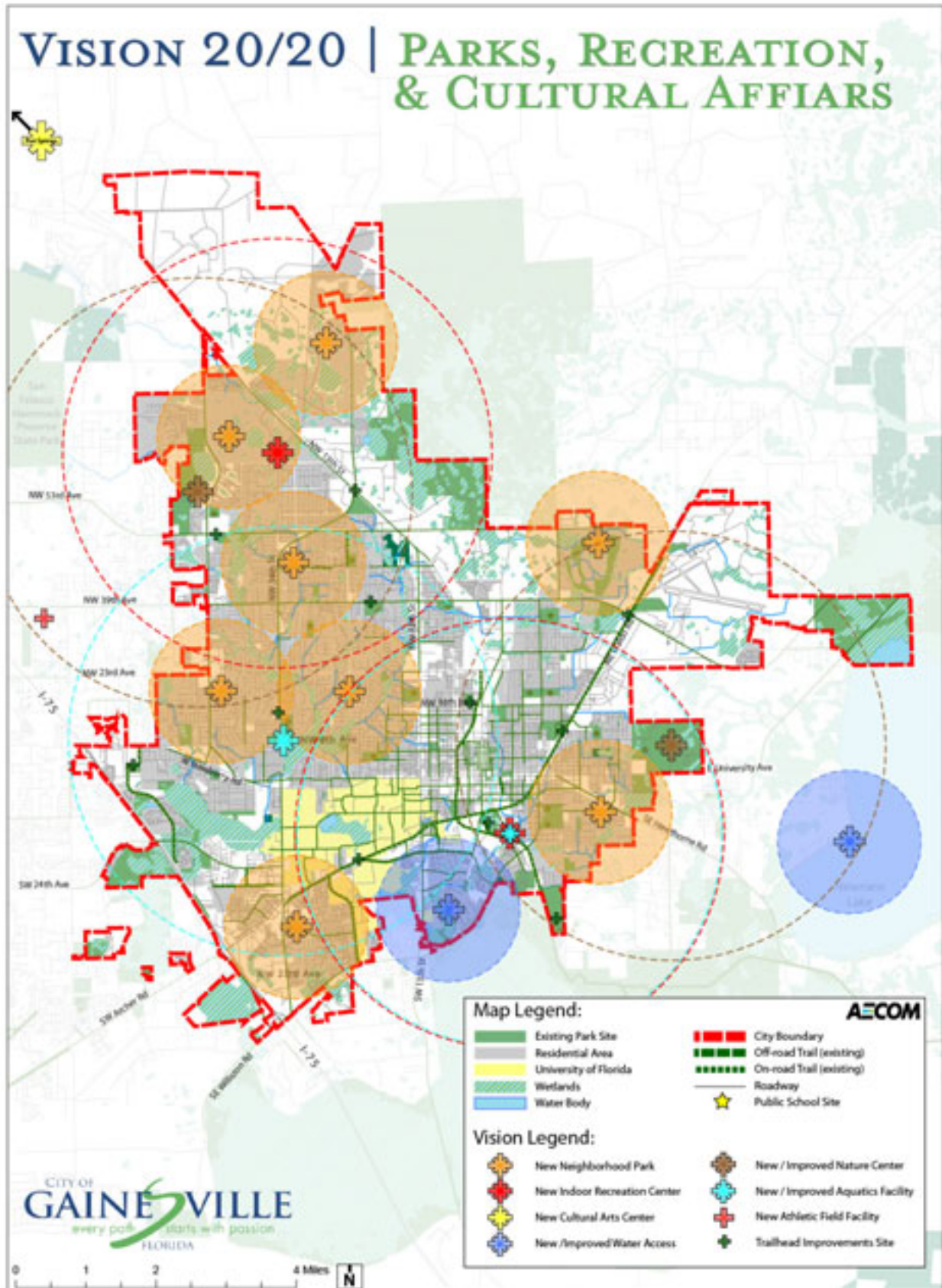
5. Recreation Centers, Pools and Programs

The vision for recreation centers, pools and programs is to adopt a "quadrant-based model", meeting residents' needs in each of the City's four quadrants. Key objectives include filling the gap on the west/northwest side, focusing on multi-functional spaces with one specialized component and environmental sustainability.

6. Trails & Bikeways System

Gainesville's future trails and bikeways system will have facilities that are safe, multi-purpose and serve a diverse population. It will be a fully interconnected and accessible system with a superior user experience. Components include off-road multi-purpose trails, enhanced sidewalk trails, on-road shoulder trails, on-road bike lanes, shared rights-of-way (ROWS), access points and trailheads.

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PRCA Master Plan Comprehensive Illustrative Vision Map

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Implementation

Based on costs derived from current market trends and similar projects, the complete implementation of the vision is estimated to cost approximately \$55M. The City should anticipate approximately \$2.75M (five percent of the capital costs) for annual, ongoing operations and maintenance costs once the Vision is completed.

City of Gainesville staff estimated that approximately \$30M will be available for improvements to the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs system over the next twenty (20) years, based on historic budget levels, as follows:

Vision Subsystem	Order of Magnitude Cost Estimate
1. New and Improved Parks	\$21,400,000
2. Athletic Facilities & Programs	\$2,000,000
3. Nature Parks, Programs, & Environmental Education	<i>(included within New and Improved Parks)</i>
4. Cultural Facilities & Programs	\$12,750,000
5. Recreation Centers, Pools & Programs	\$11,100,000
6. Trails & Bikeways	\$7,886,000
TOTAL	\$55,136,000
+5% Capital Costs Annual	+\$2,700,000 (annually)

Currently the Department averages approximately \$1.5 M annually through Capitol Improvement Project funding and a variety of other sources.

There are two possible approaches to funding the recommended projects. One option is to pay-as-you-go, implementing projects as funds become available. The second option is partially pay-as-you-go, but also includes borrowing \$26,000,000 in order to expedite high priority projects.

FY 2013:	\$1.5M
City CIP for Park and Facility Improvements	\$1.28M
Parks Conservancy/Capital Campaigns	\$5K
Concessions Revenues	\$5K
Grant Funding	\$75K
User Fees	\$100K
Corporate Sponsorships	\$40K
Volunteer Programs (32,000 hrs.)	(\$470K not included within the subtotal)



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FY 2014-2018: \$6.0M

City CIP for Park Improvements	\$5.17M
Parks Conservancy/Capital Campaigns	\$25K
Concessions Revenues	\$25K
Grant Funding	\$375K
User Fees	\$250K
Corporate Sponsorships	\$160K
Volunteer Programs (150,000 hrs.)	(\$2.35M- not included within the subtotal)

FY 2019-2033: \$22.5M

City CIP for Park Improvements	\$17.8M
Parks Conservancy/Capital Campaigns	\$50K
Concessions Revenues	\$50K
Grant Funding	\$2.0M
User Fees	\$2.0M
Corporate Sponsorships	\$600K
Volunteer Programs (750,000 hrs.)	(\$11.75M - not included within the subtotal)

Total Funding FY2013-2033 \$30M

Apart from funding, an essential component to implementing the plan is improving coordination within the Department and developing stronger partnerships with outside organizations in particularly the School Board of Alachua County. Additionally, marketing efforts will need to become more widespread and effective at communicating the City's parks, recreation and cultural facility assets.

Park System Master Plans are dynamic, long-range planning documents that evolve over time based on the ever-changing needs of a community's residents. The final success of the City of Gainesville Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs Master Plan relies on continued input and dialog with the City's residents. If you'd like to get involved in helping the Department implement PRCA Vision 2020, please contact the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs Department at 1-352-334-5067 or look for updates on the City website at:

www.gainesvilleparks.org/Vision2020



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Our Vision is to be seen as
the keepers and hosts of the
places where nature, recreation
and culture meet, offering
memorable experiences
for all!

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