

**CITY OF PALM BEACH GARDENS
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Recreation and Open Space Element**

SUPPORT DOCUMENT

Prepared by:

**The City of Palm Beach Gardens
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I. INTRODUCTION

The Recreation and Open Space Element for the City of Palm Beach Gardens provides a summary of existing recreation and open space facilities and lands, recommends desired levels of service for meeting the recreation needs of existing and future residents, and identifies how the city can ensure that the needs are met.

In 1970, Palm Beach Gardens had 6,105 permanent residents. By 1990, the permanent population of the city had increased to 22,985. Currently the size of the City stands at approximately 56 square miles and includes approximately 58,022 people.

The City is committed to providing a strong parks and recreation program to its residents. Currently, over 35% of the City's land mass is dedicated toward open space and recreation lands, and the City continues to provide additional innovative recreation programs as growth has continued.



Golf Course City of Palm Beach Gardens.

The Proposed EAR-based amendments have reviewed the Element in its entirety and have included the following initiatives: New park categories have been added to provide diversity within the park classification system; the City's inventory and data has been updated; new policies to encourage parks and open space linkage opportunities have been added; new policies to require a Parks and Recreation Master plan have been added; new policies to include coordination with other Intergovernmental agencies have been added; new policies to ensure ADA compliance have been added; and minor modifications have been made to "clean-up" certain numbering and language changes.

II. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Public parks and recreation lands and facilities are provided and maintained by the Palm Beach Gardens Recreation and Parks Department. The Department is responsible for recommending the acquisition, development, and maintenance of all City-owned parks and related facilities.

The Parks and Recreation Department was chosen by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) as a National Gold Medal Award Finalist in 1982, 1987, and 1988, and was cited as one of the top four parks and recreation departments in the country. The Department won this Award in 1989, and was cited as the best parks and recreation department in the country for its population class. In 1993, 1994 and 2003 the Parks and Recreation Department was the recipient of the Dorothy Mullen Award, which is an arts and humanitarian award given by the Florida Recreation and Parks

Association. The Department was also the winner of the 2006 Best Public/Nonprofit outdoor family aquatics center awarded by Aquatics International. Additionally, the Department was awarded a 2004 SAVVY AWARD for the best recreation publication catalogue. The Department presently consists of 43 full-time recreation staff and 20 full-time parks staff. Numerous permanent part-time employees and approximately 175 volunteers are also essential to the program. (Source: City of Palm Beach Gardens Parks and Recreation Department 2008).

The Department offers programs for age groups ranging from toddlers to senior citizens. The program is well diversified from Aquatics to a Community Theater Group. A seven-member advisory board composed of city residents meets once a month to assist the Department in formulating ideas for expansion and meeting citizen needs.

The Palm Beach County School Board has two high schools, two junior high (middle) schools, and four elementary schools in the City which provide limited recreational facilities. However, the facilities and programs provided by the School Board are directed toward the student body and not city residents at-large; therefore, their facilities are not included in the inventory for this element. The City and School Board have entered into Interlocal agreements for the joint use of ballfields and recreational facilities. City residents now have access to school facilities to use when not being utilized for student activities. The City/School Board partnership has improved recently, but still has not worked quite as well as envisioned because use of school facilities has been limited due to reservations for student use and poor maintenance of grounds during student off-seasons.



Bike and Pedestrian Pathway. City of Palm Beach Gardens.

The Youth Athletic Association (YAA) operates athletic programs in the city. The YAA is a recreation program-oriented group run by volunteers. The Association provides organized roller hockey, basketball, baseball, and softball teams and leagues. However, it does not own or maintain any park lands or recreation facilities. Instead, the Association generally uses City facilities for its activities.

Historically the private sector has provided a wide variety of recreation lands and facilities to residents in Palm Beach Gardens. While most of these facilities are reserved strictly for the use of the residents of each individual community, they still play an important part in serving the recreation needs of some residents of the City. All recent major developments have contributed funds and/or land for the improvement of public recreation facilities in accordance with the City's development code requirements and additionally all new residential development contribute parks and recreation impact fees

on a per homesite basis. The Oaks, PGA National and Mirasol are all examples where significant contributions were made to the City's public recreation inventory. The inventory of recreation facilities presented later in this Element include both public and private facilities. The current Level of Service (LOS) calculation only includes existing public lands.

Parks Classification

Existing and projected recreation lands for Palm Beach Gardens have been defined and classified for this element. The categories presented below generally follow the size by class put forward by the NRPA. However, it should be noted that these descriptions represent a general, nationwide optimum definition of park facilities. As a result, attainment of these standards varies by specific, individual community needs. Applications of these standards to smaller, residential communities are often difficult and inappropriate. Thus these standards should be viewed only as a guide for analyzing existing facilities in the City and when projecting the types of needs for future facilities. As part of the EAR-based amendment process, three new additional park categories are being added: Mini-parks, open space parks, and eco-oriented parks. These new park categories reflect the recent trends of existing parks already in the City while providing for a broader classification for future park diversity. The new park classifications include.

Neighborhood Park

The neighborhood park is a "walk or bike to" park, generally located along streets where people can walk or bicycle without encountering heavy traffic. It serves the population of a neighborhood in a radius of up to one-half mile and generally has 2 acres for each 1,000 population. Considering that few vacant sites remain in the eastern area of the City, the desirable size is 2-15 acres instead of 15 acres as stated in the current Comprehensive Plan.

Because the service areas of a neighborhood park and an elementary school often coincide, it is desirable for the neighborhood park to physically join the elementary school when feasible. Both park and school serve the same basic population, share compatible land uses, and maintain recreation facilities that are of mutual benefit. Examples of neighborhood parks include Mirasol Park, Oaks Park, Lilac Park, Riverside Park, Lake Catherine Park, and Plant Drive Park.

Since recreation needs vary from one neighborhood to another, site design should be flexible in order to meet the particular recreation needs of a neighborhood. Site design should also reflect the character of a neighborhood and incorporate compatible elements of both passive and active types of recreation. The park area should be suitable for intense recreational activities. Typical facilities developed in a neighborhood park may include play apparatus, recreation buildings, multi-purpose courts, sports fields, picnic areas, and free play areas. Additional facilities may be added depending on the recreation demands of a neighborhood.

Community Park

A community park is generally located near major streets or arterials. It is designed to serve the needs of four to six neighborhoods—which may be said to constitute a community—and serves community residents within a radius of up to three miles. Multi-modal access to community parks is strongly encouraged. Multi-modal access can be enhanced by bike paths and pedestrian walkways.

Typical facilities found in community parks are designed to serve the entire family and include both passive and active recreation opportunities such as playground areas, recreation buildings, sports fields, paved multipurpose courts, picnic areas, open or free play areas, swimming pools, and landscaping. Community parks within the City include: Gardens Tennis Center, Burns Road Community Center, Riverside Community Center, PGA National Park, and the Lake Catherine Sports Complex.



City of Palm Beach Gardens. Lake Catherine Community Park.

A minimum of 25 acres for each community park is recommended, with acreage needs based on an optimum standard of 5 acres per 1,000 population. A community park offers a wide range of programs and facilities for individuals and families. Just as a neighborhood park fulfills the recreation needs of a neighborhood, a community park is designed to meet the recreation needs of an entire community.

The park area should be suitable for intense recreational activities. Typical facilities at a community park include swimming pools, ballfields, tennis courts, play areas, picnic areas, multi-purpose courts, recreation buildings, and sports fields. Additional recreation facilities may be included to meet a particular recreation demand in a community. Adequate off-street parking may be needed to contain parking overflow. Two important elements of every community park are the use of landscaping and the provision of passive recreation areas.

Urban-District Park

An urban-district park is designed to serve the recreation needs of several communities or a City, and usually provides areas and facilities that are resource based. The park area may contain natural or aesthetic quality for outdoor recreation, such as picnicking, boating, fishing, swimming, camping and trail uses, as well as active play areas. A secondary objective may be the conservation and management of the natural/cultural environment, providing opportunities for viewing, studying nature and wildlife habitat.

The desirable size for an urban-district park is 200 acres. However, a urban-district park may achieve the desired size and scope by combining City neighborhood, community or eco-oriented parks together with parkland managed by surrounding communities or the County.

The most important aspect of an urban-district park is that it provides recreational opportunities that are resource based. Design and development of all outdoor recreation resources and facilities should promote an atmosphere of beauty and serenity that is based directly on the natural environment.

Specialized Recreational Facilities

These sites will vary widely in size and the number of residents served. Examples of specialized facilities would include marinas, swimming pools, nature centers, outdoor theaters and publicly-owned golf courses. Specialized facilities may be appropriate in combination with a community or urban-district park.



City of Palm Beach Gardens. Aquatics Complex

Mini-Parks

Mini-parks are small facilities that serve a concentrated or limited population, and when designed with a tot-lot, is geared toward toddlers. Mini-parks are designed to serve the needs of a neighborhood within a radius of up to six (6) blocks. A minimum of one half (1/2) acre for each stand-alone park is recommended. Mini-parks primarily offer passive recreation and typical facilities provided include playground areas, benches, open space, picnic tables, shade trees and landscaping. There are numerous examples of private mini-parks within planned residential neighborhoods. Since most of the neighborhood and community parks offer the facilities typically found in mini-parks on a larger scale, the City has not established a level of service standard based on population for this category of park. Adequate provision of mini-parks will be measured through service area standards required for new development and redevelopment.

Open Space (Squares, Linear Parks, Golf Courses, And Greenways)

Open space is defined as any land or water surface that affords unobstructed physical movement, and is relatively free of human-made structural mass, except for structures intended to serve the use of the open space for passive recreation. Open space can be classified in two ways, as either green open space or as urban open space.

Green open space may include golf courses and greenways. Green open space includes land such as Frenchman's Preserve, Loxahatchee Slough and our Municipal Golf Course. Urban open space, on the other hand, exists principally to provide congested urban environments with aesthetically pleasing buffer areas, to protect natural resources, and to provide passive recreation opportunities.

Urban open space may include plazas, squares, courtyards, linear parks, and also the area covered by lakes, streams and canals. These areas are typically located within built-up areas and, in some cases, may offer benches, commemorative structures, art in public places, trails, or paths.

Either type of open space can be publicly or privately owned. A publicly owned example is the linear park along Riverside Drive. Since open space is a fundamental element in land classification, as well as land use planning and resource management, these areas are not considered public parks but have been included in the level of service standard calculations as part of the overall recreation and open space.

Eco-Oriented Park

The City recognizes the importance of protecting the diverse ecosystem, while embracing the natural resources available to our residents. Eco-oriented parks provide residents enjoyment and awareness of our natural environment and shall utilize eco-friendly design to minimize the impact to the environment. These parks are unique in function and location; therefore these sites vary widely in size and number of residents served. For that reason, the City has not established a level of service standard based on population for this category of park.



Examples of an eco-oriented park are the Sandhill Crane Access Park and Allamanda Gopher Preserve. Future eco-oriented parks may include utilization of conversation lands, such as Frenchman's Creek Mangrove, Frenchman's Forest, Prosperity Oaks Preserve, and the Loxahatchee and Hungryland Sloughs. The most important aspect of an eco-oriented park is its relationship to the natural environment, and providing awareness to our residents about the City's natural resources. For this reason only, eco-oriented parks may include recreation activities such as kayak rental facilities, hiking and biking trails, and learning centers.

Inventory of Existing Facilities

Table 7-1 summarizes the inventory of existing public park acreages in Palm Beach Gardens. Generally, the parks offer a wide variety of facilities which are available to the general populace. The table indicates that the City owns and operates nine neighborhood type parks, five community type parks, four mini parks, one eco-oriented park, and three open space park. The total of all publicly-owned parks is 348.49 acres. See Table 7-1 for the inventory listing the City public parks, and Tables 7-2 and 7-3 for

the total inventory of equipment and facilities for these public parks. Privately-owned parks are listed in Appendix 7A of this element.

Table 7-1: Existing Public Parks

Park	Acres	Park Type
City Hall	13.0	Neighborhood Public
Plant Drive	8.0	Neighborhood Public
Ilex Circle South	0.5	Mini-Park
Holly Drive	0.5	Mini-Park
PGA National	36.0	Community Public
Gardens Park – East of City Hall	20.0	Community Public
Gardens Park Addition	16.9	Neighborhood Public
Palm Beach Gardens Community Center	12.0	Neighborhood Public
Lakeside Area	4.0	Neighborhood Public
Lake Catherine Park	26.0	Community Park
Riverside Youth Enrichment Center	2.0	Neighborhood Public
The Oaks Community Park	11.0	Community Park
City Park	2.25	Neighborhood Public
Lilac Park	16.0	Neighborhood Public
Mirasol Park	12.0	Neighborhood Public
Sandhill Crane Access Park	11.0	Eco-Oriented Park
Tennis Center	14.0	Community Public
Twins Park	0.75	Mini-Park
Thompson River Linear Park	0.5	Mini-Park
Municipal Golf Course	141.99	Open Space Park
TOTAL	348.39	

Source: City of Palm Beach Gardens Parks and Recreation Department and GIS Department, 2008.

Table 7-1: Existing Public Eco Park/Conservation Areas

Park	Acres	Park Type
Frenchman's Forest	160.16	Open Space Park
Loxahatchee Slough	12,599.06	Open Space Park
Allamanda Gopher Preserve	4.00	Eco-Oriented Park
TOTAL	12,763.25	<i>(Acreages include entire conservation area)</i>

Source: City of Palm Beach Gardens GIS Department, 2008.

These eco-oriented parks offer an array of recreational activities including nature walks, bird watching, hiking and running trails, photography, kayak and canoe opportunities, and equestrian trails. The Appendix Section provides more information regarding the Loxahatchee Slough Natural Area Trail Guide.

Recreation Programs

An important and distinctive aspect of recreation in Palm Beach Gardens is the City-directed recreation program. The City organizes, schedules, and staffs numerous recreation programs and classes including:

- Arts and crafts
- Dance
- Various Athletics programs and classes
- Wellness classes
- Aquatics programs
- Community theater
- Continuing education classes
- Camp Programs
- Senior Trips
- Special Events

The City offered approximately 225 different recreation programs generating \$345,000. A wide variety of special events are also provided. These programs are funded through a combination of general revenues and user fees. The number of programs offered and participation varies throughout the year and is, therefore, difficult to measure.

Recreation and Open Space Element

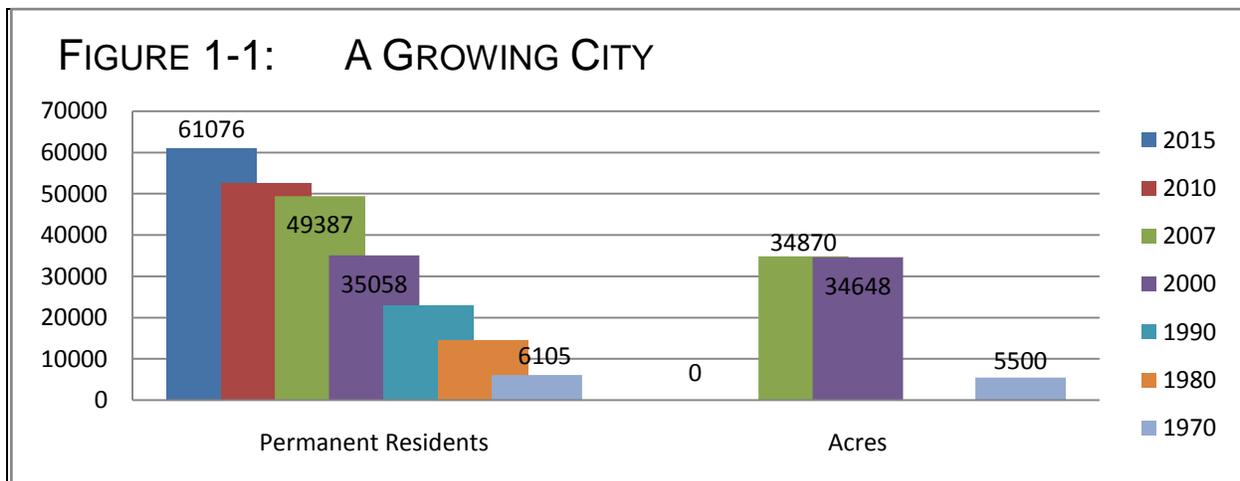
Table 7-2. Existing Public Recreation Facilities

Facility	Public (City)
Gazebo/Pavilion/Cabana	23
Basketball Courts	22
Tennis Courts	19
Racquetball/Handball Courts	4/2
Tot Lot	12
Jogging Path/Vita-Course	5
Pool	3
Volleyball	2
Recreation Center*	3
Shuffleboard	6
Golf Course	1
Picnic Area	27
Soccer/Multi-Purpose Fields	13
Softball/Baseball/T-Ball	24
Gymnasium	2
Horseshoes	6
Fishing Area (no boating)	4
Food Concession	5

III. Trends and Challenges

Permanent Population Estimates and Projections

The City utilizes the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) data, which estimates that its permanent population has grown to approximately 49,387 in 2007. The City has a history of growth; both in population and in municipal acreage (refer to Figure 1-1). As noted in Figure 1-1, the City's population grew from 6,105 permanent residents to 22,965 between 1970 and 1990, or nearly triple the population (276% increase). More recently, the city has grown from 22,965 to 35,058 from 1990 to 2000 (53%). It is estimated that the City has grown by 14,329 persons since the 2000 census. Within the last seven years, the population increase almost equals the number of persons added to the City population in the 20 years between 1970 and 1990. The City is projected to continue growing, with projections from the County's 2006 Population Model indicating the City's 2015 population to be 61,076. This estimate does not factor increases in the City's municipal area.



For more detailed information and analysis on the City's population projections refer to the support documents provided in the Future Land Use Element EAR document.

In order to accommodate these growth trends with parks and recreation services, the City must plan accordingly for adequate maintenance of the existing parks and recreation services as well as the provision of new services for future growth.

Levels of Service

In order to assess whether future growth can be accommodated, the current Level of Service (LOS) must be multiplied by anticipated population of a given year. Based on a future population of 61,076 permanent residents by 2015, and an existing LOS standard

of 3.7 acres per 1,000 people, the City currently has sufficient parks and recreation acreage to accommodate residential growth until 2015.

The level of service of existing facilities is currently maintained through improvements and expansions to parks and recreation facilities accomplished through budgetary expenditures, and land/money dedications required of new development Projects. Currently, the ideal recreation facility standards are as follows:

Table 7-4. Ideal Recreation Facility Standards

Facilities	Level of Service Standards¹
Tennis courts	1 per 4,000
Shuffleboard courts	1 per 7,500
Racquetball courts	1 per 15,000
Basketball courts	1 per 10,000
Soccer fields	1 per 4,500
Softball fields	1 per 6,000
T-Ball fields	1 per 8,000
Baseball fields	1 per 5,000
Roller hockey rinks	1 per 20,000
Skate parks	1 per 30,000
Pavilions	1 per 10,000
Picnic area	1 per 10,000
Vita course	1 per 30,000
Jogging trail	1 per 20,000
Playground/tot lot	1 per 7,000
Horseshoes	1 per 7,000
Fishing area (non boat)	1 per 20,000
Boat access	1 per 40,000
Nature center	1 per 90,000
Community swimming pools	25 s.f. per capita ²
Recreation centers	1 per 25,000
Golf course (18-hole)	1 per 100,000
Parks	
Neighborhood park	4.2 acres per 1,000 ³
Community park	
¹ Level of Service standards are based on permanent population. ² Includes pool, deck area and related facilities. ³ The City uses a combined neighborhood and community park LOS.	

Additional Policies have been added to the Recreation and Open Space Element to ensure that the City reviews its LOS on a periodic basis, and to review its impact fee

program to capture direct and indirect fees for parks and open space. When comparing other surrounding Cities and Counties in the Treasure Coast area and their current LOS for parks and recreation facilities, the City's LOS is slightly lower than the average standard. For example, St. Lucie County and Indian River County have an existing LOS standard of 5 acres/1,000 persons, the Village of Wellington 10 acres/1000 persons; West Palm Beach 5.5 acres/1000 persons, and Palm Beach County 5.12 acres/1000 persons.

Policy 7.1.2.3.: *By 2010, the City shall review the impact fee program and shall explore other methods of capturing direct and indirect impact fees for recreation and*

New residential development must pay building permit impact fees on new development to help off-set the cost of capital and operating parks and recreation expenditures. Currently, the City does not charge park impact fees to commercial businesses. By 2010, the City will be required to review the current LOS standards to determine whether adequate facilities and programs exist to provide for the population needs.

Policy 7.1.1.3.: *By 2009, the City shall review its LOS standard to reflect current trends. The LOS standard shall consider the addition of specific types of facilities, such as soccer fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, etc. or more general categories, such as active and passive recreation areas and open space. The LOS standard shall also consider the addition of recreational programs.*

Americans with Disabilities Compliance

A new Policy is being added to provide compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This policy requires the City to provide a diverse number of facilities to persons in special needs meeting ADA diversity guidelines. The Policy is:

Policy 7.1.3.4.: *Recreation facilities shall be provided consistent with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, including the number of facilities available for and accessible to persons with special needs. The City shall provide a diverse number of facilities accessible to person with special needs and shall meet or exceed the ADA diversity guidelines. By 2011, the City shall complete an inventory of existing recreation facilities that are accessible to persons with special needs. If deficiencies exist in number or diversity of recreation facilities for persons with special needs, the City shall schedule appropriate improvements and funding within its capital improvements program to remedy the deficiency.*

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

A new Policy is being added to the Comprehensive Plan as part of the EAR-based amendment to require the preparation of a parks and recreation Master Plan based on the results of the survey required by 2012. The Master Plan will be in close coordination with the Parks and Recreation Department, and it will essentially review all parks and recreation facility existing conditions in order to determine future needs. This plan will be conducted subsequent to the ADA compliance review study and therefore, will be able to incorporate the findings into the Master Plan.

Policy 7.1.4.8.: *By 2012, based on the results of the parks and recreation survey, the City shall prepare a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The City shall continue to assess the Master Plan to reflect the most current user survey.*

Additionally, a new Policy is being added to ensure that the City regularly review Palm Beach County's Master Plan to ensure updates and changes are incorporated on a regular basis:

Policy 7.1.4.9.: *The City shall review updates of the Countywide Parks and Recreation Master Plan, as they are done, and make the necessary updates to this element to achieve consistency.*

IV. RECOMMENDATION AND SUMMARY

Using the current adopted level of service standard of 3.7 acres per 1,000 residents, the current recreation inventory will meet the needs of the projected 2015 permanent population based on the existing number of public parks currently located within the City.

The City adopted a parks and recreation impact fee in 1997. The impact fee system assesses each new residential unit built, including infill development. The City utilizes the fees to acquire new park property, develop the facilities needed to meet the ideal standards, and to meet other demonstrated recreational needs. One of the City's goals will be to review this fee schedule to potentially include commercial development since at this time recreation impact fees apply mainly to new residential development. Hotels also contribute to parks and open space impact fees.

The Recreation and Open Space Element consists of a single goal; to provide adequate, sustainable park, recreation and open space facilities and areas offering a broad range of activities to all current and future citizens. Staff proposes to assess the City's Level of Service (LOS) standard for recreation and open space, and to define three new categories of recreation and open space: mini-parks, open space, and eco-oriented parks.

The following initiatives are part of the proposed Recreation and Open Space Element:

- Provide open space areas, active and passive recreation facilities for residents that comply with established LOS standards. *(Objective 7.1.1., Page 7-1, Existing)*
- Meet the recreation and open space needs of our residents through public funds, gifts, contributions, mandatory fees or dedications. *(Objective 7.1.2., Page 7-4, Existing)*
- Provide vehicular and pedestrian access to all public facilities. *(Objective 7.1.3., Page 7-5, Existing)*
- Improve and coordinate efforts with all levels of government and the private sector to provide recreation opportunities. *(Objective 7.1.4., Page 7-6, Existing)*

The following studies or actions are recommended as part of the EAR-based amendments:

COMPLETION YEAR	STUDY/PLAN/ACTION
2010	Review impact fee program and explore alternative methods of capturing direct and indirect impact fees for recreation and open space. (Policy 7.1.2.3., Page 7-5) Adopt service area standards in LDRs for PUDs and PCDs to provide open space and mini-parks within certain distances of homes and employment centers (Policy 7.1.1.5., Page 7-1)
	Review LOS standards to reflect current trends (Policy 7.1.1.3., Page 7-1)
2011	Complete inventory of existing recreation facilities accessible to persons with special needs (Policy 7.1.3.4., Page 7-5)
2012	Prepare Parks and Recreation master Plan (Policy 7.1.4.8., Page 7-6)