



PARKS & RECREATION

Administration, Aquatics, Park Maintenance and Recreation

TO: A. Jerome Fletcher II, ICMA-CM, MPA, City Manager
THROUGH: Juliana B. Bellia, Assistant City Manager
FROM: Trish Sturgess, Assistant Director, Parks & Recreation
CC: Sandy Pfundheller, CPRE, Parks & Recreation Director
SUBJECT: Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting, March 19, 2026, Action Items
DATE: March 30, 2026

During the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting on March 19, 2026, the following actions were taken by the Board:

- The 2025 Parks & Recreation Impact Report was presented.
 - 2025 Parks & Recreation Impact Report is attached for review.
- A motion was made by Board Member File, seconded by Board Member Jackomin, to recommend charging fees for bounce houses at City events.
 - A motion to amend was made by Board Member File, seconded by Board Member Jackomin, to recommend that fees for bounce houses and specialized activities at special events be charged to offset costs. The motion to amend carried on the following vote: Yes: 8
 - The main motion as amended carried on the following vote: Yes: 8
- A motion was made by Board Member Wallace, seconded by Board Member Gray, to recommend the Commission explore sponsorship opportunities. The motion carried on the following vote: Yes: 8
- A review of recent and upcoming Parks & Recreation events and City Commission Agenda Items was provided.

Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns.

TS/JBB/SP



2025 IMPACT REPORT

Oct. 2024-Sept. 2025



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MISSION

To promote healthy and socially rewarding activities through the preservation of cultural resources and the provision of diverse high-quality parks and natural spaces.

VISION

To be a recognized leader in providing parks, facilities and programs that increase wellness and enrich life experiences within our community.





A letter from the Director



This report tells the story of connection, wellness and community pride.



Sandy Pfundheller
Director Parks & Recreation

The 2025 Parks and Recreation Impact Report is a reflection of how our parks, facilities, programs and services continue to shape the quality of life in North Port.

This year’s report captures the scale and significance of our impact. In 2025, more than 850,000 visits were made to North Port parks, and nearly 620,000 individuals were directly served at our core facilities, underscoring how essential these spaces are to daily life. Beyond attendance, this report tells the story of connection, wellness and community pride. Inside, you will find how our parks supported everyday recreation and special moments, how programs and events brought neighbors together and how strategic investments

strengthened our system for today and the future. From youth and teen programs to active adults, from signature events to quiet moments on the trail, Parks and Recreation remains a place where everyone belongs.

The 2025 Impact Report also looks ahead. It showcases progress on key initiatives, partnerships that expanded our reach and projects that move us closer to our long-term vision. Each page highlights the dedication of our staff and the support of our partners as we work together for our community.

See the difference we’re making—explore the full 2025 Impact Report to learn how North Port Parks & Recreation is enriching lives and strengthening quality of life in North Port.

WITH GRATITUDE TO OUR CITY LEADERSHIP

We appreciate the City Commission’s strategic investment in Parks & Recreation, the City Manager’s steadfast support in helping us achieve our vision and mission, and the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board’s valued advocacy.



PLANNING FOR **PLAY, WELLNESS AND THE FUTURE OF NORTH PORT**

In North Port, thoughtful planning and strategic investments continue to guide the evolution of our parks and recreation system. On December 9, 2025, the City officially adopted the comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a milestone achievement completed in just six months. Built through open dialogue and collaboration, this plan reflects the voices of our residents and establishes a responsive framework to meet the evolving needs of our community today and well into the future.

Community engagement was at the heart of this process. Residents, stakeholders and partners were invited to share feedback through surveys, workshops and focus groups. What we heard was clear: a desire for additional trails and park connections, equitable park distribution, sun relief, senior-focused and nature-based programming and expanded ecotourism offerings.

By listening to what residents value most, the Master Plan charts a path that improves access and recreation opportunities while strengthening our role in fostering wellness, sustainability and a deeper connection to the outdoors.

Looking ahead, the Master Plan provides a flexible long-range roadmap to guide decision making, addressing continued demand for youth sports, strategic acquisition of additional park land and investments that support growth and community values.

Together, we are building a parks and recreation system that provides for today, plans for the future, enhances user experiences, connects people to parks and expands access to nature.

IMPACT AT-A-GLANCE



51.3%

Cost Recovery Rate

Nearly double the national average.

\$72,000

in Sponsorship Support Secured

Reducing costs and expanding opportunities through community partnerships .

3,700

Youth Athletes Served

Building skills, confidence and community through sports and recreation.

2,300

Marketing Assests Delivered

Connecting residents to programs, events and services that make our community thrive.



Investing in Parks

Enhanced safety, accessibility and sustainability across five park sites with \$689,000 investment in improvements.



Driving Engagement

Connected with the community through nearly 4 million Facebook views, 27,139 content interactions and 628,112 newsletter opens.



Building Community through Outreach & Education

Free admission days welcomed 1,700 visitors to the North Port Aquatic Center and Warm Mineral Springs Park, while staff dedicated 125 hours to outreach and 786 hours to water safety education.

A Culture of Excellence

The Department maintained national accreditation through the National Recreation and Park Association's Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies, affirming its commitment to best practices and a culture of continuous improvement. North Port Parks & Recreation is one of only 222 agencies nationwide to hold this distinction, representing less than 3% across the nation.

Additionally, the staff-led Ignite Team initiative was launched to strengthen workplace culture and advance core organizational values.

THE POWER OF **PARKS**

Beyond beautiful green spaces and fun programs, parks have community power. According to the 2025 Engagement With Parks Report from the National Recreation and Park Association, 68 percent of adults strongly agree that parks are a vital local government service, and 63 percent say access to parks is a key factor when choosing where to live. Nationally, 90 percent of U.S. adults consider parks and recreation an important local government service, with residents visiting park and recreation facilities an average of 22 times per year. In 2025 alone, an estimated 227 million adults visited a local park or recreation facility.

This sense of value is reflected locally through the various civic programs coordinated by North Port Parks & Recreation. Adopt-A-Park volunteer groups, Neighbors and Friends of Warm Mineral Springs Park, Neighborhood Land Conservancy and Making FL Dreams, have collectively contributed over 100 hours caring for parks and public spaces across the city, an investment valued at almost \$3,500. We are proud to recognize the positive impact of these partnerships toward enhancing and maintaining parkland and creating champions and stewards of our park system. Making FL Dreams supported staff in spreading 263 bags of mulch in addition to their scheduled service hours, while Neighbors and Friends of Warm Mineral Springs Park recently transformed an area once overgrown with invasive bamboo into a thriving butterfly garden. Neighborhood Land Conservancy further advanced this collective effort through the Adopt-A-Park program, supporting Myakkahatchee Creek Environmental Park, Oaks Park and Myakkahatchee Creek Greenway Trail and contributing to the long-term preservation and enhancement of these valued community assets.



THE POWER OF **PARKS**

is in how they bring people together. Every volunteer hour, every scholarship and every partnership strengthens the fabric of our city.

Other collaborations with our community partners include the nationally known Little Free Library program. A Little Free library was installed this year at Garden of the Five Senses Park, with support from Suncoast Credit Union. This addition offers free books to park visitors, encouraging literacy, curiosity and community connection in one of the city's most beloved spaces. Today, there are three Little Free Libraries located throughout North Port, with two additional installations planned for 2026.

Opportunities for support also exist through the Youth Scholarship Program, a joint effort between the Parks & Recreation Department and the Social Services Division that helps offset the cost of recreation and aquatic programs such as camps and swimming lessons. In 2025, 69 scholarships were awarded to 28 families totaling \$5,557, ensuring financial barriers did not prevent participation. In addition to the Youth Scholarship Program, the Department has laid the groundwork to incorporate the American Red Cross Centennial Program into its services, enabling swimming lessons and select aquatic programs to be offered at a reduced cost while expanding access to water safety education. This initiative will significantly increase equitable access to lifesaving skills, reduce financial barriers for families and strengthen community safety around water.

The power of parks is in how they bring people together. Every volunteer hour, every scholarship and every partnership strengthens the fabric of our city.

Source: 2025 Engagement with Parks Report, NRPA

DRUG-FREE YOUTH

“Empowering Choices, Building Futures”



North Port Parks & Recreation strengthened its commitment to positive youth development under the leadership of Assistant Parks & Recreation Director Trish Sturgess with the launch of D-Fy, a drug-free youth program serving middle and high school students. Started by passionate volunteers and transitioned to the City in 2025, the program quickly gained momentum, attracting 180 students in just two months. As of January 2026, D-Fy membership has grown to more than 329 middle and high school students, highlighting the demand for meaningful teen-focused programming.

By integrating D-Fy into Parks & Recreation, the City created a natural home for a program centered on belonging and prevention. Parks and recreation facilities are familiar, trusted spaces for youth, making them ideal for engaging teens in a positive and accessible way. Sturgess noted that D-Fy complements existing youth and teen offerings by filling an important gap for older youth seeking connection and purpose.

Early participation reflects broader trends. Nearly 90 percent of middle and high school students fall into the “Have Not Club,” meaning they have not used alcohol or drugs in the past 30 days, according to the 2024 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey. D-Fy reinforces this positive majority by shifting the conversation toward strengths, empowerment and healthy decision-making.

In addition to reinforcing healthy choices, D-Fy offers meaningful incentives that encourage ongoing participation. Registered students receive a complimentary membership to the Morgan Family Community Center, providing access to recreation spaces and programs in a safe, welcoming environment. Participants also receive a D-Fy discount card, which can be used at participating local retail locations for discounts or free items, further strengthening positive connections between teens and the community.

As D-Fy continues to grow, North Port Parks & Recreation remains focused on expanding opportunities for teen engagement and ensuring young people feel seen, supported and valued. The program’s early success underscores the vital role parks and recreation play in strengthening communities and supporting the next generation through inclusive, impactful programming.



D-Fy is about celebrating the choices most of our teens are already making and giving them a place where they feel supported, connected and confident in who they are,” said Kevin Mace, D-Fy Coordinator.



NorthPortFL.gov/D-Fy



BY THE NUMBERS



\$1.9M+

Revenue generated from Warm Mineral Springs Park



\$645K+

Revenue generated from recreation programs, events and services



\$1.1M+

Revenue generated from North Port Aquatic Center programs, events and services



153,714

Visitors to Warm Mineral Springs Park



350K+

Visitors to community centers



115K+

Visitors to North Port Aquatic Center



850K+

Visitors to parks



396

Out-of-school care and camp participants



1,668

Number of swim lesson participants



3,527

Athletic field reservations accommodated



58,135

Special event attendees



704

Volunteer hours of service, valued at more than \$24K

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Florida Festivals & Events Association Scholarship

- Awarded Statewide Emerging Leader Scholarship valued at \$550 to facilitate participation in the annual conference

Florida Festivals & Events Association SUNSational Awards

- Social Media Campaign (Pumpkin Plunge) - 1st place
- Annual Report (2024 Impact Report) - 2nd place
- Event Brochure (Playbook) - 2nd place

Florida Fish & Wildlife Youth Conservation Centers Network

- 2025 Outstanding Partner

Councilman-Hunsaker Aquatic Management Program

- Received passing grade on all components of audit

Proclamations

- April - "Florida Volunteer Month"
- May - "Drowning Prevention Month"
- July - "Parks & Recreation Month"
- July 31 - "International Lifeguard Appreciation Day"
- October 23-31 - "Red Ribbon Week"



LIFESAVING AWARD FOR PROFESSIONAL RESPONDERS

On Nov. 23, 2024, Jane DeClercq, Parks & Recreation Lead Lifeguard, and Brody McManmon, former Lifeguard II, sprang into action at Warm Mineral Springs Park, saving a woman's life after she suffered a medical emergency in the water.

Responding swiftly, they performed CPR, working together until she regained consciousness. Their bravery and quick response were honored at the 2025 Association of Aquatic Professionals Conference & Exposition held in St. Petersburg, where they received the Lifesaving Award for Professional Responders—the highest honor from the American Red Cross Training Services for saving a life using Red Cross training.





Boca Chica Neighborhood Park groundbreaking. In photo, from left to right: Deputy City Manager Jason Yarborough, Assistant City Manager Julie Bellia, City Manager Jerome Fletcher, Mayor Pete Emrich, Parks & Recreation Director Sandy Pfundheller, Commissioner David Duval and Assistant Parks & Recreation Director Trish Sturgess.

Investing in What Matters

STRATEGIC PROJECTS MOVING NORTH PORT FORWARD

Fiscal year 2025 marked an important period of progress for Parks & Recreation, as several key projects moved toward completion. One of the most meaningful milestones was the completion of design and engineering for the Circle of Honor at the City Center Campus. Developed in collaboration with the Veterans Park Advisory Committee, the complex is intended to serve as a lasting tribute to active-duty service members and veterans while providing a space for reflection, remembrance and community pride. To further support this initiative, the Department also created and launched the Circle of Honor Tribute donation program, allowing residents and supporters to directly contribute to the Circle of Honor development and legacy.

Behind the scenes, operational improvements were also completed to support long-term efficiency and service continuity. A temporary Park Maintenance office building and associated storage and operations complex were secured and constructed. This facility supports the division's relocation to Dallas White Park following extensive damage to the original Park Maintenance building caused by Hurricane Ian. This transition ensured uninterrupted maintenance operations while positioning the team for future growth and improved service delivery.

The year also included moments of celebration that highlighted the City's continued investment in community while preserving environmental spaces. The Department marked the official groundbreaking of Boca Chica Neighborhood Park, signaling the start of a new neighborhood park with a focus on open green areas, a nature-themed playground, pervious walking paths and protected gopher tortoise habitat. Designed with both recreation and conservation in mind, the park will provide residents with a peaceful place to stroll, play and enjoy the outdoors close to home, reinforcing the role of parks as vital hubs for connection to nature and enhance quality of life.



Together, these projects reflect thoughtful planning and long-term community investment and **progress with purpose.**

Caring for a North Port Treasure



During fiscal year 2025, Parks & Recreation strengthened its role as a steward of one of North Port's most distinctive natural and nationally recognized historic assets, Warm Mineral Springs Park. Through targeted improvements and strategic planning, the Divisions of Aquatics and Park Maintenance advanced efforts that enhanced accessibility, appearance, historic preservation and environmental health.

Visible improvements throughout the year transformed the park's landscape and improved accessibility. Staff removed invasive bamboo near the spring and in its place a new butterfly garden was installed by the park's Adopt-A-Park volunteer group, Neighbors and Friends of Warm Mineral Springs Park. This garden now provides habitat for pollinators and a vibrant experience for visitors. Additional park enhancements included restoring the area with new sod, re-striping the parking lot to improve visibility and accessibility and re-mulching the entire park to support landscape health. The park entrance sign was also refreshed with native plantings through volunteer-led efforts, highlighting the role of community partnership in park care.

Beyond these on-the-ground improvements, staff advanced long-term stewardship through careful planning for historic preservation and environmental protection. Design and engineering for the restoration of the historic admissions building and the hybrid

renovation of the spa building officially kicked off in April of 2025. These improvements will preserve the historic character of the site while adapting the space for future use. Additionally, the cyclorama will be stabilized and protected through a process referred to as "mothballing" until full restoration is possible.

Conservation measures are also underway to protect a portion of the 60 acres adjacent to the park, reinforcing our commitment to preserving the natural setting around the springs. Plans for the Warm Mineral Springs Park Legacy Trail Connector and trailhead are progressing, with the route running alongside these 60 acres and creating new opportunities for recreation and connectivity to the broader regional trail system. As part of these efforts, we are collaborating with the Natural Resources Division to develop a comprehensive plan for removing invasive plant species, restoring native habitats and installing educational signage that highlights the area's unique ecology and history.

Together, these improvements and planning efforts showcase the essential role the Parks & Recreation team plays in safeguarding and enhancing one of North Port's most unique assets. With construction anticipated in the near future, these initiatives are moving from vision to reality, ensuring Warm Mineral Springs Park remains protected, accessible and meaningful for generations to come.



NorthPortFL.gov/WarmMineralSpringsPark



More to *explore* in North Port

North Port Parks & Recreation offers a wide variety of recreational, instructional and fitness-based programs and activities designed to meet the diverse needs of the community. From classes and camps to events and wellness opportunities, the Playbook is your guide to experience North Port.

Visit NorthPortFL.gov/Playbook to download your copy today!