



North Port FLORIDA

PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

City Commission Workshop

09.08.25

Master Plan Purpose



Understand Needs + Opportunities

Create a responsive parks and recreation system that meets the needs of the community



Blueprint for the Future

Plan for the future parks and recreation system



Improve, Sustain, and Enhance

Improve, sustain, and enhance the quality of life in North Port

Master Plan Process



1

Understanding

Document Review
Park Inventory
Public Engagement

2

Visioning

Guiding Principles
Level of Service Framework & Mapping
Demographics & Population
Eco-Tourism Opportunities
Youth Sports Analysis

3

Master Planning

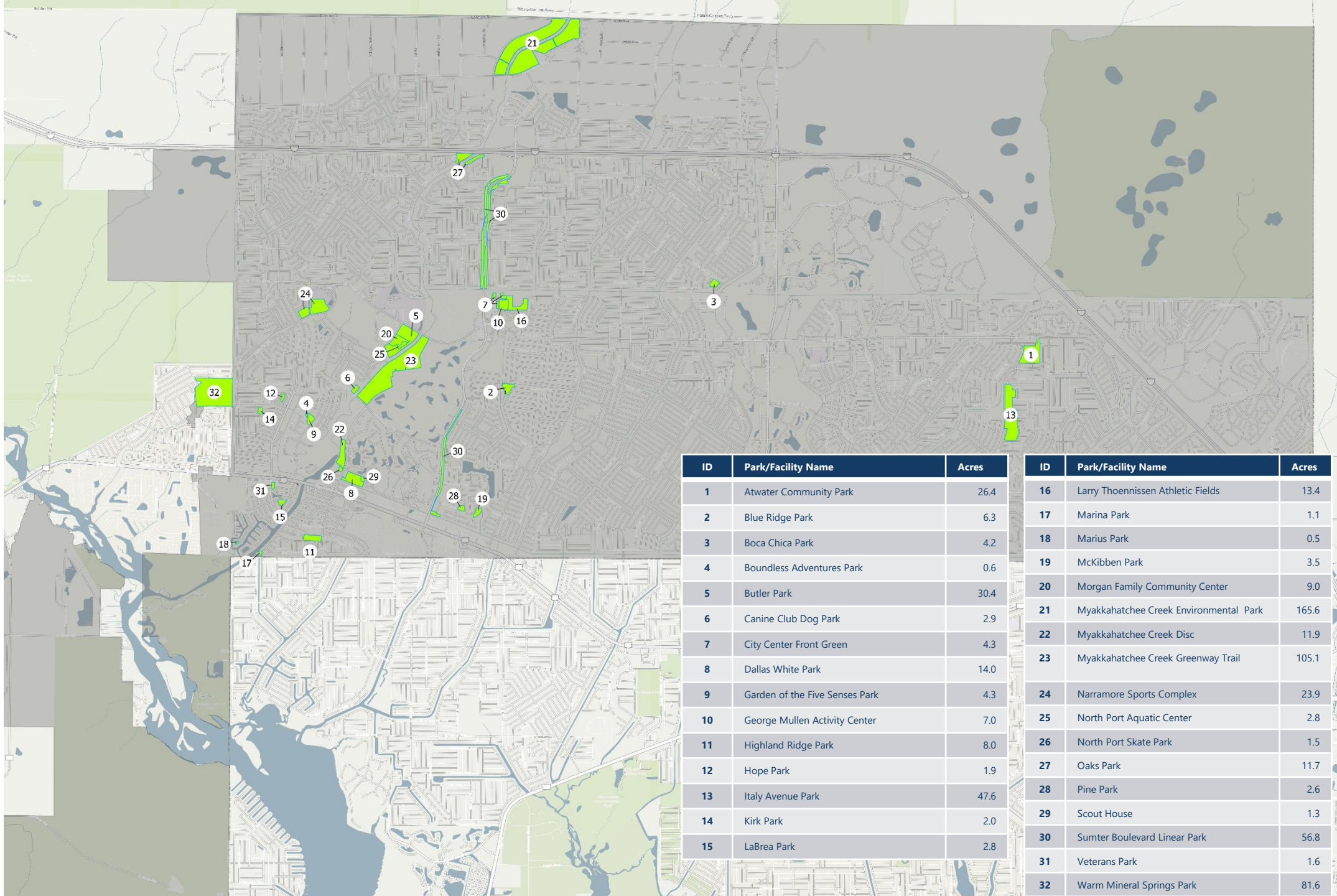
Recommendations
Capital Improvements Plan Strategy
Grant Funding Strategy



Understanding

- Analysis of Facilities
- Public Involvement
 - Project Website
 - Online Survey
 - Public Workshop
 - Focus Groups

The Park System



Field Data Collection: Site Inventory



50

Amenities

60

Buildings

25

Sports Courts

20

Sports Fields



Park inventory data is used to evaluate park quality and accessibility.



Understanding

- Analysis of Facilities
- Public Involvement
 - Project Website
 - Online Survey
 - Public Workshop
 - Focus Groups

1

Statistically Valid (Invitation Survey)

Paper surveys were mailed to a systematic random sample of residential addresses in North Port, with the option to complete online through password protected website (1 response per household). The online survey was also available in Spanish.

386 Invitation surveys completed
+/- 4.98% Margin of Error

618
**Total Surveys
Completed**

2

Open Link Survey

Later, the online survey was made available to *all* North Port Stakeholders, including non-residents

232 Open Link surveys completed

**5,000 Surveys Mailed
(4,618 delivered)**

Key Takeaways

- Increase use: Additional shade, improved communication and additional or expanded facilities and amenities
- Highest priorities: Nature/bike/multi-use trails, community parks, and nature-based experiences/ programs
- Eco-tourism: Increase nature-based areas such as trails, paths, and viewing areas and nature-based events and programs
- Future outdoor needs: skate parks, include basketball, outdoor volleyball, multi-sports, indoor volleyball, and pickleball courts.
- Future indoor needs: programs for all ages and new or improved facilities

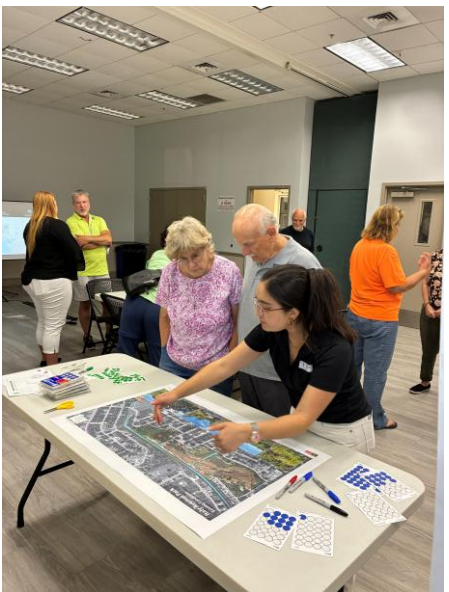
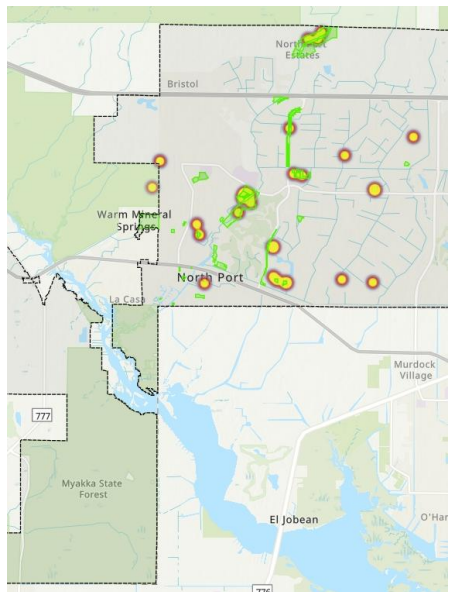
33
Participants

Public Workshop

Wednesday, July 9th
George Mullen Activity Center

Thursday, July 10th
Morgan Family Community Center

Wednesday, July 16th
George Mullen Activity Center



Live, Work, Play

Participants plotted the places within the City where they live, work, and play.

Write-on-Me

Participants wrote what parks they enjoy and potential improvements.

Priority Voting

Participants identified the park elements that they consider to be the highest priorities.

Italy Avenue Voting Station

Participants identified desired elements for the new Italy Ave. Park.

Draw Your Dream Park

Drawing activity for kids.

Focus Groups

- Two in-person
- One with Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
- One virtual
- Guided discussion/questionnaire



Key Takeaways

- The Parks & Recreation System is seen as a value within the community. Staff were highly praised.
- The most discussed improvement need was the uneven park distribution.
- The need for more rectangular sports fields.
- The trail system could be improved with more shade, more connectivity, and better ADA accessibility.
- Expansion of nature-focused programming and related recreation amenities.
- A need for unique park amenities.

Key Takeaways

Top Priorities System Wide

Additional Trails

More Shade

Athletic Courts

Nature-Based Experiences & Programs

Special Events

Key Takeaways

Top Priorities for Italy Avenue Park

Nature Trails

Indoor Track

Rock Climbing

Senior-Focused Social Activities

Indoor Gymnasium Courts

2

Visioning

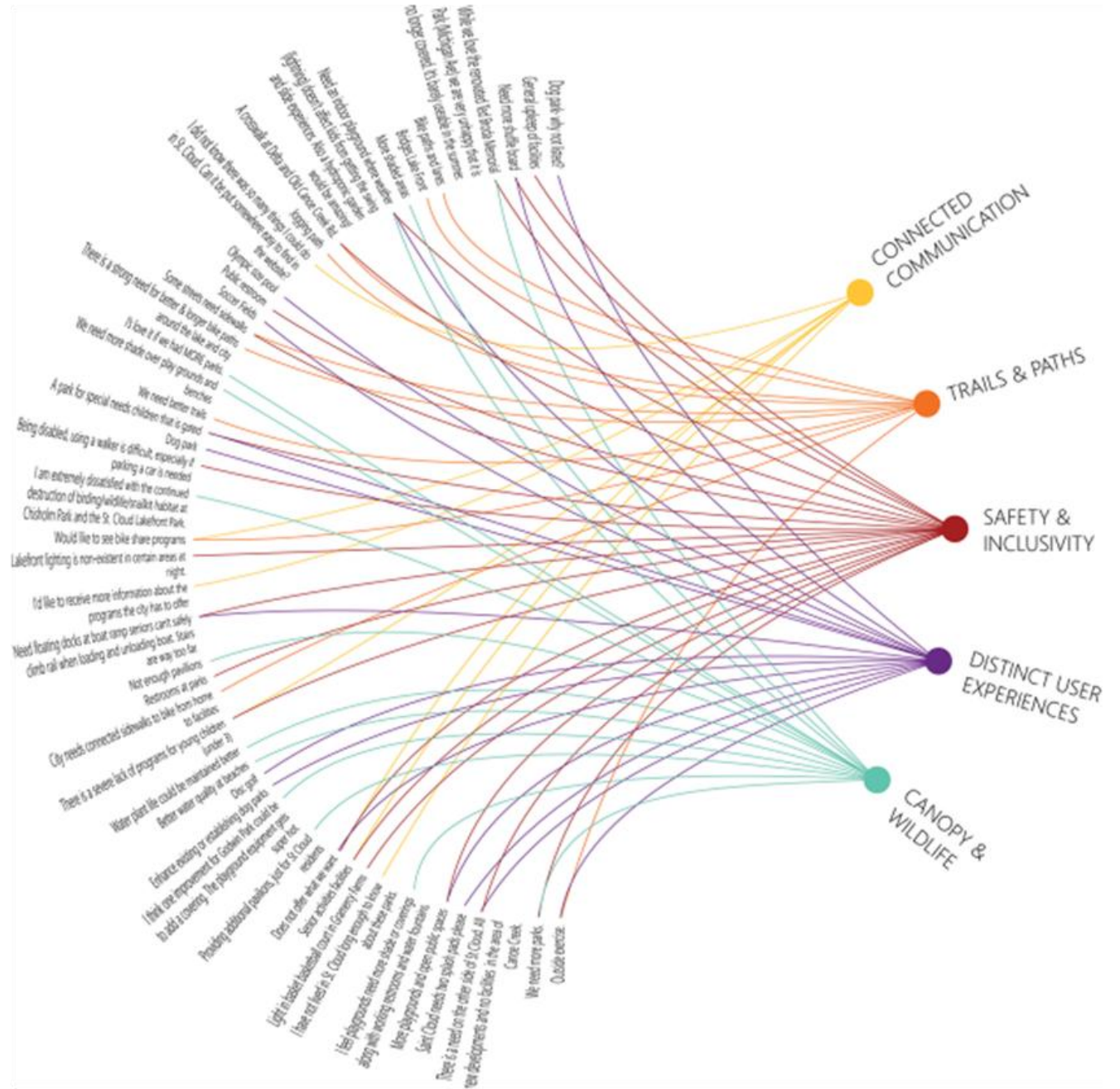
In-Progress:

- Guiding Principles
- Level of Service Framework & Mapping
- Demographics & Population
- Eco-Tourism Opportunities
- Youth Sports Analysis

Identify Emerging Themes



Develop Guiding Principles



Guiding Principles



**Walkability &
Connectivity**



Communication



**Equitable Recreation
& Programming**



**Enhance Existing &
Expand for the
Future**



**Health &
Safety**



Walkability and Connectivity

Parks are accessible, walkable, and well connected:

- Each resident lives within a 10 or 15-minute walk of a park
- Each park is connected to a sidewalk or trail network
- Each park promotes safe walking, jogging, or bicycling for all

Key Issues Matrix

| <div> <div>Key Issues Analysis Matrix</div> <div> <div>Legend</div> <div>GREEN - minor need</div> <div>YELLOW - mid/opportunity to improve</div> <div>RED - major need</div> </div> </div> | Statistically Valid Survey (Invitation Survey) | Open Link Survey | Focus Groups | Public Workshops | Site Visits | Consultant Opinion | Comments |
|--|--|------------------|--------------|------------------|-------------|--------------------|---|
| Provide for Today | | | | | | | |
| Incorporate desired amenities into parks that are desired by residents to increase their use. | mid | mid | major | major | mid | mid | Survey responses, workshop participants and focus groups voiced desires for additional trails, walking loops in parks and near sport fields, and fitness circuits along trails. |
| Improve marketing mechanisms (both physical and technological) to better advertise park amenities and programs. | major | mid | mid | minor | mid | minor | 47% of survey participants noted that communication needs improvement. |
| Meet the need for sports and active recreation. | major | major | mid | mid | n/a | major | Participants mentioned several active recreational amenities desired in the parks such as more rectangular fields including artificial turf fields, playgrounds, more sports courts and fields. |
| Plan for the Future | | | | | | | |
| Acquire more parkland to increase the LOS to provide an equitable distribution of parks. | mid | mid | major | major | major | major | There is an uneven distribution of parks within the City of North Port that was discussed throughout all public engagement means. This is especially apparent on the eastern side of the city and in rapidly growing neighborhoods |
| Provide a centralized City event space. | n/a | n/a | mid | minor | major | major | Focus groups and consultant opinion identified a need for a centralized event space with a bandshell. |
| Provide unique user experiences throughout the parks system. | major | mid | mid | mid | n/a | major | Participants mentioned several active recreational amenities desired in the parks such as a recreational BMX/ATV track, access to water-based recreation, sports complex, another skatepark, and meditation areas. |
| Provide additional indoor facilities to meet indoor recreational needs. | major | major | mid | mid | n/a | major | Participants revealed that there is a need for more indoor space for indoor sports, fitness spaces, gymnasium courts, youth/teen spaces, and multi-purpose space. |
| Enhance User Experience | | | | | | | |
| Improve ADA accessibility into and within parks. | minor | minor | major | mid | major | major | The focus groups and site visits showed there is limited accessibility to certain amenities within the parks for seniors and people with disabilities. The survey showed there is also a desire to create ADA-accessible paths, boardwalks, and viewing platforms to make nature areas inclusive for all users. |
| Provide additional shade. | major | major | major | major | major | major | Through all public engagement and site visits consider adding shade on walking pathways and within parks and additional shaded seating near sport fields and playgrounds. |
| Increase lighting throughout the parks and recreation system. | mid | mid | mid | mid | minor | mid | Due to the summer temperatures and the reduced daylight in the winter, participants requested increased lighting at current sport courts and throughout the park, especially at playgrounds, to allow for usage after dark. |
| Provide programs for residents of all ages. | major | major | mid | minor | minor | minor | Consider enhancing existing parks by introducing new programming centered around art and music. Encourage interest groups to utilize park spaces for meetups fostering broader community engagement and increasing awareness of the park system. Additionally, expand indoor recreation offerings, with a particular focus on senior-friendly activities and programs. |
| Expand hours of operation. | minor | minor | mid | mid | minor | minor | Participants would like extended pool hours, particularly opening the existing pool earlier in the day to avoid peak UV levels. Extend park operating hours with added lighting to support safe and accessible use during cooler periods in the summer and early evenings throughout the shorter daylight hours of winter. |
| Connect People to Parks | | | | | | | |
| Incorporate more trails and pathways to expand opportunities for walking, running, and biking. | major | major | mid | major | major | major | Survey and in person engagement results revealed that trails/pathways are high in importance to households. |
| Incorporate wayfinding systems to better communicate trail system both within the individual parks and system wide. | minor | minor | mid | minor | mid | major | There is an opportunity to improve wayfinding signage within the individual trail systems in the parks and also creating a park system wide trail map especially as connectivity between the parks and trails increases. |
| Improve sidewalks and crosswalks between parks, neighborhoods, and schools to improve walkability and connectivity. | n/a | n/a | mid | mid | major | major | Site visits observed the need for improved walkability and safe routes to parks from neighborhoods and schools with the use of a standardized crosswalk to access the parks and park amenities. |
| Expand Access to Nature | | | | | | | |
| Expand nature-based recreation to increase opportunities to experience nature. | major | major | major | minor | mid | major | Nature-based recreation emerged as a strong interest, with requests for enhanced recreation opportunities such as youth campsites, outdoor classrooms/large pavilion areas for nature education, and expansion of fishing opportunities in designated areas |
| Incorporate interpretive signage throughout parks on resiliency, native plants, wildlife, ecology, and history. | major | mid | mid | minor | mid | mid | Continue to expand interpretive signage and mobile app-based tours that showcase the park system's local ecology, rich history, and Indigenous heritage. |
| Expand nature-based programming and events. | major | major | major | mid | major | mid | Participants throughout all public engagement would like more nature-based programming, such as birdwatching and demonstrations focused on Florida native plants, which could be led by external organizations like Audubon and UF/IFAS. As well as interpretive programs to promote wildlife protection and ecological education and volunteer stewardship programs (invasive-species pulls, wildlife monitoring, habitat restoration). Also expand events to include eco-themed festivals and outdoor events. |
| Develop partnerships with lands owned by other local and regional agencies to expand nature-based recreation opportunities. | n/a | n/a | mid | minor | major | major | Through focus groups and site visits the City has an opportunity to partner with other local and regional agencies to increase the scale of eco-tourism recreation access to attract more people to the area. |
| Expand nature-based marketing initiative about both city-owned and influencing amenities. | major | mid | mid | minor | n/a | Mid | Through the survey results, it was apparent that many residents do not know about the nature-based resources managed by the City. As partnerships develop with neighboring agencies, an access to a branded nature campaign should be created and expanded to a broader reach to showcase the opportunities in the City and surrounding area. |

Guiding Principle

Provide for Today

Respond to the parks and recreation needs of North Port residents within the existing park system.

- Incorporate desired amenities into parks to respond to the expressed needs of the community and improve utilization rates.
- Improve marketing mechanisms (both physical and technological) to better advertise park amenities and programs.
- Meet the need for sports and active recreation.

Guiding Principle

Plan for the Future

Expand North Port's parks and recreation system to meet the needs of new communities outside of the historically served areas and prepare for future additional growth.

- Supply park services in current service area gaps and plan for future provision of parks in growth centers.
- Provide unique user experiences throughout the parks system to enhance system-wide utilization.
- Provide additional indoor facilities to meet indoor recreational needs in growth centers.
- Provide a centralized City event space.

Guiding Principle

Enhance User Experience

Provide parks and recreation that are welcoming and safe for all users regardless of age or ability to create an inclusive park system.

- Improve accessibility to park amenities for seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- Provide shade structures and tree canopy, especially in areas with limited natural cover or high sun exposure, to enhance comfort and usability year-round.
- Enhance feelings of safety within parks to provide welcoming user experience.
- Expand hours of operation to better match access to amenities and facilities to users' availability and cooler temperatures.
- Provide programming for residents of all ages.

Guiding Principle

Connect People to Parks

Connect North Port residents to parks via comprehensive trail and pathway systems.

- Improve walkability and safe access to parks by implementing standardized crosswalks, additional sidewalks, and enhancing pedestrian routes between neighborhoods, schools, and park amenities.
- Prioritize the development of new trails and pathways in park planning to reflect their high value to households.
- Expand and connect existing trail networks to create continuous, accessible routes for walking, running, and biking.
- Integrate wayfinding signage and maps to enhance user experience and promote trail usage.

Guiding Principle

Expand Access to Nature

Celebrate ecological resources both within and nearby and provide opportunities for nature-based recreation to both residents and visitors.

- Expand nature-based recreation to increase opportunities to experience nature.
- Continue to incorporate interpretive signage throughout parks on resilience, native plants, wildlife, ecology, and history.
- Expand nature-based programming and events.
- Develop partnerships with lands owned by other local and regional agencies to expand nature-based recreation opportunities.
- Develop a branded a nature-based marketing initiative about both city-owned and influencing amenities.



Master Planning

Next Steps:

- Recommendations
- Capital Improvements Plan
- Grant Funding Strategy



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