



# PARKS & Recreation

## MASTER PLAN

"Get Up, Get Out, Get Active"



# Charlotte County Parks & Recreation Master Plan 2015–2050 *2024 Update*

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## Acknowledgements

The following elected officials, departments, boards, committees, and consultants participated in the update of the Charlotte County Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

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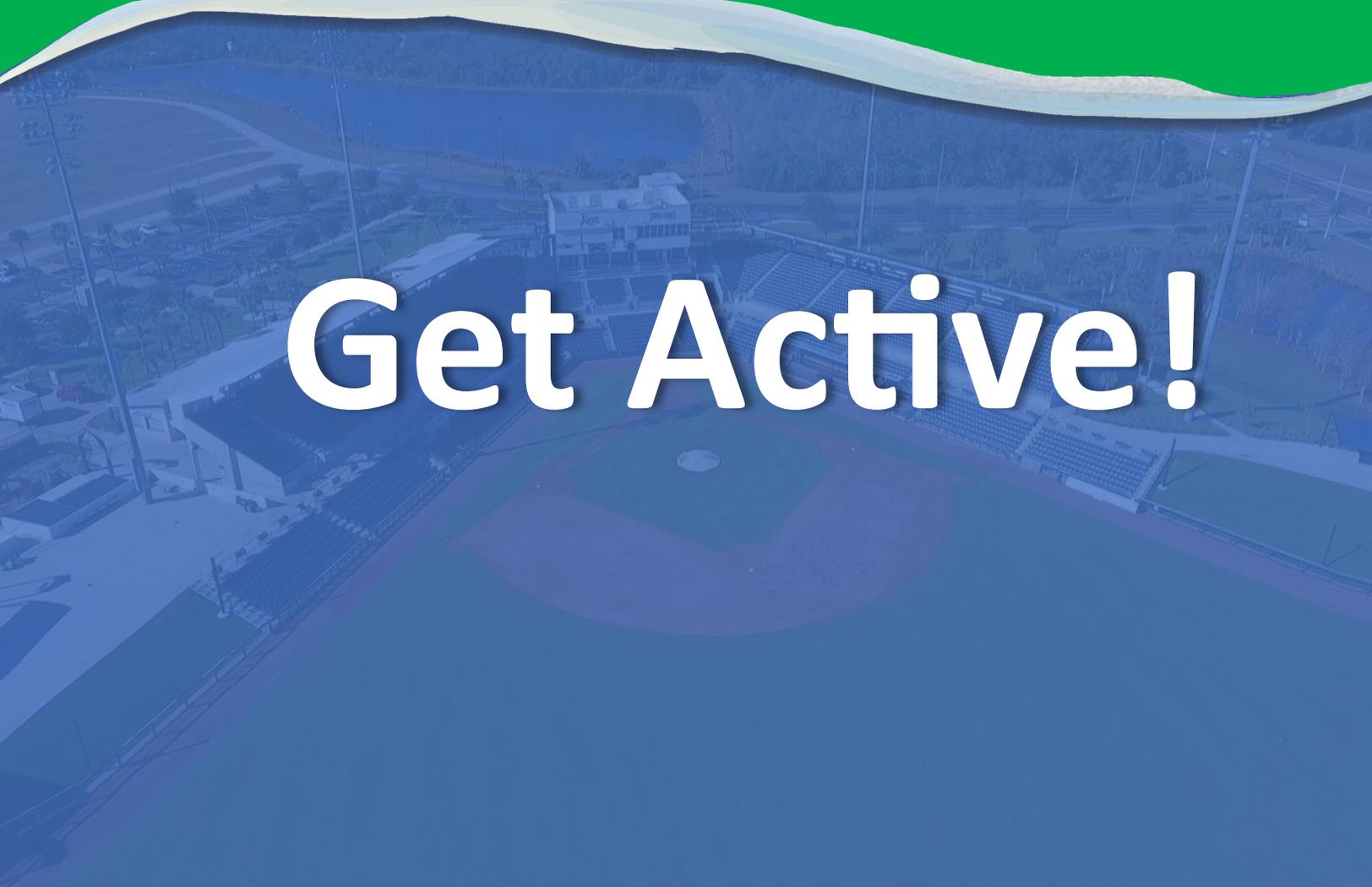
### Residents of Charlotte County

A special thank you goes out to the public who utilize our parks and recreation facilities and provided on going feedback.

**Get Up!**

**Get Out!**

**Get Active!**



## Executive Summary

The Charlotte County Parks and Recreation Master Plan serves as a comprehensive guide for the development and management of the county's parks and recreation services through 2050. Originally created in 2015, this updated version refines the county's approach to sustaining and enhancing its parks system, with a focus on ensuring equitable service distribution, meeting evolving community needs, and supporting sustainable growth.

The projects identified in 2015 Master Plan were prioritized under short-term (2016–2021), mid-term (2022–2033), and long term (2034–2050) planning periods. To date, all the short-term projects and recommendations are either, complete, in development, or funded for future development and several mid-term projects are also complete and in progress. All projects are included within the County's 20-year Capital Needs Assessment and 6-year Capital Improvement Plan. This 2024 Master Plan update incorporates the goals and recommendations from the 2015 Master Plan and adds updated goals and action items to guide the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions through the next ten (10) years.

In addition, annual appropriations are identified to **"take care of what we have"** and upgrade the County's existing parks and recreational assets. Ongoing maintenance and improvements are funded and implemented in a Capital Maintenance Plan.

This update addresses the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions' organizational structure and staffing Levels by reviewing current and proposed methodologies for staffing and maintenance, with recommendations to right size and optimize staffing to meet the Master Plan's objectives.

The county's parks and recreation department has achieved and maintained CAPRA accreditation, demonstrating its adherence to national standards of excellence. Furthermore, the biennial planning process ensures that the Master Plan remains relevant and effective, adapting to new trends and community needs.

With the adoption of this updated Master Plan, Charlotte County reaffirms its commitment to maintaining a high-quality parks system that supports public health, safety, and welfare. The plan provides a roadmap for continued improvement, ensuring that Charlotte County remains a vibrant and desirable place to live, work, and play.

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## Introduction

The Charlotte County Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Master Plan) was developed in 2015 to guide the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions' investments and strategies over the next 35 years through 2050, shaping the delivery of parks and recreation services in a manner consistent with the County's vision and goals.

The benefits of a Master Plan include ensuring public health, welfare and safety of the community, assessing the current state of the park and recreation system, guiding development of park and recreation systems, providing a foundation for financial priorities and investments, developing tools for rational decision-making, and engaging the public in identification of issues and solutions,

This version of the Master Plan is an update to the County's 2015 Charlotte County Parks Master Plan and will:

- Update the standards for parks and recreation level of service.
- Identify development priorities and recommendations on capital improvement projects.
- Guide the County in effective decision tools to make equitable allocation of services throughout the parks system.
- Guide the County in ensuring the required staffing is provided for each division.

This Master Plan provides guiding principles, long- range objectives, and implementable and high- level strategies and initiatives. The Master Plan is divided into four parts:

- **Part One: The Setting** summarizes the original planning process, including the context of the Master Plan within the Charlotte 2050 Comprehensive Plan.
- **Part Two: The Future** outlines the vision, mission, guiding principles, and recommendations borne out of engagement with the community, regional and state agencies, and County staff.
- **Part Three: System Building Blocks** includes definitions, structure of the plan, levels of service, levels of maintenance, and staffing standards that will help the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions continue to implement the systems and processes to improve service delivery.
- **Part Four: Plan Implementation** identifies the projects, capital plan, funding, staffing, and management policies.

## Funding

The Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions are responsible for the planning, programming, and management of Charlotte County's parks and recreation system. To ensure that it operates within its funding allocations and generated revenue, the Divisions must continue to adjust service provision, facility maintenance, and operations levels. The Master Plan emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the highest parks and recreation priorities, as defined by the guiding principles of this Master Plan, are met. However, current and future needs will not be met without additional investment.

## Moving Forward

With the acceptance of this Master Plan, Charlotte County commits to the vision, strategic direction, guiding principles, objectives, and strategies contained in this document.

### Agency Accreditation

With the adoption of the Master Plan in 2015, the County moved forward in seeking agency accreditation through the National Recreation and Park Association's Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). CAPRA accreditation demonstrates that an agency meets established benchmarks for delivering high-quality service. Charlotte County Parks and Recreation received CAPRA reaccreditation through the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) in 2017, was reaccredited in 2022 and is valid through 2027. As one of only 191 agencies throughout the United States to receive this recognition, Charlotte County Parks and Recreation is proud to serve all visitors and enhance the quality of life within our community.

### Biennial Planning Process

To ensure that the intent of the Master Plan is being met, the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions will perform a biennial planning review and update park inventory based on increases or decreases in acreage, facilities, and services. The biennial annual action planning process includes the following tasks:

- Review Master Plan, acknowledge and celebrate implementation successes.
- Review Goals and Action Items and update status based on completed projects and initiatives.
- Update the park inventory through biennial park inspections.
- Identify emerging recreational trends through biennial statistically valid surveys.
- Ensure implementation of the Master Plan in accordance with the County Capital Improvement Policy.

## Part One: The Setting

### 1.1 Overview of Charlotte County

Charlotte County is located on the coast of Southwest Florida bounded by Sarasota, DeSoto, Lee, Glades, and Hendry counties. Charlotte Harbor, one of the oldest areas located within Charlotte County, boasts one of the most productive and natural preserve estuaries in Florida.

The Charlotte Harbor area was platted in the 1860s around the fishing pier, which was used to ship cattle during the Civil War and for trade with Cuba and the Caribbean after the war. The County was founded in 1921 after separating from Manatee and DeSoto counties. The County did not undergo much development until the 1960s–70s when surrounding areas began to develop.

#### 1.1.1 Assets

Charlotte County has many assets available to improve the comfort and diverse lifestyle of its residents. One of the greatest benefits is the large amount of waterfront and environmentally-protected property available for beachfront parks, boating, kayaking, paddle boarding, bird watching, fishing, and other environmental activities.

One of the major County assets is the Charlotte Sports Park, where the Tampa Bay Rays spring training is held. Other County assets include the seasonal population and tourism, which boosts the economic development opportunities, and the well-established park system.

#### 1.1.2 Challenges

One of the greatest challenges the County has is its large geographic distribution with a lack of connectivity. This makes accessing public parks and recreational facilities more difficult for users.

Other challenges the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions are faced with include communicating and focusing on providing recreational needs to the community throughout the entire county while balancing the request of special interest groups; aging demographics; keeping up with the ever-changing recreational trends and demand for facilities; available financing and funding for improving and maintaining existing and future parks and facilities; ongoing coordination with other parks, recreation, and trails organizations; and the implementation of adopted County policies.

### 1.2 Regulatory Direction

The master planning effort is a key implementation strategy in the County's primary planning document, the Charlotte 2050 Comprehensive Plan, and one of the elements in the comprehensive plan, the Recreation and Open Space Element (REC Element), provides for a system of parks and recreation sites available to all of Charlotte County's citizens and visitors. The County's parks and recreation programs are two tangible ways to shape a more sustainable and livable county. The Charlotte 2050 Comprehensive Plan and the REC Element were major guiding documents during the drafting of this Master Plan. Many of the objectives and strategies identified for the implementation of this Master Plan were derived from these planning documents.

### 1.2.1 Planning Framework

The future land use and the neighborhood types, as established in the Charlotte 2050 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map Series, are important to establish the direction for future residential development of Charlotte County to accommodate user demand and planning of parklands, facilities, and programs. The comprehensive plan calls for the distribution of the identified neighborhood types to be considered in locating and providing recreation facilities. The County has identified four neighborhood types:

1. **Revitalizing Neighborhoods**— Predominantly built-out, aging housing, and commercial stock, reinvestment, and revitalization needed. Revitalizing neighborhoods are located primarily in the more urban areas of the county. Many of these neighborhoods are located within redevelopment districts.
2. **Maturing Neighborhoods** – Substantially developed, potential for infill, need to be protected. These neighborhoods are also located in the more urban areas of the county and usually located on the fringe or adjacent to revitalizing neighborhoods.
3. **Emerging Neighborhoods** – Mostly undeveloped lots, opportunity for balanced, mixed growth. The majority of these areas are located in the southern and eastern portions of the county, adjacent to Punta Gorda or associated with a development of regional impact.
4. **Managed Neighborhoods** – Mostly platted under-developed lots adjacent to sensitive environmental resources, infill and intensification discouraged. These areas are located primarily the in western portion of the county.

### 1.3 Creation of Planning Areas

To facilitate the ease of the planning framework and for effective communication with the county's residents, four Recreational Planning Areas (RPA) were identified within the different geographic regions of Charlotte County. The purpose of the planning areas is to better facilitate the distribution of parks, recreation, and trails facilities, programs, services, and maintenance. People like to know what is available in their area.

**RPA 1: West (Between Gulf of Mexico and Myakka River).** The majority of the future land use is low-density residential with some medium- and high- density residential. Large areas along the shoreline are designated as conservation/preservation. The four neighborhood types are located within RPA 1, with the majority consisting of Maturing and Managed neighborhoods. Small areas of Revitalizing and Emerging neighborhoods are concentrated along the shorelines.

With the majority of RPA 1 is substantially developed (roads and platted lots) and adjacent to environmentally sensitive lands, evaluation of existing park improvements and reprogramming activities may be necessary to meet future needs. Additional parks may be developed in the Emerging Neighborhood adjacent to the Myakka River, and potential natural resource interpretation facilities may be developed in the Managed neighborhood. This area is known as Englewood or Cape Haze Peninsula.

**RPA 2: North (North of the Peace River and Myakka River).** The majority of the future land use is low-density residential and mixed-use. Large areas along the shoreline are designated as conservation/preservation. The four neighborhood types are located within RPA 2, with the majority

consisting of Mature and Revitalizing neighborhoods. Small areas of Managed and Emerging neighborhoods are located at the east and west sides of the planning area.

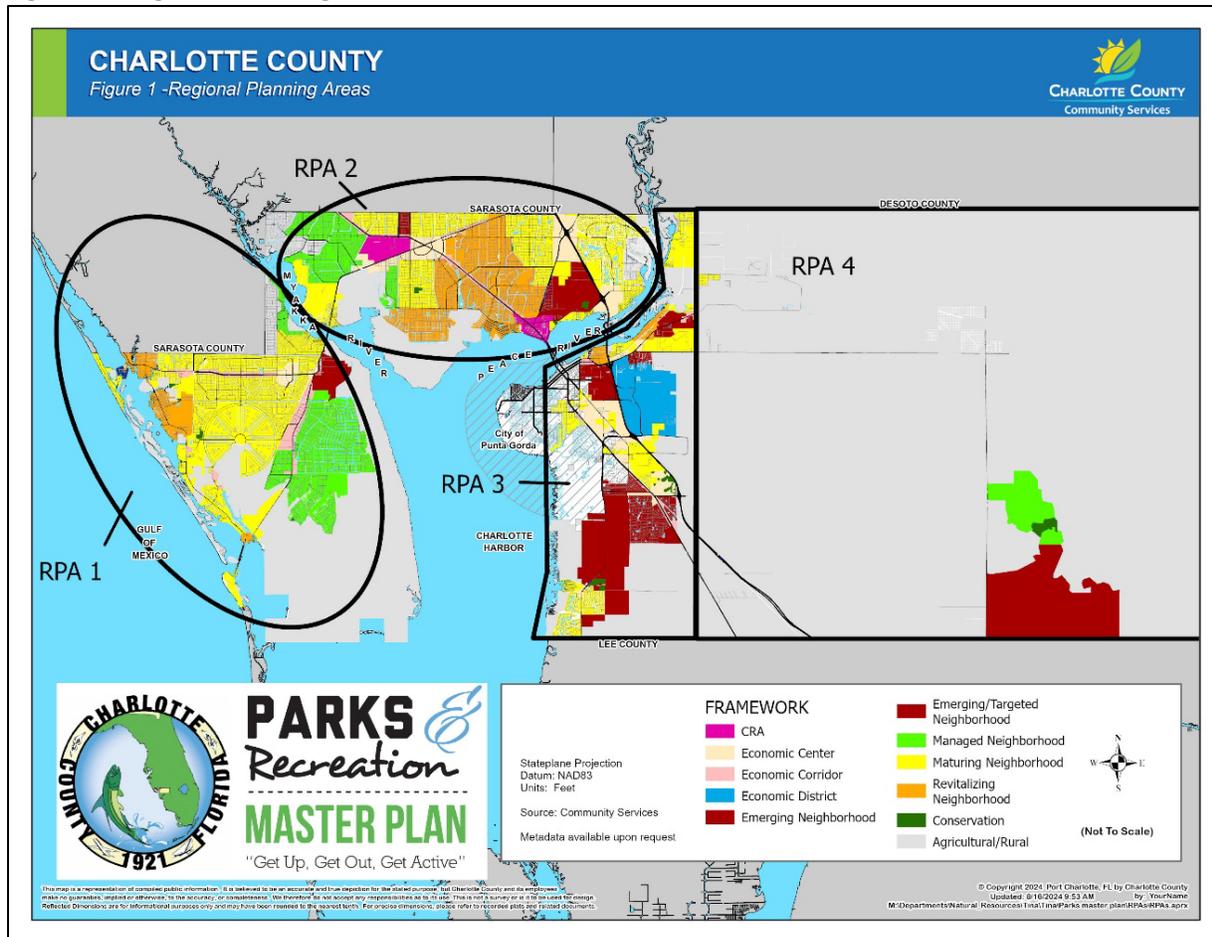
Since the majority of RPA 2 is already built out and substantially developed, evaluation of existing park improvements and reprogramming activities may be necessary to meet future needs for RPA 2. Additional parks may be developed in the Emerging neighborhood adjacent to the Peace River, and potential natural resource interpretation facilities may be developed in the Managed neighborhood. RPA 2 also includes three community redevelopment areas: Murdock Village, Parkside, and Charlotte Harbor. It is important for the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions to work closely with the Charlotte County Office of Economic Development to facilitate the redevelopment and maintenance of existing parks and recreation facilities and development of special purpose facilities that provide community level recreation access, as a means to encourage community investment.

**RPA 3: South (Between the Peace River, Charlotte Harbor and the agricultural/rural area; contains the City of Punta Gorda).** The majority of the future land use is low-density residential with some high-density residential and mixed-use. The Enterprise Charlotte Airport Park also dominates the planning area. Large areas along the shoreline, and south and east of the planning area are designated as conservation/preservation. Three neighborhood types are located within RPA 3, with the majority consisting of Emerging neighborhoods. Small areas of Maturing and Revitalizing neighborhoods are located to the north and central portions of RPA 3.

Since the initial 2015 Master Plan RPA 3 has seen significant growth and planned growth limiting the opportunities to develop new parks and facilities to meet the needs of the mixed growth. Evaluation of existing park improvements and reprogramming of activities may be necessary within the Maturing and Revitalizing neighborhoods since they are already built out and substantially developed. Since this area includes the City of Punta Gorda, ongoing communication should be maintained to fully meet the needs of all residents while minimizing the duplication of services and maximizing the expenditures of public funds to provide a diverse parks and recreation menu. The City of Punta Gorda park facilities include Harborwalk, Gilchrist Park, Laishley Park, Ponce de Leon Park, Punta Gorda Nature Park, Hounds of Henry Street (dog park), a diverse trail network, and several other smaller neighborhood parks.

**RPA 4: East (Agricultural/Rural Area).** The majority of the future land uses are resource conservation and agriculture. Emerging and Managed neighborhood types are located within RPA 4 with additional Development of Regional Impact (DRI) regulations. The current population is approximately 50,000.

Figure 1 - Regional Planning Areas



### 1.4 Parks Needs Assessment Study

As part of the 2015 Master Plan development, the County contracted with Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) Department of Public Affairs to prepare the Charlotte County Parks Needs Assessment (Needs Assessment). Dated August 31, 2014, it was used as a basis in preparing the original recommendations contained in 2015 Master Plan. The Needs Assessment Study comprised several different elements, including 1) demographic study of users and associated growth trends; 2) recreational trends research; 3) an exhaustive policy, plan, and regulatory framework review; 4) a review of other agencies including the City of Punta Gorda, Federal agencies; Regional agencies, non-profit and private providers; and 5) a level of service analysis comparing Charlotte County standards with other measures. A summary of the Needs Assessment completed by FGCU, along with augmenting information provided by the County and the Planning Team can be found in Appendix A. A full update to Needs Assessment will be conducted at the next 10-year Master Plan update.

## 1.5 Demographics and Growth

Charlotte County is of growing popularity among families looking for a new place to call home. Many of the surrounding counties such as Sarasota County, Manatee County, and Lee County have all experienced levels of growth that have warranted the reorganization of their public programs. Overall, Charlotte County has seen a population increase of 16.8% according to the 2020 Census. Of this existing population, 40.6% of people are over 65 years of age. This number is very significant as retirees use the county parks just as much as families with small children. Currently, 11.7% of the population are children under the age of 18. When analyzing this data, approximately 52.3% of people of all ages use parks or their services on a weekly basis and these numbers are only projected to increase. As the population increases, more amenities, programs and parks will be needed to meet the demand.

In 2023, Charlotte County contracted with Metro Forecasting Models (MFM) to develop the Charlotte Interactive Growth Model to identify micro and macro development trends that are taking place in the County. The model uses the best available data including spatial demographics from the 2020 Census. As part of the 2024 Master Plan update demographics were updated based on 2020 Census data as well as MFM population forecasting. The Metro Forecasting Models Parks & Recreation Analysis can be found in Appendix B.

**Size.** The population of Charlotte County will be growing in size over the next 10–15 years. The U.S. Census Bureau cited a 2020 population of 186,847 and this has increased to 212,424 in 2024.

Table 1 – Charlotte County Population Forecast

Population Forecast								
Charlotte County Population Forecast								
	2024	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	9995
Charlotte County	212,424	219,571	251,879	283,184	308,337	327,309	340,086	493,202

*Metro Forecasting Models Parks & Recreation Analysis*

**Age.** With this growth in population, the county will see a significant rise in the most senior age groups. Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau the median age of Charlotte County residents has risen steadily from 55.4 years in 2011 to 59.5 years in 2020.

**Race/Diversity.** The racial diversity of the county will not change significantly from its current makeup. However, the Hispanic/Latino population is projected to grow in keeping with national population projection trends. Related to this projection, an increase is expected in the number of individuals who speak Spanish with a high degree of English-language fluency.

**Income.** Household income is projected to decrease into 2050. The study showed the income in the county decreasing in nearly every income category. This trend applies to all categories of income except for those making \$150,000–\$199,999, whose percentage will grow only by 0.3%. The most dramatic decline is expected to occur in the \$35,000–\$49,999 income category, which is expected to decrease by more than 6%.

**Ability.** The number of individuals identified as having some type of disability is highest among the population age 65 and over but is increasing slightly over all age groups.

**Growth.** To provide more targeted park growth data MFM broke the county into six (6) planning clusters; Southwest, Northwest, Punta Gorda, Burnt Store Road, East and Babcock Ranch. The MFM models forecast the populations through 2050 in these planning clusters giving more accurate future park development recommendations.

Table 2 – Charlotte County Population Forecast by Cluster

Population Forecast								
Charlotte County Population Forecast by Cluster								
	2024	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	9995
Babcock Ranch	7,592	9,267	20,788	32,289	38,371	40,559	41,233	41,513
Burnt Store Road	5,564	6,700	10,084	14,403	19,269	22,822	23,837	36,597
East	18,752	19,191	21,817	23,523	25,102	26,647	27,791	55,940
Mid	104,629	107,256	115,698	122,699	128,535	133,835	138,777	200,662
Punta Gorda	25,200	25,559	27,081	28,664	30,241	31,592	32,694	36,661
West	50,687	51,598	56,411	61,606	66,819	71,854	76,754	121,647
<b>Total</b>	<b>212,424</b>	<b>219,571</b>	<b>251,879</b>	<b>283,184</b>	<b>308,337</b>	<b>327,309</b>	<b>341,086</b>	<b>493,020</b>

CHARLOTTE INTERACTIVE GROWTH MODEL® (CIGM) Results and Recommendations

## 1.6 Recreational Trends

The following provides insight to existing and emerging trends throughout the state and nation.

### 1.6.1 FGCU Trends Research

The 2015 Master Plan Needs Assessment Study performed research based on recreational tendencies.

**Florida Residents & Tourists.** Florida residents and tourists shared a similar preference for saltwater beach activities, wildlife viewing, and picnicking. For residents, the list also included bicycling and fishing. Tourists were also interested in swimming in outdoor pools and visiting historical or archeological sites. Participation in sporting activities. The rates of participation and popularity of different sporting activities showed that physical fitness is the most popular of all sport activities, followed by outdoor and individual sports. However, individual sports as a category have decreased by 3.7% since 2008. The sports that have grown include adventure racing and non-traditional/traditional triathlon.

**Participation Demographics.** Trends by age group show that younger groups participate more than older groups. The largest growing demographic is by people ages 25–44. These participants are largely interested in fitness sports.

**Race/Diversity.** Among all races, running, jogging, and trail running was the most popular sport. Fishing, road/mountain/BMX biking, and hiking were also consistently in the top five popular sports across all ethnicities.

## 1.6.2 National, State and Emerging Recreational Trends

As part of the CAPRA accreditation, regional and national trends are reviewed regularly to be considered when developing or redeveloping park facilities and programs. The following are national and regional trends to consider when developing or redeveloping park facilities and programs in Florida.

### National Trends

- Shift from Team to Individual Activities: Similar to national trends, adults in Florida are moving towards individual activities like running, cycling, and yoga, particularly given the state's favorable year-round climate.
- Less Unstructured Time: The trend of reduced unstructured time is also present in Florida, with a preference for shorter, more flexible programs.
- Unstructured and Drop-in Programs: There is a growing preference for unstructured, individual, and drop-in programs over scheduled activities, reflecting national trends.
- Increased Demand for Family and Women's Programs: Programs for families, girls, and women are seeing higher demand, mirroring national trends.
- Decline in Youth Participation in Traditional Team Sports: Traditional team sports among youth have declined in Florida, with an increasing interest in alternative and less structured sports.
- Opening Traditional Male Sports to Females: There is a push to open traditionally male-dominated sports to female participants, similar to national trends.
- Rise in Health, Wellness, and Fitness Program Participation: Participation in health, wellness, and fitness programs is rising, with a particular emphasis on outdoor fitness activities, given Florida's climate.
- Demand for Greenways and Trails: Florida has a strong demand for trails and greenways, supporting activities like hiking, biking, and kayaking, especially in areas like the Everglades and along the coast.
- Interest in Sports, Cultural, and Eco-Tourism: Florida's strong tourism industry sees significant interest in sports tourism, cultural tourism, and eco-tourism, more so than many other states due to its diverse ecosystems and attractions.
- Tech Access in Parks: Tech access, such as Wi-Fi in park settings, is in high demand to support remote work and connectivity, particularly in urban areas.
- Growth of Low-Impact Sports Facilities: Facilities for low-impact sports like pickleball are growing rapidly in Florida, reflecting national trends.
- Multigenerational Splashpads and Playgrounds: These facilities are popular in Florida, providing opportunities for gatherings and recreation for all ages, promoting community engagement.
- Popularity of "Paw Parks": Dog parks are increasingly popular in Florida, providing play areas for dogs and social activities for owners.
- Increased Demand for Extreme Activities: There is a rising demand for extreme activities, such as zip lining, rock climbing, and adventure trips, particularly in regions with natural attractions.
- Sprouting of Community Gardens: Community gardens, including butterfly gardens, are appearing across Florida, promoting local food production and community interaction.
- Growth in Attendance at Farmers Markets and Cultural Events: Attendance at farmers markets, special events, and cultural events is on the rise in Florida, reflecting a growing interest in local produce and community activities.

- Multipurpose and Multigenerational Facility Design: Recreation centers and facilities are being designed and programmed to be multipurpose and multigenerational, increasing flexibility and reducing overall costs.

### Florida-Specific Trends

- Water-Based Recreation: Given its extensive coastline and numerous lakes and rivers, Florida has a unique focus on water-based recreational activities such as boating, fishing, and paddleboarding, which might be more pronounced than in other states.
- Senior Citizen Programs: With a higher population of retirees, there is a significant demand for programs and facilities catering to senior citizens, including low-impact fitness programs, social clubs, and leisure activities.
- Hurricane Preparedness and Resilient Infrastructure: Park facilities in Florida often need to consider hurricane preparedness and incorporate resilient infrastructure to withstand extreme weather conditions.
- Invasive Species Management: Due to its unique ecosystem, Florida parks often have programs focused on managing and educating the public about invasive species.

### Emerging Trends

#### Increasing Outdoor Activities in the United States and Florida

- Hiking and Trail Use
  - National: Hiking has seen a significant increase in popularity nationwide, with more people seeking outdoor experiences and physical exercise.
  - Florida: Hiking and trail use are also growing, particularly in state parks and natural preserves. The Florida Trail, for instance, has seen increased use.
- Cycling
  - National: Both recreational and commuter cycling have seen growth, supported by increased bike lane infrastructure and a focus on healthy living.
  - Florida: Cycling is particularly popular in Florida due to the flat terrain and extensive network of bike paths and trails.
- Kayaking and Paddleboarding
  - National: Water-based activities such as kayaking and paddleboarding have grown, appealing to those seeking low-impact exercise and adventure.
  - Florida: With its extensive coastline, rivers, and lakes, Florida has seen a significant rise in kayaking and paddleboarding, especially in areas like the Florida Keys and Everglades.
- Birdwatching and Wildlife Viewing
  - National: Interest in birdwatching and wildlife viewing has increased, driven by a desire to connect with nature and enjoy outdoor activities that can be done while distancing.
  - Florida: Given its diverse ecosystems and numerous bird species, Florida has become a hotspot for birdwatching and wildlife tours.
- Camping
  - National: Camping has seen an uptick, with more families and individuals seeking affordable and socially distanced vacation options.
  - Florida: State parks and national forests in Florida report increased camping activity, particularly in cooler months.

- Fishing
  - National: Recreational fishing remains popular, with increases in both freshwater and saltwater fishing.
  - Florida: Fishing is a major activity in Florida, with both residents and tourists taking advantage of the abundant fishing opportunities.
- Pickleball
  - National: Pickleball is one of the fastest-growing sports in the U.S., attracting players of all ages.
  - Florida: The state's retirement communities have embraced pickleball, adding to its growth.

#### Decreasing Outdoor Activities in the United States and Florida

- Traditional Team Sports
  - National: Participation in traditional team sports like football, baseball, and soccer has seen declines, especially among youth.
  - Florida: Similar trends observed, shifting toward individual and non-traditional sports.
- Golf
  - National: While still popular, golf has seen a decline in participation due to time commitments and costs.
  - Florida: Golf remains popular among retirees, but overall participation rates are seeing slight declines, with some golf courses closing or being repurposed.
- Hunting
  - National: Hunting has seen a gradual decline in participation, influenced by urbanization and changing interests.
  - Florida: Hunting remains a tradition in certain regions, but overall has been declining.
- Skateboarding
  - National: Skateboarding saw a peak in popularity but has recently seen a decline as newer sports and activities emerge.
  - Florida: The trend is similar, with skateparks seeing less use compared to other recreational facilities.

**Health and Wellness.** People of all ages, especially older adults, are increasingly engaging in activities to improve their overall health and wellness. Chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and stroke remain leading causes of death in Americans, contributing to 6 out of 10 deaths according to the CDC. Obesity rates in the United States are among the highest in the world, with 73.6% of adults having overweight or obesity and nearly 1 in 5 children being affected. Arthritis remains the leading cause of disability. Public health professionals advocate that parks and recreation facilities, such as trails, community centers, and playgrounds, are essential for improving public health. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that the percentage of people who walk for leisure or transportation rose to over 65% in recent years.

**Older Adults.** Older Americans have increasing leisure time, which they spend engaging in physical activities, educational classes, adventure travel, and attending sporting events. This demographic is more active and seeks opportunities to socialize while staying fit.

**Adults.** Adults are moving towards individual activities such as running, cycling, and yoga, given the trend of reduced unstructured time. They prefer shorter, more flexible programs and enjoy social opportunities integrated into their fitness routines.

**Teens/Youth.** Participation in out-of-school activities and programs provides essential support for youth and working families, benefiting youth socially, emotionally, and academically. There is a notable decline in participation in traditional team sports, with a shift towards individual or non-traditional sports. Teens often look for activities that combine physical fitness with social interaction, such as climbing walls and group bike rides.

**Children.** Children's participation in physical activities is crucial for their development. Parks and recreation facilities offering playgrounds, sports fields, and programs designed for kids' fitness and fun are essential. Engagement in outdoor activities is also encouraged to foster a connection with nature and promote healthy lifestyles from a young age.

**Wildlife and Nature.** Approximately 44% of the American population over age 16 participate in outdoor activities such as hiking, nature photography, fishing, birding, and hunting. There is a growing interest in outdoor recreation, driven by a desire for nature connection and the mental health benefits associated with outdoor activities.

### 1.6.3 Statistically Valid Survey

As part of the ongoing Master Plan implementation Community Services conducts a public outreach program to gather information from residents to determine the overall knowledge, needs, and wants of Charlotte County Parks and Recreation facilities and programs, every two years. These trends are used to help the County determine where additional funding, resources, and employees are needed. Statistically Valid Survey have been conducted in 2019, 2021 and 2023. A summary of the trends from the 2023 Statistically Valid Survey are as follows:

- The highest rated benefits for the programs and facilities provided by Charlotte County are that they are fun for all ages, they provide a place to relax and enjoy nature, and they are a safe place for parks and recreation.
- Due to the pandemic, the interest in nature (walking trails, hiking, birding, gardening, etc), active sports (sports courts), and outdoor and adventure recreation has increased as well as the awareness of the programs provided for each.
- There was an increased demand for new programs, the highest rated program being aquatic recreation.
- There is a high demand for more adult and senior programs.
- People would like to see more programs in the mid-morning.
- The main reason why people are not participating in the programs offered by the County is because they have no knowledge of them. The next reason is the available hours of operation.
- People prefer to receive communication through emails/e-newsletters and the Charlotte County Parks website.
- Activity level stayed the same for half of the people surveyed in 2023, however 34% of the respondents stated they had increased their activity levels.

## 1.7 Community Engagement

For the Master Plan, the County sought input from key stakeholders, county residents, and park visitors, and assembled a Steering Committee to guide the development of the 2015 Master Plan. A critical and ongoing part of effectively delivering a community-oriented parks and recreation system is community engagement. A full community engagement program will be included in the next 10-year Master Plan update.

### 1.7.1 Parks Master Planning

Park master planning is done before an actual design is implemented. This allows the Charlotte County residents to have a voice in what is being added within their local parks. Public outreach is done in different ways to ensure the end users have the opportunity to provide their input.

**Park Specific Master Planning.** When creating a specific park master plan, three (3) public outreach meetings are conducted. Two (2) of the meetings are used to gather public feedback on desired amenities and the third meeting is to present the findings compiled into a final concept plan.

**Use of Technology to Host Public Meetings.** Public meetings traditionally were held in person. With the growing use of technology, platforms like Facebook Live and SurveyMonkey have been and continue to be used to reach a wider audience.

**Statistically Valid Survey.** As discussed in Section 1.6.3, a Statistically Valid Survey is conducted every two (2) years. This survey provides the Department with the needs and wants directly from the residents. This survey is used to gauge where additional funding and resources should be allocated to provide the necessary services for the community.

**Customer Feedback.** Community Services Department Recreation Division offers comment cards in their facilities to address cleanliness and customer service. Program surveys are provided for participants at the end of programs. There is a "Question of the Month" that is posted within the recreation centers on a monthly basis. These tools are used to allow the users to provide feedback to the staff so that changes can be implemented where needed.

### 1.7.2 Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

The Charlotte County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) provided direction during the formation of the 2015 Master Plan. The advisory board takes an active role in participating in, reviewing, and making recommendations to the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) on park development, Master Plan implementation and ongoing operations and maintenance. Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meetings provide another opportunity for public input on all things Parks and Recreation.

### 1.7.3 Public Outreach

The development of the 2015 Master Plan included a steering committee that met multiple times during the planning process. Additionally, three public workshops were held to seek information regarding how people currently recreate, their opinions on existing facilities, programs, and services, and how they

would like to focus the County's future parks and recreation resources. The workshop participants were also asked for their input on the draft guiding principles, themes, and desired parks and recreation facilities and services. During the next update planned for 2034 a full public outreach program will be planned.

### 1.8 Opportunities for Collaboration

The following organizations were identified as partners to collaborate with to provide or enhance recreational facilities and programs.

- City of Punta Gorda
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- South Florida Water Management District
- Florida Department of Transportation
- Lemon Bay Conservancy
- YMCA
- Boys and Girls Club of Charlotte County

## Part Two: The Future

This Master Plan provides an update for the 2015 Master Plan by updating standards for levels of park and recreation services and facilities in the county along with development priorities. The Master Plan describes the funding, political, and administrative processes to make public funding dollars for parks and recreation go further and strengthen the system to meet identified deficiencies and shortfalls in the future parks and recreation system.

### 2.1 The Vision

We envision an unparalleled, attractive, connected, and sustainable parks and recreation system that focuses on regional and community-based opportunities while preserving environmentally sensitive resources and enticing residents and visitors to **"Get Up, Get Out, Get Active."** The Master Plan promotes the development of a diverse, yet balanced, high-quality, and integrated parks, recreation, and regional trail system to meet community-wide current and future recreation needs.

### 2.2 Guiding Principles

There are several overarching themes or principles that guide the creation and maintenance of high-quality, safe, accessible, connected, and economically sustainable parks and recreation systems. These principles form the basis for service excellence in implementing the Master Plan.

This section summarizes these guiding principles, objectives and key strategies that were developed to create and maintain a high-quality parks and recreation system.

#### 2.2.1 Diversity & Distribution of Inventory & Services

Physical activity and leisure contribute to individual and community health. The County's parks and recreation system is designed to react to changing trends and meet diverse recreational needs in a safe and age-appropriate manner. Emphasis will be on achieving a diverse and regionally balanced system of community, regional, and environmental lands to accommodate user demand.

#### Objectives:

- Provide a regionally connected, integrated, and accessible parks and trail system.
- Concentrate efforts and resources on existing and future community, regional, and environmental lands.
- Create a park system that responds to changing recreational needs and trends while addressing the Master Plan's Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles.
- Provide user-based and context-appropriate parks, facilities, and programs.

#### Key Strategies:

1. Meet or exceed park level of service, proximity, accessibility, and connectivity standards.
  - a. Ensure the County is maintaining inventory, facilities, and services to meet the level of service requirements for providing developed community, regional, and special parks/facilities (active). Undeveloped property shall not be counted in level of service inventory.

- b. Ensure the County is maintaining its inventory of environmental lands to meet level of service requirements. Public access will be provided in areas where deemed appropriate while not degrading the natural systems.
  - c. Investigate, identify, and partner with local and regional partners such as the Charlotte County-Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the State of Florida to develop a regional trail, greenway, and blueway system that provides access to our diverse environmental areas and connects public destinations, activity centers, and neighborhoods.
  - d. Regularly evaluate population densities and development patterns, particularly within the Revitalizing and Maturing Neighborhoods, to determine the need and appropriate distribution of parks and park types.
  - e. Create partnerships to enhance connectivity and safe routes to parks and facilities.
  - f. Ensure the County's parks and facilities are compliant with ADA standards; and provide the opportunity for people of all abilities to participate in/at the County's recreational facilities and programs.
2. The County will continue to address the existing parks and recreation facilities and environmental lands inventory to meet the vision and mission of providing a quality park system that focuses on providing parks and facilities that are well-maintained, attractive, safe, and meets recreational demand of the community and region.
  - a. Utilize the qualitative park program assessment that emphasizes adequate funding for the enhancement, maintenance, and operation of existing facilities and lands over the development of new parks.
  - b. Funding will first be directed to updating, enhancing, and expanding existing park facilities over the development of new facilities.
  - c. Continue to prepare park development plans for existing and new facilities with public input.
  - d. Continue to evaluate the opportunity to develop or redevelop park facilities as multi-purpose or flexible space that can meet the needs of more than one recreational activity (i.e., multipurpose sports fields and courts). This provides access to recreation to more individuals than a single purpose facility. It is noted that tournament play facilities should not be designed as multipurpose.
3. Offer a variety of programs and facilities for all ages and groups, in keeping with current and traditional recreational trends.
  - a. Perform an annual assessment of national, state, and regional recreational trends and determine their applicability in Charlotte County.
  - b. Provide a balance of recreational facilities and activities including special events, youth programs, athletics, and multi-generational programs and facilities.
  - c. Expand outreach and marketing of available parks and recreational facilities and programs to under- represented groups (i.e., youth, young adults, physically challenged, minority, low income, and transportation dependent populations).

### 2.2.2 Economic Vitality through Parks

The Charlotte County Parks System has the opportunity to stimulate the county's overall economic viability through the provision of quality, well-maintained, and welcoming parks, recreation, and trail facilities and programs and special events that encourage cultural tourism, sports tourism, and eco-

tourism. The County's parks and recreation facilities and programs will be fully used to create and improve economic development opportunities. The county commissioned a study in 2023 to look at the impact and value of Charlotte County's parks system which can be found in Appendix C.

**Objectives:**

- Create positive community experiences and increase real property values through connected park spaces and environmental systems.
- Promote cultural tourism and eco-tourism through enhanced parks and recreational facilities, special events, and programming.
- Expand recreational facilities at regional parks and community centers to accommodate sports leagues, sporting events, and tournaments to help boost the economy through sports tourism.
- Maintain the quality and integrity of the existing park system to ensure long-term viability of the system and protect County investments.

**Key Strategies:**

1. Evaluate strategies for sound fiscal investments in parks as a cornerstone for economic development.
  - a. Actively market and promote the parks and recreation system to demonstrate parks and recreation facilities as a vital economic development tool.
  - b. Create a regional trail system and improve connectivity to County assets and natural resources to stimulate economic growth opportunities.
  - c. Increase the number and access to tournament quality athletic facilities to facilitate regional, state, and federal sports league events to be held within Charlotte County. These facilities will be located in regional parks or intensely designed recreation parks with easy access to major highways and Interstate 75.
2. Through partnerships, improve parks, facilities, programming, and special events within the County's community redevelopment districts to identify, facilitate, and increase economic development opportunities. Seek out and engage in creative local partnerships and conduct joint fundraising efforts with partners to promote cultural, sports, and eco-tourism opportunities within Charlotte County.

### 2.2.3 Service Excellence

Providing high-quality programs and facilities yields high-quality experiences and outcomes. The Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions' staff are committed to providing outstanding experiences for all users.

**Objectives:**

- Develop a highly effective workforce that will positively impact the quality of life for Charlotte County residents and visitors.
- Develop a results-oriented, collaborative, and innovative parks planning process.
- Maintain agency accreditation through CAPRA.

### Key Strategies:

1. Develop and implement a plan to eliminate or bridge competency and experience gaps in the County's parks and recreation workforce.
  - a. Create programs for cross-training between existing staff.
  - b. Develop organization performance measures (using common metrics between divisions) by functional areas.
  - c. Develop a five-year staffing plan that also addresses right sizing the organization, seasonal staff, and professional staff (including an urban forester and a partnerships/grants coordinator).
  - d. Identify professional competencies required for each position and review biennially and compare the positions across agencies to ensure that standards and competencies are similar at like levels to ensure that skills can transfer between divisions or departments.
2. Develop and implement a Communication Plan for the Divisions.
  - a. Develop a process that ensures that the Parks and Recreation Divisions can provide input into the scoping process and contract selection process for needed services.
  - b. Create a performance-based vendor monitoring program to ensure that contract scope and responsibilities are being achieved and to allow for the efficient and expedited termination of non- performing vendors.
  - c. Develop branding and marketing for the entire park system which delivers a message of diversity but unity among the facility types.

### 2.2.4 Positive Partnerships

Providing a high-quality parks and recreation system for Charlotte County requires constant, collaborative partnerships. The County will facilitate a process that actively fosters partnerships with stakeholders and other service providers to create the most effective and efficient facilities and services possible.

### Objectives:

- Build community through partnerships that are mutually beneficial.
- Parks and Recreation services shall be promoted and accessible to all community members.
- Use inclusive and transparent community engagement practices that encourage participation by all community members.

### Key Strategies:

1. Maintain, augment, and further develop strategic alliances with partners and key stakeholders (school board, MPO, Water Management District, State of Florida, City of Punta Gorda, Charlotte County Office of Economic Development, UF/IFAS Cooperative Extension, sports associations, youth non-profits, senior agencies, health department, etc.).
  - a. Monitor and evaluate all partnerships for alignment and consistency with the Master Plan.
2. Create and implement a strategic framework for developing and managing community partnerships.
  - a. Establish partnership standards and guidelines.
  - b. Identify partnership needs and actively seek out partnerships to meet needs.
  - c. Create staff position to coordinate partnerships.

3. Develop relationships with community leaders and organizations.
  - a. Develop and implement an outreach program for key stakeholders and groups.
  - b. Establish regular outreach with similar agency leaders, as well as community leaders.
4. Ensure public engagement efforts include outreach to the whole community.
  - a. Conduct a biennial user satisfaction and user survey.
  - b. Develop and maintain a comprehensive list of community groups.
  - c. Develop and implement a communication outreach plan.
  - d. Evaluate outcomes of outreach efforts to ensure that goals are met.
5. Ensure that services are promoted and accessible to all community members.
  - a. Charlotte County offers free and/or reduced programming for qualified community members.
  - b. Explore opportunities to promote services to non-English speaking visitors to promote tourism and economic development.

### 2.2.5 Sustainable Practices

Ensuring an environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable future is an overarching priority for the County. The Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions will serve as leaders in using and promoting sustainable practices in every aspect of providing parks, facilities, and programs.

#### Objectives:

- Ensure sustainable development that uses natural resources both efficiently and responsibly providing long-term benefits.
- Improve community and regional livability.
- Develop financially sustainable parks, open space areas, and recreational facilities.

#### Key Strategies:

1. Reduce energy demand.
  - a. Replace and use equipment and fixtures with the latest efficiency technology.
  - b. Strive to adopt new modern standards for structures to assure they are as energy efficient as possible. This could include LEED standards of Silver or higher for renovations and Gold or higher for new construction.
  - c. Replace and/or renovate obsolete energy or resource-inefficient infrastructure.
2. Improve vehicle efficiencies and reduce vehicle use.
  - a. The County will evaluate walking and biking facilities available to connect people to parks. If alternative transportation facilities such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and multipurpose paths are connected to parks, then park visitors may choose to leave their car at home. This serves to reduce vehicle use while assisting in meeting health and wellness goals. It is noted that Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions are not the provider of these facilities and will work with other departments such as the County's Public Works Department, the State of Florida and/or the MPO to provide them.
  - b. Bike racks are available at all neighborhood and community parks since they are considered walk/ bike to parks. New park development should evaluate the installation of electric car charging stations at regional parks.

- c. Community Services Department Parks and Natural Resources Division has dedicated routes based on areas of the County and have vehicles staged in the most efficient areas for routes. The County stages vehicles in South, Mid, and West County. There are plans to expand maintenance yards and create "maintenance yard hubs" in all of the RPAs for efficiency.
3. Reduce water use and increase plantings of native species.
  - a. Conduct an evaluation of water usage and track historical and on-going consumption of water at parks and facilities. This evaluation should include landscaping, restrooms, aquatic facilities, and other water uses.
  - b. Utilize Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Division's Landscape Basis of Design which lists plants that are considered Florida friendly.
  - c. Evaluate opportunities to increase use of compostable materials within landscaped areas (e.g., increased use of leaf mulch, chips, and other waste materials).
  - d. Increase the use of rain gardens and increased use of bioswales for the collection of runoff and stormwater. This should be a consideration during the design of new and redeveloping parks.
  - e. Coordinate with local water treatment facilities to evaluate the use of recycled wastewater for irrigation of park landscaping.
  - f. Standardize landscape buffers utilizing Florida native plantings.
4. Implement sustainable building practices and materials.
  - a. Increase the use of pervious surfaces to improve water recharge and reduce stormwater flows, for walkways, parking areas, and other traditional hardscapes.
  - b. Adopt Low Impact Design (LID) guidelines to minimize a site's development footprint and encourage re-use, and where appropriate, removal of existing structures and other impervious surfaces. Currently the County's sustainability initiatives currently follow design and construction best practices without directly pursuing any type of certifications. The design and construction will utilize sustainable standards, comparable to LEED or similar rating system principles, without pursuing any certification level.
  - c. Adapt these LID guidelines for development of recreational landscapes in parks.
5. Develop vibrant and equitable parks.
  - a. Evaluate the current service level of parks, recreational facilities, and open space areas and increase, if necessary, the ratio of park land to County population, particularly in underserved neighborhoods.
  - b. Develop, maintain, and improve access to public spaces that encourage and develop social interaction.
  - c. Consider establishing a "Nature in the County" program to increase "wildness" within the parks system.
  - d. Evaluate, design, and, if necessary, retrofit parks and recreational facilities to provide bicycle and pedestrian linkages with other public spaces including schools.
  - e. Promote gardening within public spaces through the development of a community garden program. Primary focus for locating new community gardens should be in areas that are known "food deserts" or economically depressed. This will also meet health and wellness objectives.
6. Evaluate and monitor services and facilities through a life cycle management approach. Review research on best practices and local and national trends.

7. Ensure long-term maintenance of parks.
  - a. Develop administrative, fiscal, programmatic resources and financial forecasting to ensure ongoing, long-term maintenance and management of publicly owned parks and facilities.
  - b. Plan for sustainable site maintenance prior to the development of new or renovated sites.
  - c. Recognize and document sustainability efforts already in use and share accomplishments.
  - d. Support and expand existing private programs dedicated to the care of park systems and encourage the creation private park foundations.

### 2.2.6 Health and Wellness

The community recognizes that physical activity and leisure contribute to our individual health, and the presence of park and recreation services enhance the quality of health in our community, particularly with the significant rise in the most senior age groups within Charlotte County. Programming should be accessible to all members of the community, especially youth, older adults, and those with low incomes or disabilities.

#### Objectives:

- Emphasize the important and unique mission of Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions to enhance the public health and wellness of the community.
- Continue the Divisions' initiative to **"Get Up, Get Out, Get Active."**
- Provide for community members' health and wellness through deliberate and thoughtful design of programs, facilities, parks and services.
- Serve as a facilitator, collaborator, and leader with local organizations in efforts to improve the community's health and wellness.
- Use a life cycle management approach in recreation programming and facility asset management to ensure service provision remains aligned with community interests.
- Park and recreation services and facilities will be accessible to people of all abilities.

#### Key Strategies:

1. Park and recreation services will remain aligned with the public interest in health and wellness.
2. Parks and facilities will be provided to meet and/or exceed proximity standards.
  - a. Partner with the County's Public Works Department and the MPO to enhance connectivity and safe routes to parks and schools. This includes the installation and maintenance of sidewalks, bike lanes, and other facilities to **"Get Up, Get Out, Get Active."**
  - b. Review population data to determine distribution by age, gender, income and ethnicity and plan activities at community and regional facilities to provide specific activities that the different groups may be interested in.
  - c. Partner with other agencies and private development to connect parks with residents through sidewalks and bike lanes/paths to promote walking and biking as healthy activities.

3. Analyze community health impacts and develop programs and facilitates to assist individuals in "getting and staying healthy."
  - a. Identify "recreation deserts" and prioritize the location of new facilities in these areas.
  - b. Provide programs that provide health and wellness benefits, such as the following:
    - i. Community walking
    - ii. Different types of low impact therapeutic recreation
    - iii. Gardening classes (i.e., vegetable, sensory & therapy)
    - iv. Fitness classes
    - v. Health fairs and festivals
    - vi. Community wellness challenges, and
    - vii. Initiate "Parks are Good Medicine" or "Park Prescriptions" programs with local health professionals.
4. Leverage partnerships with health providers and allied agencies that contribute essential components to the overall health of Charlotte County.
  - a. Coordinate with health care professionals and organizations to develop health measurements for Charlotte County. Link to program objectives.
  - b. Communicate annual data findings to community members and partners.

### 2.2.7 Continuous Improvement

The Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions emphasizes the continuous improvement of parklands, facilities, and programs through ongoing evaluation and enhancement. To achieve its mission and to continue to improve, the Divisions must have adequate fiscal and management resources to properly enhance, maintain, and operate the parks system.

#### Objectives:

- Require new parks/facilities, improvements to existing parks/facilities, and potential acquisition of park lands advance the vision/mission and are consistent with the objectives of this Master Plan.
- The County will properly fund the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions to ensure the quality and integrity of the facilities and that programs are maintained.
- Maintain adequate resources by implementing a life-cycle approach.
- Provide a balance of recreational activities including special events, youth programs, athletics, and multi-generational programs and facilities.

#### Key Strategies:

1. Establish and maintain an aesthetically pleasing, safe, accessible, and connected park system.
  - a. Conduct a qualitative needs assessment of the park system to identify the condition and safety of existing facilities and evaluate connectivity to surrounding areas.
  - b. Continue evaluations biennially for all parks and environmental lands.
  - c. Evaluate the potential for repurposing or transitioning parks and recreational facilities that are no longer needed or adequate for other purposes (mini parks, neighborhood parks, other property).
  - d. Reestablish Park design standards to standardize site furniture, colors, and materials.
2. The Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions must be fiscally sustainable to achieve its vision.

- a. Carry out the improvements outlined in the 2020 Sales Tax Referendum and evaluate options to continue this dedicated funding source for future park improvement projects.
  - b. The County should evaluate the appropriate levels of recreation impact fees and its collection to provide funds for future community and regional facilities.
  - c. Develop business plans for facilities and programs, including establishing a framework for consolidating/sunseting programs and evaluating programs that should sunset.
  - d. Develop partnerships with other departments, agencies, and organizations to leverage funds for facility development, operation, and provision of programs and special events.
3. Provide multi-functional and flexible parks programs and facilities that can accommodate current and future park needs and recreation use trends.
- a. Emphasize safe and adequate operation and maintenance of existing parks and facilities over development of new parks.
  - b. Ensure new parks or improvements to existing parks are consistent with or advance the objectives of the Master Plan to provide programs and activities to accommodate the recreational needs of all age groups as appropriate.
4. Acquire potential easements/properties to expand and upgrade the County's Park system and establish a network of greenways and trails that connects parks together. Priority ranking includes:
- a. Acquisitions should be prioritized for future regional parks, community parks, water access and those lands that contribute to priority conservation needs.
  - b. Properties possessing the potential for more formal outdoor interpretation of a natural resource message unique to the site or accessible to the local or regional trail system.
  - c. Located within a reasonable travel distance of urban centers, with a particular emphasis on under-served populations.
  - d. Acquisitions that include or offer potential linkages.
5. Create programs and activities for youth, teens, and young adults and appropriately locate them based on their need.
- a. Consider providing additional facilities or expanding existing facilities for popular outdoor activities for all age groups, appropriately designed to meet their recreational needs.
  - b. Seek opportunities to provide programs and facilities designed for teens and "tweens" (ages 10–12) with structured, supervised activities.
  - c. Develop a social media plan and offer programs and activities that increase youth participation in volunteer programs and encourage youth engagement in the parks and recreation system.
  - d. Provide active recreation opportunities for teens, young adults, and young families, such as Little League, softball, basketball, soccer, disc golf, and other activities.
6. Explore or expand programs and activities which provide opportunities for active lifestyles for older adults.
- a. Create settings where older adults and youth can interact and "play" with each other safely (e.g., playground within senior center to allow grandparents to play with grandchildren).
  - b. Enhance programs and facilities for older adult athletic activities.

## Part Three: System Building Blocks

This section describes the framework to achieve the Master Plans vision, mission, and guiding principles described in Part Two.

### 3.1 County's Primary Role Community and Regional Park Facilities

The Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Division's primary responsibility is to maximize efforts and resources toward providing facilities, services, and programs that can efficiently serve the largest number of people while consolidating resources through regional, community parks, special purpose parks, regional trails, and environmentally sensitive lands/parks. Neighborhood or mini parks are considered secondary in nature.

### 3.2 Park Classifications and Definitions

This Master Plan mixes park elements in such a way as to create a balanced, diversified, and sustainable parks system that is based on, and reacts to the needs of the end users within their unique geographic context. This Master Plan establishes two tiers of parks for the County: primary parks and secondary parks. Primary parks are those parks and facilities for which the County has daily operation and maintenance authority and seeks to be the focus for future development, including regional parks, community parks, special purpose parks, and environmental lands. Secondary parks are those parks, including neighborhood park and mini parks, that are operated and maintained by the County or an entity other than the County such as neighborhood groups, private development, or non-profit organizations. The following provide the definitions and criteria for each of the park types.

The following definitions are to be used as guidelines for classification, inventory, and development purposes. The key to success when using these criteria is to define what constitutes a developed active park and what constitutes public access or value for environmental lands. The problem in the past with acreage-only Level of Service (LOS) measures is that land was placed into inventory regardless of its development or access status.

#### Primary

**Regional Parks (50 acres or more, active).** Generally, the minimum acreage size is 50 acres, but the actual size of the park is dependent upon the space needed to accommodate the desired recreational uses. Regional parks serve a broader purpose than community parks and are intended to serve the needs of the entire community at 5-10 acres per 1,000 residents. Regional parks are to be located in close proximity to major highways to handle large volumes of traffic and accommodate large numbers of people without significant deterioration of the recreation experience or community. Service areas 3-10 miles (or greater in less populated areas) and a 30-minute drive are considered "drive to" parks.

Regional parks usually include heavily programmed athletic and recreation facilities designed in a complex that can serve for league or tournament play. For example, baseball/softball fields should be provided at minimum in a 4-5 field hub, and tennis courts should be built in 3-5 court batteries. The addition of pickleball courts should be considered for Regional Parks. Many times, special purpose facilities (recreation centers, aquatic facilities, etc.) are located within regional parks. The multiple use concept for designing sports fields increases access for different athletic participants.

Development of regional parks is usually phased over time with typical features—in addition to competition-level athletic fields with lights— including natural/environmental areas, picnic shelters and playgrounds, nature and multi-use trails, connections to an external trail system, unique facilities (equestrian, dog parks, skate parks, R/C track, disc golf, etc.), and adequate support amenities (parking, restrooms, concessions, etc.) Although regional parks are seen as providing more intense recreation facilities, they should be designed with adequate open space, resource-based activities (picnic, trails, open space) and natural areas. Currently, there are four (4) regional parks:

- Ann & Chuck Dever Regional Park
- Centennial Park
- Harold Avenue Regional Park
- South County Regional Park

**Community Parks (10–50 acres, active).** Due to their size and scale of amenities, community parks serve a broader purpose than neighborhood parks (definition for neighborhood park is provided under Secondary). Community parks usually serve two or more neighborhoods and populations within ½ to 3 miles of the park at 5-8 acres per 1,000 residents. Community parks need to be located, where possible, with direct access to a collector or arterial street and not small local neighborhood streets. This provides greater access from multiple neighborhoods and minimizes neighborhood intrusion. Parks are to be connected to surrounding neighborhoods by sidewalks, and if possible, bike facilities to increase community walkability.

Community parks are intended to provide community-based recreational needs while preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. Active and passive activities within a community park are more varied and intensive than neighborhood parks. Community parks can have the flexibility of providing both informal/unstructured group sports, as well as formal/structured group sports, (Little League, softball, etc.). Parking lots are to be provided, as appropriate, to accommodate user access. Lighting is to be provided for security, safety, and lighting facilities for games and events where appropriate. Currently, there are thirteen (13) community parks:

- Bissett Park
- Carmalita Park
- Deep Creek Park
- Franz Ross Park
- G. C. Herring Park
- Harbour Heights Park
- Hathaway Park (per recommended reclassification – See Section 4.5)
- Maracaibo Kidspace Park
- McGuire Park
- Myakka River Park (per recommended reclassification – See Section 4.5)
- Rotonda Community Park
- Tringali Park
- William R. Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park

Multipurpose Facilities should be emphasized at Community Parks. Recreation facilities at community parks are geared towards multipurpose play to expand recreational access to a variety of experiences.

For example, instead of tennis courts and pickleball courts, courts can be designed as multipurpose sport courts to provide both.

**Special Purpose Parks (size varies based on amenities provided at the site).** Special-purpose parks provide the community with a unique purpose. Examples include parks or sub-units of parks that are designated as a natural, historical, or cultural resource, or parks with a singular purpose. Special-purpose parks include water access (ramps, piers, launches), linear parks, splash pads, sports complexes, tournament complexes, or other special facility. Special purpose parks may provide a benefit to groups or organizations rather than the public at large. The size varies depending on use with a service area of 3–10+ miles depending on the location of the park and the facilities provided. Infrastructure to be provided is based on potential use or significance. Currently, there are 26 special purpose parks:

- Ainger Creek Park
- Allapatchee Shores Park
- Anger Fishing Pier
- Audubon-Pennington Nature Park
- Bayshore Live Oak Park
- Boca Grande Fishing Pier
- Butterford Waterway Park
- Cape Haze Pioneer Trail Park
- Centennial Fishing Pier
- Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center
- Charlotte Sports Park
- Chester Roberts Park
- Darst Park
- El Jobean Boat Ramp
- El Jobean Fishing Pier
- Englewood Beach at Chadwick Park
- Lemon Bay Sunrise Rotary Park
- Live Oak Point
- Midway Park (per recommended reclassification – See Section 4.5)
- Ollie's Pond Park
- Placida Fishing Pier
- Placida Park
- Port Charlotte Beach Park
- Riverside Park
- Spring Lake Park
- St. Paul Linear Park

**Environmentally Sensitive Lands/Park (size varies based on resource).** These are lands reserved to protect and conserve areas in natural or modified landscapes. They are classified based on their size, management goals, public access, and amount of programming; the full definitions can be found in Appendix D. These lands may also be suitable for sustainable public recreation and enjoyment for local and regional residents and can be marketed for eco-tourism. Environmental parks typically have sensitive environmental habitats with more urban interface. Management may be focused not only on

environmental preservation, but also on managing the natural resources for public use. Such uses may include programming, interpretive features, amenities, and multi-use trails (paved and unpaved). Other typical features include birding, canoe/kayak, environmental center, fishing, nature education, nature/walking trail, picnicking, playground, and room rentals. Environmental lands/parks can serve a population within a 20+ mile service radius (30–60-minute drive) based on the size and nature of the site, and the public access/facilities.

- Preserves
  - Bill Coy Preserve
  - Peace River Preserve
  - Prairie Creek Preserve
  - Shell Creek Preserve
  - Thornton Key Preserve
- Environmental Parks
  - Amberjack Environmental Park
  - Ann & Chuck Dever Environmental
  - Cedar Point Environmental Park
  - Charlotte Flatwoods Environmental Park
  - Oyster Creek Environmental Park
  - Tippecanoe Environmental Park
  - Tippecanoe II
- Mitigation Lands
  - Biscayne Trust Conservation Easement
  - HCP Acquisition Lands
  - Rotonda Mitigation Area
- Natural Lands
  - Audubon-Pennington Nature Park
  - Hathaway Park
  - Myakka River Park
  - Ollie's Pond

**Regional Bicycle-Pedestrian Trails (length depends on destinations/connections).** This is usually a paved facility that can function as alternative transportation route, but primarily used for recreational biking. Regional trails connect destinations such as neighborhoods to activity centers, regional parks to significant environmental lands, or even connecting municipalities between jurisdictions. Regional recreational trails should be a length that provides a quality experience or ride. Paved widths are to be a minimum 10 feet, with an optimum of 12–15 feet. Although this is listed as a primary facility, it is understood that the County must partner with other agencies such as FDOT, State of Florida, Charlotte County Public Works Department and the MPO for the funding, development, and maintenance of these regional systems. Trailheads with parking and convenience facilities should be provided at termini and major trail entry points. Rest areas can be incorporated throughout the trail length. Recreational trails are usually phased over time.

- Cape Haze Pioneer Trail
- Cape Haze Pioneer Trail - Harness Trailhead to Gasparilla Rd
- Briggs - Gasparilla to Keystone
- SR 776 - Fairgrounds/Charlotte Sports Park

- Port Charlotte Blvd - Edgewater Dr. to US 4
- Loveland Boulevard - Peachland to Veterans
- Kings Highway - Veterans Blvd to Sandhill Blvd

**Greenway and Blueways Trails (size varies based on resource).** Greenways are designated non-motorized pathways intended along a natural corridor, such as a riverfront, natural area, green stormwater infrastructure or landscaped course for pedestrian or bicycle passage. They open space connector linking parks, nature reserves, cultural features, or historic sites with each other and populated areas; or a local strip or linear park designated as a parkway or greenbelt. Blueways are marked routes on waterways such as rivers, lakes, canals and coastlines for people using non-motorized boats, kayaks, rafts or canoes with launch points, and marked points of interest. Blueways encourage family recreation, ecological education, and preservation of wildlife resources. Landside support facilities may include parking, launches, convenience facilities, or even rental/concession opportunities.

- Charlotte County Blueway Trails

### Secondary

**Neighborhood Park (1-10 acres—active).** A total of 5–10 acres would be considered optimal for the development of a neighborhood park. This park serves neighborhoods within ¼–½ mile without interruption of a collector roadway at 1-2 acres per 1,000 residents. Vehicle parking usually is not provided except disabled parking, or if a specialty element is located there. People should not have to cross non-residential roads or other major physical barriers to access the neighborhood park. Development of a neighborhood park should achieve 50/50 balance of passive and active (non-programmed) activities. Currently, there are eight (8) neighborhood parks:

- Englewood East Park
- Higgs Park
- Katherine Ariens Dog Park
- Lake Betty Park
- Larry Taylor Kiwanis Park
- Randy Spence Park
- San Domingo Park
- South Gulf Cove Park

**Mini Park (up to 1 acre in size).** Under certain conditions, park areas less than five acres could be considered mini parks. They are used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs (such as concentrated populations) and generally serve residential populations within ¼ mile from the park. Accessibility through trails, sidewalks, or low-volume residential streets are important components as they function to increase the use of the parks. Amenities provided in mini parks are modest and may include open space, specialty gardens, scenic views, benches, and shade. For mini parks, the site itself should help guide the physical characteristics of the park. Usually there is no parking on-site, and any lighting that is provided is for security and safety purposes only.

To refocus the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions on the provision of larger parks, neighborhood and mini parks with limited recreational value to the community as a whole may be considered for reclassification, repurposing, or disposition by transfer to another provider, such as

homeowners associations or private non-profit; if one of these options is not available, the property may be evaluated for sale.

### 3.3 Service Radii for Park Classifications

As described in the Section 3.2 park classification definitions, each park type has a geographical service radius based on park size and adjacent population. Mini parks are not assigned a service area due to their small recreational value. Special purpose parks are assigned a three-mile radius, and regional trails are not assigned a service area since attendance is based on the resource and/or facility, and interested people typically are willing to travel to reach them.

- **Regional Park.**
  - 3–10 miles or up to a 30-minute drive
  - 5–15 mile or up to a 45-minute drive
- **Community Park**
  - Less than 25 acres ½ mile to 1.5 miles
  - Greater than 25 acres ½ mile to 3 miles
- **Neighborhood Park.** ¼ –½ mile
  - ¼–1 mile in RPA 4

#### Service Radii Maps for Park Types

The following maps show the service radii at the maximum allowance. When grouped, there appears to be substantial coverage; however, when only community parks are shown, the areas that are not being served via radii can be seen. What cannot be determined by viewing the maps is the level of quality development and facilities that are provided at each park. According to the MFM data, the areas of the County that have the highest population counts are located in RPA 2, then RPA 3 and the northern half of RPA 3. Therefore, gaps in the service areas, as shown in the maps, show where priority should be given for locating new facilities.

Figure 2 - Service Area: Existing Regional Parks

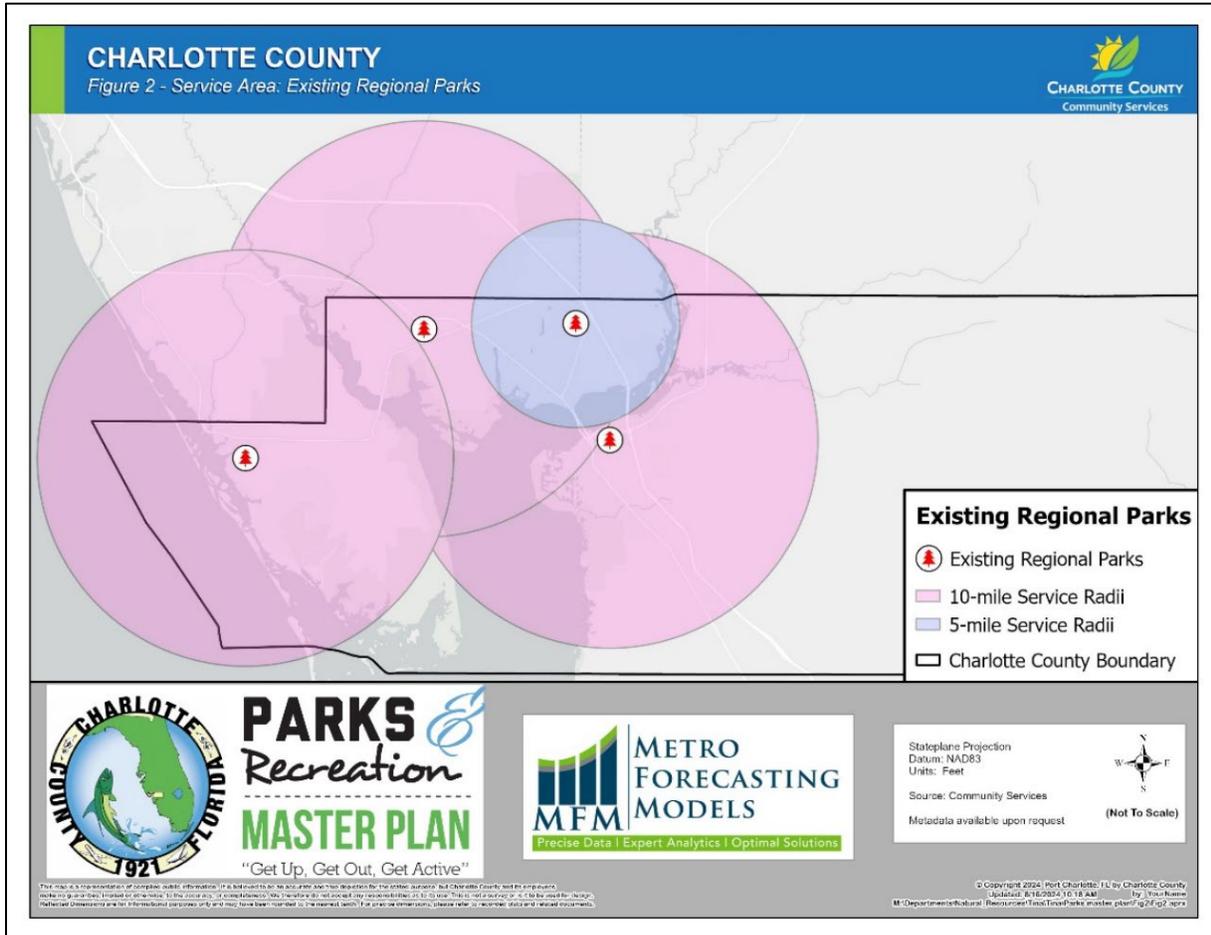


Figure 3 - Service Area: Existing Community Parks

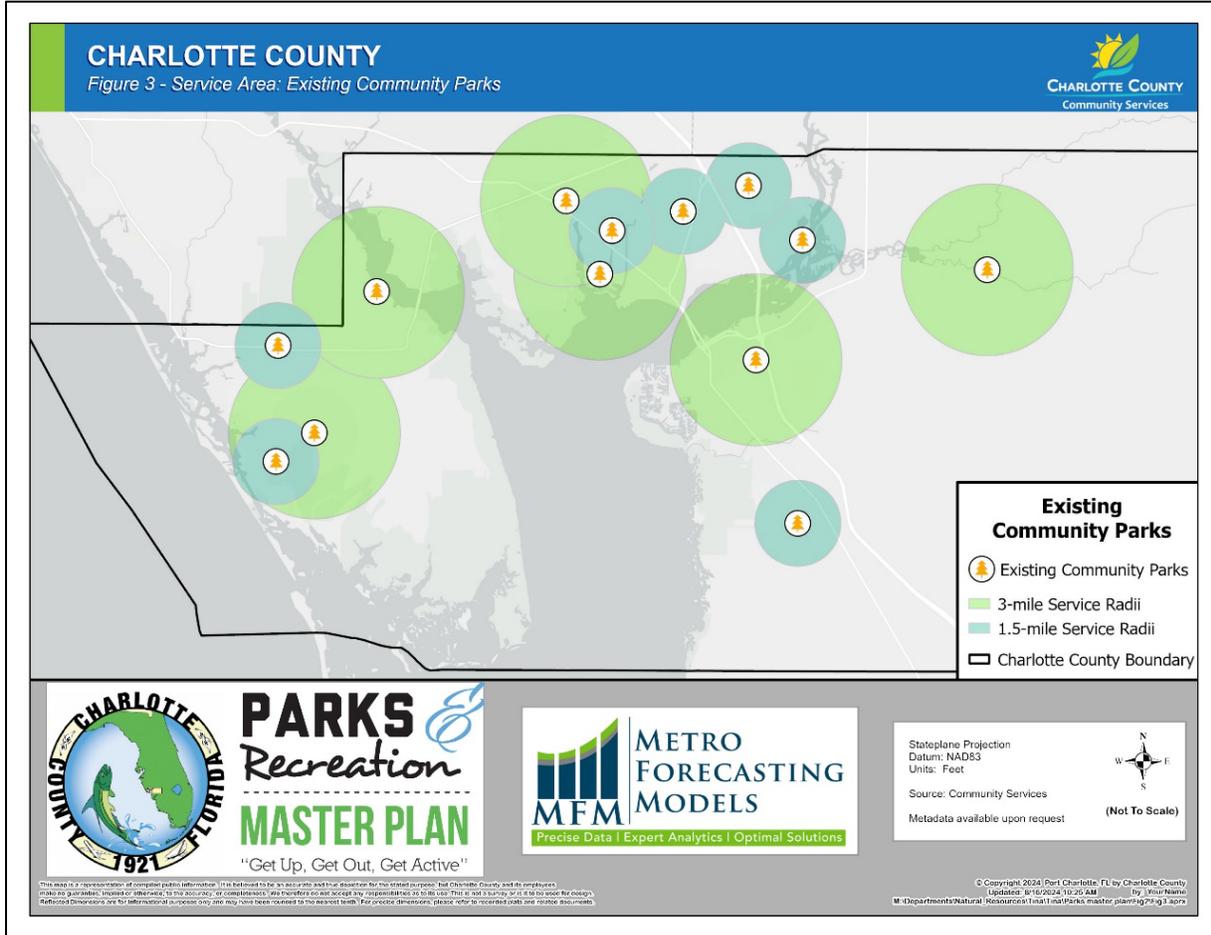


Figure 4 - Service Area: Existing Neighborhood Parks

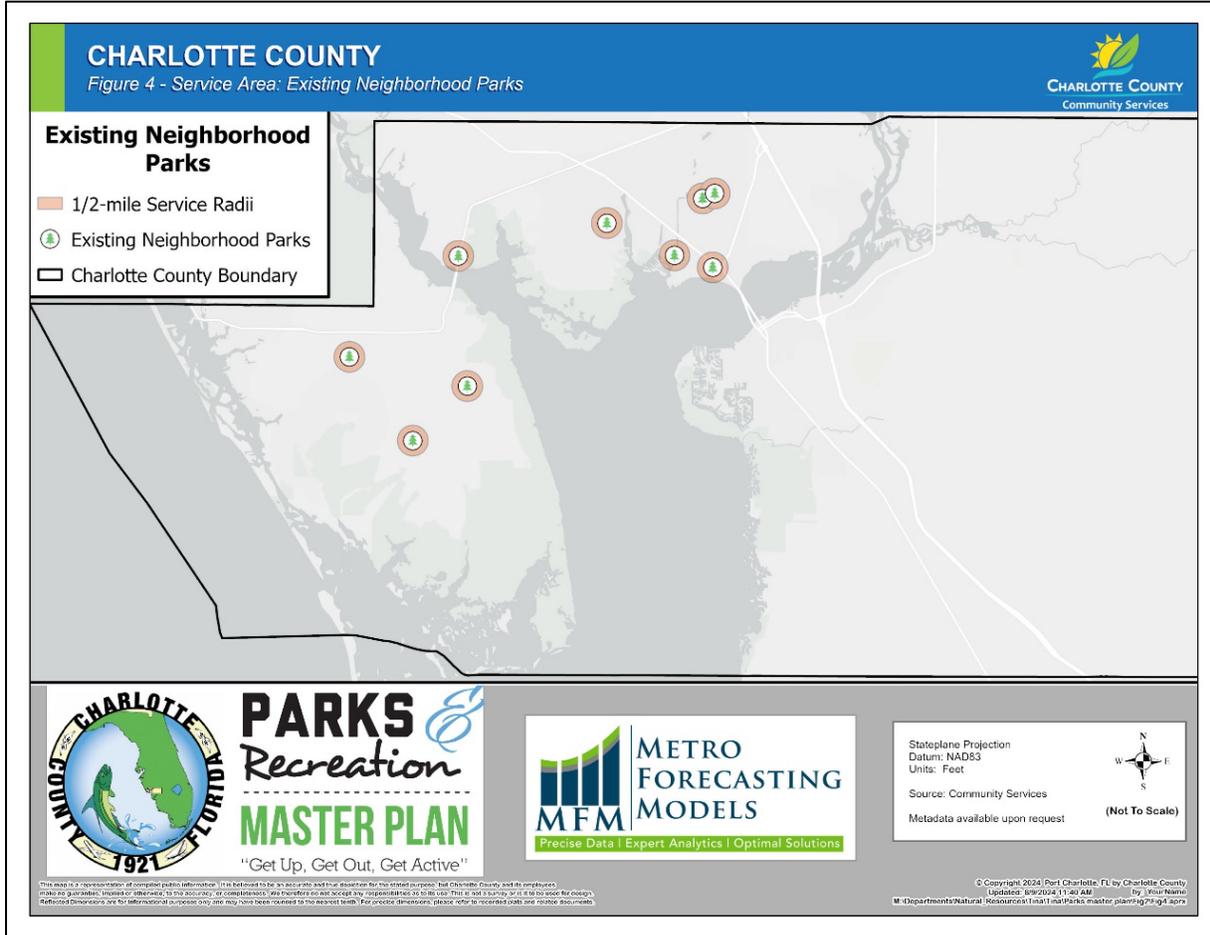
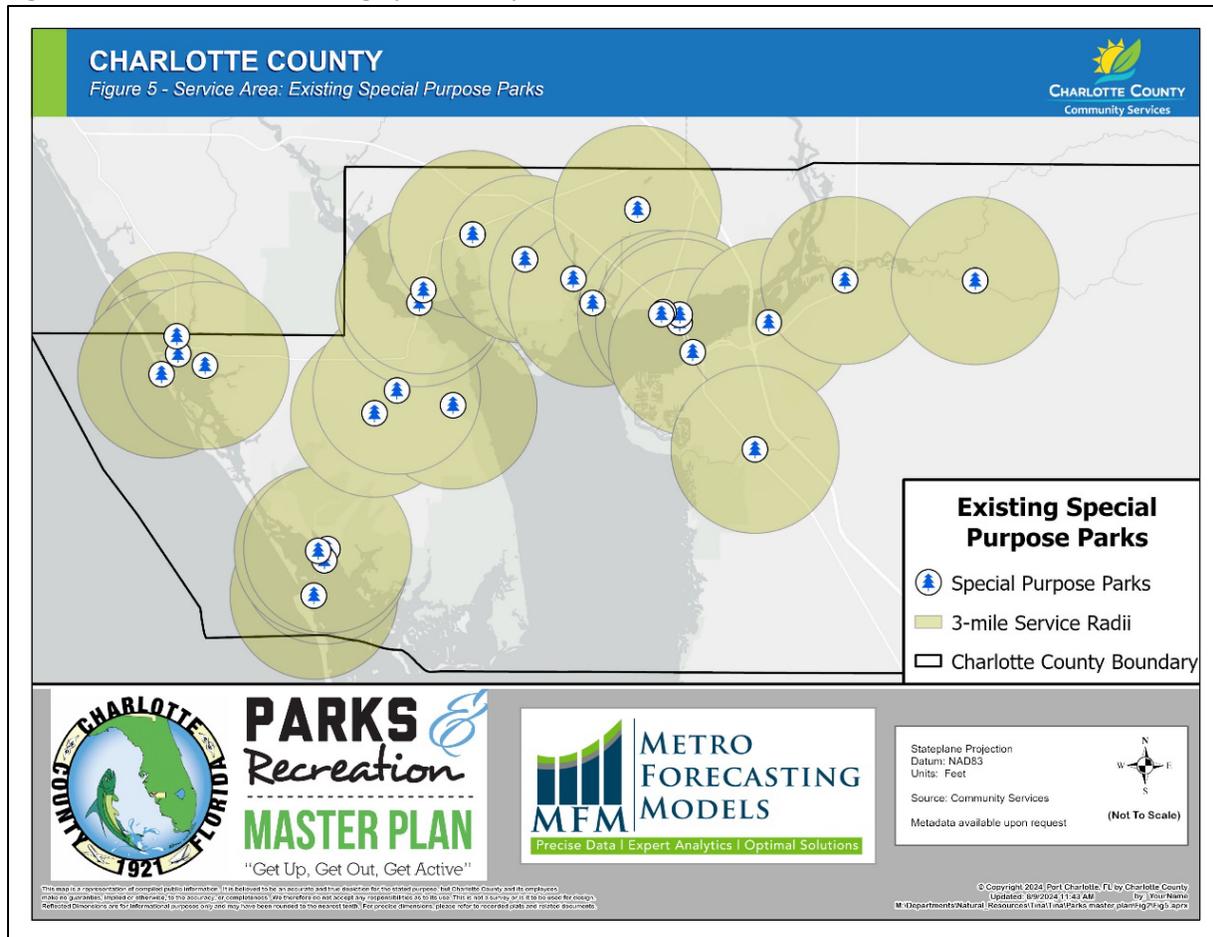


Figure 5 - Service Area: Existing Special Purpose Parks



### 3.4 Development Standards Based on Park Classification

The following are development standards for each of the active parkland categories or park types. Standards include the recommended size, service area, amenities, accessibility. Service areas shall have 50% + population threshold to trigger park development.

#### 3.4.1 Regional Parks

Regional Parks are intended to provide large-scale and intense recreation facilities that serve several communities and large areas within at least a three-mile radius (10 is typical). The service area ultimately may depend on geography, community association/designation, and co-location factors. Many regional parks serve as a sports complex with accessory recreation facilities to serve users of multiple age groups on single visits. Many of the activities are programmed either by the County or by community organizations, which includes leagues, tournaments, or special events. Co-location of these facilities adjacent to environmental lands can provide a valuable mix and infrastructure sharing that minimizes impacts.

- Size: Normally 50+ acres, typically 80–100 or greater. 5-10 acres per 1,000 residents.

- Service area: 3–10 miles, depending on park design, may offer county-wide opportunities.
- Accessibility: Designed to offer access to all ages and physical conditions. Sufficient parking, transit, and regional trail connectivity are vital to handle peak traffic during short periods of organized programming.
- Amenities: Amenities are based on community demand and LOS needs. These parks are expected to have a concentration of facilities for leagues, tournaments, and organized programming of multiple age groups. Example of activities include adult and youth baseball/softball fields, football/ soccer fields, water parks, pool, gymnasium, sport specific regulation courts. The park will serve as the site for regional recreation centers and staffing complex or headquarters. A diverse set of programming and facility types are to be provided, with a focus on large crowd events due to multiple organized games occurring at one time. Site furniture is also required (trash cans, water fountains, bike racks, benches, etc.).

Table 3 – Regional Park Standards

<b>Regional Park Development Standards</b>			
<u>Required Amenities</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>LOS points</u>	<u>Total Points</u>
Playground	2	8	16
Stand-alone Play Feature/Swings	1	3	3
Sport Courts (2-3 types)	6	5	30
Multi-Purpose Field	1	7	7
Sport Field	6	10	60
Group Pavilion/Pavilion Rentals	2	6	12
Single Table Picnic Pavilion	2	3	6
Restroom	2	9	18
Recreation Center	1	40	40
Swimming Pool	1	20	20
Dive Well	1	10	10
Open Space (10%)	1	3	3
Trail (1000 l.f.)	5	3	15
Fitness equipment	2	2	4
Lighted Fields	3	6	18
Lighted Courts	3	6	18
Minimum Acreage Requirement	50	0.3	15
<b>Total Amenities Points</b>		<b>295</b>	
Additional amenities off the amenity menu to be added based on public input to reach classification point threshold.			
<b>Regional Park Required Points</b>		<b>350</b>	

### 3.4.2 Community Parks

Community parks serve the recreational needs for multiple neighborhoods and a broader service area than neighborhood parks. The scale of these parks offer more intense recreation facilities, such as lighted fields and courts, while providing a more diverse opportunities to users. They can also be developed partly as a destination but require multimodal connectivity to serve a broader demographic and user base. Location adjacent to environmental lands can provide additional benefits of shared infrastructure. Park design and function shall include the following standards.

- Size: 10–50 acres, typically 25 acres; 5–8 acres per 1,000 residents.
- Service area: 1.5 miles (3 miles for parks over 25 acres).
- Accessibility: Located along collector or arterial streets with pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- Transit (when available) within appropriate walking distances from park entrances. Regional trail facilities must be within close proximity and serve as a primary means in which to connect schools, jobs, and residential uses to the park.
- Amenities: Typical community parks will provide a variety of uses with a focus on more intense active recreation fields and courts. Parks that are 25 acres or greater must have at least three types of amenities. These parks also serve as gathering place for resident-based organizations and include a recreation center or meeting rooms where ad-hoc programming can be handled by outside stakeholders at minimal cost to the County. Site furniture is also required (trash cans, water fountains, bike racks, benches, etc.).

Table 4 – Community Park Standards

<b>Community Park Development Standards</b>			
<u>Required Amenities</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>LOS points</u>	<u>Total Points</u>
Playground	1	8	8
Stand-alone Play Feature/Swings	1	3	3
Sport Courts (2-3 types)	3	5	15
Multi-Purpose Field/Sport field	1	7	7
Group Pavilion/Pavilion Rentals	1	6	6
Single Table Picnic Pavilion	1	3	3
Restroom	1	6	6
Community Facility	1	9	9
Open Space (10%)	1	3	3
Minimum Acreage Requirement	10	0.3	3
<b>Total Amenities Points</b>	<b>63</b>		
Additional amenities off the amenity menu to be added based on public input to reach classification point threshold.			
<b>Community Park Required Points</b>	<b>110</b>		

### 3.4.3 Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks serve the recreational needs of local residents within walking distance. Neighborhood parks are not intended to be developed and maintained by the County, but the guidelines provided herein can serve as reference for future development within the County or redevelopment of existing neighborhood parks. It is recommended that each new development shall provide sufficient neighborhood parks to serve their residents. Considerations for sufficient shade is a prime consideration in the design and include the following standards.

- Size: 1–10 acres, typically 8 acres, but primarily based on population served. 1–2 acres per 1,000 residents.
- Service area: No greater than ½ mile.
- Accessibility: All neighborhood parks must be connected via sidewalks/bike lanes or regional trail access along local streets with these facilities. Parking is not necessary and reduces the amount of space available for recreation opportunities.
- Amenities: Typical neighborhood parks will provide picnic facilities and neighborhood preferred sport courts. Two types of courts are to be provided to serve a variety of recreation needs within the neighborhood. Site furniture is also required (trash cans, water fountains, bike racks, benches, etc.).

Table 5 – Neighborhood Park Standards

<b>Neighborhood Park Development Standards</b>			
<u>Required Amenities</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>LOS points</u>	<u>Total Points</u>
Playground	1	8	8
Sport Courts (2 types)	2	8	16
Multi-Purpose Field	1	7	7
Single Table Picnic Pavilion	2	3	6
Restroom	1	6	6
Open Space (10%)	1	3	3
Minimum Acreage Requirement	1	0.3	0.3
<b>Total Amenities Points</b>		<b>46.3</b>	
Additional amenities off the amenity menu to be added based on public input to reach classification point threshold.			
<b>Neighborhood Park Required Points</b>		<b>50</b>	

### 3.4.4 Environmental Lands

There are no specific development standards for environmental lands since these lands usually are acquired to preserve and protect sensitive or endangered natural resources; however, for environmental lands to be counted within the park system, a portion of the site must be open to the public at least on a seasonal basis. Facilities that may be located in environmental lands include a small parking area (may be unpaved), interpretative signage and/or exhibits to support environmental education initiatives,

restrooms, trails, user amenities (trash can, bike racks, picnic table or pavilions based on the size and public access) if appropriate, and water access facilities such as launches, ramps, piers for those sites that have safe access to the County's waterways. Preserving and restoring 100-year flood plains, for example, can serve both as recreational opportunity and a public safety effort.

### 3.4.5 Regional Bicycle-Pedestrian Trails

Shared Use Paths are primarily off-the-road facilities that can provide safe recreational experiences while connecting parks and other destinations. The following criteria should be considered when planning and designing off-road multipurpose trails.

- Paved surfacing, with asphalt or concrete.
- Must be accessible to emergency vehicles or personnel.
- Minimum width, 10' preferred 12-15' where feasible.
- Striped surface when approaching intersections or viewing restricted areas.
- Off-road alignment preferred.
- Mile marker signage/painting every ½ mile. Many jurisdictions are providing geo-referencing at mile markers to assist emergency personnel in locating individuals in case of emergencies.
- Fit stations.
- Integrate wayfinding.
- Lighted with solar, if appropriate, for safety.
- Landscape with native materials and include plenty of shade opportunities.
- Trailheads provide access to restrooms, contain possible concessions, and parking. There are two types of trailheads, major and minor.

**Major Trailhead** – located at trail terminus or major entry points.

- Paved parking lot.
- Bike racks.
- Restrooms.
- Water stations.
- Picnic area.
- Pavilions.
- Concessions (optional) for bike rentals, refreshments, bike repair, etc.
- Playground (optional).
- Interpretive signage.
- Trail maps.
- Place for special events or areas for staging.

**Minor Trailheads** – located where trail users access the trail and rest, etc. These areas may not provide parking as they tend to be located in existing parks or at other public facilities where shared parking is available. These normally include the following:

- Bike racks.
- Single table picnic shelters.
- Benches.
- Trail maps.

### 3.4.6 Safe and Accessible Facilities

It is important that Charlotte County’s parks and recreation facilities be developed, maintained, and operated in a manner that evokes a safe, accessible, and positive image.

- Appendix E outlines the Levels of Maintenance and Operations (LOMO) which outlines the developed, maintenance, and management standards.
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) methods, programs, and techniques should be employed in the design and management of facilities. Facilities are to be designed and programs structured to allow for barrier-free, equal access for people of different abilities.

### 3.5 Level of Service

An agency must evaluate its system based on how well it is servicing the public. One of the best ways to judge this is to ask the public and allow your parks and recreation professionals to help guide the future of parks; however, to justify budget requests and defend certain investments, it is necessary to perform analytical assessments and compare that to adopted measures and other communities (benchmarking).

One tool available to planners, administrators, and government officials is LOS standards, numerical or service area guides to assist in gauging if an agency’s inventory provides a minimum level of service. LOS is determined differently by each community. Tools can include the number of acres of parkland per 1,000 population, acreage requirements by park classification, point structures, and qualitative assessments. As described in the 2015 Master Plan, Charlotte County previously used a breakdown of acres for active and environmental lands per 1,000 population; however, a new system based on a point structure was adopted with the 2015 Master Plan.

#### 3.5.1 Point-Based Level of Service

An amenity menu, where each amenity was assigned a point value, was developed in the 2015 Master Plan to document the existing facility countywide inventory (basketball courts, playgrounds, etc.) additional amenity types have been added in this update.

Table 6 – Park Development Amenity Menu

Park Development Amenity Menu		
Amenity	Units	Points
<b>ACERAGE</b>		
Environmental	acres	0.1
Active	acres	0.3
<b>ADD-ONS</b>		
Dog Friendly	each	2
Shade Structures	each	3
<b>AMENITY</b>		
Amphitheater	each	6
Bike Repair Station	each	1
Boat Ramps	lane	15

Canoe/Kayak (ADA Compliant)	each	5
Canoe/Kayak (Natural)	each	3
Concession Building	each	8
Dock/Boardwalk/Fishing Pier	1000 sq. ft.	2
Dog Park	each	5
Horse Arena	each	5
Open Space	10%	3
Outdoor Classroom	each	3
Remote Control Feature	each	3
Restroom	each	6
Special Event Venue	each	40
Specialty/Community Garden	each	3
Wildlife Observation Platform	each	3
<b>AQUATIC FACILITIES</b>		
Dive Well/Beach	each	10
Swimming Pool	each	20
Splash Pad/Interactive Water Feature	each	10
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL/ HISTORICAL FACILITIES</b>		
Environmental/ Historical Center	each	20
Environmental/ Historical Interpretive	each	3
<b>PAVILIONS</b>		
Group Pavilion/Pavilion Rentals	each	6
Single Table Picnic Pavilion	each	3
<b>PLAYGROUNDS</b>		
Accessible Playground 2-5	each	8
Accessible Playground 5-12	each	12
Playground 2-5	each	5
Playground 5-12	each	8
Specialty Play Feature (ninja, climbing dome, ropes course, etc.)	each	5
Stand-alone Play Feature/Swings	each	3
<b>RECREATION CENTER</b>		
Rec Multipurpose Room	each	10
Rec Gymnasium	each	10
Rec Fitness Center	each	10
Rentable Community Facility/Room	each	10
<b>SPORTS COURTS</b>		
Basketball Court (Dedicated)	each	5

Basketball Court (Multi-purpose)	each	8
BMX	each	6
Bocce	each	1
Horseshoes	each	1
Lighting	per sport	6
Pickleball Courts (Dedicated)	each	5
Skatepark/ Inline Hockey Rink	each	5
Shuffleboard	each	1
Tennis Courts (Dedicated)	each	5
Tennis/Pickleball Courts (Multi-purpose)	each	8
Volleyball Courts (Sand)	each	5
<b>SPORTS FIELDS</b>		
Baseball/ Softball Fields	each	10
Disc Golf	per 9 holes	5
Football/ Soccer Fields	each	10
Lighting	per field	6
Multi-Purpose Field/Cricket	each	7
<b>TRAILS</b>		
Bike Trails	1000 l.f.	6
Fitness Stations	each	2
Horse Trails	1000 l.f.	1
Multi-purpose Path (Paved)	1000 l.f.	3
Nature Trail/ Walking Path (unpaved)	1000 l.f.	1

### 3.5.2 Acreage-Based Level of Service

In addition to the point system, the County should consider readopted acreage levels for environment and developed active parklands as a supplemental way to access how well the County is doing in increasing recreational acreage and development opportunities over time. The following are guidelines for acreage-based goals.

**Environmental Lands.** The current LOS is 16 acres per 1,000 population. The current environmental inventory, based on the current U.S. Census Bureau data, the 2020 population of 186,847, exceeds this LOS, with 4,337.61 acres of environmental land, resulting in an actual level of service of over 23.2 acres per 1,000, demonstrating that the County currently exceeds the 2015 minimum acreage requirement. Environmental stewardship is a priority to the residents, therefore there is a recommendation to increase the goal over time.

**Active Parklands.** Active parkland LOS calculations are based on acreage found in regional, community, special-facility, and neighborhood parks. The County's current LOS is 5 acres per 1,000.

Tables 7 and 8 on the following page show the recommended level of service per year versus the estimated LOS for Environmental and Active parkland acreage per 1,000 people. As the population increases per year, the estimate level of service decreases.

Table 7 – Environmental Acreage LOS Goals

Acreage Based Level of Service Environmental Parkland								
	2024	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	9995
Population	212,424	218,810	249,519	279,196	303,543	323,191	337,895	482,794
Acreage	4,391.2	4,391.2	4,391.2	4,391.2	4,391.2	4,391.2	4,391.2	4,391.2
Actual LOS	20.7	20.1	17.6	15.7	14.5	13.6	13.0	9.1
LOS Goal	16.0	18.0	18.0	18.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0
Acreage +/-	992.5	452.7	-100.1	-634.3	-1,679.6	-2,072.6	-2,366.7	-5,264.6

Table 8 – Active Acreage LOS Goals

Acreage Based Level of Service Active Parkland								
	2024	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	9995
Population	212,424	218,810	249,519	279,196	303,543	323,191	337,895	482,794
Acreage	1,148.4	1,148.4	1,148.4	1,148.4	1,148.4	1,148.4	1,148.4	1,148.4
Actual LOS	5.4	5.2	4.6	4.1	3.8	3.6	3.4	2.4
LOS Goal	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Acreage +/-	86.3	54.4	-99.2	-247.6	-369.3	-467.5	-541.1	-1,265.6

### 3.5.3 Existing Countywide Point System

Charlotte County uses a combined point based and acreage based, as outlined in Sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2. The existing LOS standard in the Charlotte 2050 Comprehensive Plan, is 3.5 points per acre for regional parks, 3 points per acre for community parks, and 4 points per acre for neighborhood parks. The current points per park can be found in Appendix F. This system also accounts for the condition of the amenities within the parks, using the qualitative assessments described in Section 3.5.4 and amenities that are assessed below fair condition will be repaired or replaced within one (1) year or the points no longer count toward the LOS.

The County is currently meeting the countywide combined acreage/point-based LOS goals and should continue park development as outlined in the Master Plan.

Table 9 – Countywide Park System Points

Countywide Park System Points			
	Regional Parks	Community Parks	Neighborhood Parks
Total Points in Classification	1,638.68	1,304.82	427.84
Total Acreage in Classification	337.67	401.96	54.86
Actual System LOS Points	4.85	3.25	7.80
System LOS Points Goal	3.50	3.00	4.00
Goal +/-	1.35	0.25	3.80

The County is currently meeting the acreage-based system, however, by the year 2030, the County will need to purchase more environmental parkland to meet the recommended LOS and by the year 2030, the County will need to purchase more active parkland to meet the recommended LOS.

### 3.5.4 Qualitative Assessment and Biennial Updates

A base line qualitative evaluation was conducted at each park or facility, the evaluations are to be updated every two (2) years to reflect any changes or improvements made (if any). When performing the evaluation, staff will use the park evaluation criteria found in Appendix G. The evaluation includes the overall condition of each park, each amenity at the park, and include representative photographs. To calculate the condition of each park amenity, a qualitative score between 1 and 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, will be given to each amenity/facility located within each park. If a score is below 2, then that amenity/facility should not be counted in the LOS table and scheduled for replacement, removal, or upgrade.

### 3.6 Acquisition & Park Siting Criteria

Land acquisition will be required to achieve the LOS standards and goals. All acquisitions (purchase, donations, etc.) must meet the vision, mission, and primary role of the County. Prior to acquiring land, by purchase or other means, the County will make sure that the following criteria are addressed.

#### 3.6.1 Active Parkland

- Priority will be given to acquiring parkland in areas that are not currently being served, or to expand existing parks to increase the recreation potential and public access.
- Acquire parcels large enough to meet future land acquisition needs (minimum 10 acres for a community park; 50 acres for regional park, 80–100+ acres preferred).
- Consider the expansion of existing parks (under 25 acres) to increase access to recreational experiences.
- The County will evaluate parkland opportunities through dedicated parkland (developers' agreement or as identified, the Future Land Use Map and Neighborhood Framework, etc.). Property shall be a minimum of 10 acres for a community park. County staff has identified three (3) future community park sites in the next 10 years. One (1) of these sites are located within RPA 2, one (1) site is located in RPA 3, and one (1) in RPA 1. These sites should be evaluated for possible expansion to achieve a 25-acre community park.

- New parkland acquisition will have access to the street network through collectors or arterials. Park access requiring pass-through vehicular traffic in neighborhoods should be avoided.
- Consider locating new parks adjacent to other community facilities, such as schools, libraries, etc.
- The County will not accept the donation of parkland unless it contains at least 10 acres of uplands and meets the development standards provided in Section 3.4.
- When siting a new park, the County should evaluate the location of private and municipal parks and facilities located nearby, so not to duplicate services, but expand the public access to recreation.

### 3.6.2 Environmental Land and Water Access

- Prioritize the acquisition of lands to increase public access to waterways or other natural resources, as outlined in the Charlotte 2050 Comprehensive Plan REC Policies 1.1.3 and 1.1.4
- Lands must have the ability to support public access, including parking.
- Management plans should be prepared for all environmental lands to determine impact to operations and identify public access and use opportunities.
- Promote partnerships with other local, state, or national agencies to preserve and protect natural resources.
- Lands must preserve/protect significant natural resources, protect those lands from development encroachment, benefits such as green infrastructure or provides ecosystem services.

### 3.6.3 Regional Bicycle-Pedestrian Trails, Greenways and Blueways

There are limited opportunities to develop regional multipurpose trails that are fully off-road facilities. The Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions will work with the MPO in implementing trails that provide recreational value that are identified in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (BPMP) Implementation Plan (Appendix H) and the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan.

In addition, they will work with the State and other environmental agencies to create greenways that can support an off-road multipurpose trail corridor, without negatively impacting the underlying natural resource through the completion of a greenways and trails master plan. This plan will build from the guiding principles and strategic framework contained in this Master Plan.

### 3.7 Private Development

Neighborhood parks are viewed primarily as the responsibility of private development, special districts, and municipalities; as such, they should be dedicated, developed, and maintained as prescribed in the County's land development code. Private development should follow the development standards as referenced in the previous section when developing parks. When new private parks are developed, the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions will review the development and management plans for consistency as part of the development review process. In addition to following the development menu, a viable plan should be submitted that serves to fund the construction and the long-term maintenance of each facility.

### 3.8 Programs & Activities

Programs are the planned activities that provide instruction, socialization, competition, and learning to a wide range of residents and visitors. Parks and recreational programming are a cornerstone for societal strength and diversity in our nation. Its importance is not to be overlooked in the value that it brings to a community.

The County has done an excellent job of offering a diverse range of programming opportunities. Unlike other counties in the region, Charlotte County has been primarily a facility provider; other community groups and non-profits have carried out programming. The examples include football, baseball (Little League, etc.), adult softball, and other similar recreation programs that are being managed and carried out by others. The Charlotte County Community Services' Guide lists the following recreational programs and leagues:

- Basketball (adult and youth)
- Bocce
- Baseball
- Cycling
- Dance
- Equestrian
- Football/Cheerleading
- Gardening (bonsai/community, etc.)
- Inline Hockey
- Martial Arts
- Radio Control Racing
- Soccer
- Softball
- Special Events
- Swimming (lessons, water safety)
- Tennis, Pickleball, Table Tennis, Volleyball
- Youth and Family Programming

During outreach events for the Master Plan and through biennial statistically valid surveys, the public has indicated the ongoing support of user fees, identifying an acceptable level of program income. For adult programming, it is the norm to try to recover 100% of costs, whereas many youth programs may have a lesser acceptable recovery rate or offer program scholarships for children whose families can demonstrate economic hardship. Typically, staff follows this norm for youth and adult programs. One exception being community-wide family-oriented events that are participation driven rather than revenue driven to promote community awareness of programs and services offered by Community Services and other agencies in the county.

In reviewing available data, Community Services identifies deficiencies and supplication of services through an annual Community Inventory of internal and external programs and services offered in the county. It is important for the County to track program attendance and cost recovery which is entered into NRPA Park Metrics software to generate annual Agency Performance Reports. Park Metrics provides

year by year comparisons of agency performance as it relates to previous years and compares this agency with like agencies around the county.

### 3.9 Improving the Park System

During the site assessment and based on discussions with staff, steering committee, and the public, the County will strive to address each of the following.

#### 3.9.1 Park Improvements

- Continue to work with appropriate agencies to repair, replace and/or improve park amenities that were damaged or destroyed as a result of major hurricane impacts from recent years.
- Add more shade facilities including trees, pavilions, and shade structures over playgrounds and sports benches/bleachers to achieve shade above and beyond the amount of shade that was provided pre-Hurricane Ian.
- Develop and implement an improvement plan for existing water access facilities (ramps, launches, piers, etc.). This should be coordinated with Florida Sea Grant.
- Increase the number of accessible trails within parks.
- Work with partners to implement the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan to increase sidewalks, bikeways, greenways and trails to the county's parks from surrounding neighborhoods.
- Improve sports/athletic facilities to increase opportunities to host tournaments and league play.
- Evaluate the need to improve parking, where appropriate, with a focus on green stormwater.
- Implementation of park signage standards and wayfinding system that serves as an identifier and branding statement for the Parks and Recreation Divisions.
- Improve site safety and security through CPTED inspections.

#### 3.9.2 New Parkland & Facilities

To meet future demand, the County will need to expand its land acreage and make improvements to further its mission to provide quality play experiences and provide regional connections through a trails system and to continue to serve as excellent environmental stewards, protecting the County's resources and providing access and environmental education to the community.

Based on an assessment of the gaps in service and population, there is a need to acquire parks in the following areas through 2050. These parks should be designed utilizing the standards in Section 3.4:

1. Northwest Port Charlotte – Future Community Park A
2. Tuckers' Grade – Future Community Park B
3. Burnt Store – Future Regional Park A
4. Englewood South/775 area – Future Community Park C
5. South Gulf Cove – Future Community Park D

When seeking new park sites, the County will evaluate parkland opportunities through dedicated parkland (developers' agreement or as identified on the Future Land Use Map and Neighborhood Framework, etc.). Property must be a minimum of 10 acres for a community park. There are multiple parcels identified to be evaluated for possible expansion or combination to achieve a 25-acre community parks to meet service needs.

Table 10 – Forecasted Community and Regional Parks

Forecast Community and Regional Parks			
	Forecasted Park Location	Acres (min.)	Forecasted Year
Future Community Park A (FC-A)	Northwest Port Charlotte	25	2030
Future Community Park B (FC-B)	Tuckers Grade	25	2030
Future Regional Park A (FR-A)	Burnt Store	80	2035
Future Community Park C (FC-C)	Englewood South/775 Area	25	2040
Future Community Park D (FC-D)	South Gulf Cove	25	2045
Future Community Park E (FC-E)	North Placida/South Gulf Cove	25	2045
Future Community Park F (FC-F)	El Jobean	25	2045
Future Community Park G (FC-G)	Harborview	25	2045
Future Community Park H (FC-H)	South Burnt Store	25	2045

Figure 6 – Forecasted Community and Regional Parks

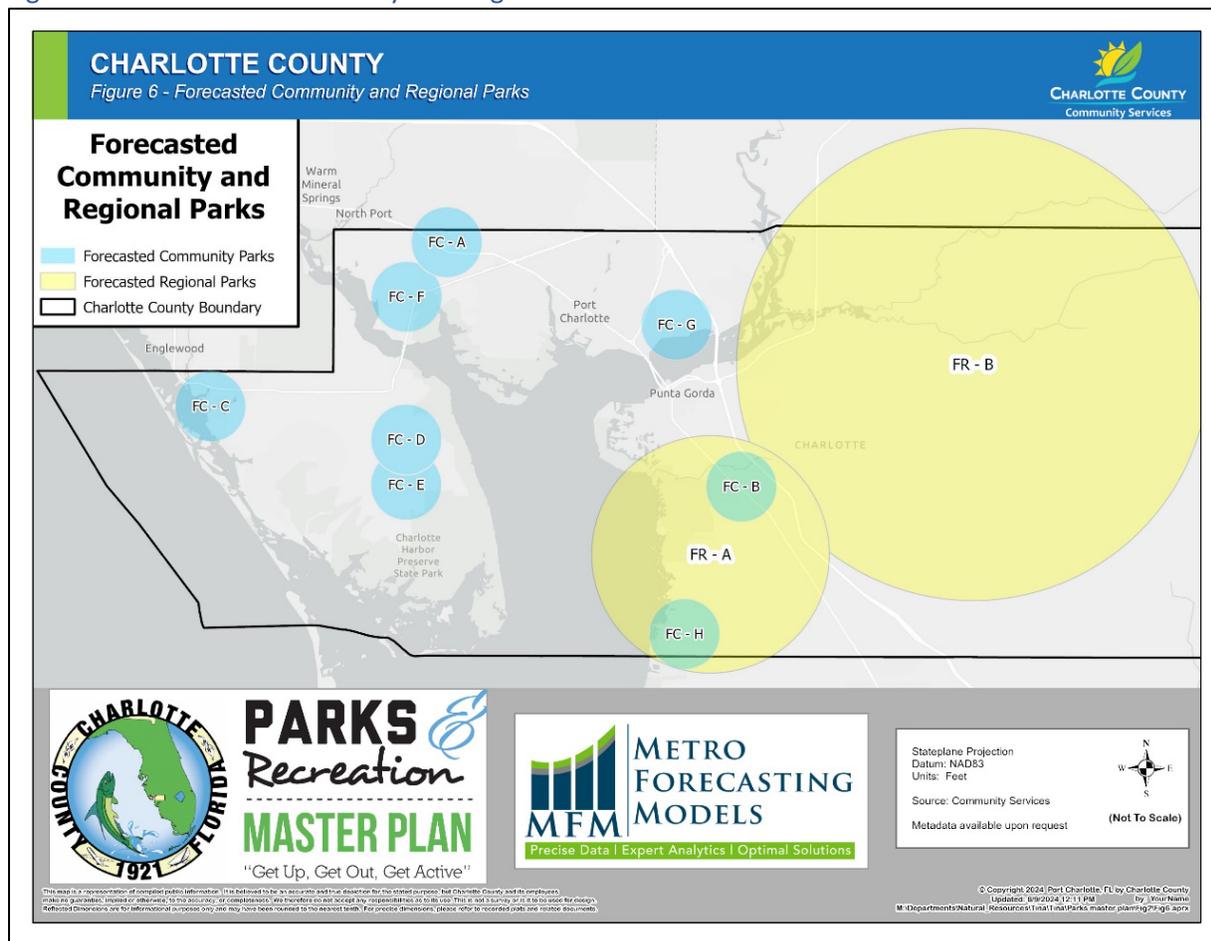
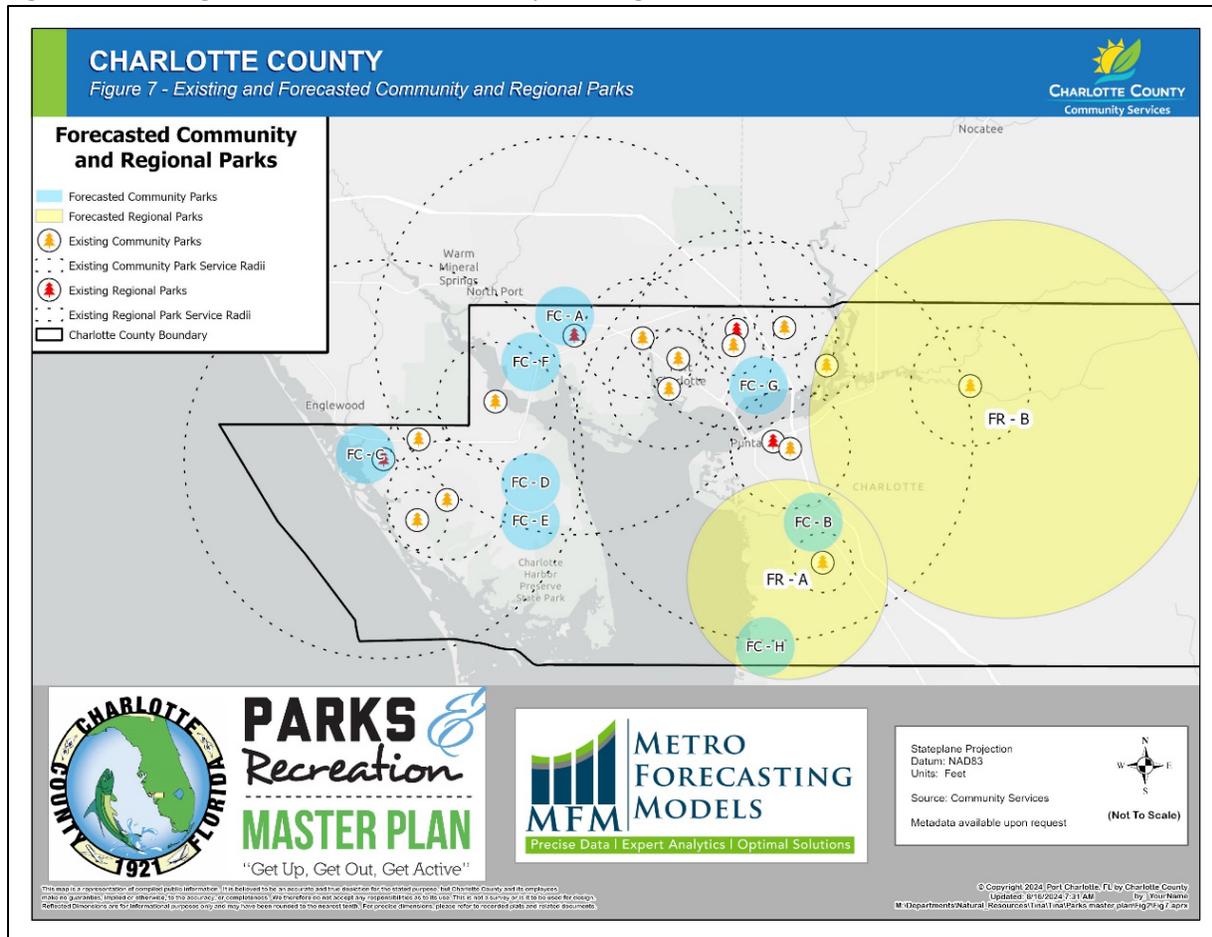


Figure 7 - Existing and Forecasted Community and Regional Parks



**Greenways and Trails.** There are very few opportunities to acquire substantial lands for multipurpose trails that are not associated with State or County roadways, public utilities or state lands. Therefore, it is important for the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions to work closely with area partners, City Punta Gorda, State of Florida, Water Management District, and the MPO, to identify and secure right-of-way to plan, design, construct, and maintain a regional multipurpose trails network.

The County will continue to identify key trail corridors through the completion of a greenways and trails master plan. The greenways and trails master plan will build from the guiding principles and strategic framework contained in this Master Plan. The County will partner with the agencies identified above in preparing the greenways and trails master plan.

**Environmental Lands and Water Access.** Any addition of environmental lands will be evaluated as the need to protect these valuable resources become apparent. The County will work with the Florida Sea Grant to evaluate future opportunities to enhance public access to the waterways within Charlotte County.

## Part Four: Plan Implementation

### 4.1 Setting Priorities

This Master Plan’s vision, mission, and guiding principles will maintain and enhance the level of service and quality of leisure experiences provided by the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions. To achieve these, the County must realize and commit to fund the system over time. The aforementioned guiding documents present the philosophy for the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions. To achieve these, an emphasis must be placed on providing quality regional, community, and special purpose facilities. Existing neighborhood parks should be upgraded as facilities need to be replaced. New neighborhood parks should be developed through funding partnerships, other providers/agencies, or by the county to meet service radius needs. The following considerations were used in identifying and prioritizing the projects included in this Part Four.

### 4.2 Plan Priorities

During the initial 2015 planning process, the public was clear with a message to first **“take care of what we have, upgrading the recreational experience and improving connectivity.”** Upgrading existing facilities and implementing existing park master plans and projects identified in the sales tax initiative are the highest priority.

The projects identified in Section 3.9.2 are recommended for implementation. To assist in prioritizing the expenditures, the projects fall under short-term (2024–2030), mid-term (2030–2035), and long term (2035–2050) planning periods. In addition, annual appropriations are identified to maintain and upgrade the County’s existing recreation assets. For example, funds for playground and equipment upgrades, court resurfacing and equipment upgrades, sports field refurbishment and equipment replacement, aquatic facility maintenance and refurbishing, and building materials (roof, AC, etc.) and equipment upgrades are to be included in each fiscal year’s budget.

### 4.3 Funding the Plan

Charlotte County recognizes the importance of finding and implementing methods of financing park system development, ongoing maintenance, operations, and programming in addition to enhancing and expanding its facilities.

#### 4.3.1 Sales Tax Initiative

Charlotte County residents have approved six 1% local option sales tax programs, starting in 1994 with the latest approved in 2020. Over the years many parks and quality-of-life improvements have been funded through the sales tax initiative. There are two funding tiers for approved projects. The first tier is prioritized to receive the funds generated through the sales tax. If sales tax proceeds exceed estimates or development costs are less than anticipated, then projects from the second tier are eligible to receive funds.

#### 4.3.2 Capital Maintenance Plan

Annually, the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions receive an allocation of capital funding through the Capital Maintenance Plan (CMP) that funds the repair and replacements

("take care of what we have") of park amenities and facilities as well as some of the expansionary projects identified in the Master Plan to meet the established levels of service.

#### 4.3.3 Alternative Funding

In addition to increasing its proportional share of tax revenue through the County's general fund, the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions must use alternative ways to fund its operations and expansion. The following addresses a few of these measures.

**Impact Fees.** The County has established an impact fee structure to fund the acquisition and development of its active parks through impact fees. The impact structure is currently approved for collection at 100% for Community Parks. Future adjustments based on inflation or other Board adopted changes would supplement revenue.

**User Fees.** The County will continue to implement a user fee structure to provide programming, especially to adult and organized play, in addition for facility rentals. There was a strong feeling during the public outreach that the community believed in "pay to play." The Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions complete an annual update to the County fee schedule.

**Cost Savings and Recovery.** The County has done an excellent job of outsourcing programming and privatizing certain maintenance elements. They shall continue to analyze the cost saving and efficiencies in using these methods compared to using County personnel.

**Grants.** It is important for the County to leverage its dollars to serve as a match for potential grants and sponsorships. Some of the specific development projects identified in this Master Plan can be funded in part by grant funds. The issue with grants is the dollars cannot be estimated due to the uncertainty of programs being funded or final ranking of projects that may be submitted.

The Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions will continue to apply for grants through traditional funding programs, such as the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP), Florida Communities Trust (FCT) and the Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) to leverage its dollars. Furthermore, they will look for other grants and sponsorships to fund programming.

#### 4.4 Annual Facility Maintenance

The County has established a series of work program and maintenance categories for capital maintenance dollars. It is critical for the County to continue to fund these on an annual basis to protect the County's resources. Funding is budgeted annually through the CMP to maintain and upgrade County resources. Delaying and underfunding maintenance puts equipment and facilities at-risk of deteriorating quicker than the expected life cycles and ultimately costing more to repair or replace.

##### 4.4.1 Boat Ramps, Seawalls and Shorelines

The Community Services Department Parks Division will work to implement the phased repair and/or replacement for boat ramps, seawalls, and shorelines as outlined in the assessments conducted by professional engineers. Additionally, many of the County's in water structures have been damaged by recent hurricanes with the high winds and flooding. To ensure the safety of the residents and visitors,

the County will continue to ensure all damaged water structures are repaired and meet ADA requirements.

#### 4.4.2 Buildings

The County will continue to fund its structure and building repairs and improvements program to maintain its existing facilities. The County has developed a restroom replacement and renovation program through the Capital Needs Assessment that will prioritize their replacement. Several of the concession buildings are reaching a point where they will need additions, upgrades or future replacement. The County will develop a standardized concession replacement and renovation program that will prioritize action based on age, condition, and use.

Shade is an important part of outdoor facilities. The heat in Southwest Florida and the sun can make a fun time at the park uncomfortable. After Hurricane Ian, many trees and shade structures were damaged and destroyed. The County is working on repairing the shade infrastructure to achieve shade above and beyond the amount of shade that was provided pre-Hurricane Ian.

The Community Services Department Parks Division has established a basis of design standard for park hardware and site furniture including trash cans, benches, picnic tables, water fountains, etc. need to be replaced.

#### 4.4.3 Court/Field Resurfacing

The County has an active resurfacing program. Each court is evaluated. to determine when resurfacing is appropriate. The standard for sport courts is to be lined as multi-sport court whenever feasible.

Annually, the County reviews and determines which sports fields need renovation. The renovation program can include full field renovations, partial field renovations, and/or changes/improvement/replacement of irrigation has an active resurfacing program. Additionally, fencing and scoreboards are evaluated for repairs and replacement as part of the capital maintenance plan.

#### 4.4.4 Electrical & Lighting

Lighting plays a role in the security of a park or facility as well as adding recreational value. Having a well-lit area allows people to safely play on sport courts and fields longer. The Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions will work to replace and add lighting at all parks where needed with a focus on energy efficiency.

#### 4.4.5 Environmental

The County has a number of environmentally sensitive lands as well as active parks that have natural areas. CMP funding for environmental management at the active parks including exotic removal, living shorelines, sea grass monitoring, and environmental fencing.

#### 4.4.6 Parking & Stormwater

The County will continue to schedule resurfacing projects, parking enhancements, stormwater and erosion design, permitting inspections and repairs. Green stormwater opportunities are evaluated and implemented throughout the park system where appropriate.

#### 4.4.7 Parks Master Plan

This Master Plan focuses on community and regional facilities, but the importance of maintaining the current inventory of neighborhood parks is realized. The County will perform a biennial inspection to determine when amenities need to be replaced and if new facilities are desired by the surrounding neighborhood. This funding is dedicated to expansionary development within the park system to ensure parks are meeting their LOS goal.

#### 4.4.8 Playgrounds

Playgrounds are an important element for development and recreational play for youth from tots to tweens. The County has already identified playgrounds for replacement, enhancement and to add shade structures. The County will continue to upgrade surfacing and expand equipment to integrate adult play, inclusive play and fitness facilities/apparatuses.

#### 4.4.9 Pools & Splashpads

The Community Services Department Recreation Division has established repair and renovation plan for the ongoing maintenance of pools and splashpads to ensure safe year-round operation to include maintenance of pump, saline chlorinators, chemical pumps and probes and the replacement of lifeguard stand and chairs, deck speaker, Bleachers, suite water extractor, diving boards, pool ladders, lounges, and shades.

#### 4.4.10 Equipment

Delaying and underfunding maintenance puts equipment at-risk of deteriorating quicker than the expected life cycle. Some examples of small equipment that is maintained through the CMP include AEDs, multipurpose room AV equipment, electronic signage, functional gym equipment, sound system, and ice machines.

#### 4.4.11 Trails, Boardwalks and Piers

The Community Services Department Parks Division will work to implement the phased repair and/or replacement for boardwalks, and piers as outlined in the assessments conducted by professional engineers. Additionally, many of the County's in water structures have been damaged by recent hurricanes with the high winds and flooding. To ensure the safety of the residents and visitors, the County will continue to ensure all damaged water structures are repaired and meet ADA requirements.

The Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions will work with the County's Public Works Department and private development to improve safe access and improve overall community walkability. While the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions are not

responsible for sidewalks outside its property, they will make sure that there are internal sidewalks connecting to the outside sidewalks, providing safe entry into the park sites.

#### 4.4.12 Blueways and Water Access

The County will continue to maintain this program. To enhance public access to the County's waterways, the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions will coordinate with Florida Sea Grant. In addition, the County has initiated a blueways marking program at water trails identified in the blueways guide. In evaluating boating facility improvements, monitor use to determine the need to expand parking or ramp, if deemed not to negatively impact environmental conditions.

### 4.5 Implementation Goals

The projects identified are general in nature and are to be planned based on community input and recreational needs at the time of development. The goals and action items are categorized by the following:

- Archive
  - These goals and action items are no longer applicable or feasible.
- Completed
  - These goals and action items are from the 2015 Master Plan and have been completed.
- Ongoing
  - These goals and action items are from the 2015 Master Plan and are in progress or are cyclical and ongoing.
- Not started
  - These goals and action items are from the 2015 Master Plan and not been started yet.
- New
  - These goals and action items are new as part of the current Master Plan update.

Charlotte County Parks and Recreation Master Plan Goals and Action Items					
Plan Year	Initiative	Term	Goal	Status	Comments
2015	Operational	Short	Continue to expand volunteer program through an Adopt-a-Park and Adopt-a-Trail programs.	Archived	
2015	Park Development	Mid	Competition Level Tennis and Pickleball Facility at Maracaibo Park master plan.	Archived	This park will be master planned with public input.
2015	Park Development	Mid	New Park Development (FY 2028–2033): Southwest Deep Creek, East of Kings Highway and South Murdock.	Archived	Priority locations changed due to new data.
2015	Acquisition	Mid	Parkland Acquisition (FY 2022–2027): Southwest Deep Creek, East of Kings Highway and South Murdock.	Archived	Priority locations changed due to new data.
2015	Sales tax	Mid	Cattle Dock Boat Ramp construction.	Archived	Funding reallocated to the Placida Park redevelopment.
2015	Operational	Mid	New staffing: increase FTE to reach 25 acres to (1) FTE for park maintenance.	Archived	Updated staffing recommendations include in 2024.
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	Relocation of Allapatchee Shores Park.	Archived	Land no longer available.
2015	Misc.	Mid	Water Access Improvements utilizing recommendations from the Florida Sea Grant Boating & Waterways Planning Program.	Archived	2024 goal to update study.
2015	Misc.	Mid	Multi-Use Trails and On-road Bike Lanes Countywide (FY 2022–2033) connect between Carmelita Community Park and Airport Road.	Archived	Included in implementation of the BikePed plan goal.
2015	Misc.	Mid	Multi-Use Trails and On-road Bike Lanes Countywide (FY 2022–2033) connection between South County Regional Park to downtown Punta Gorda and Charlotte High School.	Archived	Included in implementation of the BikePed plan goal.
2015	Park Development	Long	Park Development (FY 2022-2033): South Gulf Cove.	Archived	Priority locations changed due to new data.
2015	Acquisition	Long	Parkland Acquisition and Development (2034-2050): During the planning period 2034 thru 2050, Englewood south/775 and Northwest Port Charlotte/Myakka.	Archived	Priority locations changed due to new data.
2015	Park Development	Long	Park Development (FY 2028-2033): Southwest Deep Creek, East of Kings Highway and South Murdock.	Archived	Priority locations changed due to new data.
2015	Park Development		Need to develop tennis courts in 3–5 court batteries to support USTA tournaments.	Archived	Multipurpose court policy.
2015	Improvements/Requests		Neighborhood Park improvement Midway Park expansion.	Archived	Not enough land available due to stormwater expansion.
2015	Improvements/Requests		Add equestrian trails in Centennial Park.	Archived	This is not an appropriate amenity for this location.
2015	Improvements/Requests		Concern regarding the creation of multipurpose courts that were striped for both tennis and pickleball.	Archived	Multipurpose court policy.
2015	Improvements/Requests		Provide picnic facilities, trails, and interpretative facilities along the Myakka .	Archived	Master plan for park includes these amenities.
2015	Improvements/Requests		Turn Midway Park courts into pickleball and keep courts at Franz Ross and Tringali for tennis.	Archived	Multipurpose court policy.
2015	Improvements/Requests		Neighborhood Park improvement Kiwanis Park special event support facilities.	Archived	Park cannot support this request.
2015	Improvements/Requests		Requested amenities: Create destination parks for special events to increase economic viability.	Archived	

**Charlotte County Parks and Recreation Master Plan  
Goals and Action Items**

<b>Plan Year</b>	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>
2015	Improvements/Requests	Short	Bike Racks expansion to include all active parks.	Complete	
2015	Operational	Short	Create Maintenance Zones.	Complete	
2015	Operational	Short	Update the Standard Operating Plan to include procedures for assigning personnel, clearly define duties for routine maintenance, and employee training.	Complete	
2015	Recommendation	Short	GC Herring Park reclassification from neighborhood to community park.	Complete	
2015	Redevelopment	Short	GC Herring Park redevelopment master plan.	Complete	
2015	Redevelopment	Short	William R Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park (fka Sunrise Park) master plan update.	Complete	
2015	Redevelopment	Short	William R Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park (fka Sunrise Park) Phase 1 construction.	Complete	
2015	Sales tax	Short	Ann & Chuck Dever Regional Park pool splashpad.	Complete	
2015	Sales tax	Short	Ann & Chuck Dever Regional Park Recreation Center with gym, fitness center and community garden.	Complete	
2015	Sales tax	Short	Centennial Park (fka North Charlotte Regional Park) Recreation Center with gym, fitness center, multipurpose room, community garden, and administrative offices.	Complete	
2015	Sales tax	Short	Harold Avenue Regional Park Improvement of additional gym with an arts and crafts classroom.	Complete	
2015	Sales tax	Short	Live Oak Point Park (fka Harborwalk/Gateway Project) Phase 2.	Complete	
2015	Sales tax	Short	McGuire Park redevelopment Phase 1 construction.	Complete	
2015	Sales tax	Short	South County Regional Park Improvements of additional multipurpose room and fitness area.	Complete	
2015	Sales tax	Short	Tringali Recreation Center Improvements of kitchen renovation in meeting hall, add a multipurpose room and storage area.	Complete	
2015	Sales tax	Short	Veterans Memorial Park at GC Herring Park.	Complete	
2015	Operational	Short	Communications and Marketing: Integrate the brand on the Park and Rec website.	Complete	
2015	Operational	Short	Communications and Marketing: Use the brand on all materials/collateral as allowed.	Complete	
2015	Operational	Short	Communications and Marketing: Use the brand for facility signage (color/fonts).	Complete	
2015	Operational	Short	Communications and Marketing: Use the Get Up Get Out Get Active tagline everywhere.	Complete	
2015	Operational	Short	Communications and Marketing: Consider the adoption of standard colors and materials to be used at all parks.	Complete	
2015	Recommendation	Short	Achieve CAPRA accreditation.	Complete	
2024	Sales tax	Short	Port Charlotte Beach Recreation Center replacement master plan.	Complete	
2015	Annual Maintenance	Ongoing	Landscaping and Site Furniture design standards.	Complete	

2015	Annual Maintenance	Ongoing	Sidewalks to Parks Program.	Complete	
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	Ann & Chuck Dever Regional Park enhancement of sidewalks, refurbishment of basketball court, shade/pavilion at football fields and interpretive signs and kiosks.	Complete	
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	Bissett Park redevelopment master plan.	Complete	
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	Lake Betty Park redevelopment master plan.	Complete	
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	Myakka River Park master plan.	Complete	
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	Placida Park redevelopment master plan.	Complete	
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	South County Regional Park enhancement of pickleball courts, small pavilion with restroom at playground, and walking/fitness path.	Complete	
2015	Sales tax	Mid	Centennial Park (fka North Charlotte Regional Park) Aquatic Center Phase 1 construction.	Complete	
2015	Sales tax	Mid	Sailing Center at Port Charlotte Beach construction.	Complete	
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	William R Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park (fka Sunrise Park) trails and fitness construction.	Complete	
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	William R Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park (fka Sunrise Park) trails and fitness construction.	Complete	
2015	Misc.	Mid	Environmental Parks improve and enhance public access.	Complete	
2015	Misc.	Mid	Multi-Use Trails and On-road Bike Lanes Countywide (FY 2022–2033). Connect the Charlotte Sports Park with Centennial Park (fka North Charlotte Regional Park) w/multipurpose trail.	Complete	
2015	Improvements/Requests		Create dog-friendly trails.	Complete	Ann & Chuck Dever, Bayshore, Cape Haze Pioneer Trail, Centennial, Harbour Heights, Katherine Ariens, Kiwanis, Ollie's, Oyster Creek, Port Charlotte Beach, Randy Spence, South County .
2015	Improvements/Requests		Provide trails to the Peace River and Charlotte Harbor riverwalks.	Complete	Liv Oak Point Park connection to Bayshore Live Oak Park.
2015	Improvements/Requests		Requested amenities: Community gardens.	Complete	Ann & Chuck Dever, Centennial, South County.
2015	Improvements/Requests		Requested amenities: Splash playground.	Complete	Ann & Chuck Dever, McGuire, South County.
2015	Improvements/Requests		Requested amenities: Wellness/fitness centers.	Complete	Centennial, Harold, South County.
2015	Improvements/Requests		South County Regional Park needs shaded seating and more water fountains.	Complete	
2015	Misc.		Better promote environmental lands and natural resources to increase eco- tourism.	Complete	Created environmental lands guide and real-time maps on app.
2015	Park Development		Develop a restroom replacement program.	Complete	
2015	Recommendation		Adopt reclassification recommendations.	Complete	
2015	Recommendation		Adopt the definitions to guide the enhancement of existing facilities and development of new parks and facilities.	Complete	
2015	Recommendation		Adopt the modified point system and assess at the park level.	Complete	
2015	Recommendation		Land acquisition, development and maintenance should be organized by RPAs.	Complete	

2015	Recommendation		The County will follow the development standards and guidelines established.	Complete	
2015	Recommendation		The County will move forward in planning the improvements to existing facilities and in the location of new facilities as identified.	Complete	
2015	Misc.		Promote regional parks and community centers for tournament play to increase economic impact.	Complete	Partnership with Tourism.
2015	Recommendation		Adopt an acreage goal for active lands of 5 acres per 1,000 (parks that meet the LOS points).	Complete	
2015	Recommendation		Establish the acreage goal for environmental lands at 16 acres per thousand.	Complete	
2015	Improvements/Requests		Install doors on both sides of fenced tennis courts for ease of access and league play.	Complete	

**Charlotte County Parks and Recreation Master Plan  
Goals and Action Items**

Plan Year	Initiative	Term	Goal	Status	Comments
2015	Improvements/Requests	Short	Signage to include wayfinding signage and a signage master plan Phase 1.	Ongoing	
2015	Sales tax	Short	Multi-Use Trails and On-road Bike Lanes, Countywide. The County will continue its efforts in building a regionally connected system of trails and biking facilities in each planning period.	Ongoing	MPO Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan implementation.
2015	Misc.	Short	Environmental Parks management plan implementation.	Ongoing	
2015	Misc.	Short	Babcock Ranch park development per development agreement.	Ongoing	
2015	Operational	Short	NRPA Park Metrics (Formerly Proragis) data entry for Charlotte County.	Ongoing	
2015	Operational	Short	Regular Recreation Program Evaluations .	Ongoing	
2015	Recommendation	N/A	The County will maintain and enhance the current citizen/grass roots and community based organization programing approach.	Ongoing	
2015	Improvements/Requests	Mid	Blueways and Water Access: initiate blueways marking program at water trails identified in the blueways guide.	Ongoing	
2015	Improvements/Requests	Mid	Blueways and Water Access: make substantial improvements to its existing boating and fishing facilities.	Ongoing	Current projects (as of 2024): Ainger, Riverside and Placida
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	Bissett Park redevelopment Phase 1 construction.	Ongoing	
2015	Improvements/Requests	Mid	Pavilions in Parks Program: Centennial Park (North Charlotte Regional Park) (1–2 large)	Ongoing	1 large pavilion has been completed.
2015	Improvements/Requests	Mid	Pavilions in Parks Program: South County Regional Park (1 large, 2 medium).	Ongoing	1 large pavilion and 1 small pavilion has been completed.
2015	Misc.	Long	Multi-Use Trails and On-road Bike Lanes Countywide. continue its efforts in building a regionally connected system of trails and biking facilities in each planning period.	Ongoing	MPO Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan implementation.
2024	Misc.	Long	Bike/Pedestrian Sidewalk Trails implementation of the Regional Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan.	Ongoing	
2015	Annual Maintenance		Court Resurfacing and Improvement Program.	Ongoing	2015-2024: 86 courts.
2015	Annual Maintenance		Paving and Parking Improvement Program.	Ongoing	
2015	Annual Maintenance		Playground Improvement Program.	Ongoing	2015-2024: 20 location.
2015	Misc.		Increase access to the vast waterbodies throughout the County by adding or enhancing launches, blueway trails, and beach access.	Ongoing	2015-2020: ADA launch at Lemon Bay and Gaines, launch at South Gulf Cove and Hathaway.
2015	Misc.		Provide regional trails to connect public facilities and neighborhoods, including to State lands and adjoining counties.	Ongoing	Suntrail program.
2015	Recommendation		Increase the county-wide LOS from a score of 16 to 18 by 2025 and to 20 by 2050.	Ongoing	
2015	Recommendation		The County will review private development plans for compliance with the park facility development standards.	Ongoing	
2015	Improvements/Requests		Add nature and walking trails.	Ongoing	2015-2024: 5 locations.
2015	Improvements/Requests		Add additional water fountains, restrooms, and parking.	Ongoing	2015-2024: 16 water fountains, 2 restrooms, 1 parking lot.
2015	Improvements/Requests		Implement the master plan for Centennial Park.	Ongoing	
2015	Improvements/Requests		Increase shade throughout the parks (group pavilions, shade structures over playgrounds, and seating areas).	Ongoing	2015-2024: 19 locations.

2015	Misc.		Make the Charlotte Sports Park more available to the public for athletics and other recreational uses.	Ongoing	2017-2024: 73 events/rentals.
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**Charlotte County Parks and Recreation Master Plan  
Goals and Action Items**

<b>Plan Year</b>	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>
2015	Improvements/Requests	Short	Requested amenities: climbing walls, ziplines, and other adventure type of sporting activities.	Not started	
2015	Redevelopment	Short	GC Herring Park redevelopment Phase 1 construction.	Not started	
2015	Improvements/Requests	Mid	Pavilions in Parks Program: Ann & Chuck Dever Regional Park (1 large, 2 medium).	Not started	
2015	Improvements/Requests	Mid	Pavilions in Parks Program: Carmalita Park (1-2 large).	Not started	
2015	Improvements/Requests	Mid	Pavilions in Parks Program: Deep Creek Park (1 medium).	Not started	
2015	Improvements/Requests	Mid	Pavilions in Parks Program: Franz Ross Park (1 medium).	Not started	
2015	Improvements/Requests	Mid	Pavilions in Parks Program: Neighborhood Parks (8 medium pavilions).	Not started	
2015	Improvements/Requests	Mid	Signage, continue signage program.	Not started	
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	GC Herring Park redevelopment Phase 2 construction.	Not started	
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	Lake Betty Park redevelopment Phase 1 construction.	Not started	
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	McGuire Park Phase 2 construction.	Not started	
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	Myakka River Park Phase 1 construction.	Not started	
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	Placida Park redevelopment Phase 1 construction.	Not started	
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	Placida Park redevelopment Phase 2 construction.	Not started	
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	William R Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park (fka Sunrise Park) Phase 2 construction.	Not started	
2015	Redevelopment	Mid	William R Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park (fka Sunrise Park) Phase 3 construction.	Not started	
2015	Operational	Mid	New staffing: Urban Forester, Partnership/Grants coordinator.	Not started	
2015	Recommendation	Long	Increase the acreage goal for environmental lands by 2050 increase to 20 acres per thousand.	Not started	
2015	Improvements/Requests		Design and build competitive tournament facilities for activities such as tennis, pickleball, soccer, and baseball/ softball.	Not started	
2015	Recommendation		The County will follow the land acquisition and location criteria as outlined.	Not started	

**Charlotte County Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

**Goals and Action Items**

<b>Plan Year</b>	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>
2024	Acquisition	Short	Parkland Acquisition (FY 2025–2027): Tournament Sport's Complex.	New	
2024	Acquisition	Short	Parkland Acquisition (FY 2025–2030): Future Community Park A, Future Community Park B, Future Regional Park A, Placida Passive expansion.	New	
2024	Park Development	Short	New Park Development (FY 2025–2030): Future Community Park A, Future Community Park B, Future Regional Park A, Placida Passive expansion.	New	
2024	Park Development	Short	Placida Passive Park master plan.	New	
2024	Redevelopment	Short	Maracaibo Park master plan.	New	
2024	Sales tax	Short	Charlotte Sorts Park Renovation and expansion.	New	
2024	Park Development	Short	Placida Passive Park phase 1 construction.	New	
2024	Sales tax	Short	Port Charlotte Beach Recreation Center replacement Phase 1 construction.	New	
2024	Sales tax	Short	Port Charlotte Beach Pool replacement Phase 1 construction.	New	
2024	Recommendation	Short	Hathaway Park reclassification from special purpose park to a community park.	New	
2024	Recommendation	Short	Midway Park reclassification from neighborhood to special purpose park.	New	
2024	Recommendation	Short	Myakka River Park reclassification from special purpose park to community park.	New	
2024	Redevelopment	Short	Bisset Park phase 2 construction.	New	
2024	Park Development	Short	Centennial Park phase 2 construction.	New	
2024	Park Development	Short	Centennial Park pool phase 2 construction.	New	
2024	Park Development	Short	Charlotte Harbor Event Parking Garage design and construction.	New	
2024	Park Development	Short	Park restrooms design and construction: Bill Coy, Randy Spence, Midway, Harold, South County, Kiwanis, Franz Ross, Maraciabo, Hathaway, Centennial.	New	
2024	Redevelopment	Short	Recreation Center renovations design and construction: South County.	New	
2024	Redevelopment	Short	Tringali Community Center Replacement design and construction.	New	
2024	Redevelopment	Short	Lake Betty Park redevelopment Phase 2 construction.	New	
2024	Park Development	Short	Develop a standardized concession replacement and renovation program.	New	
2024	Recommendation	Mid	Update all parks zonings to PRK.	New	
2024	Acquisition	Mid	Parkland Acquisition (FY 2030–2035): Future Community Park C.	New	
2024	Park Development	Mid	New Park Development (FY 2030–2035): Future Community Park C.	New	

2024	Park Development	Mid	New Park Development (FY 2028–2033): Tournament Sport's Complex.	New	
2024	Recommendation	Mid	Coordinate with Florida Sea Grant to update the Florida Sea Grant Boating & Waterways Planning Program report.	New	
2024	Redevelopment	Mid	Bisset Park phase 3 construction.	New	
2024	Redevelopment	Mid	Recreation Center renovations design and construction: Centennial.	New	
2024	Redevelopment	Mid	Tringali Rec Center replacement design and construction.	New	
2024	Park Development	Mid	Park maintenance yards design and construction: Florida St., Ann & Chuck Dever, Centennial.	New	
2024	Acquisition	Long	Parkland Acquisition (FY 2035–2045): Future Community Park D, Future Community Park E, Future Community Park F, Future Community Park G, Future Community Park H.	New	
2024	Park Development	Long	New Park Development (FY 2035–2045): Future Community Park D, Future Community Park E, Future Community Park F, Future Community Park G, Future Community Park H.	New	
2024	Redevelopment	Long	Major Park Renovations.	New	
2024	Redevelopment	Long	Major Recreation Center Renovations.	New	
2024	Redevelopment	Long	Recreation Center renovations design and construction: Ann & Chuck Dever.	New	

#### 4.6 Communications & Marketing

Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions have developed a current brand and tagline/banner **"Get Up, Get Out, Get Active."** For the brand to be effective it must be used consistently and repeatedly. The County will use this branding statement on all appropriate communications and materials. At a minimum, the County will conduct the following:

- Maintain the brand on the Community Services Department's webpage.
- Use the brand on all stationery, press releases, media kits, presentations, and printed materials (flyers, brochures, GUIDE, etc.).
- Use the brand, or at least fonts and color scheme, on facility signage.
- Use the tagline on all facility campaigns, including fundraising.
- Use the brand to raise community awareness of the Charlotte County Parks and Recreation System and entice participation in programming and special events.
- Consider using the logo and tagline on park signage.
- Consider the adoption of standard colors and materials to be used in all Charlotte County parks that continue to build public recognitions that a park is a Charlotte County facility.

#### 4.7 Evaluation & Monitoring

The Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions are committed to updating its plans as necessary to meet the changing needs of the community. The County will celebrate and communicate its successes and at minimum the County will conduct the following:

- **LOS Updates.** The County will annually review the existing LOS within the county to ensure that the minimum adopted LOS is maintained as population changes, parks are reclassified, facilities are removed or added, or acreage is added.
- **NRPA Park Metrics.** NRPA has launched and is actively updating a national data base for public parks and recreation across the nation. The system is called NRPA Park Metrics. The County will update its agency profile (last update was 2023 data) and maintain its inventory and operational information on an annual basis. In addition to benchmarking information, NRPA has launched Park Metric, allowing GIS software to calculate and map a variety of datasets, including marketing and demographics information, drive or walk time, or even population density mapping. The County has started to input its inventory and will commit to updating this system on an annual basis.
- **Program Evaluations.** The County will continue to review and further refine an evaluation process for recreational programs, to include participant levels, fees, costs, and user satisfaction surveys, on a biennial basis in accordance with the County Budgeting Process.
- **Capital Planning.** The County will update its capital improvement plan on a biennial basis.
- **Master Plan Updates.** Past recommendations from the National Recreation and Parks Association suggested updating agency master plans every 5 years. New recommendations are to update every 10 years. This gives reporting agencies time to budget associated funding for Capital Maintenance and Capital improvement projects that are identified as needs in the master plan. Moving forward, Charlotte County will implement a 10-year update for their master planning process.
- **Florida Recreation and Parks Association (FRPA) Impact Calculator.** The calculator will be used to assist in master plan updates and future park growth.

#### 4.8 Regulatory Plans

Charlotte County will incorporate the recommendations of this Master Plan, where appropriate, into the Charlotte 2050 Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Code.

#### 4.9 CAPRA Reaccreditation

With the adoption of this Master Plan, the County will move forward in seeking agency reaccreditation through CAPRA. CAPRA accreditation demonstrates that an agency meets established benchmarks for delivering high quality service.

##### 4.9.1 CAPRA Standards

The accreditation process will require the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions to comply with 36 Fundamental Standards and meet 112 of the 118 Non-Fundamental Standards upon reaccreditation. The following list identifies the required information the County must provide to demonstrate compliance with CAPRA fundamental standards.

##### 4.9.2 Maintaining the Accreditation Process

There are three phases over a five-year review cycle. Phase 1 includes the self-assessment report, this Master Plan and the Needs Assessment (Appendix A) will assist the Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions in completing a self-assessment report. Phase 2 is the on-site visit by Commission representatives and Phase 3 is the Commission's full review of the required application, self-assessment, site visitation report, and other support documentation.

The Community Services Department Parks and Recreation Divisions has attained both accreditation and the first reaccreditation and will be required to complete a new self-assessment and will be revisited by Commission representatives every five years. During each of the years between accreditation and the follow-up visit in five years, the Divisions must submit an annual report that discusses how the Divisions are complying with the Commissions' standards.

## Part Five: Staffing

In this chapter, the current Community Services staffing models will be discussed based on local demographics, populations, and the anticipated needs of the Community Services Department. Currently, many of the surrounding counties such as Lee, Sarasota, and Manatee are revamping their staffing plans due to increasing populations and changing household demographics. As Southwest Florida continues to see growth, it is important to understand any limitations that the current department organizations will face as new families, parks, and buildings are introduced into the community. Based on these evaluations, recommendations will be provided to ensure the current and future needs of the Community Services Department will be met.

### 5.1 Department Organization

The Community Services Department is comprised of four (4) divisions, two (2) of which are Parks and Natural Resources Division (PNR) and the Recreation Division. These are the divisions that will be addressed in this chapter individually. This chapter will specifically address Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees and the comparison of the workload to the number of employees. A look at each division's LOMO and required tasks are needed.

### 5.2 Current Methodologies

#### 5.2.1 Parks and Natural Resources Levels of Maintenance and Operations

Historically the LOMO for PNR were defined by 11 park elements including trimming and pruning, plantings weed control, fertilizing and mulching, pest control, restrooms, common area mowing, site visual inspections, litter control, surfaces, repairs and special features, and turf care. Within each park element there were six (6) modes of maintenance, creating a complicated matrix that was difficult to manage, track, or determine a LOMO of a park as a whole.

#### 5.2.2 Parks and Natural Resources Staffing

PNR is divided into six (6) sections, Ballfields Maintenance, Land Management, Natural Resources, Parks Maintenance and Special Projects, and PNR Administration. Ballfields Maintenance, Land Management, Parks Maintenance, and Special Projects are the sections that will be addressed in this section. These 4 subdivisions have a total of 42 FTE's (see Appendix I for current organizational chart). The current LOMO is distributed based on the County maintaining numerous regional, community, neighborhood, and special purpose parks. Each subdivision has modes of maintenance assigned to individual park locations based on available staffing and maintenance task category. To assist with the workload, the County currently uses contractors to supplement the staffing need. Additionally, the Special Projects staff oversees the implementation of the Master Plan, Capital Improvement projects, annual facility maintenance through the CMP, work programs, resiliency, and storm recovery, as well as, overseeing annual contracts and Master Plan evaluations as outlined in Section 3.5.4.

#### Ballfields Maintenance

As of 2024, the Ballfields Maintenance section oversees a total of 53 ballfields and other amenities within 7 park locations over 435 acres. Each park has assigned modes ranging from a mode 1 (highest LOMO) to a mode 5 (lowest LOMO). Tasks within each mode are categorized as minor, moderate, or

major depending on how long the specific task takes. Each park location has assigned staff with minimal route impacts.

- Ballfield Maintenance has 19 FTE's

#### Land Management

As of 2024, the Land Management section maintains 12 environmental parks and preserves with public access comprised of over 5,600 acres, this includes mitigation lands some of which do not have public access. Each park has assigned modes ranging from a mode 1 (highest LOMO) to a mode 3 (lowest LOM). Staff within this sub-division are divided up into east, mid and west zones of the County.

- Land Management has 6.5 FTE's

#### Parks Maintenance

As of 2024, the Parks section provides maintenance to 53 parks over 570 acres with modes of service ranging from once a month to daily. Each park has a mode ranging from a mode 1 (highest LOMO) to a mode 6 (lowest LOMO). Staff are divided up into East zone, West zone and Beach zone. Each of the east and west zones are then further divided into two (2) sub-routes each for a total of five (5) routes divided among the maintenance staff. The maintenance crews gather the required equipment and supplies from the maintenance hubs and transport it to each park. Given the location of the parks, size of the county, and location of the maintenance hubs, maintenance staff spend 60% of their time traveling.

- Parks Maintenance has 12 FTE's

#### Special Projects

The Special Projects staff oversees assessment, repair, and replacement of park amenities and facilities. Staff also is responsible for contract management for the restroom cleaning contract, serves as designated points of contacts for Capital Improvement Projects, oversees and implements park development projects. Most importantly, this staff oversees and coordinates the implementation of the Master Plan.

- Special Process has 3.5 FTE's

### 5.2.3 Recreation Staffing

The Recreation Division operates based upon three (4) specific regions which includes Mid/South County (RPAs 2 and 3), Mid County (RPA 2), West County (RPA 1) and the Charlotte Sports Park (CSP) (RPA 2), with a Recreation Superintendent overseeing each area of operation. The Recreation Division is divided into four (4) sections, Recreation Centers, Aquatic facilities, Charlotte Sports Park, and Recreation Administration. The Recreation Division historically has not had an established LOMOs for the recreational facilities, these have been established as part of this Master Plan and can be found in Section 5.3.3.

#### Recreation Centers

The Recreation Division operates six (6) recreation centers and one (1) staffed skate park.

- Staffing for Recreation Centers is 51 FTE's

#### Aquatic Facilities

The Recreation Division operates four (4) aquatic facilities and three (3) splashpads.

- Staffing for Aquatic Facilities is 61 FTE's

### Charlotte Sports Park (CSP)

The Recreation Division operates one (1) stadium facility.

- Staffing for CSP is 10.95 FTE's

### Recreation Administration

The Recreation Administration oversees the three (3) sections.

- Staffing for Recreation Administration is 7 FTE's

## 5.3 New Methodologies

Charlotte County is a growing community. The staffing needs for the Community Services Department Parks and Natural Resources Recreation Divisions is always changing. The current route system for parks maintenance workers is requiring the staff to spend 60% of their time traveling. The staffing currently available in the Parks and Natural Resources Division is severely lacking. The current workload for amenities, parks, facilities, and acreage needing attention is too high with the number of staff currently available (see Appendix I for proposed organizational chart).

### 5.3.1 Parks and Natural Resources Levels of Maintenance and Operations

The updated PNR LOMO system is defined by each work section with modes that encompass various park elements. The LOMO for the Ballfields Maintenance section has 3 modes that focus on high, mid and lower levels of maintenance associated with field usage and event support. For Land Management section the LOMO has 3 modes that focus on the intensity and goals of habitat management and outreach. The LOMO for the Parks Maintenance section has 5 modes with a focus on frequency of site visits and overall park aesthetics. The full definitions of these LOMO modes can be found in Appendix E.

The more amenities a park has, the more visitors the parks tend to have. The largest parks with sport courts, splash pads, restrooms, and playground require a "major" amount of maintenance attention and thus need the most FTEs. Other amenities such as kayak launches, boardwalks, boat ramps, and horseshoe puts require only "moderate" attention from staff, resulting in fewer FTEs. Lastly, amenities that require "minor" maintenance attention includes BBQ grills, bike racks, picnic tables, kiosks, signage, and fitness trail equipment. The type of amenity and quantity of the amenities at each park are directly related to the FTEs required to operate the facilities at the desired LOMO. As new amenities are added to parks, the FTEs required are then increased. The amenity to staffing conversion spreadsheet (Appendix J) outlines the types of amenities and time to maintain found in each of the major, moderate and minor categories. The calculation of the FTEs by amenity from the spreadsheet requires an additional multiple calculation to account for include travel time, administrative duties, and support tasks to get to the total number of FTEs needed. Furthermore, if a certain park requires extra attention in the short term due to an increase in visitors, that has not been factored into the calculation.

### New Route Organization

The existing routing is broken up into three (3) zones, an East, a West zone and a Beach zone. With this routing, staff spends approximately 40 hours per week of their time traveling between the parks. In addition to implementing more zones, additional maintenance compounds will be added at more centrally located parks within these zones. This will reduce the travels times for maintenance staff from

40 hours per week to 31 hours per week, saving over staff 440 hours annually. This reduction in travel time will allow staff to efficiently maintain parks in the assigned mode and save 18,700 miles per year of wear and tear on county vehicles. New routes line up with the RPA outlined in Section 1.3.

Figure 8 - Parks Maintenance Routes - Current

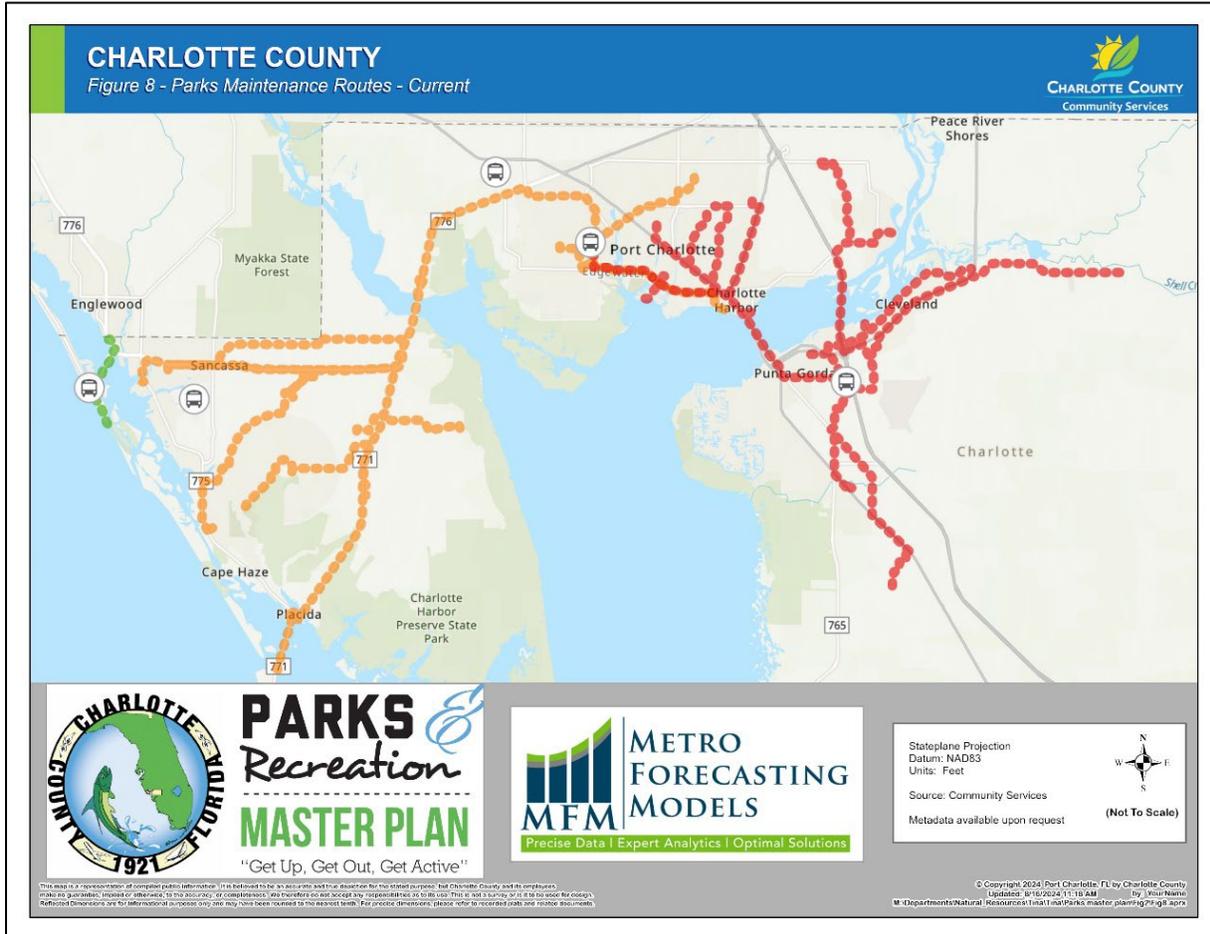


Figure 9 - Parks Maintenance Routes – Proposed



### 5.3.2 Parks and Natural Resources Right-Sizing

Based on the PNR Level of Maintenance Park & Operation Modes by park found in Appendix K, routing, modes and acreage and the amount of time needed to maintain each amenity, it is anticipated that to maintain all existing amenities 92 FTE employees are required. PNR currently has 39 FTEs on staff. To meet the current needs of PNR an additional 53 FTEs are needed. Included in the proposed FTEs are additional supervisory staff to include establishing a Park Superintendent position that would oversee a Park Supervisor within each RPA. The breakdown of needed positions per section is as follows.

#### Ballfields Maintenance

This proposed staffing model is based on aligning maintenance with RPAs.

- 30 Maintenance Workers (11 needed)
- Supervisory Staff
  - 1 Park Superintendent (1 needed)
    - Superintendent assigned 3 Ballfield Supervisors
  - 3 Park Supervisors (2 needed)

- Each Supervisor assigned 1 Coordinator and 7-9 Maintenance Workers
- 3 Park Coordinators (1 needed)

Total staffing needed to right-size Ballfield Maintenance 15 FTEs

#### Land Management

Based on the new LOMO and proposed modes, staffing is adequate.

Total staffing needed to right-size Land Management 0 FTEs

#### Parks Maintenance

This proposed staffing model is based on aligning routes with Regional Planning Areas.

- 35 Maintenance Workers (23 needed)
- Supervisory Staff
  - 1 Park Superintendent (1 needed)
    - Superintendent assigned 3 Park Supervisors
  - 3 Parks Supervisors (2 needed)
    - Each Supervisor assigned 1 Coordinator and 7-9 Maintenance Workers
    - 3 Parks Coordinators (1 needed)

Total staffing needed to right-size Parks Maintenance 34 FTEs

#### Special Projects

This proposed staffing is based on aligning workload to “take care of what we have” through assessment, repair, replacement, and contract oversight. This staff will also address project management as we continue to develop new parks and expand existing parks to meet the Master Plan LOS and the goals and action items in Section 4.5.

- 3 Sr. Project Coordinator (2 needed)
- Supervisory Staff
  - 3 Project Manager (1 needed)

Total staffing needed to right-size Special Projects 3 FTEs

### 5.3.3 Recreation Levels of Maintenance and Operations

Through this Master Plan the Recreation Division has established LOMOs for the operation of their recreational facilities as outlined below and in Appendix L.

#### Recreation Centers

##### **Level 1 – Lower LOMO at Recreation Centers (54 operational hours/week).**

- This LOMO provides amenities that support the following programs on a limited basis: staff-led athletic leagues, internal program offerings, trainings and meetings, camp operations, facility rentals, and minimal division events.
- This LOMO would not support multiple break camps, summer camp operations at *all* rec facilities, quarterly REC2U events, skate park operations, or the provision of Spring Training operations with supervisory oversight of Fan Hosts/ Parking Attendants per our approved

Amendment with the Tampa Bay Rays.

- To meet this workload, 202 employee hours per week are required to staff a recreation center, necessitating 5.05 FTE employees.
- To meet this LOMO, we would decrease the number of hours for each PT employee to approximately 15 hours per week and only use Seasonal employees as a resource for operational needs.
- Operational support staff for Level 1 at each facility would provide direct assistance during lapses in coverage as follows:
  - Administrative/supervisory support – 2.0 FTE's
    - Recreation Superintendent OR Recreation Supervisor
    - Community Services Coordinator OR Maintenance Coordinator
- The LOMO coverage at each facility would be .65 FTE.
  - This would be dependent upon the designated operations at each facility. The Maintenance Coordinator is included in the above administrative/supervisory FTE's. Otherwise, there would be a FT or PT Maintenance Worker as opposed to a FT Maintenance Coordinator.
  - It should be noted that there is a Maintenance Coordinator position in three (3) of the designated regions...they are just not assigned to each individual facility. The fourth region, the Charlotte Sports Park, has a Maintenance Supervisor. However, this position doesn't typically support operations in the recreation centers.

**Level 2 – Current LOMO at Recreation Centers (70 operational hours/week).**

- This LOMO provides amenities that support staff-led athletic leagues, various internal program offerings, fitness/wellness programs, trainings and meetings, facility rentals, quarterly REC2U events, skate park operations, minimal division events, and limited Tourism sponsored events.
- This level allows us to currently operate all summer/break camps at our locations based upon the capacity of each facility along with the provision of Spring Training operations with supervisory oversight of Fan Hosts/ Parking Attendants per our approved Amendment with the Tampa Bay Rays.
- To meet this workload, 249 employee hours per week are required for staffing, necessitating 6.22 FTE employees.
- Operational support staff for Level 2 at each facility would provide direct assistance during lapses in coverage as follows:
  - Administrative/supervisory support – 2.0 FTE's
- The LOMO coverage at each facility would be 1.0 FTE
  - As noted above, this would be dependent upon the designated operations at each facility. The Maintenance Coordinator is included in the above administrative/supervisory FTE's. Otherwise, there would be a FT Maintenance Worker as opposed to a FT Maintenance Coordinator.
  - It should be noted that there is a Maintenance Coordinator position in three (3) of the designated regions...they are just not assigned to each individual facility. The fourth region, the Charlotte Sports Park, has a Maintenance Supervisor. However, this position doesn't typically support operations in the recreation centers.

**Level 3 – This would propose an additional 14 operating hours over Level 2 at Recreation Centers to 84 hours/week along with 11 additional hours/week to support the new programs, rentals, and events.**

- This LOMO would provide expanded operating hours to 12 hours each day of the week with increased programming options, special events, and meeting space availability to the community in addition to the provisions from Level 2. Examples of this include the ability to provide three (3) division offered events, extended league operations (in various athletic facets), and the ability to host additional Tourism sponsored events. In addition, this includes the anticipated expansion of multiple rec facilities with added amenities.
- As part of Level 3, we would also propose the need to reclass one (1) of the existing FT Recreation Specialist positions at each facility to a FT Senior Recreation Specialist in an effort to provide lead coverage for the increases in programming, rentals, and special event coverage.
- To meet this additional workload, 366.25 employee hours per week would be required for staffing, necessitating 9.15 FTE employees.
- The following are the additional positions that would be required for this level to support the additional operating and program/event coverage:
  - Two (2) FT Rec Specialists at each facility – total of 12
  - One (1) PT Rec Specialists at each facility – total of 6
  - One (1) Seasonal Rec Specialists at each facility – total of 6
  - One (1) FT MW at each facility – total of 6
- Operational support staff for Level 3 at each facility would provide direct assistance during lapses in coverage as follows:
  - Administrative/supervisory support – 3.0 FTE's
- The LOMO coverage at each facility would be 2.0 FTE's.
  - As noted above, this would be dependent upon the designated operations at each facility. The Maintenance Coordinator is included in the above administrative/supervisory FTE's.
  - It should be noted that there is a Maintenance Coordinator position in three (3) of the designated regions...they are just not assigned to each individual facility. The fourth region, the Charlotte Sports Park, has a Maintenance Supervisor. However, this position doesn't typically support operations in the recreation centers.

**Level 4 – This would propose no additional operating hours from Level 3, but it would include a 25 hour/week increase for additional programs, events, and hosted meetings within the community. Total operational hours would remain at 84 per week.**

- This LOMO includes all provisions from Level 3 along with increased programming and special events initiatives along with the capacity to host various programs with our community partners. Examples of this include the ability to provide six (6) division offered events, additional Tourism hosting support, and expanded programs in our park system.
- The following are the additional positions that would be required for this level to provide the necessary program and event support across all regions:
  - One (1) FT Program Assistant at each facility – total of 6
    - This position will serve to support the increased programs, division special events, and Tourism related offerings throughout the rec facilities.
  - One (1) PT Program Assistant at each facility – total of 6
    - This position will focus on volunteer coordination and division event support.

- One (1) FT MW at each facility – total of 6
  - This position will provide maintenance support for the increased programs and special events occurring at the rec facilities.
- One (1) Data Analysis Coordinator
  - This position will provide a central role in determining how we're effectively collecting, utilizing, and responding to the data that is available to us with insight on data-driven decisions, operational inefficiencies, and responses for our reaccreditation standards (along with all future efforts).
- One (1) Special Event Supervisor
  - This position will provide supervisory oversight of the division special events and Tourism related offerings from start to finish inclusive of the communication, planning, development, staff coordination, implementation, and event recap.
- One (1) Administrative Assistant, Senior
  - This position will provide administrative assistance due to the increase in operating hours and number of staff members along with the provision of additional events in an effort to ensure that all division requirements/reports are completed and submitted, files are updated and organized (at all locations), and accreditation standards are continuing to be met with respect to documentation.
- To meet this additional workload, 391.25 employee hours per week would be required for staffing, necessitating 9.78 FTE employees.
- Operational support staff for Level 4 at each facility would provide direct assistance during lapses in coverage as follows:
  - Administrative/supervisory support – 3.0 FTE's
- The LOMO coverage at each facility would be 3.0 FTE's.
  - As noted above, this would be dependent upon the designated operations at each facility. The Maintenance Coordinator is included in the above administrative/supervisory FTE's.

#### Aquatic Facilities

##### ***Level 1 – Lower LOMO at Aquatic Facilities (69 operational hours/week)***

- This LOMO provides amenities that support the following programs on a limited basis: recreational swimming, internal camp operations, public lap swimming (no Early Bird), competitive swimming (no mornings), Learn-to-Swim, fitness classes, trainings, and splash pad operations.
- Each aquatic facility will be closed one full day per week with at least one (1) pool being open to the public on a daily basis.
- To meet the current workload, 385 employee hours per week are required to staff an aquatic facility, necessitating 9.62 FTE employees.
- Operational support staff for Level 1 at each facility would provide direct assistance during lapses in coverage as follows:
  - Administrative/supervisory support – 1.0 FTE
    - Aquatics Coordinator
- The LOMO coverage at each facility would be .65 FTE.

**Level 2 – Current LOMO at Aquatic Facilities (85.5 operational hours/week)**

- This LOMO provides amenities offering a variety of programming to include recreational swimming, expanded camp operations, public lap swimming (includes Early Bird), competitive swimming (includes morning practices), Learn-to-Swim, fitness classes, trainings, splash pad operations, and collegiate swim team trainings.
- To meet the current workload, 476 employee hours per week are required to staff an aquatic facility, necessitating 11.9 FTE employees.
- As part of Level 2, we would also propose the need to reclass one (1) of the existing FT Lifeguard positions at each facility to a FT Senior Lifeguard in an effort to provide lead coverage for the operation in the absence of the Aquatic Coordinator.
- Operational support staff for Level 2 at each facility would provide direct assistance during lapses in coverage as follows:
  - Administrative/supervisory support – 1.0 FTE
- The LOMO coverage at each facility would be .65 FTE
  - It should be noted that there is either a Maintenance Coordinator or a FT Maintenance Worker also assigned to all rec facilities that have an aquatic location.

**Level 3 – This would propose an additional 19.5 operating hours over Level 2 at Aquatic Facilities to 105 hours/week along with 5.5 additional hours/week to support the new programs, rentals, and events.**

- This LOMO would provide expanded operating hours to 15 hours each day of the week with increased programming options to include additional fitness classes, trainings, Learn-to-Swim, and special event support in addition to the provisions from Level 2.
- To meet the additional workload, 579 employee hours per week are required to staff an aquatic facility, necessitating 14.47 FTE employees.
- The following are the additional positions that would be required for this level at each aquatic facility as follows:
  - One (1) FT Aquatic Coordinator at each facility – total of 4
    - This supervisory position will be required to provide oversight and leadership for these extended hours.
  - One (1) FT Lifeguard at each facility – total of 4
    - This position will be required to meet the additional hours of operation.
  - One (1) FT Maintenance Worker at each facility – total of 4
    - This position will provide maintenance support for the increased operating hours, programs and special events occurring at the rec facilities.
- Operational support staff for Level 3 at each facility would provide direct assistance during lapses in coverage:
  - Administrative/supervisory support – 2.0 FTE
- The LOMO coverage at each facility would be 1.0 FTE which would provide one (1) FT Maintenance Worker at each aquatic facility.

**Level 4 – This would propose no additional operating hours from Level 3, but it would include a 25 hour/week increase for additional programs, events, and trainings. Total operational hours would remain at 105 per week.**

- This LOMO includes all provisions from Level 3 along with offering and hosting increased programming related to water polo, artistic swimming, etc. along with the ability to become a desired destination as an aquatic training center in SW Florida for various initiatives.
- To meet this additional workload, 604 employee hours per week would be required for staffing, necessitating 15.1 FTE employees.
- The following are the additional positions that would be required for this level:
  - One (1) FT Senior Pool Technician
    - This position would report to a Recreation Superintendent and be responsible for all aquatic facility pump room operations to include, but not limited, to technical expertise on pump room operations. consultation with FAC and outside vendors for viable solutions, determination of cost-saving initiatives for solutions, trainings on daily maintenance/repairs, and the provision of overall efficiencies.
- Operational support staff for Level 4 at each facility would provide direct assistance during lapses in coverage as follows:
  - Administrative/supervisory support – 2.0 FTE
- The LOMO coverage at each facility would be 1.0 FTE which would provide one (1) FT Maintenance Worker at each aquatic location.

#### 5.3.4 Recreation Right-Sizing

In newly establishing the Recreation Division LOMOs (Section 5.3.3), this Master Plan is setting the baseline LOMO for all Recreation Centers and Aquatic Facilities at Level 2.

##### Recreation Centers

Based on the new LOMO and proposed level, staffing is adequate.

Total staffing needed to right-size Recreation Centers 0 FTEs

##### Aquatic Facilities

Based on the new LOMO and proposed level, the following is recommended

- Reclass four (4) of the existing FT Lifeguard positions to FT Senior Lifeguard

Total staffing needed to right-size Aquatic Facilities 0 FTEs

##### Charlotte Sports Park (CSP)

Based on the new LOMO and proposed level, staffing is adequate.

Total staffing needed to right-size CSP 0 FTEs

##### Recreation Administration

Based on the new LOMO and proposed level, staffing is adequate.

Total staffing needed to right-size Recreation Administration 0 FTEs

With any additional LOMO (as noted above) and in an effort to ensure our national accreditation requirements for the agency with the Recreation Division serving as the point of contact for all annual/reaccreditation submittals, it would be recommended that the additional positions be created and/or reclassified from an existing position.

## 5.4 Recommendations

### Adopt Department Wide New Positions

With the increase in population comes the increase in demand for new amenities at parks and new parks in general. These new projects require additional staffing within the County. Through discussions with County staff and based on a review of the County's existing staffing plan, there is a need for the following positions:

- Parks and Natural Resources
  - Grants Coordinator (1)
  - Urban Forester (1)
  - Maintenance Worker (23)
  - Park Coordinator (1)
  - Park Supervisor (2)
  - Park Superintendent (1)
  - Maintenance Worker (11) for Ballfields
  - Park Maintenance Coordinator (1) for Ballfields
  - Park Supervisors (2) for Ballfields
  - Park Superintendent (1) for Ballfields
  - Project Manager (1)
  - Sr. Project Coordinator (2)
- Recreation
  - FT Lifeguard positions to FT Senior Lifeguard (4)

Total recommended FTEs - 47

### Adopt New Route System

It is recommended that a new route system be implemented to better align with RPA's, adding additional maintenance hubs allowing staff to have a more centralized location for their equipment and reduce the travel time.

### Adopt Proposed Modes

Implement the new LOMO mode system for the Parks and Natural Resource Division. This will allow each park, ball field, and County land to be given a different mode depending on the priority. This will divide the staff's workload based on the level of development and usage priorities.

## Conclusion

The Master Plan and its recommendations will provide Charlotte County with a guide for future parks and recreation facility development. This Master Plan is intended to be dynamic in nature and change with the community's future needs.