



*City of Punta Gorda*

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*Parks & Recreation  
Master Plan*

*Adopted December 2, 2009  
Resolution 2848-09*



# City Of Punta Gorda, Florida



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- Don McCormick, Councilmember
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*Daniel Burnham*

*"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably will themselves not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will not die."*



# Acknowledgement



We would also like to acknowledge the support, input and collaboration of the following departments, agencies, organizations and stakeholders:

- TEAM Punta Gorda
- Mainstreet Punta Gorda
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- Charlotte County Public Schools
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- Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center
- Department of Environmental Protection
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- Downtown Merchants Association
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- Bill Pantsari, Pantsari Architecture
- City of Punta Gorda Public Works Department
- City of Punta Gorda Parks & Ground Division
- City of Punta Gorda Finance Department
- City of Punta Gorda Police Department
- City of Punta Gorda Utilities Department

And to the Citizens of Punta Gorda who have attended meetings and provided valuable feedback and support for the Plans Vision.

*"Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice;  
it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved"*

-William Jennings Bryan-

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# I. What is "Parks & Recreation?"

In order to plan for the best possible parks and recreation system the City must first understand what are Parks, and what comprises Recreation. According to the *National Recreation and Park Association*, a "public park" is any area or portions of areas dedicated or designated by any federal, state or local agency primarily for public recreational use. Public recreation includes activities that take place at a public park/facility - sports, physical activities, exposure to natural surroundings, arts and culture, to name a few. These activities may be passive or active and may be performed at will by the visitor or be organized by a public agency. Parks and recreation are resources and services provided for the purposes of leisure, entertainment and recreational pursuits by the citizens. Resources may be public spaces and facilities like parks, nature preserves, open space areas, greenways, trails, and built structures for sport, recreation or arts programs. Examples of services include recreation activity programs, athletic leagues, special events, arts programs, and environmental education programs.





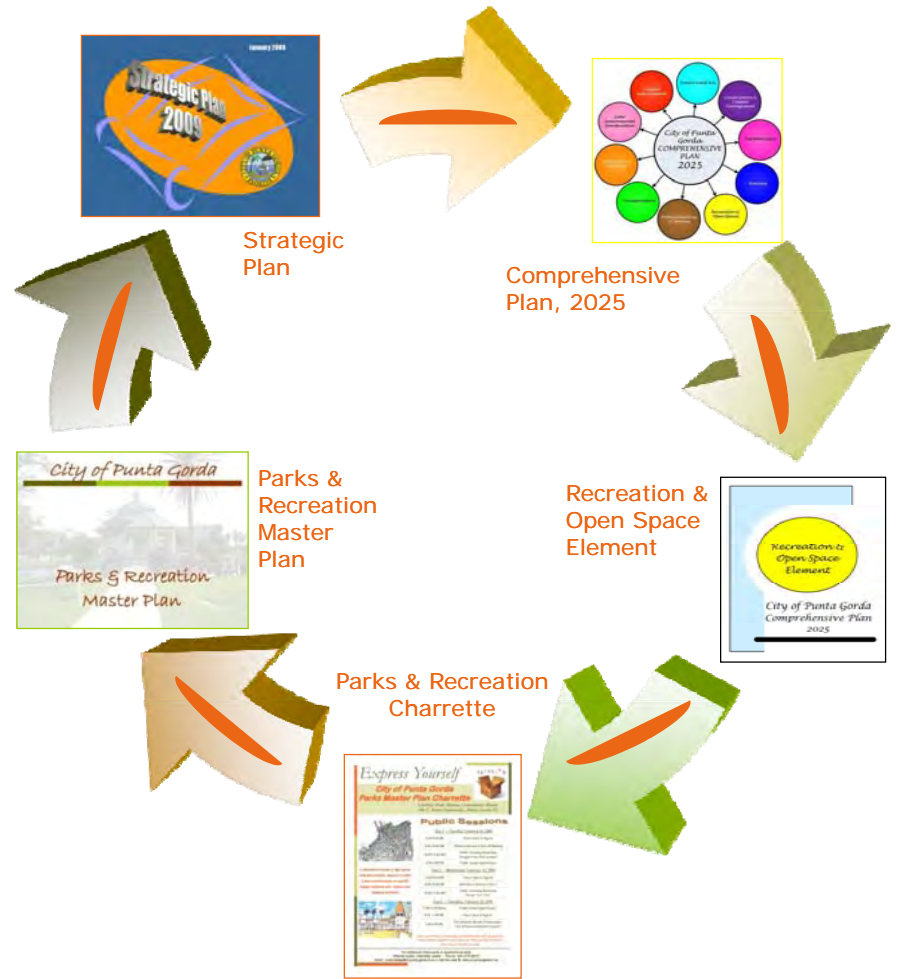
*“We need nature as much in the City as in the countryside. In order to endure we must maintain the bounty of that great cornucopia which is our inheritance. It is clear that we must look deep into the values which we hold. These must be transformed if we are to reap the bounty and create that fine visage for the home of the brave and the land of the free. We need, not only a better view of man and nature, but a working method by which the least of us can ensure that the product of his work is not more despoliation.”*

Ian Mcharg, Design With Nature, 1969

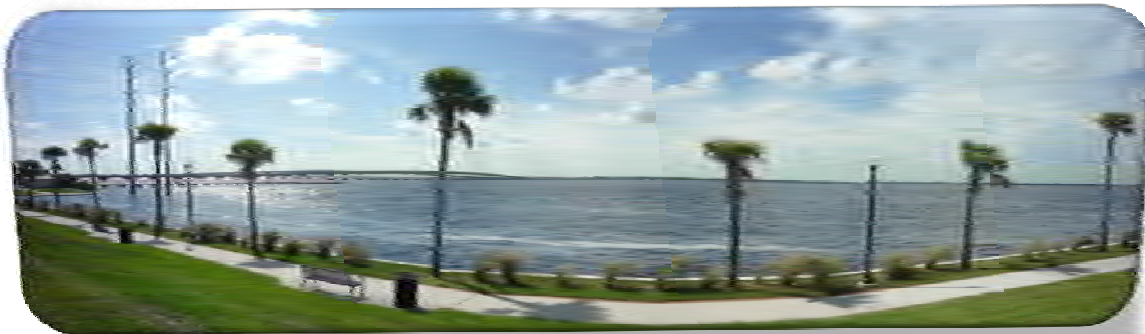


## II. Introduction

As part of the City of Punta Gorda's Comprehensive Plan 2025, the City is required to complete a "Parks & Recreation Master Plan". The Plan will review the City's current and future delivery of recreation services as it relates to the City's growing population and as a vital component of the continued economic sustainability of the City. The provision of adequate recreation and park facilities will become more challenging as the population of the area continues to grow. With a diverse population and changing demographic and economic trends, a wide variety of recreational activities are needed. This fact was demonstrated through the public input received at the "City of Punta Gorda's Parks & Recreation Master Plan Charrette." While retirees continue to be the dominant component of population growth, increasing numbers of families of various income levels will choose to live and work in Punta Gorda; thereby, leading to continued demand for a variety of recreational facilities, organized open space and other recreation related activities.



The natural beauty of Charlotte Harbor attracts residents and visitors alike with stunning vistas and dynamic waterfront views and activities. Connecting the residents and the neighborhoods to the waterfront and other park areas is crucial in achieving a sustainable park system and is a major objective of the community. This need, first identified in the 1990's, was crystallized into a tangible vision identified in the Mayor's 2008 State of City Address as the Ring Around the City. Encircling the City, this connection of multi-use recreational trails, linear parks and the Harborwalk will link key destinations, improve pedestrian and bicycling connectivity and enhance economic vitality of the core commercial areas. This project promotes the utilization of underdeveloped existing parks and creates access avenues for destination places, destination places provide venues for entertainment, waterfront activities, historical sites and meeting places serving both residents and tourists. In addition, destination places are critical in promoting a variety of personal, environmental, social and economical benefits which will improve the City's overall quality of life.





Impact fees, ad valorem taxes, and optional one cent sales tax revenues are the City's principal funding sources for parks and recreation facilities. A host of federal and state funding sources exist for capital improvement—mostly in the form of competitive grants. Other funding opportunities exist through the creation of public private partnerships and establishment of park specific non-profit management organizations, and similar innovative techniques.



Gilchrist Park

Nature Park



Lashley Park

Ponce de Leon Park



*"The key to developing a successful park system is to determine community needs and preferences, and to adopt level of service (LOS) standards for those needs which, when implemented, will provide the land, facilities, and programs in locations that serve and satisfy the public."*

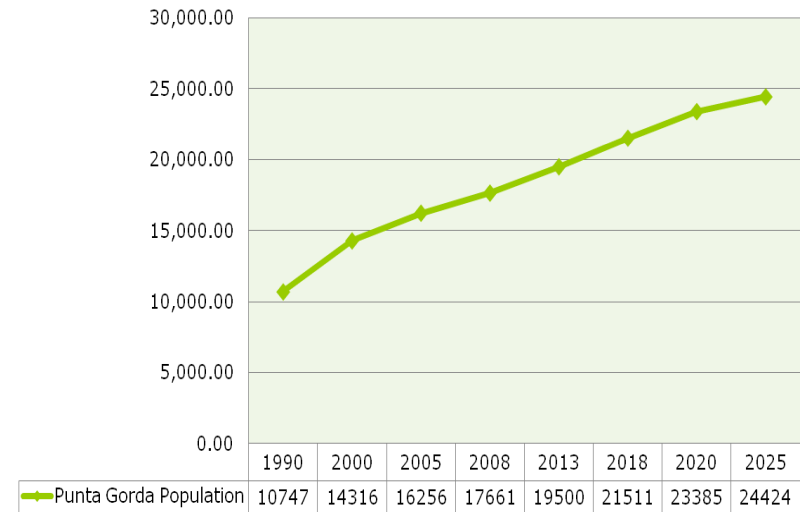
*-City of Punta Gorda Comprehensive Plan, 2025*



The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will establish Level of Service (LOS) standards for a variety of park typologies, and establish an implementation strategy with short, intermediate and long range projects to achieve the communities goals. Furthermore, the technical appendix will provide details for organizational structure and design standards providing a firm foundation for the development of the Parks System in keeping with the vision identified through the City's Parks & Recreation Master Plan Charrette, Surveys and other public input. Many of these ideas and details for the Master Plan were gathered from numerous stakeholder meetings. These meetings were arranged by staff with a variety of local organizations, businesses, and community partners to establish a community commitment for future projects.

### Punta Gorda Population Growth

Additional facilities and services will be needed as the population continues to grow.



Source: City of Punta Gorda Comprehensive Plan, 2025



# Vision

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*“Advancing the quality of life through the creation of a comprehensive interconnected and sustainable Park System that promotes the unique character and environment of Punta Gorda”*

# Mission

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In order to achieve this vision and serve a diverse population drawn from across the country and around the world, thereby promoting long term personal, environmental, social and economic benefit, and the preservation of our historic legacy, the Parks System must be:

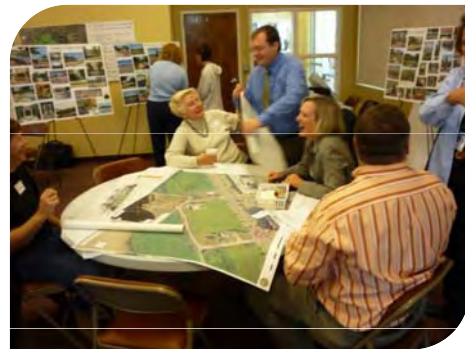
*\* Interconnected \* Sustainable \* Unique \**

The City of Punta Gorda Parks and Recreation Master Plan serves as a declaration of values and a foundation on which to build our Parks System. The Plan looks in a comprehensive way at the existing system. Specific sections address and assess the existing Park System, summarize public input, define specific park types and associated design standards, develop implementation strategies and technical appendices.

A current assessment of existing conditions formed the baseline data for engaging with the citizenry in determining community needs and desires for the Park System. An interactive multiday planning meeting known as a charrette was conducted, along with stakeholder meetings, interactive website, and user survey to engage the citizens. These public participation tools established an open forum for the community to self-identify the existing needs and desires, and start to address the opportunities and the challenges presented by the existing Parks System.



Through the assessment and initial citizen input process a clearer picture of the park needs were identified. These needs translated into a language of park types Regional, Environmental, Urban, Waterfront, Neighborhood, and Linear. These basic typologies along with a language of pedestrian, bicycle, vehicular and water connections can serve as the logical building blocks for the Parks System.



These basic park types are defined in terms of needs, stakeholders and design standards. The firm understanding of the park types and the conceptual map of the proposed system offer a starting point for determining a sustainable implementation strategy. This strategy provides a clear incremental set of short, intermediate, and long term steps that will move the parks toward the community desired vision of an interconnected, sustainable and unique Park System.





# Values



## Interconnective

Every element of the Park System shall visually and physically reinforce the understanding of the parks as a system vital to the community.



## Accessible

Every resident shall be able to safely and comfortably walk or bicycle from their home to parks, community facilities, commercial areas, and schools.

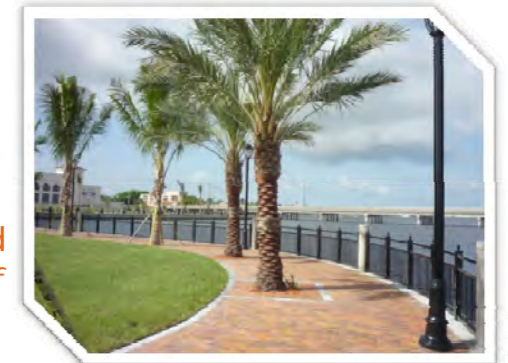
## Sustainable

Every action and improvement in the Park System shall contribute to the personal, environmental, social and economic prosperity of the City.



## Unique

Every public space shall be designed to compliment the natural, historic, and cultural landscape of the City.

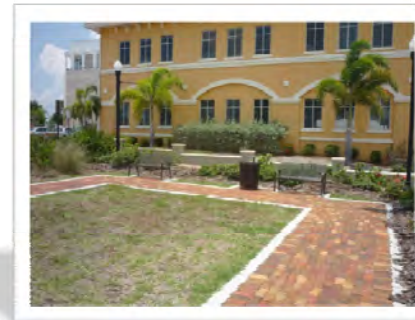




# Goals



- Offer a wider variety of water based activities throughout the Park System
- Maintain the unique small town, old Florida charm of Punta Gorda through the preservation and reinforcement of Historic Resources
- Provide and encourage public spaces to soften the urban landscape - to put the right park, with the right amenities, in the right neighborhood
- Provide tree-lined avenues to connect parks, neighborhoods and community destinations
- Utilize multi-use recreational trails that connect parks, neighborhoods, civic places and other community destinations



- Design parks to accommodate multi-generational recreational needs
- As transit becomes available, utilize it to reinforce community access to the Park System
- Encourage events and activities in the parks to enliven the public realm.
- Provide opportunities for continued economic and social development and sustainability
- To ensure conservation areas and critical habitats are protected and preserved
- Enhance existing and underdeveloped parks to maximize potential and increase neighborhood benefits



# How The Master Plan Will be Used

As the City of Punta Gorda continues to grow, citizens will want to experience a variety of activities and places along the waterfront, downtown area, and within natural environments. This plan serves as a guideline to foster and develop positive relationships that engage the community both physically and psychologically. The plan, when completed, will be used by:

## The Public:

- To learn about the parks & facilities;
- Understand benefits & services
- Understand city decisions
- Utilize more parks than just the main three (Laishley, Gilchrist & Ponce de Leon)

## Developers

- Define Parks/ Recreation Facilities
- Determine baseline development standards for facilities
- Understand Park development process
- Guide for project/ community designs

## City Partners

- Meet identified gaps in facilities or programs
- Set policy framework for partnerships with the City
- Compare services to avoid duplication

## City Staff

- Guide daily decisions based on adopted policy
- Plan workload and resource needs
- Promote benefits of parks and recreation
- Plan for ways to fill gaps
- Utilize current park facility inventory
- Establish baseline to measure success

## Citizen Advisory Committees

- Promote parks and recreation in the City
- Advocate for priorities from public surveys
- Develop policy framework for Citizen Advisory Committees business/priorities
- Establish baseline to measure success

## City Council

- Direct priorities for Parks & Recreation Services
- Guide planning for expected growth, land use, and public services
- Understand public issues and desires
- Identify funding gaps

# Challenges & Opportunities



## ■ **Challenges**

- Organizational structure
- Financial conditions
- Lack of neighborhood parks
- Pre-existing platted lands
- Auto orientated corridors
- Underdeveloped park lands
- Environmental constraints
- Lack of park land in the Southern part of the City

## ■ **Opportunities**

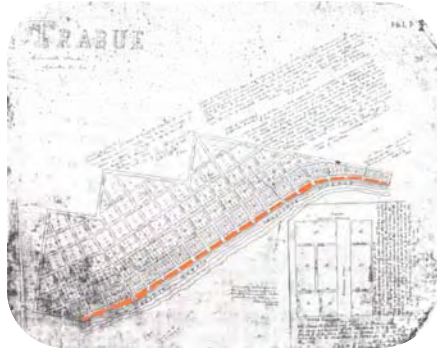
- Underdeveloped waterfront parks
- Community desire
- Quality park systems
- Environmental resources
- Historical resources
- Destination City
- Unique urban environment



# Key Events Shaping the Park System



1  
8  
8  
5



Isaac Trabue dedicates 30 acres along Charlotte Harbor waterfront as Public Park Lands (Trabue Park)

1  
8  
8  
7

City of Punta Gorda incorporated at "Hectors Billiard Parlor and Drug Store"



1  
9  
2  
1

A portion of Trabue Park is renamed "Gilchrist Park" in honor of Florida Governor Albert Walter Gilchrist, one of the City's founding fathers

1  
9  
6  
6

The City of Punta Gorda donated 10 acres of land to Charlotte County to construct a public auditorium





1  
9  
6  
7



"City Beach" is renamed "Juan Ponce De Leon Park" in honor of Ponce De Leon, explorer of Florida

1  
9  
9  
1



City begins acquiring sections of "Trabue Park" located along Patti Avenue

1  
9  
7  
8

King Park-Municipal Mobil Home Park is renamed to "Phil Laishley Park" honoring the former mayor's vision of a Municipal Marina



2  
0  
0  
0

Through grant funding the City acquires environmental lands within the Punta Gorda Isles plat to create "Nature Park" recreational trails and observation areas throughout the underdeveloped pine palmetto forest and salt/high marsh habitats



2  
0  
0  
1



City redevelops land for "Herald Court Plaza"

2003

Improvements begin at "Sculpture Park"



2004

"Hounds on Henry" is constructed as an off leash public dog park



2005

City acquires additional parcels for "Trabue Park" located along Patti Avenue



2006



The AC Freeman house built in 1903 is restored and relocated to Government Center

"Hector House Plaza" is constructed at the former site of the "Hector Billiard Parlor and Drug Store"





2007

Major improvements including 400 foot fishing pier, boat docks, boat ramp, parking facilities and marina building are constructed at "Laishley Park"



Public parking and plaza are constructed at "Government Center" home to Historic City Hall, and AC Freeman House



The City and The School Board of Charlotte County enter into a joint partnership for "Baker Park"



2008



A public private partnership with Cedar Village Condominiums to build the "Pittman Park Expansion"

The "Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center" is completed



2009



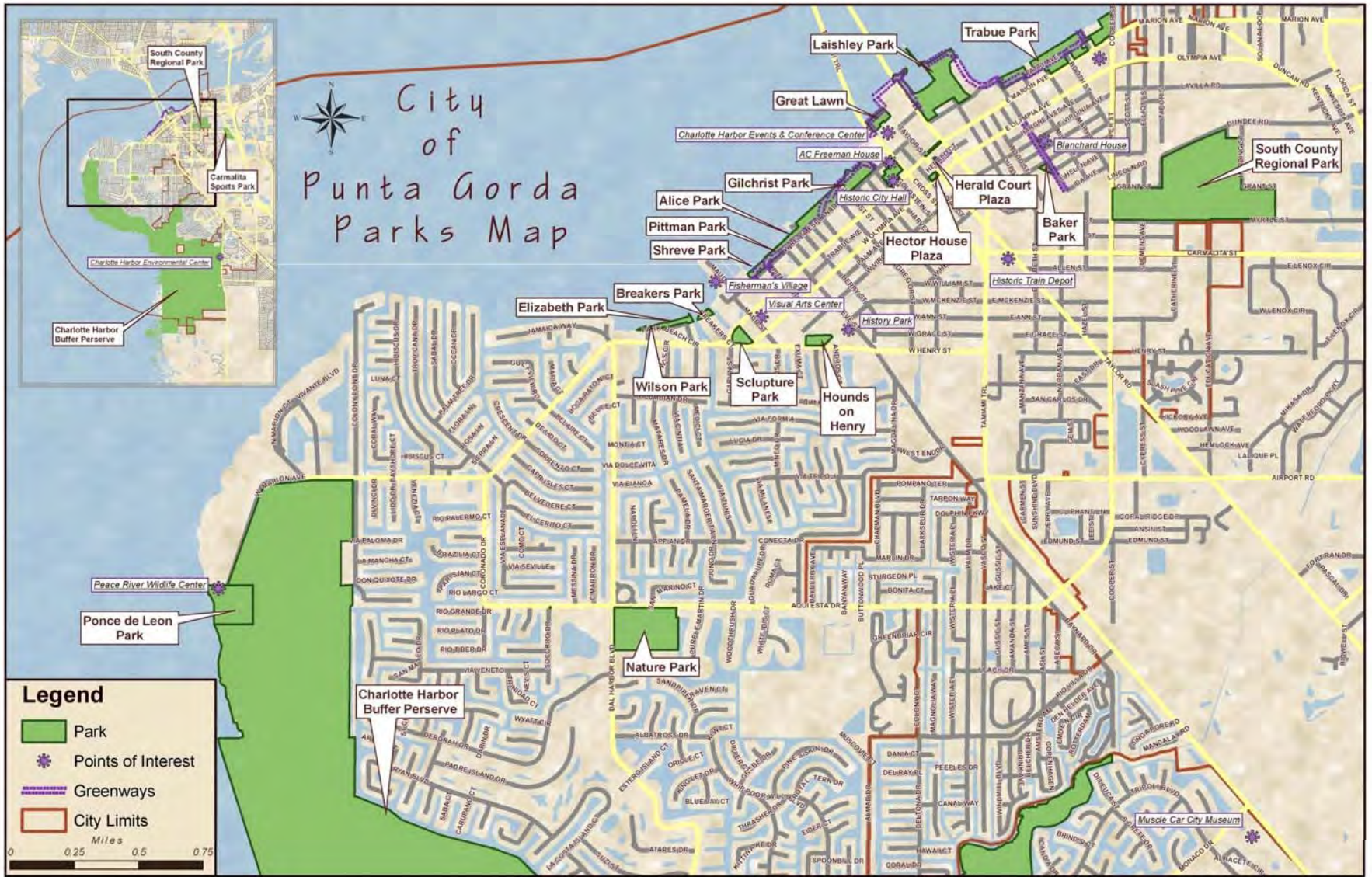
Entertainment stage, restroom facilities, open air pavilions and interactive fountain are constructed at "Laishley Park"



# City Park Map & Amenities



Park Name	Location	Basketball Court	Beach	Bird Watching	Boardwalk	Boat Ramp	Exercise Area	Fishing	Fishing Pier	Gazebo	Marina	Mult-Use recreational Trail	Nature Trail	Open Space	Parking	Park Bench Area	Playground	Pet on Leash	Picnic Area	Picnic Shelter	Restroom	Scenic Overlook	Tennis	
Alice Park	W Retta Esplanade											✓										✓		
Baker Park	Martin Luther King Blvd & Charlotte Ave													✓	✓	✓							✓	
Breakers Park	W Retta Esplanade											✓											✓	
Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC)	10941 Burnt Store Road			✓	✓								✓		✓	✓					✓	✓		
Elizabeth Park	W Retta Esplanade											✓											✓	
Gilchrist Park	1000 W Retta Esplanade	✓						✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Government Center	126 Harvey Street																							
Great Lawn at Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center	75 Taylor Street											✓		✓	✓	✓							✓	
Hector House Plaza	Taylor Street														✓	✓								
Hounds on Henry (fenced off-lease dog park)	Shreve Street														✓	✓		✓						
Laishley Park	Laishley Court				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Nature Park	1555 Aquí Esta Drive			✓	✓								✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓	
Pittman Park & Extension	W Retta Esplanade											✓				✓							✓	
Ponce de Leon Park	Ponce de Leon Parkway		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
South County Regional Park	670 Cooper Street													✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓			
Sculpture Park	Corner of Henry & Marion											✓				✓							✓	
Shreve Park	802 W Retta Esplanade											✓											✓	
Trabue Park	Patti Avenue				✓									✓	✓	✓							✓	
Wilson Park	W Retta Esplanade											✓											✓	





# Points of Interest



Punta Gorda has several points of interest that form a vital part of the Park System. These unique places provide social, cultural and environmental opportunities that will enrich the park experience.

## AC Freeman House

311 W Retta Esplanade

The A. C. Freeman House is a typical Victorian Style house built in 1903 from a Sears & Roebuck Catalog kit. In 1987, it was added to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. Currently the home serves as a museum and as the offices for the Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce and the Punta Gorda Historical Society.



## Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center

75 Taylor Street

This 44,000-square-foot facility built in 2007 features a modern and open floor space design that lends itself to endless event layouts. Located in the heart of the City on the "Harborwalk" it offers panoramic views, of Charlotte Harbor from the Great Lawn.



## Visual Art Center

210 Maud Street

The Visual Arts Center serves Punta Gorda, Charlotte County and beyond, with three major galleries, an extensive art library, and a gift shop of unique, hand crafted items.



## Blanchard House

406 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd

This 1925 house was originally built for Joseph Blanchard, a black sea captain and key member of early Punta Gorda's business community, and Minnie, his mail-order bride. Upon the death of Blanchard's last surviving daughter, local African-American historian, Bernice Russell, purchased the Blanchard House. Since Russell's death, the museum has been operated as an open access, educational institute devoted to the procurement, preservation, study and display of artifacts and materials related to the history, culture and contributions of African Americans in Charlotte County.



## Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC)

10941 Burnt Store Road

The Charles E. Caniff visitors' reception center, offers an excellent view of native Florida upland and fresh water wetland ecosystems. The Center contains exhibits describing the natural habitats in the area, a Native American exhibit, a bald eagle's nest, and a small reference library. Other facilities on site include several pavilions, a Wildlife Observatory, a Native Butterfly Garden and miles of trails through the unspoiled beauty of natural Southwest Florida.



### **Fishermen's Village**

1200 W Retta Esplanade

Fishermen's Village is a unique harborside shopping experience with a marina and vacation resort. Built on the site of the former municipal pier, the facility was designed to replicate a traditional fishing village. A series of wooden buildings house several dozen boutiques, gift stores, and six restaurants which provide dining with harbor and marina views. Adjoining the mall is a 97 slip marina, where sightseeing cruises, boat rentals and fishing charters are available. Fishermen's Village is a tourist and local destination that hosts entertainment and a weekly farmers market in the village "center court".



### **History Park**

501 Shreve St

History Park, a facility operated by Punta Gorda Historical Society, is a nine acre park located in the central part of the City that serves as a relocation site for historically significant structures saved from demolition. Structures on site include the Trabue Land Sale Office, the Cigar Cottage, and the home formerly operated as the Gilchrist Bed and Breakfast.



### **Historic City Hall**

326 W Marion Ave

The town was originally named "Trabue" for the town's founder, Isaac Trabue who platted the site in 1885 and incorporated in 1887. Punta Gorda, the only incorporated City in Charlotte County, was founded almost 40 years prior to the 1921 establishment of Charlotte County. City Hall built in 1926 continues to serve as City offices displays many historic photographs chronicling life in early Punta Gorda.



### **Muscle Car City Museum**

3811 Tamiami Trail

Muscle Car City contains almost 100,000 square feet museum space, displaying well over 200 vintage muscle cars. The collection boasts GM Performance Cars from the early 1950's thru the 1970's as well as a huge assortment of Hot Rods and Antique Chevys from other eras.



### **Historic Train Depot**

1009 Taylor Rd

The Punta Gorda Depot was built in 1928 in a Mission Revival architectural style, for the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. The Depot is the only remaining of six identical depots built for the railroad in the first quarter of the 20th century in Florida. The Depot is currently operated by the Punta Gorda Historical Society as a museum focused on local history, archaeology, and ecology, as well as an antique mall containing unique treasures for sale.



### **Peace River Wildlife Center**

3400 W Marion Ave – (Ponce de Leon Park)

The Peace River Wildlife Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the care, preservation and protection of Charlotte County's native wildlife. The center is open daily and offers tours of display areas which include many waterfowl and birds of prey that are too injured to be returned to the wild.

# Greenways



Traditionally “greenways” are linear open space established along either a natural corridor or along man made right-of-way used for pedestrian or biking purposes. Greenway trails provide recreation, transportation, fitness, and economic benefits for all to enjoy. The Ring Around The City system of greenways will link the existing Park System through the development of multi-use recreational trails, linear connections and the completion of the Harborwalk. This connection was a common theme shared by many of the stakeholders who participated in the Charette.

Greenways are usually:

- linear public corridors for pedestrians and cyclists
- Conduits to parks, nature reserves, cultural features, historic sites, neighborhoods and retail areas

The City’s Greenways provide:

- a variety of links which connect waterfront promenades, urban walks, environmental trails, sidewalks, and bike paths
- opportunities for the expansion of urban recreation
- alternate ways to move through the city
- visitors the experience of nature, community and urban life





## Ring Around The City



- Harborwalk





## - Linear Park



### Linear Park Amenities to include:

- Park Benches
- Exercise Equipment
- Shade Structures
- Drinking Fountains
- Education Information
- Directional Signage
- Trail Head Parking
- Bocce Ball Courts
- Landscaping
- Garden Areas

## - Multit-Use Recreational Trail (MURT)



# Blueways



Similar to greenways, “blueways” are water paths or trails that are developed with launch points and points of interest for canoeists and kayakers. They provide recreational opportunities, cultural and environmental awareness, in a boat friendly atmosphere with a low environmental impact.



## Creating a Blueway Involves:

1. intergovernmental coordination among federal, state and local entities,
2. installation of physical markers along the trails
3. partnerships between local and regional tourism and business groups



Blueways are usually:

- developed in quiet still bodies of water
- encourage family recreation, ecological education and preservation of our natural resources
- located in areas that feature nearby amenities for paddlers

Blueways provide an enormous amount of recreational opportunities:

- interconnectivity between residents and natural resources, green spaces, historical archeological and cultural sites
- promotes social interaction
- promotes health and wellness
- promotes historical, cultural and environmental education



# III. Level of Service



As requirement of the City's Comprehensive Plan 2025, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan must:

- be completed in 2010 and provide an inventory of existing and proposed park sites;
- evaluate each site for its design as a passive or active park\*;
- evaluate how the community wants to use each park (for festivals, art markets, relaxing, sports activities, etc) with amenities added accordingly; and
- evaluate its level of service (LOS) to the residents through the Florida State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) a set of standards developed by the Division of Recreation and Parks of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection as well as the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) standards.

\* In reviewing the industry standard established by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) staff realized that these principles were more conducive to a larger Park System and were intended to be used as guidelines for use at a local level. However since there is no national standard the number of acres of parkland for 1,000 persons, it is recommended that the community determine a level of service that is acceptable to their Park System vision.





In order to analyze the existing Park System a Level of Service must be established. This existing system analysis will form the baseline data which will be used as part of the tracking system to gauge the progression toward the goals identified in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Historically the Level of Service for components of a Park System has been measured on a simple acres per thousand of population basis. This flat analysis does not provide any data relative to the quality of service for the delivery of the parks as a public good. Over the past decade a number of studies by local governments, universities, and others have illustrated the personal, environmental, social, and economic benefits associated by being within  $\frac{1}{4}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile radius of a park.

These benefits will promote the City's sense of place by providing a strong foundation on which the Parks & Recreation System can grow and develop as identified by the stakeholders meeting, creating a boater's destination and increasing business opportunities. This development is essential for a sustainable community. Our health, community, economy and environment all benefit from investments in parks and recreation opportunities.





# Personal Benefits



The experience of learning something new enables people to develop personal life and job skills. Fun leisure opportunities for young and old stir spontaneous activity and playful imagination which allows development of self esteem and positive self image. These feelings nurture personal and community relationships and help develop balance between work and play. This balanced lifestyle creates life long memories, promotes individual fitness and wellness and energizes the community base to be active in their City.

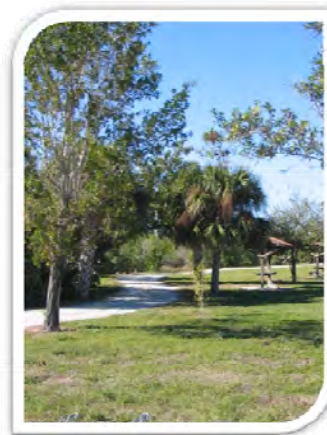
- Recreation opportunities for safe boating, sailing, chess tournaments, bocce ball and tennis
- Facilities that are inviting, accessible and that bring people together
- Parks that provide unique experiences
- Indoor & outdoor centers that advance wellness activities and promote personal health & fitness



# Environmental Benefits



Access to the natural environment is an important component of the resource-based or eco-tourism market of the City. Protecting these natural resources helps define the City's identity. Clean waterways encourage people to fish, boat, or kayak while environmental lands of pine forests and prairie lands encourage people to hike and bicycle. Connection to greenspaces and the various recreational opportunities contribute to the quality of life, increase property values, and promote economic development in Punta Gorda.



- Connections to the natural environment increases and improves our quality of life
- Trees reduce carbon dioxide, produce oxygen, filter out pollution and conserve energy
- Public educational information for residents and businesses about best practices tree species selection, fertilizing, and pruning
- Interpretive displays in open space areas about local ecosystems will educate visitors about the natural environment
- Presentation of classes available to community promoting "green concepts"





# Social Benefits



Recreation allows the community to promote their ethnic and cultural history. A variety of leisure opportunities, facilities and the quality of the local surroundings are the foundations of community pride. The ability to gather, relax and socialize together builds not only strong families and friends but also builds a strong interconnected society. Strong societies support community involvement and shared management and ownership of the resource have been shown to reduce anti-social behaviors and loneliness in individuals.

- Community facilities accessible for groups that provide afterschool programs for children & teens
- Community buildings as gathering places that provide source of civic information
- Interconnected park system to reflect uniqueness of neighborhoods and which celebrate diversity
- Partner with schools, community based organizations and other public agencies
- Civic involvement through community meetings, volunteer opportunities and neighborhood activities





# Economic Benefit



There are numerous economic benefits gained in a community with a well developed Park System. These services are often the catalyst for tourism, a major component of our economy.

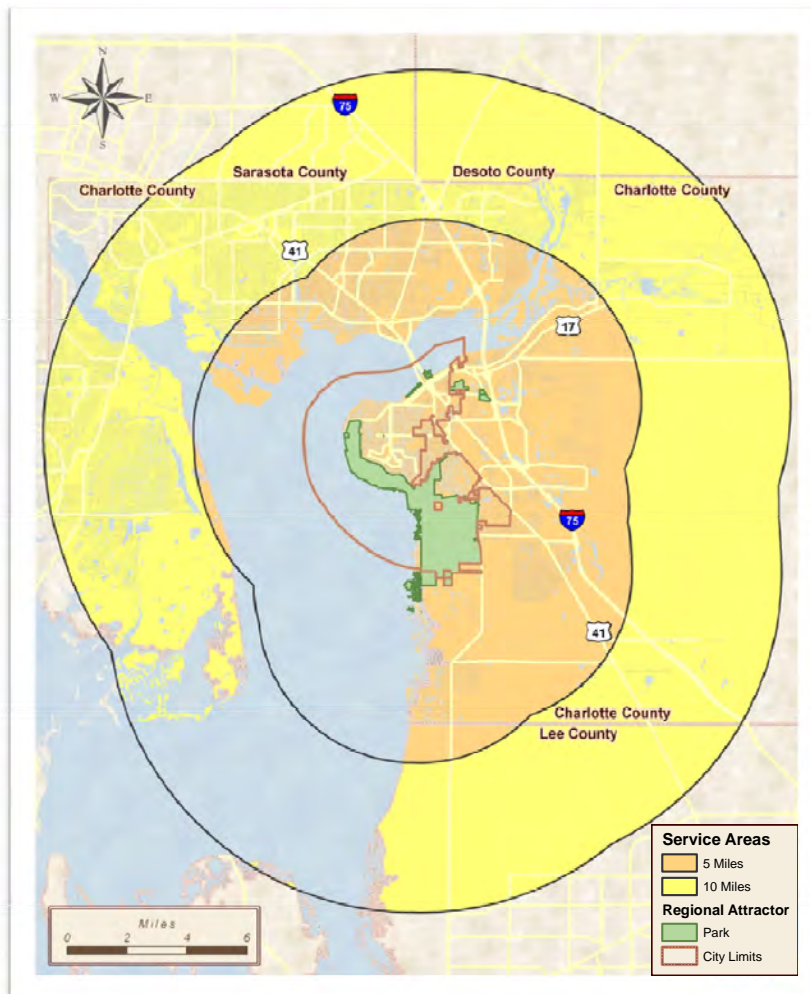
- Maintained parks, open space, recreation facilities, and services promote active use and increase property values
- Capitalize on resource based tourism opportunities
- Promote unique local events in marketing strategies to maximize positive economic impact
- Provide diversity in parks and facilities to promote opportunities for people of all ages to increase regional tourism

Parks and recreation services motivate business relocation and expansion in the community. The purchases of equipment for leisure experiences increase local retail sales. A benefit expressed by the Citizens during the Charrette.

Visitors coming to view an exhibit or participate in an event can spend millions on hotels, shopping and dining. Meaningful leisure services reduce the high cost of vandalism and criminal activity.



# Regional & Environmental Parks



The City of Punta Gorda currently relies on the Charlotte County Parks System for the provision of Regional Park facilities. South County Regional Recreation Center and Carmalita Athletic Park provide the City with sufficient access to athletic fields, Skate Park, BMX track, recreational center and public pool facilities. The Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC) provides the regional environmental educational component serving both local and regional populations. In addition, the City's waterfront parks (Gilchrist, Laishley, and Ponce De Leon) serve as a regional attraction for parts of Charlotte, Sarasota, Desoto & Lee County. The adjacent map identifies the parks that serves as regional attractors.

Level of Service shall be:

- 5 mile radius (Primary Service Area)
- 10 mile (Secondary Service Area)





**South County Regional Recreation Center & Pool**



**Carmalita Athletic Park**



Environmental Parks serve as Punta Gorda's historic connection to Charlotte Harbor and form the foundation of the community's understanding of the need to preserve the natural environment. Without significant preservation of environmentally sensitive lands in the past years the natural beauty and function of Charlotte Harbor would have seen declines similar to other significant Florida estuaries and bays. This focus on environmental protection was seen as foolish when compared to the economic prosperity wrought by unbridled development. However, now with the wisdom that comes with experience the preservation of environmental resources is seen as the economically sustainable solution not just the environmentally sustainable one. It is with this in mind that Punta Gorda seeks to establish a closer relationship with the natural environment through the sensitive development of these areas for greater public enjoyment and understanding.



**Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center**

# Urban Parks

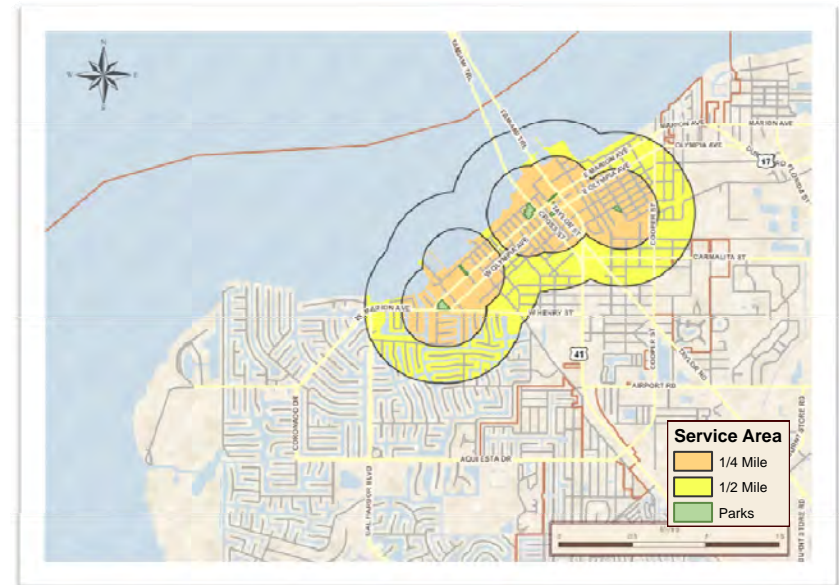


Urban Parks are the public cornerstone of any great urban environment. The Urban Park provides a green relief from the intensity and excitement of the urban landscape. This green relief creates a public gathering place for the exchange of ideas and the random social interactions that provide the lifeblood of a city, town, or village.

Level of Service shall be:

- ¼ mile radius (Primary Service Area)
- ½ mile (Secondary Service Area)

Within the context of a commercial environment a ¼ - ½ mile walk represents a prime opportunity for a lunch time stroll or break. All commercial districts in Punta Gorda allow mixed use development and the service areas may prove useful in providing adequate park facilities to those living in these urban environments.



Herald Court Plaza



Pittman Park Extension

# Waterfront Parks



Waterfront Parks such as Gilchrist, Laishley & Ponce de Leon, serve regional and local users. Citizen and Council input seeks to increase recreational opportunities and restore some of the historical activities that once occurred along the waterfronts. These ideas are being developed as a secondary product of this Master Plan. While residents from parts of Charlotte, DeSoto, Sarasota and Lee Counties come to enjoy the numerous events, providing a key component of economic activity along the City's waterfront, these parks also serve adjacent neighborhoods. These local users within the ¼ mile – ½ mile radius can walk/bicycle to utilize the parks.

Level of Service shall be:

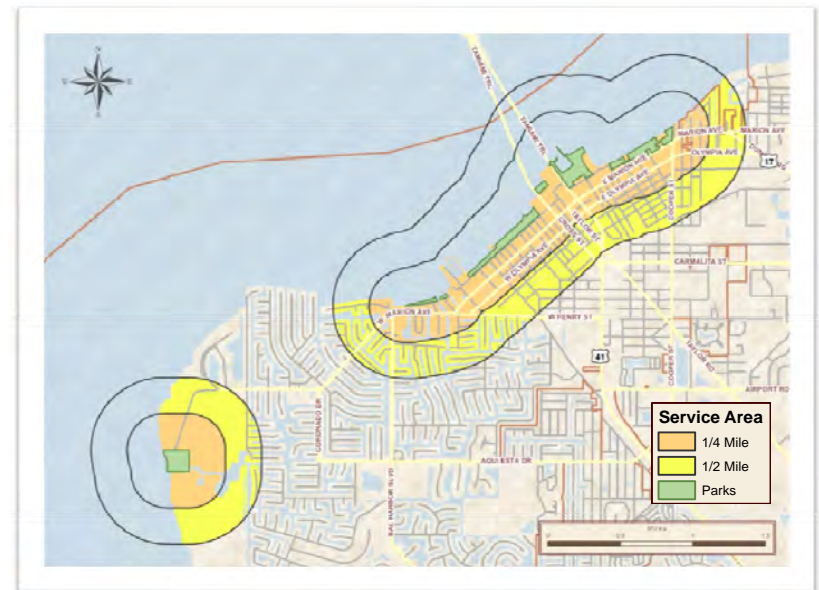
- ¼ mile radius (Primary Service Area)
- ½ mile (Secondary Service Area)



Gilchrist Park



Laishley Park





# Neighborhood Parks



Neighborhood Parks generally serve a small geography with the park amenities deemed vital to the function of that particular neighborhood. These facilities should occur within a reasonable walking/biking distance of the neighborhood it is intended to serve.

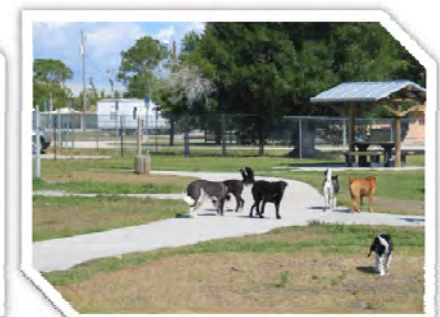
Level of Service shall be:

- ¼ mile radius (Primary Service Area)
- ½ mile (Secondary Service Area)

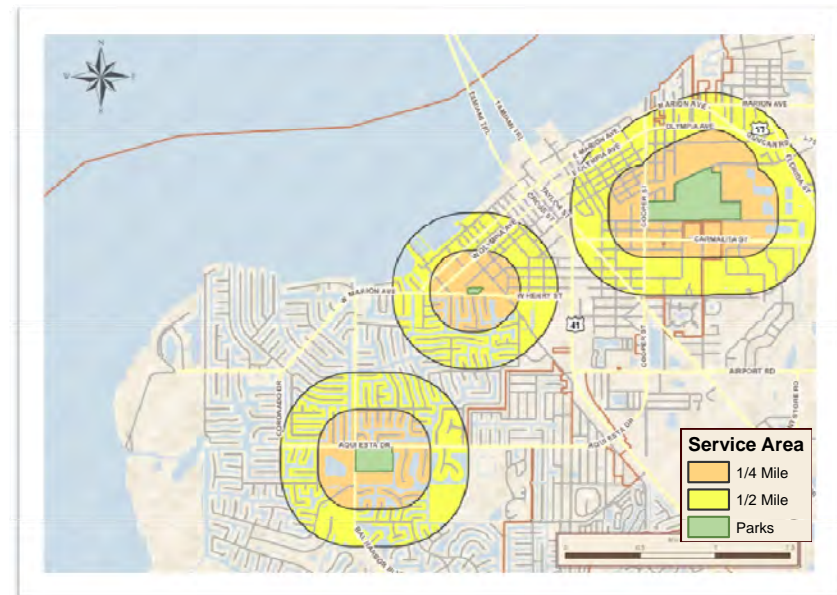
It is vital to understand the conditions, uses and functions that make a park an integral part of a neighborhood. Neighborhood Parks are rare within the context of the existing Punta Gorda Parks System. As identified on the adjacent map Hounds on Henry, Nature Park, and South County Regional Recreation Center serve as neighborhood parks primarily due to their location within or adjacent to residential communities. While sections of Gilchrist and Ponce de Leon Park also serve the function of neighborhood parks these facilities generally serve a wider and more varied audience focused on the waterfront location.



Nature Park



Hounds on Henry



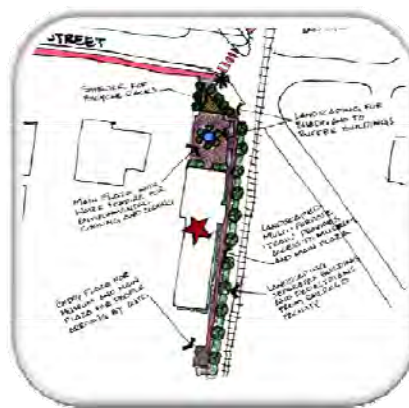
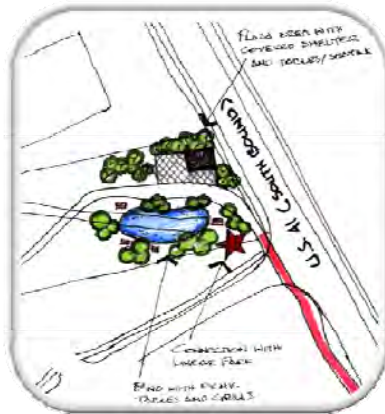
# Linear Parks



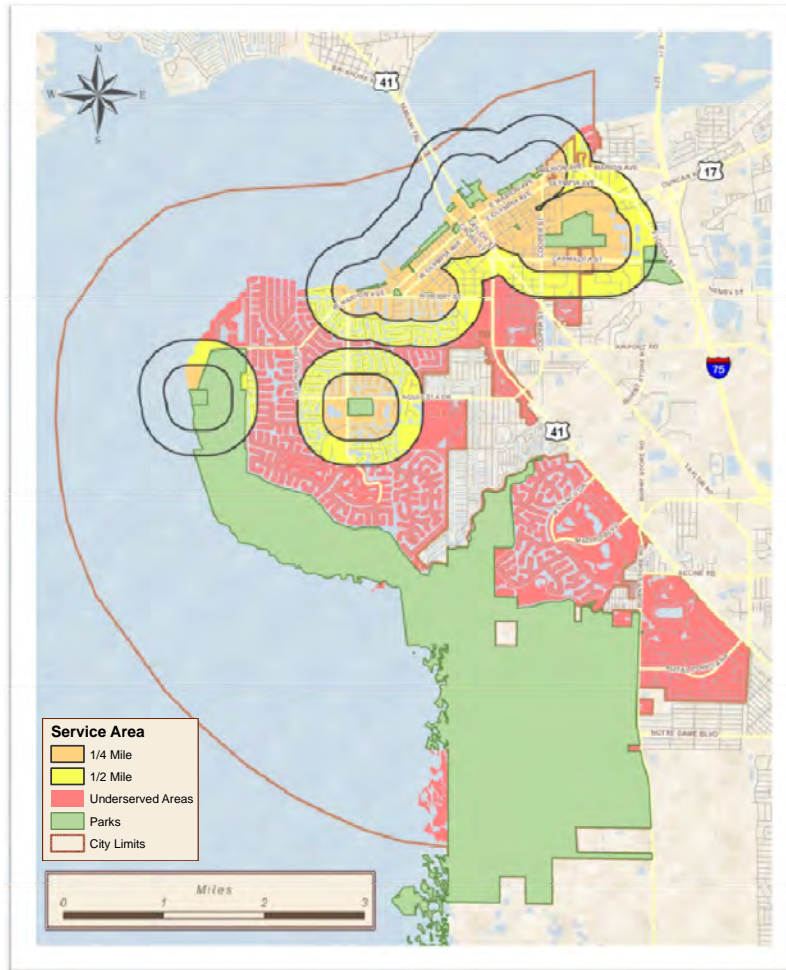
Linear Parks serve the vital function of connecting the varied park types to each other and to the communities they serve. They are designed to move residents and visitors safely and logically through the Park System in a seamless manner. This linkage was the general consensus among the citizens and business owners surveyed during the Charrette. The proximity to these facilities is a good secondary determining factor of quality of life within the context of the Parks System. These facilities should occur within a reasonable walking/biking distance of the neighborhoods they are intended to serve. There are currently no Linear Parks in the City, however many are in the planning, engineering or construction phases and once completed, will be a major component of the Ring Around the City.

The Level of Service shall be:

- ¼ mile radius (Primary Service Area)
- ½ mile (Secondary Service Area).



# Current Needs Analysis



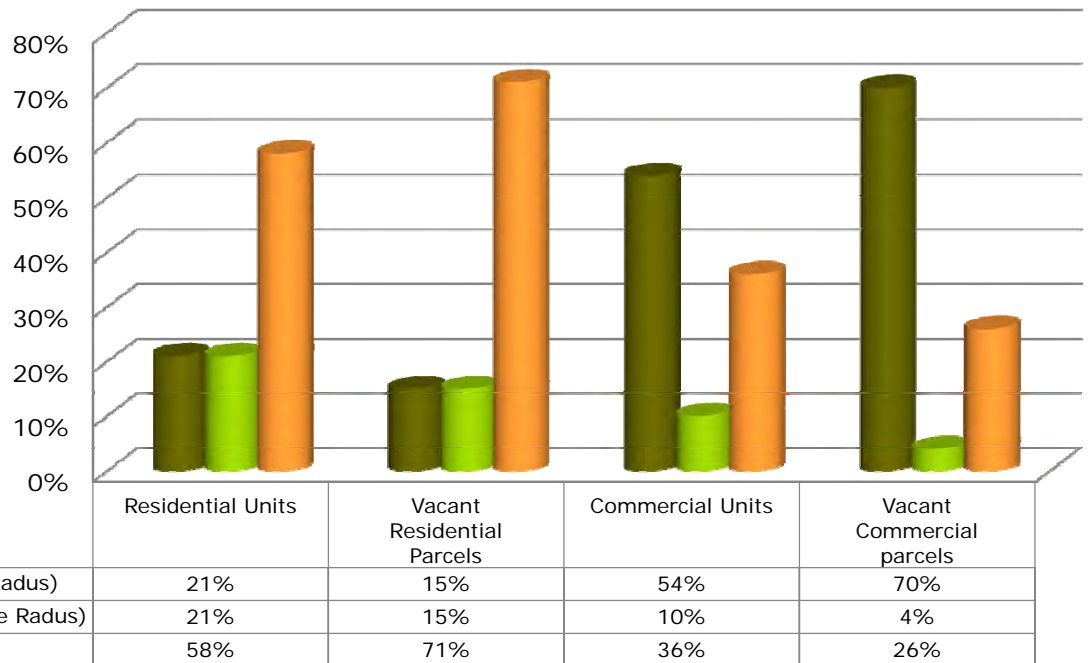
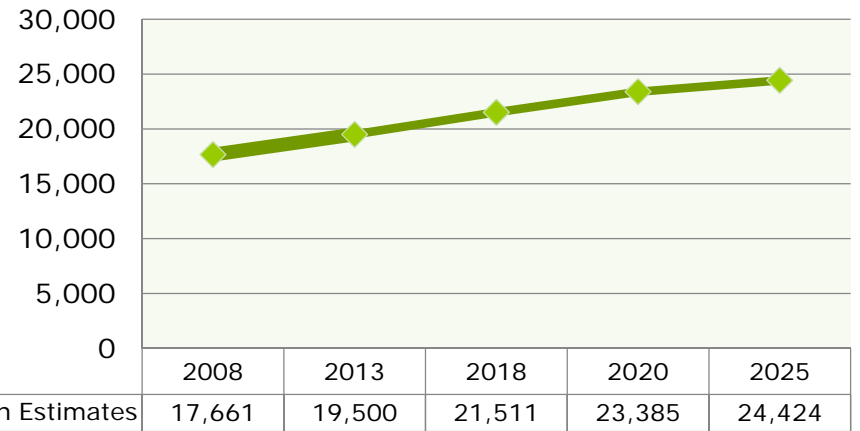
In order to determine the City's current performance, a needs analysis was completed based on the proximity of residential and commercial units to the existing Park System. The existing City Parks were identified and 1/4 mile primary service area, in orange, and 1/2 mile radius secondary service area, in yellow, was drawn around each park. Using this basis for analysis, the red areas of the map indicate areas that are considered underserved.

The adjacent table identifies the number and percentage of housing units and commercial parcels that lie within & outside the existing service areas. This data was derived from Property Appraiser data and analyzed based on the service areas generated by City staff. The table identifies 42% residential units within the City occur within the primary or secondary service area of at least one park. The remaining 58% of the City's residential population occurs in areas identified as underserved by the existing Park System.



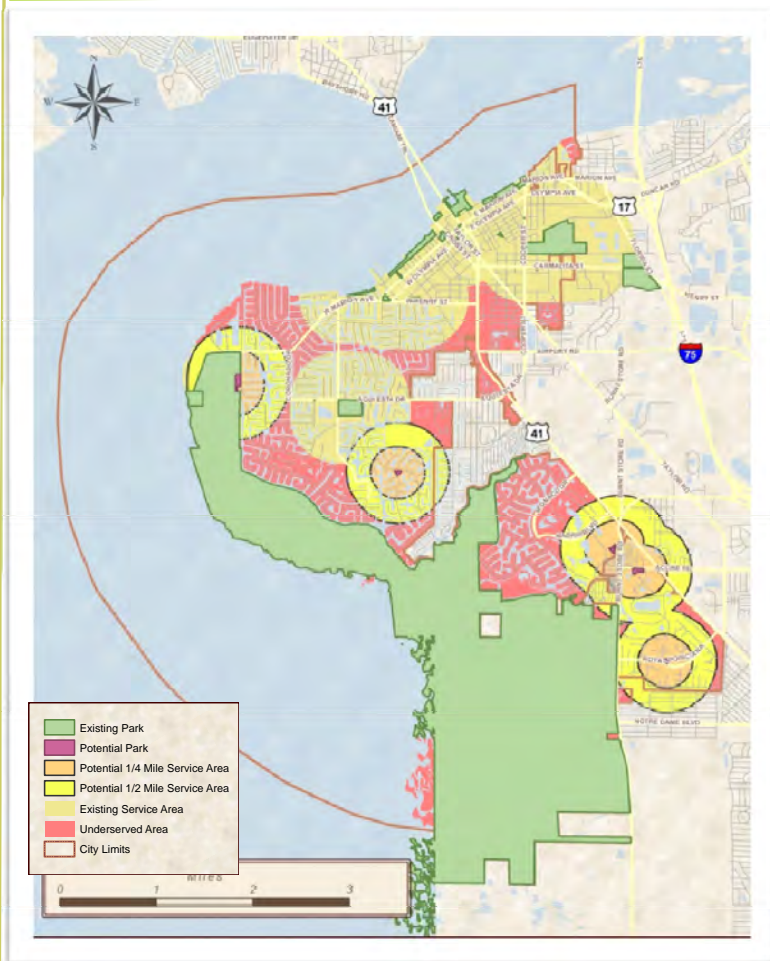
A full 30 % of vacant land available for residential development occurs within the primary and/or secondary service area; the remaining 70% of vacant residential land in underserved areas. This information is critical in planning for future parks because as residential development occurs, the associated population growth will place additional stress on the existing Park System.

The Table also identifies that 64% of developed commercial properties occur within a primary or secondary service area with the remaining 36% occurring in underserved areas. Additionally, 26% of vacant commercial properties occur in underserved areas. These vacant commercial parcels represent opportunities for public/private partnerships to provide additional parks as they become developed.



■ Primary Service Areas (1/4 Mile Radius)	21%	15%	54%	70%
■ Secondary Service Areas (1/2 Mile Radius)	21%	15%	10%	4%
■ Under Served Areas (City Limits)	58%	71%	36%	26%

# Future Opportunities Analysis

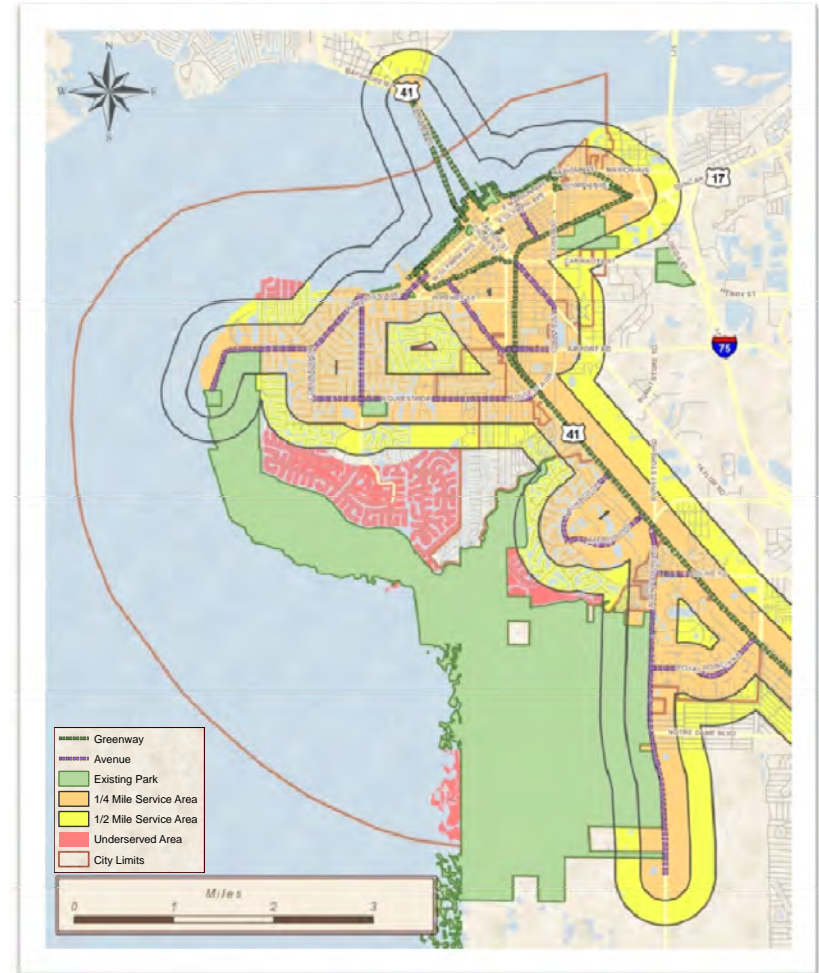


The personal, environmental, social, and economic benefits associated with close proximity to parks have been identified; the City shall establish its Level of Service (LOS) standards for the park types-Regional, Environmental, Urban, Waterfront, Neighborhood, and Linear and evaluate future park opportunities based on the proximity of housing units and commercial property to park land. Adequate pedestrian, bicycle, transit, boat and vehicular access are another critical component of the LOS, ensuring the efficient delivery of park services to the community. The current needs analysis illustrates that over half of the existing residential units, along with the vast majority of undeveloped residential properties in the City, occur in underserved areas. In order to meet this current and future need every undeveloped or underdeveloped City owned parcel will need to be evaluated for park use potential. Opportunities exist within the undeveloped commercial lands available within the City for public private partnerships to provide additional park facilities as development occurs. The map identifies potential future neighborhood park locations that could serve the current unmet community needs.

Reviewing the survey data collected, 76% of park users surveyed identified walking and 28% of park users identified bicycling as the primary reason for visiting a Punta Gorda park. Residents and businesses surveyed through this Parks & Recreation Master Plan process, want better and safer pedestrian/bicycle connections between neighborhoods, businesses, parks and the waterfront.

Once developed Linear Park facilities will provide the connections necessary to complete the Ring Around the City, and will connect or create a linkage between the Park System and neighborhoods and commercial communities.

- Personal Benefits
  - Provide increased health and wellness opportunities
  - Connect underserved areas through the Ring Around the City
  - Provide intergenerational recreation opportunities
- Environmental Benefits
  - Increase natural habitat by planting native trees and plants
  - Reduce heat island effect and local air pollution through increased tree planting
  - Provide educational opportunities for residents and businesses on landscape care best management practices
- Social Benefit
  - Make surrounding neighborhoods more desirable
  - Increase social and cultural opportunities by partnering with schools, community organizations & other public agencies
  - Interconnect communities through the Ring Around the City
- Economic Benefit
  - Build tourism through unique community events
  - Increase economic opportunity by attracting regional visitors
  - Enhance economic sustainability through public-private partnerships for parks



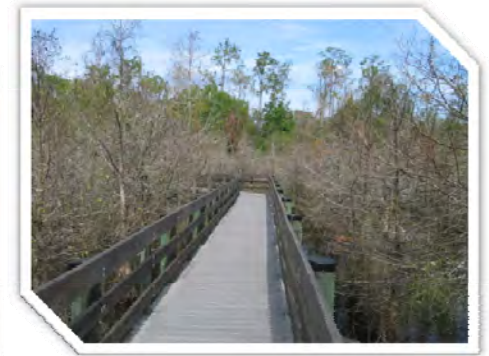


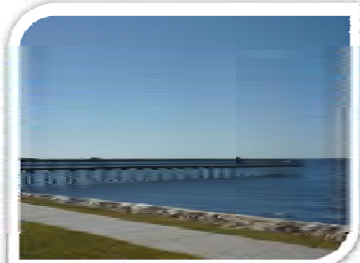
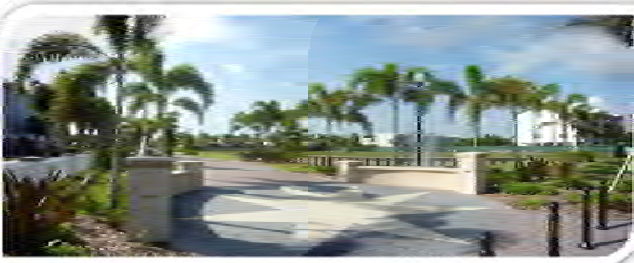
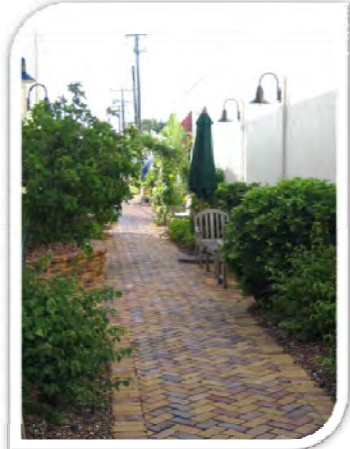
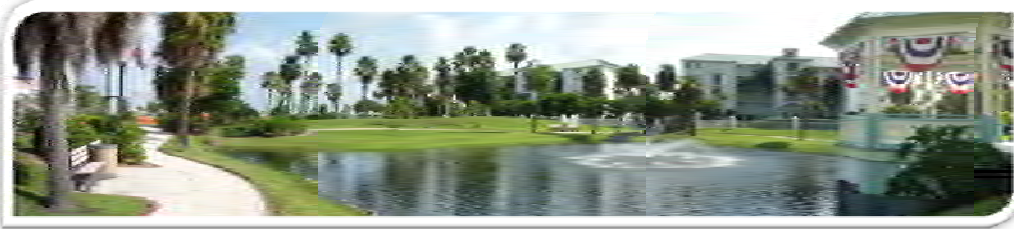


## IV. Park Typologies

The City's Park System is currently composed of various distinct park types, Regional, Environmental, Urban, Waterfront, Linear, and Neighborhood. While each type is distinct in terms of how each park operates within the overall system, certain consistency of design standards are necessary to reinforce community character and understanding of the parks as pieces of the same vital system. Therefore, it is appropriate to formulate a comprehensive language of design features, materials, configurations, landscaping, and methods of construction which readily distinguish a City Park as interconnected, sustainable and unique.

This section briefly describes each park type and illustrates through images and plans the basic typologies. The design standards found in the appendix creates a menu of options to be utilized for the creation of any park type based on existing site conditions, natural environments, neighborhoods and historical context. This essential list of conditions and mixing of park typologies based on established community needs will form the actual park environments that are created in order to form an interconnected, sustainable, and unique Park System.



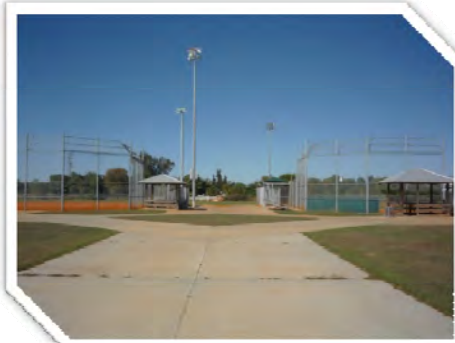




# Regional Parks



Regional Parks are designed, developed and built by local communities to serve a large population and provide a variety of recreational activities and facilities. They also enhance the region's quality of life, resulting in economic and social benefits. At this time the City of Punta Gorda relies on the Charlotte County Parks System for the provision of regional park facilities. As populations grow, future opportunities will need to be explored in order to maintain and improve level of service and to create specific design standards for the regional park typology.





# Environmental Park



The City defines an Environmental Park as a park that is managed to preserve the natural ecological systems of a specific area. Features within the environmental parks will include accessible trails and boardwalks, enhanced by native landscaping for shade. Seating will include benches for resting and picnic tables to encourage family and neighborhood gatherings. Materials for these features will remain sensitive to the area and consist of natural materials like shell, wood, and rock. Interpretive panels, guideposts, and kiosks may be incorporated to provide information. Parking shall be designed to have a minimum impact on the surrounding environment with energy efficient lighting utilizing full cut off fixtures.



# Urban Park



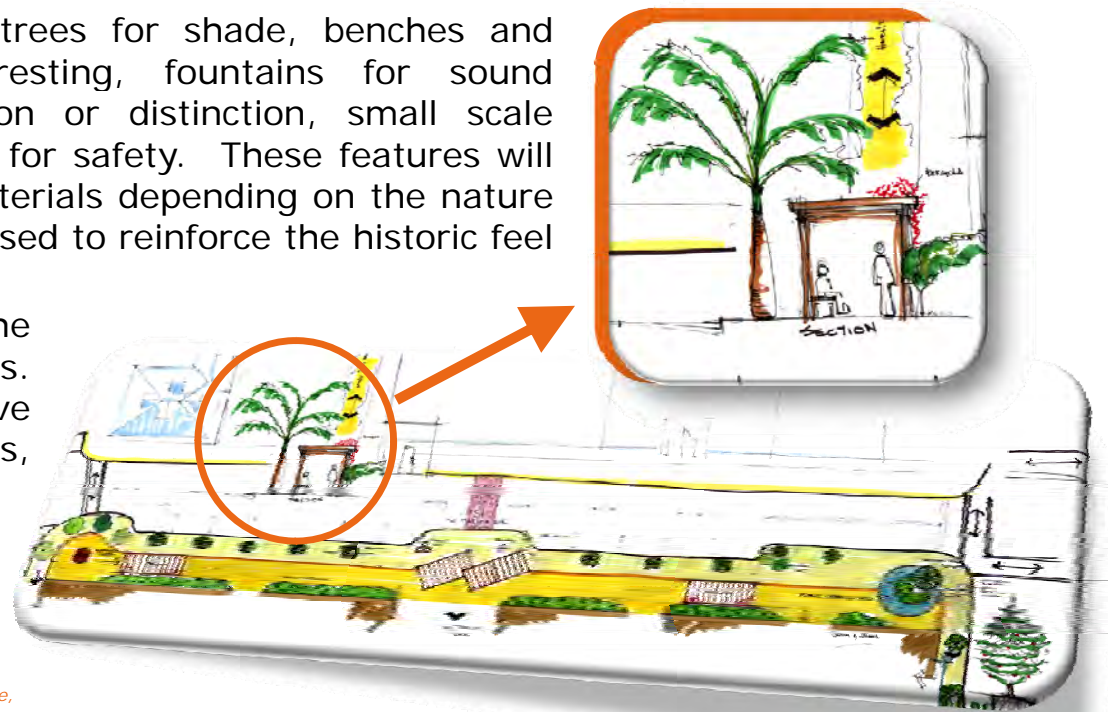
Urban parks or plazas are the public cornerstone of the urban environment which provide a green relief from the intensity and excitement of the urban landscape, while providing a public gathering place for the exchange of ideas and the random social interactions that are vital links between the community and the City. Urban Parks within the City shall be created through a combination of features which may include walkways that reinforce pedestrian connections to activity nodes, the creation of plaza space for social gatherings, green space for picnicking and small events.

Other features may include native trees for shade, benches and tables for reading, eating and resting, fountains for sound attenuation, signage for identification or distinction, small scale parking and pedestrian scale lighting for safety. These features will be constructed out of a variety of materials depending on the nature of the urban setting. Bricks may be used to reinforce the historic feel of an urban core.

Concrete may be used to define the transition from bricks to other areas. Metal will be used for decorative lighting, tree grates, trash receptacles, benches and other park furniture.

*“Urban parks are especially good arenas for cooperation between municipal government and the citizenry.”*

*- Elizabeth Barlow Rogers President of Cityscape Institute, and former President of the Central Park Conservancy*





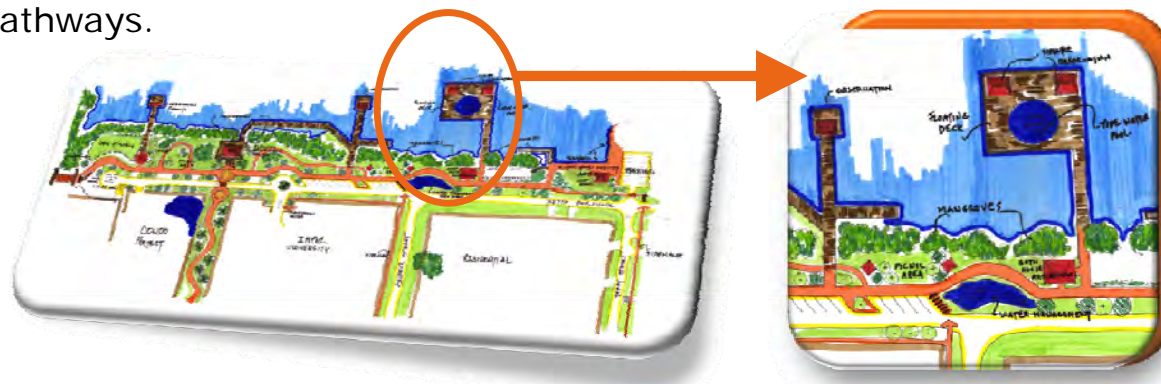
# Waterfront Park



The primary goal of waterfront parks is to maximize the connection of citizens and visitors to the water. This connection will take place both visually and physically.

Enhancement features include native & drought tolerant landscaping for sustainability and shade, and flowering trees & plants for visual interest. Seating will include benches and tables for eating and resting. Other features may include Wayfinding and interpretive signage, a variety of parking on a larger scale to accommodate the population use, and decorative lighting including bollard and other pedestrian scale lighting.

The features will be made out of a variety of materials depending on the waterfront setting. Bricks and concrete will be utilized for walkways, promenades, and plazas, while metal will be used for most furniture. Areas susceptible to saltwater spray shall require concrete fixtures. Wood and stone may be utilized as natural elements within the setting of boardwalks and pathways.



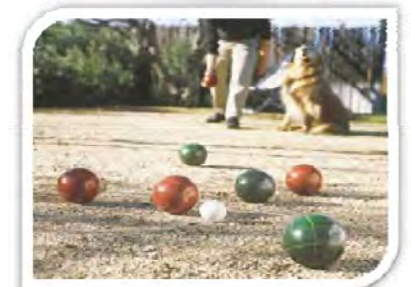


# Neighborhood Park



Neighborhood parks are rare within the context of the existing Punta Gorda Parks System. However, many of existing City Parks serve functions in part or in whole as neighborhood parks.

Design standards may be utilized in any other park type to include neighborhood specific components. Features such as walkways to connect pedestrians and activity nodes are needed. Activity areas may include a pavilion for small gatherings, a community garden, or a playground or fitness station depending on the area the park is serving. Plazas or small open green space may be included to provide neighborhood event space landscaped with native trees and plants for shade and sustainability, seating to include benches, seat-walls or fixed seating with tables. Special components of the Neighborhood Park should incorporate specific features to depict the surrounding area. These special components may include water features for sound and beauty, play surfaces for tots or older children, signage for identification or distinction, small scale parking and pedestrian scale lighting for safety.

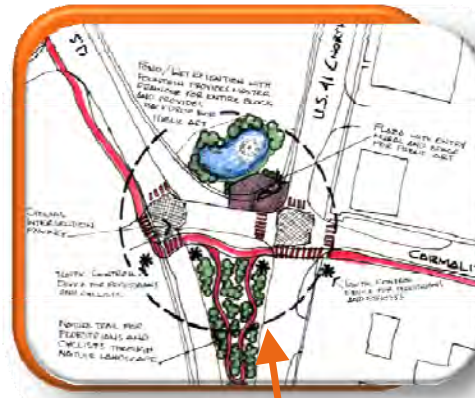


# Linear Park



A Linear Park is a park that serves the vital function of connecting the varied park types to each other and to the communities they are intended to serve. This vision of a network of linear parks was first detailed in the Mayor's State of the City Address as the Ring Around the City. The linear park type shall contain three distinct types:

- **Greenway:** a dedicated bicycle/pedestrian facility with landscaping and other park amenities;
- **Blueway:** a marked waterway trail for kayak, canoe, and other non-motorized craft; and
- **Avenue:** a complete street with landscaping, bicycle/ pedestrian, and motor vehicle facilities.



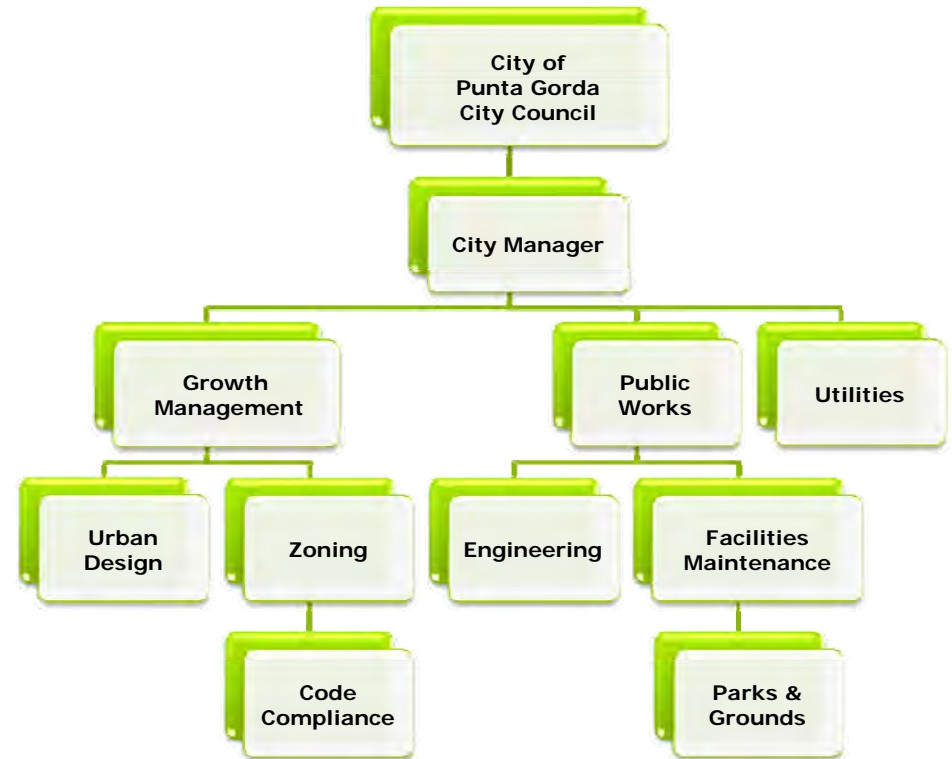
Each type shall connect the various parks in a logical manner as identified in this Master Plan. The areas identified on this map shall form the priority areas for streetscape, landscape, and other infrastructure improvements that serve to reinforce the creation of these vital links. The features in this case shall adhere to specific design standards related to the three linear types.





# V. Organizational Structure

Within the City, park development is shared by several departments. The Urban Design Division of Growth Management provides the planning concepts for the development of City Parks through traditional town planning principles. Engineering provides the technical support of the parks development through surveying, design planning, and project management. Once designed and built the Parks and Grounds Division, under the Public Works Department, provides the maintenance and care of the developed parks. Consisting of 11 full time employees, a full time crew chief, and a department supervisor, the division is responsible for the care and maintenance of 18 City parks totaling approximately 109 acres and 14 public facilities. The division also is responsible for the U.S. 41 and other right-of-way landscaping maintenance, additional mowing areas, 350 cul de sac islands, maintenance of all street trees and irrigation systems, and installation of holiday decorating and planting.





## ***Growth Management***

### **Urban Design**

Urban Design Division plans communities using traditional town planning principles which promote the high quality of life our residents have come to expect.

Expectations include:

- development of an interconnected park system
- preservation of Punta Gorda's essence as a small town
- development design to include walkability, sustainability, and enhancement of the life of the community
- seeing the community as a whole
- implementation of strategies which improve or create connectivity between all residents and visitors to neighborhoods, business districts and their relationship between streets, paths and very importantly, parks.

## ***Public Works***

### **Parks & Ground**

The Parks and Grounds Maintenance Division is made up of 11 full time employees & a full time Crew Chief who are responsible for the care and maintenance of the City's Parks System.

Responsibilities include:

- maintenance of City parks, municipal grounds, downtown streetscape, street trees, playgrounds, tennis courts, City and community entrance features and medians. irrigation design, installation and maintenance,
- herbicide spraying,
- fertilizing,
- cul de sac island plantings
- other related tasks.

## **Engineering**

Engineering is a service-oriented division that provides technical support and services to City departments.

Responsibilities include:

- performs surveys
- designs plans for City projects
- project management
- inspection duties on Capital Improvement Projects (CIP), and department projects

## VI. Park Maintenance



Similar to the establishment of the Level of Service for the Parks System, a level of service must be established for park maintenance. Determining maintenance tasks and task frequencies is an important starting point in developing a realistic level of service necessary to achieve the community's goals and to maintain the City's current investment of trees and other infrastructure improvements. Currently the level of service is based on the unique character of the public space.

Multiple levels of attention may be factored into an individual park depending on the nature of specific areas within that public space. In reviewing the daily maintenance logs, staff grouped similar tasks and activities into a three tiered level of service as follows:

Level 1: State of the art maintenance used in high traffic and highly detailed areas

Level 2: High to moderate level of maintenance associated with the City's well developed park areas

Level 3: Moderately-low level maintenance usually associated with budget reductions and lack of staff availability



## level 1

**Parks Include:** Government Center, Hector House, Herald Court, Harborwalk Pittman Park

**Class-A state-of-the-art maintenance applied to a high-quality landscape setting.** It is associated with high-traffic urban areas.

- **General Park Areas Turf:** Mowed at least once every seven to nine work days. Aeration as required. Reseeding or sodding as needed. Weed control is practiced so that no more than 1 percent of the surface has weeds present.
- **Fertilizer:** Adequate fertilization applied to plant species according to their optimum requirements.
- **Irrigation:** Sprinkler irrigated – electric, automatic.
- **Litter Control:** Minimum of once per day, seven days per week.
- **Pruning:** Frequency dictated primarily by species and variety of trees and shrubs.
- **Disease and Insect Control:** At this maintenance level, the controlling objective is to avoid public awareness of any problems.
- **Surfaces:** Sweeping, blowing, cleaning, and washing of surfaces should be done so that at no time does an accumulation of sand, dirt, or leaves distract from the looks or safety of the area.
- **Repairs:** Repairs to all elements of the design should be done immediately when problems are discovered, provided replacement parts and technicians are available to accomplish the job.
- **Inspections:** A staff member should conduct inspection daily.
- **Floral Plantings:** Normally, extensive or unusual floral plantings are part of the design. These may include ground-level beds, planters, or hanging baskets. Maximum care, including watering, fertilizing, disease control, disbudding, and weeding, is necessary. Weeding flowers and shrubs is done a minimum of once per week. The desired standard is essentially weed-free.

## level 2

**Parks Include:** Gilchrist Park, Hounds on Henry, Lashley Park, Ponce de Leon Park, Sculpture Park

**High-to-Moderate-level maintenance:** It is associated with well-developed public park areas

- **Turf Care:** Grass cut once every 7 to 9 working days. Weed control measures normally used when 50 percent of small areas are weed infested or when 15 percent of the general turf is infested with weeds.
- **Fertilizer:** Applied only when turf vigor seems to be low.
- **Irrigation:** Sprinkler irrigated – electric automatic, in key locations
- **Litter Control:** Minimum service of two to three times per week. High use may dictate higher levels during the season.
- **Pruning:** When required for health or reasonable appearance.
- **Disease and Insect Control:** Done only to address epidemics or serious complaints.
- **Surfaces:** Cleaned on a complaint basis.
- **Repairs:** Should be done whenever safety or function is in question.
- **Inspections:** A staff member should conduct inspection daily.
- **Floral Plantings:** Only perennials or flowering trees or shrubs.

## level 3

**Parks Include:** Alice Park, Breakers Park, Elizabeth Park, Nature Park, Shreve Park, Wilson Park

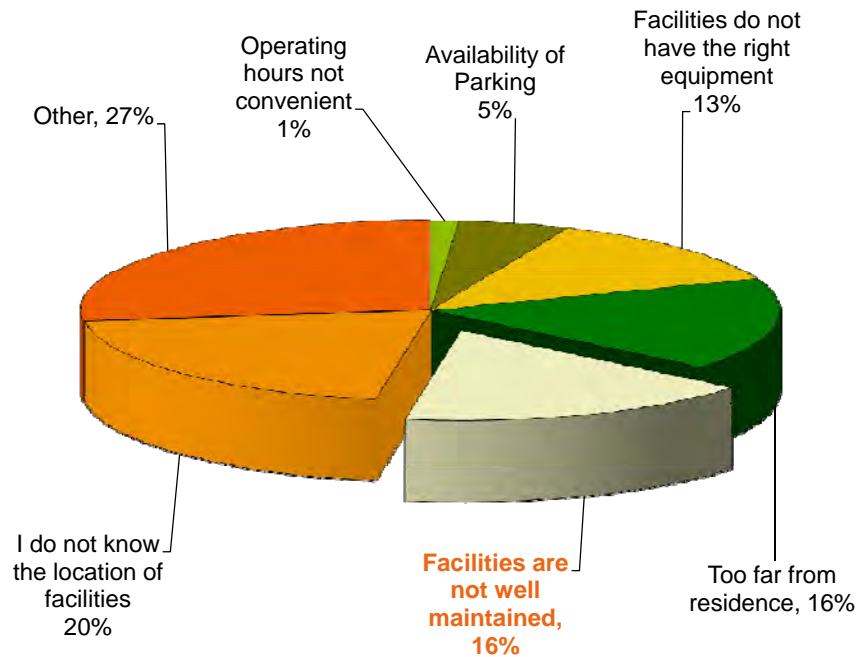
**Moderately low-level maintenance:** It is associated with locations affected by budget restrictions that cannot afford a high level of maintenance.

- **Turf Care:** Low frequency mowing scheduled based on species.
- **Fertilizer:** Not fertilized.
- **Irrigation:** No irrigation.
- **Litter Control:** Once per week or less.
- **Pruning:** No regular trimming. Trimming only for safety or damage.
- **Disease and Insect Control:** None except where the problem is epidemic and the epidemic condition threatens resources or the public.
- **Surfaces:** Should be done whenever safety or function is in question.
- **Inspections:** Inspections are conducted once per month.
- **Floral Planting:** None. May have wildflowers, perennials, flowering trees, or shrubs in place.

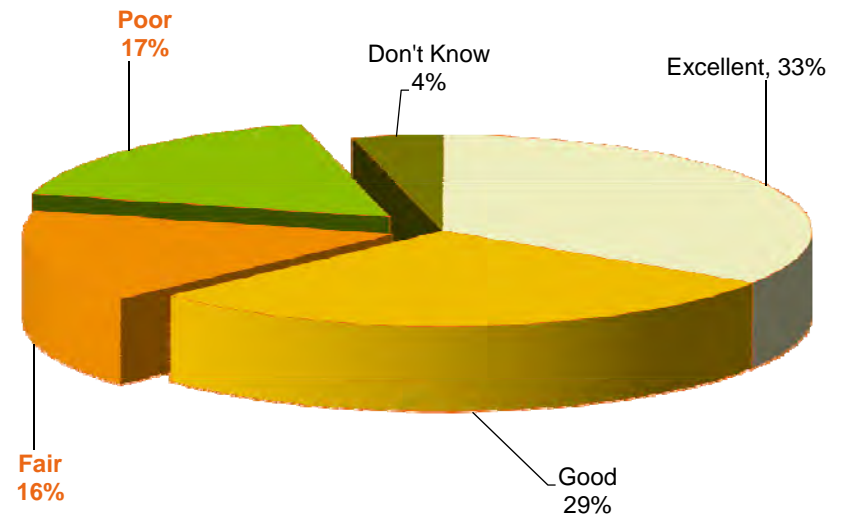


Information collected as part of the public input from the Parks & Recreation Master Plan Charrette, provided staff with some insight to the community's needs and desires for an improved, integrated and maintained Park System. Analyzing the survey results, staff found that 16% of the participants indicated "maintenance" prevented them from utilizing the Park System. When asked specifically to rate the park maintenance, 33% answered with a fair or poor rating. These results indicate room for improvement in order to meet community expectations.

Reasons for not using the Park System



Park Maintenance Rating



City parks are a high priority of City Council in terms of improving the quality of life and as an economic development tool. As such, the City has made substantial financial investment in acquiring park land and making capital improvements to the parks. However, staff finds investment in park maintenance has not received the same financial investment. In fact the Parks and Grounds Division has undergone personnel and budget reductions over the past year, while simultaneously, adding trees, landscaping, and other park features.

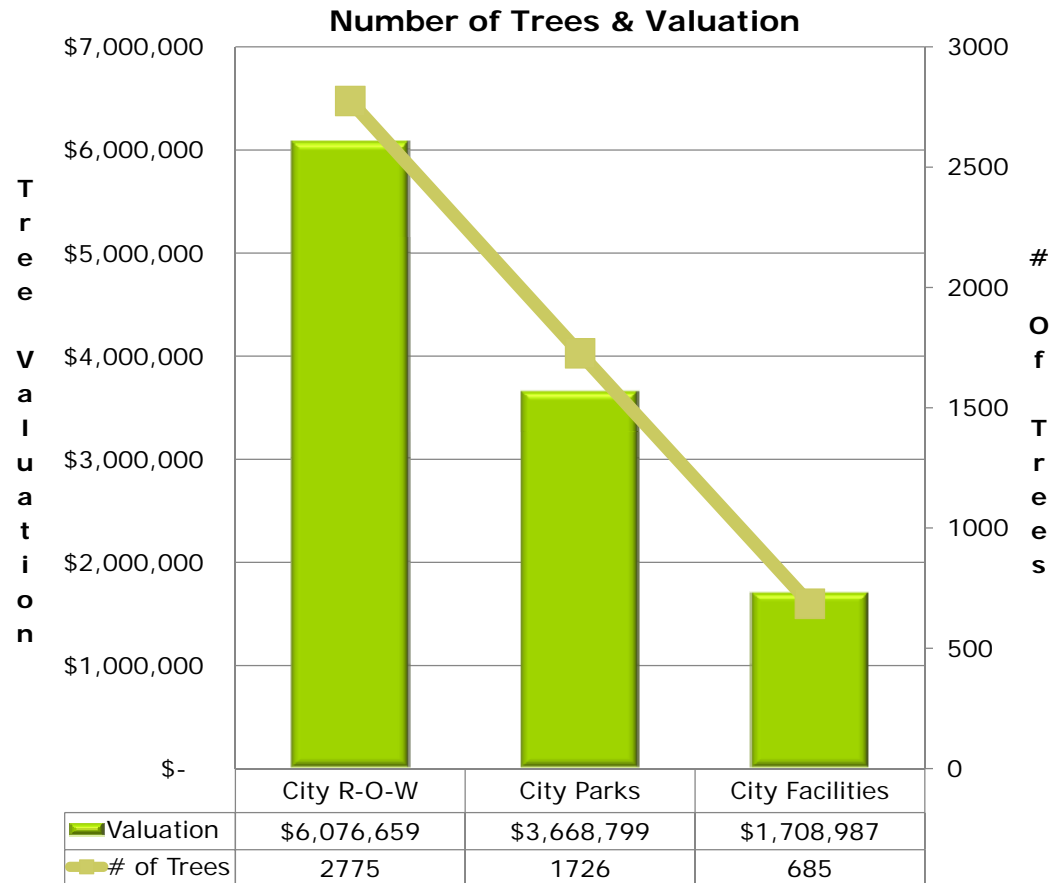


**Parks & Ground Budget and Staffing Levels**



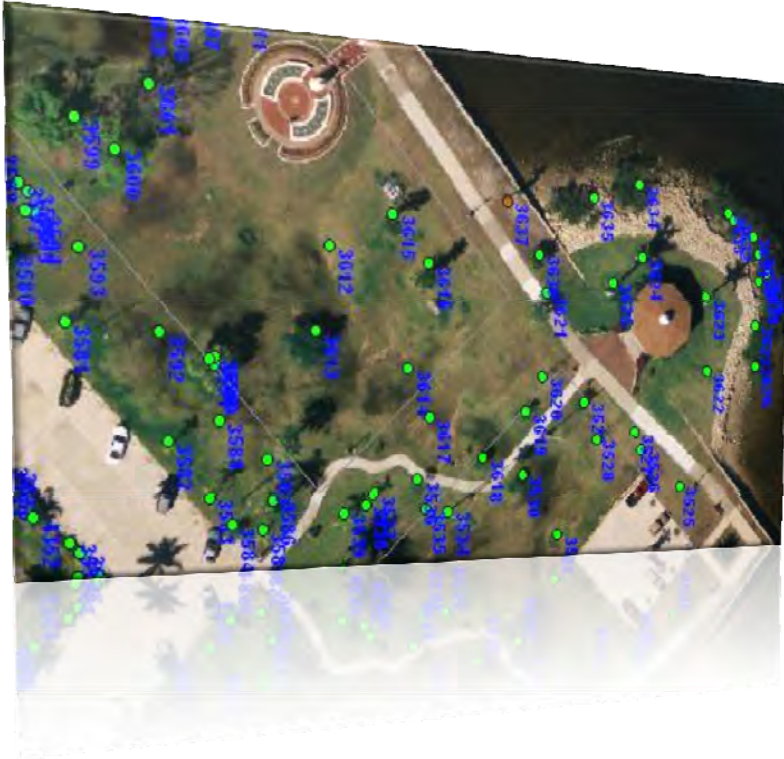
Traditionally the value of a park is measured solely by the value of the man-made improvements. A simple valuation of structures, benches, walkways, and other facilities encompasses one fraction of the actual economic value contained within the average park. Include in this assessment must be the value of the trees. Not only do they provide shade and aesthetic value but trees also provide other value through soil stabilization, storm water absorption, wildlife shelter, and reduction in heat island effect.

Realizing this need, the City applied for and received funding from the US Forestry Division to complete a citywide tree inventory. In summer of 2008 the City of Punta Gorda conducted a GPS tree inventory of trees of every tree within the City's Right-of-Way (R-O-W), Parks, and Facilities. The contractor, ArborPro, Inc., utilized the skills of a certified arborist to collect the requested tree attributes and the GPS coordinates. The attributes included in the survey are the GPS locations of the trees, species name in botanical nomenclature and common form, general health assessment, maintenance recommendation and species composition and an associated cost per tree.





While the information provided will prove invaluable to the Parks & Grounds maintenance crew, the valuation of the trees provides an asset to the City few realized. The valuation of the trees in City Parks, Facilities, and Public Rights of Way, is over \$11 million. This value cannot be underestimated and is necessary if cost effective policy and sound budget decisions are to be made. Investments in planting and the long term care associated with them require commitment from the community. Inadequate resources for planting and tree care will result in increased costs and reduced benefits of the planted environment to the community. The City will utilize the tree inventory as a tool to help quantify tree population and direct its limited resources to areas of maximum benefit to the community.



Park Name	Valuation	# of Trees
Gilchrist	\$ 843,636	388
Ponce De leon Park	\$ 708,134	254
Laishley Park	\$ 628,236	382
History Park	\$ 466,006	221
Nature Park	\$ 275,544	171
Mangrove Park	\$ 226,015	40
Sculpture Park	\$ 119,871	108
Elizabeth Park	\$ 94,333	50
Alice Park	\$ 89,572	23
Hector House Plaza	\$ 83,261	34
Hounds on Henry	\$ 77,303	26
Pittman Park	\$ 34,892	6
Herald Court	\$ 16,432	17
Brown Park	\$ 5,562	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 3,668,799</b>	<b>1726</b>

Additionally, in order to realize the fullest benefit of capital investments in our park infrastructure, a complete assessment of the existing facility conditions and maintenance standards needs to be performed. Functional operational standards, facility checklists, labor hours per acre, and consumable costs per year standards will need to be developed as part of this assessment. The assessment must also include the numerous other tasks performed by the Parks & Ground Division.

#### Scope of the Management Plan:

- Existing maintenance and operational standards
- Existing policy and procedures management
- Performance measures
- Budget & purchasing processes
- Staffing & utilization and needs
- Staff training & certification
- Workload requirements of Parks & Grounds Urban Design and Engineering
- Level of service development for Parks & Maintenance
- Field Equipment /Resources
- Partnerships/Volunteer support



The Parks & Recreation Master Plan will serve as the basis for staffing and budgetary requirements related to all existing and future public improvements. The subsequent maintenance assessment will be used to implement a comprehensive maintenance management plan which will address park project impacts to the various departments; thereby assuring all approved park projects include a sufficient and appropriate maintenance strategy. By identifying the additional maintenance, personnel, and contractual services associated with new park projects early on in the process, staff will be better able to prepare for the increased responsibilities



### **Goals of the Parks & Grounds Maintenance should include:**

- Improving the overall maintenance of all parks to City standards
- Improving park related amenities such as hard surfaces, roads, plazas, lighting, fencing, play courts, playgrounds, water fountains, restrooms, shelters/gazebos, tree care and trails.
- Ensuring appropriate equipment is available to support parks & grounds needs
- Developing a volunteer maintenance group that can assist in high maintenance issues such as planting beds, gardens, weeding etc.
- Improving custodial care of parks & facilities



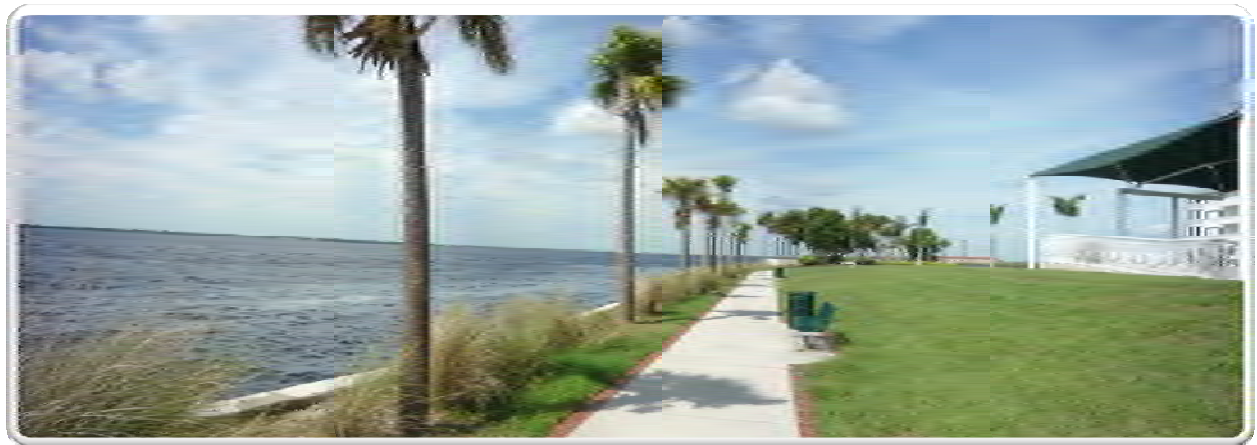


## VII. Implementation Strategy

The Implementation Strategy Section contains a list of specific projects and activities designed to move the City toward its vision of an interconnected, unique and sustainable Park System. This list of projects is divided into three implementation phases:

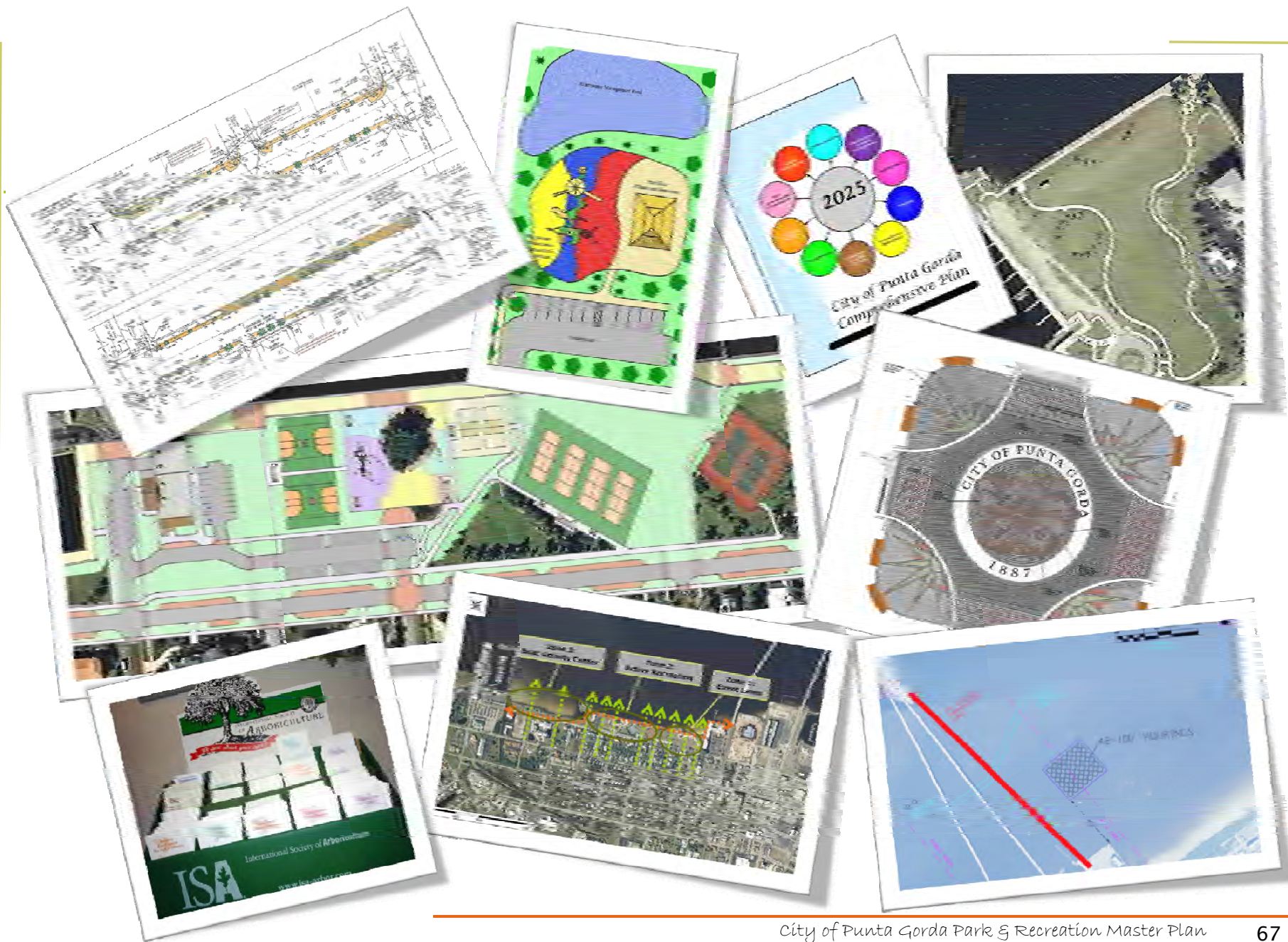
- Short Range
- Intermediate Range
- Long Range

Each project listing contains relevant information including a brief project description, the funding sources, and the anticipated completion date. This aggressive list of projects also provides a cohesive strategy for establishing a Park System that promotes the unique character and environment of Punta Gorda.



*"A community that believes today's growth must not be achieved at tomorrow's expense."*

*-Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida, Initial report, October 1995*



# Short Range



## Ring Around the City Projects

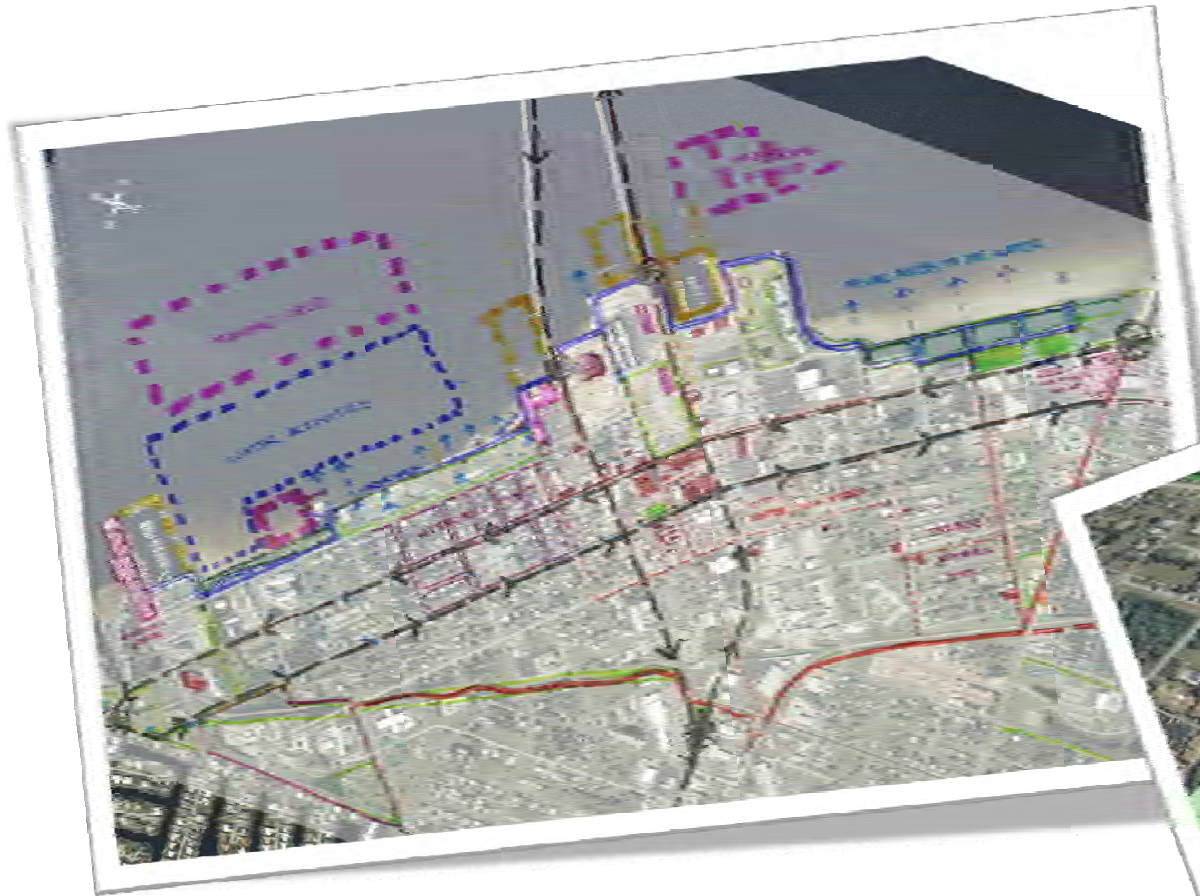
Project Name	Description of Project	Location	Responsibility	Projected Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Project Year for Completion
<b>Linear Park Development Phase I - III</b>	Phase I: A 10' wide Right of way located between Retta Esplanade and Olympia Avenue	Alice Street ROW between Retta Esplanade and Olympia Avenue	Urban Design Public Works	\$577,468	ARRA Stimulus Funding	2010
	Phase II: Continuation of Phase I from Olympia Avenue to Shreve Street	Olympia Avenue to Shreve Street		\$177,000 design	ISS Funds & Grant Funding	2011
	Phase III: Continuation of Phase II from Shreve Street to US 41	Shreve Street to US 41		\$1,300,000 Construction	ISS Funds	
<b>Bike Path &amp; Multi Use Recreation Trail (MURT) Phase I-III</b>	Design & Construction of a multi-use recreation trail (MURT) along the east side of US 41N from Airport Road to Taylor Road	Airport Road to Aqui Esta to Taylor Road	Urban Design Public Works	\$590,000	FDOT/LAP Grant	2010
	Construction of a MURT From Airport Road @ US 41 to Linear Park / Virginia	Airport Road @ US 41 to Linear Park / Virginia		\$350,000		2011
	Construction of MURT along an alternate route from Airport Road to Trabue Woods	Phase III East Loop TBD		\$350,000		2012



Project Name	Description of Project	Location	Responsibility	Projected Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Project Year for Completion
<b>Harborwalk- Best Western to Fisherman's Village</b>	Design of the Harborwalk for the area between Best Western to Fishermen's Village	Area between Best Western and Fisherman's Village	Urban Design Public Works	\$197,000 Design	ISS Funds	2010
	Best Western, US 41 S to Gilchrist Park	US 41 S Bridge to Gilchrist Park	Punta Gorda Hotel (Best Western)	\$200,000	Private Investments	2009
	Access Ramp from US 41 S to Harborwalk	US 41 S Bridge to Harborwalk	Public Works	TBD	ISS Funds	2010
	Construction of the Harborwalk between Best Western and Fisherman's Village	Area between Best Western and Fisherman's Village	Urban Design Public Works	TBD	ISS Funds	2013
<b>Harborwalk – Patty Avenue Trail Head (Trabue Park)</b>	Clean up invasive exotic species and begin mitigation process	East side of town along Harborwalk and Patti Avenue	Urban Design Public Works	\$580,000	ISS Funds and Contractual Services	2010
	Design & Contract the Patty Avenue trail from Cooper St. to Laishley Park Fishing Pier.					
<b>Shreve Street Connector</b>	An alternative route for a system of greenways connecting community parks, recreation areas to the Linear Park system (phase III) by means of a trail along the Rail Road Right-of-Way	Alternative Routes phase II Pompano (at Airport Rd.) to Shreve Street (US 41 to Linear @ Virginia	Urban Design Public Works	\$465,000	ISS Funds	2010

## Associated Projects to the Ring Around the City

Project Name	Description of Project	Location	Responsibility	Projected Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Project Year for Completion
<b>Waterfront Sports Activity Park</b>	Proposed project to include boat storage for non-motorized boats (sailboats, kayaks, canoes) and a launching facility. Staff is to gather preliminary needs analysis and report back to Council.	TBD	Public Works Urban Design	TBD	TBD	2010
<b>Park Safety Equipment</b>	Implement provision of police patrol on paths, trails and other hard to access areas through the purchase of a T-3 electric 3 wheel vehicle.	City Wide	Police Department	TBD by Police	TBD	2010
<b>Laishley Parking Improvements (Hardscape)</b>	Improvements to Laishley Park to include grading, drainage & turf improvements to the Center Drive Circle	Laishley Park	Public Works	\$50,000	FSIF	2011
	Gazebo improvements at Marriage Point including site re-design		Urban Design Public Works	\$100,000		2013
<b>Day Docks</b>	Construction of docks for boaters and tourists allowing access to the downtown businesses, Harborwalk, Gilchrist and Laishley Parks and the Charlotte County Events Center.	Laishley Park	Public Works Urban Design	\$200,000	ISS Funds	2011
<b>East Mooring Field</b>	Creation of a 40 ball mooring field approximately 1,000 feet offshore (1100' X 1100' SF)	Laishley Park	Public Works Urban Design	\$50,000 \$150,000	Charlotte County Marine Advisory Committee (MAC) ISS	2011
<b>Laishley Park</b>	Rework the main Event Lawn, to include regrading, drainage, irrigation & turf management	Laishley Park	City of Punta Gorda Urban Design Public Works	\$500,000	TBD	2014



*"Parks and recreation can improve the physical and mental health of every person, and that parks and recreation should be an essential public service of every community in America."*

-National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) 2008



## Other Miscellaneous Projects

Project Name	Description of Project	Location	Responsibility	Projected Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Project Year for Completion
<b>Education of Public Regarding Tree Care</b>	Provide public with proper tree plantings, species selection, fertilizing, pruning etc.	City Hall Annex 3rd floor	Urban Design	\$1,000	Grant Funding	2009
<b>Land Development Regulations Updates</b>	Update Article 12, Landscape Standards, of the Land Development Regulations to be consistent with the Parks & Recreation Master Plan.	N/A	Planning Commission Urban Design	N/A	City staff time	2010
	Update City Code of Ordinances to require Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Principles to be included in Article 12 (Landscape Standards) and Article 16.6 Application for Development Plan		Urban Design Police Department			
<b>Park Location &amp; Amenity Map Brochure</b>	Produce map for residents & tourists use in locating city parks & amenities available in each park.	City wide	Urban Design	N/A	City staff time	2010
<b>Parks &amp; Grounds Maintenance Standards</b>	Detailed needs analysis to determine level of service and staffing requirements for maintaining the City's Park System.	City Wide	Urban Design Facilities Maintenance Parks & Ground	\$10,000	Grant Funding	2010
<b>Nature Park Management Plan</b>	Review and revise the Nature Park Management Plan to allow for greater diversity of recreational activities	Nature Park	Urban Design	N/A	City Staff Time	2010
<b>West Mooring Field</b>	Creating of a mooring field and public access boardwalk assisting in establishing Punta Gorda as a boaters destination	West side of US 41 Bridge – Peace River @ best Western	Urban Design Public Works Partnership with Best Western	\$200,000	Private/Public Partnership	2012

## Other Miscellaneous Projects

Project Name	Description of Project	Location	Responsibility	Projected Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Project Year for Completion
<b>Cooper Street Recreational Center Playground</b>	Replace the playground equipment at Cooper Street Learning Center	Cooper Street Recreational Center	Urban Design	\$180,000	Grant Funding	2010
<b>City of Punta Gorda Comprehensive Plan, 2025 - Recreation &amp; Open Space Element Update</b>	Required per Florida Statute as evaluated through the Evaluation and Appraisal Report Process.	City Wide	Urban Design	\$ 25,000 - 30,000	Annual Budget	2011
<b>Movies in the Park</b>	Monthly Movies on the Laishley Park Event Lawn	Laishley Park	Urban Design Public Works Partnership Opportunity	TBD	Business Sponsorships CRA Operating Revenue	Ongoing
<b>Yoga in the Park</b>	Weekly yoga classes on the Laishley Park Event Lawn	Laishley Park	Urban Design Private Partnership Opportunity	TBD	Public Private Partnership Business Partnership	Ongoing
<b>Partnership Development</b>	As identified in the Future Opportunities Analysis of the Park and Recreation Master Plan, commercial lands are available for public & private partnerships for additional park facilities as development occurs.	N/A	Urban Design	N/A	City staff time	Ongoing
<b>Interlocal Agreements</b>	Explore agreements w/ local, state and federal agencies.	City wide	Public Works Urban Design	Determined at the time of agreement	Grant Funding and in kind services agreed upon between the agreement signees	Ongoing

# Intermediate Range



Project Name	Description of Project	Location	Responsibility	Projected Budget	Potential Funding Sources	Project Year for Completion
<b>Intersection Enhancements (Taylor &amp; Herald Ct. /Maude &amp; Marion)</b>	To enhance pedestrian safety & access	Taylor & Herald Maude & Marion	Urban Design Public Works	\$100,000	ISS Funding & Grant Funding	2014
<b>Retta Esplanade Improvements</b>	To enhance street parking, sidewalks, & lighting and increase open space in Gilchrist Park along the north side of W. Retta Esplanade	W. Retta Esplanade from Harvey to Berry.	Urban Design Public Works	\$200,000	ISS Funding	2014
<b>Intersection Enhancements (Retta &amp; Taylor/ Olympia &amp; Maude)</b>	To enhance pedestrian safety & access	Retta & Taylor Olympia & Maude	Urban Design Public Works	\$200,000	ISS Funding & Grant Funding	2014
<b>Tree Inventory</b>	Update the existing tree inventory to include Historic Overlay District	Historic Overlay District	Urban Design Public Works	TBD	Grant Funding	2014
<b>Parks &amp; Recreation Master Plan</b>	Review and update the Parks & Recreation Master Plan	City Wide	Urban Design	TBD	TBD	2014
<b>Colony Point Drive</b>	Community garden, small pavilion, on street parking	Dredge spoil site S Colony Point Dr.	Urban Design Public Works	\$75,000	Impact fees	2015
<b>Nature Park Improvements</b>	Restrooms, bus loop, parking, educational pavilion, and paddle craft launch	Nature Park	Urban Design Public Works	\$500,000	State & Local Funds CHNEP SWFWMD	2016



Project Name	Description of Project	Location	Responsibility	Projected Budget	Potential Funding Sources	Project Year for Completion
<b>Trabue Park</b>	US 17 S / Marion Ave streetscape, pavilions, restrooms, play area, environmental mitigation, observation pier	Adrienne to Mary	Urban Design Public Works	\$1,500,000	State Recreational Grants FDOT CDBG	2017
<b>Gilchrist Park Park Improvements</b>	Replace bathroom and picnic pavilion in Gilchrist Park	Gilchrist Park adjacent to the Best Western	Urban Design Public Works	\$250,000	TBD	2015
	Re-grading, drainage, irrigation & turf for event lawn	Gilchrist Park; between pavilions adjacent to the Best Western		\$250,000	TBD	2016
	New play ground equipment, play surface, restroom, pavilion, picnic area & fencing for Gilchrist park including ADA compliance	Gilchrist Park – Kiddie Land		\$500,000	Grant Funding TBD	2018
	“summer houses” gazebos in style of original pavilions associated with the Punta Gorda Hotel	Gazebo site at Gilchrist Park; Marina Entrance at Lashley		\$300,000	TBD	2019
<b>Park Improvements</b>	Carousel House	TBD	TBD	\$50,000	FSIF	2018
<b>Develop Partnerships</b>	As identified in the Future Opportunities Analysis, Commercial Lands are available for Public & Private Partnerships for additional park facilities as development occurs.	City wide	TBD	As agreed upon	As agreed upon on between partners	Ongoing

# Long Range



Project Name	Description of Project	Location	Responsibility	Projected Budget	Potential Funding Sources	Project Year for Completion
<b>Tree Inventory</b>	Update and assess tree inventory to include streets & neighborhoods not included in the 2009 inventory	Miscellaneous City Right-of-Way	Urban Design Parks & Grounds	TBD	Grant Funding	2019
<b>Royal Poinciana Avenue Improvements</b>	Bicycle/pedestrian improvements, street trees, overhead utilities, drainage modifications – connects US 41 MURT to Burnt Store Road	Royal Poinciana US 41 to Burnt Store Road	Urban Design Public Works	\$600,000	TBD	2019
<b>Burnt Store Meadow (BSM) Neighborhood Park</b>	Neighborhood meetings and concept design, construction and permitting documents for neighborhood park	BSM	Urban Design Public Works	\$180,000	TBD	2019
<b>Parks &amp; Recreation Master Plan</b>	Review and update the Parks & Recreation Master Plan	City Wide	Urban Design	TBD	TBD	2020
<b>Burnt Store Meadow (BSM) Neighborhood Park</b>	Construction of Playground area, picnic pavilion, parking and other improvements	BSM	Urban Design Public Works	\$600,000	TBD	2020

Project Name	Description of Project	Location	Responsibility	Projected Budget	Potential Funding Sources	Project Year for Completion
<b>Monaco to Madrid Improvements</b>	Bicycle/pedestrian improvements, street trees, overhead utilities, drainage modifications	BSI	Urban Design Public Works	\$600,000	TBD	2021
<b>Bal Harbor Avenue Improvements</b>	Bicycle/pedestrian improvements, street trees, overhead utilities, drainage modifications	PGI– Marion to Deborah	Urban Design Public Works	\$600,000	TBD	2022
<b>Gilchrist Park Boat Club/ Bayfront Redesign and Construction</b>	Concept design, construction & permitting design documents	Gilchrist Park Bayfront Center	Urban Design Public Works	\$100,000	TBD	2022
	Construction of community facilities, parking & site improvements	Old Boat Club / Bayfront Center Site	Urban Design Public Works	\$2,500,000	TBD	2025
<b>Park Beach Circle Park</b>	“Summer Houses” gazebo in style of original pavilions associated with the Punta Gorda Hotel, on street parking, landscape improvements	Park Beach Circle Park	Urban Design Public Works	\$500,000	TBD	2025
<b>Alternative Transportation Study</b>	As transit becomes available a study to provide access of surrounding communities to the Park System	City Wide	Urban Design Public Work MPO	TBD	MPO	TBD
<b>Develop Partnerships</b>	As identified in the Future Opportunities Analysis, commercial lands are available for public & private partnerships for additional park facilities as development occurs.	City wide	TBD	As agreed upon	As agreed upon on between partners	Ongoing



This comprehensive strategy list will be used as a tool to:

- Implement the vision of the City of Punta as directed by the Charette workshop and citizen input
- Create a focus point for the City to begin connecting the Parks System
- Provide City Council the information necessary to direct staff as to priority projects in light of fiscal matters and other constraints
- Evaluate annually the use and adequacy of the parkland, park facilities, and natural or historic protected lands;
- Update and outline future opportunities and implementation strategies

The wide selection of projects builds on the “Ring-Around-the City” theme and increases economic viability and sustainability through the connection of important pedestrian components such as the small businesses, restaurants, shops and stores, which service the local residents as well as the tourist community. The completion of the “Ring-Around-the City” will encourage events and activities in the parks to enliven the public realm and provide opportunities for continued economic and social development and sustainability.





*"You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation"*

-- Plato

# VIII. Economic Benefit -Sustainability



Measuring the economic value of parks is a difficult but necessary exercise. While costs associated with acquiring, developing and maintaining parks is relatively easy to obtain and calculate, the benefits received from a well developed Park System are harder to ascertain. As the City's Park System grows and develops, a more detailed picture of the economic benefits of parks would be useful for City Council to set priorities and goals and develop policies that will strike a balance between park development, park maintenance and other City issues.



## Six reasons why parks, recreation, open space and land conservation make good economic sense:

- Parks and open space often increase the value of nearby properties, along with property tax revenue.
- Parks and open space attract businesses and trained employees in search of a high quality of life.
- Parks and open space attract tourists and boost recreational spending.
- Parks and open space reduce obesity and health care costs by supporting exercise and recreation.
- Working lands, such as farms and forests, usually contribute more money to a community than the cost of the services they require.
- Conserved open space helps safeguard drinking water, clean the air and prevent flooding—services provided much more expensively by other means.

- Adapted from *The Trust for Public Land*, Spring 2006

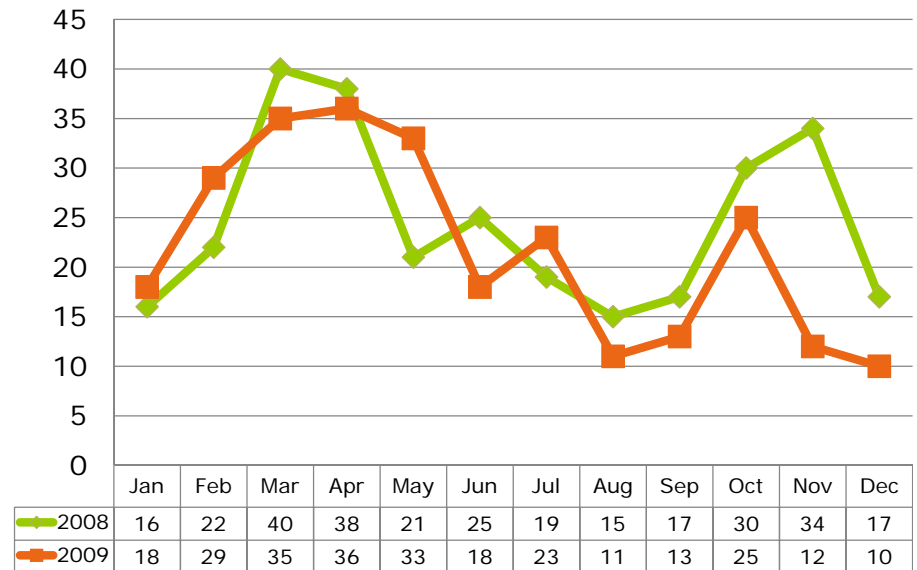


State and local governments are investing in parks and open space not only for the traditional reasons of protecting their environment and providing recreational opportunities, but also because it makes good economic sense saving taxpayer dollars, attracting investment, rejuvenating cities, and boosting tourism, to name a few benefits.

- Investment in recreation constitutes an investment in preventive health measures for the community
- Physical fitness improves work-force productivity
- Investing in parks and recreation facilities increases the value of nearby and surrounding properties, providing benefit to landowners and tax districts
- Downtown development efforts can benefit from proximity to attractive and enjoyable parks and community spaces
- Strong parks and recreation services can motivate business relocation and expansion within the community
- Recreation and park services can provide opportunities for tourism, an important sector of the economy
- Investments in environmental protection as part of parks and open space management pay for themselves



**# of Park Rentals**



\*December rentals have been estimated

Many people consider parks and recreational opportunities to be a positive attribute of a community, and they are associated with higher property values, economic development, and overall quality of life. Although parks cost money to manage, it is important to establish the economic value to the residents, tourists and businesses. City parks, particularly the City's waterfront parks, are used by local and regional communities for promotional and recreational activities. The revenue generated from these events provides an economic value to the City as well local businesses. How much of an economic value and benefit is not typically tracked by the City. The Charrette survey provided staff with some general information on local users and permit applications

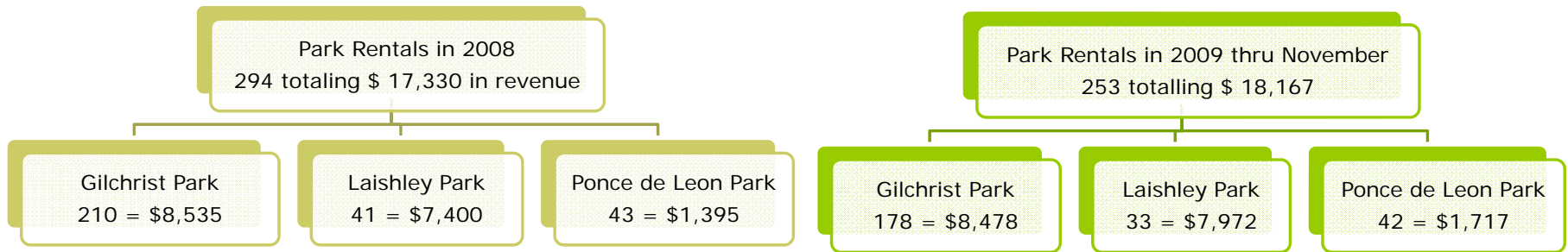


provided estimated attendance numbers. But there is no clear system developed to correlate the economic impacts of events

and rentals on the City's Park System. Events and gatherings held in Punta Gorda's public parks require a nominal fee to defray the maintenance and administrative costs associated with reserving one or more of the various park amenities. These amenities are available to the public on a first come, first served basis at rates established by the Punta Gorda City Council. These fees also apply to users for reserved exclusive use, based on individual or commercial activities.



Comparing the number of park rentals for 2008 and 2009, there were 294 and 263 total rentals respectively per year. The top three parks rented are Gilchrist, Laishley and Ponce de Leon Parks. Gilchrist Park, home to a large number of yearly events and picnics at low hourly rates, hosted the majority of events both years due to flexibility and amenities located within the park. Although there has been a decrease in the total number of park rentals, revenues remain consistent.





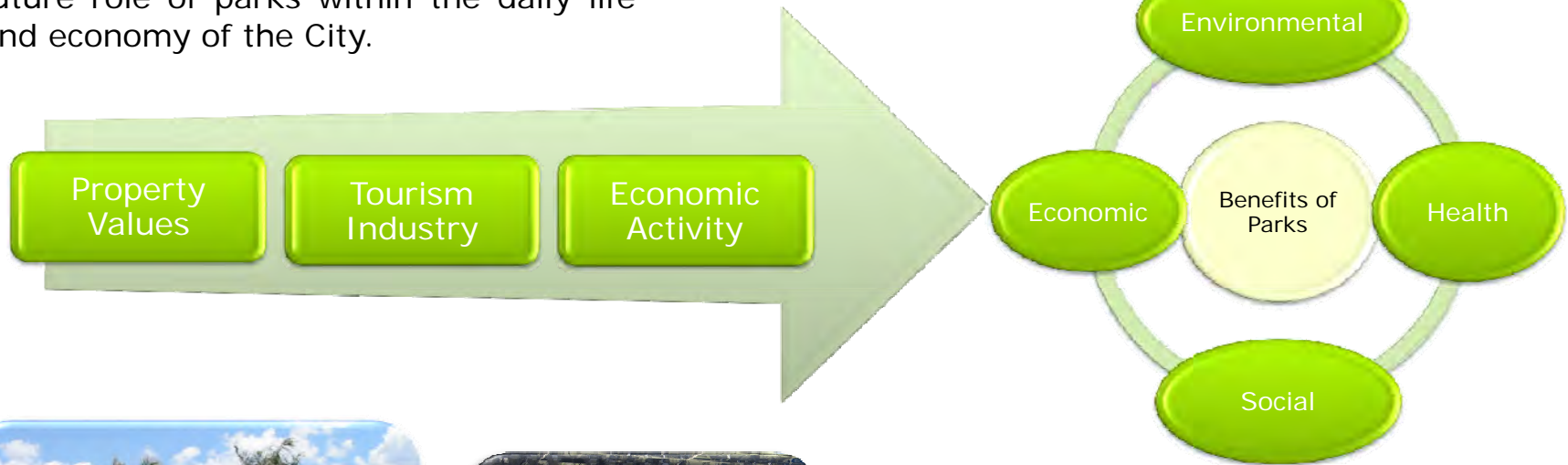
There are a variety of events and festivals that occur within the City throughout the year. Many of the annual events generate over 250 or more attendees and require City employee service from Police assistance to Parks and Grounds Maintenance. Numerous other events occur throughout the year that attracts a number of attendees who generate additional tourism spending.



### Yearly Events in Punta Gorda

<u>Event</u>	<u>Park</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Estimated # of Attendees</u>	<u>Estimated Revenue</u>
MY Promotions Arts & Crafts	Gilchrist Park	Jan & Mar	500 +/-	\$963
Hands across the Harbor	Gilchrist & Bayshore* alternate every other year	Jan	250 +/-	n/a
Art Show	Gilchrist Park	Jan, Feb, Mar	500 +/-	\$1,573
Corvette Car Show	Laishley Park	Feb	200 +/-	\$50
Wine & Jazz Fest	Laishley Park	Feb	1000 +/-	\$471
PR Nat'l Art Show	Laishley Park	Feb or Mar	10,000 thru 2 days	\$995
PR Seafood Fest	Laishley Park	Mar & Oct	6,000 thru 2 days	\$3,425
Rotary Taste of PG	Laishley Park	Mar	2000 +/-	\$300
Jim Morris Concerts	Laishley Park	Apr & Oct	350 +/-	\$500
MSPG Coconut Craze Days	Laishley Park	Apr	1500 +/-	\$235
AACA Car Show	Gilchrist Park	Apr	300 +/-	\$50
Redfish Cup	Laishley Park	Apr / May	7,500 for 2 days	n/a
Hibiscus Festival	Gilchrist Park	Jun	500-600	\$50
4th of July	Laishley Park	Jul	10,000 +/-	\$1,400
CDBIA Rib Cook off	Laishley Park	Sept / Oct	5,000 +/-	\$50
AWL Party in the Park	Laishley Park	Nov	250 +/-	\$165

Although nominal fees are collected, an analysis of the actual cost associated with the event should be performed. The analysis should include park users, park types, maintenance and administrative costs associated with the different types of events. This analysis will provide Council, staff, developers etc, with information pertaining to the future role of parks within the daily life and economy of the City.



# IX. Conclusion



A Park can be the focal point of a neighborhood, a regional attractor, a protector of nature, or an economic engine of a community. The citizens of Punta Gorda want parks that perform all of these functions. The citizens envision a system of parks that serve all the current community desires while leaving space to encompass the desires of the future. The involvement of the community through the Charrette, interactive website, and other public workshops generated the vision of the Parks System illustrated in this Master Plan.

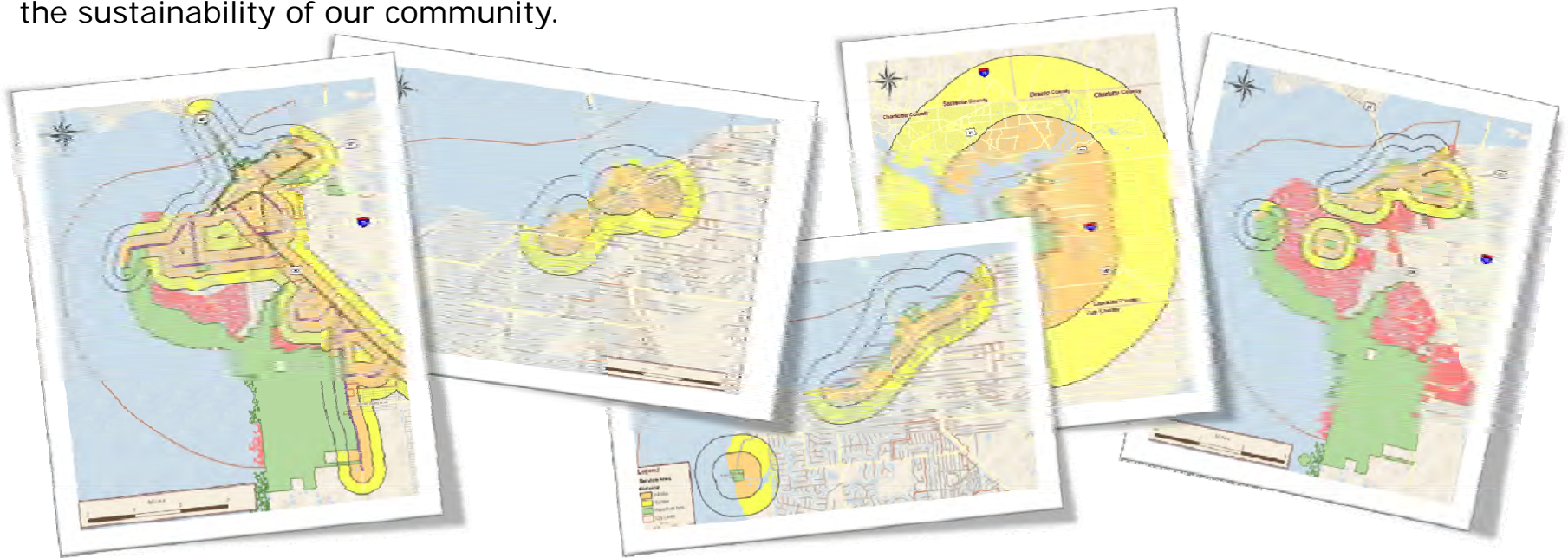
The Parks and Recreation Master Plan expands on the citizens' vision with a variety of different uses, which reinforce a sense of place, and provide comfortable, sociable spaces which will form the basic building blocks of our community identity.





The Park and Recreation Master Plan provides the base information from which to improve and expand the current parks system. Every element of the Park System shall be interactive, accessible to all residents, and sustainable by contributing to the personal, environmental, social and economic prosperity of the City. Each park will be designed to the high quality standards established through community input. These specific features will help define the uniqueness of our community and will reinforce the understanding of each park as a vital part of the community.

The establishment of the parks within  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile radius of neighborhoods and commercial communities provides a level of service standard specific to the needs of the City. The accessibility of the park system to all residents and tourists will promote personal unique experiences, individual fitness and wellness, preserve and enhance our natural resources, strengthen community pride and provide the economic catalyst for tourism and encourage business relocations and expansions in the community. These numerous benefits will contribute to a balanced healthy life style and enhance the sustainability of our community.



The implementation of the park system vision will require the development of park maintenance standards which clearly defines the needs of each City Park. The Parks & Recreation Master Plan will serve as the basis for staffing and budgetary requirements related to all future public improvements. The subsequent assessment will be used to implement a comprehensive maintenance management plan which will address the long term fiscal impacts of park projects.

By identifying the additional maintenance, personnel, and contractual service costs associated with new park projects early on in the process, staff will be better able to prepare for the increased responsibilities. The establishment of a three tiered maintenance system will assist the City in achieving its goal by effectively and efficiently addressing maintenance programs and costs for current and future parks. As the park system continues to grow, the parks and maintenance level of service standards will be reviewed and revised to include changes in facility types, demand, land use, and community desires.

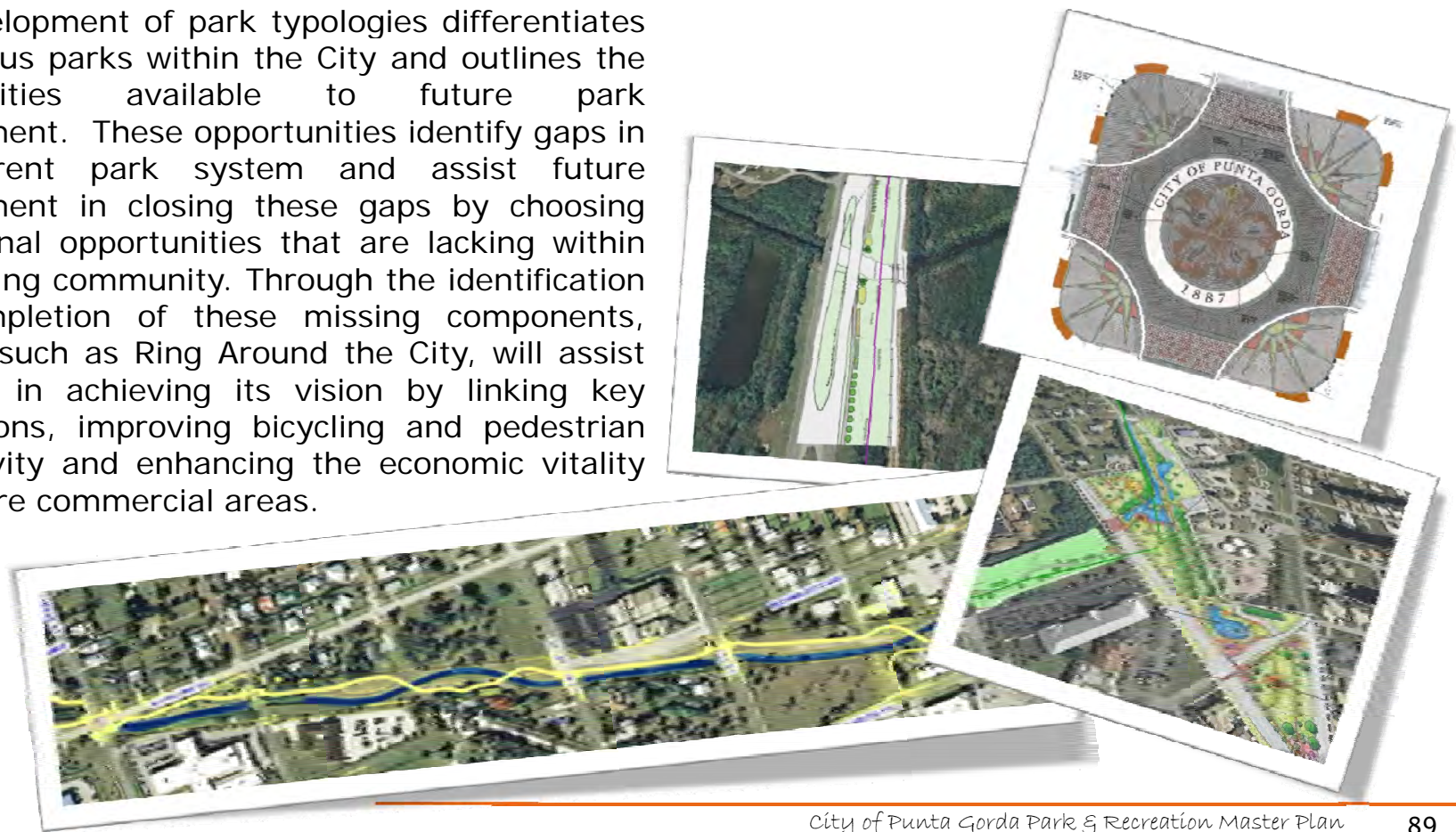
A variety of recreational opportunities and park types are necessary to satisfy the diverse community within the City. While each park type is distinct in terms of how each park operates within the overall park system, a certain consistency is necessary to reinforce community character and understanding of the parks as pieces of the same vital system.





The design standards section provides a variety of minimum standards that address the unique character of the various park typologies. This section incorporates the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles which promote a climate of safety in a community right from the design through to operation. The incorporation of these standards into the City's Land Development Codes and project development processes will allow site specific strategies to be implemented at the development or redevelopment phase. These principles will assist our Police and Fire Departments, and County EMS in providing more community responsive protection services.

The development of park typologies differentiates the various parks within the City and outlines the opportunities available to future park development. These opportunities identify gaps in the current park system and assist future development in closing these gaps by choosing recreational opportunities that are lacking within the existing community. Through the identification and completion of these missing components, projects such as Ring Around the City, will assist the City in achieving its vision by linking key destinations, improving bicycling and pedestrian connectivity and enhancing the economic vitality of the core commercial areas.





Parks and open spaces produce indirect economic benefits by increasing the value of adjacent properties. The City's parks, particularly the waterfront parks, create direct economic benefits to our community through various promotional and recreational activities that attract local and regional audiences to the City. Revenue generated from these events provides an economic value to the City as well as local businesses. How much of an economic value and benefit is not currently tracked by the City. Although nominal fees are collected for a variety of events and festivals held within the City parks, an analysis of the actual cost associated with the events should be undertaken as a goal of this Parks and Recreational Master Plan. This analysis should include a review of the fees, staff time and contain the increased time and operating costs to the Public Works Parks & Ground Department so as to provide Council, staff, developers and users with a comparison of the economic benefits of the parks to the community verses their financial impact on the City Department budgets.



*"... the deliberate effort to ensure that community development not only enhances the local economy, but also the local environment and quality of life."*

*- Center of Excellence for Sustainable Development*

The City of Punta Gorda Parks & Recreation Master Plan provides an implementation strategy broken down into short, intermediate and long term projects for Council to quickly achieve a park system capable of fulfilling the community's vision. The implementation of these strategies will provide the City's residential, commercial and tourist communities with a plan to develop, to the fullest potential, a park system that meets community expectations. The detailed projects illustrate the City's commitment to fulfilling the citizens' vision. Just as Isaac Trabue envisioned the waterfront lands as public parks that would serve to enrich the lives of all the residents of his new development of 1884, this document provides a new vision respectful of the past looking forward to a brighter future.

*"Advancing the quality of life through the creation of a comprehensive interconnected and sustainable park system that promotes the unique character and environment of Punta Gorda."*

This plan:

- presents the community with a full range of recreational opportunities as the City grows;
- recommends modifications to recreational activity areas as needed; and
- assists developers, engineers and consultants as they prepare plans for new development, renovations and expansions
- provides implementation strategies
- identifies the department responsibilities, projected costs, potential funding sources and anticipated completion dates
- assists in organizing and upgrading the park facilities

*“To create great parks and great cities, we have to be willing to develop a new vision for parks, - as economic incubators, as environmental centers, as places to teach ecology and to learn about social interaction. Parks can be places where residents can share a common heritage and learn about each other or can simply be places where people can go and take a stroll, or a break, where a community's public life can be renewed and enhanced. Through vision, community interaction, good design, and leadership, we can create parks that belong to their communities, and work for their communities.”*

Kathy Madden, Vice President for Public Spaces  
and Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Urban Parks Institute





# *City of Punta Gorda Parks Master Plan Charrette*



Laishely Park Marina Community Room  
February 24, 25, & 26, 2009

# Public Input



## Express Yourself

### City of Punta Gorda Parks Master Plan Charrette

Laishley Park Marina Community Room  
100 E. Retta Esplanade, Punta Gorda FL



### Public Sessions



*A Charrette is simply a high speed, intensive creative session in which a team concentrates on specific design problems with citizens and presents solutions*



*Your one-time, three-day commitment will shape the future park system and improve the quality of life in the City of Punta Gorda*

For Additional Information or questions contact:  
Mitchell Austin, Charrette Leader - Phone: 941-575-3372  
Email: [urbandesign@ci.punta-gorda.fl.us](mailto:urbandesign@ci.punta-gorda.fl.us) or visit the web @ [www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us](http://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us)



# “Imagine Your Park System” Workshop



- Bocce Courts
- Improve Bike Path
- Bike Path Connections
- Possible Partnership
- ADA Compliance
- Accessibility

- Colony Point Beautification
- Dog Beach
- Picnic Areas
- Kiosk / Wayfinding
- Nature Parks



- Improve Gateway
- Activity Center @ Bayfront
- Kayak Center
- Nose-in Parking along Retta
- Shelter for shade
- Bike Path





# “Design Your Park” Workshop



- Environmental
  - Pavilions
  - Outdoor Classroom
  - Pedestrian Amenities
- Waterfront
  - Expand Walkway
  - Kayak Launch



- Neighborhood/Gateway
  - Fitness Trail
  - Green Space
  - Campus Connectivity



- Linear Park
  - US 41 Signalized crossing
  - Connection
  - Destination Points

# *Visual Preference Survey*



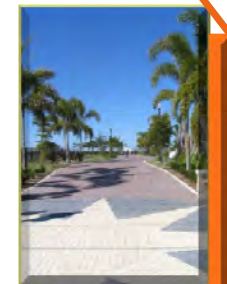
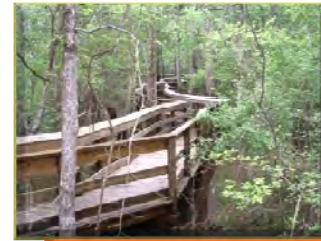
A visual preference survey is a tool that was used during the Charrette to allow citizens to rate visual concepts of park elements.

The following pages detail the citizen's preferences for the various park features depicted by the visual representations.





## Art & Sculpture



## Boardwalks, Trails & Walkways

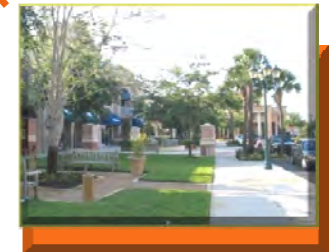
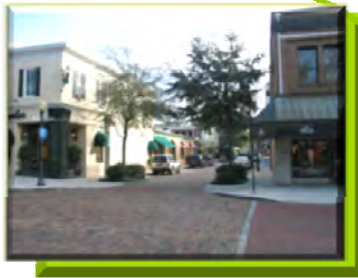
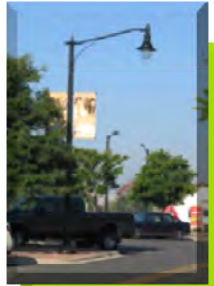
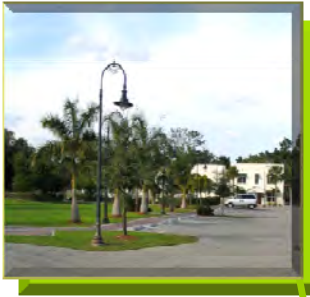
# Gazebos & Pavilions



# Furniture



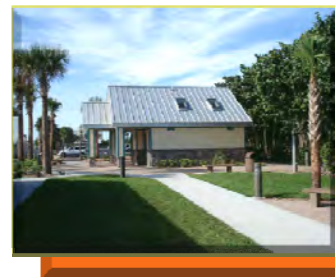
## Parking & Lighting



## Urban Parks

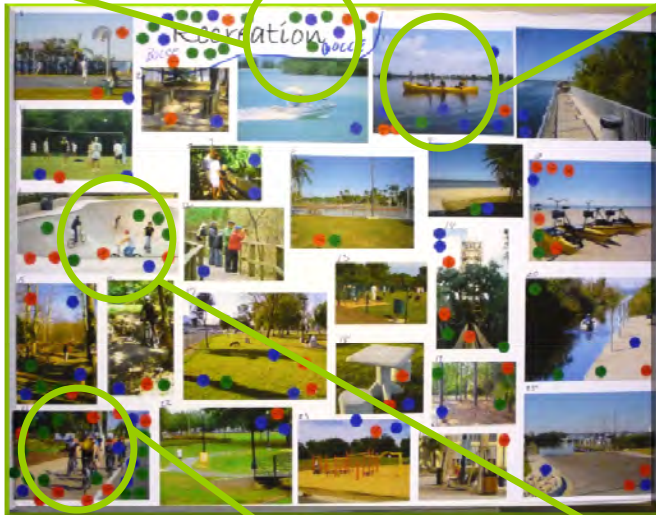


# Play Areas



# Restrooms

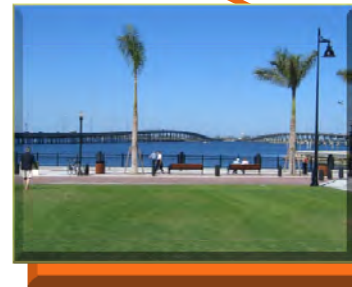
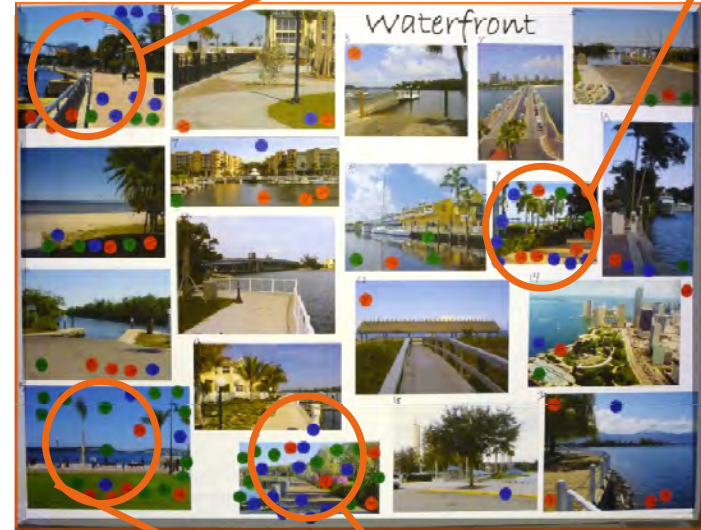
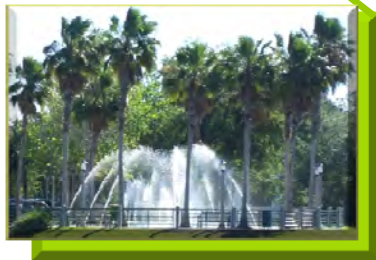
# Recreation



# Signage



# Water Features



# Waterfront



# *Express Yourself*

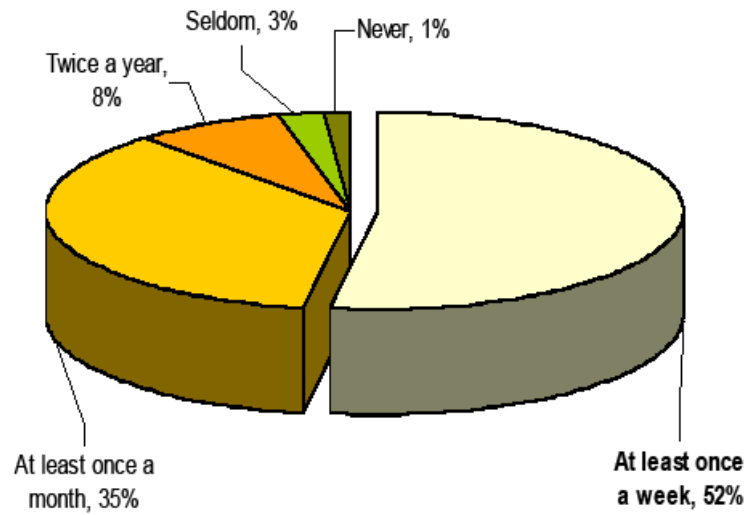


## *City of Punta Gorda*

### *Parks & Recreation Master Plan Survey Results*

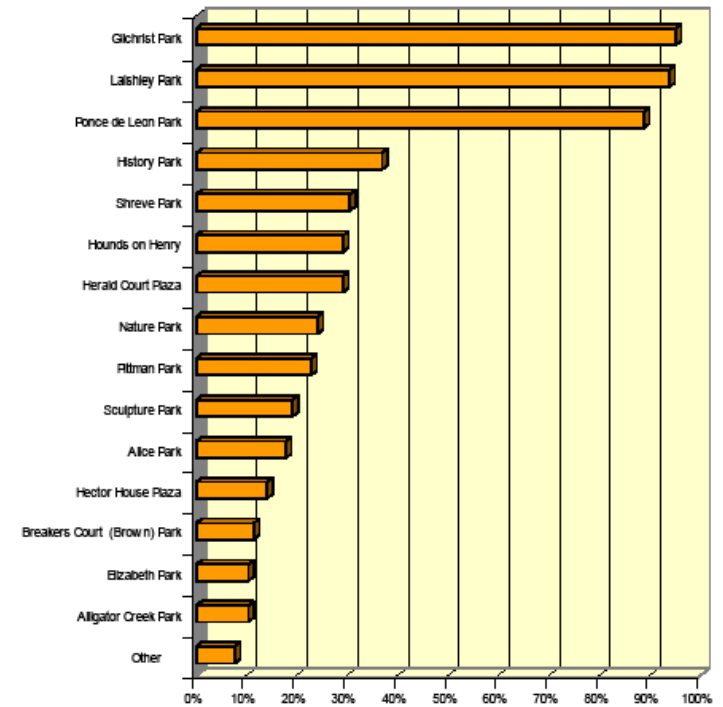
*The following pages contain the data & analysis collected from the Parks & Recreation Survey attained from our citizens.*

1. In a year's time, how often do you visit one of the City of Punta Gorda's Parks?



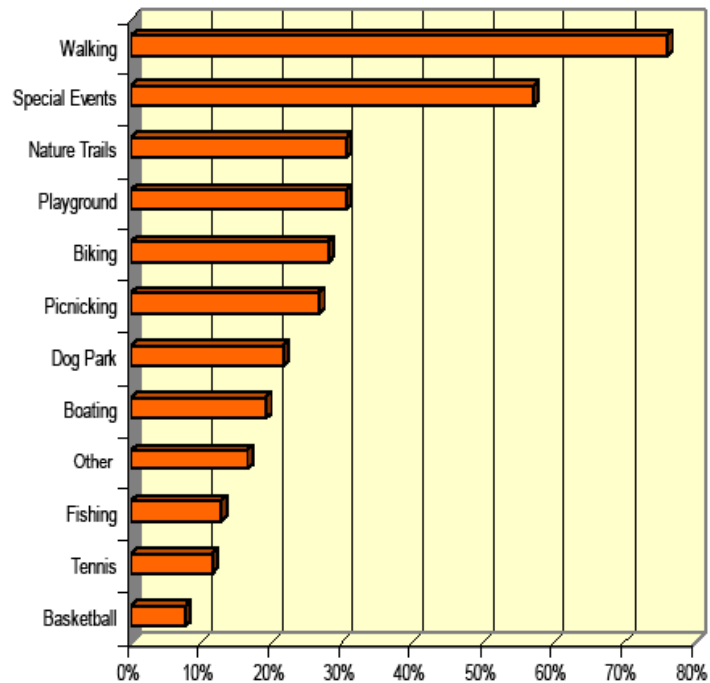
2. What Parks have you visited?

- Other: South County, Patti, Carmalita, Bayshore



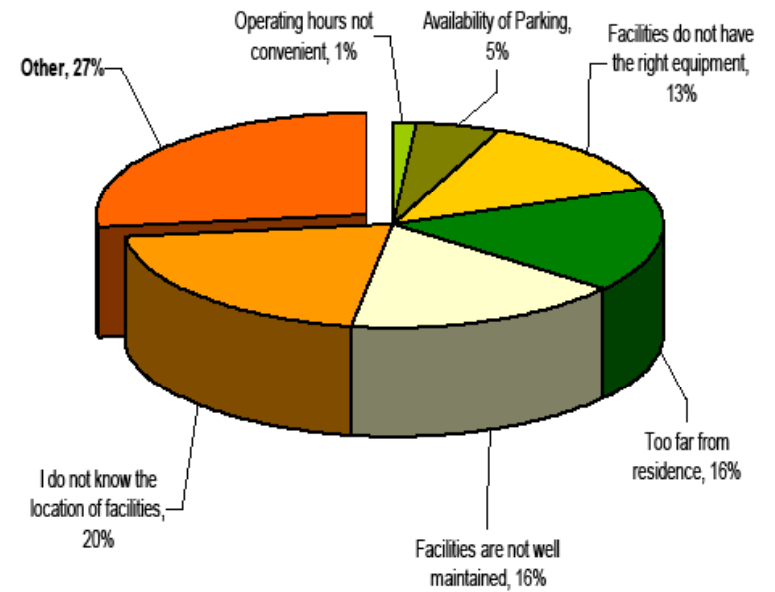
### 3. Why do you visit the Parks?

- Other: Beach, hot dog stand, running, enjoyment, bird watching, being around other people, boat ramp, being outdoors



### 4. What are the reasons that prevent you from using the City of Punta Gorda Park System?

- Other Comments included: poor lighting, safety issues, dog friendly, no bocce courts, no pickleball courts, no beach area, too crowded, more food vendors and lack of shade trees.

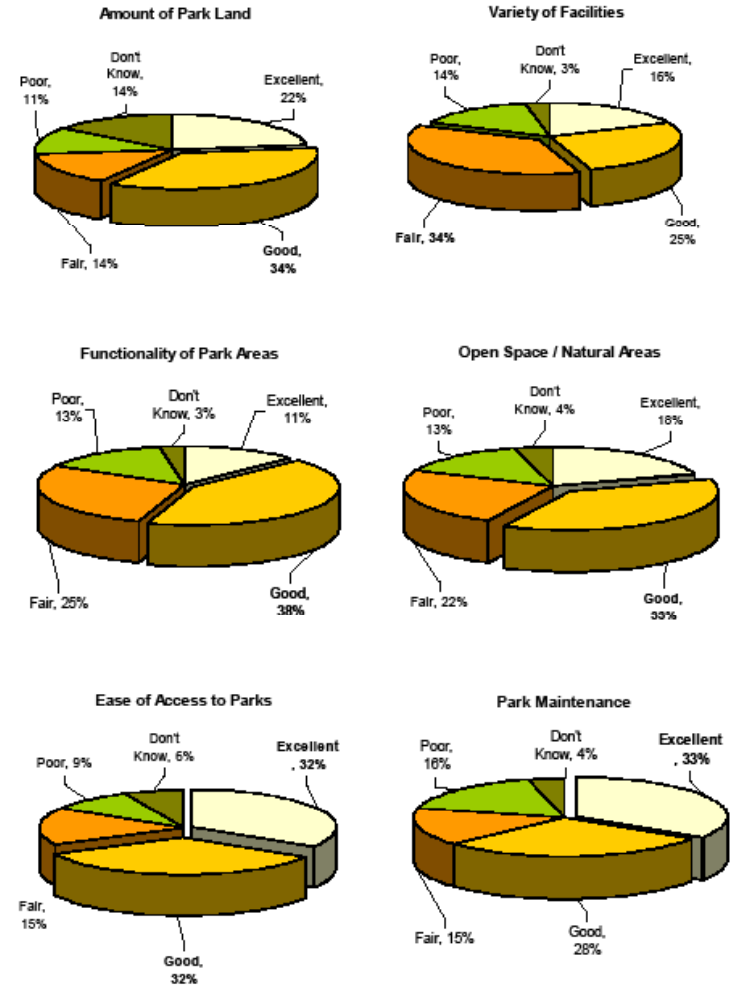




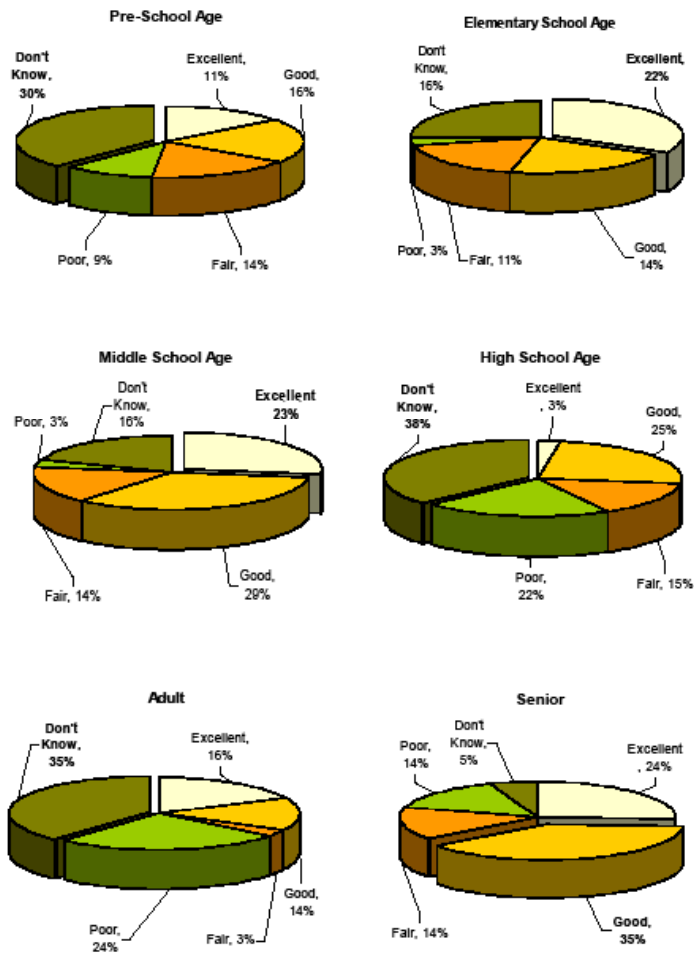
5. What makes the City of Punta Gorda Parks different from other local Parks

- Nostalgia, landscape, small town feel
- Clean and well maintained
- Convenient—part of everyday life
- Natural Beauty
- The beautiful waterfront & friendly people
- Variety of locations
- Free Access
- Peace & Quiet
- Lots of Water
- Beautiful water and nature views
- Availability use for events
- Generally well maintained and have restrooms
- Nice parks & restrooms
- There are a lot of small parks
- Location
- Nice parks & people

6. How would you rate the following:

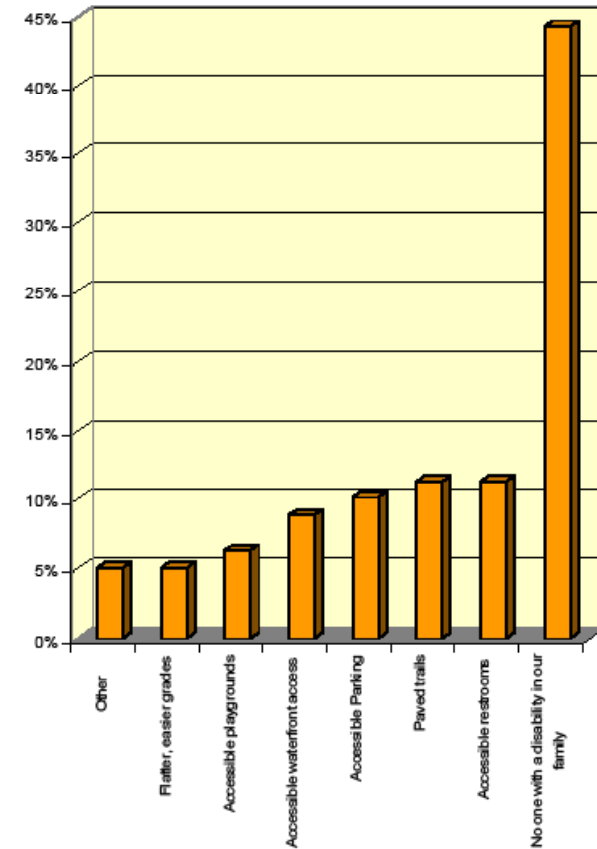


7. How would you rate the City of Punta Gorda Park and Recreation facilities for ages:

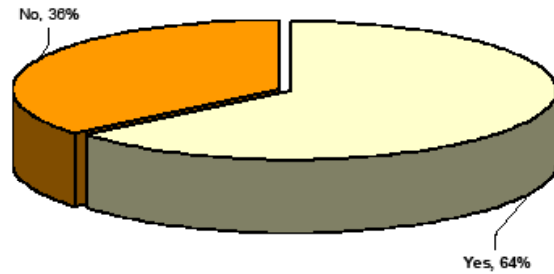


8. If there is a person with a disability in your family, please indicate which of the following would make the City of Punta Gorda Parks more user-friendly.

- Other: Need for a map of facilities, benches along trail, shade trees, & more shelter



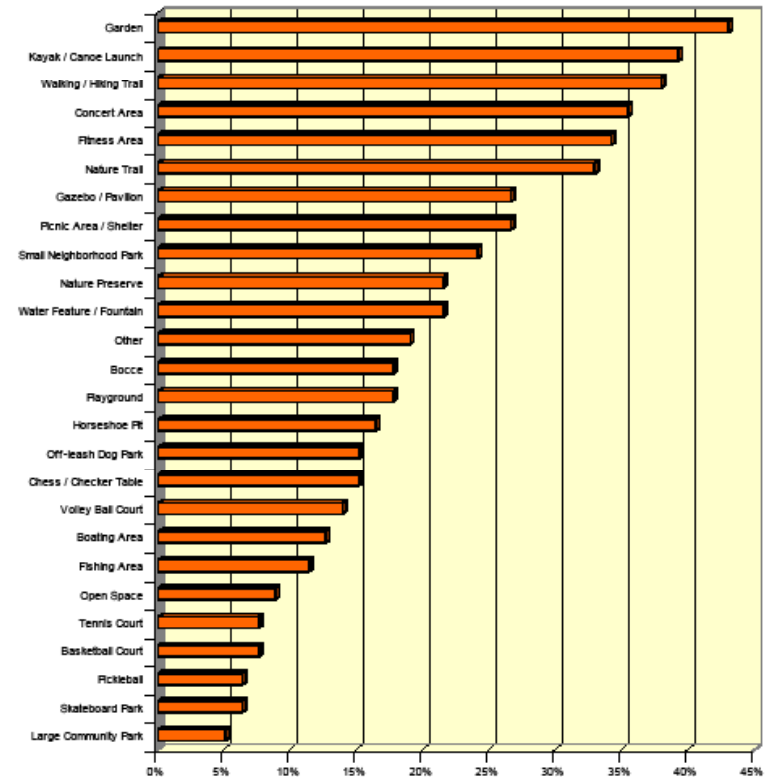
9. Is the City of Punta Gorda Park System meeting your family's local recreational needs?



- Yes, Comments:
  - Wonderful places for us to walk
  - Good Variety
  - Nice place to ride bikes, but of course would like more places to ride
  - Clean & Inviting
  - Free access to parks
  - Diversity, however geared for seniors, would like to see a focus on younger families
  - Available biking
  - Close to home, good variety of facilities
  - Parks are senior friendly
- No, Comments:
  - No bocce courts
  - Would like to see Gilchrist open to dogs
  - Not enough facilities (playgrounds & tennis)
  - Need better bike path & lightings
  - Parking is hard for boaters
  - Better Waterfront usage
  - More seating, water fountains & dog parks
  - Needs to be an increased presence in the arts
  - We like to bike, but have found the roads to be extremely hazardous
  - Improve tennis program—clay courts would be good for older population
  - Not enough facilities—playgrounds, tennis, etc.
  - Not enough "recreational" activities in the park—Please put in Pickleball courts.
  - Would like to see more bike and nature trails with identification signs

10. What FACILITIES or EQUIPMENT would you like to see added to the City of Punta Gorda Park Systems?

- Other: Shuffle Board, Art Center, Benches, Dog Beach, Pickleball, Butterfly Building, Murals, Disk Golf Course





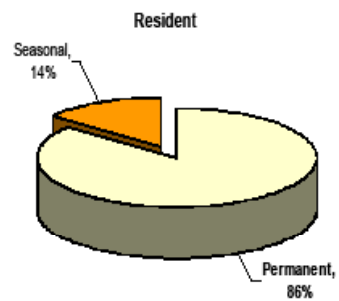
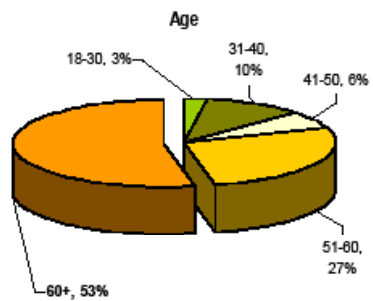
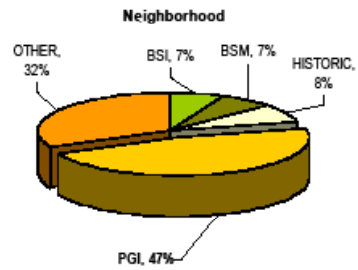
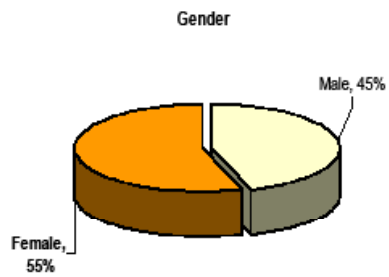
11. What do you think the City of Punta Gorda should do to improve its Park and Recreation System?

- Better up keep of existing parks
- More covered areas at Ponce Park, updated equipment for small children, maybe a water feature
- More color
- Better landscaping
- More boat trailer parking
- Visitor guide to facilities in local stores
- Activities
- Community Arts Center
- Additional things for children to do at parks
- Address connectivity to downtown
- Attention to pre-teen and teens
- Enhance current Harborwalk with landscaping
- Provide shaded sitting areas
- Improve access and parking
- Additional activities in the south end of Punta Gorda
- Better bike routes, better walking routes between Ponce Park & the Hospital
- Add a skate park someplace for the youth and pickleball courts for everyone
- Keep up on the gazebos, power wash & paint them
- Create more nature areas with trails and information about what lives there
- Make Punta Gorda a very friendly biking community so all can visit many parts of our nice town
- Provide access for boaters

Additional Comments & Suggestions:

- Keep small town, old Florida style, maintain historical nostalgic feel of Punta Gorda when making improvements
- Good variety not in the southern City limits.
- Better maintenance of Gilchrist & Ponce facilities and grounds
- Thank you for providing open public spaces
- Everything is fine for us you are doing an exceptional job
- Thank you for this opportunity
- It is great to see the comeback from Charlie
- Just do not know the location of parks beyond waterfront area
- The beach at Ponce could be expanded and be used as a tourist draw
- Have various dog parks based on dog size—not just one park
- Add bocce to Gilchrist Park
- Improve Colony Point Park
- Need bike from BSI to downtown area, clean up the dam area on Alligator to make a park with kayak access
- More plants and trees
- Put in outdoor pickleball courts, more people can play this sport than tennis
- Develop a small format park pamphlet for distribution to the residents and visitors that show parks, trails & amenities
- Have scheduled activities in the parks

Please tell us about yourself:



Thank you to everyone who participated in this survey.

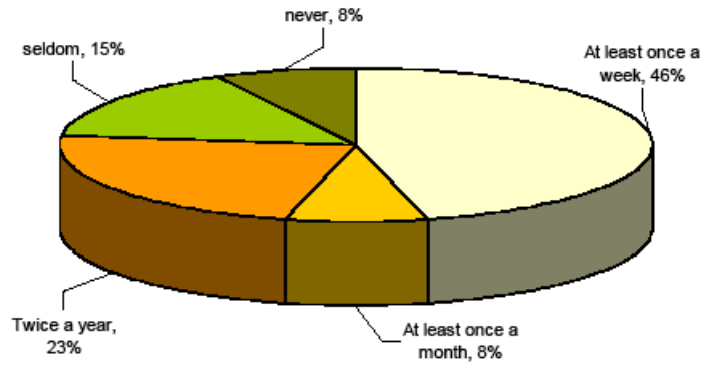
# *Charlotte High School*



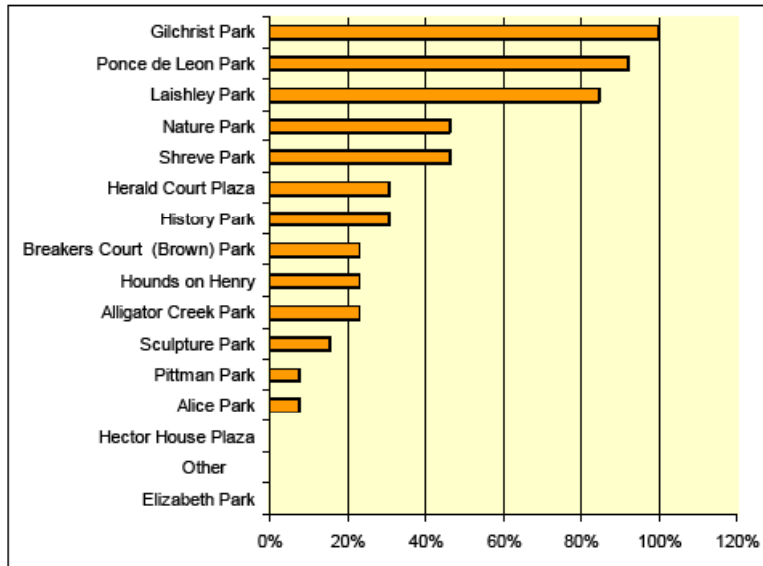
A visual preference survey and Parks & Recreation survey was presented to Charlotte High School students. The following pages detail the students preferences for the City's Park System



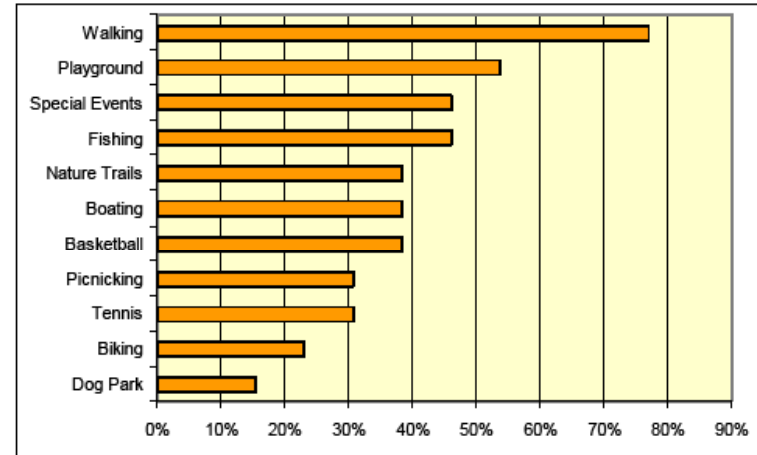
1. In a year's time, how often do you visit one of the City of Punta Gorda's Parks?



2. What Parks have you visited?

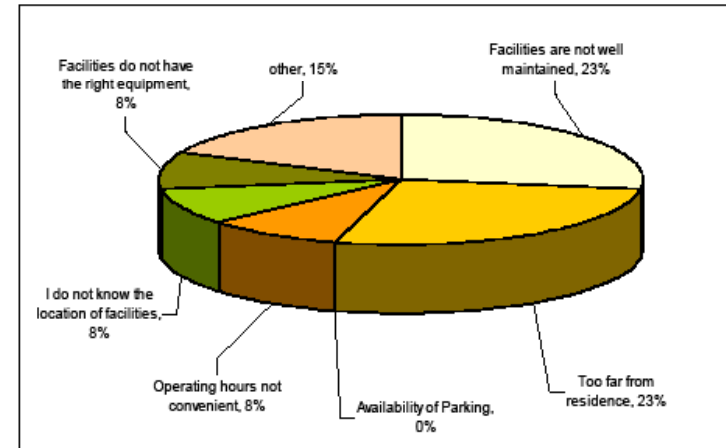


3. Why do you visit the Parks?



4. What are the reasons that prevent you from using the City of Punta Gorda Park System?

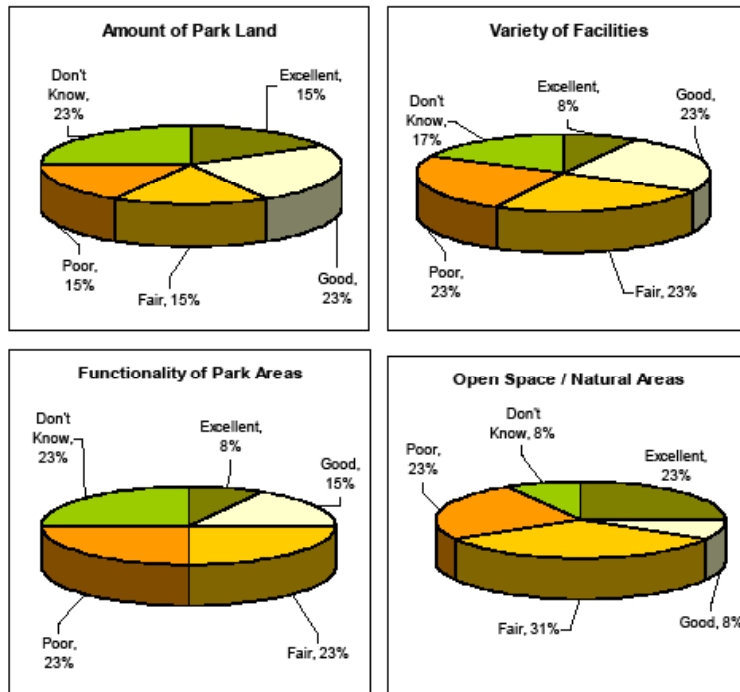
- Other: not enough time



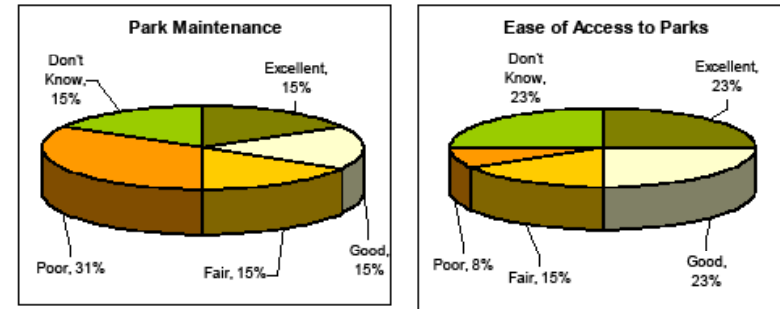
5. What makes the City of Punta Gorda Parks different from other local Parks

- They are cleaner and nicer than other
- It is on the water
- They are nice
- They tend to always be clean and beautiful
- They don't have much trash like other parks
- Cool and nice picnic area for friends & Family

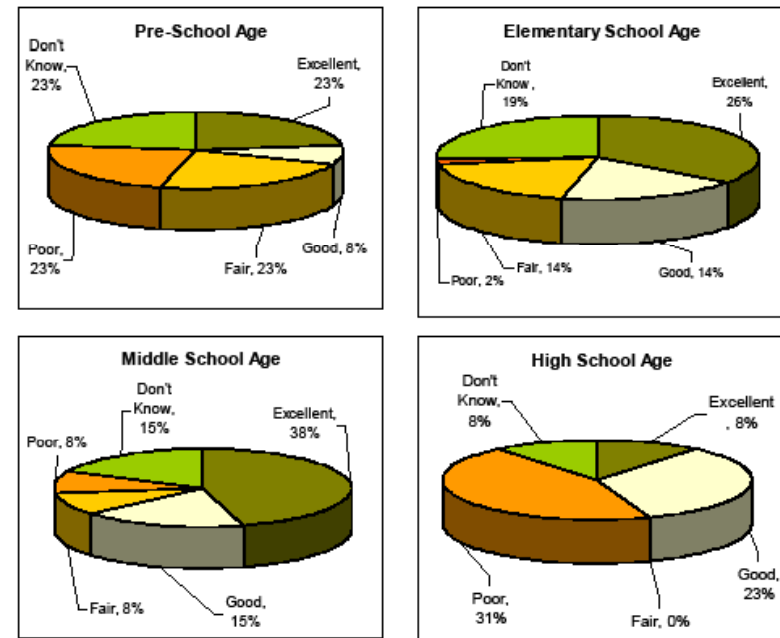
6. How would you rate the following:  
(1 – Excellent, 2 – Good, 3 – Fair, 4 – Poor, 5 – Don't know)



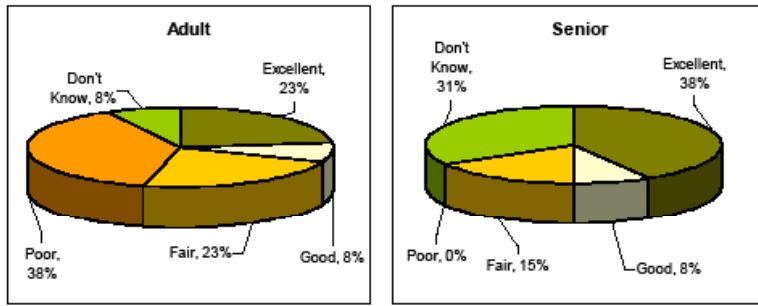
6. How would you rate the following (cont.):  
(1 – Excellent, 2 – Good, 3 – Fair, 4 – Poor, 5 – Don't know)



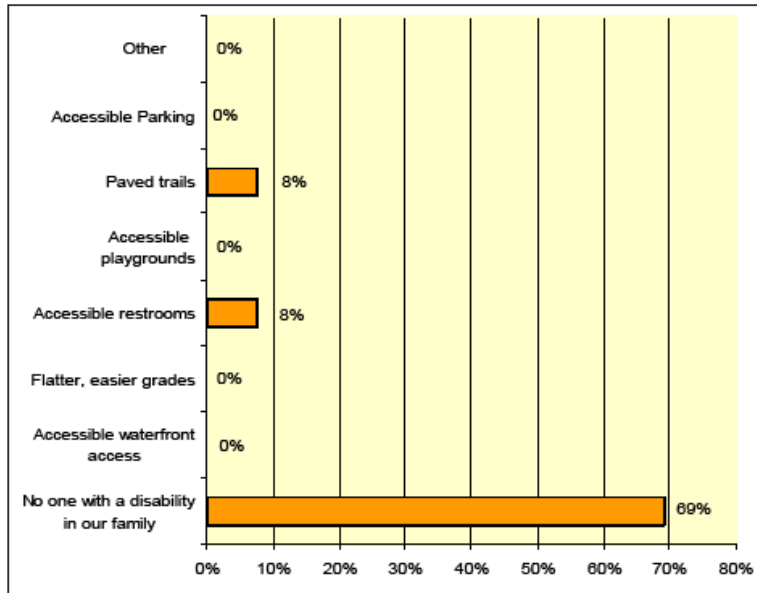
7. How would you rate the City of Punta Gorda Park and Recreation facilities for ages:  
(1 – Excellent, 2 – Good, 3 – Fair, 4 – Poor, 5 – Don't know)



7. How would you rate the City of Punta Gorda Park and Recreation facilities for ages (cont.):  
 (1 – Excellent, 2 – Good, 3 – Fair, 4 - Poor, 5 - Don't know)

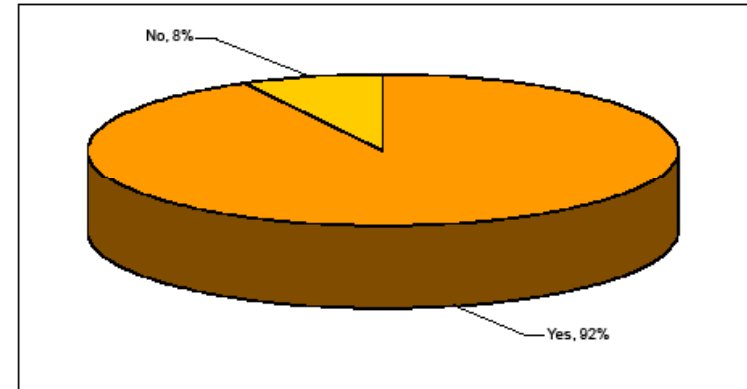


8. If there is a person with a disability in your family, please indicate which of the following would make the City of Punta Gorda Parks more user-friendly.



9. Is the City of Punta Gorda Park System meeting your family's local recreational needs?

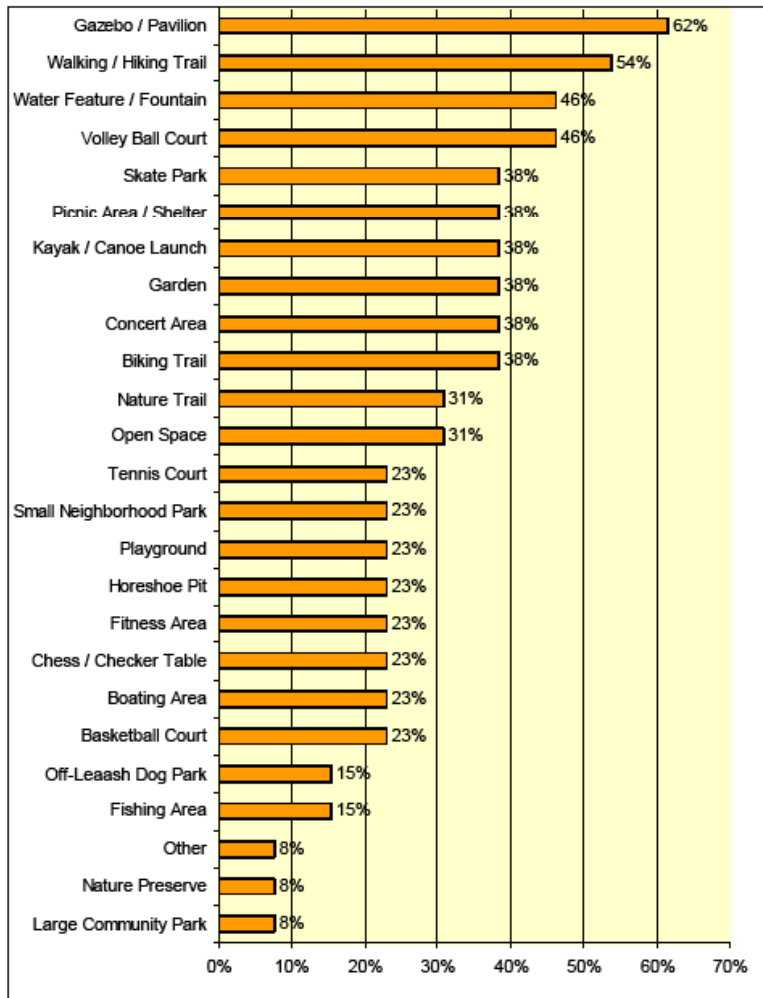
- Comments include: Great Place to jog & Play tennis, Love to play tennis in Gilchrist Park, Wide open area make it easier for functions





10. What FACILITIES or EQUIPMENT would you like to see added to the City of Punta Gorda Park Systems?

- Other: Soccer



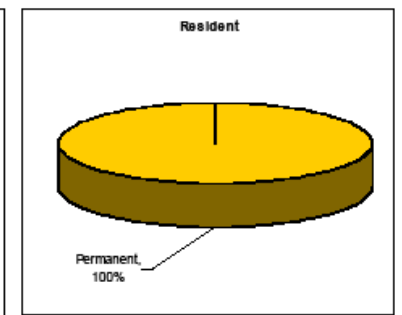
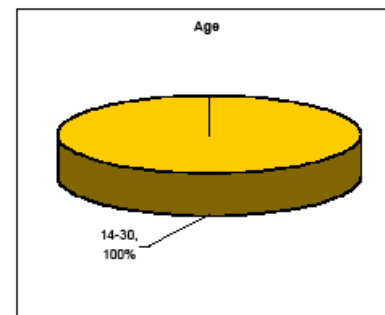
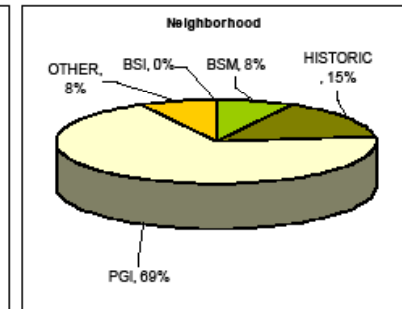
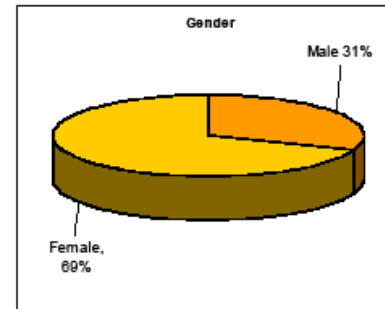
11. What do you think the City of Punta Gorda should do to improve its Park and Recreation System?

- More things for teenagers
- Make the parks cleaner
- Add a playground area in PGI
- Should offer more Bike trails
- Need some BMX trails

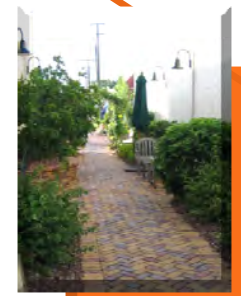
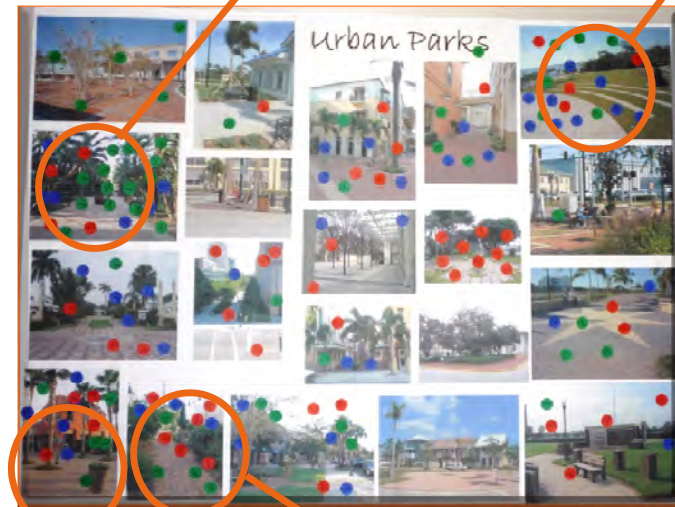
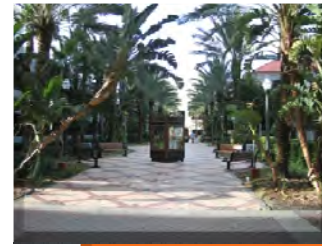
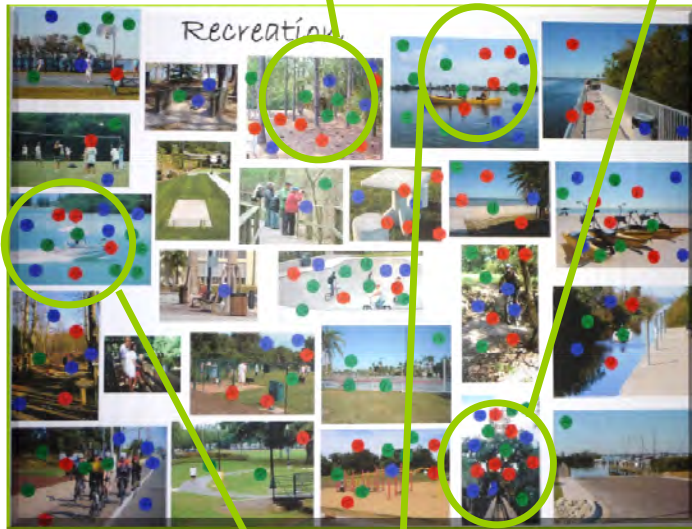
Additional Comments & Suggestions:

- Additional parking at Gilchrist park

Please tell us about yourself:



# Recreation



# Urban Park

# *Stakeholder Input*



Stakeholder meetings were arranged with a variety of local organizations, businesses, and community partners to derive usability objectives from a business perspective and to gain commitment from the community.

The following pages contain the information collected from the stakeholders about their perception of the purpose of the Park System.



# Stakeholder Findings



## Park Opportunities

Parks & recreational open spaces provide opportunities for both active recreation, such as organized and informal sports, and passive recreation. Despite the relatively small quantity of parkland in the City of Punta Gorda, a wide range of outdoor recreation opportunity exists. Those stakeholders polled through stakeholder meetings, the survey and the charrette identified areas where the City could purchase and develop parklands. Each area reflects the characteristics of development patterns, neighborhood types and landscape ranges. These areas range from vacant lands located at the south and west end of the City near Burnt Store & Burnt Store Meadows to vacant waterfront opportunities in the north and east end of the City.

- Park in the area of Burnt Store Meadows to be available for future school
- No pools for schools but would like to be able to use the facility for swim teams
- Park in connection with Fire Station 2
- Park over by Alligator Creek on Taylor Rd.
- Gateway Feature at Environmental Park Area along Burnt Store Rd Boardwalk
- Beach Area on Environmental Lands (annexed property) (City southwest side)
- Community Park Green space @ north end of Colony Point
- Existing Dog Park: Berm between large & small dogs
- Neighborhood Play Area between the two 41's
- Develop a boater friendly beach along the City's southwest annexed environmental lands



### Cultural / Events

There was a strong focus on cultural arts center which could create a visible and deliberate image for Punta Gorda that embraces the performing, visual, & cultural arts. It was noted that several groups and organizations share a common hope. This hope is to see Punta Gorda integrate the performing, cultural and visual arts into the fabric of the city and to express an interest in placing arts and culture on the main stage of our city's marketing strategy.

- Triathlon Uses
- Commercial Cultural Arts Center @ Bayshore Bldg

### Revenue Sources

At this time the City's main funding sources for parks and recreation are impact fees, ad valorem and grant funds. It would be great to be able to apply for more funding through a series of grants or the development of another revenue source. The ability to have additional funding would assist the City in completing the vision that this Master Plan expresses.

- Special Events GREAT
  - Allow night time gatherings
- Pay for Parking
- User Fees

### Business

The City would greatly benefit from exploring marketing strategies that join/link/connect other industries together. This could be done in a variety of ways from zoning amendments which allow for retail and dining opportunities to land use changes which promote preservation of natural areas. The implementation of marketing strategies would allow Punta Gorda to market itself as a boater's destination and enhance its viable economies such as traditional fishing, tourism and sports fishing. In addition, a successful marketing strategy would enable Punta Gorda to enhance its visibility as a boater's destination and attract cruising boaters on the intra-coastal waterway.

- Improve zoning and LDR's Retail & dining opportunities
- Preserve areas to maintain good fishing to attract tourists



### Park Activities / Needs

The City had never done a needs analysis study on park activities for Punta Gorda. The February Parks & Recreation Charrette provided numerous input from residents and businesses alike as to what people were interested in doing during their leisure time.

- Borrow-A-Bike Program
- Maybe try Yoga/Karaoke
- Band Shell for Concert Opportunities Community Arts, Performing Arts Center for Children, Arts Park
- Need beach areas along Gilchrist and Best Western
- Teens need venues (Teen Clubs)
- Bocci, Croquet, Disc Golf
- Fitness stations at Gilchrist, Ponce & Laishley
- Water Sports Activity Center



### Design Standards

In order to distinguish between private and public parks, the City should have design standards to identify City parks. Residents were interested in establishing standard guidelines for facilities, sites, furnishings, equipment, and systems to be included in projects. These design standards would provide the guidelines that represent the minimum acceptable standards to be used in all City Parks. They should not be used as technical specifications, but they should allow for creative flexible design which will enhance development of any of the City parks.

- District Color Coding (sidewalks or use different material)
- "In" sidewalk create a "wayfinding emblem" by inserting a bronzed medallion, pavers/stamped concrete (hibiscus symbol?) into the concrete
- wider sidewalks to
  - create a more friendly atmosphere & enlarge gathering space
  - add planters
  - street furniture & Bike Racks needed
  - allow more outdoor dining
- Better design @ intersection
- Harbor Walk -May need some sort of signage in certain areas
- Kiosk points create City standard



### Maintenance / Safety

As with any project, maintenance of the completed facility and the safety of that facility need to be incorporated early on in the development process. The general appearance & maintenance of several areas was mentioned as an issue to be addressed. The desire was to see a "cleaned up area" especially around Nature Park so as to improve/increase the use of the park as well as improve the overall appearance and value of the surrounding properties.

- Use of bollards w/numbers (mile marker)
- Limited visibility problem along Patty Ave area and harbor walk (CPTED input)
- Implement CPTED principles in planning park system (Lighting & proper vegetation)
- Improve park maintenance
- Improve crosswalks & signalization across US 41
- Multi use recreational path or bridge across Alligator Creek area
- Provide signage



### Improvements

There are so many projects going on in the City that there are improvements necessary to create a complete and connected City Park System. Whether it be connections necessary from the downtown business areas to the waterfront, or sidewalks to get kids to parks or the development or redevelopment of an area park to increase its use, the park system is in need of a change. Updated amenities, development of standards for City Parks, increased shade in existing parks.

- Wide feeling w/connection to waterfront
- Sidewalks along Carmalita: Need to get kids to parks
- Cross use of facilities
- Urban Park , Plazas Performance Areas along Gilchrist side
- Better Signage & Shade @ Nature Park
- Add benches to beach and mangrove areas. Improve pavilions
- Allow dogs w/sanitary stations

## Connection

A common theme of a need for interconnectivity appeared from the information and data collected at the Charrette. Although there are a variety of parks, neighborhoods commercial centers and waterfront parks, there exists a lack of connection between the residential neighborhoods and business communities. The general consensus among the residents and business owners seemed to be to make better/safer connections using sidewalk completion, logical signalization @ appropriate locations, between the variety of neighborhoods, businesses, and venues to the parks and waterfront.

- Some connection of path from Burnt Store Rd to CHEC and across US41 through Old Burnt Store Rd to Taylor, across Taylor through private property to Airport Rd., across Airport Rd through Edison Campus to Florida Street can break left onto Myrtle and continue to US 17 or Riverside Dr. Utilize existing bus or trolley for transportation to Park System
- Need to connect School Campus to the Charlotte County Park System @ Carmalita Park (need to include bridge to cross over drainage swale)
- Connect Linear paths thru City (Taylor preferred by group do to connectivity to Harbor Walk)
- Include Nesbit in connection to waterfront
- Access improvements for bikes, paths
  - along US 41S to Cecil Webb Management Area
  - along Aqui Esta
- @ Adrienne create campus connection
- Trail Head @ Depot area for Rails to Trails
  - Connect South to Ft. Myers
  - Connect north to Arcadia



## Joint Ventures

By engaging in joint ventures the City allows for opportunities to develop and provide a variety of recreational activities which might not be able to be completed through normal budgeting processes.

- More partnerships: Baker Academy: A success Story
- IFAS (Master Gardeners) source of free/low cost landscaping & installation help
- Edison Campus: Student Appreciation Activities are well attended (Hula Hoop Contest)

# Park Type Concepts



## Environmental Park (Nature Park) Ideas

- Create Nature Map: include: nesting areas/environmental aspects/scavenger ID
  - Educational pamphlets (id H2O Monitoring Areas, flora & fauna species)
- Signage: id environmental aspects, flora & fauna, distance markers & orientation
- Add ADA restrooms/water fountains/parking areas/pavilion/picnic/bike racks/benches (w/ & w/out shade)/Sundial/ Play Area/interactive fountain
- Dog friendly leashed w/doggie bag stations
- Install native plant butterfly garden
- Concerned with protection of environment especially around Vivante
- Develop a nature trail through the environmental lands to Ponce de Leon



## Gateway Park Ideas

- Design & install fitness trail in green space north of Patty (Actual Vacant land)
- Connect Harborwalk along Patty
- Maybe develop a Historic Center (SE corner on US 41)
- Make available a kayak access point (NW Corner, Extension of Booth)
- Install traffic calming and across from hospital





### Waterfront Park Ideas

- Make the waterfront more dog friendly. Add new dog park @ Sculpture Park
- Provide teen sailing (include parking)
- Incorporate mangroves to preserve the area so as to maintain our economy of good fishing
- Provide more tennis courts
- Complete mooring field plans
- Provide tree shade cover along Harborwalk
- Park Accessible in new development where PW campus is now
- West past that develop a dog friendly area
- Further west connect meandering sidewalk into the existing bridge, enlarge bridge if necessary
- Include covered observation platform & boardwalk over the water along mangroves
- Include boardwalk east to a second observation/fishing pier
- Further east along the water, build a wide water pool surrounded by a wood deck w/shelters on the northern corners
- At the entrance to the tide water pool, restroom facilities?
- Further east, put in the kayak area behind the mangroves
- Just east of this are should be a parking area w/restrooms?
- Sidewalk/path should start from the parking area creating an internal path which will connect to the existing meandering path along Retta
- Where Shreve St. runs into Retta, design and improve storm water treatment





# *City of Punta Gorda*

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## *Parks & Recreation Design Standards*

This section contains design standards and technical specifications for a variety of facilities, furnishings, and systems to be utilized in the creation of the City Park System.

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