

IX. Conclusion



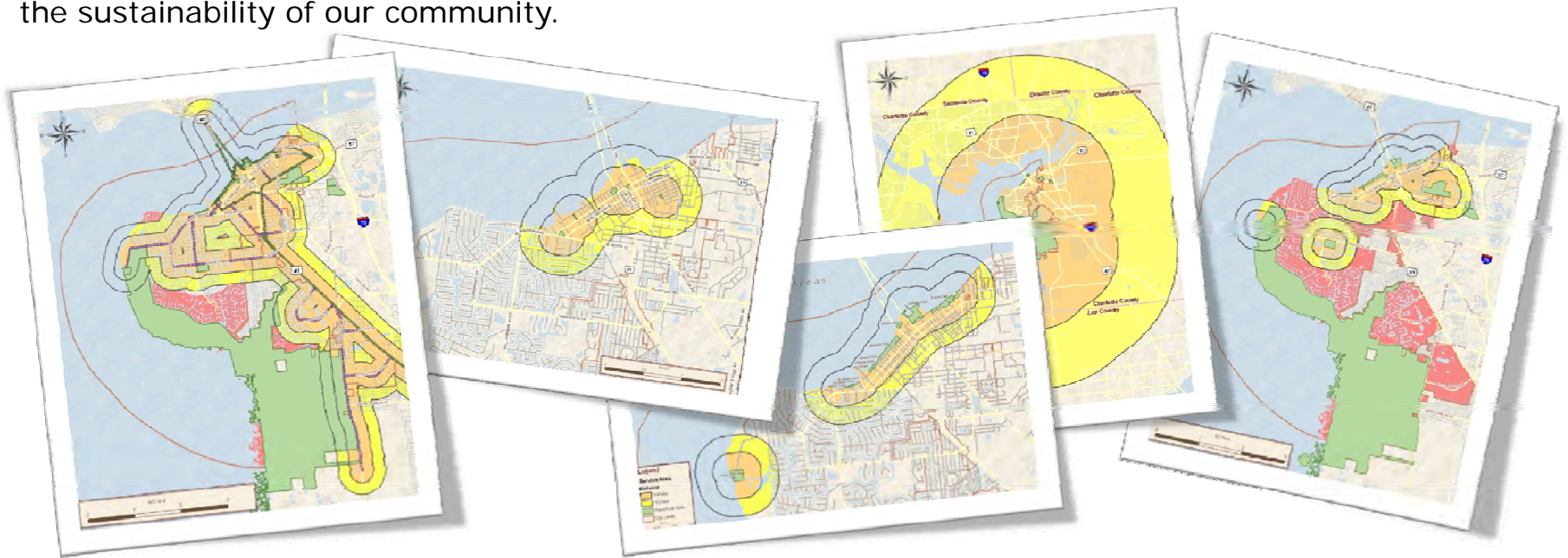
A Park can be the focal point of a neighborhood, a regional attractor, a protector of nature, or an economic engine of a community. The citizens of Punta Gorda want parks that perform all of these functions. The citizens envision a system of parks that serve all the current community desires while leaving 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.

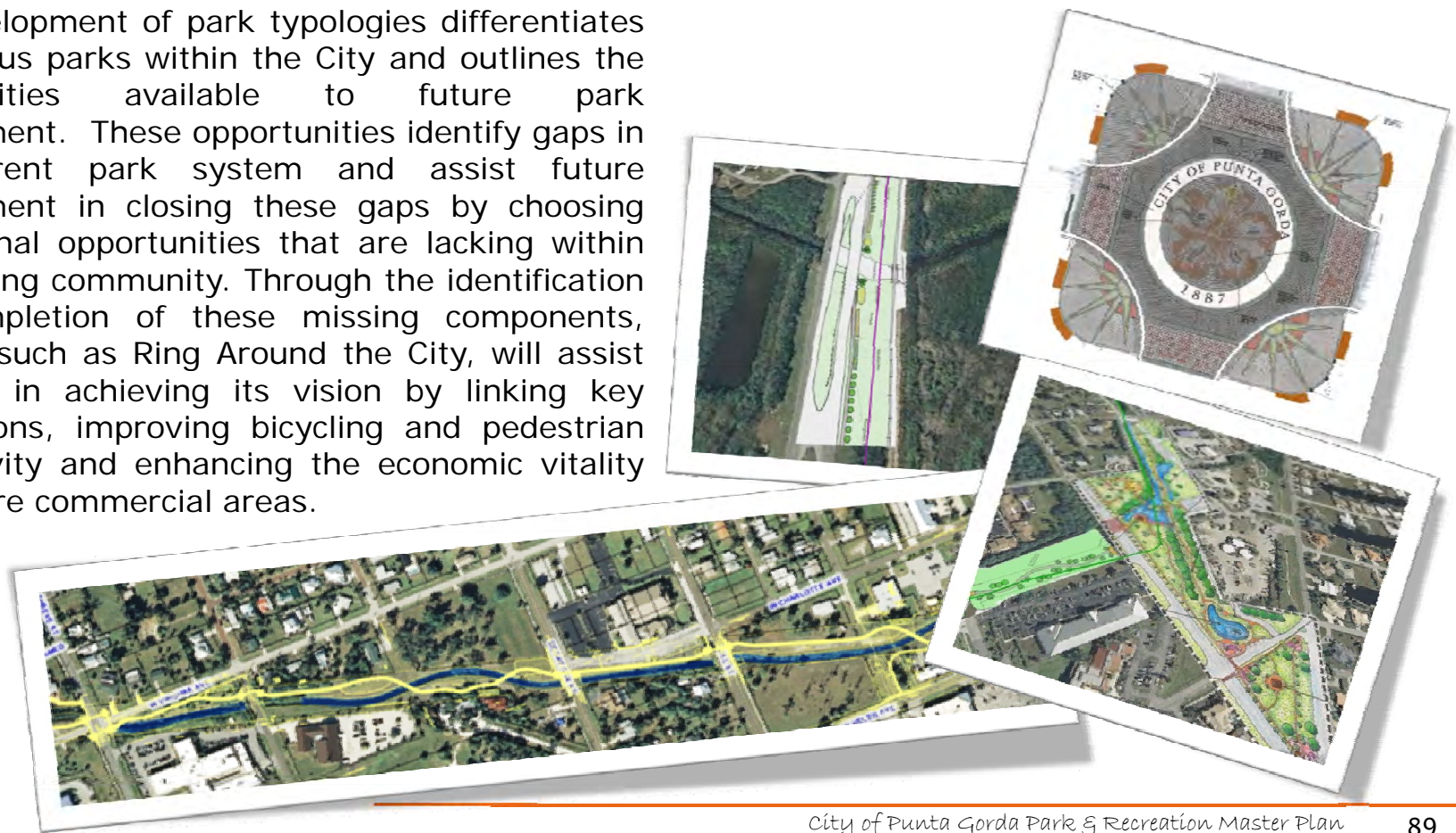
By identifying the additional maintenance, personnel, and contractual service costs associated with new park projects early on in the process, staff will be better able to prepare for the increased responsibilities. The establishment of a three tiered maintenance system will assist the City in achieving 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

