

SECTION 6

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACES

1. INTRODUCTION

This section assesses current opportunities, analyzes future needs and contains goals, objective and policy statements which shall be used by Panama City Beach to further the system of public and private recreation and open space sites available to the public. Currently, most of the area's recreational opportunities are centered around the coastal shores along the Gulf of Mexico. In order to provide the necessary recreational opportunities and keep pace with demands generated by continual growth, Panama City Beach must plan for the development of new recreational facilities. Valuable open spaces, such as the coastline, wetlands, forests and parks are situated on privately and publicly owned properties. Adequate planning must be taken to ensure the protection and proper use of these resources in the future.

2. INVENTORY: EXISTING RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE FACILITIES

The City provides an array of public recreational facilities for its residents and guests. These public facilities are mainly in the form of passive neighborhood parks, outdoor recreational and athletic facilities, and greenways and trails. The City is essentially an island isolated from Bay County by St. Andrews Bay and the Intercoastal Waterway. These natural resources, in conjunction with the 23 miles of beaches, provide many recreational activities. Recreational facilities are reflected on Exhibit Number 5.

Recreational facilities may be classified into two categories: resource-based or activity-based. Resource-based sites and facilities are defined as those centered around particular natural resources. They provide opportunities for picnicking, hiking, hunting, water sports, fishing or simply enjoying nature.

Activity-based recreational sites and facilities may be defined as those developed for the enjoyment of particular commercial and non-commercial activities. They include things such as facilities for basketball, baseball, softball, football, soccer, tennis, golf, miniature golf, amusement parks, arcades, water parks, senior citizen activities and so forth.

A. Recreational Facility Inventory.

1. Public Recreation Facilities.

There are three (3) suppliers of recreational facilities in Panama City Beach and the surrounding area. These suppliers include Panama City Beach, Bay County, and the private sector. Table 1 provides a breakdown of these facilities by supplier.

**TABLE 1
RECREATION FACILITIES
BY SUPPLIER, 2008**

<u>SUPPLIER</u>	<u>NUMBER OF FACILITIES</u>	<u>ACREAGE</u>
City of Panama City Beach	7	259
Bay County	1	11
Private	5	394
TOTAL	13	664

Source: Panama City Beach Public Utilities Department; Bay County Planning Department, City of Panama City Beach Building & Planning Department.

Table 2 identifies the location and brief description of each recreational facility.

**TABLE 2
RECREATIONAL FACILITY INVENTORY
PANAMA CITY BEACH AREA, 2007**

<u>NAME</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>ACREAGE</u>	<u>FACILITIES</u>
Dan Russell Municipal Pier	Alternate Hwy 98 (Front Beach Road)	N/A	Saltwater fishing pier
Frank Brown Park	16200 PCB Parkway	164	Facilities include: 9- softball/baseball fields 2- t-ball fields 1-Miracle League ballfield 3- soccer fields 4-multi-purpose football fields 4-tennis courts 4-outdoor basketball courts 2-indoor basketball courts 1-sand volleyball court 1-shuffle board court 1-indoor gymnasium 1-Under the Palms playground 1-large group picnic pavilion

			<p>20-small picnic shelters 1-20 acre festival site 1-freshwater youth fishing pond 4.5 miles of paved greenways and trails (Gayle's Trails) 1-fenced dog play area 3-concession stands</p>
Panama City Beach Aquatic Center	16200 PCB Parkway	5	<p>1-50 meter heated pool 1-5,000 sq. ft. kid's activity pool Classrooms, locker rooms, concessions</p>
Aaron Bessant Park		55	<p>Amphitheater with state, 1.5 miles of paved walking Trails, Picnic tables, Freshwater lake, Benches, Veteran's Memorial</p>
M.B. Miller Park	12217 U.S. 98	11.0	<p>Picnic tables - 6, Saltwater beach-equipped play area 100,000 sq ft, saltwater pier-586 feet</p>
Panama City Beach Senior Center	423 Lyndell Lane	30.0	<p>Lydnell Senior Center 1-picnic area with lawn games</p>
Scott's Field Park	Palm Circle and Azalea Drive	3.0	<p>1-picnic shelter, 4-tables, and 1-outdoor basketball court, 1-childrens playground</p>

Steel (Maggie) Park	Lantana and Petunia St.	2.0	2-Picnic Shelters, 4- picnic tables and grills, 1-shuffleboard court, 1-children's playground
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Source: Florida Department of Environmental Protection; "Florida; Bay County Public Works Department; Panama City Beach Public Utilities Department.

2. Private Sector Recreation Facilities.

Another provider of recreational facilities in Panama City Beach and the surrounding area is the private sector. While most of the facilities provided by this sector are offered on a "for profit" basis, the facilities identified in Table 3 include facilities offered by nonprofit organizations as well. It is important to note that the private sector provides virtually all of the specialized recreational facilities, including golf courses, ~~marina slips~~, and other recreational facilities.

**TABLE 3
PRIVATE SECTOR
RECREATIONAL FACILITY INVENTORY
PANAMA CITY BEACH AREA, 2007**

<u>NAME</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>ACREAGE</u>	<u>FACILITIES</u>
Holiday Golf Course	Fairway Blvd.	100	27 hole course
Hombre Golf Course	Back Beach Road	135	27 hole course
Campers Inn	8800 Thomas Drive	14.0	Campsites(developed)-206, picnic tables-110,saltwater jetty-50 feet, swimming pool-1, basketball goals-2, shuffleboard courts-2, equipped play area.
Signal Hill Golf Course	9615 N. Thomas Drive	125.0	Golf course-18 holes

Shipwreck Island	Middle Beach Road	20.0	Water Recreation Park
Water Fun Park			

Source: Panama City Beach Public Utilities Department.

The private sector also provides other types of recreational facilities that are not identified in Table 3. These facilities include miniature golf courses, go-cart tracks, amusement parks, parasail rides, and jet ski rentals.

B. Existing Open Space.

Tracts of land that are not developed are deemed suitable for passive resource-based recreation or conservation uses and are classified as open space. In order to establish and maintain the required recreational facilities for present and future populations, it is necessary to inventory and evaluate the existing open spaces that would be suitable.

Three different types of open space are recognized in Panama City Beach: pastoral, utilitarian and corridor. Pastoral space is defined as land preserved for the management, protection and utilization of natural resources on the land. The Pines and Ponds 3,000 acre reclaimed water discharge area/recreation area west of State Road 79 and Pine Log State Forest are examples of pastoral open space. Utilitarian space is that land which is not suitable for development because of hazardous conditions. Corridor spaces may be found along areas through which people travel, such as road right-of-ways. There is more than 190,000 acres of pastoral and utilitarian open spaces in and adjacent to Panama City Beach.

**TABLE 4
OPEN SPACE INVENTORY
PANAMA CITY BEACH AREA, 1999**

<u>NAME-PROVIDER</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>ACREAGE</u>
PCB discharge/recreation area	Northwest of Panama City Beach	3,000 acres
St. Andrew Bay-Gulf of Mexico	North, South and East of Panama City Beach	70,000 acres
Saltwater beaches	Gulf of Mexico	420 acres
Right of Way	City	615 acres

Source: Panama City Beach Public Utilities Department and the Building and Planning Department.

3. RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE NEEDS ANALYSIS.

A. The Recreational Needs Survey.

The existing need for recreation forms the foundation upon which the plan for future recreation and open spaces is designed. Factors influencing recreation demand are the demographic characteristics of the population, popularity of various kinds of recreation, the amount of leisure time available, and the amount of demand for recreation created by the non-resident population.

Assessment of the demand for recreation is most effectively measured through the use of recreational surveys measuring the participation by and demand on facilities.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES.

GOAL: Ensure provision of sufficient recreational facilities and open space for all citizens and visitors of Panama City Beach through the provision or encouragement of facilities.

OBJECTIVE 1: Provide public access to recreation facilities and open spaces.

POLICY 1.1: Publicize public access for the public to recreational parks and available facilities.

POLICY 1.2: Erect signs to identify City parks to direct the public to its recreational opportunities. Maintain signs for all City maintained easements with beach access.

OBJECTIVE 2: Maintain or improve existing public beach access and add additional access sites and facilities where deemed necessary.

POLICY 2.1: Maintain and update annually an inventory of public saltwater access facilities in the City and periodically survey and record conditions at those sites.

POLICY 2.2: Coordinate the need for public beach access and facilities with the Coastal Management element.

OBJECTIVE 3: Establish and promote coordination to provide and encourage recreational opportunities.

POLICY 3.1: Establish communication with appropriate government agencies and private entities regarding recreation and beach access.

POLICY 3.2: Promote coordination and cooperation through interlocal agreements which would enhance public access and recreational sites and facilities.

OBJECTIVE 4: Provide open space and recreational facilities in a cost effective manner.

POLICY 4.1: Use private resources such as volunteers, agreements with groups and organizations and donations in the development and maintenance of appropriate furnishings in recreational areas, including both public art and recreational equipment.

POLICY 4.2: Reduce maintenance costs in developing new facilities and improving existing facilities, by including the installation of low maintenance landscaping, facilities and site design.

POLICY 4.3: All acquisitions of and physical improvements to park and recreational facilities shall be consistent with the Capital Improvement element of this Plan.

OBJECTIVE 5: Provide or encourage private development of active recreational opportunities in accordance with adopted City standards for level of service.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Standard Acres/1,000 population</u>	<u>Currently Available Acres/1,000 Population (2006)</u>
Local Parks	5.0	35

<u>Category</u>	<u>Standard Facility/1,000 population</u>	<u>Currently Available Facility/1,000 Population</u>
Golf course (holes)	.35	5.40
Tennis courts	.25	0.30
Basketball courts	.04	0.44
Baseball fields	.03	1.10
Football/soccer fields	.01	0.70
Shuffleboard courts	.03	0.30
Racquetball courts	.02	0.00
Disc Golf Course	NA	0.00

POLICY 5.2: Utilize the results of recreation participation/ demand surveys conducted by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to identify recreational needs and to determine if the City is meeting the needs.

POLICY 5.3: Develop guidelines for expenditures for acquisition of new facilities and development and maintenance of existing City facilities.

POLICY 5.4: In selecting sites for future parks, give high priority to sites that concern multiple uses such as recreation, wildlife habitat, water conservation and unique natural systems or communities, shorelines, open spaces within urban areas and historic sites.

POLICY 5.5: Inventory all open space and recreational lands and facilities annually.

POLICY 5.6: Encourage the maintenance and development of existing and additional privately owned recreational facilities open to the public by making adequate provision for such uses in the Future Land Use element and providing necessary public infrastructure and services.

OBJECTIVE 6: Lands designated as open space will be protected from incompatible land uses.

POLICY 6.1: Develop a formal open space plan to include classifications for open space areas.

POLICY 6.2: Adopt Land Development Regulations which include specific open space definitions and standards addressing protection of open space, natural vegetation, landscaping, and signs, as well as the provision of use of open space for buffering.

OBJECTIVE 7: Provide for new or enhanced greenways or recreational trail systems.

POLICY 7.1: The City shall establish by acquisition and development of facilities, unpaved recreational trails along water bodies, and other areas that link environmentally significant natural areas and other uses to provide safe and pleasant public access for all citizens, including seniors, children, and the disabled.

POLICY 7.2: The City will maintain and update the Gayles' Trails master plan as appropriate, including conceptual greenway maps, that includes existing and proposed new recreational trail systems and conservation greenways to link existing and new open space, conservation and/or outdoor recreation areas. Land acquisition efforts will focus on establishing these new links and enhancing existing greenways and recreational trail systems, including the acquisition of areas for destination areas and trail heads, including parking areas.