

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Recreation is the pursuit of leisure time activities in an outdoor or indoor setting. The proper relationship in size, number, type, and location of different park and recreation areas is the primary objective for achieving a well balanced recreation system. The policies included within this plan element for resource-based and user-oriented recreational facilities are based upon the information contained within the County's *Data and Analysis* document.

(Ord. # 1991-006, 12-26-91)

The data collected for this element and analysis of this data, contained in the County's Data and Analysis document, are not part of this adopted Element, but serve to provide a foundation and basis for the formulation of this portion of the Comprehensive Plan.

(Ord. # 1991-006, 11-26-91)

The following goal, objectives and policies for resource-based and activity-based recreation facilities within the County and surrounding environs establish guidelines for the proper relationship of size, number, type, and location of the different park and recreation needs for the County. The level of service standards established within the policies provide guidelines for determining the acceptable quantities of recreational resources and facilities for the County's population.

(Ord. # 1991-006, 11-26-91)

GOAL, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

GOAL 6: THE COUNTY SHALL PROVIDE SUFFICIENT AND ADEQUATE RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES ENABLING HIGH QUALITY PARTICIPATION FOR ALL RESIDENTS AND VISITORS OF GADSDEN COUNTY.

(Ord. # 1991-006, 11-26-91)

OBJECTIVE 6.1: The County shall continue to work toward improved lake access for passive and active resource based activities along river and lake shores.

(Ord. # 2001-006, 7-17-01)

Policy 6.1.1: County parks and recreation facilities shall be designed and constructed with access ways that are consistent with the character and quality of the resources and activities within the site.

(Ord. # 1991-006, 11-26-91)

Policy 6.1.2: The County shall provide safe, operational automobile, bicycle and pedestrian access to all public parks and facilities in its jurisdiction.

(Ord. # 1991-006, 11-26-91)

Policy 6.1.3: Access to all public recreation facilities shall be designed as barrier-free as possible to accommodate accessibility by the elderly, handicapped, and very young.

(Ord. # 1991-006, 11-26-91)

Policy 6.1.4: The County shall maintain the number of access points to water-oriented recreational resources which will meet or exceed the level of service standards, contained herein, for resource-based water related activities.

(Ord. # 1991-006, 11-26-91)

Policy 6.1.5: The County shall coordinate with the Northwest Florida Water Management District and the Department of Environmental Protection in protecting and preserving Lake Talquin and its recreational resources to ensure the quality of its waters and the integrity of its shores is maintained or improved.

(Ord. # 2001-006, 7-17-01)

Policy 6.1.6 Allowable uses in lakeside recreation areas or conservation areas shall be limited to those compatible with the natural character of these areas such as passive recreation, observation areas, hiking, biking and nature interpretive trails, canoe areas and trails, and environmental education areas.

(Ord. # 2001-006, 7-17-01)

Policy 6.1.7: The County shall maintain existing access points and provide additional public access to water bodies by the following:

- A. providing lake and river shoreline access facilities (walkways, or walkovers and parking areas) where possible near existing highway river-crossings, and within new residential development along Lake Talquin.
- B. providing access to all public recreation facilities for the handicapped, elderly and the transportation disadvantaged.

(Ord. # 2004-007, 8-6-04)

OBJECTIVE 6.2: The County shall continue to improve and coordinate efforts of the public and private sector as a means of meeting the demand for increasing recreational opportunities in the County.

(Ord. # 1991-006, 11-26-91)

Policy 6.2.1: The County shall coordinate with the municipalities, the School Board, local churches, and private organizations to identify existing and projected recreational facilities and to increase the availability and accessibility of these facilities to County residents. This should be done to the maximum extent practicable where there is excess capacity in such recreation facilities prior to constructing new site/facilities.

(Ord. # 2001-006, 7-17-01)

Policy 6.2.2: The County shall include incentives for private developers to provide adequate land for parks as part of new developments or redevelopment activities. Such incentives shall include clustering, density bonuses, fast-tracking of developments, and dedication of lands in lieu-of-fees.

(Ord. # 2001-006, 7-17-01)

Policy 6.2.3: The County shall acquire and or retain a sufficient amount of acreage within each municipality and established rural residential areas or in close proximity to such areas for planning and development purposes in the provision of future public services beyond the 10 year planning period.

(Ord. # 1991-006, 11-26-91)

Policy 6.2.4: Developments of Regional Impact shall be required to provide physical improvements in addition to open space to provide recreational opportunities. These improvements may include but are not limited to tot lots, playgrounds, sport courts, or multipurpose athletic fields.

(Ord. # 2001-006, 7-17-01)

Policy 6.2.5: Residential developments may be allowed a density bonus of up to ten percent (10%) over base density for providing on site recreational amenities in addition to open space. The type and placement of the additional amenities will be a subject of the Development Order.
(Ord. # 2001-006, 7-17-01)

OBJECTIVE 6.3: The County shall plan for and provide a system of adequate parks and recreational facilities that will accommodate the existing needs and future demands of the population. This objective is to be met with a series of neighborhood parks, regional/district parks, enhanced river and lakefront access and developer provided open space or amenities in new residential developments.
(Ord. # 2004-007, 8-6-04)

Policy 6.3.1: The County will develop a master plan, including conceptual greenway maps, that include proposed new recreational trail systems and conservation greenways to link existing and new open space and outdoor recreation areas. Land acquisition efforts will focus on establishing these new links and enhancing existing greenways and recreation trail systems, including the acquisition of areas for destination areas and trail heads, including parking areas.
(Ord. # 2004-007, 8-6-04)

Policy 6.3.2: The County shall, through the annual capital improvements budgeting process, identify funding sources and allocate funds to correct or improve existing deficiencies in County-owned parks and recreation facilities in accordance with the level of service standards without decreasing the beauty of the natural environment.
(Ord. # 1991-006, 11-26-91)

Policy 6.3.3: The County shall develop a parks and recreation system based on the Neighborhood Park, District Park and Water Access classifications and shall provide acreage and facilities based on the following level of service standards:

Neighborhood Parks	2.0 acres per 5,000 population
Regional/District Parks	20.0 acres minimum per 10,000 population
Water Access Points	Near major road crossings on the Ochlokonee River and at new subdivisions on or existing ramp access locations on Lake Talquin.

(Ord. # 2004-007, 8-6-04)

Policy 6.3.4: The County shall pursue grant funding when available to provide a minimum level of amenities at the County's eight neighborhood parks. This minimum standard should include the following:

- New playground equipment;
- Security lighting;
- Rest rooms;
- Picnic shelters;
- Water fountains;
- Cookout grills;
- Walking trails with fitness stations;
- Replacement of existing basketball or softball infrastructure where these facilities currently exist;
- Stabilized parking areas; and
- Shade trees where none exist or where they need to be augmented.

(Ord. # 2004-007, 8-6-04)

Policy 6.3.4: The County shall pursue the acquisition and furnishing of regional/district parks located to provide at least one regional park per commission district. The site should address either a prominent local need or provide recreational use of a locally available amenity. Minimum facilities sought for the regional parks should include the amenities listed in Policy 6.3.4 as well as the following list of improvements:

- Wilderness or nature interpretive trails for pedestrians;
- Bicycles and equestrians
- Softball fields;
- Lighted basketball courts;
- Tennis courts;
- A multipurpose soccer/football field; and
- Other resource amenities that the individual site might dictate such as docks, landings, boardwalks, observation towers or natural/historical kiosks.

Acquisition is to be aided by grant funding where possible, gifts, foreclosures, tax liens or other mechanisms that will assist in the acquisition of lands. Park development is to be funded by grants and general revenue funds when available.

(Ord. # 2004-007, 8-6-04)

Policy 6.3.5: The County hereby establishes basic level of service standards and needs for resource-based and user-based recreation facilities as listed in Policy 8.3.1(F).

(Ord. # 2004-007, 8-6-04)

OBJECTIVE 6.4: The County shall ensure the provision of open space in the development process by Gadsden County, private enterprise, and other public agencies. This requirement shall apply to the development of new projects or the redevelopment of existing sites under a new use.

(Ord. # 2001-006, 7-17-01)

Policy 6.4.1: The County shall ensure the provision of open space in new developments by requiring Class I commercial and industrial applications as well as all major subdivisions to provide a minimum of ten percent (10%) open space and for all Class II commercial and industrial applications to provide twenty percent (20%) open space. In addition, new development and re-development along designated corridor roads shall be required to preserve at least fifty percent (50%) of the first twenty-five feet (25') of frontage for residential projects or fifty feet (50') for non-residential projects. The open space requirement for commercial/industrial parks can be shifted into perimeter buffers to better shield the development from dissimilar uses.

(Ord. # 2001-006, 7-17-01)

Policy 6.4.2: The County shall require proper buffers in the form of berms, hedges, trees, and open space. The Land Development Code will designate the size of buffers for different land uses, and establish the criteria for landscaping, tree protection and special protection zones.

(Ord. # 2001-006, 7-17-01)

Policy 6.4.3: The County shall utilize the concept and use of open space (undeveloped lands suitable for passive recreation or conservation uses) as part of the satellite system (series of parks, one to seven acres in size, strategically located throughout the unincorporated County) of tot lots and neighborhood parks.

(Ord. # 2001-006, 7-17-01) (Ord. # 2001-006, 7-17-01)

Policy 6.4.4: The County shall develop joint use plans with private facility providers to enhance access for all citizens to recreational facilities.
(Ord. # 2001-006, 7-17-01)

OBJECTIVE 6.5: By 2010, the County shall have increased the public provision, protection and enhancement of natural areas and open space as measured by the increased acreage set aside for these purposes and for resource-based and user-based recreation activities.
(Ord. # 2004-007, 8-6-04)

Policy 6.5.1: This will be accomplished by utilizing funds set aside by the County for this purpose, the Florida Forever land acquisition program, the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP), FDEP's Greenways and Trails program or other available funding resources to acquire lands identified by the County's recreation plan as priorities. Private enterprises shall be offered incentives to encourage the provision of natural areas and open space through donations or inclusion in planned community developments.
(Ord. # 2004-007, 8-6-04)

Policy 6.5.2: The County shall seek additional revenue streams to create a fund to be utilized to assist in matching state or federal sources for funding its acquisition and recreation development programs.
(Ord. # 2004-007, 8-6-04)

Policy 6.5.3: Open space and parks developed or redeveloped by the County in its recreation plan will comply with all State and Federal watershed protection, groundwater protection and surface water protection regulations.
(Ord. # 2004-007, 8-6-04)

Policy 6.5.4: The County will require all plans for development to include a preliminary survey of archaeological, cultural and historical features for those sites which are known to contain these features, or for which there is a high probability that they contain these features. The preliminary survey will be used prior to the commencement of development, including land clearing activities, to develop and implement a plan to protect these features, in coordination with the Department of State, Division of Historical Resources.
(Ord. # 2004-007, 8-6-04)

Policy 6.5.5: The County will establish as a priority, the acquisition of land that contains natural communities, as described in the "Guide to the Natural Communities of Florida," and listed species habitat. To the extent that these areas are available and suitable for the intended recreational use, lands so listed will gain priority over other similar sites.
(Ord. # 2004-007, 8-6-04)

Policy 6.5.6: The County land will support the acquisitions identified in the Northwest Florida Water Management Districts' Five Year Plan to coordinate that program with the County's resource based recreation planning.
(Ord. # 2004-007, 8-6-04)

Policy 6.5.7: In developing each new property acquired for recreation purposes, the County will restore or enhance seventy-five (75%) of degraded natural areas. This will include establishing a program for the removal of non-native vegetation with annual monitoring.
(Ord. # 2004-007, 8-6-04)