

## 7. RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

**Purpose.** The purpose of this element is to plan for a comprehensive system of public and private recreation opportunities, and to provide areas of open space.

**GOAL 7A: PROVIDE EQUITABLE, ADEQUATE, AND APPROPRIATE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH PROVISION OF A COMBINATION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FACILITIES.**

**Objective 7.1:** Provide public access to identified recreation sites, including public access to beaches.

**Policy 7.1.1:** The City shall provide recreation sites and facilities consistent with the level of service standards established in Policy 7.3.10.

**Policy 7.1.2:** The City shall provide signs designating recreation sites and shall allow access to such sites during reasonable hours of operation.

**Policy 7.1.3:** The City shall provide adequate parking for all City-owned recreation sites.

**Policy 7.1.4:** The City shall guarantee reasonable public access to City-owned natural areas.

**Policy 7.1.5:** The City shall maintain or increase the number of public water access points, including boat ramps, as recognition of these access points' importance to the City's economy.

**Policy 7.1.6:** The City shall coordinate coastal access points with the Future Land Use, Conservation, and Coastal Management Elements.

**Objective 7.2:** Provide for a functional mix of both public and private recreation sites and facilities to accommodate recreation demand.

**Policy 7.2.1:** The City shall accept donations, contributions, volunteer assistance, or other forms of fiscal or physical private assistance in meeting recreational needs.

**Policy 7.2.2:** The City shall encourage the use of public-private partnerships when acquiring land or developing park sites.

**Policy 7.2.3:** The City's park and recreation space is depicted on Map 7.1.

**Objective 7.3:** Provide, or require the provision of, adequate recreation sites and facilities consistent with level of service standards and population demand.

**Policy 7.3.1:** By 2020, the City shall adopt a Park and Recreation Plan to ensure the provision of additional park space by utilizing existing resources and identifying new funding sources.

**Policy 7.3.2:** The City shall prepare an inventory that identifies potential sites for acquisition to meet level of service standards for park space, as deemed necessary by annual population estimates.

**Policy 7.3.3:** The City shall work with the School Board to ensure the availability of school recreational sites for City residents, pursuant to the Interlocal Agreement for School Concurrency.

**Policy 7.3.4:** The City shall utilize available sites and facilities belonging to other units of government, to meet level of service needs after joint use agreements have been executed.

**Policy 7.3.5:** The City shall evaluate using lands acquired for public works projects (e.g. drainage retention areas) as recreation or open space sites.

**Policy 7.3.6:** The City shall use local, state, or federal grant funds, including, but not limited to, those available through the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program and/or the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program in providing recreation sites and facilities.

**Policy 7.3.7:** The City shall require that developers of residential development projects provide acreage for a recreation site or sites

- a) Developers of projects consisting of over 50 residential units and less than 100 units shall provide land area to be dedicated for public or non-commercial private recreation use. Land area dedicated for recreational use shall be at least equal to the size of the average of the lots in the subdivision, or a minimum of one-half acre, whichever is greater. Such recreational space shall be located on upland property with the same site characteristics as the subdivision or project site as a whole.
- b) Developers of projects consisting of more than 100 residential units shall provide recreation space with a ratio listed in policy 7.3.7(a) at 50 residential unit increments so that for every 50 units, at least one-half acre of land or the average size of one lot is dedicated to park space.

**Policy 7.3.8:** The City shall adopt, in the Land Development Regulations, criteria establishing under what conditions a developer may pay a fee in lieu of dedicating land for recreational use and establishing the fee schedule.

**Policy 7.3.9:** The City shall utilize recreation sites and facilities to augment and promote other City objectives, including acquisition of sites intended to protect environmentally sensitive lands.

**Policy 7.3.10:** Level of Service Standards for parks and recreational space shall be:

- a) There shall be 1 acre of neighborhood park space per 1,000 residents.
- b) There shall be 2.75 acres of community park space per 1,000 residents.

**Policy 7.3.11:** A neighborhood park is defined as a minimum acreage of one-half acre and a maximum of 2.5 acres.

**Policy 7.3.12:** A community park is defined as a minimum acreage of 2.5 acres.

**Policy 7.3.13:** The City shall not cause the level of service standard for park space to degrade below the adopted LOS standards through the annexation of residential uses.

**Policy 7.3.14:** The City shall retain all public park land and waterfront rights-of-ways in perpetuity, unless a land swap of equal or greater value and acreage to the City's park inventory is agreed upon by the City Commission. The vacation of a waterfront right-of-way may occur as specified in Policy 5.7.3 of the Coastal Management Element.

**Policy 7.3.15:** By 2020, the City shall implement a program to acquire property for neighborhood parks consistent with the Park and Recreation Plan.

**Objective 7.4:** By December 2015, include specific and detailed standards, in the Land Development Regulations, for provision of open space

**Policy 7.4.1:** The City shall require, in its Land Development Regulations, that open space be provided by public and private developers.

**Policy 7.4.2:** Open space is defined as any land or water not covered by buildings, parking, or traffic circulation paving, including spaces between buildings, and consists of pervious surface.

Open space requirements shall be as described in the Future Land Use Element and / or the Land Development Regulations. Open space categories shall be described as follows:

- (a) Private Open Space is land adjacent to private residences commonly called yard space.
- (b) Public Open Space is publicly-owned land such as utility easements, recreation areas, grounds for public buildings, dedicated public easements, or other similar areas available for use by the general public. Public open space may include non-estuarine or other non-salt water bodies.
- (c) Common Open Space is privately-owned land set aside for common use by residents of a development.

**Policy 7.4.3:** The City shall coordinate with public utility providers and state agencies on use of properties or easements for open space and recreation purposes.

**Objective 7.5:** Provide appropriate recreation facilities for the full range of citizenry needs.

**Policy 7.5.1:** Incorporate applicable Americans with Disabilities Act requirements in the design of new parks and facilities.

**Policy 7.5.2:** The City shall locate and utilize recreation sites in areas that will stimulate ancillary economic activity and promote redevelopment or rehabilitation efforts.

**Policy 7.5.3:** The City shall design park areas using the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles as a measure of safety for City residents.

**GOAL 7B: PROTECT AND ENHANCE LOCALLY AND REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT NATURAL RESOURCES WHEN DEVELOPING PARK SITES.**

**Objective 7.6:** Conserve locally and regionally significant natural resources through the use of sustainable development practices when improving park and open space.

**Policy 7.6.1:** The City shall utilize low-maintenance designs, landscaping, and equipment for recreation sites.

**Policy 7.6.2:** Restoration of degraded environmentally sensitive recreational sites acquired by the City shall be considered whenever financially feasible and when restoration would not interfere with the main passive recreational activity of the site. Restoration to the

site's natural state may include, but is not limited to, removal of non-native vegetation, aquatic weed control, restoration or creation of aquatic grass beds, re-forestation, shoreline or dune restoration, or restoration of natural hydrology.

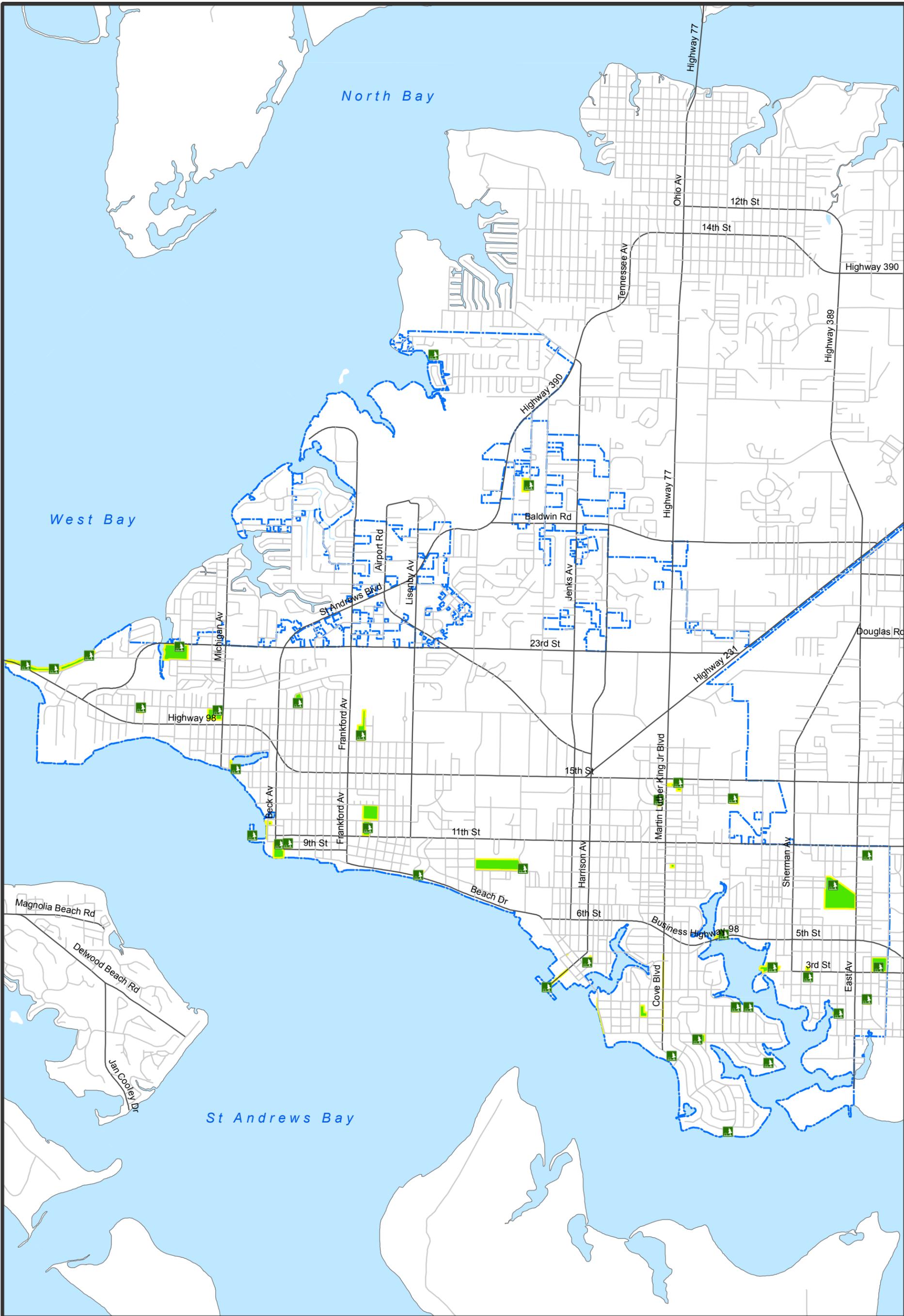
**Policy 7.6.3:** The following activities shall be considered when developing environmentally sensitive sites acquired by the City: nature trails or boardwalks, waterway trails, interpretive displays, educational programs, and wildlife observation areas.

**Policy 7.6.4:** When acquiring environmentally sensitive sites for passive recreational purposes, the City shall give priority to sites:

- a. That are adjacent to publicly owned sites so as to create natural area greenways.
- b. That feature unique geological and historical resources.
- c. That contain any of the following: rare or threatened vegetative communities, listed animal species or habitats of listed species, or beach or shoreline ecosystems.

**Policy 7.6.5:** The City shall designate ecologically sensitive areas, where little or no development is permitted or anticipated, as Preservation on the Future Land Use Map.

**Policy 7.6.6:** The City shall annually implement strategies and practices to maintain the City's designation of "Tree City USA."



**Parks and Recreation Spaces**

**City of Panama City**



**Map 7.1**

Comprehensive Plan 2035

Date: November 2010  
Source: City of Panama City

**Legend**

-  Parks and Recreation Spaces
-  Panama City City Limits

