

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this element is to establish the role of the parks, recreation, and open space system within Fernandina Beach. Parks, recreation facilities, and open space not only assist with the recreational needs of citizens and visitors, but they also contribute to the quality of life within the community by providing access to natural resources, sports facilities, and leisure activities. A formalized parks and recreation system has been in place in Fernandina Beach since as early as the 1950's.

Providing community parks and recreation is a valuable public service. The National Parks and Recreation Association (NPRA) finds three values that make parks and recreation essential public services to communities (www.nrpa.org). The first is economic value. NPRA finds that parks improve the local tax base and increase property values, and businesses cite quality parks and recreation as one of the top three reasons to relocate to an area. Additionally, the ecology of parks, such as trees and wetlands, contribute to a local economy by providing ecosystem services. Parks and recreation not only generate direct revenue for a community through fees, but also contribute to indirect revenue through special events, tournaments, and festivals which generate economic activity in other sectors such as tourism.

Secondly, NPRA finds that parks and recreation provide community health and environmental benefits. Parks and recreation facilities provide avenues for physical fitness for children, youth, adults, and seniors. Providing places for physical fitness can improve community health and increase the number of residents who engage in exercise. Visits to parks have been shown to reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and contribute to an overall sense of well-being by visitors. The health of the environment is also increased, as parks and protected open space or public lands can improve water quality, protect groundwater, prevent flooding, improve air quality, provide buffers to development, and protect wildlife and their habitat. This healthy environment in turn provides a place for children and families to connect with nature and enjoy the outdoors. This connection with the natural world has been shown to contribute to physical and mental health both in children and adults. The recently launched federal initiative "America's Great Outdoors" and the growing influence of organizations such as the Children and Nature Network highlight the importance of access to the natural environment.

Lastly, NPRA finds that parks and recreation are socially important. Availability of parks and recreation services are often utilized to determine how livable communities are, and contribute to the perception of a community having a good quality of life. Parks and recreation areas provide gathering places for communities, regardless of age or economic status. In the past ten years, voter approval rates for bond measures to acquire parks and conserve open space nationwide have exceeded 75%, which illustrates a high level of public support for parks and open space. Parks and recreation areas are important to communities and contribute to a sense of civic pride.

Parks and recreation as a public service is provided at all levels – federal, state, and local. In the Florida Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) (2008), the State acknowledges that municipal governments play a primary role in providing user-oriented recreation opportunities in Florida (SCORP, 3-40). **User-oriented recreation** can be provided in a variety of locations and involves activities such as golf, tennis, baseball, basketball, shuffleboard, volleyball, soccer, pool swimming, and playground activities (SCORP, 1-3). This is in contrast to **resource-based recreation**, which cannot be located anywhere and instead depends on a combination of elements in the natural or cultural environment. Examples include hiking, fishing, camping, boating, surfing, biking, nature study, and visiting historical or archaeological sites. While the SCORP indicates resource-based recreation is often managed at the state or federal level, Fernandina Beach is unique in being able to provide and manage both user-oriented and resource-based recreation. Maintaining this variety of recreational opportunities available to citizens and visitors is essential in the comprehensive planning process.

ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

Under the most recently updated City Comprehensive Plan (2004), the level of service standard for parks and recreation read "[t]he level of service standard is 7.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents." The Evaluation and Appraisal Report recommendation was to increase the acreage to 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. However, in further evaluating this level of service standard, it does not adequately address parks, recreation, and open space needs in Fernandina Beach. "Parkland" is not defined, and it does not take into account the classification of parks and recreation facilities by the City.

The City Parks and Recreation Department currently utilizes several classifications to identify the type of park or recreation facility available: heritage, community, public access, neighborhood, conservation, open space, pocket, and beach. Table ROSE-1 identifies and classifies the following parks, recreation facilities, and open space as follows:

Table ROSE-1 Fernandina Beach Recreational Amenity Functional Classification

Park/Facility/Open Space	Type
Amelia Island Lighthouse	Heritage
Atlantic Park	Community
Beach Accesses	Public Access
Central Park	Community
Egans Creek Park	Neighborhood

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Egans Creek Greenway	Conservation
Hickory Street Park	Neighborhood
Ilan Circle	Open Space
MLK Park	Community
Main Beach Park	Community
Ash Park	Pocket
North Beach Park	Beach
Peck Fields	Neighborhood
Seaside Park	Beach
Sunrise Park	Neighborhood
Ybor Alvarez Fields	Community
Downtown Beautification	Heritage
Anchor Pocket Park	Pocket
Hook Pocket Park	Pocket
Waterfront Park	Community
Bosque Bello Cemetery	Heritage

Classification of parks helps determine current availability of parks and recreation opportunities, and also helps determine future needs to accommodate the community. The SCORP utilizes the following classifications for user-based recreation facilities:

- equipped play area and tot lot – open areas with play apparatus for preschool and school-age children. It is recommended that play area serve neighborhoods of between 500 and 2500 people on a minimum of a ¼ acre at a site adjoining an existing recreation facility or elementary school.
- neighborhood park – “walk to” park, generally located along streets where people can walk or bicycle without encountering heavy traffic. These serve the population of a neighborhood in a radius of up to ½ mile, and should have at least two acres for each 1,000 population. The size usually ranges from 5 to 10 acres, and serves a population of up to 5,000.
- community park – “ride to” park, located near major streets. These parks are designed to serve the needs of four to six neighborhoods, and serve an area with a radius of up to three miles, or a service population of up to 25,000. A minimum of 20 acres for each community park is recommended, with two acres per 1,000 population. A minimum of 5 acres is recommended.
- urban open space – landscaped or natural open areas located within built-up areas. These sites may serve populated areas ranging in size from a single neighborhood to an entire city. Urban open space areas may vary from 1/10 of an acre to several acres depending on intended use.
- urban-district park – designed to serve the recreation needs of several communities, a city, or county, and usually provides resource-based areas and facilities. Examples are a zoo, golf course, or botanical garden.
- regional park – large, resource-based areas that serve two or more communities or counties and are within an hour’s driving distance of residents that they serve. A space allowance of 20 acres per 1000 population is suggested. The park should serve a population of over 100,000 and range in size from a minimum of 250 acres to several thousand acres. The location is dependent on the availability of high quality natural resources.
- beach access site – support facilities for public-owned beaches. Sites may range from 10 to more than 100 feet in width, and parking may or may not be available. Three parking spaces should be provided for every 100 square feet of beach at public access points. A distance of ½ mile between access sites has been developed as a guideline for the spacing of access sites.

No specific descriptions are available for resource-based facilities aside from use guidelines. The following SCORP classifications are utilized for resource-based facilities:

- freshwater and saltwater beach
- freshwater and saltwater piers or catwalks
- boat ramps – freshwater and saltwater
- camping facilities (RV/trailer and tent)
- picnic tables
- recreational trails
- archaeological and historical sites
- hunting land

It is **recommended** that the City evaluate existing facilities under the SCORP classification system and fully incorporate this methodology in any inventory of facilities in order to be more standardized. While utilizing the City’s classification methodology will assist in creating more specific levels of service for this comprehensive plan update, it is additionally **recommended** that any master planning efforts take into account the SCORP methodology and adjust levels of service standards based on any changes.

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User-Based Recreation Facility	Type of Facilities Available
<p>Main Beach Park <i>Main Beach Park is the largest beach park within the City, offering many recreational opportunities. Like Central Park, many community events are also held at Main Beach Park.</i></p>	<p>Playground 2 Volleyball Courts Outdoor Multipurpose Courts Skate Park Picnic Shelters Boardwalk Gazebos Restrooms Showers Water Fountain</p>
<p>Egans Creek Park <i>This park offers open space and limited recreation directly adjacent to Egans Creek.</i></p>	<p>Baseball Practice Field Open Recreation Field Playground Picnic Tables</p>
<p>Sunrise Park <i>Sunrise Park offers limited recreation adjacent to Egans Creek.</i></p>	<p>Playground Open Space Picnic Tables</p>
<p>Seaside Park <i>Seaside Park is a beach access point at the end of Sadler Road. This access is larger than many of the other beach access points and offers pavilions, picnic tables, and limited open space.</i></p>	<p>Pavilions Picnic Tables Open Space Boardwalk Restrooms Showers</p>
<p>North Beach Park <i>Like Seaside Park, North Beach is larger than most access points and offers pavilions and picnic tables in addition to a boardwalk to the beach.</i></p>	<p>Pavilions Picnic Tables Boardwalk</p>
<p>Ash Street Park <i>This small park adjacent to City Hall offers limited picnic seating.</i></p>	<p>Picnic Tables</p>
<p>Anchor and Hook Pocket Parks <i>The two pocket parks are located off Centre Street downtown and offer landscaped seating areas.</i></p>	<p>Benches</p>

ROSE-3 Resource-Based Recreational Sites in Fernandina Beach

Resource-Based Recreational Sites	Uses Available
<p>Egans Creek Greenway <i>This 300-acre natural area alongside Egans Creek is preserved in an undeveloped state for passive recreational use.</i></p>	<p>Biking Hiking Bird Watching Kayaking</p>
<p>Golf Course <i>The City's 27-hole Golf Course is operated as an individual department within the City. The golf course offers tee times, tournaments, and instruction.</i></p>	<p>Golfing Driving Range</p>
<p>Fernandina Harbor Marina <i>The City's Marina is operated by Westrec Marinas and is the first stop in Florida for boaters traveling south. The Marina offers 60 slips and a mooring field.</i></p>	<p>Boating</p>
<p>City Boat Ramp <i>Located at the foot of Ash Street, this public boat</i></p>	<p>Boating</p>

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<i>ramp is the only boat ramp within City limits. This boat ramp is currently within the downtown waterfront park area.</i>	
Beach Accesses <i>The City maintains 48 public beach access points.</i>	Swimming Surfing Walking/Running Multipurpose Use
Downtown Waterfront Park <i>This park along the Amelia River is in the early phases of construction. A master plan has been adopted by the City for this park.</i>	Boating Walking Nature Study Multipurpose Use
Amelia Island Lighthouse <i>This 19th-century lighthouse is still active and is open to the public for limited touring.</i>	Heritage Education Maritime Education
Ilan Circle <i>This small open space is located within a neighborhood.</i>	Open Space
Bosque Bello <i>Dating to approximately 1798, this historic cemetery is still utilized. The historic section offers opportunities to learn about the community's heritage in a quiet, natural landscape.</i>	Heritage Education Walking Nature Study

PUBLIC ACCESS

Maintaining public access to the water is an important mission to the City, which is a Waterfronts Florida Partnership Community. One of the program goals of Waterfronts is to ensure and protect public access. Currently, the City offers 48 public beach access points. No fee or permit is required to utilize these access points or their parking, and they are operated on a first-come, first-served basis. Beach accesses are currently the only public access type that is inventoried. It is **recommended** that the City inventory also include any public access points to the Amelia River and Egans Creek, and adopt level of service standards for all public access types. Additionally, it is **recommended** that boating and waterway needs be better addressed within the parks and recreation system.

Table ROSE-4 Beach Access Locations in Fernandina Beach

ACCESS	STREET NAME	WALKOVERS	HAND RAILS	RAMPS	PARKING	FOOTPATH	TRASH CAN	PROPERTY DIMENSIONS	ACREAGE	ACCESSIBLE	RENOVATED	CONSTRUCTED
	N KIMBERLY	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO					
16N	FERRIERA	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	50X50	.50		2008	
n/a	LOWENSTIEN	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO					
n/a	COOPER	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO					
12N	NORTH BEACH	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES		1.37	YES		2002
	EAST 8 TH ST.	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES					2006
	EAST 7 TH ST.	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES					2006
9N	EAST 6 TH ST.	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES					
	EAST 5 TH ST.	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO					
	EAST 4 TH ST.	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES					2007

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		WALKOVERS	HAND RAILS	RAMPS	PARKING	FOOTPATH	TRASH CAN	PROPERTY DIMENSIONS	ACREAGE	ACCESSIBLE	RENOVATED	CONSTRUCTED
ACCESS	STREET NAME											
6N1	EAST 3 RD ST.	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES					
	EAST 2 ND ST.	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES					2007
4N	EAST 1 ST ST.	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES					
PARK	DOLPHIN/MB	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES			YES		
1	NASSAU	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	35X200	.18			
2	AMELIA	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	35X250	.20			
5	ALABAMA	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	60X50	.06			
6	NEW YORK	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	60X50	.06			
8	MARYLAND	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	60X50	.06			
9	JASMINE	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	60X50	.06		05-06	
10	WISCONSIN	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	25X75	.04		05-06	
10S	KENTUCKY	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	25X85	.04			
11	COLORADO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	25X100	.05			
13	*JEFFERSON	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	10X100	.03			
14		NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO					
15	MADISON	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	10X150	.03			
16	CLEVELAND	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	10X150	.03			
18	ROOSEVELT	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	10X250	.10		2010	
19		NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	10X50				
Park	SEASIDE PARK	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	100X330	2.7	YES		2003
21	JOHN ROBAS	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	25X375	.22		2002	
21S	B STREET	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	25X335	.18			
22	C STREET	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	25X340	.19			2007
23	D STREET	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	25X355	.20		2009	
24	*ASKINS	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	50X415	.48		2005-06 2008	
25	*MIZELL	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	50X486	.56		2007	
27	*ALLEN	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	50X505	.58		2007	
28	N. CASINO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	50X530	.60		2005-06	
29	S. CASINO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	50X540	.62		2007	
30	*SIMMONS	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	50X550	.63			

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		WALKOVERS	HAND RAILS	RAMPS	PARKING	FOOTPATH	TRASH CAN	PROPERTY DIMENSIONS	ACREAGE	ACCESSIBLE	RENOVATED	CONSTRUCTED
ACCESS	STREET NAME											
31	*HUTCHINS	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	50X380	.44			2005
33	OKLAWAHA	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	40.485	.44			
34	MANTANZAS	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	40X500	.45	YES		2006
35	MANATEE	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	40X530	.49		2005 -06	
35S	*SUWANNEE	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	40X500	.46			
36	*KISSIMMEE	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	40X480	.44		2008	
37	*ALACHUA	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	50X474	.54		2009	
38	*OSCEOLA	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	40X450	.54		2010	
39	*OZELLO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	40X559	.51		2009	
40	PASCO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	40X585	.54		2002	
* ACCESS = STAIRS AT ONE END AND RAMP AT THE OTHER END												

FACILITY GUIDELINE COMPARISON

The SCORP (Appendix D: Use Guidelines, Table E-3) outlines recommended population guidelines for parks and recreation facilities. The guidelines for the facilities found within the City are identified in Table ROSE-5.

Table ROSE-5 Facility Guideline Comparison for Fernandina Beach

ACTIVITY	RESOURCE/FACILITY	POPULATION SERVED		
		Minimum	Maximum	Median
Freshwater and Saltwater Beach Activities	Mile of freshwater or saltwater sandy beach shoreline	25,000	211,200	25,000
Freshwater and Saltwater Fishing (Non-Boat)	800 feet of pier, catwalk or jetty	5,000	25,000	5,600
Freshwater and Saltwater Fishing, Power Boating, Water Skiing, Sailing	Boat ramp lane	1,500	12,500	5,000
Nature Study	Linear mile of trail	6,250	10,000	6,750
Picnicking	Picnic Area	5,000	10,000	6,000
Baseball/Softball	Baseball/Softball Field	2,000	10,000	5,000
Basketball	Basketball Court	500	20,000	5,000
Football/Soccer/Rugby	Football/Soccer Field	4,000	25,000	6,000
General Play	Equipped play area	500	15,000	10,000
	Multipurpose Field	500	10,000	3,750
	Multipurpose Court	3,000	4,000	3,500
Golf	9 hole golf course	8,000	50,000	25,000
	18 hole golf course	25,000	65,200	50,000
Swimming Pool	Swimming pool	1,000	50,000	25,000
Tennis	Tennis court	1,067	10,000	2,000
Volleyball	Volleyball court	4,000	12,000	6,000

Using the BEBR projection of 11,510 residents in 2011, an assessment of City facilities with the SCORP population guidelines finds the following:

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SALTWATER BEACH ACTIVITIES

The City has approximately six (6) miles of sandy beach shoreline within City limits. The City has no freshwater shoreline available. This is one (1) sandy beach shoreline mile per 1,918 residents, which is much better than state guideline population recommendations.

SALTWATER FISHING (NON-BOAT)

The City has zero (0) feet of pier, catwalk or jetty. This is zero feet per 11,510 residents, which is *not* within state guidelines. It is **recommended** that the City evaluate locations and options for providing freshwater and saltwater fishing opportunities. Fort Clinch, which is owned by the state and operated as a state park open to the public with an admission fee, has jetties and a fishing pier available.

FRESHWATER AND SALTWATER FISHING, POWER BOATING, WATER SKIING, SAILING

The City has 1 public boat ramp per 11,510 residents, which is within state guidelines, but close to the maximum recommended population served. It is **recommended** that the City consider adding an additional boat ramp or boat ramp lane, as well as evaluate the needs of non-motorized boating access. It is worth noting that Nassau County owns and maintains a public boat ramp contiguous to City limits, which is utilized by City residents.

NATURE STUDY

The City has 3.1 miles of linear trail, as part of the Greenway. This is one (1) mile per 3,713 residents, which is better than the recommended state guidelines. Fort Clinch, which is owned by the state and operated as a state park open to the public with an admission fee, also has nature trails available for nature study, walking or off-road bicycling.

PICNICKING

The City has six (6) picnic areas. This is one (1) picnic area per 1,918 residents, which is better than the minimum population required for a picnic area.

BASEBALL/SOFTBALL

The City has eighteen (18) baseball and softball fields (practice and playing). This is one (1) baseball/softball field per 639 residents, which is better than the minimum population required for a baseball field.

BASKETBALL

The City has four (4) basketball courts. This is one (1) basketball court per 2,878 residents, which is within the state guidelines.

FOOTBALL/SOCCER

The City has four (4) full-size football/soccer fields. This is one (1) football/soccer field per 2,878 residents, which is better than the state guidelines by a small margin.

GENERAL PLAY

The City has six (6) equipped play areas. This is one (1) equipped play area per 1,918 residents, which is within state guidelines.

The City has five (5) multipurpose fields. This is one (1) multipurpose field per 2,302 residents, which is within state guidelines.

The City has one (1) multipurpose court. This is one (1) multipurpose court per 11,510 residents, which is *not* within state guidelines. It is **recommended** that the City increase the availability of multipurpose courts.

GOLF

The City has one (1) golf course. This is one (1) golf course per 11,510 residents, which is within the state guidelines for a nine-hole course, and better than the guidelines for an 18-hole course.

SWIMMING POOL

The City has two (2) aquatic facilities. This is one (1) facility per 5,755 residents, which is within state guidelines.

TENNIS

The City has four (4) tennis courts. This is one (1) tennis court per 2,878 residents, which is within state guidelines.

VOLLEYBALL

The City has four (4) volleyball courts. This is one (1) volleyball court per 2,878 residents, which is better than the minimum state guidelines.

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

Table ROSE-6 Assessment of City Recreational Facilities with SCORP Guidelines

Exceeds Guidelines	Meets Guidelines	Deficient from Guidelines
Saltwater Beach Activities	Basketball	Freshwater and Saltwater Fishing (Non-Boat)
Nature Study	Equipped Play Areas	Freshwater and Saltwater Fishing, Power Boating, Water Skiing and Sailing (almost deficient)
Picnicking	Multipurpose Fields	Multipurpose Courts
Baseball/Softball Fields	9-hole Golf Course	
Football/Soccer	Swimming Pools	
18-hole Golf Course	Tennis	
Volleyball		

It is **recommended** that the City maintain the existing resources and facilities that are within the state population guidelines or better than the guidelines, and increase the resources and facilities that are deficient. Additionally, it is **recommended** that when the SCORP methodology for categorizing parks and facilities is adopted that the City evaluate park types against the state population guidelines. This will assist in evaluating where the City may be within guidelines or deficient in providing neighborhood parks, community parks, and similar park types.

CITY PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES

In addition to facilities, the City Parks and Recreation Department provides many services to the community. Currently, the Parks and Recreation Department offers the following youth services, senior services, and activities:

Youth Services

- Teen Center – Pool, ping pong, foosball, video games, cable TV, theme nights and concession stand
- Camp Amelia – afterschool care and summer camp
- Amelia Preschool – during school year only
- Kids night out
- After school tutoring and summer learning center
- Summer food service
- Scuba Camp
- Aquatic Camp

Senior Services

- Bridge
- Open card nights
- Senior meet and greets
- Senior trips

Activities

- Youth sports – softball and tennis
- Adult sports – volleyball, softball, basketball, tennis, and scuba diving
- Tournaments – tennis, softball, flag football, volleyball, dodgeball, horseshoes, kickball, and ultimate frisbee, Amelia Island Open Water Challenge
- Classes – karate, swim, water aerobics, tennis, weights/fitness
- Special events – carnivals, movie nights at the park or beach, Easter egg hunt, barbeque cook-off, community yard sale, family fun days, kite festival, Wild Amelia Festival

The City also provides services to the community by allowing community sports leagues to utilize City recreation facilities. The following sports programs currently use City parks and recreation facilities: Babe Ruth Baseball, Little League Baseball, Pop Warner Football, Amelia Island Youth Soccer, the Fernandina Stingray Swim Team, and the Fernandina Beach, Yulee and West Nassau High Schools Swim Teams.

It is **recommended** that the City include an objective regarding continuation of parks and recreation services.

UNIQUE CITY RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE RESOURCES

Bosque Bello Cemetery

The City Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for operating and maintaining the historic Bosque Bello Cemetery, which is included within the City's Old Town Historic District. Municipalities throughout Florida operate their municipal cemeteries through varied city departments, with parks and recreation being a common operator. Historically, cemeteries were utilized as passive leisure centers, providing opportunities for being outdoors in a maintained, peaceful setting. Beginning in the 19th century, cemeteries were planned with visitors in mind and designed to accommodate this type of recreating. While there is no evidence of Bosque Bello being planned in this manner, it does afford visitors the opportunity to experience the City's heritage in a beautiful outdoor setting, noted particularly for an extensive tree canopy.

Bosque Bello, or "Beautiful Woods," is said to have been established by the Spanish in 1798, with the oldest identifiable grave dating to 1813. Many notable citizens of Fernandina's past are buried at Bosque Bello. In 1945, the "new" section of the cemetery was added on land donated to the City, and the cemetery is still utilized. In 1987, the General Duncan Lamont Clinch Historical Society of Amelia Island completed a survey of the original section of the cemetery. This survey was updated in 1997 by the Amelia Island Genealogy Society, and included the "new" section as well. As of the 1997 survey, approximately 4000 people are buried in the "old" and "new" sections of the cemetery.

Due to the cemetery's historic significance, provisions for the ongoing maintenance and protection of the cemetery have been included in the Historic Preservation Element in addition to the Recreation and Open Space Element. It is strongly **recommended** that the Parks and Recreation Department, the Planning Department, and the Historic District Council coordinate regarding objectives and policies related to the preservation of Bosque Bello.

Egans Creek Greenway

The City Parks and Recreation Department operates and maintains Egans Creek Greenway, which was funded by a general obligation bond and the Florida Communities Trust program. The Greenway, established in 2000, is a 300 acre undeveloped park open during daylight hours for passive recreational opportunities such as walking, jogging, bird watching, and bicycling. A pavilion with restrooms and picnic area is located at the northern entrance at Atlantic Avenue, and two bridges over Egans Creek and a raised boardwalk at the south entrance at Sadler Road offer enhanced opportunities for wildlife viewing. Benches, located throughout the park, offer peaceful resting places for park users. The Greenway is zoned as conservation land and is also designated as conservation in the Future Land Use Map (FLUM).

Prior to the Egans Creek Greenway land acquisition by the City, this area was owned by multiple private land owners and was largely managed and manipulated by Amelia Island Mosquito Control. Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, Egans Creek, for which the Greenway was named, was diked, ditched, and deprived of its tidal waters to support surrounding development and flood and mosquito control efforts. In 2003, the FDOT undertook a restoration project of the 70 acres in the northern Greenway. This mitigation project restored tidal flow to the area, bringing back the salt marsh habitat that had been absent for over 50 years. Unfortunately, the tidal flow unexpectedly extended beyond the established restoration site, adversely affecting fresh water habitat to the south. Many acres of a long-established monoculture forest of red maple were affected. In 2009, FDOT completed construction of a second water control device at Jasmine Street which stemmed the flow of salt water to the south but continues to allow excess fresh water to drain to the north. The fresh water vegetation in the south Greenway is currently undergoing a successful recovery process, and this project is still under monitoring.

The easy access to the northern Greenway makes it ideal for use as an outdoor classroom for local high school and middle school classes. Both schools are located on Citrona Drive, within walking distance of the Greenway. Community-based education is emphasized via the use of graphics and regular tours, as well as information available online and at the Nature Center. Educational opportunities are presented by City staff and local volunteers. The Greenway is a tool for educating the public about the values of natural spaces, wetlands, endangered and threatened species, invasive species, and human impacts on ecosystems.

Egans Creek Greenway is part of the Great Florida Birding Trail. Users may pick up an informational brochure and map at each entrance, and brochures containing a self-guided walking tour are available at the adjacent Parks and Recreation Department administrative office on Atlantic Avenue. Information is also available on the City's website.

A management plan has been created as part of the grant funding requirements associated with the land acquisition for the project. It is strongly **recommended** that the Parks and Recreation Department ensure a management plan is created and updated for the Egans Creek Greenway, including at a minimum ensuring that it is addressed separately in the parks and recreation master planning process.

NON-CITY RECREATION FACILITIES WITHIN CITY LIMITS

Fort Clinch State Park is located within the City limits of Fernandina Beach, but is owned and operated by the State. Fort Clinch offers numerous recreational opportunities, including: beach activities, bicycling (on-road and off-road), camping, fishing, hiking, picnicking, swimming, nature study, and wildlife viewing. In addition, the Park is home to Fort Clinch, a Civil War-era fort that is open to visitors.

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

The State also owns and operates nearby Plaza San Carlos, known as Fernandina Plaza, which was the parade ground for the former site of a 19th-century Spanish fort. Although the fort is no longer present, the open grassy site allows for picnicking and beautiful views of the Amelia River. Fort Clinch State Park charges an entrance fee; however, the Plaza does not.

The YMCA facility is located within City limits, and offers swimming, basketball, exercise classes, youth activities, and exercise equipment. There is a membership requirement and fee associated with the use of the YMCA facility. Additionally, there are several privately-owned health and fitness facilities within the City that have membership requirements or fee-based services. Though accessible to City residents, the City prefers to provide a full range of services via City properties and facilities.

FUTURE NEEDS

The City provides a variety of excellent user-oriented and resource-based recreational opportunities, as well as a variety of services, to the community. However, the City does not currently have a master plan for parks, recreation facilities, and open space. In 2002, a preliminary Fernandina Beach Parks/Greenway Master Plan was undertaken by Bellomo-Herbert and Company, Inc. However, due to financial constraints, this plan was never completed. While the preliminary plan provides useful information and a helpful starting point, a new plan needs to be given priority by the City and funded through completion.

Currently, needs are identified based on a case-by-case basis. It is **recommended** that in order to provide better coordination regarding the physical infrastructure of the parks and recreation system and the types of services provided by the system that a new parks and recreation master plan be created and adopted by the City Commission. A master plan will provide a specific set of goals and programming in a way that the comprehensive planning process cannot. Master planning can evaluate existing facilities and resources under the SCORP categorization method, as is recommended, and can make provisions for addressing maintenance of existing facilities and resources and planning for steps to correct any deficiencies. Additionally, master planning can take into account any underserved neighborhoods, populations, or recreational groups and how to address those opportunity deficiencies as well. Lastly, master planning can integrate the parks system into the larger community and identify connections between the environment, community health, transportation, and infrastructure needs.