

*Recreation &
Open Space
Element*

*City of Punta Gorda
Comprehensive Plan*

2025



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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The demand for outdoor recreation and open space continues to be a challenging issue. With population and demographic trends changing in Florida, a wide variety of recreational activities are needed. Increasing populations, retired populations and all income level families are seeking leisure-time activities. Thereby leading to continued demand for a variety of recreational facilities, organized open space and other leisure related activities.

The City has a solid foundation of natural and cultural resources on which to build an expanded park and recreation system. At the time of the 1997 Comprehensive Plan's adoption, recreational demand was generally being satisfied with the exception that the local parks were deficient in some portions of the City. This occurrence was due to the uneven distribution of parks which resulted in some of the City's parks being overused while others were underutilized.

As Punta Gorda's population grows, it is important that the quality of existing facilities improves as well as increasing the amount of recreation and open space to meet the needs of the community as a whole. The current City of Punta Gorda Strategic Plan identifies some of the areas the City is interested in improving and increasing services. This is especially true in the need for the City to produce a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. In addition, the development of the City's waterfront will be critical in enhancing and revitalizing the downtown district.

The key to developing a successful park system is to determine community needs and preferences, and to adopt level of service (LOS) standards for those needs which, when implemented, will provide the land, facilities, and programs in locations that serve and satisfy the public. According to Section 9J-5.003(63), *Florida Administrative Code*, level of service is defined as the "indicator of the extent or degree of service provided by, or proposed to be provided by a facility based on and related to the operational characteristics of the facility. Level of service shall indicate the capacity per unit of demand for each public facility".

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan, scheduled for completion 2010, will provide an inventory of existing and proposed park sites. Each will be evaluated for its design as a passive or active park, and by how the community wants to use each park (for festivals, art markets, relaxing, sports activities, etc) with amenities added accordingly. The Plan will evaluate its level of service (LOS) to the residents through the Florida *State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (SCORP) a set of standards developed by the Division of Recreation and Parks of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection as well as the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) standards.

Local governments are faced with the task of providing to the community the full range of recreational opportunities. The range is large and can include everything

from cultural arts programs to nature trails. As populations grow, it becomes increasingly difficult to provide this wide range of activities. The State concentrates their primary efforts on resource-based outdoor recreation and offers to assist local governments, with a secondary effort of financial support and technical assistance.

Additional facilities and services will be needed as the population continues to grow. The provision of these facilities and services will become increasingly harder to fulfill with the limited funds available, and the limited supply of land, water, shoreline access and cultural resources available to non-recreational uses to support the expanding population.

The Parks and Grounds Division is responsible for the development, operation and maintenance of city parks and recreation facilities. Approximately 17 developed parks and recreation facilities are maintained by the department. Besides the parks, the Parks and Grounds Maintenance Division provide care and maintenance for the grounds around all; City owned buildings, on seven separate sites. The division also maintains all street trees and associated landscaping. The department operates with a maintenance staff of 16 full time employees under the direction of the Public Works Department.

Impact fees and ad valorem taxes are the City's principal funding sources for parks and recreation. Impact fees can be used only for land acquisition and capital improvements that increase the level of service. Operation and maintenance expenses typically come from ad valorem taxes. A host of other, less reliable, sources exist—mostly in the form of grants. State acquisition programs and some limited Federal funds can be used to acquire open space which may have passive recreational value. The City can supplement these funds by establishing a private civic fund to channel contributions and legacies to build parks. This fund could also help finance other projects such as museums and libraries.

The *Goals, Objectives, and Policies* section were adopted by ordinance. This section establishes an acreage-based level of service standard for parklands, identifies funding sources, proposes land management strategies, and policies concerning the acquisition of parklands. It also provides policies which implement the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 in all city recreational facilities.

II. INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The *Recreation and Open Space Element* provides a process for determining the recreation and open space needs of the community based on analysis of existing recreational facilities servicing the community and establishing goals, policies and objectives to meet future community demands. This analysis covers a wide range of factors, including: number of facilities, type of facility, size of park land, location of parks and facilities, character of the park landscape, function of the park, quality of the park and quality of the facilities.

Relationship to the City's Comprehensive Plan

There are several key connections between the *Recreation and Open Space Element* and other elements of the City's Comprehensive Plan which include the following:

- The *Future Land Use Element* provides the overall growth management strategies for the City by defining the direction and intensity of future growth and development. This element strongly influences the analysis of future recreational demand and facility needs in different portions of the City.
- The *Transportation Element* provides input on the issue of accessibility of park and recreation facilities at the neighborhood, community and city-wide levels, and on linkage opportunities between parks, open space, and alternative transportation corridors such as bikeways and pedestrian ways.
- The *Infrastructure Element* describes the availability of public water and sewer, and drainage patterns, which will greatly influence development trends within the planning horizon, influencing the analysis of recreational demand and facility need.
- The *Conservation and Coastal Planning Element* contains key data and goals concerning exceptional natural resource areas, beach/waterway access, wildlife corridors, and other issues having implications for park and recreation location criteria, potential "greenway" linkages, and water based recreation (boat launches, public marinas).
- The *Intergovernmental Coordination Element* provides opportunities to improve City collaboration and coordination with other agencies, such as the School Board, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, in the delivery of park and recreation services.

- The *Capital Improvements Element* will reflect the City's strategy for the delivery of infrastructure and other public services, which will serve a primary role in growth management and help shape future demand for recreation. In addition, the *Capital Improvements Element* establishes the five-year budget plan for park and open space capital outlay.

III. LEGISLATION

Federal Regulations

Endangered Species Act

The Endangered Species Act ESA (16 USC 1531-1544) passed in 1973 and as amended over the years provides for the conservation of endangered and threatened species of fish, wildlife, and plants, and for other purposes. The City of Punta Gorda adopted policies which support the intent of this act and operates recreational programs when viewed in their entirety, support the goals objectives and policies of the Conservation and Coastal Planning Element.

Americans with Disabilities Act ADA

Act passed July 26, 1990 to establish a clear and comprehensive prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability. The City of Punta Gorda adopted goals to conform with the intent of this act thereby ensuring that recreational programs when viewed in their entirety, prove accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.

State Regulations

Florida Statutes

Chapter 163, Part II, Florida Statutes requires the Recreation and Open Space Element; however, it provides no specific guidelines as to its content or format.

Perhaps the most profound impact to the revised *Recreation and Open Space Element* resulted from the repeal of Section 9J-5.014 Florida Administrative Code, on February 20, 1996. This section provided guidelines as what information was required to be provided by the Element as well how it was to be provided.

- Chapter 163.318(2)(b), Part II, F. S. requires:

“Consistent with public welfare, and except as otherwise provided in this section, parks and recreation to serve new facilities to serve new development shall be in place or under actual construction no later than 1 year after issuance by the local government of a certificate of occupancy or its functional equivalent. However, the acreage for such facilities shall be dedicated or be acquired by the local government prior to issuance by the local government of a certificate of occupancy or its functional equivalent, or funds in the amount of the developer’s fair share shall be committed prior to issuance by the local government of a certificate of occupancy or its functional equivalent.”

Objectives and policies address the issue of time limit in maintaining concurrency in this Element.

Local Regulations

Ordinance 1452-06

As a local regulation which affects recreation and open space, the City has an adopted Impact Fee Ordinance (1452-06) which requires development to contribute its proportionate share of funds, land, or public facilities necessary to accommodate any impacts having a rational nexus to the proposed development.

Additionally, the City utilizes a portion of Infrastructure Surtax (ISS), a one-cent optional sales tax, to fund various park improvements. In the past these funds have been used for streetscaping and park improvements.

Strategic Regional Policy Plan

The Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council adopted a Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) in 1987 and subsequently amended it in 1991, 1995 and 2002. The 2002 SRPP identifies the abundance of natural resources in Southwest Florida. These resources provide alternative recreation opportunities different from the activity based facilities of ball fields, basketball courts etc. The natural resources immediately affecting the City are Charlotte Harbor, the Peace River and Webb/Babcock Wildlife Management Area. These resources as discussed in detail in the SRPP include marine and freshwater systems that create economic opportunities, recreational opportunities providing a high quality of life important to residents and visitors. The SRPP further states that the main problem in protecting these resources is the competition for these resources among the numerous and varied users.

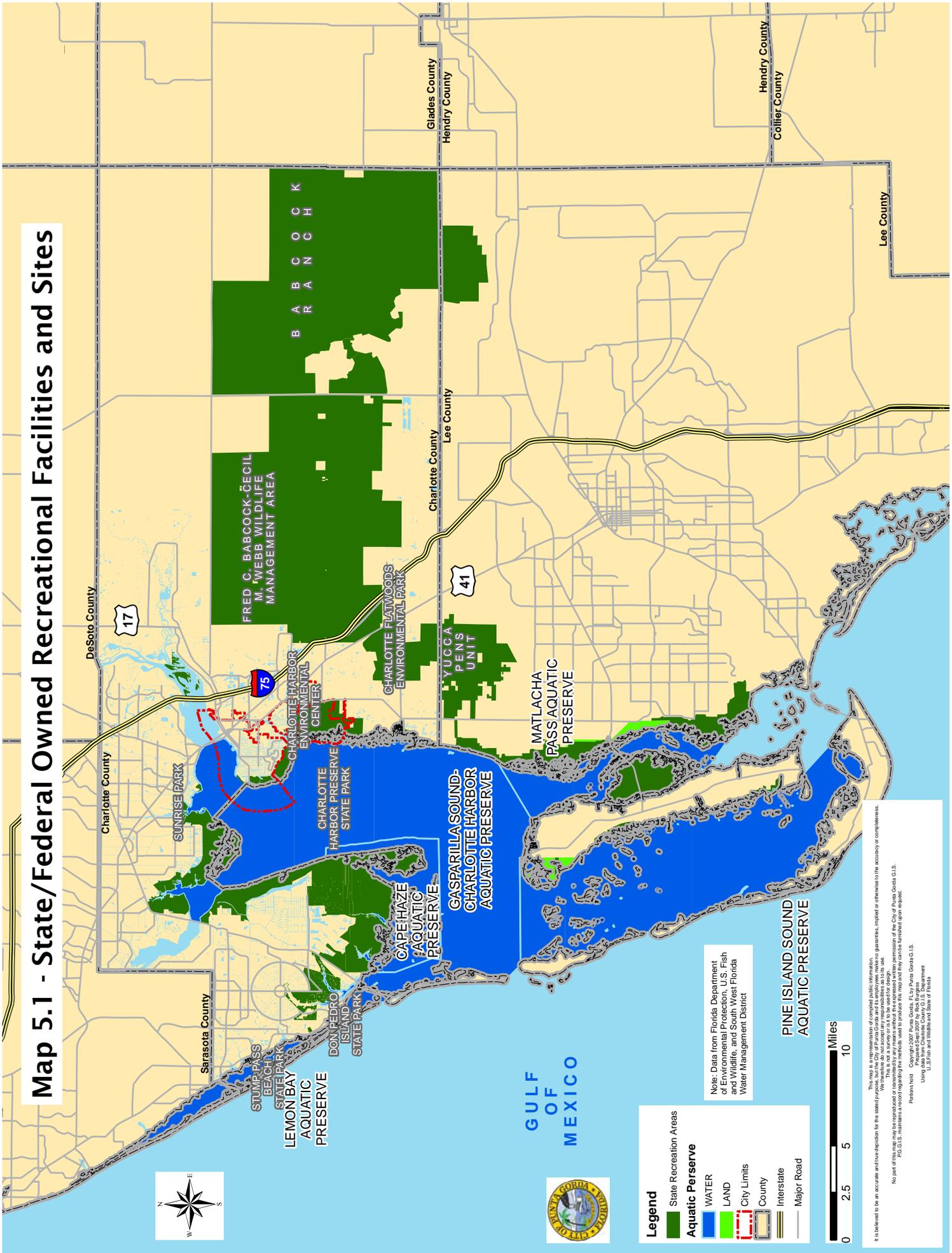
The City continues to participate in projects that protect our greater natural resources through the acquisition of regionally significant lands which provides for a variety of values and functions. Through public awareness and educational programs recommended in the SRPP, the policies of the *Recreation and Open Space Element*, and the sound growth management practices, the City will continue to proactively promote planning strategies which protect and enhance the provision of regional open space and recreation.

IV. INVENTORY

State and Federal Parks

Recreation facilities in the State and Federal Park systems are designed for mass use. These areas generally include scenic, historic, geologic, or ecologic features and are attractive to large segments of the population. A variety of these parks are available for use by the City residents. The state and federal parks immediately affecting the City of Punta Gorda are identified on Map 5.1. Table 5.1 gives a description and location of the parks in the surrounding area.

Map 5.1 - State/Federal Owned Recreational Facilities and Sites



Note: Data from Florida Department of Environmental Protection, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and South West Florida Water Management District

Legend

- State Recreation Areas
- Aquatic Preserve**
- WATER
- LAND
- City Limits
- County
- Interstate
- Major Road



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Park Name & Ownership	Affected Area	Location	Acres	Facilities Available	Recreation Type	Classification
Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park- State	County & City	Charlotte Harbor	17,375	Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center, 7.75 miles of trails, pavilion,	Resource-based	Special Purpose
Don Pedro Island State Park - State	West County	Placida Road Don Pedro Island	225	One+ mile long saltwater beach area, 1 pavilion, 1 boat dock, boardwalk, ferry landing	Resource-based	Special Purpose
Stump Pass Beach State Park – State	West County	Beach Road, Manasota Key	245	nearly 1.25 mile long saltwater beach	Resource-based	Special Purpose
Lemon Bay State Aquatic Preserve-State	West County	Lemon Bay	8,000	No land facilities, open to water related activities	Resource-based	Special Purpose
Cape Haze State Aquatic Preserve - State /Island Bay Wildlife Refuge - Federal	West County	Cape Haze/ Charlotte Harbor	11,000/20	No land facilities, open to water related activities/ 2 historic / archaeological sites	Resource-based	Special Purpose
Gasparilla Sound / Charlotte Harbor - State	County & City	Charlotte Harbor	80,000	No land facilities, open to water related activities	Resource-based	Special Purpose
Babcock Ranch (includes Conservation Easement)	East County	State Road 31	74,000	Privately operated – eco tourism	Resource-Base	Special Purpose
Charlotte Flatwoods - State	East County	US 41 and Zemel Rd	3,900	None presently	Resource-based	Special Purpose
Cecil M. Webb Wildlife Management Area – State (Includes the Yucca Pens Unit)	East County	S. of SR 74, E. of US 42, W of SR 31	79,013	1,280 acres for primitive camping, 25 acre camp sites, hunting, target range, 3 boat ramps, field trial area for hunting dogs	Resource-based	Regional
Total Acreage			273,778			

Source: Urban Design 2007

The State and Federal Government has acquired a significant amount of acreage as natural reserve and preserve land. Many acres of these tracts include an outdoor recreational component in the form of hiking trails, nature trails, and allow for other passive activities such as bird watching and photography. Regionally there is tremendous diversity of recreational opportunities.

Regional and District Parks

Regional and District parks are usually greater than eighty (80) acres and provide recreational opportunities. Development of these parks generally facilitates active recreation servicing a larger population however occasionally park development encompasses educational or wildlife management purposes.

Within the City, the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC) provides educational and passive recreational resources. The non-profit CHEC organization leases land from Alligator Creek State Preserve which forms part of a 30,000+ acre State Park Preserve bordered to the west by the Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park. The main attraction at the preserve is the area's four (4) miles of nature trails.

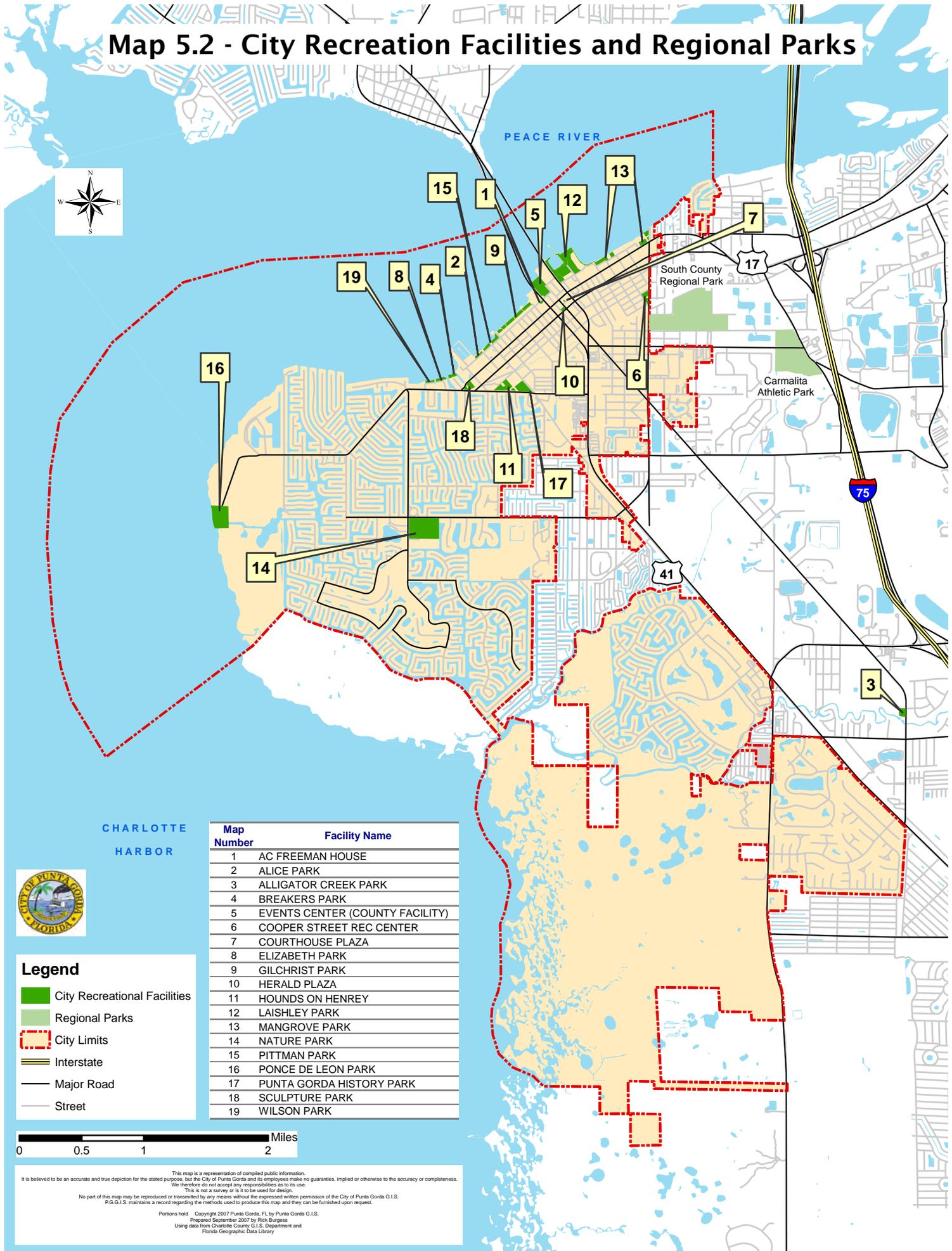
Adjacent to the City limits to the East, the County owns and operates the ninety (90) acre South County Regional Park. Opened in 2004, this County developed regional park incorporates a mix of active and passive uses. The location of the South County Regional Park directly benefits the City in an area where the 1997 Comprehensive Plan previously identified a deficit in the level of service provided. Its location can be identified on Map 5.2.

In addition to the South County Regional Park, the County's Carmelita Park, serves the City of Punta Gorda's residents. Although not quite the size of a regional park, the activity and use of these facilities is equal to that of a regional or district park. The types of activities vary and range from baseball, football and softball fields to horse riding arena, BMX course, playground area and a skate park.

City Facilities

In addition to the properties that are owned and managed by the Federal Government, the State of Florida, and Charlotte County, the City facilities serve a variety of the residents' daily park and open space needs. These parks provide a diversity of uses and activities. The location of these facilities can be seen on Map 5.2. Table 5.2 provides a brief description of the individual parks.

Map 5.2 - City Recreation Facilities and Regional Parks



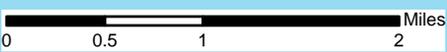
CHARLOTTE HARBOR



Legend

- City Recreational Facilities
- Regional Parks
- City Limits
- Interstate
- Major Road
- Street

Map Number	Facility Name
1	AC FREEMAN HOUSE
2	ALICE PARK
3	ALLIGATOR CREEK PARK
4	BREAKERS PARK
5	EVENTS CENTER (COUNTY FACILITY)
6	COOPER STREET REC CENTER
7	COURTHOUSE PLAZA
8	ELIZABETH PARK
9	GILCHRIST PARK
10	HERALD PLAZA
11	HOUNDS ON HENREY
12	LAISHLEY PARK
13	MANGROVE PARK
14	NATURE PARK
15	PITTMAN PARK
16	PONCE DE LEON PARK
17	PUNTA GORDA HISTORY PARK
18	SCULPTURE PARK
19	WILSON PARK



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 Prepared September 2007 by Rick Burgess
 Using data from Charlotte County G.I.S. Department and Florida Geographic Data Library

Park Name	Location	Acres	Facilities Available	Recreation Type	Classification
AC Friedman House	639 East Hargreaves	<1	Historic museum house	Passive	Neighborhood/ Special Purpose
Alligator Creek Park	Alligator Creek & Taylor Road	<2	shoreline fishing	Resource based	Special Purpose
Alice Park	W. Retta Esplanade	1 +	Sidewalk for walking, jogging and biking, native plants, benches.	Passive	Neighborhood
Breakers (Brown) Park	Breakers Court/W. Retta Esplanade	1 +	Benches and beautiful Harbor views	Passive	Neighborhood
Charlotte County Events Center (in City owned by County)	75 Taylor Road	7+	Recreation center, fishing, picnicking	Resource-based	Special purpose
Cooper Street Recreation Center	Cooper and Mary Streets	3	Picnic Pavillion, 2 basketball courts, 1 baseball/softball field, 1 multi-purpose/open space field, 1 playground, 1 recreation center	Activity based	Neighborhood
Elizabeth & Wilson Park	Park Beach Circle	<3	Small walking/ jogging trail, native plants, benches and view	Passive	Neighborhood
Gilchrist Park	1000 West Retta Esplanade	12	Picnic tables, gazebo, 2 pavilions, , 4 tennis courts, 1 playground, 4 basketball courts, , fishing pier, sidewalk for walking, jogging & biking, gardens, restroom facilities, four parking lots.	Resource and Activity based	Special Purpose
Herald Court Plaza	Herald Court	<1	Pedestrian Plaza, fountain and seating areas	Passive	Neighborhood
Hector House Plaza	Taylor Street	<1	Pedestrian Plaza and seating areas	Passive	Neighborhood

Park Name	Location	Acres	Facilities Available	Recreation Type	Classification
History Park	Shreve Street	9	Historic structures saved from demolition; bike path/sidewalk	Resource based	Educational
Hounds of Henry	Shreve Street	<1	Fenced in dog area		Neighborhood / Special Purpose
Lashley Park*	200 Harbor Walk Dr	17	400' fishing pier, boat ramp and trailer parking, * full service public Marina, Gazebo w/fountain, Veterans garden, shelter w/ picnic tables, restrooms, sidewalks for walking, jogging and biking.	Resource based	Special Purpose
Mangrove Park	North of Patti Ave.	10	Observation piers, multi use path	Passive	Neighborhood
Punta Gorda Nature Park	1555 Aqui Esta Drive	21	Picnic tables, 1 mile nature trail hiking, jogging, two boardwalks, wetland area, educational. Signage, one fishing pier, benches and 2 parking lots.	Passive based	Neighborhood/ Environmental
Pittman Park	802 W. Retta Esplanade	1+	Sidewalk for walking, jogging and biking, native plants, benches.	Passive	Neighborhood
Ponce de Leon Park	4000 West Marion Avenue	16	Picnic tables, historical interest, boat ramp and trailer parking, wildlife sanctuary, playground manmade beach, two fishing piers, ¼ mile boardwalk, restrooms	Resource based	Special Purpose
Sculpture Park	Corner of Henry and Marion	<1	Pond, Fountain, walking jogging and bike path	Passive	Neighborhood
Shreve Park	802 W. Retta Esplanade	<1	Sidewalk for walking, jogging and biking, native plants, benches.	Passive	Neighborhood
Total Developed Park Acreage		109 ±			

Source: Charlotte County Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department 2005 and City of Punta Gorda's Urban Design 2007

AC Freeman House

The AC Freeman House built in the early 20th century provides an excellent example of Victorian Architecture. The home is listed on the National Register of Historic Landmarks and was moved to its present site and restored in 2006. It currently serves as a museum house and as the offices for the Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce and the Historical Society.

**Alligator Creek Park**

Alligator Creek Park is approximately two (2 acre) primarily serves the Burnt Store Isles neighborhood of the City. The site is heavily wooded and bisected by Alligator Creek. A significant portion of the park is used as a storm water retention basin for an adjacent shopping center. Picnic facilities and horseshoe pits are available; however additional facilities could enhance its attractiveness and usability.

Alice Park

Alice Park is approximately one (1) acre located between W. Retta Esplande and the Charlotte Harbor which offers a water view and walking path connected to the City's existing multi-use recreational trails.

Breakers (Brown) Park

Breakers Park provides panoramic vistas of the Peace River. The park consists of two land parcels containing approximately one and one half (1.5) acres of land which has been partially developed as a passive park. It is a portion of the waterfront parks that are connected through a path. Brown Park, the second piece of land, is beautifully landscaped.

Elizabeth Park

Elizabeth Park contains approximately two and a half (2.5) acres located in Punta Gorda Isles along Charlotte Harbor. This facility offers a water view and walking path just off the City's existing multi-use recreational trails.

Charlotte County Events Center (In City, owned by County)

The Charlotte County Events Center is located in the central business district of the City but is owned by the County. The original facility was destroyed by Hurricane Charley in 2004 but is currently being rebuilt. Designed as a multi-function facility the new facility will contain conference rooms, classrooms and dining capabilities for both large and small occasions. It is scheduled to be completed in 2008 and will be an asset to the downtown business area.



Cooper Street Recreation Center

The Cooper Street Recreation Center contains approximately three (3) acres and serves the City of Punta Gorda. As one of the City's most intensively developed parks, Cooper Street offers a variety of educational support; cultural stimulation and recreational challenges to the City's youth.



Gilchrist Park

Gilchrist Park provides approximately twelve (12) acres of Charlotte Harbor waterfront just west of US 41 hosting a variety of active recreation opportunities, including, basketball, tennis, and a children's playground area. Additionally, passive recreational activities include picnic pavilions, waterfront gazebo, and fishing pier. Also located within the park is the Bayfront Center which offers a community room for small group events, however since the 2004 hurricane season, the facility has served as office space for the City's Public Works and Utilities Departments until their new facility is constructed.



Hector Court Plaza

This site was purchased in 2003 by the City of Punta Gorda Community Redevelopment Agency for the purpose of providing a public gathering space and additional parking for the historic Charlotte County Courthouse. The Courthouse facility is currently undergoing a complete historically accurate restoration. As a complement to this restoration the design of the site includes an urban plaza occupying approximately 1/5 (one fifth) of the site. The improvements include seating, landscaping and brick paving.

**History Park**

History Park is a nine (9) acre park located in the central part of the City. The park serves as a relocation site for significantly historic structures saved from demolition. This facility is operated in conjunction with the Punta Gorda Historical Society.

Hounds on Henry

This park contains approximately one and a half (1.5) acres and provides fenced area sidewalks and other facilities for residents and their K-9 companions. This park is heavily utilized and demonstrates the need for similar facilities throughout the City.

Laishley Park

Laishley Park contains seventeen (17) acres originally developed in 1993 within the Downtown District. In 2005 redevelopment of the park began with the construction of new docks, a boat ramp, parking facilities, and a marina building containing a Harbor Master's Office, Ship's Store and a community room. Additionally, construction of a restaurant, open pavilions to facilitate a fresh market, and an outdoor concert area/festival space are expected to be completed by 2010.



Mangrove Park

Mangrove Park contains ten (10) acres of mangroves and uplands located along the Peace River east of US 41. The park contains observation decks and a multi-use recreational trail.

Punta Gorda Nature Park

The Punta Gorda Nature Park is a twenty-one (21) acre park situated in the center of Punta Gorda Isles neighborhood. The park includes pine palmetto forest and salt/high marsh habitats which include a multi-use recreational trail and observation deck. The remainder of the park is disturbed upland areas which present opportunities for the development of a variety of outdoor recreational activities.

**Pittman Park**

Pittman Park is one approximately one (1) acre located between W. Retta Esplande and the Charlotte Harbor which offers a water view and walking path connected to the City's existing multi-use recreational trails.

Ponce de Leon Park

Ponce de Leon Park is a sixteen (16) acres facility located along Charlotte Harbor. The park contains a boardwalk through mangrove forest, a non-profit wildlife sanctuary, a fishing pier, a beach area and boat ramp facilities. The park is effectively buffered from the surrounding neighborhoods by a portion of the Charlotte Harbor State Buffer Reserve.



Sculpture Park

Sculpture Park is approximately one (1) acre and centers around a pond that also serves as a stormwater mitigation facility. The site also includes sidewalks and plaza area for the future display of public art.

Shreve Park

Shreve Park is approximately one (1) acre located along Charlotte Harbor. This facility offers a water view and walking path just off the City's existing multi-use recreational trails.

County and School Facilities

The County offers a variety of parks and recreational facilities in the Punta Gorda area. Table 5.3 details County facilities located in the Punta Gorda area. Charlotte County Parks Department provides soccer, baseball, football and other organized recreational opportunities.

Additionally, Charlotte County School District facilities serve a variety of needs for the residents. The District owns and maintains recreational facilities at all school sites in the Punta Gorda area. Charlotte County and the School Board of Charlotte County maintain interlocal agreements for the utilization of school owned recreational facilities. These facilities provide diversity, organized and year-round programs at accessible locations as summarized in Table 5.4.

The Charlotte County School System received significant damage from 2004 hurricane season. All four campuses and associated playing fields in the Punta Gorda area received significant damage and re-construction activities are expected to continue until 2011.

Table 5.3 - South/East County Recreation Facilities and Sites					
Park Name	Location	Acres	Facilities Available	Recreation Type	Classification
Allapatchee Shores Park	3100 Hickory Court	.32	canoe/kayak launch, picnicking, fishing	Resource-based	Special purpose
Bissett Park	12455 Path Avenue	16.46	picnicking, 3 shelters, 1 pavilion, 1 basketball court, 4 shuffleboard courts, 1 tennis court, 1 horseshoe pit, 1 multi-purpose field, 1 playground	Resource & Activity-based	Neighborhood
Carmelita Park	Carmelita & Florida Streets	33.00	picnic shelters baseball fields, playground, softball fields, horse arena football fields, BMX course, skate park	Activity based	Community/ Regional
Charlotte Flatwoods	15801 Tamiami Trail	486.36	nature preserve	Resource-based	Environmental
Clark Park	3100 Patio Ct.	1.74	1 boat ramp, 1 fishing pier	Resource-based	Special purpose
Darst Boat Ramp	537 Darst Avenue	0.78	1 boat ramp, picnic table, canoe/kayak launch	Resource-based	Special purpose
South County Regional Park	670 Cooper St.	100.00	recreation room, outdoor basketball courts, swimming pool, tennis courts, baseball fields, softball field, and soccer fields	Activity based	Regional
Total Acreage		638.66			

Source: Charlotte County 2003 EAR Draft

Park Name	District	Location	Acres	Facilities Available	Public Access	Recreation Type
Baker Elementary	City	Charlotte Avenue.	6.28	Currently being developed to contain walking trail, open field, and seating areas	X	Passive
East Elementary	East County	Fairway Drive	16.3	general play field, softball field, basketball courts, covered play area	X	Activity-based
Sallie Jones Elementary	City	Narranja Street	13.1	general play field, softball field, basketball courts, covered play area	X	Activity-based
Punta Gorda Middle	City	Carmalita Street.	20.0	baseball field, softball field, general play field, basketball courts, tennis courts	X	Activity-based
Charlotte High	City	Cooper Street.	49.54	baseball field, softball field, general practice field, tennis courts, track, football field	X	Activity-based
Total Acreage			105.22			

Source: Charlotte County School Board 2005

Undeveloped Parks

Eight (8) undeveloped parks containing approximately ± 30 acres existed in Punta Gorda. The City has successfully developed 3 of the 5 undeveloped parks listed in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. Two properties, Zabian property and Court House Plaza property were acquired between 1995 and 2003 assisting the City's provision of parkland in excess of 5 acres per 1,000 residents, the target included in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. In the years to come, the City will still need to increase its parkland acreage as its population continues to rise. These acquisitions will not only ensure the City maintains an adequate number of parks, but also decrease the average distance from all residents to their nearest park.

The City's undeveloped parks are briefly described in the following paragraphs.

Linear Park

Linear Park is a nine (9) acre abandoned railroad right-of-way running from Cross Street to Maude Street just south of the National Register Historic District. The site contains a small tidal drainage course and stands of trees. Various planning documents include this land as an important segment of the City's multi-use recreational trail system, as well as affording activity node opportunities for the adjacent neighborhoods.



Seminole Lakes Park

Seminole Lakes Park is a five (5) acre undeveloped site located between Acline Road and northern portion of the Seminole Lakes subdivision. The site contains a large number of invasive exotic species mainly Brazilian Pepper. Planned development of this site includes City's Fire Station II.

Zabian Property

Zabian Property is approximately .39 acres, and is adjacent to the ten (10) acre Mangrove Park located along Marion Avenue east of US 41. This property was

acquired as part of the City's mitigation activities within the Costal High Hazard area.

Ruggeri Property

Ruggeri Property is approximately .34 acres, and is adjacent to the ten (10) acre Mangrove Park located along Marion Avenue east of US 41. This property was acquired as part of the City's mitigation activities within the Costal High Hazard area.

Palm Beach Development Property

Palm Beach Development Property is approximately .33 acres, and is adjacent to the ten (10) acre Mangrove Park located along Marion Avenue east of US 41. This property was acquired as part of the City's mitigation activities within the Costal High Hazard area.

Sidewalks and Bike Paths

The City of Punta Gorda system consists of 8.4 miles of sidewalk and multi-use recreational trail facilities. The overall network is anticipated to include 29.5 miles of facilities. The completion of the planned network will include approximately 2.9 miles of facilities outside of the current Punta Gorda city limits, and thus requires cooperation and coordination with the State, County, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

In 2006 the City adopted the Alternative Transportation Plan 2030. This plan delineates the existing bicycle, pedestrian, and kayak/canoe facilities in the City and provides for the logical expansion of those systems through the planning horizon. Along with this document the City has committed to a five (5) year capital improvement program designed to further the goals set forth in the plan. See Map 5.3 for the Sidewalk and Bike path facilities. The *Transportation Element* discusses in greater detail the continued development of sidewalks and bikeways.

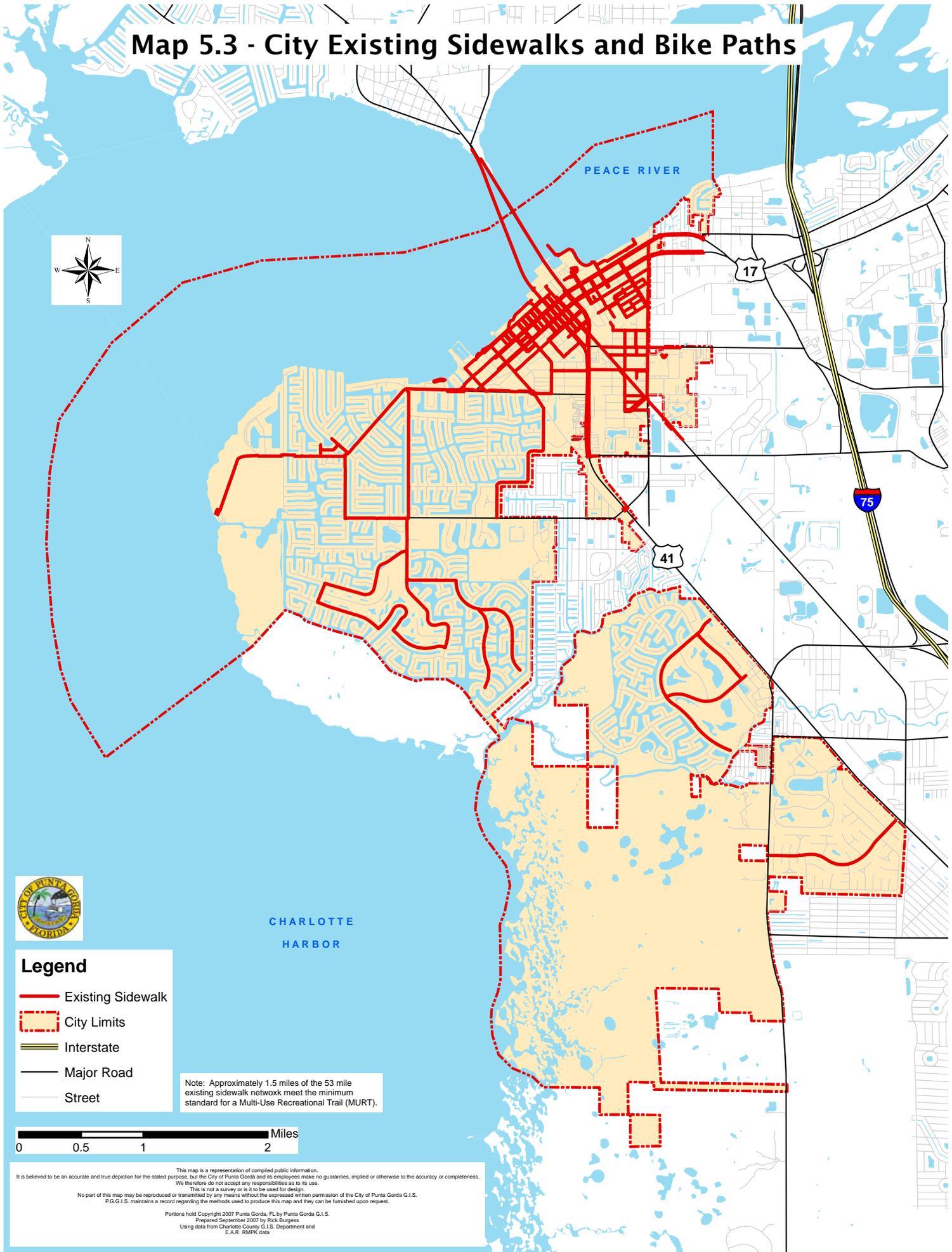
Baker Academy

The Baker Academy Park is a joint venture between the School Board of Charlotte County and the City. It consists of an area on the school property which will be developed by the City, maintained by the School Board and utilized by the residents in the area. It is scheduled to be completed in 2008.

Pittman Street Park

Pittman Street Park is approximately <1 acre located in an undeveloped right-of-way between Marion Avenue and Retta Esplanade. This park is a unique public/private partnership which will include a multi-use recreation trails, seating facilities, and pond that will serve as a joint stormwater mitigation facility.

Map 5.3 - City Existing Sidewalks and Bike Paths



Legend

- Existing Sidewalk
- City Limits
- Interstate
- Major Road
- Street

Note: Approximately 1.5 miles of the 53 mile existing sidewalk network meet the minimum standard for a Multi-Use Recreational Trail (MURT).



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Public Lands

Public lands is defined as lands owned and occupied by government institutions for general administration, postal services, law enforcement, public safety, educational, and cultural activities. In 1995 public-oriented land uses consisted of 5.5% of all developed land within the City. This represents approximately 8.6 acres of land per one thousand (1000) persons based upon peak seasonal population figures.

Since 1995, Punta Gorda's public lands have increased by approximately thirty-nine (39) acres. This increase results from the acquisition and development of the twenty (20) acre Nature Park/Fire station and the ten (10) acre Charlotte County Justice Center.

As the City's population continues to increase the acreage devoted to public uses will similarly need to rise to maintain the acres-to-population ratio.

Semi-public Lands

Semi-Public Land Uses are classified as institutional, civic, fraternal and religious uses. Land use requirements for semi-public land uses involved consideration of these uses per one thousand (1,000) residents. A rate of 5.2 acres per one thousand (1,000) peak seasonal population was used to project future needs.

Park Lands

The 2003 Evaluation Appraisal Report (EAR) states that no new parklands would be required over the next five (5) years through 2008. The projected space requirements apply to developed parklands and do not include facilities associated with the City's multi-use recreational trail system. Golf courses and other private recreational uses are not included in this total.

Proposed Recreation Sites

In addition to the inventory of developed parkland, there are a variety of parcels available city wide that may be useful in serving the future park needs of the various communities as these areas build out. These areas are described below.

Vacant Lands

Vacant lands provide for a variety of recreational opportunities such as:

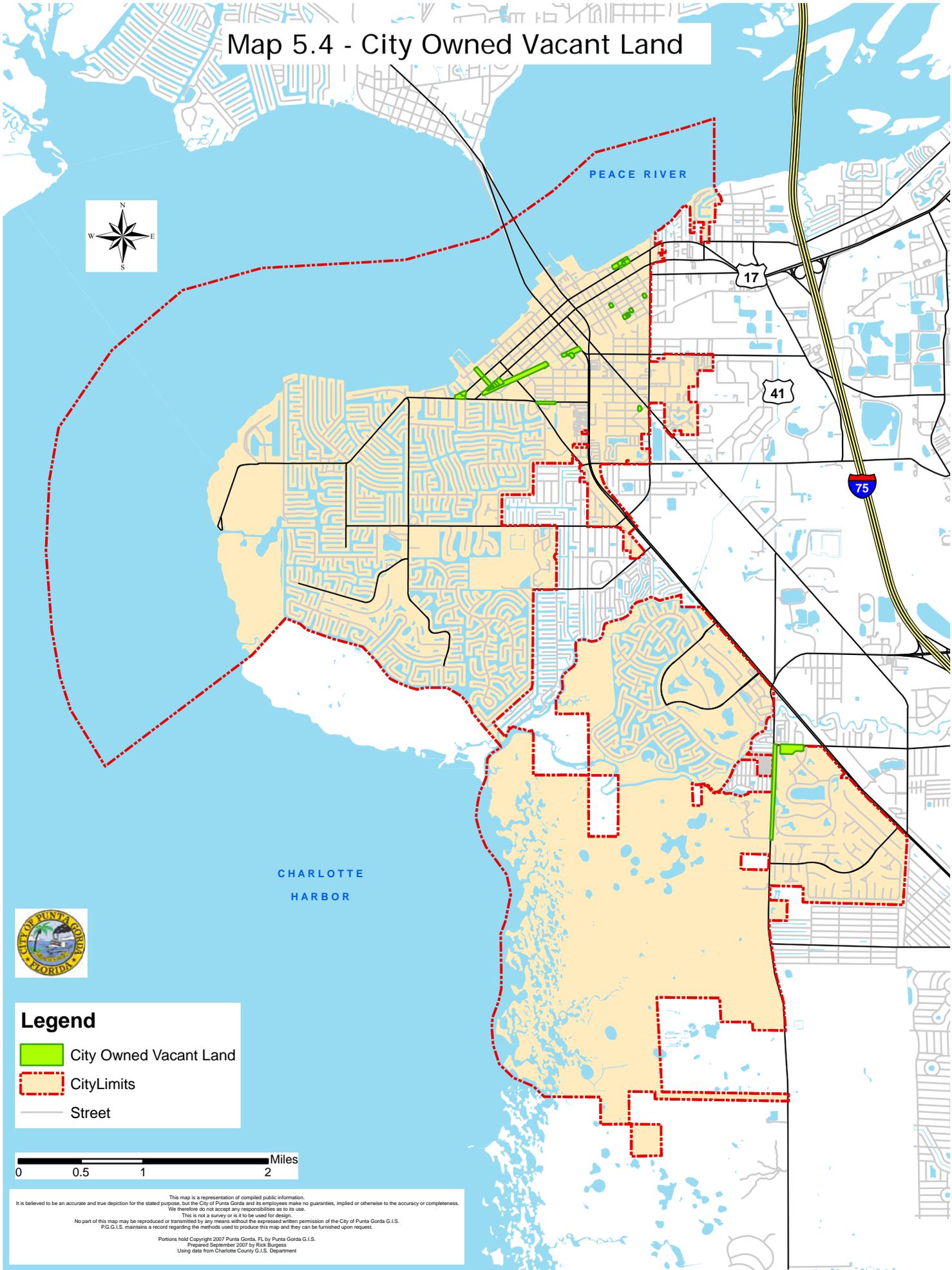
- Neighborhood parks developed to suit the individual needs of the community
- Additional buffers between different land uses
- Increased green space

In addition, this available vacant land may allow for creative opportunities such as shared facility locations. This type of joint venture has been successfully used with the Nature Park and the AQUI Esta Fire Station.

The Park and Recreation Master Plan will include a review of City owned properties, for size, location, and development potential, grant funding restrictions/opportunities, future land use designation (Parks and Recreation, Public Lands and Facilities, Preservation and Resource Conservation), and zoning designation.

Zoning designations can vary within the FLUM designation and need to be reviewed to more accurately reflect the character of the various public land types. Map 5.4 and Table 5.5 identifies those lands available and the current status of the properties

Map 5.4 - City Owned Vacant Land



Legend

- City Owned Vacant Land
- CityLimits
- Street



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Location	Cross Street	Acres	Proposed Type of Park
Patty Avenue	Booth Street	.46	Mangrove Park Extension
Patty Avenue	Booth Street	.44	Mangrove Park Extension
Patty Avenue	Booth Street	.61	Mangrove Park Extension
Patty Avenue	Booth Street	.25	Mangrove Park Extension
Patty Avenue	Booth Street	.02	Mangrove Park Extension
Patty Avenue	Booth Street	.37	Mangrove Park Extension
E. Charlotte Avenue		.09	Affordable Housing
Fitzhugh Avenue	Wood Street	.08	Affordable Housing
Showalter Avenue	Milus Street	.09	Affordable Housing
W. Charlotte Avenue	McGregor Street	.04	Linear Park
Breakers Court	Marion Avenue	.38	Open Space
Breakers Court	Marion Avenue	.63	Open Space
Henry Street	Shreve Street	.17	Pedestrian Trail
East Drive	San Marie Drive	.14	Affordable Housing
Burnt Store Road	Acline Road	3.87	Pedestrian Trail
Acline Road	Burnt Store Road	5.19	Fire Station & Park

Source Urban Design 2007

Privately Owned Recreational Facilities

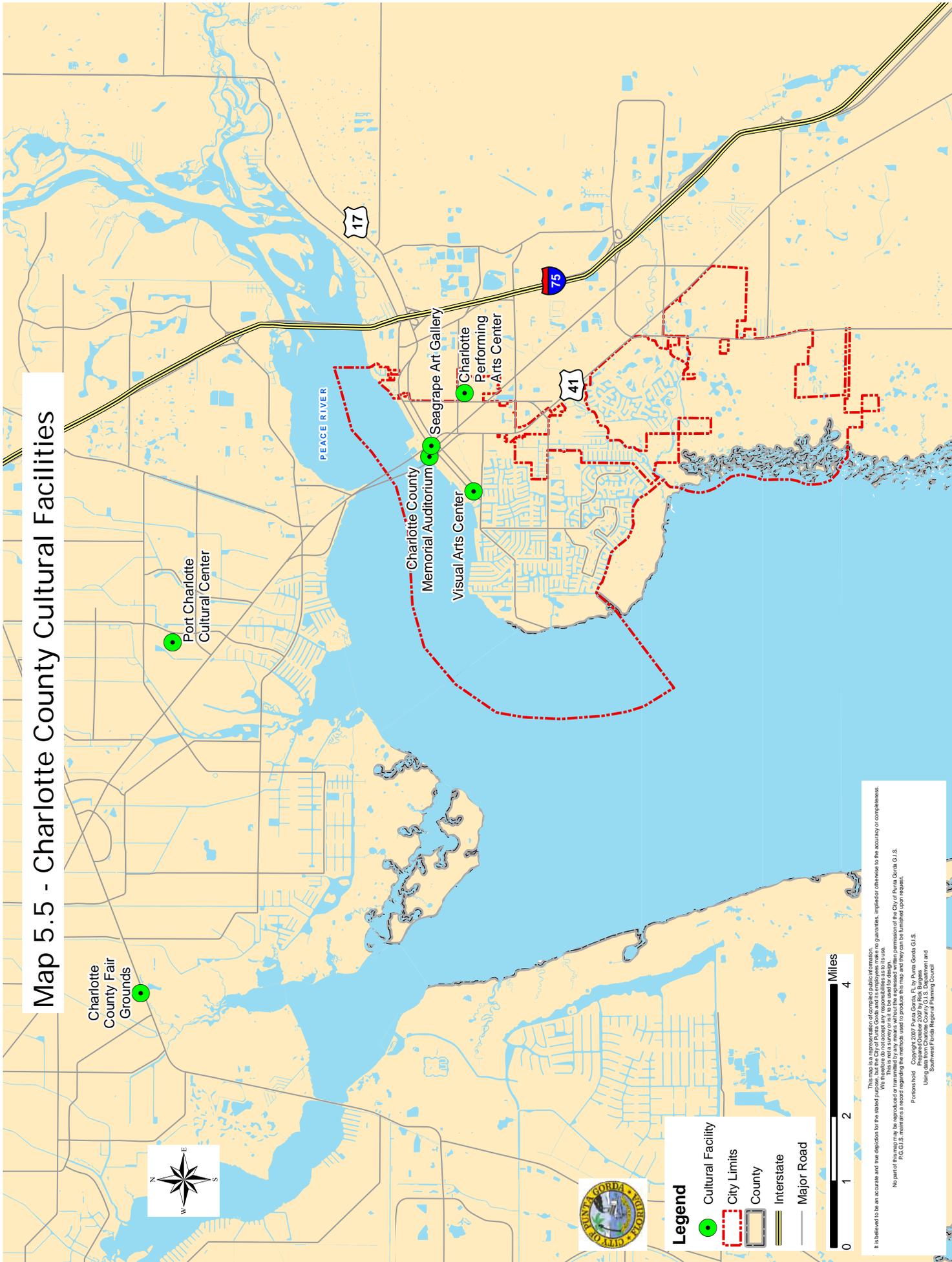
Private recreation is difficult to inventory in a comprehensive manner due to the diversity and complexity, and often rapid and frequent owner or use change. Private recreation providers generally respond quickly to opportunities for acquisition and development of properties suitable for recreational use, given

market forces. This quick reaction time gives the private sector a distinct advantage in providing highly desirable recreational facilities.

Cultural Resources

Cultural facilities occur within the City of Punta Gorda and throughout Charlotte County. Activities within the City range from art lessons and gallery exhibits, to community theatre, choral groups, and symphony orchestras. Cultural programs throughout the City and County provide both children and adults, with opportunities which include painting, craft, and instrument and voice lessons. The facilities immediately affecting the City residents are identified on Map 5.5 Charlotte County Cultural Facilities.

Map 5.5 - Charlotte County Cultural Facilities



Charlotte County Fair Grounds

Port Charlotte Cultural Center

Charlotte County Memorial Auditorium

Visual Arts Center

Seagrape Art Gallery

Charlotte Performing Arts Center

PEACE RIVER

17

41

75



Legend

- Cultural Facility
- City Limits
- County
- Interstate
- Major Road



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V. LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS

Current Conditions of Level of Service

The development of the Proposed Parks and Recreation Master Plan will consider the guidelines identified in the Florida State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The SCORP provides a set of standards for recreational activities which was developed by the Division of Recreation and Parks of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection as well as the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) standards.

The current LOS standard for the City is 5.0 acres of developed parklands per functional or seasonal resident. Table 5.6 shows the current LOS per 1,000 population by a variety of land uses. It is the goal of the 2010 Parks and Recreation Master Plan to review the existing LOS, the existing and future land use, existing facilities, index the permanent population and recommend a new LOS Standard.

As previously identified the park and recreation level of service (LOS) standard includes City parks, County recreational facilities, and recreational facilities available at the school sites located in the City. The current LOS standard for the City is 5.0 acres of developed parklands per functional or seasonal residents. Table 5.6 provides the current LOS based on the developed recreation facilities in the City based on existing population as discussed in the City's 2003 EAR and as updated to the Bureau of Economic and Business Research in this document. The table identifies those areas where the City will experience deficits by Land Use Type. The deficit identified in the year 2025 will be reviewed during the completion of the 2009-2010 Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

Table 5.6 – Level of Services for Recreation & Open Space			
Future Land Use Category	Public/Semi Public	Recreational (Developed Parks**)	Open Spaces***
Proposed Ratio per 1,000 Persons	6.5	5	145.4
Total Lands Classification by Existing Land Use	264	435	3,924
YEAR 2008			
Population*	17,651	17,651	17,651
Total Acreage Required	115	88	2,567
Anticipated Surplus or Deficit	149	347	1,357
YEAR 2013			
Population*	19,500	19,500	19,500
Total Acreage Required	127	98	2,835
Anticipated Surplus or Deficit	137	337	1,089
YEAR 2018			
Population*	21,571	21,571	21,571
Total Acreage Required	140	108	3,128
Anticipated Surplus or Deficit	124	327	796
YEAR 2025			
Population*	25,615	25,615	25,615
Total Acreage Required	160	123	3,579
Anticipated Surplus or Deficit	104	312	345

Source: 2007 Urban Design

* Population projections from the Bureau of Economic and Business Research

** Adopted City Level of Service

***Includes Conservation from Existing Land Use categories

The City will utilize the following strategies moving into the future:

- Mini Parks, Neighborhood Parks and Community Parks can be developed as appropriate on the undeveloped City owned properties identified in Table 5.5. A careful review of these properties with the LOS acreage per park classification will be provided in the Proposed Park and Recreation Master Plan. New developments shall be required to provide parks for their residents.
- Regional Parks will continue to be provided primarily by Charlotte County. Through careful planning, land acquisition and intergovernmental coordination, adequate lands can be obtained to meet the growing population in this area.
- The City will continue to work with governmental entities and developers to preserve environmental lands.

The 1997 Comprehensive Plan provided a LOS standard of 5 acres total parkland acres per 1,000 population. Currently the City is providing parkland in excess of the established LOS. However the future Parks Master Plan will recommend a framework for categorizing the City park system, including possible modifications to the LOS.

Revenue Sources

The City's main funding sources for parks and recreation are impact fees, ad valorem taxes and grant funds. Potential grant opportunities available to the City are identified in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7 – Potential Grant Funding Available to the City of Punta Gorda for Recreation and Open Space Acquisition and Development

Program	Purposes	Funding	Conditions
Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program , established by Section 375.075, F.S, and Chapter 16D-5, Part V, F.A.C.	Can be used for acquisition or development or renovation of recreational sites. Acquisition can range from small areas serving a localized need to those of regional significance encompassing hundreds of acres. Development can include single-purpose facilities ranging from beach access, picnicking and ball fields to large multi-activity parks.	A project with a total cost of \$40,000 or less can be funded 100%. Projects with a cost of 50,001 to 150,000 can be funded 75% with a match from local government. Project costs exceeding \$150,000 must be funded at 50:50% cost share.	Eligible Applicants are units of local government with the legal responsibility for the provision of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities.
Florida Boating Improvement Program , established by Section 327.28 F.S. and distributed according to Chapter 16D-5, Part III F.A.C.	To provide for Boat ramps, lifts and hoists, and public launching facilities, piers, docks, and mooring fields, recreational channel marking, boating education, derelict vessel removal, economic development initiatives and other boating related activities,	Funds collected from the registration of boats are returned to local governments in the form of grants.	No matching requirements.
Florida Communities Trust, Chapter 380, Part III, F.S. administer funds 2 separate programs- the Preservation 2000 Program and the Area of Critical State Concern	Funds are used to assist local government with matching grants, full grants and loans to purchase land for conservation & outdoor recreation purposes.	Community governments and municipalities of Florida are eligible to receive Florida Forever funds from the trust. Florida Forever replaces the Preservation 2000 Program.	Non-profit organizations, such as The Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land, may sometimes play a role in helping the DEP acquire preservation land.
The National Park Service's Land and Water Conservation Fund Program , administered by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection pursuant to Chapter 16D-5, Part VI, F.A.C.	Funds are available for distribution to state agencies and local governmental entities for approved, high-quality outdoor recreation projects meeting needs identified in the State's comprehensive outdoor recreation plan. Florida has allocated its portion of these funds to local governments for resource-based and user-oriented public outdoor recreation projects.	Funding is on a 50/50 basis from state and local sources.	Local match may be cash, in-kind services, or land value. Local governments are eligible applicants.

Table 5.7 – Potential Grant Funding Available to the City of Punta Gorda for Recreation and Open Space Acquisition and Development Continued

Program	Purposes	Funding	Conditions
<p>The West Coast Inland Navigational District Waterway Development Program established by Section 107, River and Harbor Act of 1960.</p>	<p>To provide financial assistance to eligible local governments to undertake projects such as beach renourishment; planning & public navigation; public recreation; boating safety; research, study or test programs, relating to waterway construction; use, operation or maintenance; environmental education; and marine enforcement.</p>	<p>Certain projects require matching funds.</p>	<p>Eligible applicants are Charlotte, Lee, Manatee, and Sarasota Counties.</p>
<p>The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 established the National Recreational Trails Funding Program and the Transportation Enhancement Program. These programs were carried out through the TEA 21 and the current SAFETEA-LU Acts.</p>	<p>The Trails program was created to allocate funding assistance to the states for recreational trails construction and maintenance. The enhancement program was established and continues to be for public agencies to receive funding for projects such as bicycle & pedestrian facilities, scenic easements, scenic or historic sites, landscape beautification, historic preservation and others.</p>	<p>Funds are dispersed on an 80% federal, 20% State, and 0% local.</p>	<p>Projects must first be approved in the FDOT capital improvement plan.</p>

Source: Charlotte County Parks and Recreation and Cultural Resources Department 2005 and City of Punta Gorda’s Urban Design 2007

VI. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Goal 5.1: The City of Punta Gorda will act to recreation public and private recreation resources; to provide public parks appropriately located to the population they are intended to serve; coordinate the City facilities with those of other governments; and acquire important open space systems that protect property from storm surge events and/or preserve important habitats.

Objective 5.1.1: Punta Gorda will continue to develop a system of, neighborhood and community parks that serve the residents of the City and serve as part of a comprehensive outdoor recreational system consisting of city, county, state, and national parks.

Policy 5.1.1.1: Punta Gorda will maintain and improve the park system through continual redesign and renovation of existing parks and by the acquisition and development of new parks.

Measurement: Maintenance activities improvements and land acquired for parks.

Policy 5.1.1.2: Punta Gorda will cooperate with Governmental entities for the use of appropriate facilities as neighborhood or community parks.

Measurement: Agreements with governmental entities for use of recreational facilities.

Policy 5.1.1.3: The Punta Gorda park system will include intensive play areas, nature oriented activity areas, extensive natural areas, special activity areas, and urban scenic and passive areas.

Measurement: Amount of such areas in City parks.

Policy 5.1.1.4: Punta Gorda will incorporate its historic districts and structures, and the multi use recreational trails into the overall park system.

Measurement: Number of multi use recreational trails connecting the historic districts to the park system.

Objective 5.1.2: Punta Gorda will maintain a system of open spaces that will conserve and preserve marine and terrestrial flora and fauna and their associated habitats.

Policy 5.1.2.1: Punta Gorda will preserve or restore the natural features to include native plant species and natural water flows of a site when acquiring or developing City owned open spaces.

Measurement: Amount of lands, vegetative cover types, restored or preserved for such properties acquired or developed by the City.

Policy 5.1.2.2: Punta Gorda will encourage the protection of privately owned environmentally sensitive lands by public acquisition, conservation easements, transfer of development rights, or by voluntary dedication.

Measurement: Acres of conservation lands protected by the aforementioned means.

Policy 5.1.2.3: Punta Gorda will consider the following criteria when pursuing the acquisition of open space:

- a. Unique features such as plant communities, wildlife populations, mangrove stands, saltwater marshes, freshwater wetlands, beaches, or sand flats.
- b. Critical ecological features such as protection of surface and groundwater quality or as a protection from severe storms surge events.
- c. Locations suitable for outdoor educational programs.
- d. Relatively undisturbed examples of biological communities.

Measurement: Documentation of the aforementioned factors of any open space purchase by the City.

Policy 5.1.2.4: Punta Gorda will make available density bonuses, or other appropriate incentives for developments that preserve environmentally sensitive lands.

Measurement: Acres preserved through development incentives.

Policy 5.1.2.5: Punta Gorda will assist Charlotte County in the development of a scenic wildlife corridor or trail system around the perimeter of the City and which connects to the populated City areas or the Charlotte Harbor State Preserve.

Measurement: Amount of funding, staff support, or other assistance leading to such a corridor or trail system.

Objective 5.1.3: Punta Gorda will promote the use of public and private resources to meet recreation demands.

Policy 5.1.3.1: By 2010, Punta Gorda will develop a park and open space plan with standards that will integrate public, semi-private, and private recreational facilities into an overall plan.

Measurement: Drafting and adoption of such a plan.

Policy 5.1.3.2: Punta Gorda will require developers of residential subdivisions or planned unit developments to dedicate or set aside lands for parks, or to develop and maintain a private or semi-private park system as part of their development, or otherwise contribute to the acquisition and/or development of parks.

Measurement: Amount of land or contributions received.

Policy 5.1.3.3: Punta Gorda will assist Charlotte County through the County General Fund revenues received from City taxpayers, or other appropriate financing mechanisms, in the acquisition of regional or district park sites which complement the City's neighborhood and community park systems.

Measurement: Charlotte County tax funds received from City residents and used for acquisition of park sites.

Policy 5.1.3.4: Punta Gorda will acquire, when possible, property for parks and open spaces in advance of annexation to provide an adequate amount and distribution of recreation and open space lands.

Measurement: Acres of park land acquired.

Policy 5.1.3.5: Punta Gorda will work with the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC) in the development of bicycle/sidewalk and passive recreation facilities.

Measurement: Planning and development accomplished for such a system in and around CHEC.

Objective 5.1.4: Punta Gorda will promote access and/or public enjoyment of all parks and open space systems in the City.

Policy 5.1.4.1: Punta Gorda will operate a park and open space system in a manner that will promote an equal opportunity for enjoyment by all persons including those with disabilities.

Measurement: Accessibility features included in City parks.

Policy 5.1.4.2: Punta Gorda will not charge user fees at its park and open space facilities, but may require fees for events taking place at a park or to maintain its specialized recreation facilities such as boat ramps and night lighting for tennis facilities.

Measurement: Absence of user fees prohibited by this policy.

Policy 5.1.4.3: All public parks will have public access via a public street.

Measurement: Documentation of public street access to public parks.

Policy 5.1.4.4: Punta Gorda will seek to distribute parks and open spaces so as to serve all neighborhoods.

Measurement: Park and open space acres acquired that satisfy locational needs identified by plan described in Policy 5.1.3.2 .