

**CHAPTER 13**  
**RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT**

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### **RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE**

#### **A. OVERVIEW**

The purpose of the Recreation and Open Space Element is to present a comprehensive recreation and open space plan and program for unincorporated Volusia County. This Element inventoried existing conditions and evaluated appropriate park sites, recreation areas, facilities, and open space systems. The existing system of parks includes both public and private sites for a wide range of recreation activities. This Element presents what has been determined to be the most appropriate strategies that Volusia County should follow to achieve the best use for land and resources in developing a comprehensive outdoor parks and recreation system.

The effect of this Element will be to implement standards which give direction to improving existing deficiencies in recreation areas, facilities, and open space, and which expand the outdoor recreation system to meet the future needs and improve the quality of life for the residents of Volusia County. The Recreation and Open Space Element and support document identifies outdoor recreation and open space areas for acquisition and development

The overall direction of this Element is to maintain a park classification system of local and district parks. The local parks are intended to be located and developed within the urbanizing areas to encourage pedestrian access and to minimize the length of vehicular trips. The development of these outdoor recreation areas will result from the implementation strategy of the land development regulations and policies dealing with coordinating public and private resources to ensure that available resources and programs are utilized to their full potential. The district parks are intended to provide activities and opportunities that rely on the abundant natural resources that exist along the coastal beaches, inland rivers and lakes, or land-based outdoor areas that provide user-oriented or resource-based activities.

The open space system includes a range of resources that can be defined as undeveloped land suitable for passive recreation and/or conservation uses. The different variations of open space are classified by their functions and are to be integrated with the Future Land Use Map and Conservation Element.

The requirements for recreation and open space goals, objectives, and policies are to establish the long-term end toward which recreation and open space programs and activities are ultimately directed (goals) and how or what strategies (policies) will be used to implement the activities. The development of goals with related objectives and policies is derived from the data collection and analysis phase, and forms the basis of a plan or recommended course of action to achieve a desired future. The preparation of goals, objectives, and policies address at a minimum, the following issues:

- Public access;
- Coordination of public/private resources;
- Provision of park facilities;
- Designating and acquiring open space;

- Maintain/improve level of service for beach and shoreline access;
- Establish levels of service standards for recreation; and
- Improve existing deficiencies.

In the year 2000, the county's voters passed a referendum establishing the Environmental/Cultural/Historical/Outdoor (ECHO) Program. This long-term initiative was renewed in 2020 through at least 2041. As of April 2021, the program has awarded 91.8 million dollars to a total of 227 projects. The program is intended to finance acquisition, development and restoration of environmental, cultural, historic, and outdoor recreation projects to enhance the quality of life and purposes incidental thereto.

This Element contains the documentation originally required by Section 163.3177(6)(e), Florida Statutes, which established the minimum requirements for the contents of the Recreation and Open Space Element.

## **B. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

### **GOAL:**

- 13.1 Volusia County shall establish a comprehensive parks and recreation system that provides sufficient land, facilities and programs to meet the existing and future recreational needs of the residents and visitors of the County.

### **OBJECTIVE:**

- 13.1.1 Volusia County shall strive to improve public accessibility to existing parks and recreation facilities with the construction of mandatory vehicular access facilities and/or optional bicycle and pedestrian access-ways.

### **POLICIES:**

- 13.1.1.1 Existing parks and facilities shall continue to be inventoried for lack of appropriate public access and establish a park priority list for access improvements.
- 13.1.1.2 Volusia County shall continue to provide vehicular access facilities for local and district parks. Vehicular access facilities may include car parking areas, parking aisles, driveways, entrances, and access roads as the basic functional elements of the park circulation system. The Land Development Code shall provide the specific design requirements.
- 13.1.1.3 Volusia County shall acquire and develop rights-of-way or easements for access to parks and facilities which are determined to be needed.
- 13.1.1.4 Vehicular access facilities shall be designed, located and constructed to minimize the impact on the natural systems within the park site.

- 13.1.1.5 Volusia County shall continue coordination with VOTRAN and other public or semipublic transporters to expand, to the maximum extent possible, transportation routes to park sites or recreational programs in order to improve usage and accessibility for special groups such as the disabled, lower income residents, the elderly, the transportation disadvantaged and the general public.
- 13.1.1.6 Accessible parking spaces, ramps, handrails and other accessibility improvements shall be provided in compliance with applicable state and federal regulations and appropriately located to new and existing recreational facilities.
- 13.1.1.7 Volusia County shall continue to coordinate with the TPO to maintain a County-wide bicycle facilities plan, in order to identify routes for both recreation and alternative modes of transportation.
- 13.1.1.8 Bicycle facilities requirements (location and dimension) shall comply with or exceed the requirements of the Volusia County land development regulations.
- 13.1.1.9 When unpaved natural paths are incorporated into County parks, staff shall study the separation of users for safety.
- 13.1.1.10 Bicycle parking facilities (bike racks) shall continue to be provided at existing and future park sites.
- 13.1.1.11 Local and district parks shall be developed with on-site/ off-site pedestrian accessways (sidewalks, pathways, easements or walkways) as required in Volusia County land development regulations. The pedestrian access ways shall be coordinated with the development of subdivisions, commercial centers, community centers, schools, and industrial centers.
- 13.1.1.12 Pedestrian access ways, to the maximum extent possible, shall be designed to accommodate people with disabilities.
- 13.1.1.13 Recreation facilities (sports fields, buildings, playgrounds, apparatus areas, paved areas and picnic areas) shall be designed to allow reasonable barrier free access for people with disabilities.
- 13.1.1.14 Planned Unit Developments and residential developments proposing parks and/or recreational facilities shall be designed to ensure vehicular, pedestrian and bike accessibility in accordance with Volusia County land development regulations.

OBJECTIVE:

- 13.1.2 Public access for the inland waterways shall be maintained and improved to meet the needs of the population. Inland waterways shall include, but are not limited to, the Halifax River, North Indian River, St. Johns River and Tomoka River, Spruce Creek, Lake George, Lake Monroe, Lake Ashby, Lake Dias, and Lake Beresford which can support public access.

## POLICIES:

- 13.1.2.1 When developed, and where environmentally permissible, inland waterway public access shall include vehicular on-site circulation systems, docking slips, fishing piers and boat ramps. Riverfront parks and lakefront parks shall accommodate inland waterway access facilities if not separately provided as a Special Use Facility.
- 13.1.2.2 All inland waterway facilities shall include public access to a public road.
- 13.1.2.3 Volusia County shall continue to identify and improve selected inland waterway access facilities to ensure that such facilities are accessible to the disabled and elderly.
- 13.1.2.4 A priority shall be placed on new construction of observation and fishing piers and associated parking within existing parks that have waterfront access.
- 13.1.2.5 Where environmentally suitable, and in compliance with the Manatee Protection Plan, a priority shall be placed on the provision of docking slips, boat ramps and associated parking within existing parks.
- 13.1.2.6 Volusia County shall continue to coordinate with local governments, the private sector, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to accommodate the estimated demand for wet and dry slips within the coastal area. Marinas shall also be monitored for suitable location and distribution.
- 13.1.2.7 The County shall continue to study the demand or need for additional boat wet or dry slips throughout Volusia County, as per the Manatee Protection Plan for Volusia County approved by the State, October 19, 2005.
- 13.1.2.8 Development of boat slip capacity shall be encouraged at the Ponce DeLeon Inlet until the established standards are met. In addition, marina facilities may be encouraged in the Ponce DeLeon Inlet area.
- 13.1.2.9 If environmentally suitable, where marinas are developed, they shall be encouraged to have both wet and dry slip capacity.

## OBJECTIVE:

- 13.1.3 Volusia County shall maintain current cooperative agreements for public recreation opportunities and shall coordinate and develop a monitoring system and new inter-local agreements with the local public suppliers to ensure park and recreation facilities meet local recreation demands. Coordination with private suppliers of recreational opportunities shall be accomplished through residential land development review process, analysis of impact on level of services and amendment to the Land Development Code to include District and Local Parks impact fees in the unincorporated area for the purpose of providing new parks necessitated by such development.

## POLICIES:

- 13.1.3.1 Continue to seek inter-local agreements among and between local governments to identify and coordinate all park and recreational plans to ensure cost effectiveness, eliminate duplication and ensure that County-wide needs are being served.
- 13.1.3.2 Volusia County shall continue to seek additional agreements with the School Board of Volusia County for public access and use of recreational facilities at designated school sites.
- 13.1.3.3 Encourage coordination with the School Board on the location, phasing and design of recreation sites to enhance the potential of schools as recreational areas.
- 13.1.3.4 The County, in conjunction with the School Board, shall continue to determine the amount of County funds to be expended, determine priority sites, and which recreation facilities are to be developed on School Board property.
- 13.1.3.5 With consent of the School Board, the County may subsidize additional outdoor recreational development (additional land and/or facilities) at School Board sites according to the capital improvement project detail sheets for Public Services/Parks and Recreation of the Capital Improvement Program.
- 13.1.3.6 Volusia County shall continue to coordinate with Daytona Beach College for public access and use of existing and proposed recreational facilities at designated campus sites.
- 13.1.3.7 Continue to work with the appropriate local, state, and federal agencies, the St. John's River Water Management District, non-profit organizations, and others to acquire and manage a County-wide open space and recreation system.
- 13.1.3.8 To the extent possible, Volusia County shall encourage private developments to provide new public local parks and improvements in lieu of park impact fees.
- 13.1.3.9 To the extent possible, the County shall improve the district park system by constructing the appropriate minimum user-oriented and/or resource-based outdoor recreation facilities. Future district park needs shall be provided by implementing the adopted level of service and prototype district parks minimum user-oriented and resource-based outdoor recreation facilities.
- 13.1.3.10 Implement mechanisms for the provision of a County-wide park system by the use of:
  - a. County owned and operated parks and recreation system developed through impact fees, municipal service districts, grants, bonding or other appropriate funding sources.
  - b. Homeowner-association-owned, operated and maintained parks in subdivisions or planned unit developments.

- 13.1.3.11 All development proposals in unincorporated areas shall be coordinated and reviewed in conjunction with the concurrency management system to assess their impacts on present or proposed recreational or open space areas designated in the Recreation and Open Space Element and support documentation.
- 13.1.3.12 The County will continue to support and rely on the State of Florida and Federal Government to provide regional parks, areas and facilities.
- 13.1.3.13 Volusia County shall continue to foster programs which ensure parks and recreation facilities are available to private/non-profit groups to conduct programs which serve the public interest.
- 13.1.3.14 Volusia County shall continue to foster programs which ensure parks and recreation facilities are available for arts, crafts, and special events and festivals which serve the public interest.
- 13.1.3.15 Volusia County shall provide recreational programs, where economically feasible, at County owned local and district parks but also continue coordination with the local municipalities, the private sector, School Board and quasi-public agencies (YMCA's, YWCA's, etc.) to ensure that available facilities and staff will provide adequate programs and services in a cost-effective manner.
- 13.1.3.16 Volusia County shall continue to support cultural and related programs through the Cultural Facilities Element.
- 13.1.3.17 The County shall continue to incorporate arts and crafts and other cultural activities into the summer recreational program.

**OBJECTIVE:**

- 13.1.4 Volusia County shall develop and maintain a system of recreation sites and facilities to meet the level of service standards of the County.

**POLICIES:**

- 13.1.4.1 Volusia County shall develop a Parks and Recreation System based on the local and district park classifications and adopted the following individual level of service standards.

Local Park - 2.0 acres per 1000 population  
District Park - 5.0 acres per 1000 population

- 13.1.4.2 Volusia County shall provide recreational facilities at individual park sites based on the following adopted level of service standards:

**LOCAL PARKS**

Must contain at least 4 of the following 14 facilities to be designated a local park:

1. Open or "free play" area
2. Picnic Area
3. Equipped Playground
4. Multi-purpose Hardcourt
5. Parking, paved or Shell Gravel Surface
6. Fencing
7. Water/ sewer services
8. Trails; hiking, biking
9. Sports field, lighted or unlighted
10. Vehicular access to a public road
11. Ball field with backstop
12. Dock or wooden decking
13. Canoe or kayak launch
14. Informational Kiosk on public trail system

#### DISTRICT PARKS

Must contain at least 6 of the following 21 facilities to be designated a district park:

1. Two Sports Fields, lighted or unlighted
2. Multi-Purpose Field
3. Two Tennis Courts
4. Picnic Area with covered pavilion
5. Playground
6. Multi-Purpose Hardcourt
7. Parking
8. Restroom



9. Trail; hiking, biking, equestrian, or Jogging/Fitness
10. Recreation/Building Concessions
11. Basketball Court
12. Fencing
13. Utility services - water/sewer/septic/electric
14. Boat Ramp and trailer parking
15. Camping
16. Dock or wooden decking
17. Dog Park
18. Canoe or kayak launch
19. Accessible Beach Access
20. Improved off beach parking outside of a right-of-way
21. Skate Park

13.1.4.3 Annually, Volusia County shall evaluate the existing land holdings listed as County owned by the Property Appraiser's Office for potential future open space and recreation sites.

13.1.4.4 The County shall determine whether a park facility is local or district based on the service area demand of the park rather than on a minimum number of acres of park size.

#### OBJECTIVE:

13.1.5 Volusia County shall ensure that parks, recreation facilities and open space areas are economically feasible to acquire, develop, operate and maintain by coordinating and implementing a County-wide park system between the public and private sectors.

#### POLICIES:

13.1.5.1 Continue to use the Volusia Forever and ECHO Programs as a means of implementing the Recreation and Open Space Element.

- 13.1.5.2 Periodically solicit funding through the Florida Forever and other programs for acquisition of endangered, environmentally sensitive/significant, and recreational lands.
- 13.1.5.3 Continue to fund the operation and maintenance of parks and recreational facilities.
- 13.1.5.4 Submit applications to local, state and federal grant programs for the acquisition, planning, development/management and maintenance of County owned and leased lands. Programs include, but are not limited to:
- ECHO
  - Florida Recreation and Development Assistance Program
  - Land and Water Conservation Fund Program
  - Florida Forever
  - Suntrail Program
  - Florida Boating Improvement Program
  - Save Our Rivers Program (SJRWMD)
  - Ponce DeLeon Inlet and Port District
  - Florida Inland Navigation District
  - Florida Communities Trust Program
- 13.1.5.5 Acquisition and development of local and district parks shall also be accomplished through the Local and District County Parks Impact Fee Ordinance.
- 13.1.5.6 Continue to review and/or negotiate with private developments to donate recreation sites and open space areas as a part of the development review process.
- 13.1.5.7 Volusia County may establish user fees to help offset costs at park sites where facilities and programs are intensive and require continued care and operation.
- 13.1.5.8 Volusia County shall consider the option of establishing municipal service taxing districts to finance the acquisition of land, development and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities.
- 13.1.5.9 The County shall annually investigate and continually review the availability of all revenue sources to supplement the general fund allocations.
- 13.1.5.10 Land acquisition efforts should be guided, as appropriate to the intended use, by consideration of the ecological, environmental, historical, cultural, and/or recreational merits of the affected area/property.
- 13.1.5.11 Encourage private development projects that contribute to the overall recreational objectives of this element.

OBJECTIVE:

- 13.1.6 County staff shall periodically review park property for safety and security deficiencies and shall incorporate, where practical, those improvements in the design and operation of the County's park system.

POLICY:

- 13.1.6.1 County staff shall continue consulting with the Public Protection Department, School Board of Volusia County and other public agencies in reviewing park property for safety and security improvements.

GOAL:

- 13.2 Expand and improve an open space system which utilizes unique natural resources and amenities of botanical, ecological, cultural, and historic significance and which provides recreational opportunities.

OBJECTIVE:

- 13.2.1 Volusia County shall develop a system of open space through the preservation of significant lands as identified on the Future Land Use Map, and Potential Open Space Areas Map of the Recreation and Open Space Element support document.

POLICIES:

- 13.2.1.1 Volusia County shall continue to review, and if necessary, amend the land development regulations to include specific open space definitions and standards to implement the Recreation and Open Space Element.
- 13.2.1.2 Utilize innovative techniques to protect identified open space areas. Such techniques could include overlay districts, flood zones, performance standards, or other incentive-based methods.
- 13.2.1.3 Designated open space areas encompassing natural resource areas, significant environmental features, wildlife habitats, conservation or potential recreation areas shall be protected, but not limited to, buffer zones, deed restrictions, limiting density and intensity of development, conservation easements, acquisition, transfer of development rights, and purchase of development rights or land exchanges.
- 13.2.1.4 Criteria and standards to be used for reviewing development proposals within existing and proposed open space areas shall be developed by Volusia County. Site specific analysis shall continue to include an Environmental Impact Assessment to be submitted, reviewed and approved prior to the issuance of a development order.
- 13.2.1.5 Continue to coordinate with local governments, state agencies and other public agencies in developing consistent standards, criteria and land development regulations for the protection of open space areas.

OBJECTIVE:

- 13.2.2 The County, through programs/processes such as, but not limited to, Volusia Forever and ECHO, shall increase the provision, protection and enhancement of public open space. Provision of open space by private enterprise shall be accomplished through donation or requirements for dedication of open space as specified in the Zoning Ordinance and Land Development Code.

POLICIES:

- 13.2.2.1 Both public and private provision of open space shall be coordinated in order to establish a land use pattern consistent with the Future Land Use Map.
- 13.2.2.2 Land or easements suitable for the provision of open space shall continue to be encouraged as donations from public agencies and private enterprises. The location, shape, size and character shall be evaluated for applicability to Volusia County land development regulations.
- 13.2.2.3 Open Space areas shall be preserved for the following types of development:
- A. Residential development required to provide park needs as required by the Land Development Code.
  - B. Planned Unit Developments required to provide open space and common open space per Zoning Ordinance.
  - C. Development plans encompassing valuable resource habitats such as, but not limited to, environmental corridors as identified in the Conservation and Future Land Use Elements.
- 13.2.2.4 Volusia County shall seek to utilize funds for land acquisition (i.e. Volusia Forever) to partner with non-profit or private organizations to acquire open space areas through cooperative land acquisition efforts, therefore protecting valuable open space as identified on the Potential Open Space Areas Map and Future Land Use Map.

OBJECTIVE:

- 13.2.3 Provide for recreational corridors to link the County-owned parks as well as other open space/conservation areas.

POLICIES:

- 13.2.3.1 To the extent possible, Volusia County shall identify and acquire available abandoned railroad right-of-ways with recreational trails potential and which provides linkages to public parks, recreation areas, historic sites; connects or provides access to existing trails and offers the potential for multiple use.
- 13.2.3.2 Volusia County shall develop and promote recreational trails as a part of the County's nature-based tourism package, consistent with environmental requirements of the Land Development Code.
- 13.2.3.3 Wherever possible, the Volusia County Recreational Trail Corridors shall be coordinated with other national level trails such as the East Coast Greenway and the Department of Environmental Protection Office of Greenways and Trails as well as other state trail systems.
- 13.2.3.4 Volusia County shall coordinate with utility companies with the potential multi-use concept for open space and recreational trails within utility easements.
- 13.2.3.5 To the extent practical, utility easements (overhead transmission lines, gas and water) shall be made available for bike path, nature, jogging, horse trail development. This off-road corridor system shall be designed and developed to connect neighborhoods and communities to recreation and open space facilities.
- 13.2.3.6 Volusia County shall coordinate with State Parks system for potential off-road recreational corridor easements.
- 13.2.3.7 Volusia County shall coordinate with other local governments for recreational trails within their jurisdictions.

OBJECTIVE:

- 13.2.4 Provide for adequate protection of the County's open space/conservation areas.

POLICIES:

- 13.2.4.1 Volusia County would support the reactivation of the Florida Scenic and Wild Rivers Program for the designation of Bulow Creek, Spring Garden Run, Spruce Creek and the Tomoka River as part of the State Scenic and Wild River System. The County's land development regulations may include land use controls, standards and criteria for the protection of the estuarine and shoreline areas adjacent to the designated water bodies.

- 13.2.4.2 Provide assistance in implementing the Wekiva River Aquatic Preserve Management Plan, especially in the areas of protection of natural and cultural resources and the enforcement of applicable laws and ordinances.
- 13.2.4.3 Volusia County shall continue to support the protection and enhancement of Outstanding Florida Waters (O.F.W.) for Spruce Creek and the Tomoka River.
- 13.2.4.4 The recreational use of Utilitarian Open Space resource lands adjacent to or a part of floodplains, wetlands, lakes, rivers, streams and forests shall continue to be considered for public access provided that the safety of the public is ensured and the environmental function of these open space areas is not adversely impacted.
- 13.2.4.5 The development of open space areas for recreational facilities/public access shall be compatible with primary usage (corridor, pastoral, utilitarian) of the natural resource areas, significant environmental or ecological features, critical wildlife habitat or conservation areas. Standards and criteria adopted per Policy 13.2.1.1 shall be enforced to protect or enhance lands adjacent to preserves, refuges and corridors.
- 13.2.4.6 Open space systems or conservation areas identified for potential outdoor classroom sites or nature study facilities shall be provided with the appropriate access facilities. Facilities shall include but are not limited to: on-site circulation system elements, nature trails, above ground boardwalks and limited passive areas designated for picnicking.
- 13.2.4.7 Pastoral open space areas shall continue to be protected from incompatible land uses and development by implementing standards and criteria which will preserve the natural character, scenic values and public benefit of these areas.

GOAL:

- 13.3 Expand County trail system to improve trail connectivity, access to public lands and waterways and access to business centers and commerce. Expansion to include parking areas, restrooms, pavilions, and signage.

OBJECTIVE:

- 13.3.1 Create trails that provide safe and responsible access that enhances the user's outdoor experience and provides interesting opportunities to connect individuals with nature.

POLICIES:

- 13.3.1.1 Establish trail alignments that minimize environmental impacts while providing a unique user experience.
- 13.3.1.2 Include parking areas, trail head maps, wayfinding signs, mile markers and emergency markings for new and existing trails.

- 13.3.1.3 Utilize trail maps, mobile applications, websites, educational signage, virtual tours when appropriate.

OBJECTIVE:

- 13.3.2 Expand paved trail system to close gaps in existing trail segments to connect to parks and preserves, and to connect to restaurants, retail and commerce. Paved corridors will increase recreational activity to parks, preserves, waterways and urban businesses.

POLICIES:

- 13.3.2.1 Construct trails to connect gaps in the Coast to Coast Trail and the St. Johns River to Sea Loop.
- 13.3.2.2 Include restrooms and paved parking areas at new and existing trails.
- 13.3.2.3 Coordinate with municipalities to connect city parks and urban areas to the county's paved trail system.
- 13.3.2.4 Minimize use of on-road trails and shared road trails to increase user safety and to enhance user experience.

OBJECTIVE:

- 13.3.3 Expand un-paved non-motorized trail system in parks and preserves to suit our residents and visitors recreational needs.

POLICIES:

- 13.3.3.1 Alignment should be scenic and offer unique experiences to highlight the sights, smells and sounds of the natural environment and provide rest areas at visual vistas where appropriate.
- 13.3.3.2 All mountain bike trails shall meet International Mountain Bicycling Association's best management practices and comply with safety standards.

OBJECTIVE:

- 13.3.4 Expand and improve public access and awareness of a variety of trail types including equestrian, mountain bike, and paddling trails.

POLICIES:

- 13.3.4.1 Improve county managed marketing platforms including the county's trail website and the Parks and Trails mobile application.
- 13.3.4.2 On-site navigational tools should be provided to users on their mobile application devices and should be easily accessible.
- 13.3.4.3 Provide users with easy access to useful information such as trail locations, site maps, wayfinding signage, parking information, mile markers, trail difficulty and emergency contact information.
- 13.3.4.4 Partner with neighboring counties and cities on trail alignment and map coordination for trails that cross jurisdictional boundaries.