

## Acknowledgements

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# 1 Introduction

The Bay County Parks and Recreation Division provides a comprehensive park system that significantly enhances residents' quality of life. The Master Plan will provide the framework to meet the changing needs of Bay County residents.

The Bay County Parks and Recreation Division provides a comprehensive park system that significantly enhances the quality of life within the area. The most recent complete update to the master plan was done in 2011. To maintain the existing park system and provide continued enhancement to meet the community's changing demographics, the division began an update to the 2011 Master Plan in February 2018. In September 2018, a draft update was completed and included the many changes, additions, and improvements that were made since 2011. In October of 2018, destruction from category-five storm Hurricane Michael destroyed or altered many of the park system's properties and amenities. These changes necessitated further updates to the master plan.

The Parks and Recreation Division maintains all recreational facilities within the unincorporated County for the enjoyment of residents and visitors. Parks staff provides maintenance and upkeep of 10 athletic complexes, 21 recreational parks, 21 boat ramps, 11 small craft launches, 46 beach easements, one 20,000 sq. ft. skatepark, one off-leash dog park, the County pier and a shooting range.

This Parks and Recreation Master Plan will guide the County's continual maintenance of the existing facilities and introduction of new facilities to meet the needs of residents. The Master Plan update was conducted in three phases – the existing conditions analysis, the identification of needs and priorities through public meetings and stakeholder engagement, and the outlining of implementation strategies. Updates to the 2018 draft include an updated demographic analysis, updated data and analysis, revised



Figure 1. Bay County parks and recreation facilities significantly contribute to the quality of life in the area. Source: Bay County, 2022



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list of facilities and amenities, and an updated community survey.

## 2 Existing Conditions Analysis

The Existing Conditions Analysis serves as the basis to determine the facilities that are currently in place within the County. The analysis includes a review of existing plans, demographics, parks and recreation facilities, a level of service analysis, and benchmark comparison to similar communities.

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### 2.1 Existing Plans

Reports and plans are in place to guide the existing and future needs of the community while considering the vision of the County. Plans reviewed as part of the master planning process include the Bay County Comprehensive Plan and the Bay County FY 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.

#### 2.1.1 Bay County Comprehensive Plan

##### *Recreation and Open Space Element*

Chapter 163.3177(6)(e), Florida Statutes, requires that all municipalities adopt a Recreation and Open Space Element as part of their comprehensive plan. The requirement includes “a comprehensive system of public and private sites for recreation, including, but not limited to, natural reservations, parks and playgrounds, parkways, beaches and public access to beaches, open spaces, waterways, and other recreational facilities.”

Bay County’s Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 2009. The Recreation and Open Space Element within the Plan consists of one Goal and nine Objectives. The Goal is as follows:

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*To meet the recreation needs of a growing population; to plan for future improvements to recreation sites and facilities; ensure public access to beaches and shorelines; to provide recreation sites and facilities in a timely and cost-efficient manner including interagency coordination and developer exactions where appropriate, and; to further and promote State policies and laws relative to recreation and open space.*

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The Goal is achieved through the implementation of the objectives and policies that address the provision of parks, guide improvements to recreation sites and facilities in a cost-effective manner, address the provision of public beach access, establish intergovernmental coordination, preserve the natural qualities

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of Econfina Creek, establish a level of service standard, maintain open space, and address the acquisition of property to expand recreational facilities. The complete element is included in Appendix A.

## *Level of Service Standard (LOS)*

As part of the Recreation and Open Space Element, a LOS standard is adopted. Policy 9.7.1 requires the following standard:

- Local Parks 2.3 acres / 1,000 population
- Regional Parks 4.0 acres / 1,000 population
- Beach Access Points 0.29 points / 1,000 population

An update to Florida Statutes in 2012 removed the requirement for a LOS standard to be included as part of the Recreation and Open Space Element. Some jurisdictions opt for a more general standard such as a specific number of acres of general parks and open space, instead of identifying the specific types of parks, to allow for more flexibility in the provision of park services.

## *Future Land Use Element*

The Future Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan establishes future land use categories to guide future growth. The Element includes designation for a Conservation/Recreation future land use designation and Recreation future land use designation.

The purpose of the Conservation/Recreation future land use designation is to provide for areas that are used jointly for conservation and recreation purposes. In order to be designated as such, the property must be designated as either St. Andrews State Recreation Area and Aquatic Preserve, Pine Log State Forest, Econfina Creek Water Management Area, Shell Island, or Class III waters. Allowable uses include Agriculture (when Best Management Practices are used), Recreation, and Public/ Institutional. Residential and Commercial uses are allowed on upland areas when used in conjunction with the overall recreation function (e.g. ranger quarters, concessionaires, etc.). In addition, physical improvements such as docks, piers, seawalls, groins, buoys, "eco-parks" and other similar uses, and public utilities are allowed.



Figure 2: Hiland Park includes baseball fields, picnic area, concession stand, restrooms, swings, and lighted parking. Source: Bay County, 2022



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The Recreation future land use designation is intended to provide areas for the location of private and public recreation land uses including active and passive recreation activities. The criteria for this land use designation requires that the property will contain existing or planned public parks or recreation areas, public golf courses, ball fields, walking or jogging tracks, public exhibition areas, picnic areas, playgrounds, public marinas, public boat ramps, public beach access, multi-use fields, public utilities, and other similar uses. Allowable uses are limited to public parks, playgrounds, exhibition halls, tracks, fields, picnic areas, courts, golf courses, marinas, gymnasiums, and other recreation uses.

*Bay County's  
Enduring Goals*

*Goal 1* Ensure a safe county.

*Goal 2* Deliver effectively the services that county residents need, want, and are willing to support.

*Goal 3* Maintain a family friendly community where citizens and visitors can find and afford the values, services, and lifestyles, they seek.

*Goal 4* Maintain effective stewardship of Bay County's significant natural resources.

*Goal 5* Build and maintain a healthy business climate.

Other future land use designations list recreational uses as a permitted use. They include Conservation / Habitation, Agriculture, Residential, Rural Residential, General Commercial, and Mixed Use. Recreational uses are also encouraged as part of the Special Treatment Zones and Planned Unit Developments. Allowing for recreational uses within more dense land use districts allows for the ready provision of recreational facilities close to the populations they serve.

*Other Comprehensive Plan Elements*

The Transportation Element supports completing the missing portions of the Florida National Scenic Trail:

Policy 4.15.3: The County shall support and assist, through Bay County TPO, a solution for completing the missing portions of the "Florida National Scenic Trail" in the northern part of the County.

The Conservation Element groups conservation lands and passive recreation lands together offering encouragement and strategies for meeting the County's overall goals. The Intergovernmental Coordination Element encourages the coordinated siting of parks and schools for multi-functional use.

The Bay-Walton Sector Plan (Sector Plan), adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan, requires that public needs, including parks, are assessed and provided for through future phases of development. The Sector Plan serves as a master development plan for an area in western Bay County that extends into Walton

County. The Objective for the Recreation and Open Space portion of the Plan (Objective 12.12) states, "To provide public parks, greenways, trails, public access points to water, and other recreational opportunities for a growing population that demands an increasingly wide variety of recreational facilities and services."



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Subsequent policies provide strategies for achieving the objective including providing public access points, connecting to the Florida National Scenic Trail, providing central public spaces, meeting the County level of service, and others.

### 2.1.2 Strategic Plan

The Bay County FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan serves as a roadmap for achieving the goals of the County. The strategic plan also serves as a guide for the County manager and staff in the preparation of the annual budget and all processes for delivering high-level service to citizens. It also serves as a framework for critically evaluating and measuring the County's performance over time by both policymakers and the public.

To accomplish those goals, the Parks and Recreation division is responsible for the following actions and tasks.

**PR ACTION 3.1:** Implement a Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

PR TASK 3.1.1: Work with the Parks Advisory Board and County Commissioners to adopt and implement a Parks and Recreation Master Plan that incorporates the needs and desires of Bay County citizens. (Q3, FY23)

**PR ACTION 3.2:** Promote the value and attraction of Bay County.

PR TASK 3.2.1: Provide a full range of Parks and Recreation services through media sources, brochures, pamphlets, etc. to promote Bay County. (FY23-27)

**PR ACTION 3.3:** Provide diverse recreational, educational, and cultural opportunities that enrich the lives of our citizens and visitors.

PR TASK 3.3.1: Develop annual work plan to maintain Parks and Recreation facilities to promote community interaction and healthy lifestyles. (Q4, FY23-27)

PR TASK 3.3.2: Work to create a central source of information to identify all county-wide (municipal, state, and federal) parks and recreational resources. (FY23-27)

**PR ACTION 4.1:** Educate citizens regarding natural resources in Bay County.

PR TASK 4.1.1: Continually update the information map on recreational uses of the public waterways and natural resources at county recreational facilities. (FY23-27)

PR TASK 4.1.2: Review, update, and ensure maintenance standards for all county beach and bay access points protect the natural resources. (Q1, FY23-27)

## 2.2 Demographic Analysis

The following provides a population and demographic analysis of Bay County and the State of Florida. Decennial Census and annual American Community Survey data was used for the years of 2000, 2010, and 2020. The analysis looks at Bay County as a whole, including the incorporated areas.

### 2.2.1 Population Growth

Over the last 16 years, the population changes in Bay County have been similar to the State of Florida, but the County’s population increases tend to trend lower than that of the State. Over the period from 2000 to 2010, Bay County’s population grew by almost 14% while the state’s population grew by almost 18%. Between 2010 and 2020, the County’s population increased by almost 4% while the state’s population increased by 14.6%.

*Table 1: Population Growth 2000, 2010, and 2020*

	2000 Population	2010 Population	% Change 2000-2010	2020 Population	% Change 2010-2020
Bay County	148,217	168,852	13.9%	175, 216	3.8%
State of Florida	15,982,378	18,801,310	17.6%	21,538,187	14.6%

*Source: US Census Bureau Decennial Census, 2000, 2010, and 2020*

### 2.2.2 Density

Bay County and the State of Florida both have a low population density (measured in population per square mile) as compared to more urban communities. Bay County’s population density was estimated at 231 persons per square mile of land and Florida’s density at 401 persons per square mile of land. The housing density follows a similar pattern in Bay County and Florida with 135 units per square mile and 184 units per square mile, respectively.

*Table 2: Population Density 2010 – 2020*

	Area (Square miles of land)	2020 Population/Square Mile	2020 Total Housing Units/Square Mile
Bay County	758.4	231	135
State of Florida	53,633.7	401	184

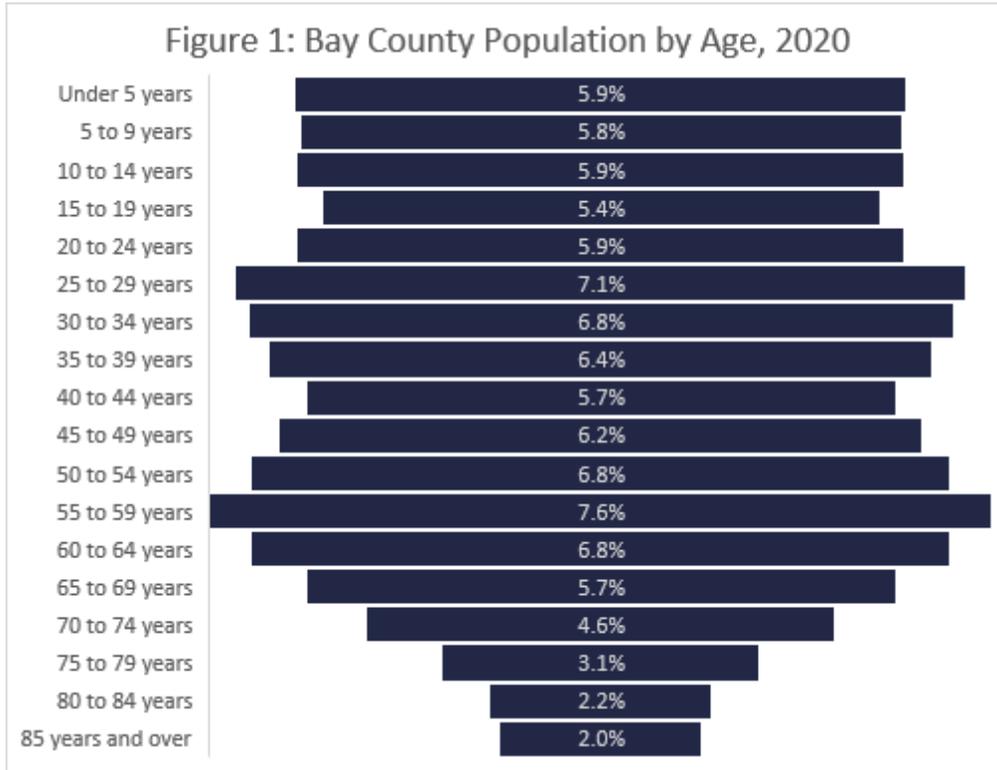
*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census*

### 2.2.3 Age

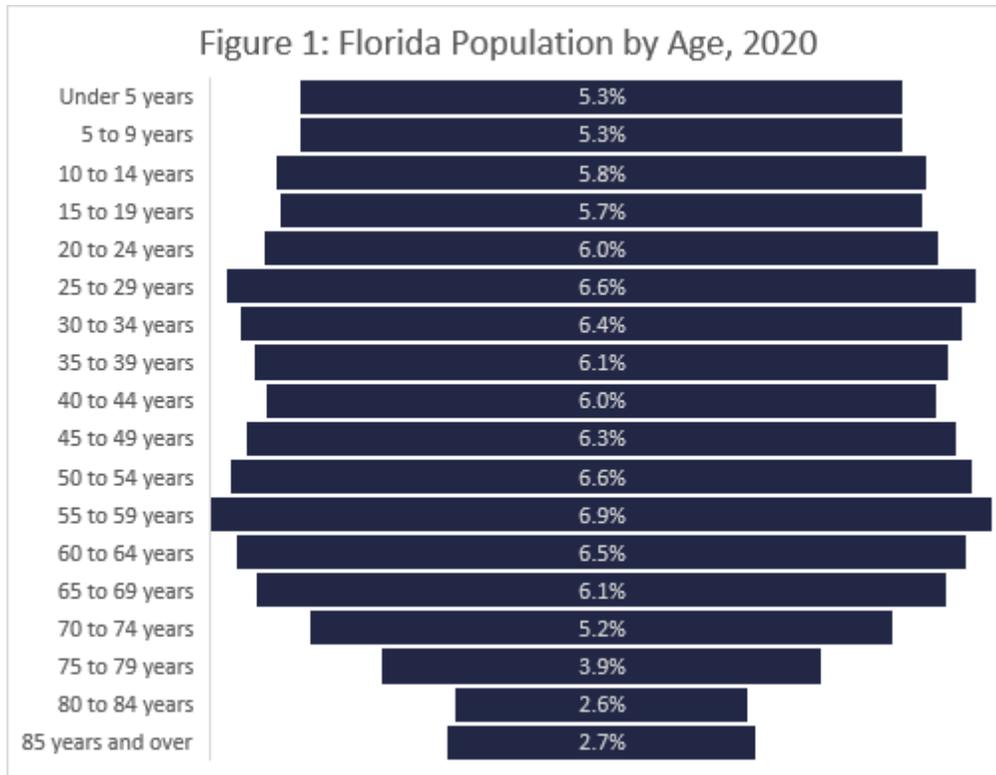
The largest age cohorts within Bay County and Florida occurred between the ages of 25 to 29 and 55 to 59 years. These cohorts make up 14.7% of the overall population in the County and 13.5% in the state. In the younger age cohorts Bay County tended to have a higher percentage of the population than that of Florida. Conversely, Florida tended to have a higher percentage than Bay County in the 60 years old and

  
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above cohorts. As can be expected, the median age for Bay County of 40.6, was lower than that of Florida's at 42.2.




  
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Source: US Census Bureau, 2020 Census

### 2.2.4 Race and Ethnicity

The racial and ethnic make-up of the County and State has shifted between the 2010 and 2020 Census. Similar to the State, the population is predominately white in Bay County; however, both entities are trending towards greater racial and ethnic diversity with the County seeing a 2.6% decrease and Florida seeing a 6.3% decrease in the white population. Within Bay County, a significant increase was seen in Some Other Race and Hispanic/Latinos. The greatest increase was in the Some Other Race group, which grew from 0.2% to 1.5%, a 650% increase.

Table 3: Population by Race and Ethnicity, 2000 - 2010

	Bay County			Florida		
	% of Population, 2010	% of Population, 2020	% Change, 2010-2020	% of Population, 2010	% of Population, 2020	% Change, 2010-2020
White	82.6%	80.4%	-2.7%	76.5%	71.6%	-6.4%
Black or African American	9.2%	10.7%	18.9%	15.9%	15.9%	0.0%



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	Bay County			Florida		
	% of Population, 2010	% of Population, 2020	% Change, 2010-2020	% of Population, 2010	% of Population, 2020	% Change, 2010-2020
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.6%	0.3%	-50.0%	0.4%	0.3%	-25.0%
Asian	2.1%	2.3%	9.5%	2.4%	2.8%	16.7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
Some Other Race	0.2%	1.5%	650.0%	2.6%	3.3%	26.9%
Two or More Races	5.3%	4.6%	-13.2%	2.2%	6.0%	172.7%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	4.6%	7.7%	67.4%	21.9%	26.9%	22.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census and 2020 Census

### 2.2.5 Household Types

Despite to the 3.8% population growth in the County, the total number of households grew by 15.5% between 2010 and 2020. Florida’s household growth kept pace with its population growth, with a population increase of 14.6% and household growth of 12.7%. The County has a larger percentage of households under the age of 18 years old than the State and has a percentage of households with individuals over 60 years old that is consistent with the state’s percentage.

Table 4: Select Household Characteristics, 2010-2020

	Bay County			Florida		
	2010 Population	2020 Population	% Change, 2010-2020	2010 Population	2020 Population	% Change, 2010-2020
Total households	63,654	73,536	15.5%	7,035,068	7,931,313	12.7%
Family households	44,451	47,432	6.7%	4,556,930	5,118,056	12.3%
With own children under 18 years	15,584	18,224	16.9%	1,790,226	1,863,076	4.1%
Nonfamily households	19,203	26,104	35.9%	2,478,138	2,813,257	13.5%
Households with individuals under 18 years	17,314	21,105	21.9%	2,026,100	2,125,592	4.9%



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	Bay County			Florida		
	2010 Population	2020 Population	% Change, 2010-2020	2010 Population	2020 Population	% Change, 2010-2020
Households with individuals 60 years and over	24,061	30,591	27.1%	2,891,413	3,719,786	28.6%
Average household size	2.60	2.42	-6.9%	2.62	2.62	0.0%
Average family size	3.18	2.98	-6.3%	3.24	3.23	-0.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2010 and 2020

### 2.2.6 Housing Occupancy

The total number of housing units saw a 4.4% increase between 2010 and 2020, while the total number of housing units in the state increased 6.3% over the same period. The overall number of occupied housing units in Bay County increased by 15.5% and owner-occupied units increased by 22.3%. In conjunction, vacant housing units decreased by 15.3% and renter-occupied units increased by 3.7%.

Table 5: Housing Occupancy, 2010 – 2020

	Bay County			Florida		
	Number of Housing Units, 2010	Number of Housing Units, 2020	% Change, 2010-2020	Number of Housing Units, 2010	Number of Housing Units, 2020	% Change, 2010-2020
Total Housing Units	99,690	104,060	4.4%	8,994,091	9,562,324	6.3%
Occupied Housing Units	63,654	73,536	15.5%	7,035,068	7,931,313	12.7%
Vacant Housing Units	36,036	30,524	-15.3%	1,959,023	1,63,1011	-16.7%
Owner-occupied Housing Units	40,461	49,474	22.3%	4,794,130	5,250,878	9.5%
Renter-Occupied Housing Units	23,193	24,062	3.7%	2,240,938	2,680,435	19.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, 2010 and 2020

### 2.2.7 Household Income

Both Bay County and Florida saw increases in median income between 2010 and 2020. The median income in Bay County increased by 25.9% to \$56,483. Florida’s median income increased by 29.9% to



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\$57,703. In Bay County, the most significant increases in household income took place in the \$150,000 – \$199,999 category and in the \$200,000 or more category. Florida saw similar changes, but not at quite the same rate.

*Table 6: Household Income, 2010 - 2020*

	Bay County			Florida		
	% of Population, 2010	% of Population, 2020	% Change, 2010-2020	% of Population, 2010	% of Population, 2020	% Change, 2010-2020
Less than \$10,000	7.7%	5.9%	-23.4%	8.3%	6.2%	-25.3%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	6.8%	4.3%	-36.8%	6.3%	4.2%	-33.3%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	9.8%	8.9%	-9.2%	12.6%	9.3%	-26.2%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	12.6%	9.4%	-25.4%	12.2%	9.9%	-18.9%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	18.1%	15.1%	-16.6%	15.7%	13.8%	-12.1%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	22.0%	20.4%	-7.3%	18.3%	18.3%	0.0%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	9.7%	14.6%	50.5%	10.7%	12.5%	16.8%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	9.6%	12.1%	26.0%	9.6%	13.7%	42.7%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1.9%	5.4%	184.2%	3.1%	5.6%	80.6%
\$200,000 or more	1.7%	3.9%	129.4%	3.1%	6.4%	106.5%
Median Income	\$44,881	\$56,483	25.9%	\$44,409	\$57,703	29.9%
Mean Income	\$55,348	\$73,774	33.3%	\$61,877	\$83,104	34.3%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, 2010 and 2020*

### 2.2.8 Demographics and Physical Activity

The physical activities a person is interested in doing depend, in part, on an individual’s demographic characteristics. These characteristics include gender, age, income, ethnicity, and household size. In its 2021 Participation Report, the Physical Activity Council summarizes the findings from an online survey conducted in 2020. The Council found that, in general, participation in physical activity is increasing, and interest in activities has started moving toward outdoor recreation. The report also provides a breakdown of the types of activities preferred by each age group. In addition to the surveys, discussed in Section 3.2 of this report, these trends may help determine what types of park and recreation improvements are preferred by the citizens of the County. The circumstances surrounding a birth cohort, or generation, (i.e. Baby Boomers, Generation X, etc.) can create some collective traits that distinguish one group from another. These distinctions can be useful when trying to predict the needs of a certain group.

According to the July 2012 edition of Parks and Recreation magazine, there are five demographic trends shaping the parks and recreation needs of future populations. These trends include slower population



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growth, an increasingly aged population, growing racial and ethnic diversity, a smaller proportion of youth, and the changing distribution of the US population. For Bay County, these trends translate into a larger retiree population; while Bay County’s population profile does not indicate that there is a large population about to retire, Florida is one of the states who population is projected to increase due to the in migration of retirees. Thus, Bay County may experience and increase in its elderly population. Compounding the general state-wide trend, a 3,000-unit retirement community is planned for the northwest portion of the County. This development will increase the overall demand for parks in that portion of the County and will also increase the demand for the type of park and recreation facilities used by retirement-age citizens.

In addition, the changes in Bay County’s racial and ethnicity makeup since 2010 indicate that while the white non-Hispanic population is still well within the majority, the proportion of minorities is increasing. What generation you belong to and what your race is can inform how you use parks and recreational facilities. Table 7, below, shows the participation rate for each demographic cohort.

**Table 7: Participation Rate by Demographic Cohort**

Demographic Cohort	Participation Rate						
	Individual Sports	Racquet Sports	Team Sports	Outdoor Sports	Winter Sports	Water Sports	Fitness Sports
Generation Z (2000+)	44.3%	22.4%	56.6%	60.6%	19.4%	16.3%	55.2%
Millennials (1980-1999)	41.5%	19.3%	30.4%	59.4%	14.5%	17.1%	68.7%
Generation X (1965-1979)	31.5%	12.2%	15.5%	52.2%	8.7%	13.0%	66.0%
Boomers (1945-1964)	22.3%	6.4%	4.9%	39.5%	3.5%	7.8%	59.9%

*Source: Physical Activity Council, 2021 Participation Report*

The table above indicates that individual sports, outdoor sports, and fitness sports enjoy the greatest participation rates across all age groups. However, there are some differences between the generations and their use of parks and recreation facilities. According to “Here Come the Millennials,” a report published by California State Parks, and the Physical Activity Council’s 2018 Participation Report, Baby Boomers use parks and recreation facilities for physical fitness and to engage with nature. Millennials prefer a more structured experience with a clear task to be accomplished and tend to use technology to facilitate or augment their experience.

Some trends develop irrespective of generational drivers. According to *Recreation Management’s* “2021 State of the Managed Recreation Industry” report (June 2021), The top ten planned features for park and recreation facilities include: 1) fitness trails and outdoor fitness equipment; 2) splash play areas; 3) playgrounds; 4) park shelters; 5) disc golf courses; 6) walking and hiking trails; 7) bike trails; 8) synthetic turf sports fields; 9) dog parks; and 10) outdoor sports courts and restrooms. The top ten planned program additions for park and recreation facilities include: 1) group exercise programs; 2) fitness programs; 3) teen programs; 4) mind-body/balance programs; holidays and special events; 5) educational programs; 6)

  
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adult sports teams; 7) environmental education; 8) programs for active older adults; and 10) special needs programs. The County should be aware of these trends, in conjunction with demographic changes and survey responses, when considering which physical activity improvements to make to its parks and recreation facilities.

## 2.3 Inventory

The Parks and Recreation Division maintains all recreational facilities within Unincorporated Bay County. Facilities under their responsibility include 10 Athletic Complexes, 21 recreational parks, 21 boat ramps, 11 small craft launch, 46 beach easements, 1 20,000 sq. ft skatepark, 1 off-leash dog park, the County pier, and a shooting range. (Please see Map 1, Bay County Park Facilities, for locations.)

### 2.3.1 Parks

The Comprehensive Plan divides the park facilities into two categories – User-Oriented and Resource Based. User-oriented facilities are those that are used for activities such as tennis, softball, football, soccer, and playgrounds. Resource-based sites are those used for access and enjoyment of a natural resource.

The 2011 Strategic Plan for Parks and Recreation divided the parks into acreage-based categories. They include mini-parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, regional parks, and special use parks.

#### *Mini-parks (<1 acre)*

Specialized facilities that serve a local population, or a specific group such as very young children or senior citizens, typically within ¼ mile of the park location. Mini-parks are small in size (typically less than one



Figure 3. David W Hutchinson Park is a mini-park located on Deer Point Lake. It is 2 acres in size and contains a boat launch, picnic tables, and a playground. Source: Bay County, 2022.

  
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acre) and often encompass only a single lot. Facilities are typically limited to a small open area, children’s playground, and a bench or picnic table. These parks are intended to provide convenient opportunities for people who are unable to travel further for open space and unstructured activities. They may be intended for passive recreational use of immediate property owners such as in apartment complexes and retirement communities.

*Neighborhood parks (<10 acres)*

A neighborhood park is used by the residents of one or more nearby neighborhoods for active recreation and playground use, typically within a half-mile radius or 10-minute walk of the park. These parks are usually less than ten acres in size, with landscaping and improvements that suits the needs of local residents. Some neighborhood parks are situated near a school and have improvements that are focused mainly on the recreational needs of children, such as tot lots or playgrounds. If possible, Neighborhood parks should be located within safe walking distance of the homes they serve. Playgrounds should offer imaginative play opportunities not found in the backyard, with such things as sandboxes, play sculpture, swings, and slides. Other neighborhood parks are quite small with basic landscaping, and no special facilities. These parks are important, too, because they provide a focal point for neighborhoods and an



*Figure 4. Ira A Hutchinson Park is a neighborhood park located on Highway 2321. It is about 6 acres and includes a dock, freshwater ramps, picnic area, restrooms, swings, and lighted parking. Source: Bay County, 2022.*

  
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informal place for small groups or individuals to enjoy the outdoors. These areas should be fenced in if possible. For adults, there should be benches, shelter, and trees for shade.

*Community Parks (6 – 20 acres)*

A community park is a little larger in size than the neighborhood park. These areas are used by residents who live within a three-mile radius of the park and are typically 6-20 acres in size. Where neighborhood parks are lacking, community parks may also serve the same function as neighborhood parks. The facilities at a community park could include the same elements found at a neighborhood park, plus restrooms, onsite parking, large landscaped areas, a community building/center, lighted sports fields, and other specialized facilities. The smaller community parks might be dedicated to one use, and some elements of the park might be leased to community groups.

*Regional Parks (40 acres or more)*



*Figure 5: Under the Oaks Park is a Community Park located along East Bay. This 30-acre park includes a walking trail, picnic tables, benches, and a large playground. The oak trees for which it is names were severely damaged in 2018's Hurricane Michael. Source: Bay County, 2022.*

Regional parks provide recreation opportunities that typically cannot be provided by neighborhood or community parks. Regional parks may have many of the same facilities as the neighborhood and community parks and may be used by nearby residents (within a 10-mile radius) as their neighborhood or

  
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community park. Because they are so large (usually 40-100 acres or larger) they can be designed to include significant open space or natural areas. Regional parks are typically developed with recreational facilities and sports complexes.

*Special Use Park*

Special Use Parks typically describe parks that do not fit into any one category or provide a single-purpose use. The Special Use Parks include the Bay County Shooting Range, a 20,000 sq. ft. skatepark, Zollie Young Dog Park, Newby’s Curve Beach Access Parking, and Rick Seltzer Park (beach access).

The Bay County Shooting Range provides a 300-yard rifle range, a 100-yard rifle range, a 50-yard rifle/handgun range, three handgun ranges, an automated clays course, an automated clays field, and 18 3-dimensional archery targets. A study completed by the National Shooting Federation indicated that the shooting range could potentially draw users from a 500-mile radius and more than 30,000 people per year.



*Figure 6. HG Harders Park is a 76-acre regional park. It includes softball/baseball fields, soccer/football fields, tennis courts, model boat pond, model plane airstrip, playground, cross country rail, concession stands, pavilions, and restrooms. Source: Bay County, 2022.*

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Table 7: Park Inventory

Park Name	Acres	Park Type	Restrooms	Community Building	Pavilion	Picnic Tables	Playground	Baseball	Basketball	Football	Soccer	Volleyball	Tennis	Trail	Dog Facilities	Water/Beach Access	Boat Ramp	Boat Dock	Fishing Pier
B.V. Buchanan Park	1	Mini	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	X
Bay County Shooting Range	108	Special Use	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bayou George Park	8	Community	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Crooked Creek Park	8	Neighborhood	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓
David W Hutchison	2	Mini	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓
Deep Springs Park	40	Regional	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
East Bay Community Park	1	Mini	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

X = No, ✓ = Yes

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Park Name	Acres	Park Type	Restrooms	Community Building	Pavilion	Picnic Tables	Playground	Baseball	Basketball	Football	Soccer	Volleyball	Tennis	Trail	Dog Facilities	Water/Beach Access	Boat Ramp	Boat Dock	Fishing Pier
HG Harder's Recreational Complex	127	Regional	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Highland Park Sports Complex	12	Community	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Highpoint Park	1	Mini	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Ira A. Hutchinson Park	6	Neighborhood	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Island View Park	1	Mini	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Issac Byrd Park	4	Neighborhood	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Laird Park	6	Neighborhood	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Lake Powell Park	5	Neighborhood	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Lauren Merriam Park	2	Mini	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
M.B. Miller Park (County Pier)	11	Community	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓

✗ = No, ✓ = Yes

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Park Name	Acres	Park Type	Restrooms	Community Building	Pavilion	Picnic Tables	Playground	Baseball	Basketball	Football	Soccer	Volleyball	Tennis	Trail	Dog Facilities	Water/Beach Access	Boat Ramp	Boat Dock	Fishing Pier
Majette Park	348	Regional	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
McCall-Everitt Park	31	Regional	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Newby's Curve	1	Special Use	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Pete Edwards Field	15	Community	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Rick Seltzer Park	5	Special Use	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Simmons Park	10	Community	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Southport Ball Park	5	Neighborhood	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Southport Community Park	3	Neighborhood	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Spring Avenue Walking Park	12	Community	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

✗ = No, ✓ = Yes

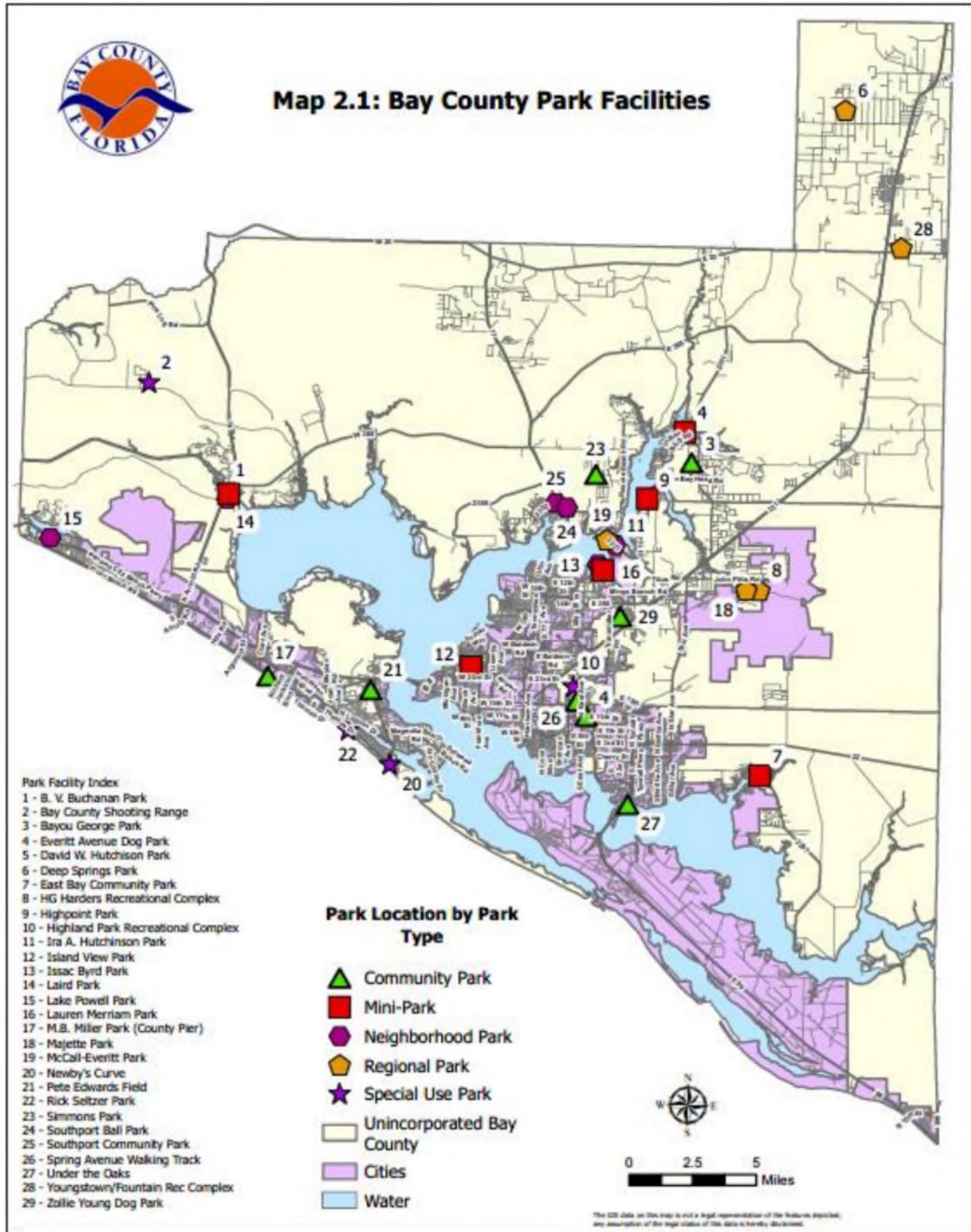
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Park Name	Acres	Park Type	Restrooms	Community Building	Pavilion	Picnic Tables	Playground	Baseball	Basketball	Football	Soccer	Volleyball	Tennis	Trail	Dog Facilities	Water/Beach Access	Boat Ramp	Boat Dock	Fishing Pier
Under the Oaks Park	30	Community	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	X
Youngstown / Fountain Rec Complex	35	Regional	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Zollie Young Park	10	Special Use	X	X	X	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X

X = No, ✓ = Yes

# Bay County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Map 2.1: Bay County Park Facilities



### 2.3.2 Boat Ramps and Small Craft Launches

According to the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, in 2021, Bay County had 16,813 registered vessels. This number includes 623 commercial, 125 dealer, and 16,065 pleasure and small craft vessels. Bay County maintains 13 saltwater and 8 freshwater public boat ramps. In addition to the boat ramps used for motorboats, ten small craft launches are provided throughout the County. Map 2: Boat Ramps and Small Craft Launches shows the location of boat ramps and launching facilities within the County.

Table 8: Boat Ramp Inventory

Boat Ramp Name	Size	Restroom	Boat Dock	Fishing Pier	Ramp Type	Water Type	Waterbody
B. V. Buchanan Park	1	✗	✓	✗	Concrete	Saltwater	West Bay Intercoastal
Bayhead North	1	✗	✗	✗	Concrete	Freshwater	Deerpoint Lake
Bayhead South	1	✗	✗	✗	Shell	Freshwater	Deerpoint Lake
Burnt Mill Creek	2	✗	✗	✗	Concrete	Saltwater	Burnt Mill Creek
Crooked Creek	0	✗	✓	✗	Concrete	Saltwater	Crooked Creek
David W. Hutchison Park	1	✗	✓	✓	Concrete	Freshwater	Deerpoint Lake
Deerpoint Draw Down	3	✗	✓	✓	Concrete	Freshwater	Deerpoint Lake
Dolphin Drive	1	✗	✓	✓	Concrete	Saltwater	Grand Lagoon
Donald Penny	0	✗	✓	✗	Concrete	Saltwater	Fanning Bayou
High Point Park	1	✗	✓	✗	Concrete	Freshwater	Deerpoint Lake
Ira Hutchison	6	✗	✓	✗	Concrete	Freshwater	Deerpoint Lake
Lake Powell Park	5	✓	✓	✗	Concrete	Saltwater	Lake Powell
Maude Holmes	0	✗	✗	✗	Concrete	Freshwater	Sandy Creek
McCall-Everitt Park	22	✗	✓	✓	Concrete	Saltwater	North Bay
McKenzie	1	✗	✓	✗	Concrete	Saltwater	Fanning Bayou
Oriole Street	0	✗	✗	✗	Dirt	Saltwater	Grand Lagoon
Pine Log	1	✗	✗	✗	Concrete	Freshwater	Pine Log Creek
Quail Street	0	✗	✗	✗	Concrete	Saltwater	Grand Lagoon
Safari Street	1	✗	✓	✗	Concrete	Saltwater	Grand Lagoon
Shoreline Circle	0	✗	✓	✗	Concrete	Saltwater	Pretty Bayou
West Hathaway	0	✗	✗	✗	Concrete	Saltwater	St Andrews Bay

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✘ = No, ✔ = Yes

Table 9: Small Craft Launch Inventory

Small Craft Launch Name	Restroom	Boat Dock	Fishing Pier	Water Type	Waterbody
25th St Small Craft Launch	✘	✘	✘	Saltwater	West Bay
26th St Small Craft Launch	✘	✘	✘	Saltwater	West Bay
Amhurst Small Craft Launch	✘	✘	✘	Saltwater	Beatty Bayou
Duppie Easement	✘	✘	✘	Freshwater	Deerpoint Lake
Fanning Bayou Small Craft Launch	✘	✘	✘	Saltwater	Fanning Bayou
Grassy Point Rd Small Craft Launch	✘	✘	✘	Saltwater	North Bay
Jan Cooley Dr Small Craft Launch	✘	✘	✘	Saltwater	Grand Lagoon
Laurie Ave Small Craft Launch	✘	✘	✔	Saltwater	Lower Grand Lagoon
Sandra Lane Small Craft Launch	✘	✘	✘	Saltwater	North Bay
Tarpon St Small Craft Launch	✘	✘	✘	Saltwater	Grand Lagoon
Under the Oaks Small Craft Launch	✘	✘	✘	Saltwater	East Bay

✘ = No, ✔ = Yes

### 2.3.3 Public Beach Easements

The public beaches of Bay County are exceptionally important recreational resources. During maximum use conditions parking at beaches and beach access points is a problem, particularly on weekends. Bay County maintains forty-two public beach access points along the Gulf of Mexico, in addition to MB Miller County Pier and Rick Seltzer Park. Many of these access points were established primarily for residents in the immediate vicinity, and thus have limited parking. Drivers are often forced to park along roadways which creates traffic congestion. The public is parking on right of ways along major roads; these areas may be wide enough for parallel parking. In addition, parking lots at some commercial establishments appear to be within the public right of way.



Figure 7. There are 45 beach access points throughout the county. Source: Bay County, 2018

  
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The MB Miller County Pier attracted 16,000 people in June 2021, the peak month for that year. The County Pier is staffed with 5 office employees and 2 maintenance employees; it is open year-round 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A Lifeguard program covering the County Pier and S. Rick Seltzer Park has been added to Pier staff.

Standardized signs across all County beach accesses make the locations easily identifiable and help to promote usage and public safety. Additionally, informational signage at beach access points identifies surf conditions to warn beach-goers of potentially dangerous currents. Maps 3: Beach Access Locations – East and 4: Beach Access Locations – West show the location of beach access locations for the County.

### 2.3.4 Community Buildings

There are two community buildings available for rent within the County. They include the Southport Community Building and a new community building at Majette Park. The facilities are used for events such as weddings, reunions, meetings, rehearsals, and many other activities.



*Figure 8. A new community building was under construction at Majette Park in March 2022 and completed October 2023  
Source: Bay County, 2022.*

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Map 2.2: Boat Ramps and Small Craft Launches



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Map 2.3.a: Beach Access Locations - East



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*Map 2.3.b: Beach Access Locations - West*



### 2.3.5 Programs and Special Events

The Parks and Recreation Department’s Athletic Program is continually advancing and adapting to meet the needs of the local public and beyond. The program currently hosts seasonal softball leagues, soccer leagues, youth football leagues, high school sports, and various tournaments though out the year. As time progresses, new leagues and activities will be developed to meet the needs of changing demographics.

Table 10: Recreational Sports Leagues that Utilize Bay County Parks

Sport League	Number of Participants	Seasons	Revenue Generation
Bay County Youth Soccer Association (BCYSA)	614 Recreation Players 65 Select Players	Spring Fall	Registration Fees Sponsors
Gulf Coast Youth Football Association (GCYFA)	630 Players	Fall	Registration Fees
Hiland Park Sports, Inc.	109 Players	Spring Fall	Concession Stand Registration Fees Sponsors
Men’s Softball at Harder’s Park	180 Players	Spring Fall	Registration Fees
Southport Youth Sports Association	248 Players 65 Coaches 110 Volunteers	Spring Fall	Concession Stand Registration Fees Sponsors
Bayou George Ballpark	135 Players	Spring Fall	Concession Stand Registration Fees Sponsors

In 2016, the County introduced the Lifeguard Program. Staff consists of seven full-time and three part time/seasonal lifeguards who operate out of two towers with roving guard staff on ATVs during the summer. The Lifeguard Program has become an in-house, United States Lifeguard Association-certified training program. The Staff work closely with Panama City Beach and Surf Police to help with the growing demand for safety on the beach. This cooperative effort includes extending operational hours when needed and for holidays and special events.

  
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The County hosts a variety of special themed events at their facilities and donates their time and equipment to assist other local events. Some of the events they participate include:

- Easter Egg Hunt at Harder’s Park in April
- Christmas at Harder’s Park in December, including a light display and Santa’s workshop.
- The MB Miller Pier partnered with the Tourist Development Council to host a Fall Fishing tournament.
- The MB Miller Pier hosts the annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks celebration that is partnered with the Panama City Beach’s Dan Russell Pier. The show is a mirror concept with the fireworks being simultaneously visible from both locations.
- Bay County Sheriff’s Rodeo is held every December, with proceeds benefiting the Sheriff’s office



*Figure 9. Above: Santa and Ms. Claus arriving on the Sheriff’s helicopter at the Christmas celebration at Harder’s Park. Source: Bay County 2018*

*Figure 10: Left: Easter egg hunt at Harder’s Park. Source: Bay County, 2019*

## 2.4 Facility Evaluations

An evaluation of each of the park facilities was conducted by park staff in 2018 to determine the quality of the existing facilities and their ability to serve the end user. Each reviewer was provided standard evaluation criteria to analyze the parks and could rate the facility from 1.0, Not Meeting Expectations, to 5.0, Far Exceeds Expectations.

The evaluation criteria included a review of access, comfort, use, sustainability, and buildings. Some of the items reviewed include the following:

*Access:*

- Visibility from a distance
- Ease of walking to the park
- Transit access
- Clarity of information/signage

- ADA compliance
- Lighting

*Comfort*

  
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- First impression/overall attractiveness
- Feeling of safety
- Cleanliness/overall quality of maintenance
- Comfort of places to sit
- Protection from bad weather
- Evidence of management / stewardship (interior and exterior)
- Ability to easily supervise and manage the park or facility (interior)
- Condition and effectiveness of any equipment or operation systems

- Ability of facility to effectively support current organized programming

*Sustainability*

- Stormwater management
- Multi-modal capacity
- Facility energy efficiency

*Buildings*

- Image and aesthetics
- Clarity of entry and connection to the park
- Interior finishes, furniture, and equipment
- Building enclosure
- Building systems

*Use*

- Mix of uses/things to do
- Level of activity
- Sense of pride/ownership
- Programming flexibility

Overall, the parks were rated an average of 2.8. The rating is similar to the results of the community survey discussed in Section 3.2. This score indicates that the parks are close to meeting expectations but need some improvements. M.B. Miller Park (County Pier) rated the highest at 3.4 followed by David W. Hutchinson Park and Majette Park at 3.1. The lowest rated parks were Deep Springs Park at 2.4 and Bayou



George Park, Laird Park, and Newby's Curve at 2.5.

Due to damage from Hurricane Michael, some of the factors within these parks have changed. However, the ratings from 2018 give some idea of which aspects of park users find most important and can inform future updates and maintenance schedules.

*Figure 11. The boat ramps at McCall Everitt Park. Source: Bay County, 2022.*



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Table 11: Park Site Evaluation Summary

	Access	Comfort	Use	Sustainability	Buildings	Average Scores without Buildings	Average Scores with Buildings
B. V. Buchanan Park	2.3	2.8	3.0	2.7	-	2.7	-
Bay County Skate Park	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0		5.0
Bayou George Park	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.7	2.2	2.5	2.6
Crooked Creek Park	2.8	3.3	3.2	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.2
David W Hutchison	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.0	-	3.1	-
Deep Springs Park	2.2	2.2	2.6	2.7	2.3	2.4	2.7
East Bay Community Park	2.3	2.6	2.4	2.7	2.2	2.5	2.4
HG Harder's Recreational Complex	2.8	2.7	3.2	2.7	2.4	2.9	3.1
Highpoint Park	2.7	2.8	3.0	2.7	-	2.8	-
Ira A. Hutchison Park	2.7	2.6	3.4	2.7	-	2.8	-
Island View Park	2.5	2.9	3.0	2.7	-	2.8	-
Issac Byrd Park	2.5	2.5	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.6
Laird Park	2.2	2.4	2.6	2.7	-	2.5	-
Lake Powell Park	2.5	3.0	3.0	2.7	-	2.8	-
Lauren Merriam Park	2.6	2.7	2.9	2.8	3.0	2.8	2.9
M.B. Miller Park (County Pier)	3.7	3.1	3.4	3.3	3.0	3.4	3.4
Majette Park	2.7	3.0	3.8	3.0	2.4	3.1	3.7
McCall-Everitt Park	2.3	2.6	3.2	2.7	-	2.7	-
Newby's Curve	2.8	2.4	2.2	2.7	-	2.5	-
Pete Edwards Field	2.7	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.2	2.7	2.4
Rick Seltzer Park	2.8	2.7	3.2	2.7	2.2	2.9	2.6
Sherman Ave Park	2.7	2.9	3.0	2.7	2.9	2.8	2.8
Simmons Park	2.8	2.9	3.0	2.7	3.0	2.8	3.0
Southport Ball Park	2.9	2.9	3.2	2.7	2.6	2.9	2.8
Southport Community Park	2.9	2.9	3.0	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.8
Spring Avenue Park	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.7	-	2.9	-
Under the Oaks Park	3.0	2.9	3.0	2.7	2.8	2.9	3.0
Youngstown / Fountain Rec Complex	2.6	3.0	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.9



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	Access	Comfort	Use	Sustainability	Buildings	Average Scores without Buildings	Average Scores with Buildings
Zollie Young Park	2.8	2.9	3.0	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.7

### 2.4.1 Park Maintenance

Park staff provides general repairs and maintenance to park structures including buildings, boat ramps, fencing, and turf. They are also responsible for the maintenance of ball parks and open space which includes mowing, weed eating, and trimming.

## 2.5 Level of Service Analysis

As previously mentioned, Florida Statutes no longer require comprehensive plans to include a level of service (LOS) requirement for parks space. Additionally, there is no industry standard for how local communities should establish LOS for parks and recreation. Instead, communities are able to conduct communitywide assessments and / or look at other, similar communities and determine a standard that works best. To analyze the LOS provided to Bay County residents, two methodologies were employed:

- Comprehensive Plan LOS Analysis – Measure the quantity of park space provided versus what is required within the Comprehensive Plan.
- Access/Service Area Analysis – Use mapping to illustrate where parks are accessible for residents and where gaps may occur.

### 2.5.1 Comprehensive Plan LOS Analysis

Policy 9.7.1 of the Comprehensive Plan requires the following standard for parks within the County:

Table 12: Comprehensive Plan LOS Requirements

Park Classification	LOS Requirements
Local Parks	2.3 acres / 1,000 population
Regional Parks	4.0 acres / 1,000 population
Beach Access Points	0.29 points / 1,000 population

An analysis based on the LOS requirement and the unincorporated Bay County population of 79,737 from the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) 2021, identifies the need or surplus of park land within each of the three park categories. Additionally, based on the 2035 Medium BEBR population projections, calculated as a percentage of the overall County population, the analysis assumes that population will reach 89,042 by 2035. Currently, and for the 2035 planning horizon, park facilities and beach access points are anticipated to be more than sufficient to service the County population.



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Table 13: Comprehensive Plan LOS Analysis

Park Facility	Bay Co. Comprehensive Plan LOS (Acres/ 1,000 People)	Existing Acreage / Access Points	2021 Population Estimate 79,737		2035 Population Estimate 89,042	
			2021 Target Acreage	Acreage Need (-) / Surplus (+)	2035 Target Acreage	Acreage Need (-) / Surplus (+)
Total Park Acreage	6.3	854	502	352+	561	293+
Local Parks	2.3	274	183	91+	205	69+
Regional Parks	4.0	580	319	261+	356	224+
Beach Access Points	0.29	45	23	22+	26	19+

### 2.5.2 Access Service Area Analysis

The access service area analysis is a visual tool used to assess resident’s ability to access County parks using varying parameters. Standards are not established nationwide, and must be created based on recreational lifestyles, land use patterns, population densities, transportation networks and other variables that meet the needs of the individual locality. The parameters used in this analysis were based on the access radius initially established in the 2011 Strategic Plan for Parks and Recreation and is consistent with standards used in similar communities. The access service area analysis used the following standards:

Table 14: Access Service Area Buffers per Park Type

Park Type	LOS Access Buffer
Mini-Park	½ mile
Neighborhood Park	1 mile
Community Park	3 miles
Regional Park	10 miles

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Figure 12. Sports associations in Bay County offer the opportunity for the community's youth to enjoy a variety of sports, including baseball. Source: Bay County, 2022.

There are a total of seven mini-parks spread throughout the County, servicing an area of about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from the park. Due to the large size of the County and the small service area, there is a large portion of the County that is not serviced by these types of parks; however, that is to be expected due to their small service area. Please see Map 5: Mini-Park,  $\frac{1}{2}$  Mile Service Area for the location of mini-parks within the County.

There are seven neighborhood parks throughout the County that have a typical service area of approximately one mile. Similar to the mini-parks, they are not anticipated to fill the need of every resident but are able to provide services in various locations throughout the County. Please see Map 6: Neighborhood Park, One Mile Service Area, for the location of neighborhood parks within the County.

The community parks serve a larger area – approximately three miles – and are located throughout the County. The eight community parks service the majority of the County with a noticeable gap in the northwestern portion of the County and the southeastern portion of the County. Please see Map 7: Community Park, Three Mile Service Area for the location of Community Parks within the County.

There are a total of five regional parks that each service a ten-mile area. These parks are accessible to most County residents; however, there are gaps on the western and southeastern side of the County. Please see Map 8: Regional Park, Ten Mile Service Area for the location of Regional Parks within the County.

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*Map 5: Mini-Park, ½ Mile Service Area*



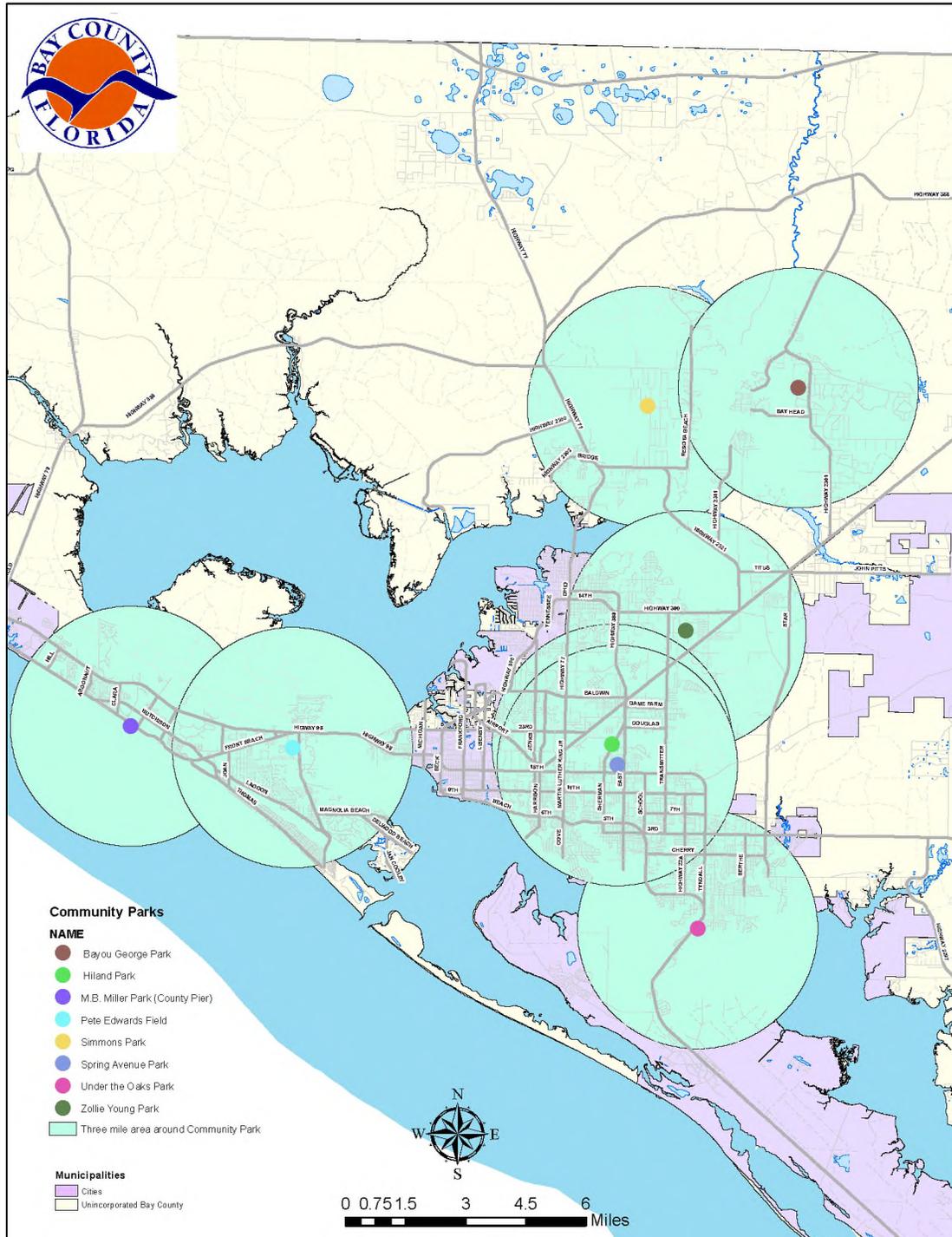
# Bay County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Map 6: Neighborhood-Park, One Mile Service Area



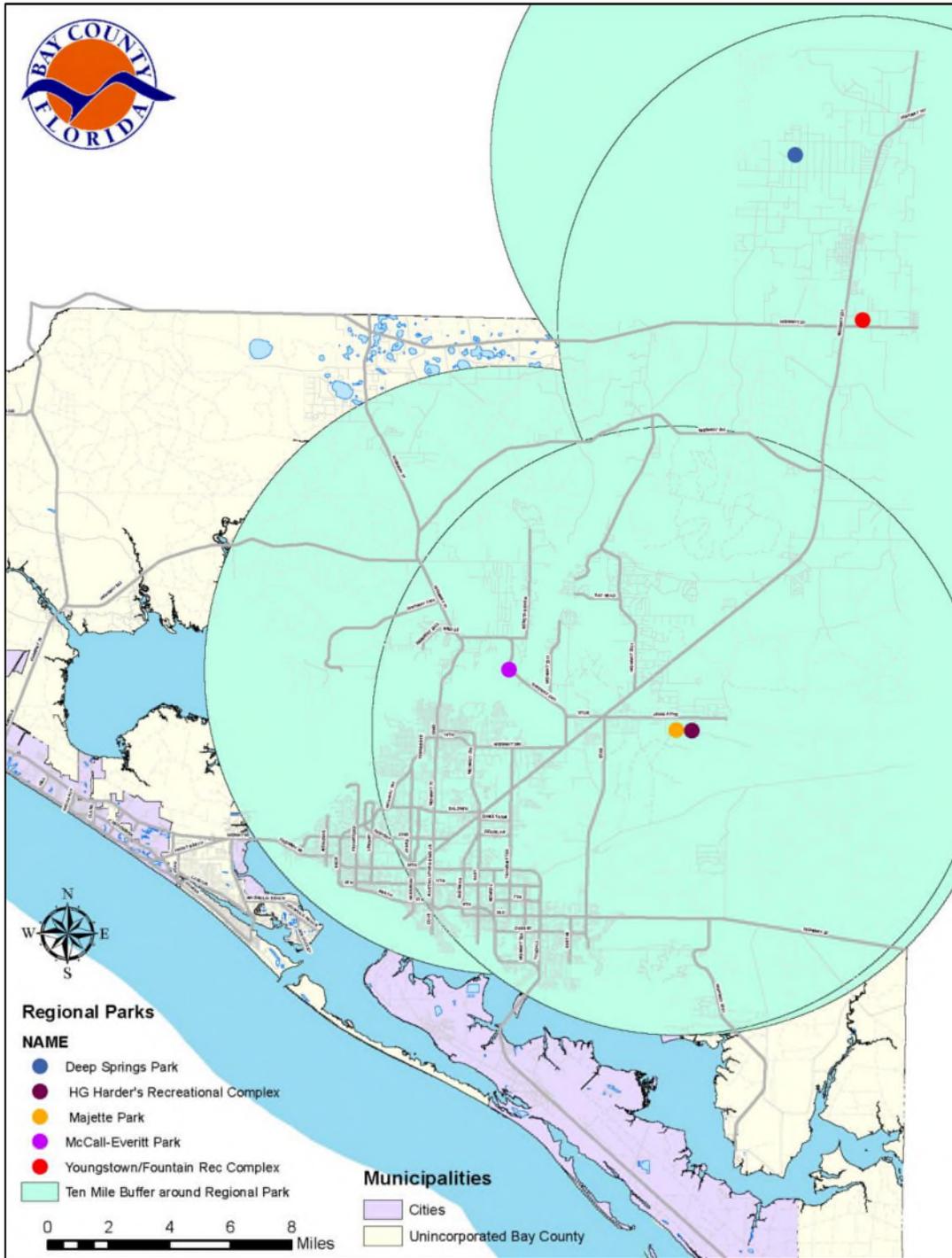
# Bay County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

*Map 7: Community-Park, Three Mile Service Area*



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*Map 8: Regional-Park, Ten Mile Service Area*



## 2.6 Community Comparisons

Each year, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) publishes a review report that serves as a benchmarking tool to assist park and recreation professionals in the effective management and planning of operating resources and capital facilities. According to the 2021 NRPA Agency Performance Review, there is one park for every 2,277 residents and 9.9 acres of park land for every 1,000 residents when looking at the United States as a whole. Because local and regional park agencies differ so greatly in size and facility offerings, the NRPA provides a resource to compare agencies across various attributes including “Residents per Park” and “Acres of Park Land per 1,000 Residents” to offer a comparison of nationwide standards.

The following analysis uses the 2021 BEBR population in Unincorporated Bay County of 79,737 persons, to compare to other programs with a similar population throughout the United States. The NRPA estimates that other municipalities with similar population would have a median range of one park per 2,387 residents. Bay County is near to meeting that standard with one park per 2,572 residents. Another standard to analyze is the acres of park land per resident. The NRPA estimates that other municipalities with similar population would have a median range of 7.9 acres of park land per 1,000 residents. Bay County exceeds this standard with 10.7 acres of park land per 1,000 residents.

Table 15: National Median Comparison

Residents per Park		Acres of Park Land per 1,000 Residents	
National Measure of Residents per Park for agencies with population of 50,000 – 99,999	2,387	National Measure of Acres of Park Land per 1,000 Residents for agencies with population of 50,000 -99,000	7.9
Bay County Residents per Park in 2021	2,572	Bay County Acres of Park Land per 1,000 Residents in 2021	10.7

Source: [2021-agency-performance-review\\_final.pdf \(nrpa.org\)](#)

To compare Bay County’s provision of parks and recreation facilities, data was gathered for select counties within Florida. Counties in Florida whose unincorporated populations fall within 50,000 to 99,999 people were chosen for this comparison. Data for each of the communities was gathered from either their Comprehensive Plans or from a Park and Recreation Master Plan. The dates of the plans varied; to ensure an accurate comparison, the population when the plan was developed is used. The results of the analysis vary widely. The County with the most residents per park (Putnam County, 2,961) has more than twice as many residents per park than the County with the smallest number of residents per park (St. Lucie County, 1,446). Bay County falls toward the higher end, with 2,593 residents per park. Likewise, the acres of land per 1,000 people has a large difference between the largest and the smallest number. St. Lucie County has 44.1 acres of park land per 1,000 residents compared to Putnam County, which has just 3.7. Bay



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County was again in the middle with 10.1 acres per 1,000 residents. Please see Table 16, Select Counties Comparison, below.

Table 16: Select Counties Comparison

County Name	Population	Number of Parks	Residents Per Park	Acres of Park Land	Acres of Park Land per 1,000 residents
Putnam County	59,213 <sup>1</sup>	20	2,961	219	3.7
St. Lucie County	72,298 <sup>2</sup>	50	1,446	3,188	44.1
Highland County	76,662 <sup>3</sup>	49	1,565	1,488	19.4
Bay County	79,737 <sup>4</sup>	31	2,572	854	10.1

<sup>1</sup> 2010 Population <sup>2</sup> 2017 Population <sup>3</sup> 2015 Population <sup>4</sup> 2021 Population Estimate

According to the 2021 NRPA Agency Performance Review, for jurisdictions serving 50,000 to 99,999 residents, the typical parks and recreation agency has 9 full time equivalent employees for every 10,000 residents served, with the majority of authorities falling between 5.1 and 15.8 per 10,000 population. For the selected counties, Highland County has the lowest ratio of staff to residents at 1.8. St. Lucie County has the highest, with 21.4. Bay County has a ratio of 4.1 staff to 10,000 residents. For the number of employees per 100 acres of park land, Highland County has the least, with 0.9 employees per 100 acres of park land. St. Lucie County has the highest, with 4.9 employees per 100 acres. Bay County has a ratio of 3.7 employees per 100 acres of park land. Bay County is well below the national average in terms of the ratios of employees to population and acres of park land.

Table 17: Select Counties Comparison - Employees

Location	Number of Employees	Population	Employees per 10,000 Population	Acres of Park Land	Employees per 100 Acres of Park Land
National Median	61.2	50,000 – 99,999	9	n/a	n/a
St. Lucie County	155	72,298 <sup>1</sup>	21.4	3,188	4.9
Highland County	14	76,662 <sup>2</sup>	1.8	1,488	0.9
Bay County	32	79,737 <sup>3</sup>	4.1	854	3.7

<sup>1</sup> 2017 Population <sup>2</sup> 2015 Population <sup>3</sup> 2021 Population

## 2.7 Summary of Findings

Three analyses were conducted to determine if the County is meeting the recreational needs of the community. Overall, it appears that the County is meeting that goal. The Comprehensive Plan LOS analysis shows that the County will have adequate park land to meet the needs of the community now and through



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the 2035 planning horizon. A review of national trends with similar populations shows that the County is providing an adequate number of parks per person and an adequate amount of park land.

However, the Access Service Area Analysis noted that residents may not have equal access to parks and some areas of the County are lacking in parks. Noted from the analysis, additional facilities may be needed to service the needs of residents on the western and southeastern sides of the County. The addition of mini-parks or neighborhood parks in these areas would provide additional access, although these facilities would likely not satisfy the entire need of the area. A community park and / or regional park in these areas would be needed to ensure that all County residents are within a reasonable distance to a park.

## 3 Needs and Priority Assessment

The Needs and Priority Assessment determines the gaps between existing and desired conditions based on input from the community, interviews with elected officials, and discussions with stakeholder groups.

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### 3.1 Community Outreach

#### 3.1.1 2018 Community Workshop

A workshop was held on April 18, 2018, to solicit the opinions of residents regarding parks and recreation needs and priorities. The workshop was held in conjunction with the regularly scheduled Parks and Recreation Board meeting and was located at the Bay County Planning Commission Chambers and began at 5:00 pm. The workshop was well attended by the community and provided insightful feedback.

The meeting began as a regular Bay County Parks and Recreation Board meeting but was quickly transitioned to the workshop format. To start the workshop, a brief presentation was given explaining what the master planning process entails and how the workshop would function. After the presentation, participants were asked to visit each of three stations located throughout the room. Following this



Figure 13. A public workshop with community members and the Parks and Recreation Board was held in April of 2018.  
Source: Bay County 2018.

  
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interactive session, participants were given the opportunity to speak to the Board. A summary of the public comments and the results of the workshop stations are included in Appendix A.

*Station 1: What's your vision?*

A vision statement is a one-sentence statement describing the clear and inspirational long-term desired goal resulting from the County and community's work. We asked participants to help create a vision statement by jotting down one word that describes how they envision the future of parks and recreation in Bay County. The participants provided a wide array of phrases that were formulated into the following vision:

*Vision Statement*  
**The Bay County Parks and Recreation Department provides diverse recreational opportunities for a lifetime.**

*Station 2: How do we rank?*

Station 2 provided a large map of all the parks in the County and asked participants to rank the facilities that they frequented by putting a star on each facility using following scale: exceeds expectations, meets expectation, and does not meet expectations.

- Under the Oaks was rated the highest of all the facilities with three "Exceeds Expectations" stars and four "Met Expectations" stars
- Rick Seltzer Park "Met Expectations" with seven stars.
- Lake Powell Park received three "Does Not Meet Expectations" stars.



Figure 14. Community workshop participants were asked to interact at each of three stations. Source: Bay County, 2018

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## *Station 3: Dream Big*

The third station asked participants to envision their ideal park. It could be an existing park with added amenities or a brand-new facility. They were given four stickers and asked to put a sticker next to an item listed. Pickleball courts received the most interest with recreation programs coming in next, followed by tennis courts and walking, biking, and hiking trails.

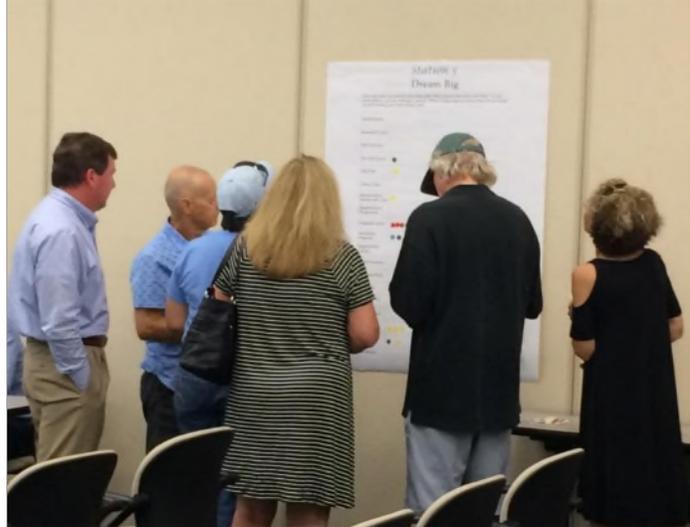


Figure 2. Community participants "dreaming big" at the public workshop. Source: Bay County, 2018.

## 3.1.2 2021 Community Meeting

On February 22, 2022, The Bay County Parks Advisory Board met for a workshop. The workshop was held in conjunction with the regularly scheduled Parks and Recreation Board meeting and was located at the Bay County Government Center and began at 5:00 pm. The meeting began with a presentation about the update to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and a discussion of growth areas around the County. Community feedback was gathered after the presentations in the format of a question-and-answer session.

## 3.2 Community Survey

A public survey was dispersed throughout the community via Facebook. Over 700 participants responded during the two-month period. The intent of the survey was to garner feedback from the public regarding the parks and recreation facilities, the need for other facilities, and the viability of the programs that are offered.

Respondents were asked some background information when completing the survey. It was determined that 97% of the respondents live here annually, 2% live here seasonally, and 1% are visiting. The zip codes of the respondents were also correlated with local zip codes. Over 60% of residents must travel between 3 and 10 miles to utilize a park facility.

### *Use of Existing Facilities*

In order to understand how and why citizens use the County facilities, a series of questions were asked. The majority of respondents participating in the survey had visited the facilities within the last 12 months (94%) and 38% of them thought the facilities were well maintained while 55% thought they needed some maintenance. The respondents use the facilities primarily for exercise/physical activity (56%), to bring

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children (53%), spend time with friends or family (51%), and to access the water (46%). The type of facilities that they use most often include neighborhood parks (24%), walking, hiking, and biking trails (23%), and recreational fields (22%).

### *The Need for Future Facilities*

Respondents were given the opportunity to share their desires for future facilities and amenities. The response was varied but the facilities that were most wanted included walking, hiking and biking trails (47%), outdoor swimming pools (45%), indoor swimming pools (39%), and nature trails (39%). The additional amenities that were requested to be added to existing parks included shade structures (48%), splashpad (38%), playgrounds (9%) fitness trails (34%), and water access (33%).

### *Recreation Programs*

The next set of questions were used to gauge the respondent's satisfaction with the County's recreation programs. Respondents expressed an interest in adult fitness and wellness programs (59%), nature programs (50%), youth sports programs (48%), and special events (37%). The leading reason preventing respondents from using recreation programs, services, and facilities more often was that the desired program, service, or facility wasn't offered (42%). Other leading reasons included facilities lacking the desired equipment (22%), and facilities not being well-maintained (19%). Additional reasons ("Other" in the table below) are listed in Attachment A. Respondents were divided on the question of whether the County should depend on parent volunteers to administer children's sports leagues (51%) or provide the service internally (49%). The satisfaction with the County's preferred athletic providers was measured. Satisfaction levels with all four providers was generally consistent, with satisfaction rates (includes "Very satisfied" and "Somewhat satisfied") ranging from 33% for the Southport Youth Sports Association to 42% for the Bay County Youth Soccer Association.

### *Overall Perception*

Respondents were given the opportunity to write in any improvements that need to be made to the existing parks. There was a response for improvements to bathroom facilities, additional lighting, public pools, additional facilities accessible to County residents, disc golf, shade structures, tennis facilities, and general park maintenance. Specific facilities were targeted for improvements which included Harder's Park, Majette Park, Under the Oaks, and Zollie Young Park.



Figure 16. Picnic Tables at Southport Community Park. Source: Bay County, 2022.

In summary, respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction of the facilities and programs. The majority of respondents voted that they were “Very satisfied” or “Satisfied” with parks (46%). This view is consistent with the responses received – stating that the park facilities could benefit from additional maintenance or improvements.

Finally, respondents were asked if they were willing to support increased funding for parks and recreation facilities. The overwhelming majority (81%) responded positively to this suggestion.

### 3.3 Jurisdictional Stakeholders

Adjacent communities play a significant role within the park system. Most residents aren’t aware whether they are in a County park or a City park. Due to this overall integration, it is important to communicate with each entity providing park and recreation services within the County and identify their strategy for providing park and recreation facilities. Throughout the meetings it was evident that the County and each municipality had established relationships and were able to communicate informally. However, no formal communication strategy was in place to discuss the addition of new parks, park improvements, community programs, or festivals and events. Some of the other priorities identified during the meetings included:

- Coordinating on the skate park
- Connecting trails through County and city parks
- Enhance the beach lifeguard program by adding additional towers to the city and County piers, near Carillon Beach on the west end, and near Patches restaurant on the east end
- Parking is a countywide problem at most park facilities
- More basketball courts are needed in the community

### 3.4 Summary of Findings

In addition to technical analyses to determine communities’ park access, a more qualitative analysis was completed through community workshop, community survey, and face to face interactions. The meetings, survey, and discussion produced similar results. The parks are adequate but could be improved with additional maintenance and upkeep with a focus on new bathrooms and lighting improvements. A need has been determined for additional amenities including shade structures, disc golf courses, splash pads, pools, and trails.

## 4 Implementation

The top priorities identified through the needs and priority assessment were determined to be additional parks in underserved areas or the County, shade structures, pools and splash pads, trails, disc golf, and bathrooms. The following chapter provides a phasing strategy and grant opportunities to achieve these priorities as well as other recommendations.

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### 4.1 Summary of Identified Needs



*Figure 17: Some of the oak trees that give Under the Oaks Park its name. Source: Bay County, 2022*

After analyzing surveys, the level of service analysis, comparing to other jurisdictions, and examining trends in parks and recreation facility provision, a series of recommendations have been developed to meet the parks and recreation facility needs of the citizens of Bay County.

The first recommendation is to increase the number of park and recreation facilities for underserved populations within the County. These include those residents who live in the western and southeastern

portions of the County. While mini or neighborhood parks would increase access while being easier and less expensive to construct, a community or regional park would serve a larger number of residents and ensure that all County residents are within a reasonable distance of a park.

Although the adopted level of service for the provision of parks and recreation has been met, and Bay County facilities are on par with the national average, surveys and discussion with residents about current parks reveals some needs for additional maintenance and specific additional facilities. These additional facilities include shade structures, disc golf courses, splash pads, pools, and trails.

Together with priority projects that are currently under development, these recommendations can be used to establish an implementation strategy to ensure that the parks and recreation needs of all Bay County residents will be met.

## 4.2 Current and Planned Projects

There has been growth and increased interest from the local skateboarding community to establish a skate park in the area. Bay County has been collaborating with other local municipalities on the details for providing such a park and County staff are waiting direction to proceed with the project. This project has the potential to meet the needs of a large skating demographic within the County and bring in a competitive aspect to the many recreational opportunities that already exists within our area. This project is proposed to go in the Panama City Beach Sports complex. A contract for \$2 million to construct the skate park was approved by the Board of County Commissioners on February 2, 2022.

In addition, tentative plans for a new Southport athletic facility are under development. With advancements in playground technology and the concept of providing leisure activities for all, plans are in place to construct an all-inclusive playground to meet the ADA needs of both children and adults.

Table 19 identifies the Park Improvements projected for Fiscal Years 2024 – 2027. The plan includes projects identified through community outreach, interviews with County Commissioners, jurisdictional stakeholder discussions, and County needs. The estimated costs are preliminary based on comparable projects, and typical costs-per-acre. The County will need to prepare preliminary feasibility/design studies, master plans, and/or site plans to establish actual budget costs.

Table 19: Park Improvements (FY 2024 - FY 2028)

Project Description	Estimated Cost
<b>2024 Park Improvement Projects</b>	
Disc Golf Course Improvements	\$15,000
Park Facility Improvements	\$475,000
Park Planning	\$100,000
Playground Improvements	\$14,000
Repairs and Renovations	\$95,000



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Project Description	Estimated Cost
Restroom Improvements	\$205,000
Sport Court Improvements	\$70,000
Trail Construction and Improvements	\$115,000
Total	\$1,089,000
<b>2025 Park Improvements Projects</b>	
Boat Ramp Improvements	\$240,000
Parks and Recreation Operations Improvements	\$70,000
Park Facility Improvements	\$80,000
Parking Improvements	\$60,000
Playground Improvements	\$200,000
Repairs and Renovations	\$200,000
Restroom Improvements	\$240,000
Sport Court Improvements	\$70,000
Trail Construction and Improvements	\$65,000
Total	\$1,225,000
<b>2026 Park Improvements Projects</b>	
Beach Access Improvements	\$100,000
Boat Ramp Improvements	\$190,000
Park and Recreations Operations Improvements	\$60,000
Park Facility Improvements	\$329,000
Pier Improvements	\$45,000
Playground Improvements	\$200,000
Sport Court Improvements	\$8,000
Trail Construction and Improvements	\$195,000
Total	\$1,127,000
<b>2027 Park Improvements Projects</b>	
Beach Access Improvements	\$120,000
Dock Improvements	\$45,000
Horse Facilities Improvements	\$25,000
Park Facilities Improvements	\$2,127,500
Pier Improvements	\$50,000
Playground Improvements	\$180,000
Sport Court Improvements	\$20,000
Trail Construction and Improvements	\$120,000
Total	\$2,687,500



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Project Description	Estimated Cost
2028 Park Improvements Projects	
Beach Access Improvements	\$120,000
Park Facilities Improvements	\$170,000+
Total	\$295,000+
Total for all projects	\$6,423,500

Source: Bay County Parks and Recreation Department, September 2022

### 4.3 Implementation Strategy

The strategies presented below provide a path for the County to better serve its parks and recreation constituents. Suggested performance measures to be done to further each strategy are included as well.

**Strategy 1: Increase Maintenance. (Short Term)** One of the most frequently occurring comments gathered during the surveys regarding park and recreation facilities is the need for additional maintenance, particularly restroom and athletic field maintenance. Increasing its inspections on facilities will ensure that everything is clean and in working order for the users of those facilities. Additional personnel will be required to perform this task. As seen in the analysis in Section 2.6, the County has a low level of employees in comparison to other jurisdictions.

**Recommended Action 1:** An increase in the number of maintenance inspections by a defined percentage.

**Recommended Action 2:** Add staff as needed to ensure that current parks and recreation facilities are adequately maintained.

**Recommended Action 3:** Provide on-line surveys for park condition complaints and suggestions.

**Strategy 2: Evaluate Existing Facilities. (Short Term)** Many of the additional facilities that were requested through the public outreach process (shade structures, pools and splash pads, trails, and disc golf courses) may be able to be accommodated at existing parks. The County should examine existing parks to see where additional facilities could be added. For example, if the County has a walking trail, disc golf targets may be able to be added along the path. Additionally, the County should evaluate under-used facilities for conversion to other more in-demand facilities, such as converting tennis courts to pickleball courts. The County should also examine the possibility of adding parallel parking spaces in proximity to beach access where local roads would allow it.

**Recommended Action 4:** An evaluation of the availability of each park to accommodate additional facilities.

**Recommended Action 5:** A plan to add desired facilities to existing parks and recreation facilities.



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**Strategy 3: Working Committee. (Intermediate Term)** In addition to funding specific facilities, it was noted that other, non-physical improvements could be made. One of the key recommendations is to establish a working committee for all jurisdictions within the County. The working group would allow for internal discussions regarding existing parks, future parks, park improvements, community needs, and upcoming festivals and events. It should be noted that an existing committee is in place that meets twice yearly; however, the goals of that meeting may not allow for the internal discussion that is suggested. Instead, a regularly occurring meeting, likely on a quarterly basis, should be established and a designated representative from the local communities and other vested stakeholders (i.e. Bay District Schools, TDC, Military representatives, and others) should attend.

**Recommended Action 6:** An evaluation of the existing committee’s ability to meet more frequently and discuss parks within the County. The evaluation should include the committee’s ability to be expanded to include additional stakeholders.

**Recommended Action 7:** Identification of stakeholders to add to the existing committee and/or formation of a new council, if necessary.

**Strategy 4: Enhanced Public Communication. (Intermediate Term)** In addition to internal communication with jurisdictions and stakeholders, it was noted that communication with the public could also be improved. Through the survey, public workshop, and discussions with community members, it was noted that the public is often unaware of programs and events taking place. This could be improved through an increased social media presence, email blasts, and more frequent website updates.

Another way that the County could leverage technology to provide better services to its citizens is through its own mobile device application. Leon County provides an example of one such application, called Citizens Connect. The application, or app, is downloaded for free to a smartphone through the app store. This application then allows users to report a problem, such as a bathroom in need of maintenance or broken playground equipment, directly to the County in real time and can identify the exact location of issues. The app could also be configured to allow the uploading of photos of the issue. The app could have further applications as it could provide users with information about events and emergency information as well. A need for better communication was identified by some users within the survey process. This app could help to provide more easily accessible information to the County’s citizens. This strategy also links with PR action 3.2.1 as discussed in Chapter 1.

**Recommended Action 8:** A plan to use existing social media and email lists to update citizens more frequently; the plan should also consider the addition of more social media venues, such as Twitter and Instagram.



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**Recommended Action 9:** A plan to discuss the creation of a Bay County app in conjunction with other departments of the County that may benefit from having an app (i.e. emergency management, animal control).

**Strategy 5: Explore development of new parks. (Long Term)** As outlined in the section above discussing current and planned projects, the County has tentatively planned to build new parks or to improve existing parks in currently underserved areas of the County. The parks should include as many of the facilities desired by the community as possible (swimming pools, etc.). The County should work closely with the developers of the Sector Plan to ensure that adequate facilities of the types desired by Bay County citizens are included in the new development and are open to the public. In addition to the regional facilities tentatively planned for these areas, the County should explore providing other, smaller parks in these areas. While these parks would not serve as large a population as the larger regional facilities, these smaller parks would serve the neighborhoods they are in and could become a focal point of each of the neighborhoods they serve. A variety of park types is needed to serve the local community.

**Recommended Action 10:** Include in plans for the development of new parks the desired facilities identified by the community.

**Recommended Action 11:** Examine underserved areas for sites that accommodate a variety of park types.

### 4.3.1 Potential Grant Funding Sources

Currently, parks and recreation projects are funded through the County’s general fund. A variety of grant funding options may be available to supplement the existing funding mechanisms that are already in place.

*Table 21: Grant Funding Sources*

Funding Program	Grant Amount	Match Required	Eligible Projects
American Academy of Dermatology Shade Structure Program	\$8,000	0%	For the purchase of a permanent shade structure to schools, day-cares, parks, and other non-profit organizations where children learn and play
Environmental Protection Agency Section 319(h) Grants	\$750,000	40%	Technical assistance, financial assistance, education, training, technology transfer, demonstration projects and monitoring to assess the success of specific nonpoint source implementation projects; granted to states

  
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Funding Program	Grant Amount	Match Required	Eligible Projects
Florida Department of Agriculture Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program	\$20,000	100%	Develop or enhance their urban and community forestry programs including revising tree ordinances, educational programs, and tree planting projects
Florida Department of Environmental Protection Coastal Partnership Initiative Grant Program	\$30,000	100%	Community projects such as habitat restoration, park planning and improvements, waterfront revitalization, and improving communities' resiliency to coastal hazards
Florida Department of Environmental Protection Florida Communities Trust	\$5,000,000	25%	Land acquisition of passive and active recreational facilities including those for unique and disabled persons
Florida Department of Environmental Protection Recreational Trails Program	Non-Motorized Trail = \$200,000  Mixed Use Trail = \$200,000  Motorized Trail = \$500,000	80:20 60:40 50:50	Development of recreational trails, trailheads and trailside facilities
Florida Department of State Cultural Facilities Grant Program	\$500,000	2:1	Renovation, new construction, or acquisition of cultural facilities
Florida Department of State Special Category Historic Funding	\$500,000	100%	Preservation, Restoration, Rehabilitation, or Reconstruction of historic properties regularly open to the public
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Florida Boating Improvement Program (FBIP)	\$200,000	5%	Boating access projects and other boating-related activities on coastal and/or inland waters



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Funding Program	Grant Amount	Match Required	Eligible Projects
Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP)	\$200,000	100%	Acquisition or development of land for public outdoor recreation use or to construct or renovate recreational trails
Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) Disabilities and Unique Abilities	\$500,000	100%	Projects that incorporate adaptations or modifications to the design and development of recreational resources or equipment to meet the needs of all potential participants including those with physical or developmental disabilities
Land and Water Conservation Grant	\$200,000	100%	Acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities
Land and Water Conservation Fund Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program	\$750,000	100%	Create and improve state and locally owned park and other outdoor recreation areas in ways that will help the public to access or re-connect with the outdoors
National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Grant	\$150,000	100%	Projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes
US Fish and Wildlife Service Boating Infrastructure Grant	\$200,000	25%	Construct, renovate, and maintain tie-up facilities with features for transient boaters in vessels 26 feet or more in length, and to produce and distribute information and educational materials about the program
US Soccer Foundation Grant	\$50,000	100%	Field turf, lighting, irrigation and program equipment
US Tennis Association Public Facilities Grant	\$20,000	50% - 100%	Renovation and / or construction of public tennis facilities

### 4.3.2 Comprehensive Plan Update

A review of the Recreation and Open Space Element identified opportunities to clarify the existing policies and implement the Master Plan. The suggested revisions include the following as:



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Objective 9.2: Use the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to guide improvements to recreation sites and facilities.

Policy 9.2.1: The Board will use the Parks and Recreation Master Plan as the basis for making improvements to recreation sites and/or facilities.

Policy 9.2.2: The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will be updated every five-years to ensure consistency with the goals and objectives of the Parks and Recreation Division.

Policy 9.3.4: Utilize Boating Improvement Funds to improve access to County-maintained boat ramps by acquiring additional land for parking.

Objective 9.7: Provide active recreational opportunities in accordance with adopted County standards for level of service.

Policy 9.7.1: The following level of service standards shall be adopted for parks and recreation sites:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Acres/1,000 Population</u>
Local Parks	2.3
Regional Parks	4.0
Beach Access Points	0.29

Policy 9.7.2: Use the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to identify expenditures for acquisition of new facilities and development and maintenance of existing County facilities.

## 5 Conclusion

After analyzing surveys, the level of service analysis, comparing to other jurisdictions, and examining trends in parks and recreation facility provision, a series of recommendations were developed to meet the parks and recreation facility needs of the citizens of Bay County. These recommendations include preparing a park master plan for Majette Park; increasing the number of park and recreation facilities for underserved populations within the County (western and southeastern area of the County); additional maintenance; and specific additional facilities. These additional facilities include additional shade structures, trails, pools and splash pads, and disc golf courses.

Together with priority projects that are currently under development, these recommendations can be used to establish an implementation strategy to ensure that the parks and recreation needs of all Bay County residents will be met. The Master Plan has presented five strategies to provide a path for the County to better serve its parks and recreation constituents. Recommended actions to be done to further each strategy have been included as well.

Following these strategies and continuing to listen to its constituents will ensure that Bay County will continue to provide high quality parks and recreation facilities enjoyed by people all over the County.