

H Parks and Recreation Element

Introduction

The purpose of the Parks and Recreation Element of the Community Agenda is to establish a framework to guide the expansion of recreation programs and park facilities consistent with the growth projections prepared in the Comprehensive Master Plan. Planning for short and long-term parks and recreation needs will enhance the quality of life for existing and future Parish residents. Plaquemines has an on-going demand for recreation programming and a growing need to expand and improve existing parks and recreational facilities. This element identifies strategies for expanding recreational opportunities that build on the inherent strengths of Plaquemines Parish and that are coordinated with the needs of the community.

This element of the Community Agenda is based on a review of existing facilities, previous plans, and current and proposed improvement projects described in the Parks and Recreation Element of the Community Assessment. This information is paired with the input received in discussions with the Master Plan Steering Committee, Parish Council, community agencies, Parish staff, and the valuable input received from the public during the visioning workshops held in Spring 2010.

1. Goals and Objectives for Plaquemines Parish's Parks and Recreation Facilities and Programs

Goals and Objectives help establish an organized planning framework for the Comprehensive Master Plan.

Goals

Goals are statements of the outcomes that the community seeks to achieve through the planning process. The following goals are recommended in order to set high standards for planning Plaquemines Parish's park facilities and recreation programs that will attract visitors and contribute to the community's quality of life, health, enjoyment, and civic pride:

Goal 1

Plaquemines Parish should be a place that is known for excellent parks and recreation programs that provide safe and convenient ways for residents to enjoy healthy exercise and social activities.

A successful parks and recreation program is beneficial to the quality of life and encourages healthy lifestyles for all community residents. Many of the residents of Plaquemines Parish choose to live in Plaquemines because they enjoy the outdoors, appreciate the Parish's unique environment, and value everyday recreation opportunities. Where possible, parks should be located in areas that are safe and accessible for all residents, including children and the elderly.

Goal 2

The park facilities and recreation programs in Plaquemines Parish should serve as building blocks for stable, high-quality neighborhoods and communities.

Parks are more than just a place for children to play. They can become a natural focal point for the identity and social life of the community. Successful recreation programs bring citizens together and promote socialization and civic pride. Parks can even contribute to economic development and increase the value of real estate because people want to live in neighborhoods that are near attractive parks and successful recreation programs. Quality park facilities attract new businesses, as well as new residents. Likewise, well-maintained and accessible parks and trails can be the backbone for organizing successful new neighborhoods and communities—and can stabilize and strengthen existing neighborhoods.

Goal 3

Parks and recreation programs in Plaquemines Parish should be planned, designed, and maintained in a cost-effective manner.

Plaquemines Parish, like most local governments, has limited funds and government personnel. Therefore, it is important to expend resources where they will be highly utilized and appreciated. Park facilities and programs should be located and designed to maximize accessibility by the most number of residents. Quality park design also considers the full, life-cycle costs of land and equipment, with careful attention to designing park facilities and equipment to be durable and easy to maintain.

Goal 4

Parks should capitalize on, and enhance the people's enjoyment of, the unique natural and historic features of Plaquemines Parish.

Plaquemines Parish has a rich history and is located in a unique and beautiful natural environment, with abundant recreation opportunities. Improving and building upon its existing cultural resources and natural strengths is critical as the Parish plans future parks and facilities.

Objectives

Objectives state the specific, measurable standards for achieving the community's goals. The following objectives are recommended in order to guide the development of the Parks and Recreation facilities and programs and to help the Parish achieve the goals set forth above.

Objective #1: Provide the quantity of parks, park space, and facilities for the current and anticipated population that meets or exceeds recommended levels of service based on national standards.

Objective #2: Establish neighborhood parks in convenient locations that are within a 10 minute travel time of the majority of the existing and planned population.

Objective#3: Plan a broad selection of park facilities and recreation programs that are appropriate for people of all ages.

Objective #4: When planning new parks, identify locations that will allow safe access for children and the elderly.

Objective #5: Seek public-private partnership opportunities in order to reduce public cost of park facilities and recreation programs.

Objective #6: Emphasize passive forms of recreation that require less supervision and maintenance.

Objective #7: Locate, plan, and design parks, trails, and recreation programs that help residents and visitors to encounter, learn from, and enjoy the natural habitats, scenic views, and historic places of Plaquemines Parish.

Objective #8: Identify ways to interconnect parks with schools, neighborhoods, and natural features.

These goals and objectives form the basis for recommendations in the Parks and Recreation element of the Comprehensive Master Plan.

2. Evaluation of Current and Future Parks and Recreation Needs

Objectives 1 and 2 express the intent to provide an adequate supply of park land and park facilities in areas that are accessible to the majority of the residents of Plaquemines Parish. The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) provides a series of measurable standards for these objectives that can be applied to Plaquemines Parish population today and in the future.

The first step is to classify the park facilities in Plaquemines Parish into four categories—playgrounds, neighborhood parks, community parks, and regional parks—and to order them from small to large. Each of these types of parks also has a desirable service area according to guidelines of the NRPA. **Table H.1** outlines the characteristics of these parks, their recommended size, and the distance each type of park should be from each residence in order to achieve the appropriate level of service. For instance, small playgrounds may include site furniture and play equipment. Such facilities are typically provided with new residential development. The ideal Community Park includes passive areas with walking trails and landscaping and also active areas, such as playing fields, court games, and playgrounds. In addition to activities listed in Community Parks, Regional Parks may include camping, picnicking, water access, and specialized facilities like a golf course, BMX track, ATV trail, as well as natural and cultural programs. Regional parks will also need to support large scale programmed sporting and cultural events.

Table H.2 provides the guidelines recommended by NRPA for the number of acres of different types of parks that a community needs based on its total population. For instance, communities should plan to have a small playground (less than one acre) within a 10 minute walk (1/4 mile) of each residence in the Parish. There should also be a 5-10 acre neighborhood park for every 5 to 10,000 residents—and it should be located within a 1-mile radius of this population. The community should have 2 acres of community parks per every 1,000 residents. Community parks are typically 20 to 50 acres in size but can

service up to a 5-mile radius. Finally, regional parks can serve a 50 mile radius and there should be 5 acres of community parks for every 1,000 residents.

Finally, **Table H.3** provides the guidelines recommended by NRPA for the types of recreation facilities that a community needs based on its population (of all ages). For instance, it says that a community should plan for one baseball field and one softball field for every 5,000 residents and one soccer field and one basketball court for every 10,000 residents, plus one football field for every 20,000 residents.

Table H.1

Level of Service for Parks, Travel Time					
Facility Type	Service Area Radius	Approx Size In Acres	Max Travel Time	Mode of Access	Comments
<u>Playground:</u>	1/4 mile	< 1 Acre	10 min.	On Foot By Bicycle.	This may include site furniture and play equipment. Typically provided with new residential development. The ideal play-ground includes both passive areas like walking trails, and active areas such as playing fields, courts and playground equipment.
<u>Neighborhood Park:</u>	1 mile	5 - 10 Acres	20 min.	On Foot By Bicycle.	Serves more diverse recreational interests.
<u>Community Park:</u>	1 to 5 miles	20 to 50	30 min.	By transit, auto, bicycle, or trail. Serves adj neighborhoods.	Passive and active recreational opportunities for walking trails, playing fields, game courts, and play structures and complemented unique amenities that reflect local interest. Parking and comfort stations are provided on a scale to support programs such as performances and social gatherings. Ideal location for community center buildings and activities. In addition to activities listed in
<u>Regional Parks:</u>	50 sq. mi. +	40 +	1-2 hrs.	By transit, auto, charter bus or boat, and via regional trail system. Serves entire Parish.	Community Parks, Regional Parks may include camping, picnicking, water access, and specialized facilities like a golf course, BMX track, ATV trail, as well as natural and cultural programs. Regional parks will also need to support large scale programmed sporting and cultural events.

Table H.2 Level of Service based on Population and Acreage

Facility Type	Total Facilities	Active Facilities	Inactive Facilities	Total Acres Existing	NRPA Guideline Acres/Pop	2010 Need	(Deficit) Surplus	2030 Need
Playground: (> 1acre)	2	2		1.5 Acres	.25 per 1,000	5.6 Acres	(4.1) Acres	7.1 Acres
Neighborhood Park (5-10 Acres)	5	4	1	38.4 Acres	1 per 1,000	22.4 Acres	17.5 Acres	28.4 Acres
Community Park: (20-50 acres)	7	6	1	190 Acres	2 per 1000	44.8 Acres	145 Acres	56.8 Acres
Regional Parks	5	3	2	465 Acres	5 per 1000	112	353 Acres	142 Acres
Regional Wildlife Refuge Parks:	3	3		750k	N/A			

Table H.3 Level of Service based on Population and Facility Type

Field Program	Facility Inventory	Guideline Units/Pop.	2010 Need	(Deficit) Surplus	2030 Need
Baseball/ Softball	19	1 per 5,000	4.4	10.6	5.7
Football	2	1 per 20,000	1	1.0	2
Basketball	2	1 per 10,000	2	0	3
Soccer	0	1 per 10,000	2	-2	3
Tennis	10	1 per 2,000	10	0	14
Swimming Pool	1	1 per 20,000	1	0	1.5
Trails, Walking (each)	4	1 per 20,000	1.0	3	1.5

Tables H.2 and H.3 also provide an assessment of how the supply of parks and recreation facilities in Plaquemines Parish compares with the national recommendations of the NRPA in terms of the number of facilities and number of acres per 1,000 residents. This assessment is based on the population estimates provided in the Population and Demographic Element of the Community Agenda. The 2010 population estimate used for this analysis is 20,942. Using this measure, it appears that Plaquemines Parish meets or exceeds the national standard for acres of all types of park facilities except playgrounds. Plaquemines Parish should have 5.6 acres of small playgrounds (6-8 playgrounds) distributed about ½ mile apart; however, the Parish currently has a shortage of 4.1 acres or about 5 or 6 playgrounds. Plaquemines Parish has a surplus all other types of parks (neighborhood parks, community parks and regional parks). **Table H.3** shows that the Parish should have at least 2 soccer fields given its residential population; however, there are no Soccer fields in Plaquemines Parish.

When this exercise is repeated for the future population of approximately 29,130 (medium projection), the Parish continues to have an adequate supply of all types of parks except playgrounds. By 2030 Plaquemines Parish will need an additional 5.6 acres of small playgrounds (6 to 8 new playgrounds) and

three soccer fields. By 2030 the Parish will also need to provide at least one more football field, one basketball court, four tennis courts, and three soccer fields to adequately provide for its future growth.

Table H.4 - NRPA Guidelines

National Recreation and Park Association Guidelines for Open Space, Recreation, and Facilities		
Currently the Parish has approximately 402 acres of recreation land for 20,942 residents, or 19.2 acres per 1,000 residents. This exceeds the NRPA recommended range of 6.25 to 10.5 acres per 1,000 residents.		
The current level of service provided by the Parish typically exceeds the below NRPA guidelines.		
<u>2010 Min Level of Service for Parish Facilities</u>		
Open Space:	131-220	Acres
Football:	1.0	Field
Ball Fields:	4.2	Fields
Tennis:	10.5	Courts
Basketball:	4.2	Courts
<i>Based on NRPA Guidelines and Current Population</i>		

It is important to note that these are national averages and there is little about Plaquemines Parish that is “average.” The long, narrow proportion of the Parish, the variation in the distribution of population between the East Bank and the West Bank, and the population variation between Belle Chasse compared to Venice, make it very difficult to provide the same level of service throughout the Parish. The Service Areas for Parks map illustrates the distribution of park space in the Parish, with colored rings that indicate the service areas served by each park and the gaps between parks that are without adequate access to parks.

It is clear that the travel time to parks in the southern end of the Parish, like the travel time to most daily activities and services, is greater than in other areas of the Parish. Meanwhile, the supply of park land and facilities per resident in Belle Chasse is much lower than the supply of park and facilities in the rest of the Parish. Overall, the level of service based on travel time is too low for the southern end of the Parish, while the level of service based on acreage and facilities per resident is inadequate in Belle Chasse.

When considered independently, Belle Chasse currently needs 61.2 acres of total park space and provides approximately 61.5. However, Belle Chasse currently lacks an adequate number of small playgrounds and neighborhood parks—and as its population continues to grow, its population will likely outgrow its park supply. Currently this area is served by Medal of Honor Park, a community park for passive recreation, and Blackie Buras Park, a small neighborhood park with tennis courts and a play lot.

A small playground is planned on the Sherwood lot and another passive park is planned at Good News Avenue. Even with these additions, there is a need for six more playgrounds, two of which should be 5-10 acre Neighborhood Parks added in the Belle Chasse to Myrtle Grove area.

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Comprehensive Master Plan
Plaquemines Parish,
Louisiana

Service Areas
for Parks

Legend		Service Area Extent	
	Playground		Playground
	Neighborhood Park		Neighborhood Park
	Community Park		Community Park
	Regional Park		Regional Park

represents back of map

3. Recommendations for Future Parks and Recreation Facilities

The recommendations of this element of the Comprehensive Master Plan are based on the fulfillment of the eight objectives listed in part 2 of this section and are as follows:

Objective #1: Provide the quantity of parks, park space, and facilities for the current and anticipated population that meets or exceeds recommended levels of service based on national standards.

Objective #2: Establish neighborhood parks in convenient locations that are within a 10 minute travel time of the majority of the existing and planned population.

These two objectives are directly related to the foregoing assessment of the adequacy of existing park space and facilities. If the NRPA guidelines are met, it is likely that these three objectives will also be achieved. The greatest shortfall in park space will be in the area between Belle Chasse and Myrtle Grove. For the next 10 to 20 years, it is anticipated that most of the population growth will be concentrated in this area. Belle Chasse will have additional passive park space when the 400 acres of park space is opened on Good News Avenue. Because this new space will be primarily passive, Plaquemines Parish needs to identify at least two new sites for neighborhood playgrounds in the existing Belle Chasse / Woodward Parkway area (in addition to the Good News Avenue park), plus one more on the East Bank near Braithwaite and two or three more playgrounds in the Jesuit Bend- Myrtle Grove area, where most of the new growth is anticipated.

Objective #3: Plan a broad selection of park facilities and recreation programs that are appropriate for people of all ages.

It will be necessary to adjust the programming of new and existing parks to ensure that additional facilities are provided in conjunction with park development:

- Soccer fields – at least three soccer fields are needed – one on the East Bank, one on the south end of the Parish, and one in the Belle Chasse-Jesuit Bend area.
- At least four more tennis courts will be needed. The tennis courts could be distributed to include at least two in the Belle Chasse-Jesuit Bend area.
- At least one additional basketball court will be needed. A location near Myrtle Grove would be ideal.
- Current plans exist for additional walking trails and swimming pools and should be in place in advance of the population needs.

Objective #4: When planning new parks, identify locations that will allow safe access for children and the elderly.

Highway 23 has become a highly congested route on the north end of the Parish, with high speed auto and truck traffic south of Jesuit Bend. These high traffic conditions make it potentially dangerous for

many residents, especially children, to access parks near LA Highway 23. It is imperative that park facilities include a safe means of access for pedestrians, including appropriately placed signalized crosswalks and signage to alert drivers.

Objective #5: Seek public-private partnership opportunities in order to reduce public cost of park facilities and recreation programs.

Plaquemines Parish has already been successful at accomplishing broad based public-private partnerships in providing parks facilities and recreation programs; however, many other opportunities for partnerships exist. The Project Rebuild Plaquemines was an outstanding community effort that leveraged resources from the Belle Chasse Naval Air Station and the School Board, plus businesses like Conoco Phillips, and non-government agencies such as Save the Children and the Red Cross.

YMCA has also recently developed two new recreation centers in the Parish and the Parish and the YMCA are currently in conversation about collaboration with respect to operation of recreation programs in Parish-owned community centers and park facilities.

Other partnership opportunities may arise with the development of large-scale planned unit developments within the Parish. The Parish should consider amending its zoning codes to require large developments with more than 50 dwelling units to set aside open space, recreation centers, or park land for its residents.

Objective #6: Emphasize passive forms of recreation that require minimum supervision and maintenance.

Objective #7: Locate, plan, and design parks, trails and recreation programs that help residents and visitors to encounter, learn from, and enjoy the natural habitats, scenic views, and historic places of Plaquemines Parish.

Objective #8: Identify ways to interconnect parks, with schools, neighborhoods, and natural features.

The final three objectives relate to another important priority for improving park and recreation facilities in Plaquemines Parish – developing a Parish-wide bicycle and multi-use trail system that links the various parks, schools, and neighborhoods throughout the Parish. This trail system should include long stretches of trails along the levee system with views of the water.

Three existing plans have been prepared to illustrate these opportunities:

- 2001 Plaquemines Parish Bike Path Plan
- 2005 New Orleans Metropolitan Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- 2009 Louisiana Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan

Bike paths, routes, and related facilities that are not currently funded; however, these projects can potentially be supported with Federal funding through the Transportation Enhancement Program. Approximately 20 percent of the Parish's population does not have access to an automobile—and Plaquemines' dependence on non-motorized transportation. Expanding the Parish's bicycling and pedestrian network would increase transportation options for those without automobiles. A Rider Classification study was conducted in the 2005 NOLA Master Bike and Pedestrian Plan: Sport; Principal Commuter; Casual Commuter; Children. In order to ensure accessibility and safety for the average user, the recreation element of this Comprehensive Plan favors passive recreation and safe routes for children.

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