

## RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

The following goal, objectives and policies establish the planning focus for recreational facilities within unincorporated Gadsden County.

### **GOAL 6A: PROVIDE SUFFICIENT AND ADEQUATE RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES.**

#### **OBJECTIVE 6.1: Improve lake and river access for passive and active resource based activities abutting river and lake shores.**

**Policy 6.1.1:** Recognizing the importance to Gadsden County's tourism economy, the County shall maintain or increase the number of access points to water-oriented recreational resources for resource-based water related activities, to include boat ramps.

**Policy 6.1.2:** The County shall maintain existing water access points and provide additional public access to water bodies by the following:

- A) Provide lake and river shoreline access facilities (walkways, or walkovers and parking areas) where possible near existing highway river crossings, and within new residential developments.
- B) Provide access to all public recreation facilities for the handicapped, elderly and the transportation disadvantaged.

**Policy 6.1.3:** The County Public Works Department shall seek funding to enhance wayfinding (directional signage) to public water access points. Funding may be sought through the Gadsden County Tourist Development Council, grants with Visit Florida, or other entities.

**Policy 6.1.4:** The County shall coordinate with the Northwest Florida Water Management District and the Department of Environmental Protection in protecting and preserving Lake Talquin, the Ochlocknee River, and the Apalachicola River and their recreational resources to ensure the quality of those waters and the integrity of those shores are maintained or improved.

#### **OBJECTIVE 6.2: Provide for a functional mix of both public and private recreation sites and facilities to accommodate recreation demand.**

**Policy 6.2.1:** The County shall coordinate with the municipalities, the School Board, the state, and private organizations to identify existing and projected recreational facilities and to increase the availability and accessibility of these facilities to County residents. This should be done to the maximum extent practicable where there is excess capacity in such recreation facilities prior to constructing new site/facilities.

**Policy 6.2.2:** The County shall include incentives for private developers to provide adequate land for parks as part of new developments or redevelopment activities. Such incentives shall include, but not be limited to, clustering, density bonuses, fast tracking of developments, and dedication of lands in lieu-of-fees.

**Policy 6.2.3:** Developments of Regional Impact, master planned communities and planned unit developments shall be required to provide physical improvements in addition to open space to provide recreational opportunities. These improvements may include, but are not limited to tot lots, playgrounds, sport courts, or multipurpose athletic fields.

**OBJECTIVE 6.3: Plan for and provide for a system of adequate parks and recreational facilities that will accommodate the existing needs and future demands of the population.**

**Policy 6.3.1:** County parks and recreation facilities shall be designed and constructed with access ways that are consistent with the character and quality of the resources and activities within the site.

**Policy 6.3.2:** The County shall provide safe, operational automobile, bicycle and pedestrian access to all public parks and facilities in its jurisdiction.

**Policy 6.3.3:** Access to all public recreation facilities shall be designed as barrier-free as possible to accommodate accessibility by the elderly, handicapped, and very young.

**Policy 6.3.4:** The County will seek funding to develop a recreational master plan, including conceptual greenway maps, which include proposed new recreational trail systems and conservation greenways to link existing and new open space and outdoor recreation areas.

**Policy 6.3.5:** The County shall, through the annual capital improvements budgeting process, identify funding sources and allocate funds to correct or improve existing deficiencies in County-owned parks and recreation facilities in accordance with the adopted level of service standards.

**Policy 6.3.6:** The County shall develop a parks and recreation system based on the Neighborhood Park, District Park and Water Access classifications and shall provide acreage and facilities based on the following level of service standards:

Neighborhood Parks	2.0 acres per 5,000 population
Community Parks	20.0 acres minimum per 10,000 population
Water Access Points	Near major road crossings on the Ochlockonee River and at new subdivisions or existing ramp access locations on Lake Talquin.

**Policy 6.3.7:** The standards listed in Policy 6.3.6 shall be evaluated against proposed new residential development. If adequate park space and/or water access points are not

sufficient based upon the impact of the new development, then the developer shall create the parks and/or access points needed to serve the projected population of the proposed development.

**Policy 6.3.8:** No new residential development shall be issued a Final Development Order unit it has demonstrated that the level of service standard for the parks and recreation system shall be met.

**Objective 6.4: Ensure the provision of open space with the development of land.**

**Policy 6.4.1:** The County shall ensure the provision of open space in new developments by requiring developers of commercial and industrial projects as well as all platted subdivisions to provide a minimum of ten (10) percent open space. This requirement may be fulfilled by public or private open space, or a combination thereof.

**Policy 6.4.2:** New development on parcels contiguous to designated corridor roads shall be required to preserve at least 50% of the first fifteen (15) feet of frontage for residential subdivisions and twenty-five (25) feet for non-residential projects. The open space requirement for commercial/industrial uses can be shifted into perimeter buffers to better shield the development from dissimilar uses.

**Policy 6.4.3:** The County shall require buffers between different land uses in the form of berms, hedges, trees, and open space. The Land Development Code will designate the size of buffers for different land uses, and establish the criteria for landscaping and tree protection. The preservation of native vegetation shall be encouraged.

**Policy 6.4.4:** The County shall seek to coordinate with other agencies/entities and private facility providers to develop joint use plans to enhance access for all citizens to recreational facilities.

**Policy 6.4.5:** Gadsden County shall actively seek grants and other funds from available funding resources. This may include, but is not limited to, the Office of Greenways and Trails, the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP), and/or from private or non-profit organizations.

**Policy 6.4.6:** The County shall seek additional revenue streams to create a fund to be utilized to assist in matching state or federal sources for funding its acquisition and recreation development programs.

**Policy 6.4.7:** Open space and parks developed or redeveloped by the County will comply with all State and Federal watershed protection, groundwater protection and surface water protection regulations.

**Policy 6.4.8:** At the development order stage for all non-residential development, and all platted residential subdivision applications, the County shall require the applicant to submit a letter from the Division of Historical Resources, Department of State, stating whether or not there are any historical resources recorded on site as listed on the

Florida Master Site File. If the Florida Master Site File has a historical resource listed on the site, then mitigation or avoidance of development of that area shall be required.

**Policy 6.4.9:** The County will establish as a priority, the acquisition and protection of land that contains natural communities, as described in the “Guide to the Natural Communities of Florida,” and listed species habitat.

**Policy 6.4.10:** The County will support the acquisitions identified in the Northwest Florida Water Management Districts’ Five Year Plan to coordinate that program with the County’s resource based recreation planning.

**Policy 6.4.11:** In developing each new property acquired for recreation purposes, the County will establish a program for the removal of non-native vegetation.