

Highlands County, Florida



Parks and Recreation Master Plan



Adopted: July 21, 2015



Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Special thanks to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners, Planning and Zoning Commission, Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee, Highlands County administrative staff, residents, business community members, and stakeholders that contributed to the preparation of this document.



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Prepared by



Central Florida Regional Planning Council

Adopted: July 21, 2015



Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

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RESOLUTION No. 14-15-86

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF HIGHLANDS COUNTY, FLORIDA, ADOPTING THE PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners of Highlands County, Florida (the "Board"), was regularly assembled on the 21st day of July, 2015; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes the importance of parks and recreation for all its citizens; and

WHEREAS, the Board appreciates the quality of life benefits that parks and recreation provides to the community; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes the need for a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to provide goals, needs assessments, standards, recommendations, and strategies for implementation in an effort to provide for and continually improve park and recreational facilities, provide trail opportunities, and improve existing county parks; and

WHEREAS, the Board supports the efforts to develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan that will serve as a planning guide specifically focused on the future of parks and recreation in Highlands County; and

WHEREAS, the primary objective of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to provide parks and recreation opportunities to the county's growing population; and

WHEREAS, in order to address recreational needs in the future, Highlands County has sought citizen input through a survey, public input meetings, and municipal and improvement district staff, and that input has been incorporated into the Parks and Recreation Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, on June 18, 2015, the Highlands County Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee voted to forward to the Board to consider to approve and adopt the Parks and Recreation Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, on June 30, 2015, the Planning and Zoning Commission and Local Planning Agency voted to forward to the Board to consider to approve and adopt the Parks and Recreation Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Board has reviewed the Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan and affirms that this Master Plan will support the goals of the 2030 Highlands County Comprehensive Plan.



NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of County Commissioners of Highlands County, Florida, after public hearing and comment that:

SECTION 1. ADOPTION. The Highlands County Board of County Commissioners hereby accepts and adopts the Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan as attached hereto as Exhibit "A" and incorporated herein for all intents and purposes.

SECTION 2. SEVERABILITY. The sections, subsections, paragraphs, sentences, clauses and phrases of this Resolution are severable, and if any phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph, subsection or section of this Resolution shall be declared invalid, unconstitutional or unenforceable by the valid judgment or decree of a court of competent jurisdiction, such invalidity, unconstitutionality or unenforceability shall not affect any of the remaining phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, subsections, and sections of this Resolution.

SECTION 3. CONFLICT. Any resolution or part thereof in conflict with this Resolution or any part hereof is hereby repealed to the extent of the conflict.

SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

DONE AND ADOPTED this 21st day of July, 2015.

Board of County Commissioners
Highlands County, Florida
Robert W. Germaine, Clerk
William R. Handley, Chairperson



CERTIFIED
TO BE A TRUE COPY
ROBERT W. GERMAINE, CLERK
BY Amalpus, C.
7/24/15

Adopted: July 21, 2015



Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

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Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Section I. Introduction

The Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a guide for the development and implementation of future parks, trails, and recreational opportunities. Carefully developed, the resulting document is the culmination of a community outreach and engagement process.

The intent of the Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to assess the overall parks and recreation system in unincorporated Highlands County in a way that meets the needs of the current and future residents of the County. The Master Plan assesses the overall park system, demographics, and provides a plan for Highlands County's future. This roadmap outlines objectives and provides recommendations, but is not a financial plan for their implementation. The Master Plan also provides an update to the County's Blueways, Greenways, Trails and Bikeways Master Plan which was originally adopted in 2000 and updated in 2005.

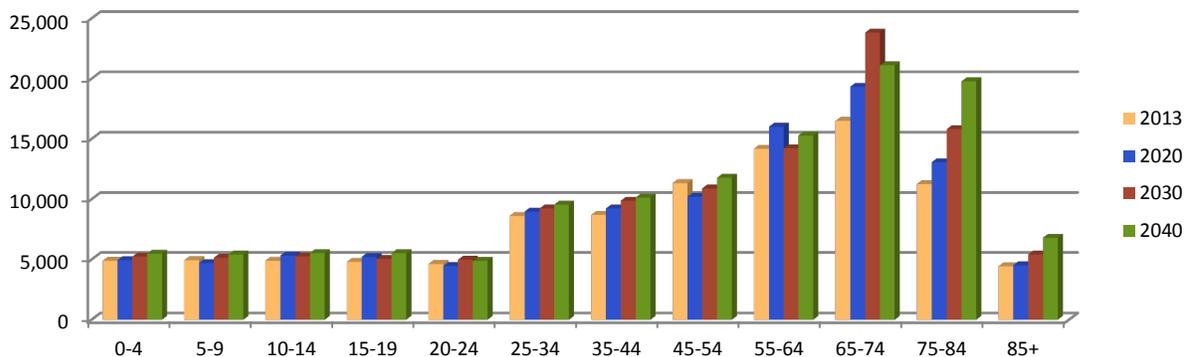
Each of the three municipalities within the County and the two improvement districts have their own recreation facilities and programs. However, inventories of all recreation facilities in the County including those in the municipalities and improvement districts are provided in the Appendices of this Master Plan. While all parks were generally analyzed, the purpose of this Master Plan is not to inventory and assess the current condition of each individual park and/or community center, nor is the purpose to assess the organization of the Highlands County Leisure Services Department.

County Profile

Section II of the Master Plan provides information on the history of the County and the current and estimated future of the County. The Section addresses population, age distribution, race/ethnicity, and education, employment, and income profiles; all of which impact the types of facilities and uses necessary for the County. As illustrated in the figure below, as the population of Highlands County increases between 2013 and 2040, the breakdown in age groups changes through the time periods. These changes result in potentially different impacts and requirements for the County's facilities over the years.

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Figure 2.10: Projected Population by Age Category for Highlands County



Park and Recreation System Assessment

Highlands County has 49 parks, including 39 boat ramps and approximately 1,488 acres of park land. Facilities such as athletic fields, community buildings, and picnic pavilions are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis through the Highlands County Leisure Services Department. Other than a program for softball leagues, the County provides no other direct recreation programming. Recreation programs are provided by the County's three municipalities, two improvement districts and private recreation organizations. To assist these recreation providers, the County has developed a recreation grant program through the Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee. More information on these facilities is available in Section III and Appendices B and C. In addition to the information on the facilities, Section III includes a recreation demand assessment that analyses the six park typologies, which include:

- Mini Parks (pocket parks)
- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Parks
- District Parks
- Regional Parks
- Special Facilities

Trails

Existing and proposed trails are shown on the Trails network map in Appendix A. Existing and proposed trailhead locations are also shown. Section IV provides a trail assessment including existing and planned trails, planning efforts, and trail design guidelines. Typical sections, similar to the example shown below, are included for a variety of trail options. They are intended to be used as suggested practices for constructing a trail system and may not apply to every situation.

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan



Equestrian Trail Typical Section

Section IV also outlines priorities, goals, and recommendations for trails. Recommendations include:

- Connecting existing trails to each other and neighborhoods and parks;
- Coordination with all municipalities in the County, the Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization, and state and federal agencies; and
- Implementing the trails plan through new development/redevelopment and road construction projects.

Public Participation

The Master Plan was developed through public input received via an online community survey, community workshops, and work through the County's Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee. Based on input received, the County will continue to focus its efforts on maintaining its current facilities and coordinating with municipal and private non-profit providers. Information on the public participation process, including detailed survey analysis, is located in Section V and Appendix D.

Plan Objectives

As part of the development of the Master Plan, a mission statement and objectives were developed to help guide the development of the County's parks and recreation system and are provided in Sections IV

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

and VI. The County should consider the mission statement and associated objectives before making decisions related to the parks and recreation system. If an action does not support the mission and objectives, the action should be further evaluated.

Mission Statement

“Highlands County will facilitate the management of facilities for a recreation system that includes parks, trails and other recreational opportunities that meet the needs of a growing community. The County shall continue to seek opportunities for a connected recreation system linking neighborhoods, trails and parks.”

Objectives supporting the Mission Statement are included in Section VI. These objectives work to implement the Mission Statement, support the Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and provide a roadmap for the County to implement the Master Plan. While not an inclusive list, some of the Objectives included in Section VI follow:

- Provision of quality recreation opportunities;
- Promotion of Highland County’s parks, trails, cultural events, natural areas, and special events to visitors; including a web-based promotional guide for parks and recreation facilities and trails, a logo and signage program, and a dedicated presence on Highlands County’s website;
- Inclusion of nearby residents and interested parties in the planning process for the development of new parks and facilities; and
- The creation and approval of a phased development and renovation plan for the existing parks.

Recreation Facility Planning

To ensure an adequate amount of park and recreation facilities are available for the current and future population of Highlands County, the Highlands County Comprehensive Plan adopts a level of service of 10 acres per 1,000 people for the County’s Recreation and Open Space requirements. “Level of service” as used in this plan means the amount of resources and facilities that are available to support the population of the unincorporated county. It is expressed in acres.

$$\text{Level of Service} = \frac{\text{Acreage of Resources and Facilities}}{\left(\frac{\text{Population of Unincorporated County}}{1,000} \right)}$$

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As illustrated in Table I-1 below (and located in Section III), the level of service requirements are being met based on the 2010 census for the unincorporated county and the population estimates through 2040. The majority of the recreation acreage in unincorporated Highlands County is located in the Preserve of Sun 'N Lake which is approximately 1,350 acres and serves as a regional, resource-based park.

Table I-1 Unincorporated Highlands County Recreation Facility Level of Service (LOS) for Population Projections – All Park Facilities						
Year	Population	Park Acreage	LOS		Required Acreage for Population	Acreage Difference
			Adopted	Operating		
2010 Census	77,236	1,488.31	10.00	19.27	772.36	715.95
2013 Estimate	77,026	1,488.31	10.00	19.32	770.26	718.05
2020 Estimate	83,663	1,488.31	10.00	17.79	836.63	651.68
2030 Estimate	91,078	1,488.31	10.00	16.34	910.78	577.53
2040 Estimate	96,463	1,488.31	10.00	15.43	964.63	523.68

* LOS = acres/1,000 people

Future Parks

Unless additional acreage for parks and recreation activities are created over time, as the population increases, the difference between the operating level of service and the adopted level of service will diminish. Requirements for developers of residential projects to dedicate land and/or pay a fee in lieu of park dedication based on the estimated population of the development ensure that parks and recreation facilities are provided for all the residents of the County and that the County continues to operate at or above the adopted level of service for parks and recreation.

Park Distribution

What is more critical in developing a parks and open space system is ensuring a good distribution of and location for parks and open spaces, connecting them to one another and to key destinations, achieving the right mix of activities within and around parks, and ensuring they are well maintained and programmed. Certain areas of the County may have greater demand for community and district parks as the County continues to grow.

Potential park and trail sites should be evaluated prior to the County proceeding with acquisition. Section VII outlines the land acquisition and park siting criteria. Items to be evaluated should include:

- Useable acreage of the property;
- Environmental conditions;
- Proximity to users; and
- Expansion of existing parks.

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Funding is an important element for the development of future parks and trails as well as the maintenance of existing parks and trails.

Summary of Recommendations

Section VII includes the recommendations of the Highland's County Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

County's Role

- Highlands County's system of parks and recreation facilities should direct efforts toward providing facilities that can efficiently serve the largest amounts of people while consolidating resources.
- The County should continue to coordinate with municipalities and other agencies to connect parks and natural resources countywide through a coordinated system of trails, blueways and greenways.
- Any park scheduled for sale or transfer should address the impact on the recreational services to nearby residents, especially access to lakes or other significant natural or cultural resources.
- County facilities should continue to be made available to outside groups or agencies that administer and run recreation programs. Such groups shall meet certain conditions and abide by any regulations the County adopts for the use of its facilities.
- Partnerships, joint facilities, cooperative arrangements, and other collaborations are creative ways of providing for needed recreational services, facilities, and programs. Sharing of resources will assist Highlands County in meeting the recreational needs of residents and visitors.
- The County should continue to develop partnerships with non-profit providers and with municipalities and improvement districts to develop and new or expand existing facilities.

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The Master Plan and its recommendations will provide Highlands County with a guide for future parks and recreation development. This Plan is intended to be dynamic and change with the community's future needs through monitoring and evaluation.

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Section II: County Profile

A full analysis of a parks and recreation system is not based solely on the inner workings of the department, but includes serving the community as well. To provide a comprehensive parks and recreation master plan, the plan must analyze both current and projected demographics to determine the composition of the population and its needs. Understanding these trends is a critical component in planning the current and future delivery of recreation programs and facilities for Highlands County.

To begin the demographic analysis, information was collected from multiple sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR), the Florida Housing Data Clearinghouse, the Comprehensive Plans for Highlands County and the incorporated jurisdictions, Highlands County staff, the Florida Legislature Office of Economic and Demographic Research, the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC), and Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI), an econometric model for forecasting in the Central Florida Region. By assembling varying blocks of data within the county, the needs of each area within the community were estimated to form the basis for recommendations made throughout this master plan. In addition, this analysis compares Highlands County's trends to those of counties with similar growth trends including Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Manatee, and Pasco Counties, and the State of Florida is general to provide a benchmark against which the county may be measured and to demonstrate the differences that make the county unique or similarities that might support consistent planning strategies. Understanding where population growth will occur and the composition of that growth is the most effective way to determine the level of service required over the next decade.

Overview

Highlands County was created in 1921, when it was separated from Desoto County, along with Charlotte, Glades, and Hardee Counties. Highlands County's name derives from the terrain of the county, having an abundance of hills in the area. Ground elevations in Highlands County range from 23.87 feet above the North American Vertical Datum of 1988 (NAVD 88) to 198.87 feet NAVD 88. The county is located in the south-central portion of the Florida peninsula, bordering Okeechobee, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, and Polk Counties. It is mid-way between St. Lucie County on the Atlantic to the east, Sarasota County on the Gulf of Mexico to the west, and northwest of Lake Okeechobee. The primordial Lake Wales Ridge bisects the county and accommodates the major portion of the urban development occurring within the county, including the City of Avon Park, the City of Sebring, and the Town of Lake Placid. U.S. Highway 27 runs the length of the Ridge, connecting the City of Miami to the south with the State of Georgia to the north. The Kissimmee River runs along the eastern boundary of the county. Highlands County is home to over 100 lakes ranging from less than 10 acres to the 27,600 acre, Lake Istokpoga, Florida's fifth largest lake. As far as streams, the County is the headwaters for Fisheating Creek and Arbuckle Creek, one of the few free-flowing streams in South Florida.

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Population Trends

According to the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR), Highlands County has a 2014 population estimated at 99,818, which is a 1.04 percent increase over the number cited by the 2010 U.S. Census, which was 98,786. Highlands County overall is not growing as quickly as the State of Florida or most of the comparison counties (Table 2-1). While the County's overall growth rate is slower than the state and all but one of the comparison counties, the City of Avon Park and the Town of Lake Placid are growing at nearly twice the rate of the State of Florida and outpacing all the comparison counties.

Location	2000 Census	2010 Census	Percent Change	2014 Estimate	Percent Change
Avon Park	8,542	8,836	3.44%	9,513	7.66%
Lake Placid	1,668	2,223	33.27%	2,375	6.84%
Sebring	9,667	10,491	8.52%	10,666	1.67%
Unincorporated Highlands County	67,489	77,236	14.44%	77,264	0.04%
Highlands County (Total)	87,366	98,786	13.07%	99,818	1.04%
Citrus County	118,085	141,236	19.61%	140,798	-0.31%
Hernando County	130,802	172,778	32.09%	174,955	1.26%
Lake County	210,527	297,047	41.10%	309,736	4.27%
Manatee County	264,002	322,833	22.28%	339,545	5.18%
Pasco County	344,768	464,697	34.79%	479,340	3.15%
Florida	15,982,824	18,801,332	17.63%	19,507,369	3.76%

Population Estimates Through 2040

The Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) provides projections of Florida population by county for the years 2015–2040. These projections include a range of low, medium, and high. The following analysis is based on the BEBR medium projections (Table 2-2 and Figure 2.1).

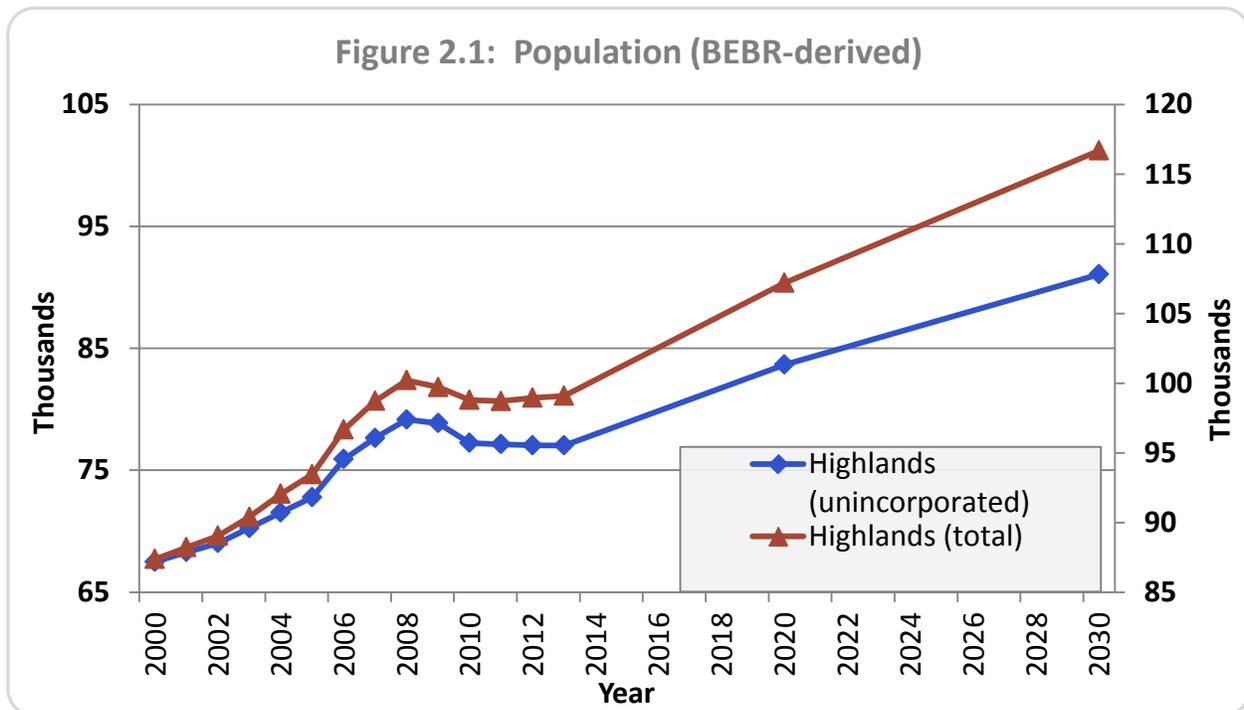
Location	2010 Census	2013 Estimate	Percent Change	2020 Estimate	Percent Change	2030 Estimate	Percent Change	2040 Estimate	Percent Change
Incorporated County*	21,550	22,066	2.39%	23,537	6.66%	25,622	8.86%	27,137	5.91%
Unincorporated County	77,236	77,026	-0.27%	83,663	8.62%	91,078	8.86%	96,463	5.91%
Total Highlands County**	98,786	99,092	0.31%	107,200	8.18%	116,700	8.86%	123,600	5.91%

* Incorporated County is the combined total population of Avon Park, Sebring, and Lake Placid

** Total of the incorporated and unincorporated areas of Highlands County

Notes: BEBR 2012 projections for 2020, 2030, and 2040 projections for Entire County. Projections for Unincorporated and Incorporated County based on analysis

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Note: 2000-2010 Census Bureau Estimates; 2011 – 2030 REMI Projections

Age Distribution

Another component to consider when planning parks and recreation services is the age of the population. This particular element plays a critical role in determining the proper diversity of programs and facilities needed to accommodate particular age groups. For example, younger age groups tend to require more active and structured forms of recreation, such as football, soccer, baseball, and softball. Conversely, older populations, while still considered “active,” tend to rank passive programming as a higher preference. However, a growing trend has begun across the nation, in which parks and recreation departments are realizing a growing demand for additional programs and services geared towards senior (55+) citizens.

Researchers have noted an increase across the country in the design of Active Adult Communities (AAC) that cater to empty-nest adults along with early and recent retirees. In general, persons between 50 and 65 years of age are active participants in parks and recreation activities and frequently request opportunities for additional activities such as wellness programs and facilities, tennis, swimming, golf, walking, hiking, and running, as well as classes and programs that are social and educational. They also like to travel in groups, so determining a county’s age profile related to this very large population group is critical.

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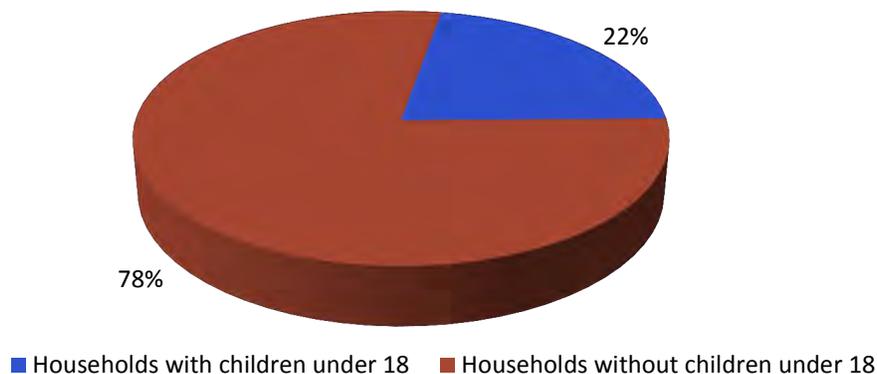
Median Age

The median age in Highlands County is 51.8 years, which is ten years older than the state median age and higher than all the comparison counties except Citrus County. While the Highlands County median age is over 50, all three municipalities in the county have a median age under 50 (Table 2-3). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the majority of households in Highlands County do not have children under 18 years old (Figure 2.2). While the county and all three municipalities have a higher percentage of households with one or more persons over 60 years old than the rest of the state, they are divided in terms of percentage of households with one or more persons under 18 years old (2009-2013 5-year American Community Survey). Lake Placid and Avon Park have a higher percentage of households with one or more persons under 18 years old and Sebring and Highlands County have a lower percentage of households with one or more persons under 18 years old than the state (Table 2-4).

Table 2-3: Median Age	
Location	Median Age
Avon Park	35.3
Lake Placid	30.5
Sebring	44.3
Highlands County	51.8
Citrus County	54.6
Hernando County	48.0
Lake County	46.0
Manatee County	45.9
Pasco County	44.0
Florida	41.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey

Figure 2.2: Highlands County Households With and Without Children (2010)



Source: U.S. 2010 Census.

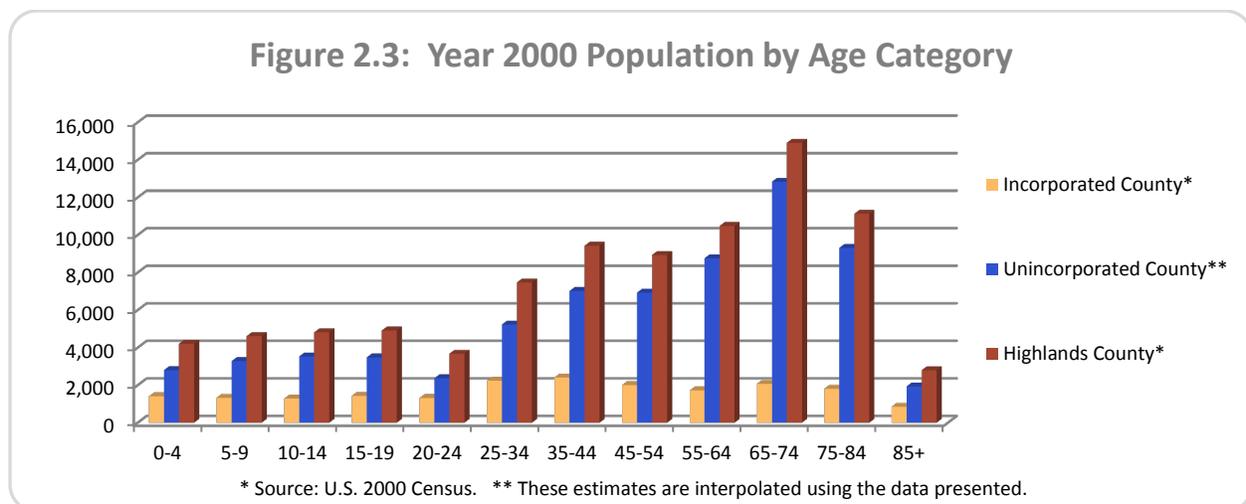
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**Table 2-4:
Highlands County Average Households with Persons Under 18 and Over 60 Years Old (2009-2013)**

Location	Households with one or more persons under 18 years old	Households with one or more persons 60 years and over
Avon Park	29.8%	45.5%
Lake Placid	31.2%	49.3%
Sebring	21.6%	50.4%
Highlands County	24.8%	64.4%
Citrus County	18.6%	61.6%
Hernando County	25.3%	53.6%
Lake County	26.5%	51.2%
Manatee County	23.6%	50.3%
Pasco County	27.6%	47.1%
Florida	28.6%	41.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey

In 2013, approximately 43 percent of the population of Highlands County fell between the ages of 50 and 80. BEBR projects an increase in the percentage of population in the age groups over 70 years old between 2013 and 2040 and a decrease in the percentage of the population of all other age groups during this time period. Figures 2.3 – 2.6 illustrate the population by age category and population by age category by jurisdiction for the year 2000 and the year 2010. Figures 2.7 – 2.9 illustrate the projected population by age category for Highlands County, the Incorporated County, and the Unincorporated County for 2020, 2030, and 2040. Figure 2.10 illustrates the projected population by age categories for Highlands County for 2013, 2020, 2030, and 2040. The figure illustrates the projected trend of an increasing older population for Highlands County by 2040.



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Figure 2.4: Year 2000 Population by Age Category by Jurisdiction

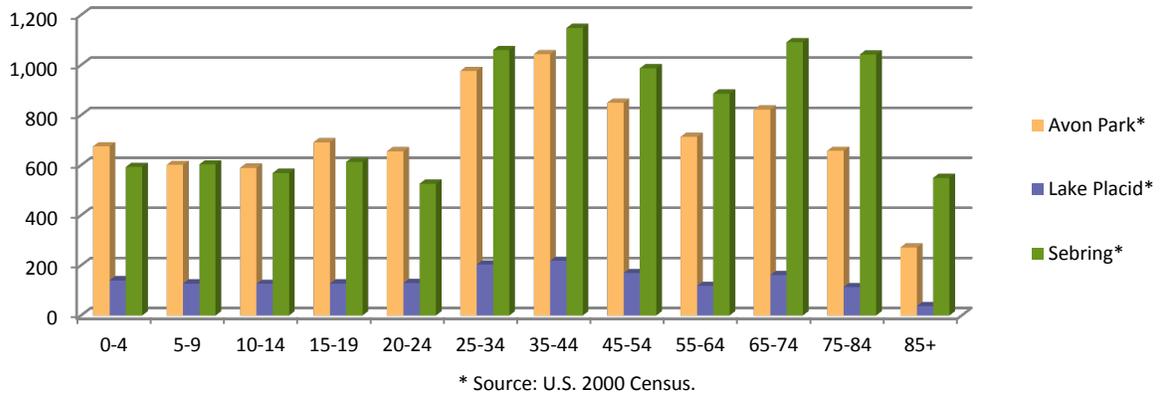


Figure 2.5: Year 2010 Population by Age Category

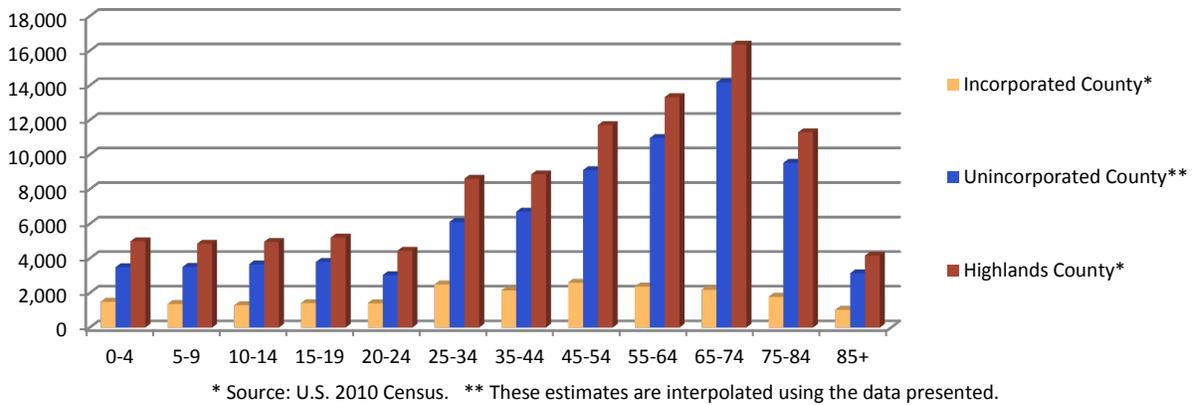
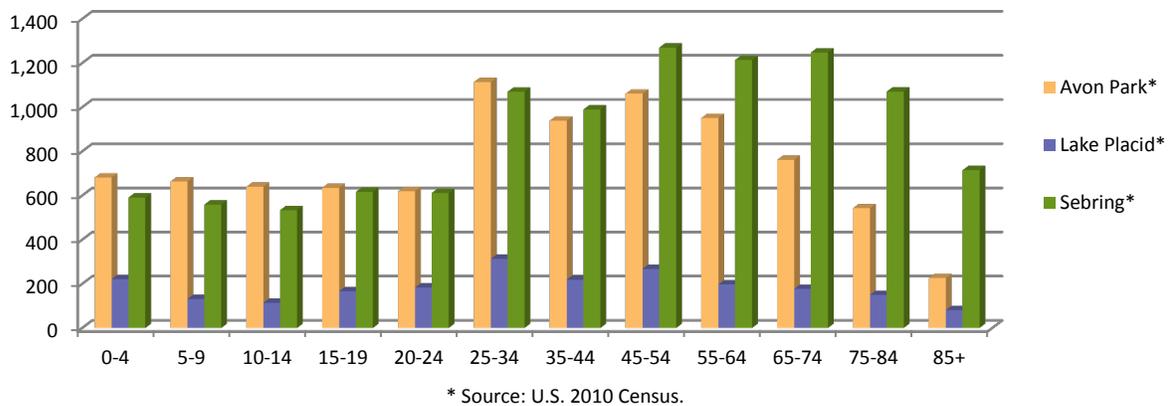
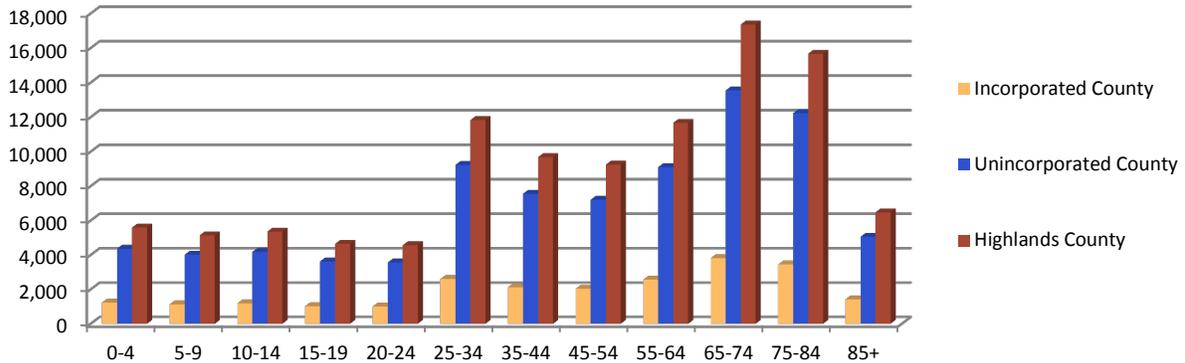


Figure 2.6: Year 2010 Population by Age Category by Jurisdiction



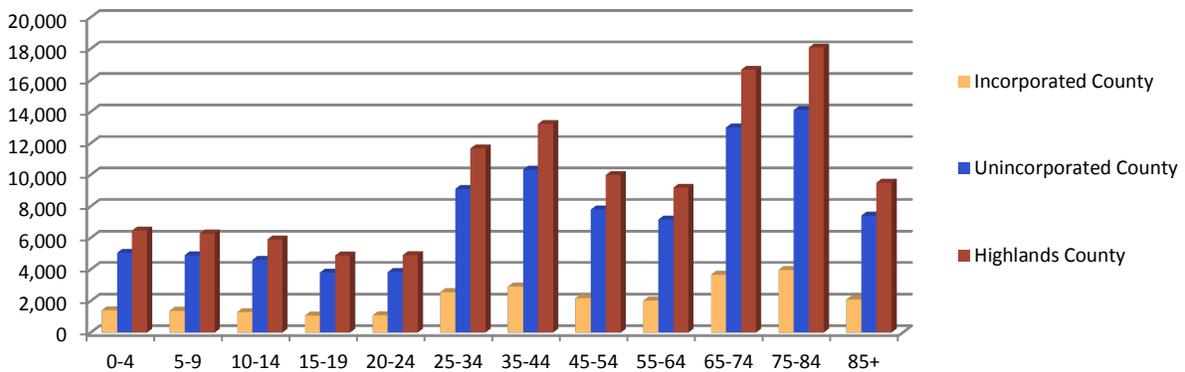
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Figure 2.7: Year 2020 Population by Age Category



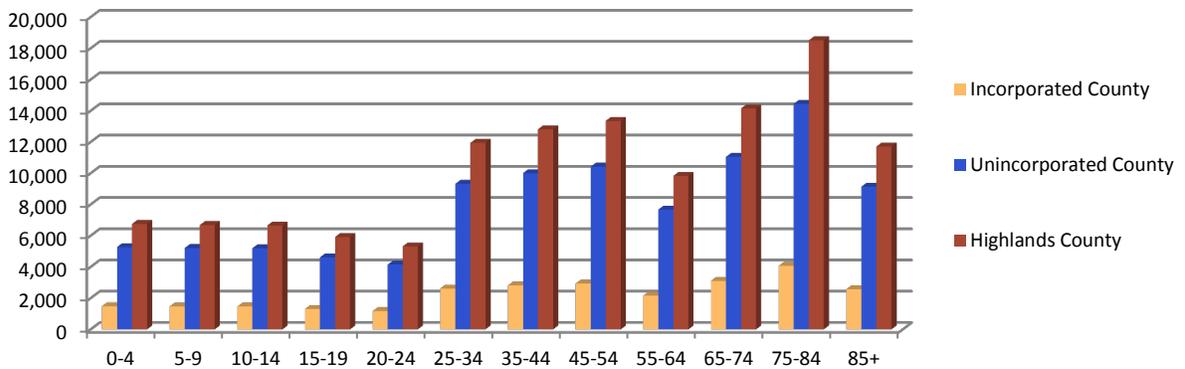
These projections assume that population grows at BEBR 2012 Medium rates, and no change occurs between the proportion of residents living inside or outside of incorporated areas. The age distribution is adapted from REMI PI+ v1.5.2.

Figure 2.8: Year 2030 Population by Age Category



These projections assume that population grows at BEBR 2012 Medium rates, and no change occurs between the proportion of residents living inside or outside of incorporated areas. The age distribution is adapted from REMI PI+ v1.5.2.

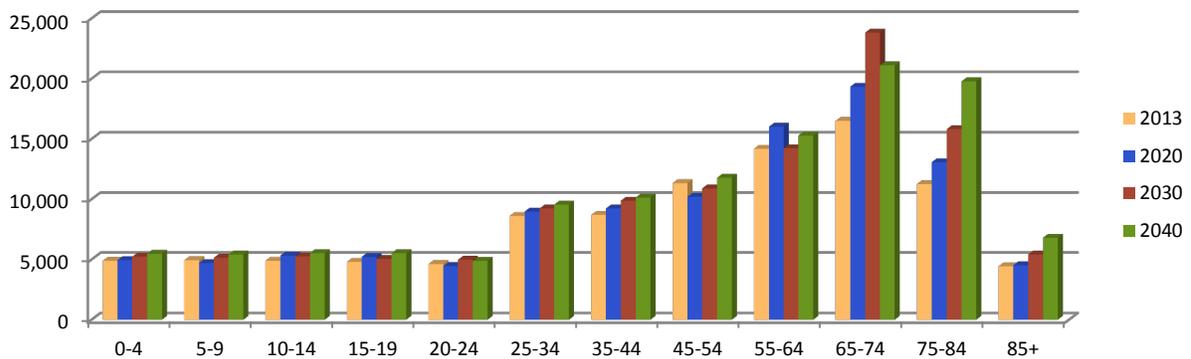
Figure 2.9: Year 2040 Population by Age Category



These projections assume that population grows at BEBR 2012 Medium rates, and no change occurs between the proportion of residents living inside or outside of incorporated areas. The age distribution is adapted from REMI PI+ v1.5.2.

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Figure 2.10: Projected Population by Age Category for Highlands County

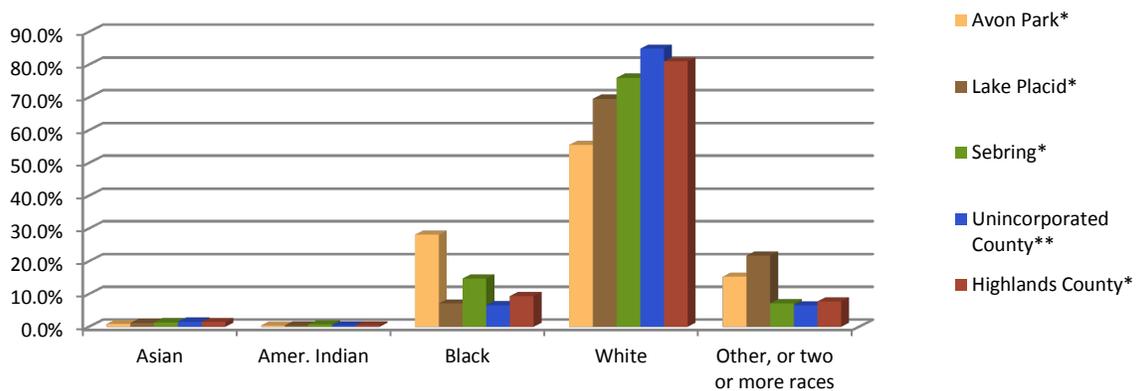


Source: BEBR: Florida Detailed Population Projections Age Sex Race and Hispanic Origin 2015-2040 estimates, July 2014.

Race/Ethnicity

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the majority of Highlands County identifies as white (81.0 percent). Approximately 9 percent of the population of the county identify as black, and 8 percent identify as two or more races (Figure 2.11). The incorporated areas have a higher percentage of people identifying as minority population than the unincorporated areas of the county. Approximately 17 percent of the County identifies as Hispanic or Latino (Figure 2.12). The incorporated areas have a higher percentage of people identifying as Hispanic or Latino than the unincorporated areas of the county.

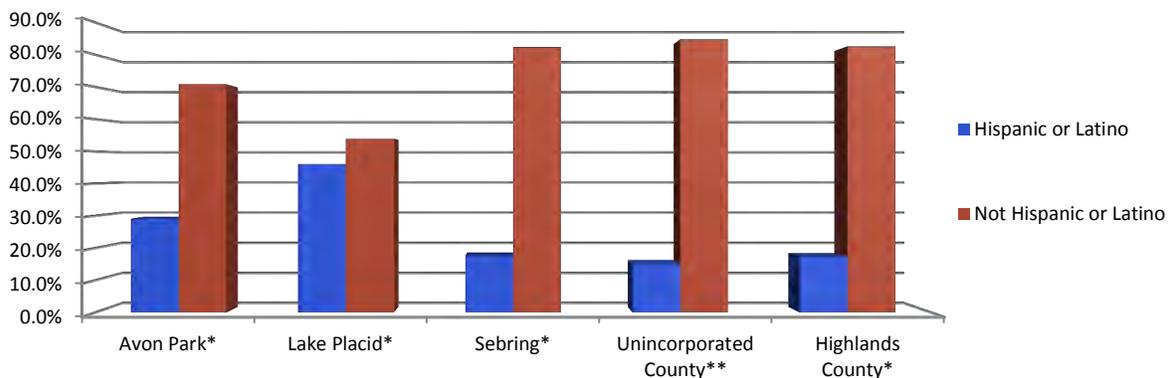
Figure 2.11: Year 2010 Race (as % of Jurisdiction)



* Source: U.S. Census 2010. ** These estimates are interpolated using the data presented herein.

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Figure 2.12: Year 2010 Ethnicity (as % of Jurisdiction)



* Source: U.S. Census 2010. ** These estimates are interpolated using the data presented herein.

Education, Employment, and Income Profiles

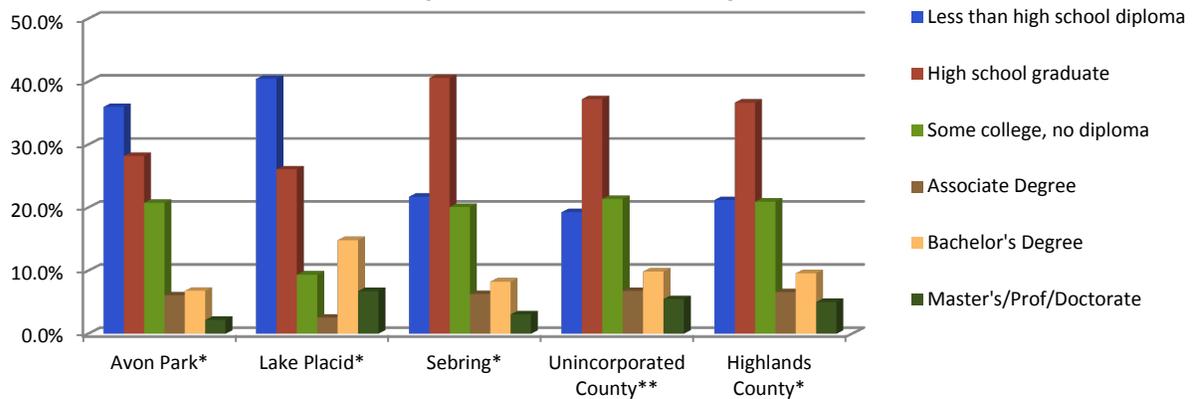
The education, employment, and income levels of a population can have a wide range of effects on a parks and recreation system. In one aspect, these three statistics determine the economic health of the area, which plays a critical role in a service provider's ability to obtain adequate funding for both existing and proposed programs and facilities. Those with more disposable income have greater choices and often are less dependent on the public recreation system than others that have less income and are dependent on a public recreation system to meet their personal and family recreation needs. This trend has come to light in the wake of the recent economic downturn, where public parks and recreation providers across the country were called on to meet the needs of the citizens.

Educational Attainment

According to the Florida Legislature Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR), of persons 25 years and older in Highlands County, 81.0 percent have a high school diploma or higher and 14.9 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher. These percentages are lower than the state at 86.1 percent and 26.4 percent respectively. Figure 2.13 illustrates the educational attainment by jurisdiction in 2010. Educational attainment is often a factor in recreational choices and preferences.

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**Figure 2.13: Year 2010 Educational Attainment
(as % of Jurisdiction)**



* Source: 2010 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. ** These estimates are interpolated using the data presented herein.

Employment

Currently, education and health services (20.6 percent), trade, transportation, and utilities (18.6 percent), and government (15.6 percent) lead the average annual employment by industry in Highlands County (Table 2-5).

Industries	Average Annual Employment, % of All Industries, 2013		Average Annual Wage, 2013	
	Highlands County	Florida	Highlands County	Florida
Natural Resource & Mining	14.60%	1.10%	\$21,930	\$27,654
Construction	3.30%	4.90%	\$28,172	\$42,129
Manufacturing	2.40%	4.30%	\$34,794	\$54,087
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	18.60%	20.90%	\$28,885	\$39,181
Information	0.60%	1.80%	\$41,214	\$68,514
Financial Activities	2.80%	6.70%	\$38,224	\$63,006
Professional & Business Services	8.80%	14.90%	\$30,756	\$52,963
Education & Health Services	20.60%	14.80%	\$41,211	\$45,582
Leisure and Hospitality	10.50%	13.80%	\$15,173	\$22,490
Other Services	2.10%	3.20%	\$21,702	\$31,139
Government	15.60%	13.70%	\$37,885	\$48,376

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey, Prepared by Florida Legislature Office of Economic and Demographic Research

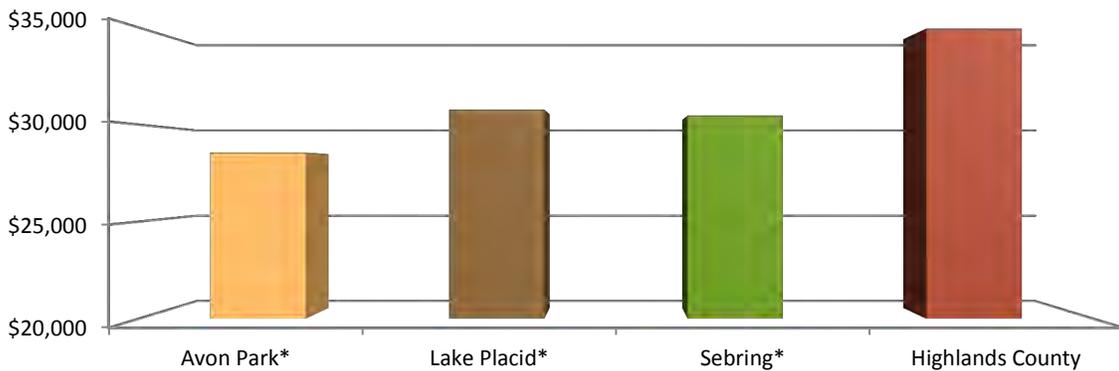
Employment affects recreation choices, both in terms of disposable income to pay and also in terms of time availability to participate in recreation activities.

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Household Income

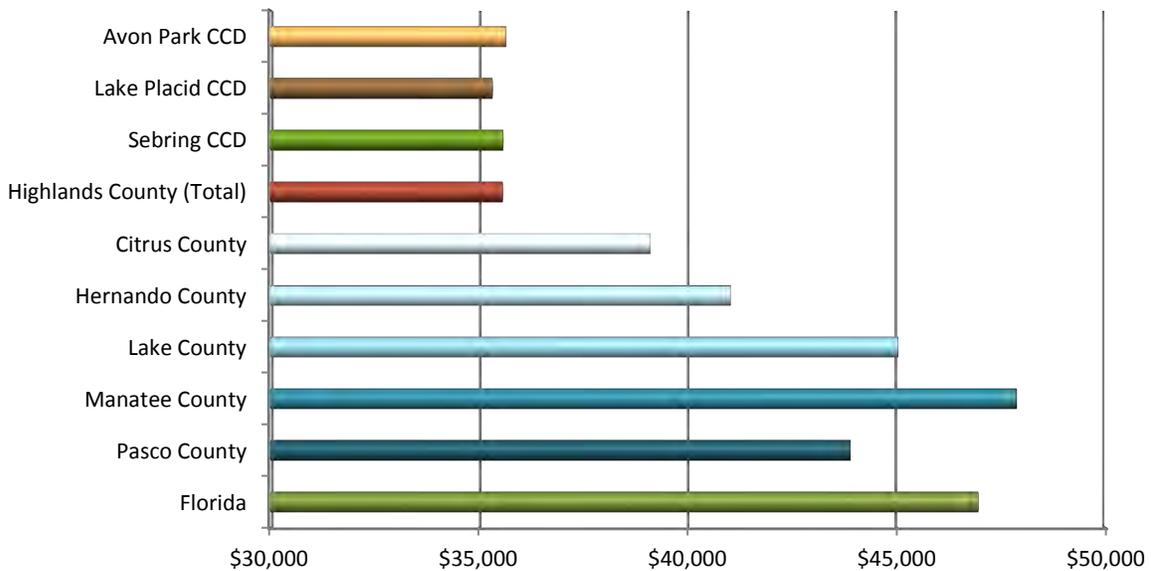
Roughly, 20 percent of the population of Highlands County is below the poverty level. The U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey estimates the median household income for Highlands County to be \$35,560, which is just over \$11,000 less than the median household income for the State of Florida. In contrast with the comparison counties, Highlands County ranges between approximately \$3,500 and \$12,000 less in household income (Figures 2.14 and 2.15). Approximately 32,190 persons receive social security benefits, including retirement and disability.

Figure 2.14: Median Household Income (2010)*



* Source: 2010 American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

Figure 2.15: Median Household Income (2009-2013)*



* Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey Estimate.

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Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Section III. Park and Recreation System Assessment

Facilities Inventory

Highlands County has 49 parks, including 39 boat ramps, and approximately 1,488 acres of park land. The county's recreation facilities are listed in Table 3-1 below. Table 3-2 provides a list of boat ramps.

Facilities such as athletic fields, community buildings, and picnic pavilions are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis through the Highlands County Leisure Services Department. Other than a program for softball leagues, the County provides no other direct recreation programming. Recreation programs are provided by the County's three municipalities, two improvement districts and private recreation organizations. To assist these recreation providers, the County has developed a recreation grant program through the Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee.

Table 3-1: Highlands County Recreation Facilities				
Parks	Acres	Proximity	Type	Amenities
DeSoto City Park	5.50	Sebring	Neighborhood Park	1 softball field, community center, picnic area
HL Bishop Park	4.51	Lake Placid	Neighborhood Park	1 basketball court, lake swimming area, playground, clubhouse, picnic area, restrooms, boat ramp, fishing pier, boardwalk
Lake Istokpoga Park	29.90	Sebring	Special Facility	2 boat ramps, fishing pier, picnic area, restrooms, boardwalk, nature trails
Lincoln Heights Park	6.50	Sebring	Neighborhood Park	1 softball field, 1 basketball court, playground
Lorida Park	4.70	Lorida	Neighborhood Park	1 ball field, playground, community center, picnic area
Martin Luther King Park	4.50	Lake Placid	Neighborhood Park	1 ball field, 1 basketball court, playground, picnic area
Multi-Sports Complex	53.10	Sebring	District Park	5 softball fields, 1 soccer field, 1 football field, 2 multi-purpose fields
Preserve of Sun 'N Lake	1,350.00	Sebring	Regional Park	Boardwalk, nature trails, off-road bike trails, bird watching, fishing pier
Windy Point Park	25.50	Lake Placid	Special Facility	Fishing pier, picnic area, restrooms, nature trail
Venus Ball Field	4.10	Venus	Neighborhood Park	1 ball field
Total Park Acreage	1,488.31			

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Tables 3-2 through 3-5 provide a list of the 39 boat ramps maintained by Highlands County identified by location area. As indicated on the tables, there are several boat ramps on Lake Istokpoga, which is 27,500 acres in size and is Florida’s fifth largest lake.



Table 3-2: Highlands County Boat Ramps – Avon Park Area	
Boat Ramp	General Location
Arbuckle Creek (Burnt Out Bridge)	6391 E. Arbuckle Creek Rd.
Lake Adelaide	2124 N. West Shore Rd.
Lake Damon	1065 W. Lake Damon Dr.
Lake Denton	800 Lake Denton Access Rd.
Lake Glenada	2475 US Hwy 27 S
Lake Isabelle (South End)	N. Oak Island Rd.
Lake Lelia (Gator Lake)	890 W Martin Rd.
Lake Letta	2490 E. Victoria Ln.
Lake Lotela	1005 Lake Lotela Dr.
Lake Olivia	2712 Nautilus Dr.
Lake Pioneer	100 Lake Pioneer Boat Ramp Rd.
Lake Viola	1500 Oak Park Ave.
Little Lake Bonnet	2300 Little Lake Bonnet Dr.
Little Lake Redwater	3026 Holiday Beach Dr.

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Table 3-3: Highlands County Boat Ramps – Lake Placid Area	
Boat Ramp	General Location
Lake Apthorpe	2017 Lake Blvd.
Lake Carrie	1022 Jonquil St.
Lake Clay	1700 Lake Clay Dr.
Lake Clay	1300 Lake Clay Dr.
Lake Francis	300 Cloverleaf Rd.
Lake Huntley	170 Anderson St.
Lake Huntley	121 Lake Huntley Dr.
Lake Istokpoga	621 Lakesedge Dr.
Lake Istokpoga (Windy Point)	65 Windy Point Rd.
Lake June – H.L. Bishop Park	10 Lake June Clubhouse Rd.
Lake Persimmon	150 Hillside Dr.
Lake Placid	3349 Placid View Dr.
Lake Placid	136 Benton Dr.

Table 3-4: Highlands County Boat Ramps – Lorida Area	
Boat Ramp	General Location
Lake Istokpoga	Off Cow House Rd
Arbuckle Creek	6401 E. Arbuckle Creek Rd

Table 3-5: Highlands County Boat Ramps – Sebring Area	
Boat Ramp	General Location
Dinner Lake	2400 Yachting Rd.
Istokpoga Park	720 Istokpoga Park Access Rd.
Lake Istokpoga Park (2 boat ramps)	
Lake Josephine	10809 US 27 S
Lake Josephine	1536 Lake Josephine Dr.
Lake Josephine	2500 Oak Beach Blvd.
Lake Sebring	626 Memorial Dr.
Red Beach Lake	6701 Commerce Dr.
Wolf Lake	6346 Lakeside Dr. West

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Recreation Demand Assessment

For the purposes of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan, recreation standards were based upon Florida's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), which was adopted in 2013. The National Recreation and Park Association Standards were also reviewed. These commonly accepted standards were further refined specific to the needs of Highlands County.

A needs assessment is conducted with the objective of determining whether parks are in sufficient supply and appropriately located to meet the recreation needs of community residents. Parks may be classified based on the size of the park, the population served, service radii, and the types of activities within the park. The following terms apply:

Active Recreation refers to a structured individual or team activity that requires the use of special facilities, courses, fields, or equipment. It includes sports such as baseball, football, soccer, or activities such as golf or skateboarding; or classes such as aerobics or yoga.

Passive Recreation refers to recreational activities that do not require prepared facilities like sports fields or pavilions. Passive recreational activities place minimal stress on a site's resources; as a result, they can provide ecosystem service benefits that are highly compatible with nature resource protection. Examples of passive recreation activities include: hunting, camping, hiking, wildlife/bird viewing and/or photography; fishing, swimming, walking, picnicking, running/jogging, bicycling, horseback riding.

Active Programming refers to adult learning classes including but limited to yoga, dancing, art, and cooking. This may also include organized programming including league sports such as soccer or baseball. Highlands County relies on the three municipalities, two improvement districts and private recreation providers for recreation programs.

Passive Programming includes open fields for activities. Drop-in games/programming are characteristic of passive programming and may include pick-up basketball, soccer, etc games that are not part of an organized group.

Activity-Based Facilities provide localized facilities for playing a specific sport or game such as basketball, baseball, football, and soccer. These facilities foster team sports and require maintenance for frequent use. Such facilities are frequently located in neighborhood, community, and special use parks.

Resource-Based Facilities are facilities in which recreation is based on the natural landscape, such as a river or lake, or cultural resources such as historical and archeological sites. Resource-based recreation is generally passive such as walking or hiking on an interpretive trail or active such as boating or swimming.

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Park Classifications

The Park Classification described below is intended to serve as a reference tool to guide Highlands County in analyzing existing parks and the development of new parks. Implementation of the Park Classification allows those responsible for parkland selection, design, construction, and maintenance of parks to best meet the needs of communities.

The location and programming of parks is determined by the County according to population and recreational level of service requirements as established in the Highlands County Comprehensive Plan. Parks are distributed throughout a community, and across the county, to enable residents to have easily accessible parkland that satisfies a wide range of recreational needs, while enhancing the public realm. All park and pathway locations shall take into consideration the design of existing neighborhoods and site specific policies in the Comprehensive Plan for the area. Communities may benefit when parks are varied in their typologies and are distinctive in their design.

Six (6) park typologies are described below. They include: Mini Parks (pocket parks), Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, District Parks, Regional Parks, and Special Facilities. Highlands County currently has neighborhood parks, a district park, a regional park, and special facilities. In general, counties typically provide the larger parks such as resource-based parks and large scale specialized facilities. An overview of types of parks is provided below.

The Park Classification establishes park typologies and includes a general description, a typical size range, a typical length of visit, access provisions, service area radius, configuration, and a list of appropriate amenities for that type of park based on best practices and community input. The list of amenities is not meant to be prescriptive or exhaustive. The appropriate amenities for any individual park should be determined through a regular park master planning process that involves the community it is meant to serve. Some amenities or programming may be provided by neighborhood groups or other private partners. Parklands should be of a shape and size that provide appropriate access, serve multiple age segments, and offer flexibility in the design of sports fields and other recreational amenities.

There are often a variety of ownership and management scenarios, including publicly owned and operated, publicly accessible but privately owned and operated, and other public-private partnerships. The park classifications are applicable in all ownership and management scenarios.

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Mini Parks

Mini parks (also known as ‘pocket parks’) serve as parks within neighborhoods. These small areas are either natural or landscaped areas located within built-up areas. These parks are sometimes located within common areas of a development. Facilities may include walks, benches, gardens or memorials. Most pocket parks are provided through developer agreements and the land development process with very little responsibility on the part of counties or cities. Highlands County currently does not have any mini parks within its inventory. The following are typical characteristics of mini parks.

- <5 acres in size
- ½ acre per 1,000 population
- ¼ mile service area radius
- takes advantage of unique opportunity (locality, resource, a view)
- accessible by low volume streets and trails
- can be located in high-density areas, including downtown areas.

Mini Park Example

Optimum Area:

< 5 Acres

Construction Cost:

Ranges from \$25,000 to \$75,000 depending on size and amenities

Typical Amenities:

- I. Pre-School Playground
- II. Picnic Area
- III. Sitting Area with Pergola
- IV. Open Lawn with Seating
- V. Walkway



Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are the basic unit of the park system and serve the informal recreation needs of residents within walking distance of their homes. Serving as the recreational focus of the neighborhood, these parks should balance informal active and passive spaces. In general, about half of the park's area should be planned for passive activities and natural features. Neighborhood parks have limited program activities and are not intended to attract users from outside the neighborhood. Neighborhood parks are larger than pocket parks and may include practice areas or greenspaces/playing courts for drop-in games of all types. Neighborhood parks are generally used by the immediate community they serve. Ideally these parks should be accessible on foot or by bicycle. Within suburban areas, they should be accessible by bicycle or a short drive by car. Highlands County's neighborhood parks include DeSoto City Park, Lincoln Park, and Martin Luther King Park. The following are characteristics of neighborhood parks.

- 5-19 acres
- 2 acres per 1000 population
- ¼ to ½ mile service area radius
- located within or adjacent to neighborhoods
- takes on character of surrounding areas
- accessible by walking, bike riding or short drive by car
- casual play with very little programming, if any at all
- provides a compatible balance of activities and resource-based recreation
- facilities may include playgrounds, multipurpose courts/fields, tennis courts, landscape areas, benches, recreation buildings, picnic areas, and walkways

Neighborhood Park Example

Optimum Area:
10 Acres

Construction Cost:
Ranges from \$50,000 to \$250,000
depending on size and amenities

Typical Amenities:

- I. Pre-School Playground
- II. Elementary Playground
- III. Pavilion
- IV. Picnic Area
- V. Basketball Court (70' x 110')
- VI. Open Lawn
- VII. Walking Trail
- VIII. Bike Rack
- IX. Landscape Buffers



Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Community Parks

Community parks are larger in size than neighborhood parks and serve several adjoining neighborhoods, attracting residents from a relatively large area. They should preserve unique landscapes and open spaces, allow for group activities, and offer recreation opportunities not feasible or desirable at the neighborhood level. As with neighborhood parks, they should be developed for both active and passive recreation activities. Community parks may have one or two revenue-producing facilities and a recreation center, gym, or senior center. They typically include a permanent and accessible public restroom. The design of community parks should include flexibility of recreational facilities along with specific uses allowing the recreation provider to respond to changing programming trends. The primary function is to provide places where typical recreation programming occurs. Community parks serve broader community areas and provide for a wide range of athletic or team sports opportunities as well as cultural and artistic programs and services. The following are secondary characteristics of community parks.

- 20-50 acres
- 5 acres per 1,000 population
- up to a 3-mile service area radius for urban areas
- up to a 6-mile service area radius for rural areas
- access by walking, biking, but more often by car
- usually located near major collector streets or arterial roads
- serves needs of several neighborhoods
- more intensely developed than neighborhood parks
- primarily activity-based recreation sites, but can be resource-based as well
- can include such facilities as athletic fields, swimming pools, multi-purpose fields, and recreation centers
- natural areas should be incorporated to provide biking, fitness, picnicking, and open space activities
- other community services (i.e., libraries, law enforcement substations, or fire/emergency services) may be located within a community park

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Community Park Example

Optimum Area:

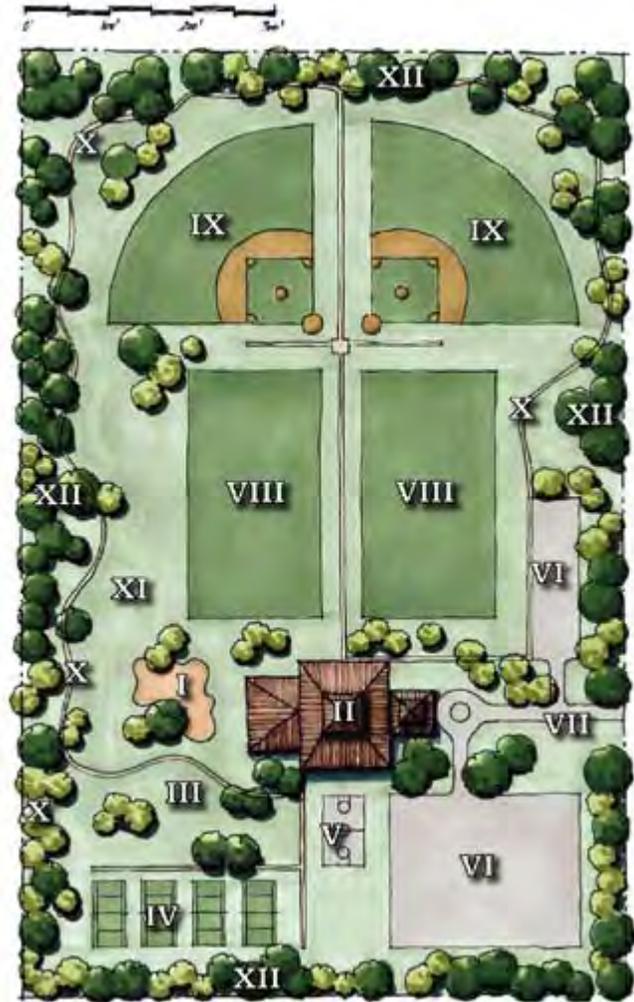
Between 20 and 50 acres

Construction Cost:

Ranges from \$150,000 and up depending on size and amenities

Typical Amenities:

- I. Playground
- II. Recreation Center
- III. Picnic Area
- IV. Tennis Courts (30' x 70')
- V. Basketball Court (70' x 110')
- VI. Parking (200 spaces)
- VII. Park Entrance Drive
- VIII. Multi-Use Fields (150'x300')
- IX. Baseball Fields
- X. Trail
- XI. Open Lawn
- XII. Landscape Buffers



Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

District Parks

District parks serve a broader purpose than neighborhood or community parks and should be used to supplement local parks when they are not adequate to serve the needs of the community. District parks are focused on meeting community-based needs as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. They should be designed to generate revenue, with more than two revenue-producing facilities. Permanent public restrooms should be provided. District parks are usually resource-based and located contiguous to or encompassing natural resources. Activities and facilities may include picnicking, boating, swimming, hiking, camping, and play areas. These parks are usually 'drive to' parks and can be a 30-40 minute commute, although these parks should be connected to a community's trail system as well. In some cases, district parks can be multi-purpose, large-scale, activity-based parks that serve several communities. Such parks are appropriate in outlying areas of the County or in areas with a high concentration of unincorporated residents adjacent to cities. The service area for a district park is generally countywide. The following are characteristics of district parks.

- 75+ acres (minimum of 50 acres)
- 5 acres per 1000 population
- 30-40 minute driving time
- access by car, bikeways or trails

District Park Example

Optimum Area:

> 50 acres

Construction Cost:

Ranges from \$1 million and up depending on size and Amenities

Typical Amenities:

- I. Existing Lake
- II. Boat Launch
- III. Lake Front Park w/Picnic Area & Playground
- IV. Parking
 - a. Lakefront (130 spaces)
 - b. Recreation Center (170 spaces)
 - c. Tennis Center (250 spaces)
 - d. Stadium, Soccer, Baseball (2,560 spaces)
- V. Basketball Court (70' x 110')
- VI. Recreation Center
- VII. Tennis Center/Courts (30'x70')
- VIII. Soccer Fields (225'x360')
- IX. Stadium
- X. Baseball Fields (300' Radius)
- XI. Park Entrance Drive
- XII. Trails



Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Regional Parks

Regional parks are large, typically provide more diverse recreational opportunities than community or neighborhood parks, and serve the entire community. They provide space for high-intensity recreational activities as well as large tracts of open space. These areas frequently attract visitors from outside of the community. Regional parks are almost always resource-based. Regional parks are usually located in areas of diverse natural resources such as lakes, rivers, flora, fauna, or topography. These are usually very large tracts of land and provide camping, equestrian activities, canoeing, boating, fishing, and other resource-based activities. Such parks often serve to protect environmentally sensitive lands with facilities limited to resource-based activities. Care should be taken not to over use the land or allow activities that tax the stability of the resources contained within or adjacent to the park. The service area of a regional park could be multi-county. The following are secondary characteristics of regional parks.

- 250+ acres
- 20 acres per 1,000 population
- offers same type of activities as district but on a larger scale
- up to 60 minute driving time
- access by car, bikeways or trails

Special Facilities

Special facilities are parks with a particular function, resource or single activity located within them. The activity or natural/cultural resource opportunity found within the site drives these facilities. Special facilities can include a soccer complex, a large natural park with equestrian or hiking opportunities, or an aquatic facility with competition size swimming pools or interactive water play features. Community centers with multipurpose buildings also fit into this category. Special facilities may include resource-based facilities such as lakes or rivers, or cultural resources such as museums, history centers, or the fair grounds.

The following are secondary characteristics of a typical special facility.

- >1 acre
- optimally >20 acres for large scale competition facilities
- Acres per 1000 population is not applicable
- county-wide service area
- access by car, bikeways or trails
- may be resource-based; located contiguous to or encompassing natural resources or man-made facilities
- resource oriented facilities may include picnicking, boating, swimming, hiking, camping and play areas;
- activity-based facilities may include a single purpose or activity, such as an equestrian center, golf course, senior center, or museum;
- located based on the center of activity or where the population demands it; and
- size varies depending on facility.

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Level of Service Comparison

Parks may be classified in a number of ways and serve a variety of functions, from providing open space in urban areas to large athletic complexes, and everything in between.

Acreage Standards for Park Types

Park Type	Population Served	Area per 1,000 Population
Mini Park	2,500	0.5 acre
Neighborhood Park	5,000	2 acres
Community Park	5,000	2 acres
District Park	50,000	5 acres
Regional Park	>100,000	20 acres
Special Facility	N/A	N/A

Table 3.6 provides a guide for acreage for the six different park types. This is only a guide and its use is dependent upon population demands. The National Recreation and Parks Association recommends adopting a general level of service such as 10 acres / 1,000 people and then applying applicable standards by appropriate park type.

Highlands County Level of Service

The level of service that is currently provided by the unincorporated county's existing supply of resources and facilities was determined. "Level of service" as used in this plan means the amount of resources and facilities that are available to support the population of the unincorporated county. It is expressed in acres.

$$\text{Level of Service} = \frac{\text{Acreage of Resources and Facilities}}{\left(\frac{\text{Population of Unincorporated County}}{1,000} \right)}$$

The Highlands County Comprehensive Plan adopts a level of service standard of 10 acres per 1,000 people for the County's Recreation and Open Space requirements. Table 3-7 illustrates how the level of service requirements are being met based on the 2010 census for the unincorporated county and the population estimates through 2040 when all park facilities are included.

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Table 3-7: Unincorporated Highlands County Recreation Facility Level of Service (LOS) for Population Projections – All Park Facilities						
Year	Population	Park Acreage	LOS		Required Acreage for Population	Acreage Difference
			Adopted	Operating		
2010 Census	77,236	1,488.31	10.00	19.27	772.36	715.95
2013 Estimate	77,026	1,488.31	10.00	19.32	770.26	718.05
2020 Estimate	83,663	1,488.31	10.00	17.79	836.63	651.68
2030 Estimate	91,078	1,488.31	10.00	16.34	910.78	577.53
2040 Estimate	96,463	1,488.31	10.00	15.43	964.63	523.68

* LOS = acres/1,000 people

As illustrated in Table 3-7, the County is currently operating above the adopted level of service standard for parks and recreation and will continue to operate above the adopted level of service standard as the population grows through 2040. It is important to note that approximately 1,350 acres of the total park acreage is located within the Preserve of Sun 'N Lake which is a regional park offering passive recreational opportunities.

Unless additional acreage for parks and recreation activities are created over time, as the population increases, the difference between the operating level of service and the adopted level of service will diminish. Requirements for developers of residential projects to dedicate land and/or pay a fee in lieu of park dedication based on the estimated population of the development ensure that parks and recreation facilities are provided for all the residents of the County and that the County continues to operate at or above the adopted level of service for parks and recreation.

Park Distribution

What is more critical in developing a parks and open space system is ensuring a good distribution of and location for parks and open spaces, connecting them to one another and to key destinations, achieving the right mix of activities within and around parks, and ensuring they are well maintained and programmed. Certain areas of the County may have greater demand for community and district parks as the County continues to grow.

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Roles in Providing Recreation

Recreation is provided to the residents of Highlands County through a variety of sources. Highlands County and the three municipalities provide different levels of recreation opportunities for residents of the county. Federal and State maintained lands also serve as recreation resources. Private recreation providers are a vital component of the county's outdoor recreation supply. Commercial providers meet a significant portion of the overall demand for both resource-based and user-oriented outdoor recreation in Highlands County. Non-profit organizations include private and quasi-public organizations such as the scouts, church groups, and conservation organizations. These groups provide land and facilities primarily for the use of their members, but in some cases for the public at large.

Clubs and other organizations not certified as non-profit by the Florida Department of State (DOS), such as hunt clubs, country clubs, and others, manage lands and facilities that are primarily available only to organization members and their guests. In doing so, they can relieve some of the pressure that is often placed on overcrowded public facilities.

Federal

The federal government has responsibility for developing recreational facilities and programs that provide public opportunities that are not, or cannot, be made available by state or local government. Federal roles in outdoor recreation are broad in scope and run the gamut from dredging waterways, lock and levee construction and maintenance, endangered species protection and habitat preservation, and providing crucial funds for many programs through federal grants. Federal agencies coordinate and cooperate on resource protection efforts such as protecting wilderness areas, designating wild and scenic rivers, and implementing trail connectivity projects that require inter-jurisdictional management. The core mission of most of the federal agencies, with the exception of the National Park Service, is not recreation per se. However, by the nature of their settings - the national forests, wildlife refuges, military installations, dams and locks, waterways and estuaries of the state - these vast tracts of federal land are key locations for outdoor recreation and play a vital role in the state's outdoor recreation supply and thereby the County's outdoor recreation supply.

State

The State of Florida's responsibilities for providing public recreation are fulfilled through a variety of facilities and programs, each unique to the mission of the separate entities of the state government. These entities include: The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Water Management Districts, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Florida Department of State, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, the Florida Department of Transportation, the State University Systems of Florida, and Special Districts.

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Counties

Counties are primarily concerned with the local outdoor recreation needs generated by extra-municipal populations and as a rule are the ideal level of government to provide regional or large community parks. Unlike cities, the larger acreage of counties provides a wider range of resources and a greater variety of outdoor recreation venues. As a result, the typical county outdoor recreation program in Florida may offer a combination of resource-based and user-oriented activities. Beaches, swimming areas, boating access sites, picnic sites, scenic areas and, occasionally, campgrounds are among the more popular types of resource-based areas and facilities provided.

Municipalities

Due to higher population densities and the lack of large open space areas that support resource-based recreation opportunities, municipal recreation systems tend to concentrate on providing more intensive user-oriented facilities that require relatively little space. Typical municipal outdoor recreation facilities include playgrounds, swimming pools, ball fields, tennis courts, and golf courses. Although little in the way of resource-based outdoor recreation facilities is provided by the typical municipal outdoor recreation program, municipal programs play a primary role in the provision of user-oriented recreation opportunities in Florida. The importance of the role of municipal programs will grow as increased public emphasis is placed recreation opportunities within walking distance of neighborhoods. Since municipal recreation agencies are the recreation system closest to the people, they are usually the first to feel the pressures to establish programs for meeting the added demands of new residents.

Non-Government

In addition to the more conventional forms of outdoor recreation provided by all levels of government, a wide array of recreational opportunities is afforded by the private sector. Private programs range from for-profit recreational enterprises such as campgrounds, golf courses, marinas and attractions of all kinds to non-profit conservation organizations.

Private recreation, because of its size, complexity, and the fact that it under-goes rapid and frequent change, is extremely difficult to inventory in a comprehensive manner. In addition to its direct delivery of outdoor recreation opportunities, the private sector can respond quickly to opportunities for acquiring property for subsequent donation or resale. This capability makes the private sector a valuable partner with public agencies in the provision of resource-based outdoor recreation. During the past decade, private companies and non-profit organizations have transferred thousands of acres to state government for recreation and conservation purposes. Those transfers represent a substantial contribution to the overall supply of outdoor recreational opportunities in Florida.

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Commercial Providers

Commercial recreation providers are a vital component. Commercial providers meet a significant portion of the overall demand for both resource-based and user-oriented recreation. Because of their capabilities and further potential for fulfilling demand, the private commercial sector bears a share of the responsibility for meeting demand for both resource-based and user-oriented recreation.

Private Organizations

This category includes private and quasi-public organizations such as the YMCA, scouting organizations, 4-H, faith-based groups, sports clubs, and a myriad of conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society, and Archbold Biological Station. In many cases, these organizations not only acquire and manage conservation land, but they also conduct preservation, restoration, and research programs and public educational activities. These groups provide land and facilities primarily for the use of members, but in some cases for the public at large. For the groups without land holdings, they provide organized activities.

Clubs

This category includes hunt clubs, country clubs, tennis clubs, and others. These groups manage land or facilities that are primarily available only to organization members or their guests. In addition, private industry lands are included (timber or mining companies and other industries with extensive land holdings whose lands or portions thereof are open to the public). The majority of these lands are used for resource-based recreation, although some forms of user-oriented facilities are also available.

Section IV. Trails Network Assessment and Plan Update

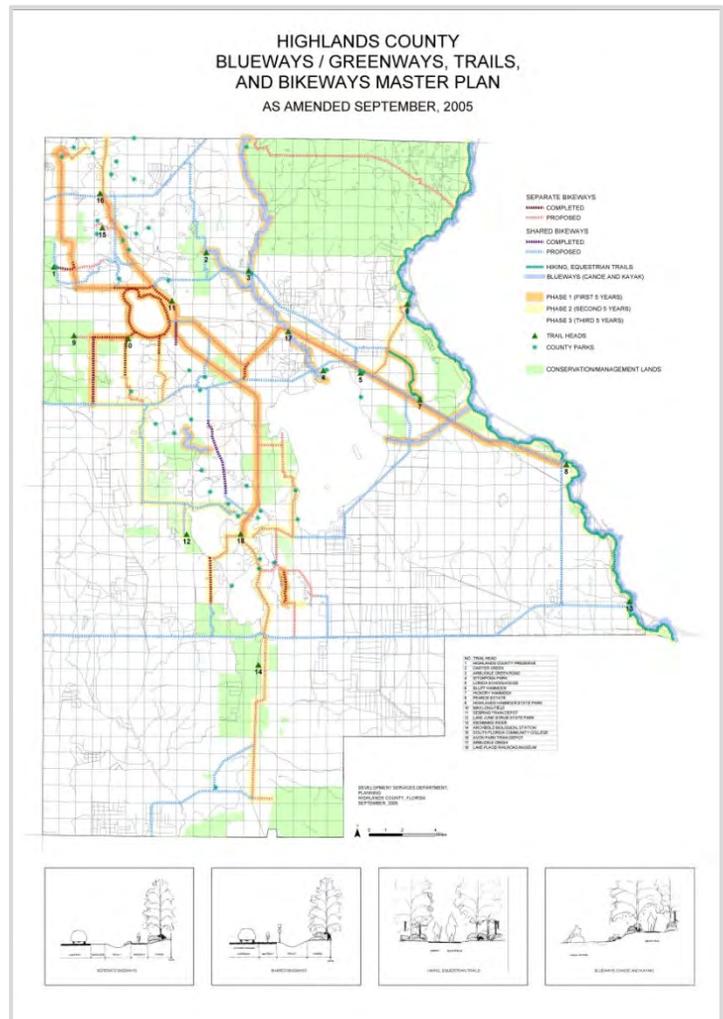
Blueways, Greenways, Trails and Bikeways Master Plan

Highlands County adopted the Blueways, Greenways, Trails and Bikeways Master Plan (Plan) on July 5, 2000. The Plan was prepared by The National Park Service: Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program with assistance from: Archbold Biological Station – Fred Lohrer; Audubon Society of Highlands County; Florida Department of Transportation; Highlands County Parks and Recreation Department; Ridge Trails Association; Sebring Historical Society, Inc.; and Trails Initiative Committee (T.I.C.). As part of the Plan, a Blueways, Trails and Bikeways Map was adopted. The Map was updated in September 2005 and is provided below.

The Plan was developed with significant consideration to designing future trails to establish inter-connections between neighborhoods, business districts, schools, cultural centers, and places of historical significance. The Plan promoted linkages to each of the three municipalities in the County as well as to four middle schools, two elementary schools, and South Florida State College. The existing and proposed trail system passes within 300 yards of four other schools. Many city, county and state parks are located adjacent to planned trails.

An update to the Blueways, Greenways, Trails, and Bikeways Master Plan is included as part of Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Master Plan).

As part of this Master Plan, trail data was updated to reflect trails that have been constructed as well as potential new trails. Updated trail information also includes the proposed trail system identified through the Lake Placid Regional Plan visioning process that occurred between 2005 and 2007. Community input received through a recreation survey and at public workshops guided the update to the Plan and Map.



Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Definitions

The definitions below are referenced throughout this section of the Master Plan.

Greenways: A linear open space established along either a natural corridor, such as a riverfront, stream, or ridge-line, or over land along a railroad right-of-way converted to recreational use, a canal, a scenic road, or other route; any natural or landscaped course for pedestrian or bicycle passage; an open space connector linking parks, natural reserves, cultural features, or historic sites with each other and populated areas; or a local strip or linear park designated as a parkway or greenbelt.

Trails: Linear corridors and any adjacent support parcels on land or water providing public access for recreation or authorized alternative modes of transportation. Trails are a common recreational component of greenways.

Bicycle Trail (Bikeways):

Designated trail or system of trails used primarily for bicycling.

Canoe and Kayak Trails (Blueways):

Distance along most commonly used route on a designated or undesignated waterway used for canoeing and/or kayaking.

Equestrian Trail:

Improved or unimproved trail designated and used primarily for horseback riding.

Fitness Trail (Exercise Par Course):

An outdoor exercise track or course especially for joggers equipped with a series of stations along the way where one is to stop and perform a specific exercise.

Hiking Trail:

Path used solely for backpacking or long distance hiking.

Interpretative/Nature Trail:

Short to moderate length trail with concentrated informational stops explaining associated views, natural flora and fauna, and/or other features.

Multipurpose, Multi-Use, or Shared Trail:

Trail used for more than one of activity (walking/hiking/bicycle/nature/equestrian/canoe & kayak). Such trails are located on exclusive right-of-way and with minimal cross flow by motor vehicles.

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Trailhead: The point at which a trail begins, where the trail is often intended for hiking, biking, horseback riding, or off-road vehicles. Trailheads may contain restrooms, maps, sign posts and distribution centers for informational brochures about the trail and its features, and parking areas for vehicles and/or trailers.

Benefits of Greenways and Trails

According to the Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) within the Florida Division of Recreation and Parks, Florida is a leader in greenways and trails. The state was recognized in 2008 as the first-ever Best Trails State in America for its work in facilitating an outstanding statewide system of trails. The system includes thousands of miles of paved, unpaved, and water trails to accommodate hikers, bicyclists, equestrians and paddlers.

Greenways and trails provide a multitude of benefits including but not limited to:

- Making communities better places to live by preserving and creating open spaces;
- Encouraging healthy lifestyles;
- Creating opportunities for outdoor recreation and non-motorized transportation;
- Strengthening local economies;
- Protecting the environment; and
- Preserving historical and cultural areas.

These benefits have been noted by the National Association of Home Builders in 2008 as trails are the number one community amenity sought by prospective homeowners. In 2011, the University of Massachusetts cited that every \$1 million spent on construction of multi-use trails yields 9.6 jobs. In 2012, VISIT FLORIDA documented that 75 percent of all Florida visitors participate in nature-based activities when visiting the state.

Community Input

Two public workshops were held as part of the development of the Master Plan. At the first workshop, held in July 2014, attendees were asked about the importance of trail connections and community linkages. There were breakout groups in which attendees provided input. In November 2014, a public workshop was held and attendees expressed their priorities for goals regarding trail development which included linkages from neighborhoods to parks and to schools as well as connections to the three municipalities in the County and to the State trails system. (See Section V.)

During the November 6, 2014, Public Workshop, the following questions were asked and meeting attendees voted on their priorities. The questions asked and the percentages for each response are provided below.

Adopted: July 21, 2015



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Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Question 1: Goals: County Parks and Facilities

(Please vote for the item below which expresses your highest priority.)

- New and expanded parks and facilities to attract state or regional events. (21.43 %)
- Improve existing parks and facilities to meet growth in County residents. (64.29 %) (Majority)
- Maintain existing parks and facilities. (14.29 %)
- None of the above. (0.00 %)

Question 2: County Connections

(Please vote for the item below which expresses your highest priority.)

- Connect trails to parks and facilities and to regional & statewide system. (50.00%)(Majority)
- Link existing trails, closing gaps. (28.57 %)
- Maintain existing trails without further extensions & develop volunteer maintenance efforts. (14.29 %)
- None of the above. (7.14 %)

Question 3: County Connections

(Please vote for the item below which expresses your highest priority.)

- Connect neighborhoods to trails and parks. (35.71 %) (Majority)
- Connect Avon Park, Sebring and Lake Placid through a unified trails system. (28.57 %)
- Connect trails to statewide trail system. (21.43 %)
- None of the above. (14.29 %)

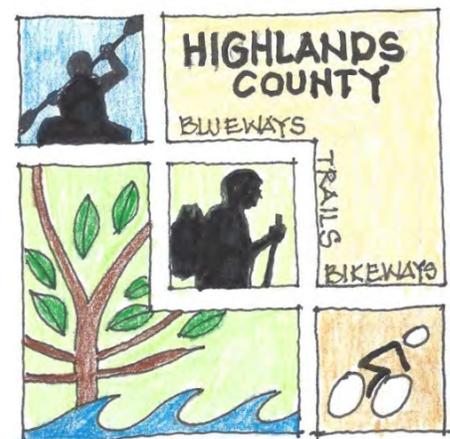
Workshop attendees were also asked to vote on the logo that they liked best to identify the County's trails system. The three logos options that were displayed for voting are provided below.



Logo 1
14.29%



Logo 2
57.14%



Logo 3
28.57%

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Logo 2 was included in the County’s Blueways, Greenways, Trails and Bikeways Master Plan adopted in July 2000. The majority of workshop attendees voted for Logo 2 above. The logo may be used throughout the county to identify the trail system.

Trails Assessment

Highlands County has many recreation opportunities through greenways and trails. These systems are provided not only by the County but also by others including the Southwest Florida Water Management District, the South Florida Water Management District, the State of Florida, and Florida Fish and Wildlife.

Existing and Planned Trails

Several organizations and local governments have been involved in developing trails in Highlands County. Many trail projects are administered by various agencies. For County trails, planning and construction is coordinated by the County Engineering Department and the maintenance and operation of trails is addressed by County Leisure Services Department. Table 4-1 includes a list of trails maintained by Highlands County.

Table 4-1: Highlands County Maintained Trails System		
Trail	Miles	Surface
Hammock Multi-Use Trail (US 27 to Highlands Hammock State Park)	3.50	Paved
Trails at Sun N’ Lake Preserve (Balboa Avenue and Sun N’ Lakes Boulevard)	6.39	Unpaved
<i>Cardiac Loop</i>	<i>0.62</i>	
<i>Curvy Run</i>	<i>0.67</i>	
<i>Hammock Loop</i>	<i>0.47</i>	
<i>Intense</i>	<i>0.14</i>	
<i>Lots O Logs</i>	<i>0.24</i>	
<i>North Trail</i>	<i>1.77</i>	
<i>Picnic Loop</i>	<i>1.26</i>	
<i>Sum N Else</i>	<i>1.22</i>	
South Florida State College Multi-Use Trail	1.39	Paved
Memorial Avenue Multi-Use Trail	3.83	Paved
Total	<u>15.11</u>	



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As indicated on the Trails Map provided in **Appendix A**, several trails are planned throughout the county. The proposed trails provide connections to existing trails and linkages to the three municipalities as well as to many of the schools in the County and state parks. The proposed trail system runs in proximity to or adjacent to the following areas:

- Lake Tulane (*estimated to be 50,000 years old, considered one of the oldest lakes in Western Hemisphere*)
- Lake Annie (*estimated to be 44,000 years old*)
- Archbold Biological Research Station
- Highlands Hammock State Park
- Lake June Scrub State Park
- Jacks Creek
- Lake Placid Scrub Preserve
- Holmes Avenue Scrub Preserve
- Hickory Hammock
- Venus Flatwoods Preserve
- Avon Park Air Force Range
- Lake Wales Ridge Wildlife and Environmental Area – Royce Unit
- Carter Creek National Refuge



Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Planning Efforts

Highlands County

The Highlands County 2030 Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners has several greenways and trails policies in the Goals, Objectives and Policies throughout the Recreation and Open Space Element and the Transportation Element. The County has developed the trails listed in Table 4-1.

Water Management Districts

To meet water management needs, both the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) own lands within Highlands County. Water supply, flood protection, protection of natural systems, and water quality are benefits of these lands. In addition, a portion of these lands are available for outdoor recreation including hiking and fishing.

Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD)

Jack Creek is a 1,286-acre recreation area owned by the SWFWMD and located on the west side of US 27, south of Sebring on the south side of Josephine Creek. The recreation area is recognized as a Great Florida Birding Trail and includes opportunities for hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, and fishing as well as camping.

South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)

The SFWMD owns the Hickory Hammock Wildlife Management Area and the Boney Marsh and Bluff Hammock Management Units in eastern Highlands County. These areas are located north of US 98 and contain portions of the Florida National Scenic Trail. Hiking and equestrian trails and off-road biking are common activities at this facility.

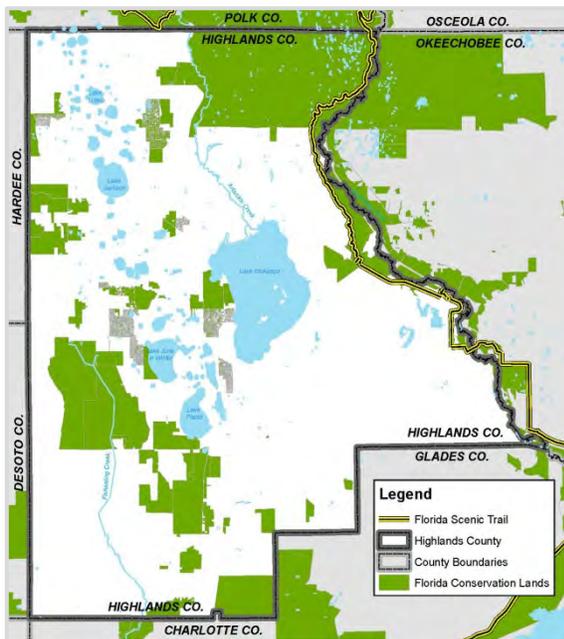
Office of Greenways and Trails within the Florida Division of Recreation and Parks

The OGT is a clearinghouse for Florida's greenways and trails system and:

- Plays a leading role in establishing the statewide system of greenways and trails;
- Provides assistance to communities, developers, and landowners to develop greenways and trails;
- Provides funding through the Greenways and Trails Land Acquisition Program under Florida Forever and the federally funded Recreation Trails Program;
- Provides information regarding recreational opportunities and trails in Florida; and
- Develops information and publications to educate the public about the benefits of greenways and trails.

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Through the OGT's 2013-2017 Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan, the State's Greenways and Trails Map is provided as shown below.



The Florida Scenic Trail is identified as a state Priority Trail Connection as it parallels the Kissimmee River.

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Florida Cracker Trail Association

The Florida Cracker Trail Association's mission is to promote, maintain and enhance the natural beauty of the Florida Cracker Trail while providing a trail for horseback riding, and another trail for bicyclists. The Association's goal is to provide a trail connecting the east coast of Florida to the west coast of Florida. The Florida Cracker Trail is proposed to run along the SR 66 and US 98 corridors in Highlands County.

Trail Design

Trail design guidelines vary based on the type of trail proposed (shared or separate bikeway, nature trail, equestrian trail, multi-use trail). In order to provide opportunities to the greatest number of people, trails should provide a variety of distances, loops, ecosystems, scenery, and linkages. Construction should cause minimal impact to the area.

Trails with a high volume of use should accommodate all users where appropriate and conform to the intent and spirit of ADA guidelines and the Florida Americans with Disabilities Accessibility Implementation Action (Florida Statutes). Efforts should be made to consider linkages to historical and archeological sites as part of the trail system.

Construction Guidelines

The purpose of this section is to outline general construction standards for recreational trail building. Standards are basic guidelines that illustrate typical trail dimensions and construction practices. They are intended to be used as suggested practices for constructing a trail system and may not apply to every situation. The site conditions for a proposed trail route will be variable along every segment of the Highlands County Trail System so these standards will provide ideas on how best to proceed with planning and construction.

Typical sections for the common existing and planned trails in the County are provided below.

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Bike Lane Sharing Roadway

Bicycle lanes serve the needs of all types of cyclists in urban and suburban areas, providing them with their own travel lane on the street surface. The minimum width of a bike lane should be 5 feet against a curb or adjacent to a parking lane. On streets where the bike lane is adjacent to the curb and the curb includes a 1-foot to 2-foot gutter pan, bike lanes should be a minimum of 4 feet wide (width does not include the gutter pan, since bicyclists are typically unable to use this space). Since bicyclists usually tend to ride a distance of 2.5 feet to 3.5 feet from the curb face, it is very important that the pavement surface in this zone be smooth and free of structures. Drain inlets and manholes that extend into this area cause bicyclists to swerve, having the effect of reducing the usable width of the lane. Where these structures exist and the surface cannot be made smooth, bike lane width should be adjusted accordingly. Regular maintenance is critical for bike lanes.

Bike lanes should be constructed to normal full-depth pavement standards since motor vehicles will occasionally cross them, or may use them as a breakdown area. Where the minimum widths listed above cannot be met, it may be possible to provide an unmarked lane. Studies have shown that the bicyclist's perceived level of comfort is higher when a striped area is provided; therefore, this method can raise the bicycle level of service for the street. An unmarked lane is a striped area of 2 feet wide or more that contains no markings or signing that would denote it as a bike lane. "Share the Road" signs may be used to caution motorists to be alert for bicyclists (Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1: Typical Section for a Bike Lane Sharing Roadway

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Multi-Use Trail

As illustrated in Figure 4.2, a 5-foot buffer is recommended between an off-road multi-use trail and the existing roadway. The multi-use trail should be paved and a minimum of 8 to 10 feet in width, which allows for two-way traffic to safely pass along the trail.

Improved Surface Trail - consists of high-use trails located mainly within urban and suburban areas. A typical tread width ranges from 10' to 16', depending on anticipated user volume. Tread surface would be granite gravel, concrete, asphalt (discouraged for trails near waterways due to negative water quality impacts), or other added material including porous pavement systems. These trails could have bridges, and typically have amenities such as information kiosks, benches, drinking fountains, rest rooms, exercise facilities, etc at trail heads. Improved surface trails where possible will be built to conform to AASHTO and/or ADA standards.

Natural Surface Trail - are located mainly in greenways or natural resource areas. A typical trail width ranges from 2' to 10' depending on specific uses. Trail tread would be existing natural soil that has been cleared, grubbed of rocks and roots, leveled and compacted. These trails would have limited amenities such as way finding.

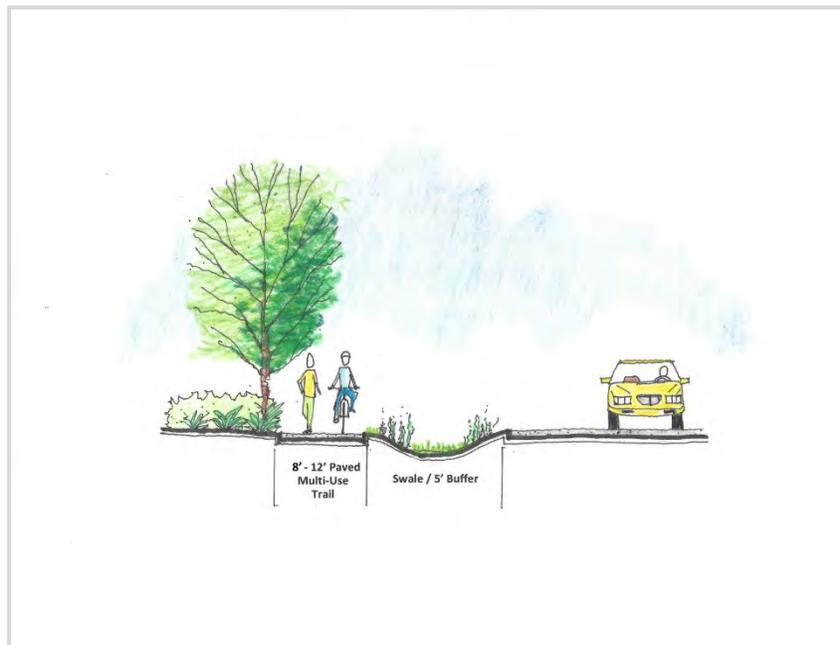


Figure 4.2: Multi-Use Trail Typical Section

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Equestrian Trail

Dual tread trails are suggested on multi-use trail systems where different users travel at different speeds, such as equestrians and walkers. If hard surfacing is being used on the multi-use trail, a softer, 5-foot wide tread for horses should be considered. Mulch, dirt, stabilized dirt or limestone dust can be used. Hard surfaces, such as concrete and asphalt are undesirable for equestrians because they can injure horses' hooves. Granular stone may also present problems because it can get stuck in horse hooves.

Vertical clearance for equestrians should be at least 10', with a horizontal clearance of at least 5 feet. Low-hanging tree limbs should be cut flush with the trunk. Leaves, branches, and other protrusions that could injure the horse, rider, or gear should be removed. Within the tread, stumps, large rocks, and other debris should be cleared. Sight distances for equestrians, who usually travel between 4 and 6 miles per hour, should be at least 100 feet.

Horses can be easily scared by sudden movements therefore it is recommended that a separate trail be used solely for equestrian use. A 4-foot mulch surface (or limestone dust surface) may be used in order to reduce erosion from heavy use. Trees and other landscape materials should be well maintained and kept clear to avoid collisions of riders with low overhangs from trees (Figure 4.3).

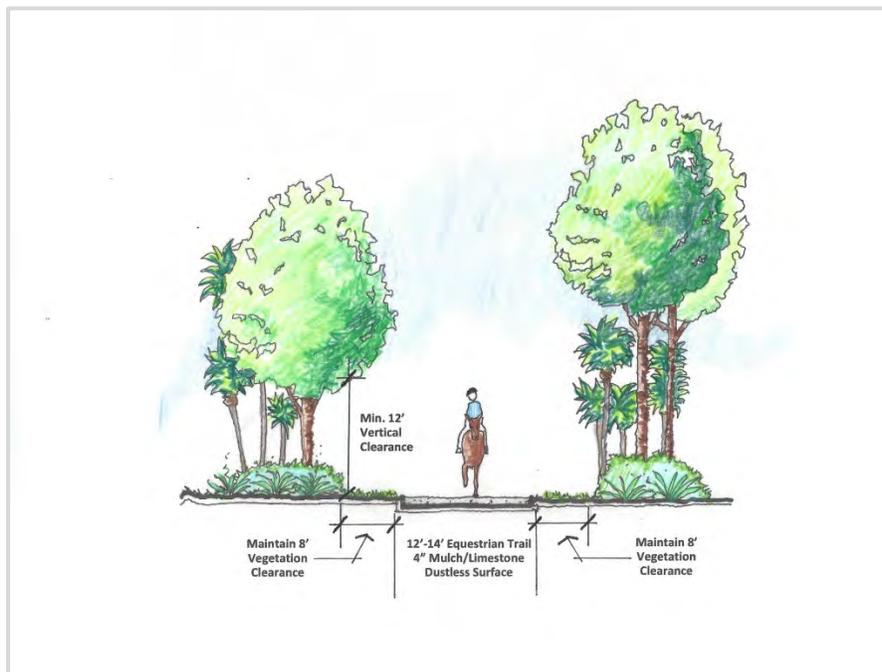


Figure 4.3: Equestrian Trail Typical Section

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Canoe and Kayak trail (Blueway)

Blueways offer opportunities for canoeing and kayaking on some of central Florida's most scenic waterways. Unlike bikeways, water trails already exist. What is needed is help for trail users to get to the water and to find their way around. Signs, route markers, maps, and promotion of water routes are essentials. Trail supporters can create more opportunities by providing facilities like parking, boat ramps or docks, and places to camp and picnic. It is important to provide safe access points to the blueways (Figure 4.4).

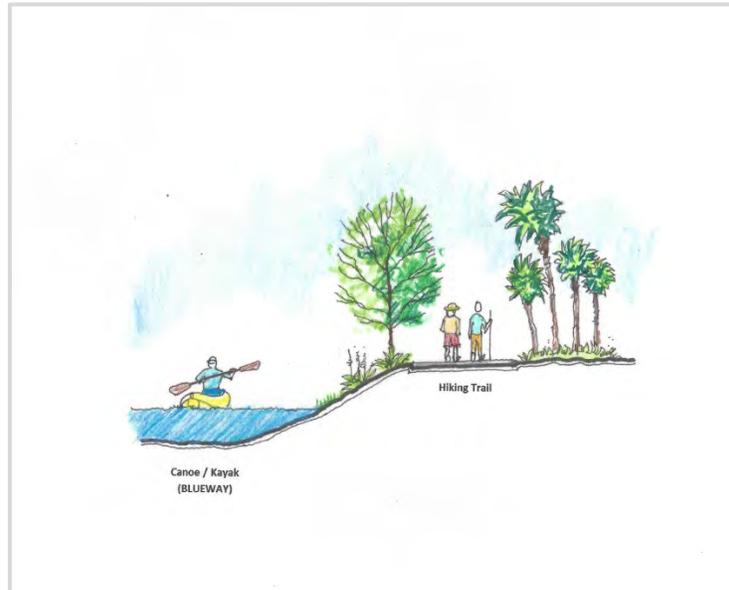


Figure 4.4: Blueways Typical Section

Trail Markings

Trail markings should be standardized, easy to understand, identifiable, weather resistant and durable. Such markers should be placed strategically along trails to indicate hazardous points and directional changes. Signs, maps, and brochures should be provided at trailheads, and information should be appropriately placed along the trail to indicate permitted type of trail use, trail difficulty rating, information for trail users on how far they have traveled, and their approximate location on the trail.

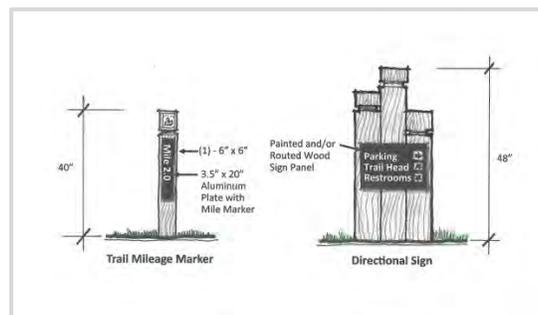


Figure 4.5: Examples of Trail Markings

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Trailheads

There are 18 trailheads in Highlands County. The majority of the trailheads do not have public restrooms. There are three types of trailheads including:

Primary Trailhead: Consists of designated parking and staging area, public restrooms, trash receptacles, informational and interpretive signs, maps or brochures, potable water, picnic facilities, covered shelters, and other appropriate amenities.

Secondary Trailhead: Consists of designated parking and staging area, possible restrooms, trash receptacles, information signs, maps or brochures, potable water, and covered shelter.

Remote/Primitive Trailhead: Includes a parking and staging area, information signs, maps or brochures.



Sun N' Lake Preserve Remote/Primitive Trailhead

Trail Priorities, Goals, and Recommendations

Trail Priorities

Trail priorities are based on factors including:

- Trail system connectivity;
- Transportation connectivity;
- Recreational connectivity;
- Scenic/Experience value;
- Environmental impacts;
- Stakeholder input; and
- Availability of right-of-way.

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A trail's value is directly linked to its location in providing connectivity to other recreation opportunities as well as destinations. The trail's scenic value is also important. Key priorities identified through public involvement included linking trails from neighborhoods to parks to schools.

Right-of-way availability is also an important factor and maybe the most challenging aspect providing continuous trails. Opportunities may be available through easements, dedications, public or private right-of-way reservation, and joint use agreements. Strategies to obtaining right-of-way include:

- Abandoned Railroad (Rails-to-Trails)
- Active Railroad (Rails-with-Trails)
- Rail Banking
- Roadway Co-location
- Inclusion in New Development
- Public Land
- Private Property (Easements).

Trails - Goals and Objectives, Recommendations

The Highlands County 2030 Comprehensive Plan has several Goals, Objectives, and Policies throughout the Recreation and Open Space Element and the Transportation Element that relate to trails.

The recommendations below capture those as well as new priority goals which were outcomes from the Community Workshops held to develop the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and to Update the Blueways, Greenways, Trails and Bikeways Master Plan.

Recommendations

1. The Trails Map and Plan should be adopted by the Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization and the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners as the basis for the systematic implementation of an integrated regional trail network.
2. The Trails Map should be distributed to all municipalities, the County, state including the Florida Department of Transportation and federal agencies with jurisdiction over the property along a proposed trail alignment.
3. The Trails Map and Plan should be reviewed, evaluated, and updated as needed in conjunction with the Office of Greenways and Trails within the Florida Division of Recreation and Parks, but at least every five years. The purpose of the review is to take advantage of opportunities that may arise, to re-establish or re-allocate priorities, and to update the status of current projects.

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4. All new development/redevelopment and road construction projects should implement those trails from the Highlands County Trails Network that are within the vicinity of the project where feasible.
5. As part of assessing and developing new trail routes and making modifications to existing trail routes, follow the prioritization guidelines.
6. Prior to sale of any County property, the property should be evaluated to determine potential use for a trail link or facility.
7. The interdepartmental review of developments and other infrastructure projects should be strengthened to specifically require a review of the project for provision of a linkage to the trails system.
8. The trail network will be phased over time in association with new development and county and municipal infrastructure improvement projects. Projects may also be implemented based on changing construction opportunities or specific trail related demand.
9. Evaluate and determine gaps within the Trails Network Map to identify the best target resources and funding.
10. Detailed route design for stand-alone trails will utilize public involvement with local neighborhoods and agencies where public involvement is deemed necessary by County staff.
11. Annual capital budgets should include opportunities for the implementation of the trails network.
12. The County should coordinate with municipalities and state providers to connect trails to parks and facilities and to regional and statewide system.
13. The County should work to link existing trails and reduce trail gaps.
14. The County should work to connect neighborhoods to trails and parks.
15. The County should work to connect Avon Park, Sebring and Lake Placid through a unified trails system.
16. The Highlands County Board of County Commissioners should specifically charge the Engineering Department with implementation of the Blueways, Greenways, Trails and Bikeways Master Plan. The Highlands County Board of County Commissioners should provide the resources to implement the Trails Plan as feasible.

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Section V: Community Input

An important component to the drafting of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Trails Master Plan Update is the input and comments received from the public. Public involvement was achieved through workshops and meetings, a dedicated project website, and a recreation survey. Information about the project was disseminated through public notices in the newspaper, the distribution of flyers and post cards, notices on websites, and word of mouth – including social media such as Facebook.



Workshops and Meetings

The creation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan required input from county and city staff, the Highlands County Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee (RPAC), elected officials, stakeholders, and the public. Several meetings were held throughout the process, including:

Community Workshops

To engage the public in the process and to receive input and comments, two public Community Workshops occurred. Both Community Workshops were advertised in the newspaper, on the project website and the County's website. Postcards and flyers were distributed to residents at parks and recreation locations and through the local governments.



July 31, 2014

The Community workshop held on July 31, 2014, introduced the participants to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. After a presentation outlining the components of a parks and recreation plan, the attendees were asked to separate into breakout groups. The facilitators rotated to each group to discuss and receive input on the following topics:

- Active and Passive Recreation
- Programs – Types and Need
- Facilities – Current and Future
- Connections – Links between neighborhoods and facilities and trails.

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After reporting the results of the breakout groups to the overall groups, the participants were given \$100 of play money (five \$20 dollar bills). They were asked to show how they would spend the money between the four categories discussed in the breakout groups. An option for not spending the money was also provided. Approximately 72 percent of the votes received were for spending money on one of the four categories (Figure 5.1). The participants spent the most dollars on facilities (41 percent of the vote) followed by connections (29 percent of the vote) and active and passive recreation (25 percent of the vote). Programs received very few of the participants' dollars (5 percent of the vote) (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.1: Parks & Recreation Dollar Voting Results

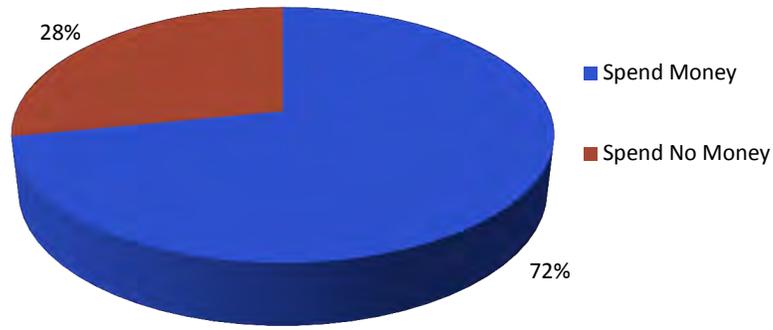
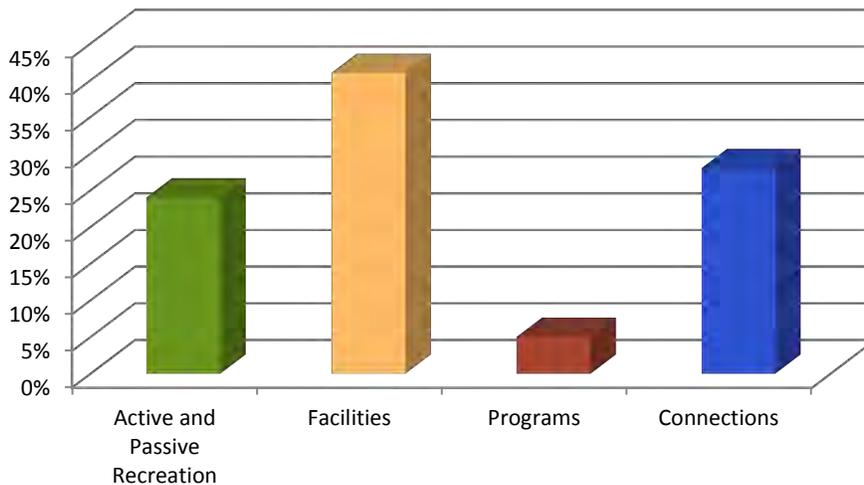


Figure 5.2: Parks & Recreation Dollar Voting Results



Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

November 6, 2014

The Community Workshop on November 6, 2014, began with attendees viewing display boards at the entrance to the facility which provided information on the survey results received to date, county demographics through 2030, a map of county parks, and a map of county trails. Staff members were available to discuss the display boards with the attendees and to record any comments. The Community Workshop included a presentation outlining the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, summarizing the input received at the July 31st Community Workshop, summarizing the survey results, and discussing connections and linkages. The attendees were asked to separate into breakout groups where they discussed existing trail connections and opportunities for trail connections. The discussions focused on the communities of Avon Park, Sebring, and Lake Placid.

After reporting the results of the breakout groups to the overall groups, the participants were given handheld instant voting devices to vote on different statements relating to the goals to be formed for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The handheld instant voting devices allow the participants to express their preference anonymously and instantaneously. The software records the results for staff's use.



Highlands County Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee (RPAC)

The Highlands County Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee (RPAC) advises the Board of County Commissioners and its staff on issues pertaining to the creation of a balanced county-wide recreation program and integrated recreation facilities inventory, guided by the respective Recreation and Open Space Elements of the Avon Park, Sebring, Lake Placid and Highlands County Comprehensive Plans. The RPAC was involved in the update of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Staff presented updates to RPAC at their meetings throughout the process.

County Commission and Planning and Zoning Commission

On December 9, 2014, staff provided a briefing on the project to the Planning and Zoning Commission. The briefing included an explanation of the project and information on the update process. A summary of the input received at the two Community Workshops was outlined. On January 20, 2015, staff provided a summary of the project and the public information received to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners.

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Project Website

A project specific website was established to provide information regarding the Parks and Recreation Master Plan process. The website also hosted the survey and served as a vehicle for the public and interested stakeholders to provide comments and input. The website is located at: <http://www.cfrpc.org/highlandsparksandrec/>



Parks and Recreation Survey

During the summer of 2014, the public was asked to complete a Parks and Recreation Survey to provide information on their demographics, the parks and recreation facilities they use, and their thoughts on the needs for additional parks and recreation facilities. The public submitted 243 surveys. While 243 surveys were submitted, not all survey respondents answered each question. The following information is a summary of the information obtained from the received surveys.



Demographic Information

The majority of the respondents are from the Lake Placid or Sebring Area. Approximately 5 percent of the survey respondents did not provide any information as to what area of the county in which they reside (Figure 5.3). While the majority of the respondents range in age from 35 years old to 64 years old, there were participants that declared themselves to be between 18 and 24 years old or under 17 years old (Figure 5.4). Almost half the respondents (47

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percent) have no children under the age of 18 living in the household. Approximately 17 percent of the respondents have one child under 18 and 13 percent of the respondents have two children under the age of 18 in the household (Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.3: Survey Response by Area

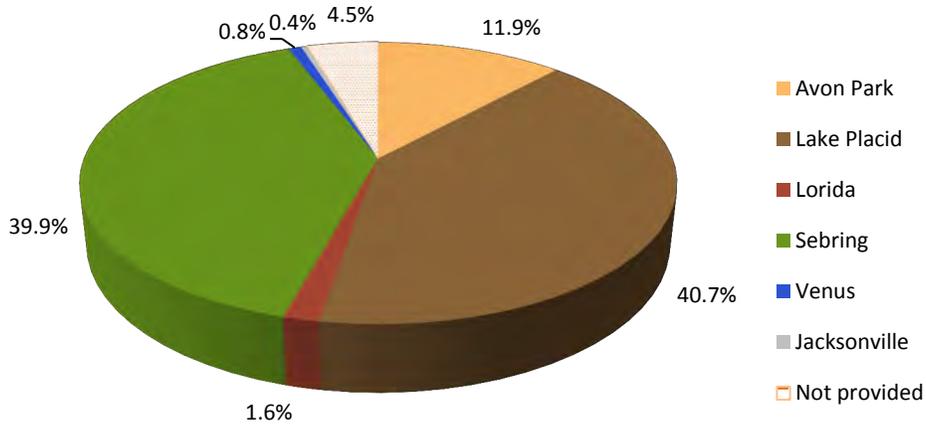
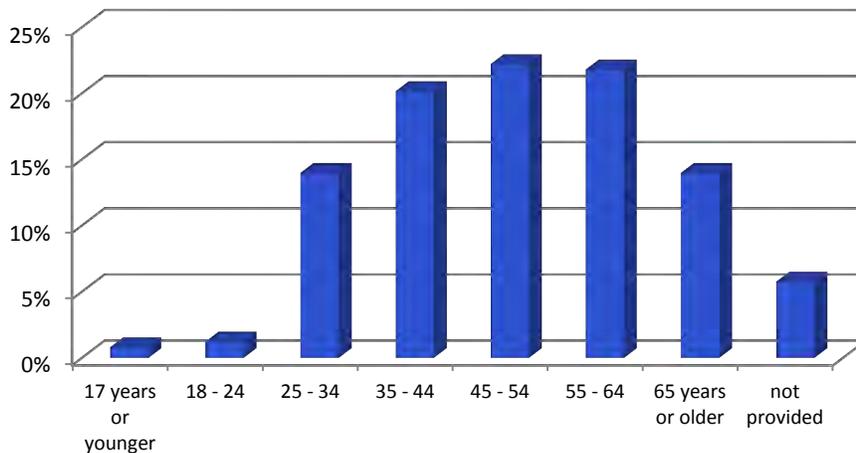
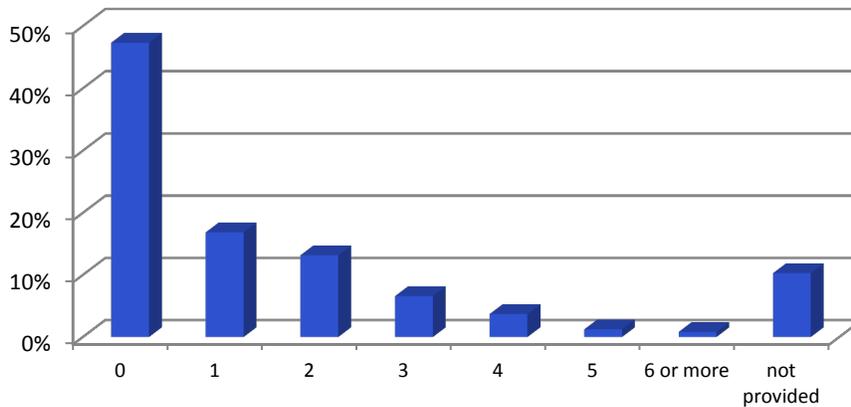


Figure 5.4: Age Range of Survey Respondents



Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Figure 5.5: Number of Children Under 18 in Household



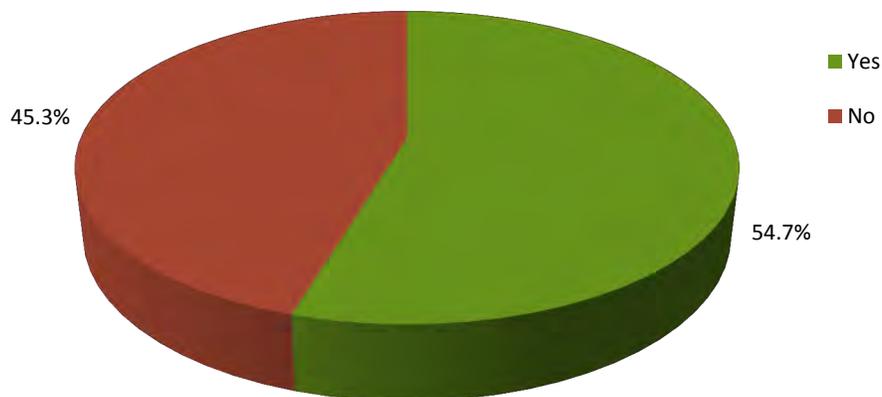
Parks and Recreation Information

Survey respondents did not respond to every question in the survey. The information and graphs that follow are based on those surveys that answered each specific question.

Participation

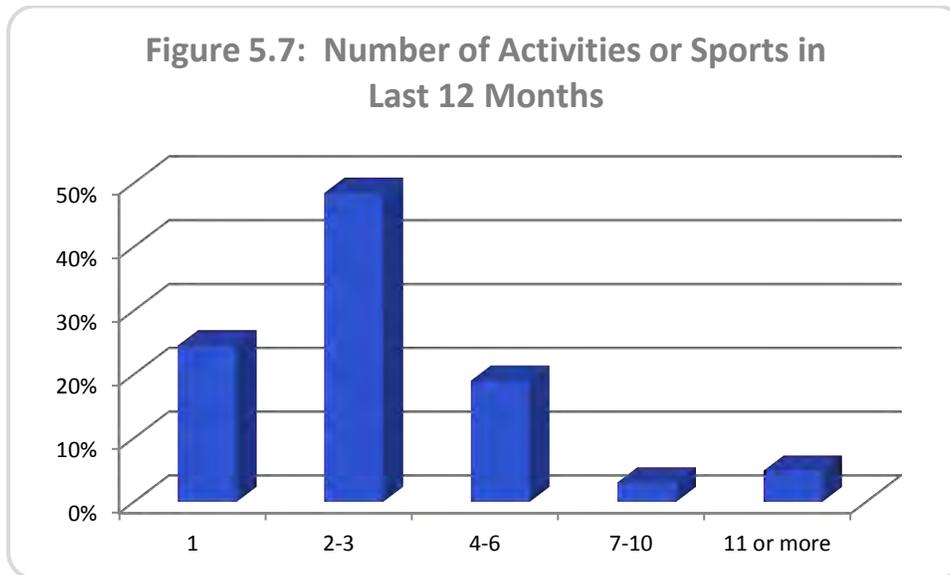
Slightly more than half of the respondents (54.7 percent) said they or members of their household participated in recreation or sports activities or programs offered at Highlands County facilities in the past 12 months (Figure 5.6).

Figure 5.6: Participation in Highlands County Parks & Recreation



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Of the responses received, 48 percent of the respondents said they participated in 2 to 3 sports or activities in the last 12 months, 25 percent participated in 1 activity, and 19 percent participated in 4 to 6 activities. Three percent of the respondents said they participated in 7 to 10 activities and 5 percent said they participated in 11 or more activities or sports in the last 12 months (Figure 5.7).



The respondents were asked to list all the sports/activities they participated in over the last 12 months. Water related sports such as boating, fishing, and swimming made up approximately 40 percent of the responses. Team sports including baseball, soccer, football, and basketball made up approximately 26 percent of the responses. Passive recreation activities such as walking, hiking, biking, and bird watching comprised approximately 24 percent of the responses (Table 5-1).

**Table 5-1:
Sports and Activities Survey Respondents Participated in Over the Last 12 Months**

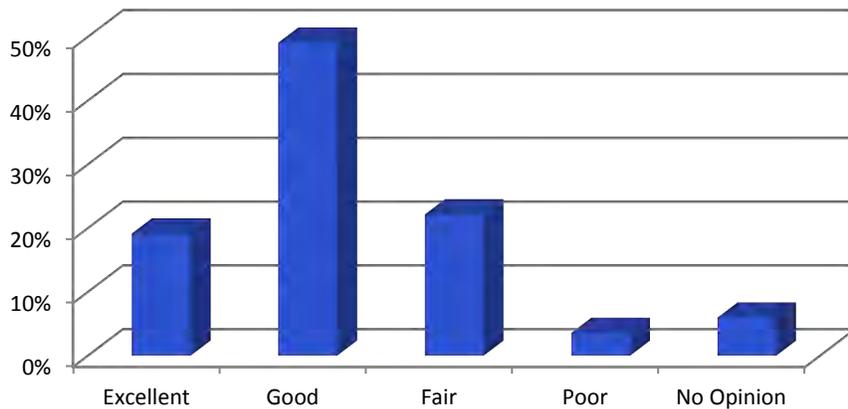
Sports/Activities	Count	Percentage
ATV and Four-wheeling	3	0.68%
Baseball, Softball, Soccer, Football, Basketball, T-Ball	116	26.30%
Boating, Kayaking, Fishing, Swimming	174	39.46%
Hiking, Walking, Trails, Biking, Bird Watching, Horseback Riding, Nature Photography, Fireflies, Camping	107	24.26%
Playground, Picnic, Concerts, Parties	23	5.22%
Tennis, Golf, Archery, Pickle ball	18	4.08%

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Quality and Condition

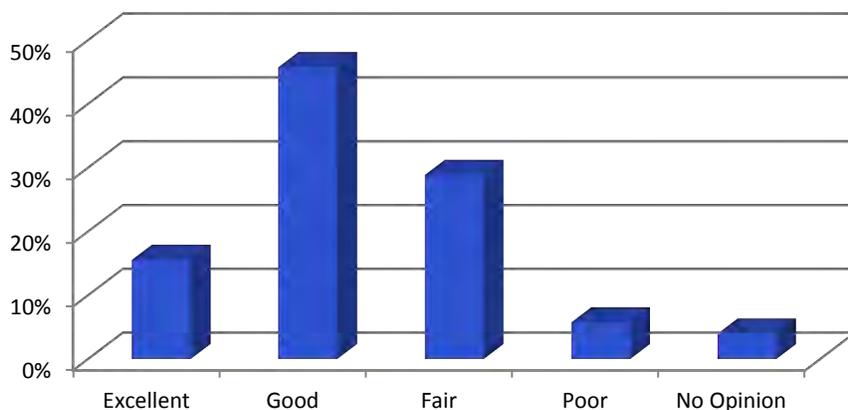
When asked to rate the quality of the activities or sports based on participation in them over the last 12 months, 49 percent of the responses received provided a rating of good, 22 percent provided a rating of fair, and 19 percent provided a rating of excellent. A rating of poor was provided by 4 percent of the respondents and 6 percent had no opinion (Figure 5.8).

Figure 5.8: Rate Quality of Activities or Sports Based on Participation



In response to the question of rating the overall condition of parks and recreation facilities visited in the last 12 months, 46 percent of the respondents rated them good, 29 percent rated them fair, and 16 percent rated them excellent. A rating of poor was provided by 6 percent of the respondents and 4 percent had no opinion (Figure 5.9).

Figure 5.9: Overall Condition of Parks & Recreation Facilities



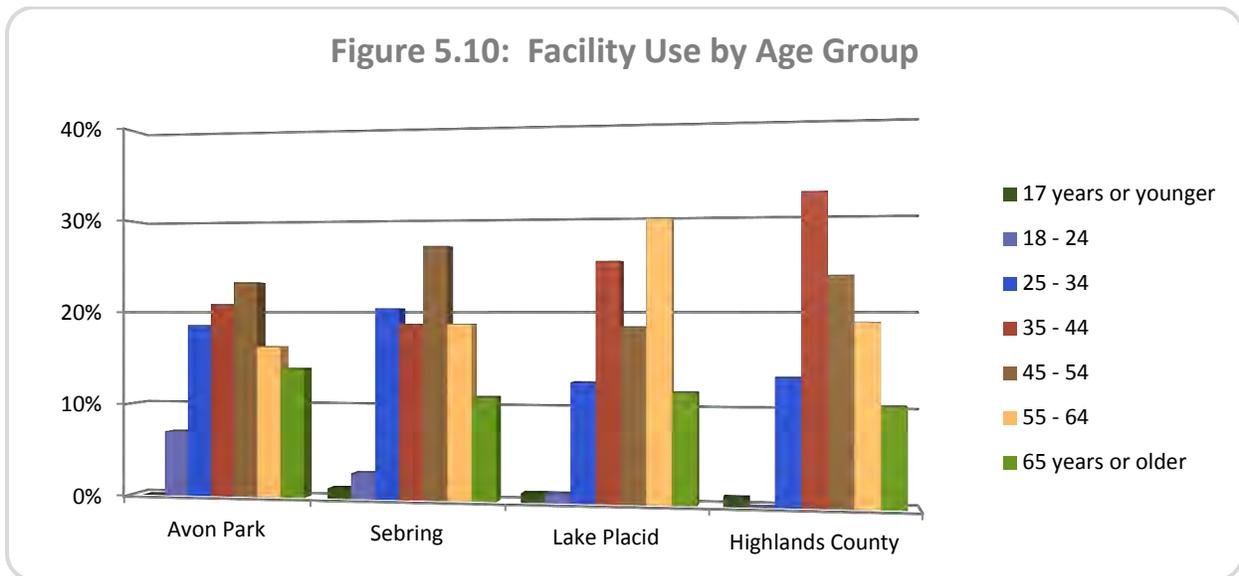
Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Facilities

Survey respondents were asked to select all facilities they or members of their households had used during the past 12 months. Some of the survey respondents chose to skip over these questions.

General Facilities

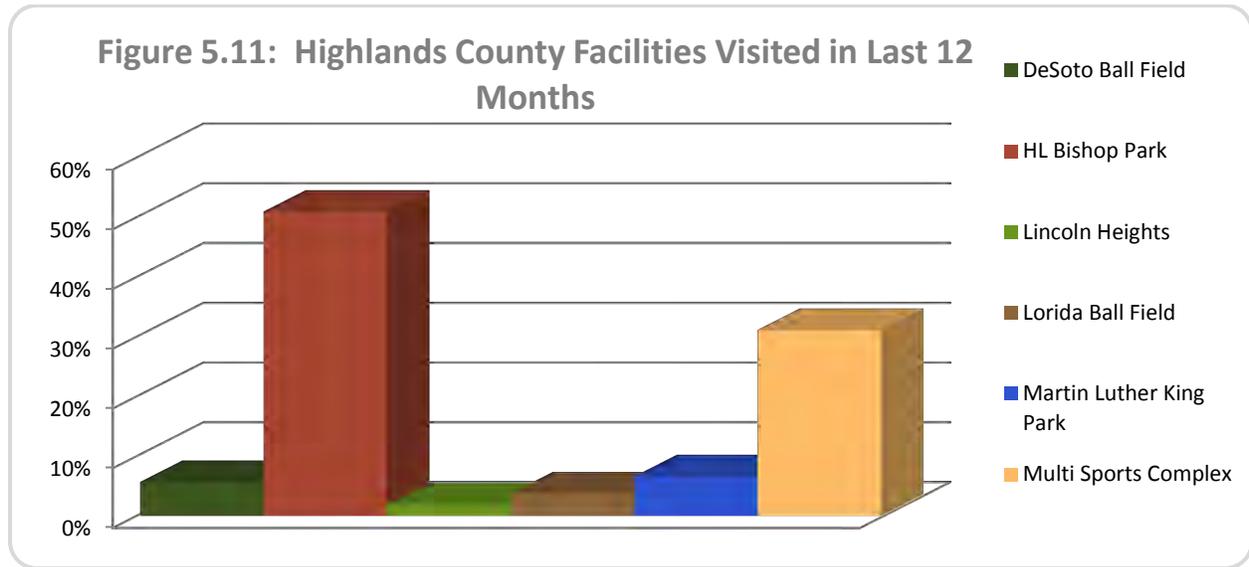
The survey separated General Facilities out by location and included Highlands County, Avon Park, Sebring, and Lake Placid. Figure 5.10 illustrates the facility usage by age group. According to survey respondents, Highlands County facilities receive the most use by the 35-44 year old age group while Lake Placid facilities receive the most use by the 55-64 year old age group. Both Avon Park and Sebring facilities receive the most use by the 45-54 year old age group.



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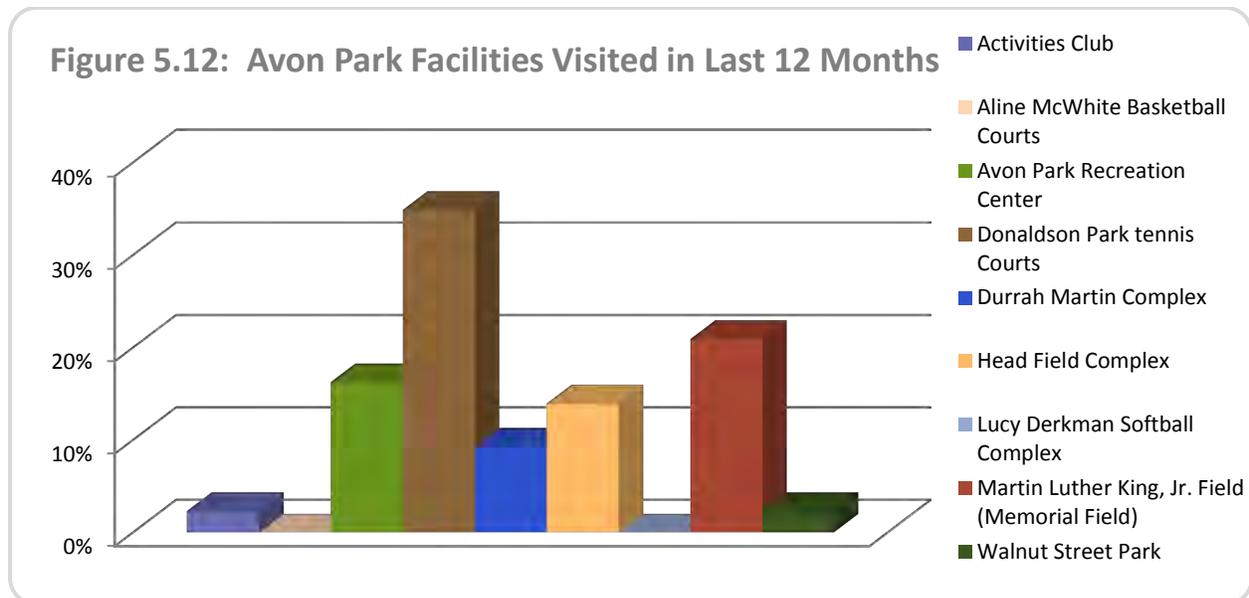
Highlands County

There are six general facilities located in Highlands County. Figure 5.11 illustrates the six facilities and the percentage of use over the past 12 months by survey respondents. Of the six facilities, the facilities identified as having the highest use include HL Bishop Park (51 percent) and Multi Sports Complex (31 percent).



Avon Park

There are nine general facilities located in Avon Park. Figure 5.12 illustrates the nine facilities and the percentage of use over the past 12 months by survey respondents. Of the nine facilities, the facilities identified as having the highest use include Donaldson Park Tennis Courts (35 percent) and Martin Luther King, Jr. Field (Memorial Field) (21 percent).

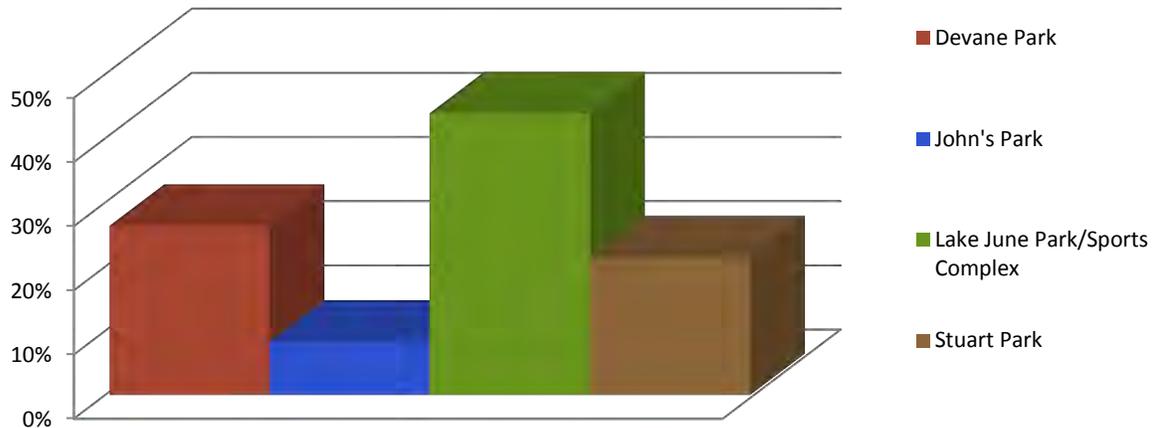


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Lake Placid

There are four general facilities located in Lake Placid. Figure 5.13 illustrates the four facilities and the percentage of use over the past 12 months by survey respondents. Of the four facilities, the facilities identified as having the highest use include Lake June Park/Sports Complex (44 percent) and Devane Park (26 percent).

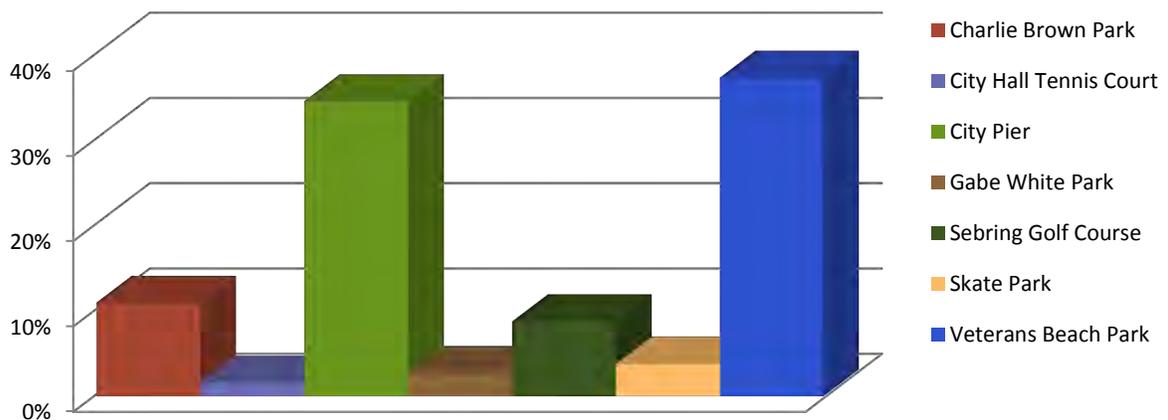
Figure 5.13: Lake Placid Facilities Visited in Last 12 Months



Sebring

There are seven general facilities located in Sebring. Figure 5.14 illustrates the seven facilities and the percentage of use over the past 12 months by survey respondents. Of the seven facilities, the facilities identified as having the highest use include Veterans Beach Park (37 percent) and City Pier (35 percent).

Figure 5.14: Sebring Facilities Visited in Last 12 Months



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Nature Trails

The survey identified three Nature Trails (Figure 5.15). Survey respondents were asked to identify all of the nature trails they visited in the last 12 months (multiple nature trails could be selected). Their use patterns are as follows: Hammock Trail – 57 percent; Lake Istokpoga Park – 28 percent; The Preserve of Sun 'N Lake – 16 percent. Figure 5.16 illustrates the use of nature trails by age group.

Figure 5.15: Nature Trails Visted in Last 12 Months

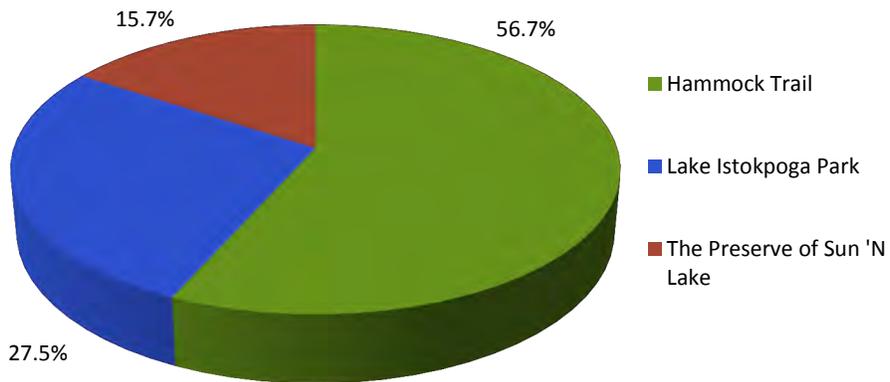
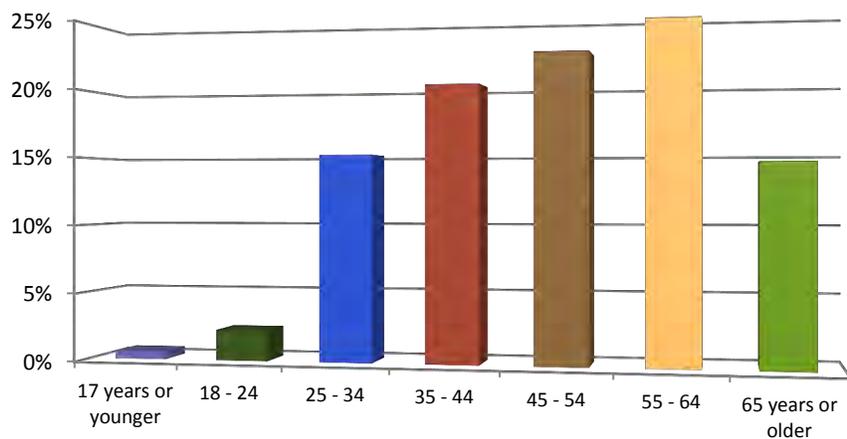


Figure 5.16: Nature Trail Use by Age Group



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Boat Ramps

There are a variety of boat ramps available for use throughout Highlands County. Survey respondents were asked to identify all of the boat ramps they visited in the last 12 months (multiple boat ramps could be selected). The boat ramps were divided by location: Avon Park, Lake Placid, Lorida, and Sebring. On a countywide basis, the boat ramps with the highest use are Lake June - H.L. Bishop Park, Istokpoga Park, Lake Placid (3349 Placid View Dr.), and Lake Istokpoga Windy Point. Figure 5.17 illustrates the boat ramp use by age group in the different areas. Table 5-2 includes the boat ramps with the highest use by area and the Figures 5.18 through 5.21 illustrate usage for each boat ramp by area according to the survey respondents.

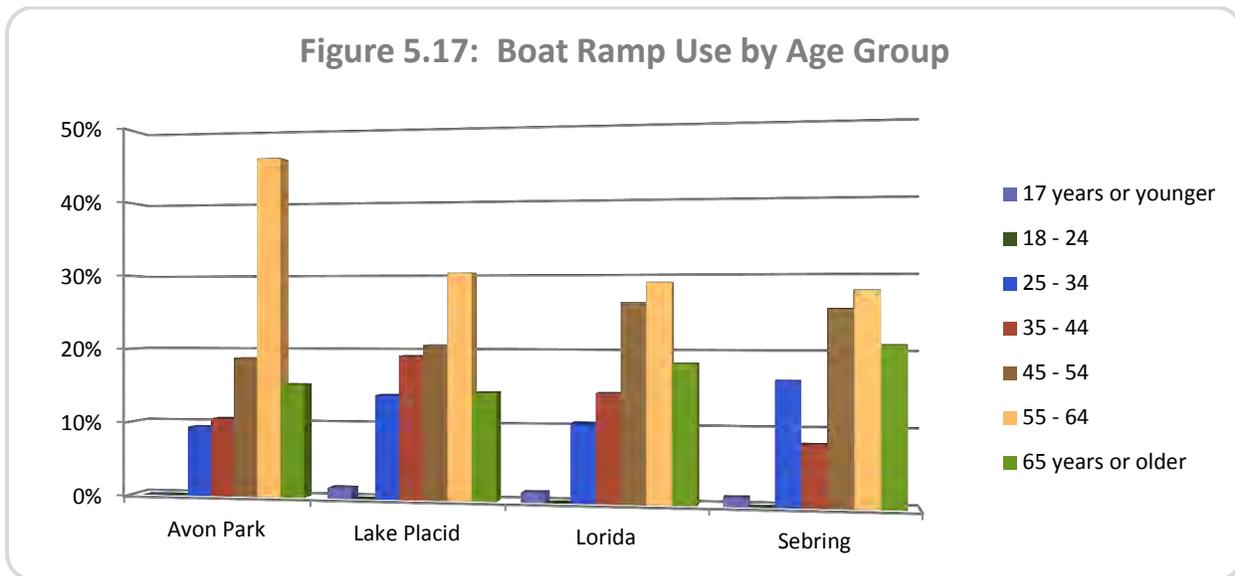


Table 5-2: Boat Ramp Facilities with Highest Use by Area in the Last 12 Months		
Facilities		Percentage
Avon Park		
	Lake Lotela	15.29%
	Arbuckle Creek (Burnt Out Bridge)	12.94%
	Lake Denton	11.76%
Lake Placid		
	Lake June - H.L. Bishop Park	26.44%
	Lake Placid (3349 Placid View Dr)	15.38%
	Lake Istokpoga Windy Point	13.94%
Lorida		
	Istokpoga Park	46.05%
	Lake Istokpoga (off Cow House Rd)	30.26%
	Arbuckle Creek (6401 E. Arbuckle Creek Rd.)	23.68%
Sebring		
	Lake Josephine (Sentinal Point)	21.57%
	Lake Sebring	19.61%
	Red Beach Lake	19.61%

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Figure 5.18: Avon Park Boat Ramps Visited in Last 12 Months

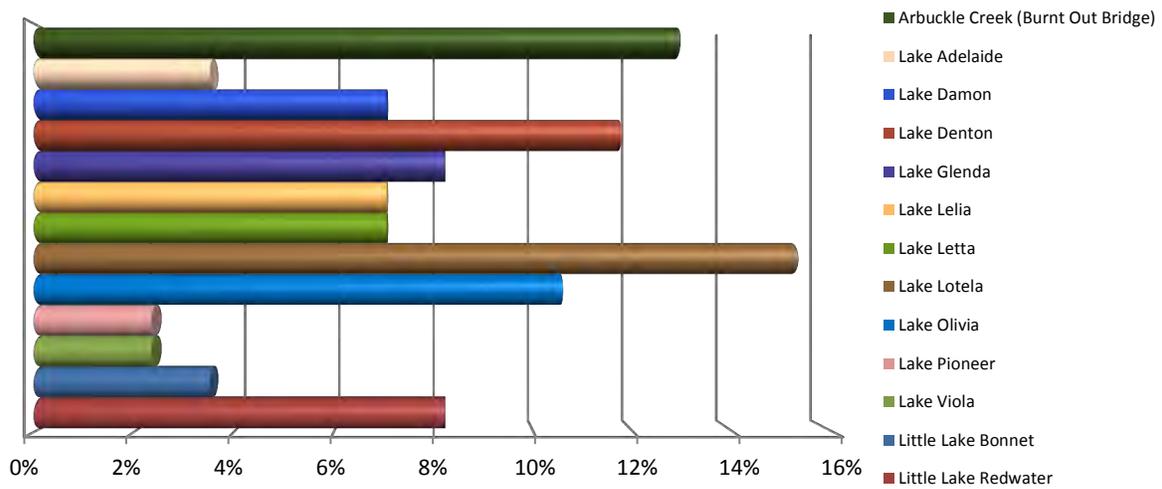
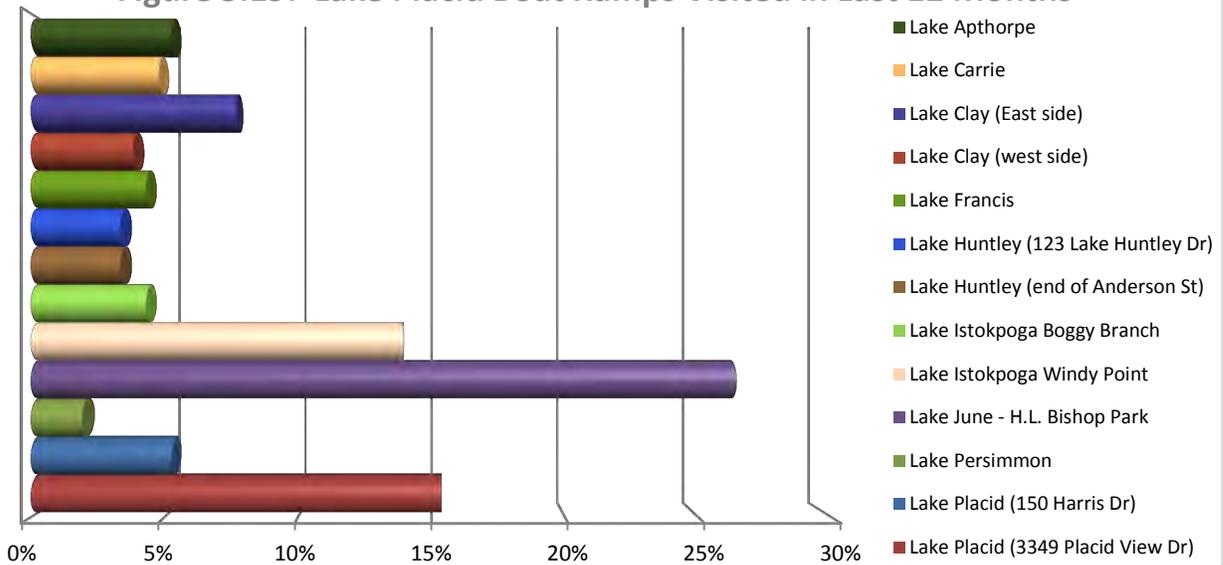


Figure 5.19: Lake Placid Boat Ramps Visited in Last 12 Months



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Figure 5.20: Lorida Boat Ramps Visited in Last 12 Months

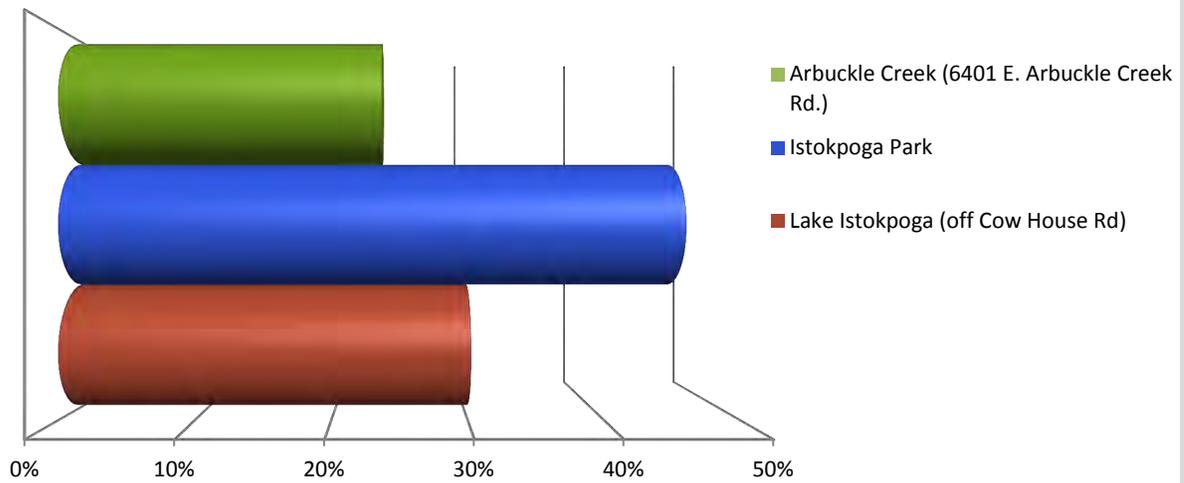
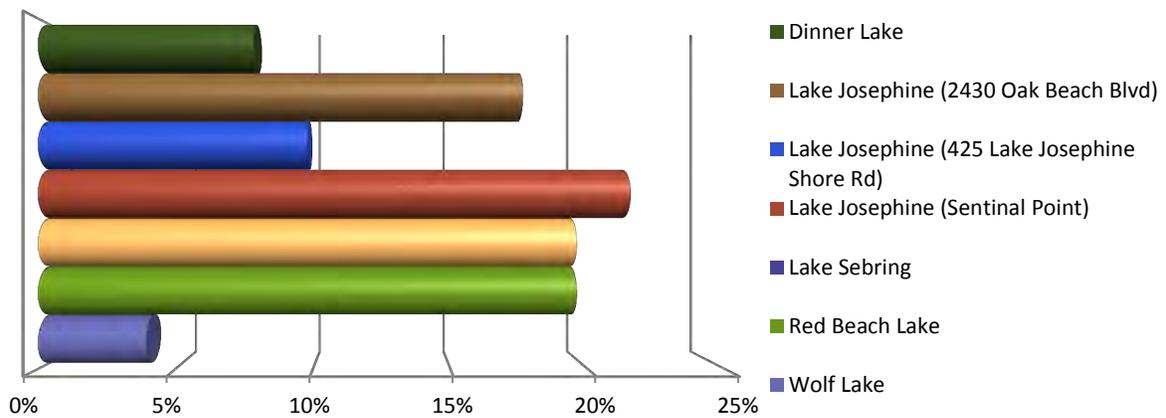


Figure 5.21: Sebring Boat Ramps Visited in Last 12 Months



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Recreation Needs

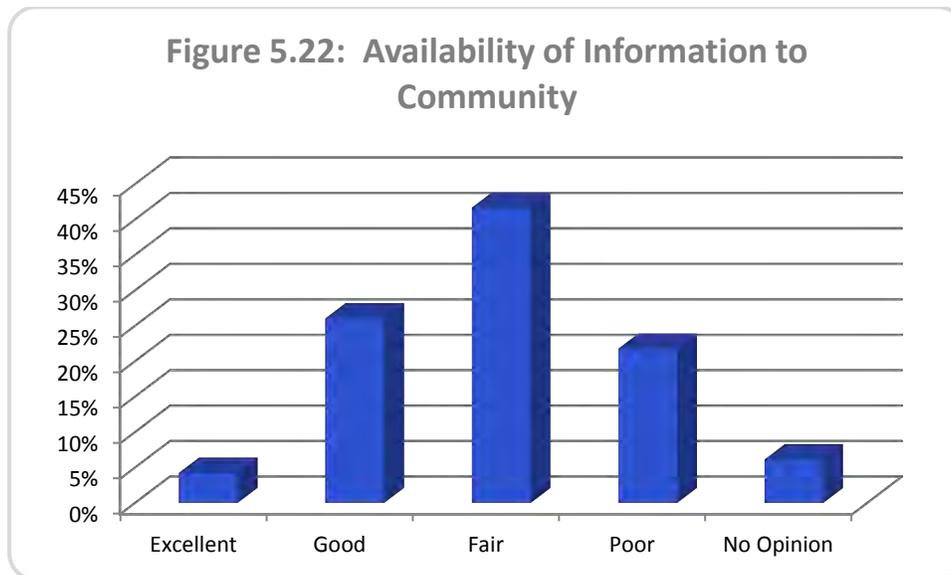
The survey asked respondents to identify if any member of the household has a need for specific recreation and sports programs. For programs identified as needed, the respondents were asked to rate how well their needs are met for that program. Table 5-3 on the following page includes the listed programs and the results of those surveys that responded to the question. For youth programs, the highest needs were for sports (45 percent), fitness and wellness (35 percent), and swim lessons (31 percent). For adults, the highest need was for fitness and wellness (67 percent). The survey respondents did not identify a high need for either programs for persons 55 years and older (27 percent) or for programs for disabled persons (17 percent).

Table 5-3: Need for Recreation and Sports Programs							
Program	Need for the Program		If Yes, How Well is Need Being Met				
	Yes	No	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
Youth							
Swim Lessons	31%	69%	15%	25%	25%	15%	21%
Summer Camp	25%	75%	34%	19%	17%	19%	11%
Sports	45%	55%	8%	15%	25%	32%	21%
Fitness and Wellness	35%	65%	16%	21%	30%	23%	10%
Tennis Lessons & Leagues	18%	82%	55%	15%	23%	3%	5%
Golf Lessons and Leagues	16%	84%	45%	16%	26%	6%	6%
Adult							
Fitness & Wellness	67%	33%	13%	20%	30%	20%	17%
Sports Lessons & Leagues	32%	68%	20%	34%	26%	11%	9%
Tennis Lessons & Leagues	14%	86%	46%	35%	12%	0%	8%
Golf Lessons & Leagues	17%	83%	26%	16%	26%	13%	19%
Special Areas							
Programs for Persons 55 Years or Older	27%	73%	24%	31%	18%	18%	10%
Programs for People with Disabilities	17%	83%	37%	37%	10%	10%	7%

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Recreation Sources

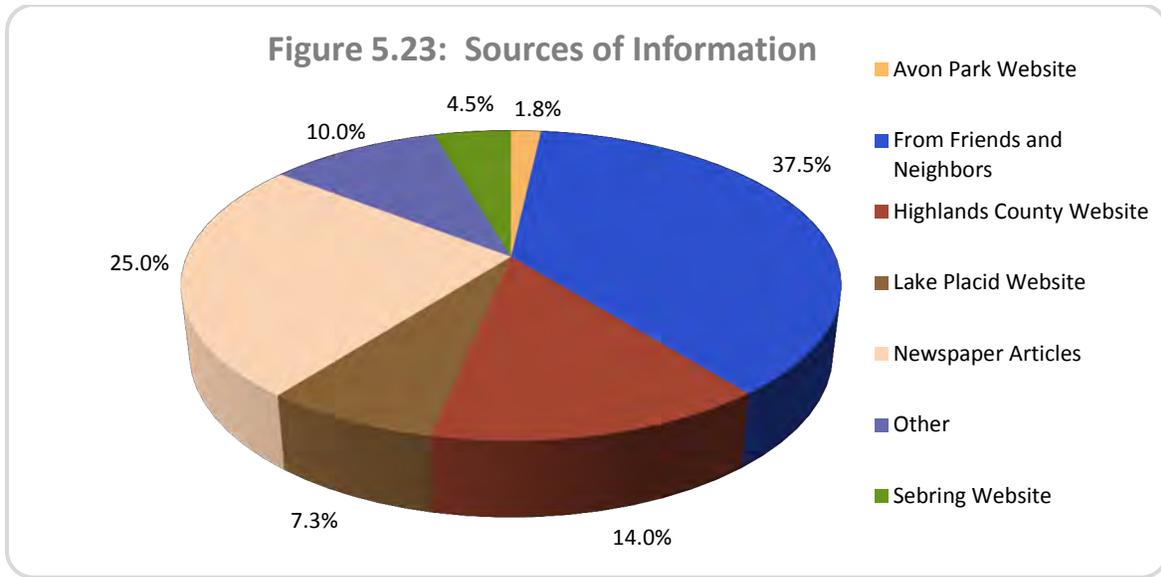
According to Survey respondents, the availability of information related to parks and recreation facilities and activities is fair. Approximately 42 percent of the respondents who answered this question said information availability is fair while 26 percent said it is good and 22 percent said it is poor. Six percent of the respondents who answered the question said they had no opinion and 4 percent said information availability is excellent (Figure 5.22).



As illustrated in Figure 5.23, the majority of the respondents receive their information from friends and neighbors (37.5 percent) or through newspaper articles (25 percent). The Highlands County Website serves as a source of information for 14 percent of the respondents. Some of the sources identified under “Other” in Figure 5.23 include:

- Street signs
- Library
- Social media and websites
- Radio
- Club organizations
- School announcements and flyers
- Chamber of Commerce

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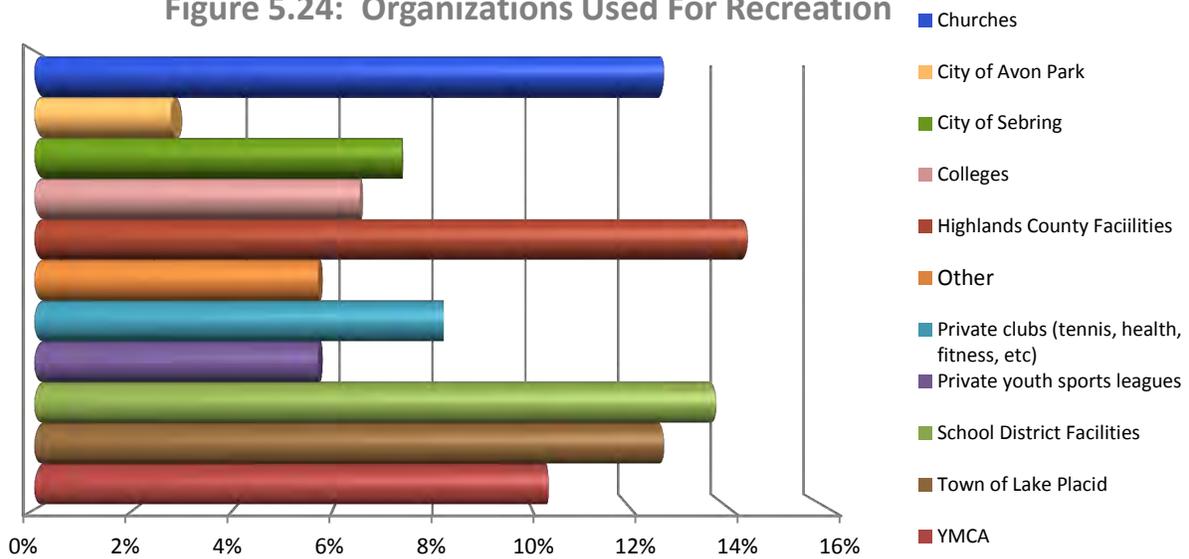


Survey respondents were asked to identify all the organizations they utilized for their indoor and outdoor recreation and sports activities in the last 12 months. As illustrated in Figure 5.24 on the following page, the top three responses include: Highlands County Facilities (14.4 percent), School District Facilities (13.7 percent), and a tie for the Town of Lake Placid and Churches (12.7 percent each). Some of the organizations identified as “Other” by survey respondents in Figure 5.24 include:

- Highlands Hammock State Park
- Theater
- Library
- Sun n Lake and Englewood pickleball courts
- Neighborhood sidewalks and streets
- Golf courses throughout the county
- Locations outside of the county.

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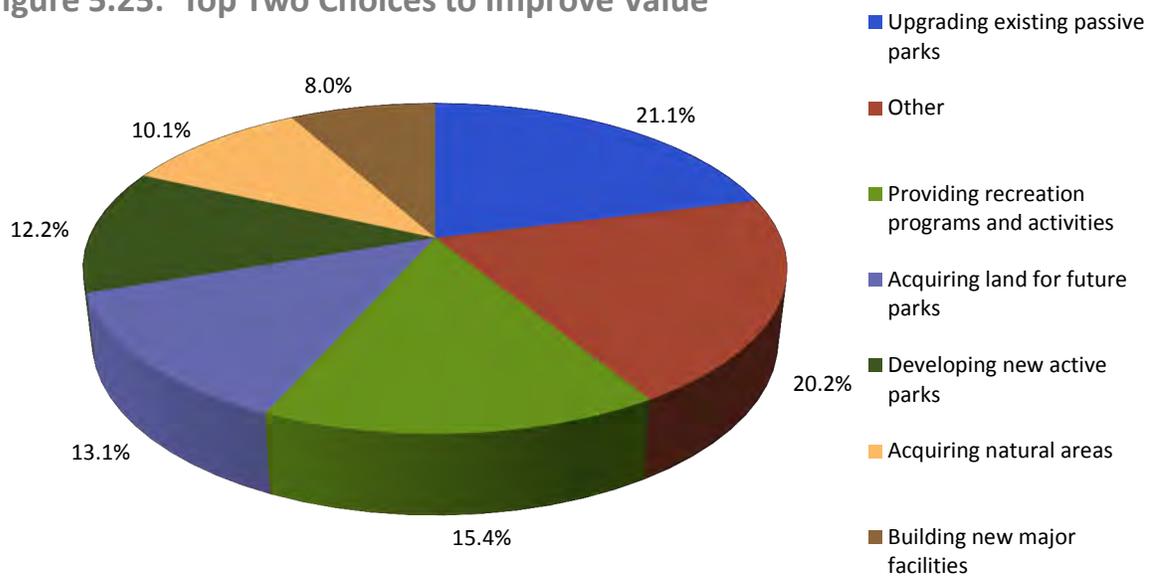
Figure 5.24: Organizations Used For Recreation



Parks and Recreation Improvements

The respondents were asked to choose their top two choices for how Highlands County parks and recreation system could be improved. Figure 5.25 below illustrates the results.

Figure 5.25: Top Two Choices to Improve Value

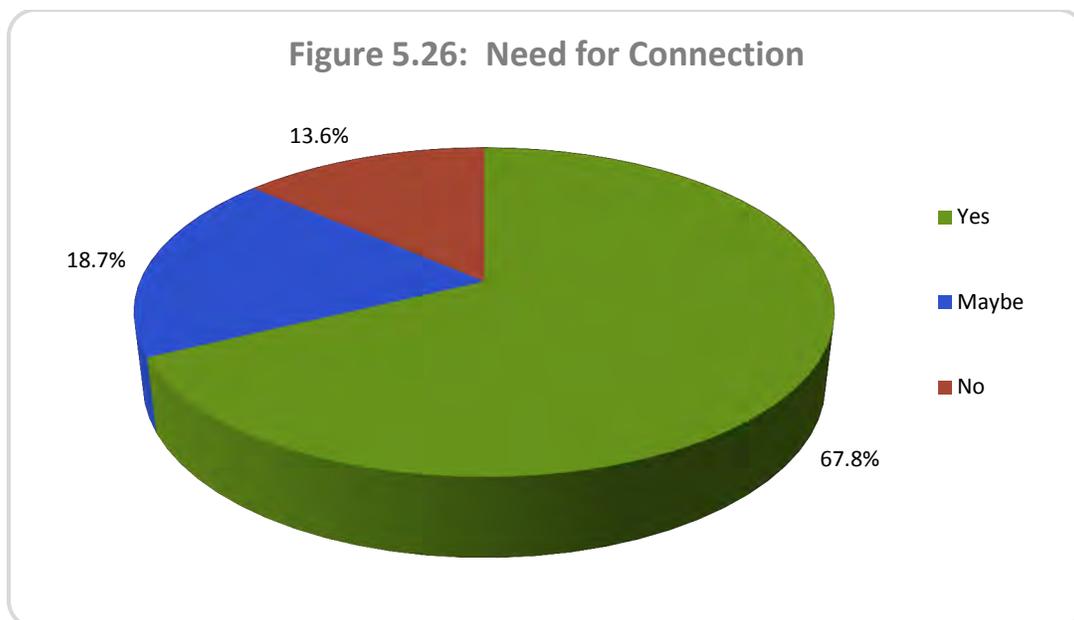


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As illustrated in the Figure 5.25 on the previous page, the top two choices made by the respondents were: Upgrading existing passive parks (21 percent) and Other (20 percent). Some of the ideas listed under “Other” include:

- Development of multi-use paths
- Outdoor fitness areas
- Funding and maintaining existing facilities
- Improvements and additions of facilities – bleachers, restrooms, etc.
- Dog park
- Public swimming pool
- Water Parks and spray parks
- Camping areas
- Walking track or trails, soccer fields, picnic shelters with facilities and grills, etc.
- Indoor activities
- Special needs playground
- Equine Facilities

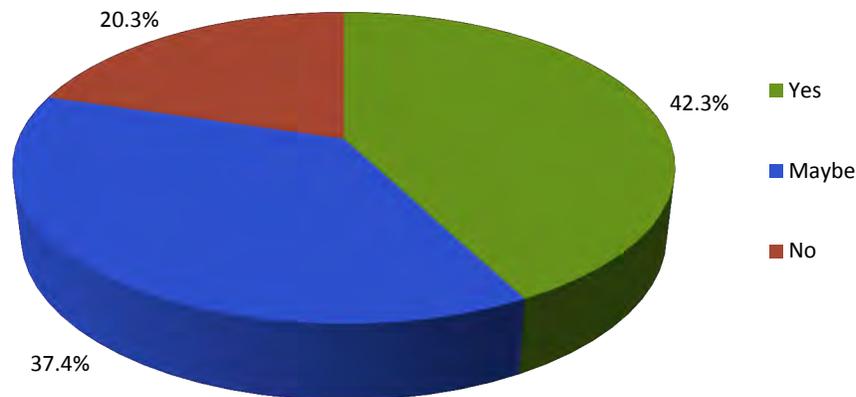
Survey respondents were asked if they felt there was a need to provide a connection between neighborhoods and parks and recreation facilities. Of the respondents that answered the question, the majority (67.8 percent) answered yes. Approximately 19 percent said maybe and 14 percent said no (Figure 5.26).



Survey respondents responded favorably to the questions of if they would you be interested in Highlands County providing additional recreation activities or programs if there was an additional fee. As illustrated in Figure 5.27, approximately 42 percent said yes, 37 percent said maybe, and 20 percent said no.

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Figure 5.27: Additional Recreation Programs or Activities with Additional Fees



The survey asked respondents to state their opinion for the most important addition or improvement to the Highlands County Parks and Recreation activities, programs, or facilities. Some respondents stated that no changes should be made. Of the respondents who identified changes, the following list summarizes the variation of responses:

- Water park
- Dog park
- Passive recreation
- Active parks – frisbee golf, soccer, baseball, batting cages, volleyball
- Aquatic activities – swimming, boating, fishing
- Off-road facilities
- Biking, walking, hiking, fitness trails, horsetrails, multi-use trails – connections between trails
- Camping areas
- Firearms range for pistol, rifle, and bow
- Family friendly
- Maintenance of and improvements to existing facilities – cleaning, safety, and upgrading
- More children and teen activities
- Easy access for everyone – disabled and elderly
- More awareness and advertising
- More complexes and playgrounds
- More lake access
- Community gardening

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Section VI: Plan Objectives

As part of the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Trails Master Plan Update, a mission statement and objectives were developed to help guide the development of the County's parks and recreation system. The County may consider the mission statement and objectives before making decisions related to the parks and recreation system.

Mission Statement

The following mission statement has been drafted through the community input and development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Trails Master Plan Update.

“Highlands County will facilitate the management of facilities for a recreation system that includes parks, trails and other recreational opportunities that meet the needs of a growing community. The County shall continue to seek opportunities for a connected recreation system linking neighborhoods, trails and parks.”

Objectives

The following are objectives in support of the mission statement.

- Objective 1:** Highlands County will develop, operate, and promote a parks and recreation system that provides all residents with quality recreation opportunities.

- Objective 2:** The Highlands County Leisure Services Department should coordinate with staff of the Highlands County Visitors and Convention Bureau to help promote Highland County's parks, trails, cultural events, natural areas, and special events to visitors.

- Objective 3:** Highlands County should develop and distribute a web-based promotional guide for parks and recreation facilities and trails owned and operated by the County.

- Objective 4:** A logo and signage program should be initiated that becomes an identifier for the Highlands County parks and recreation system, strengthening the image and recognition factor by residents of, and visitors to, Highlands County.

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- Objective 5:** Highlands County will continue a presence on the County’s website specifically for the Leisure Services Department that is updated regularly and contains useful information regarding programs, facilities, an interactive map, other recreation providers, volunteer opportunities, and upcoming events.
- Objective 6:** Highlands County will facilitate the development of a well-balanced system of community and regional facilities that include active and resource based recreational communities to meet a variety of needs for individuals as well as groups.
- Objective 7:** The park classification system in Highlands County will be limited to community parks, district parks, and special facilities. Parks will be further classified as either resource-based or activity-based.
- Objective 8:** Highlands County Leisure Services Department shall maintain an up-to-date inventory of all Highlands County maintained park facilities.
- Objective 9:** When developing new parks and facilities, Highlands County shall include nearby residents and other interested parties in the planning process.
- Objective 10:** Highlands County will create and approve a phased development and renovation plan for the existing parks in the System to determine appropriate development of new facilities and/or phase out of parkland that does not meet the objectives of the Master Plan.
- Objective 11:** Highlands County shall pursue development of a “payment in lieu of parks” fee in which developers may contribute money to the government having jurisdiction, equal to the value of the number of developed park acres required; or in the alternative, acquire and convey to the government park acreage (equal in value to the required developed park acreage) in lieu of parks.

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- Objective 12:** Highlands County will foster the development of a comprehensive trails, blueway and bikeway system that provides scenic, eco-tourism and resource-oriented recreation.
- Objective 13:** Highlands County shall continue working towards implementing its trails program by coordinating with federal, state, regional, and local public agencies and private organizations.
- Objective 14:** Highlands County shall add greenways and blueways to its trails and bikeways program to help connect natural resources and parks to the trail system.
- Objective 15:** Highlands County shall reference as a guideline the Florida Bicycle Facilities Planning and Design Handbook by FDOT and the Florida Office of Greenways and Trails Reference and Resource Guide. These documents shall be used in the planning and development of trails.
- Objective 16:** Highlands County will ensure equal access and maximum availability to all facilities.
- Objective 17:** Highlands County shall design, construct, and manage parks and trails with access ways that are compatible with the natural features and character of the individual park site.
- Objective 18:** Sidewalks, bikeways, and/or trails should be provided to link residential areas, community facilities, schools, and other park sites where feasible.
- Objective 19:** Highlands County will continue to promote access to water bodies and natural resources through the development and maintenance of public access points, swimming areas, boat ramps, and canoe/kayak launches.
- Objective 20:** In order to reduce vandalism and crimes in County parks, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) methods, programs and techniques may be integrated in

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the design where feasible and appropriate for the operation of County public parks, trails, and environmental lands.

Objective 21: Highlands County recognizes that it is imperative to identify and implement methods to finance the on-going operation and management of its facilities.

- a) Highlands County shall focus on providing larger scale facilities. These facilities will supplement existing city recreation facilities, natural resource based parks, and a trails system linking them all together.
- b) Design of new facilities should incorporate revenue-generating opportunities that could offset operational costs and/or enhance the recreational experience of participants (i.e. concessions, rentals, etc).
- c) The County's grant-funded programs should be refined to be consistent with the objectives of the Master Plan.
- d) A reliable and consistent capital funding source for recreation facilities and operations should be established to help implement the Master Plan.
- e) The County shall consider adoption of fair and equitable fees and charges, where appropriate, for the Parks and Recreation System for both residents and visitors that use County facilities.
- f) New park and trail development shall address the cost to maintain each facility prior to construction. Design/maintenance techniques, materials, and procurement methods should be used to provide the most cost effective measures to develop and maintain, the park and trail facilities.

Objective 22: Highlands County recognizes that continuation, growth and effectiveness of the County's Parks and Recreation system will depend on the ability to focus on a formalized mission and the ability to develop and maintain partnerships with the municipalities, including Avon Park, Sebring and Lake Placid, the Highlands County School Board and the Water Management Districts.

- a) Highlands County shall continue to investigate alternative funding sources and relationships to provide for public park facilities, programs, and management.

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- b) Highlands County and the School Board should further work to co-locate sites for new and existing schools and parks where feasible. Highlands County should work with the School Board to identify possible joint opportunities to provide athletic and recreation opportunities for students and citizens. A school/park design prototype should be developed to be used for planning such joint facilities. Highlands County and the School Board should also work to identify existing school sites for possible improvements to better accommodate public recreation usage.
- c) Highlands County should work with the School Board to develop a model 'Mutual Use Agreement' for the public use of joint school and park facilities.
- d) Highlands County shall continue to coordinate with the County's municipalities and adjacent counties for the provision of public parks and recreational programming through the use of interlocal agreements.
- e) Highlands County shall develop agreements with non-profit recreation providers such as the YMCA and Boys and Girls club to provide recreational programming and facilities.
- f) Highlands County shall pursue joint agency funding for the purchase, development, and management of public parks, environmental lands, and trails.

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Section VII: Recommendations

Mission Statement

“Highlands County will facilitate the management of facilities for a recreation system that includes parks, trails and other recreational opportunities that meet the needs of a growing community. The County shall continue to seek opportunities for a connected recreation system linking neighborhoods, trails and parks.”

Recommendations

The recommendations of the Master Plan that will implement the mission statement are provided below. Objectives for parks and recreation are set forth in Section VI of the Master Plan. The recommendations below are based on those objectives.

County’s Role

- Highlands County’s system of parks and recreation should direct efforts toward providing facilities that can efficiently serve the largest amounts of people while consolidating resources.
- The County should continue to coordinate with municipalities and other agencies to connect parks and natural resources countywide through a coordinated system of trails, blueways and greenways.
- Prior to scheduling any park for sale or transfer, the County shall address the impact on the recreational services to nearby residents, especially access to lakes or other significant natural or cultural resources.
- County facilities should continue to be made available to outside groups or agencies that administer and run recreation programs. Such groups shall meet certain conditions and abide by any regulations the County adopts for the use of its facilities.
- Partnerships, joint facilities, cooperative arrangements, and other collaborations are creative ways of providing for needed recreational services, facilities, and programs. Sharing of resources will assist Highlands County in meeting the recreational needs of residents and visitors.
- The County should continue to develop partnerships with non-profit providers and with municipalities and improvement districts to develop and new or expand existing facilities.

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- The County's Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee (RPAC) funding program should be refined to promote the development of facilities and programs that further the goals of the Master Plan. Increasing funding and revising the requirements of the grant program should be studied and reviewed as part of the Comprehensive Plan evaluation process.

Trails

Objectives for Trails are set forth in Section IV of the Master Plan. The recommendations below are in addition to those objectives.

- Highlands County is a popular bicycling location for triathletes, competitive cyclists and touring cyclists. Many popular cycling routes are being impacted by increased traffic due to development which is creating conflicts between cyclists and drivers. **The County should continue to provide on-road bicycle facilities along popular cycling routes. In lieu of such facilities, the County should promote awareness of on-road cycling through signage, adopt-a-road programs, and recognizing bicycle friendly businesses.**
- Consideration should be given to trails for motorized off-road recreational vehicles (motorcycles, four-wheelers, etc). This issue was brought up during the development of Florida's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and has been raised by a few individuals involved in the public meetings for the Master Plan. There is a lack of designated trails for off-road vehicles, consequently, inappropriate areas are sometimes used for this activity. **Motorized recreational trails should be located in specific areas designated for motorized use and away from areas considered environmentally sensitive.**

Future Parks

Unless additional acreage for parks and recreation activities are created over time, as the population increases, the difference between the operating level of service and the adopted level of service will diminish. Requirements for developers of residential projects to dedicate land and/or pay a fee in lieu of dedication based on the estimated population of the development ensure that parks and recreation facilities are provided for all the residents of the County and that the County continues to operate at or above the adopted level of service for parks and recreation.

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Land Acquisition and Park Siting Criteria

Potential park and trail sites should be evaluated before the County proceeds with acquisition. Items to be evaluated should include the useable acreage of the property, environmental conditions, proximity to users, expansion of existing parks and other criteria.

Acquisition of additional land for parks should be based on one or more of the following criteria:

1. Acquire parkland where no existing facilities are located or where existing facilities do not meet the needs identified in the master plan.
2. Priority should be given to expand the boundaries of existing county parks or to be adjacent to boundaries of parks owned/managed by other local, regional, state, federal, private non-profit, or private entities.
3. Natural or cultural resources should be included and/or protected when possible.
4. Activity-based facilities should be considered for resource-based parks where appropriate so that natural resources are not adversely affected and protected.
5. Land should be accessible to existing motorized and non-motorized traffic circulation systems.
6. A decision matrix and evaluation form should be used to determine the feasibility of land acquisition as well as programs at County facilities.

Conclusion

The Master Plan and its recommendations will provide Highlands County with a guide for future parks and recreation development. This Master Plan is intended to be a dynamic, living document that will change as the community's future needs change. Periodic monitoring and evaluation will ensure the Master Plan addresses those changed needs.

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Appendix A Highlands County Trails Network

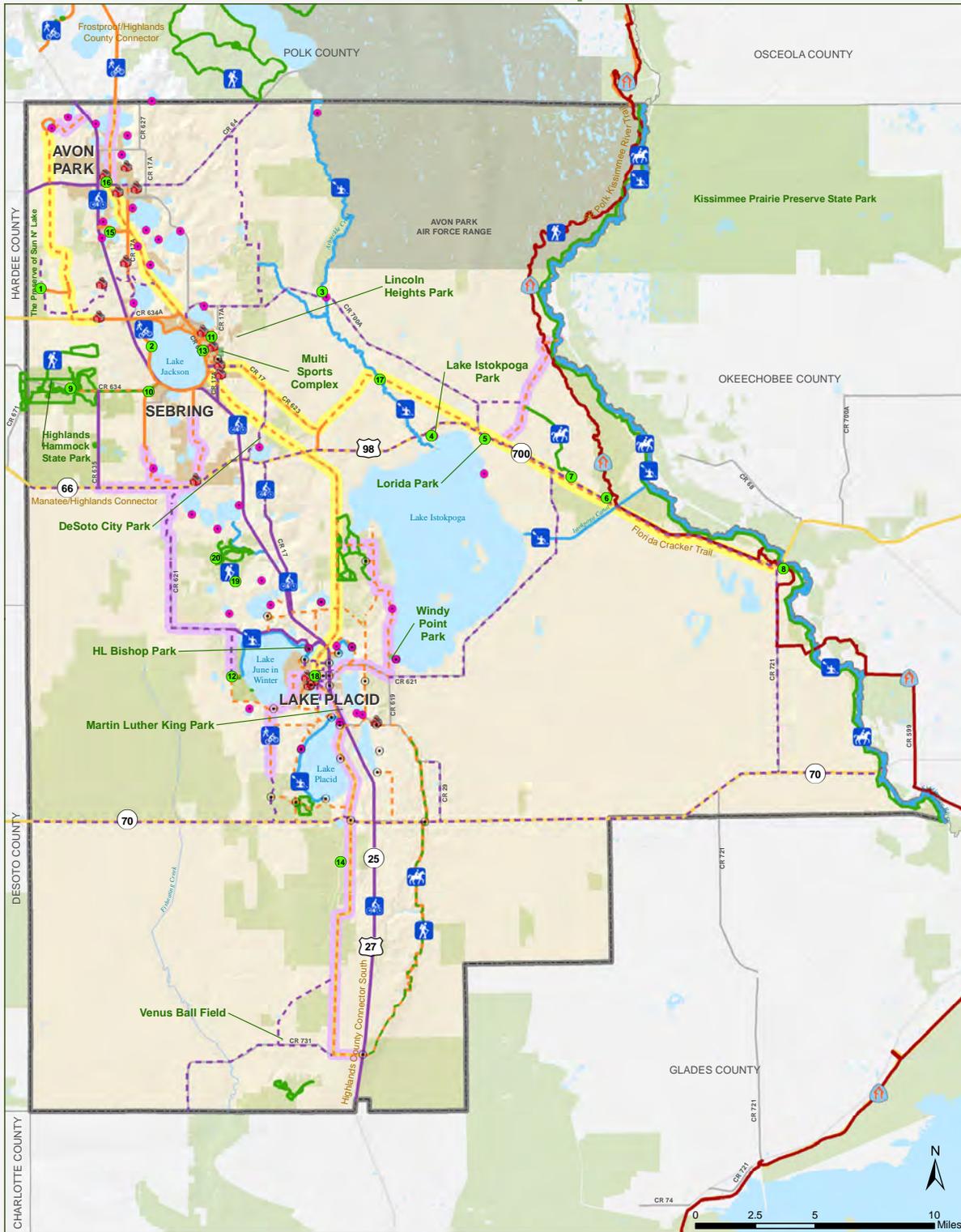
Map of Highlands County Trails

Map of Avon Park Area Trails

Map of Sebring Area Trails

Map of Lake Placid Area Trails

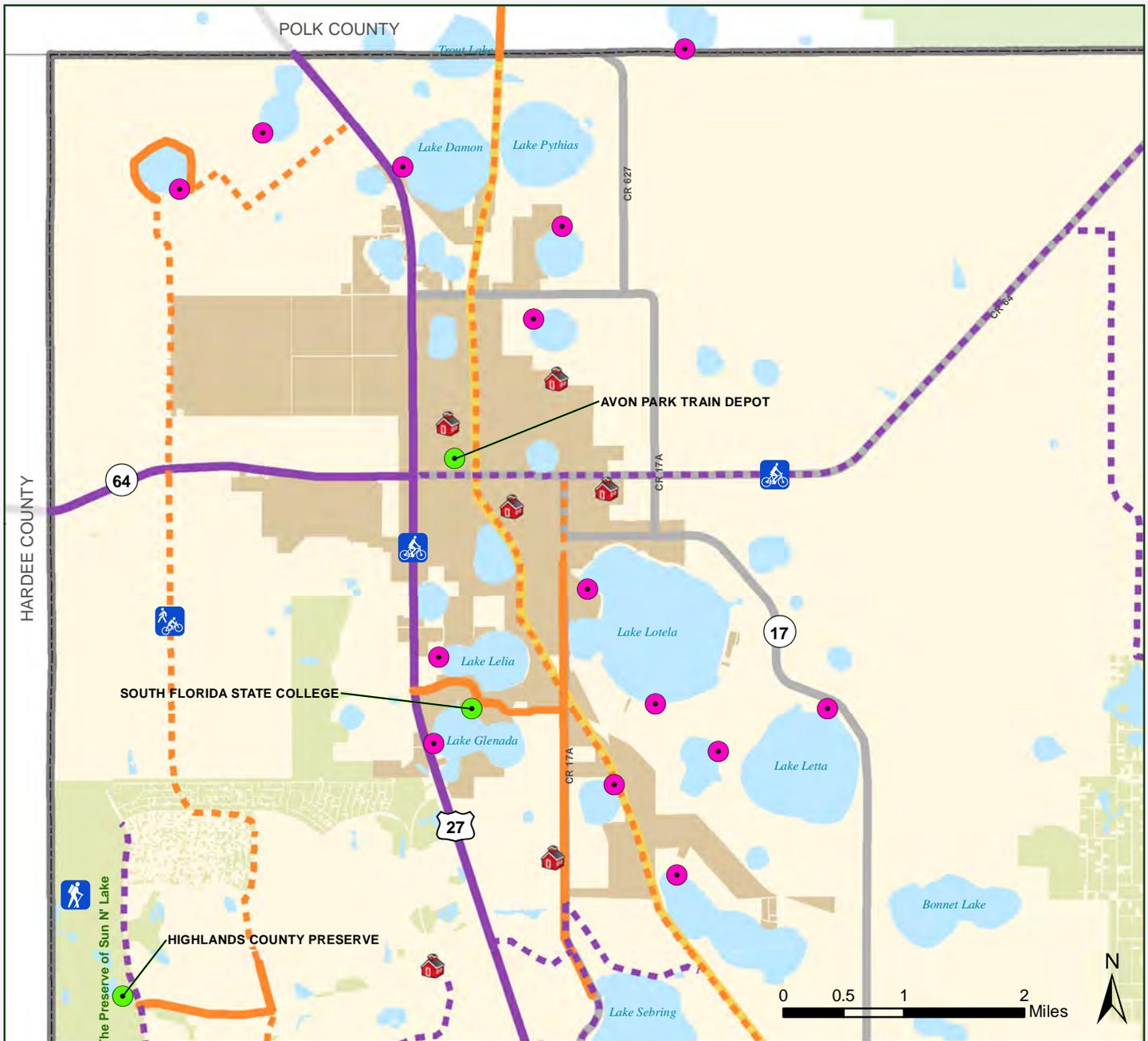
Trails Map



General Legend	Trail Types	Activities	Existing Trailheads
Schools	Florida Scenic Trail	Trailheads	1. Highlands County Preserve (HC)
Roads	Hiking, Equestrian Trails	Trailheads (Proposed)	2. Veteran's Beach (Sebring)
Phase 1 (1st 5 Yrs)	Hiking, Equestrian Trails (Proposed)	Boat Ramps	3. Arbuckle Creek Road (HC)
Phase 2 (2nd 5 Yrs)	Multi-Use Path	Bicycling	4. Istokpoga Park (HC)
Lakes	Multi-Use Path (Proposed)	Multi-use	5. Lorida Schoolhouse (HC)
Avon Park AFR	Shared Bikeway	Hiking	6. Istokpoga Canal Park (ACOE)
Conservation Lands	Shared Bikeway (Proposed)	Equestrian	7. Hickory Hammock (SFWMD)
Highlands County	Statewide Greenways/Connectors	Canoeing	8. Pearce Estate (SFWMD)
	Blueways (Canoe & Kayak)		9. Highlands Hammock State Park (FDEP)
			10. Max Long Field (Sebring)
			11. Sebring Train Depot (Sebring)
			12. Lake June Scrub State Park (FDEP)
			13. Sebring Civic Center (Sebring)
			14. Archbold Biological Station (Archbold)
			15. South Florida State College (HC)
			16. Avon Park Train Depot (AP)
			17. Arbuckle Creek (HC)
			18. Lake Placid Railroad Museum (LP)



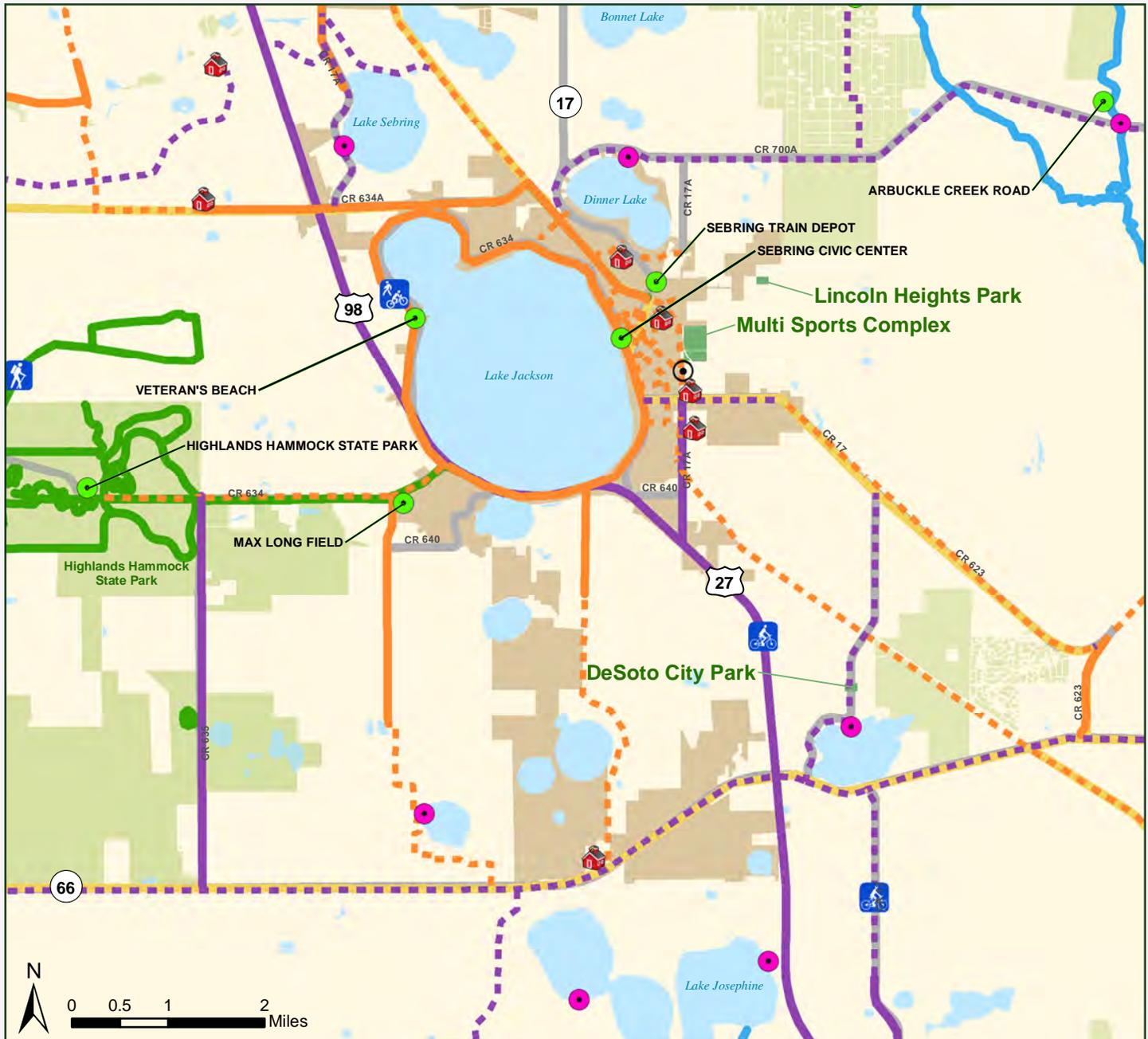
Trails Map - Avon Park Area



Legend

Schools	Multi-Use Path	Trailheads (Existing)
Roads	Multi-Use Path (Proposed)	Boat Ramps
Lakes	Shared Bikeway	Bicycling
Avon Park City Limits	Shared Bikeway (Proposed)	Hiking
Conservation Lands	Statewide Greenways/Connectors	Multi-use
Highlands County	Blueways (Canoe & Kayak)	COUNTY OF HIGHLANDS STATE OF FLORIDA

Trails Map - Sebring Area



Legend

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
|  Schools |  Multi-Use Path (Proposed) |  Trailheads (Proposed) |
|  Roads |  Multi-Use Path |  Trailheads (Existing) |
|  Lakes |  Shared Bikeway (Proposed) |  Boat Ramps |
|  Sebring City Limits |  Shared Bikeway |  Bicycling |
|  Conservation Lands |  Blueways (Canoe & Kayak) |  Hiking |
|  Highlands County |  Statewide Greenways/Connectors |  Multi-use |



Trails Map - Lake Placid Area



Legend

Schools	Multi-Use Path (Proposed)	Trailheads (Existing)
Roads	Shared Bikeway	Trailheads (Proposed)
Lakes	Shared Bikeway (Proposed)	Boat Ramps
Lake Placid Town Limits	Statewide Greenways/Connectors	Canoeing/Kayaking
Conservation Lands	Blueways (Canoe & Kayak)	Bicycling
Highlands County		Multi-use



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Appendix B County Parks and Recreation Inventory

Map of County Boat Ramps

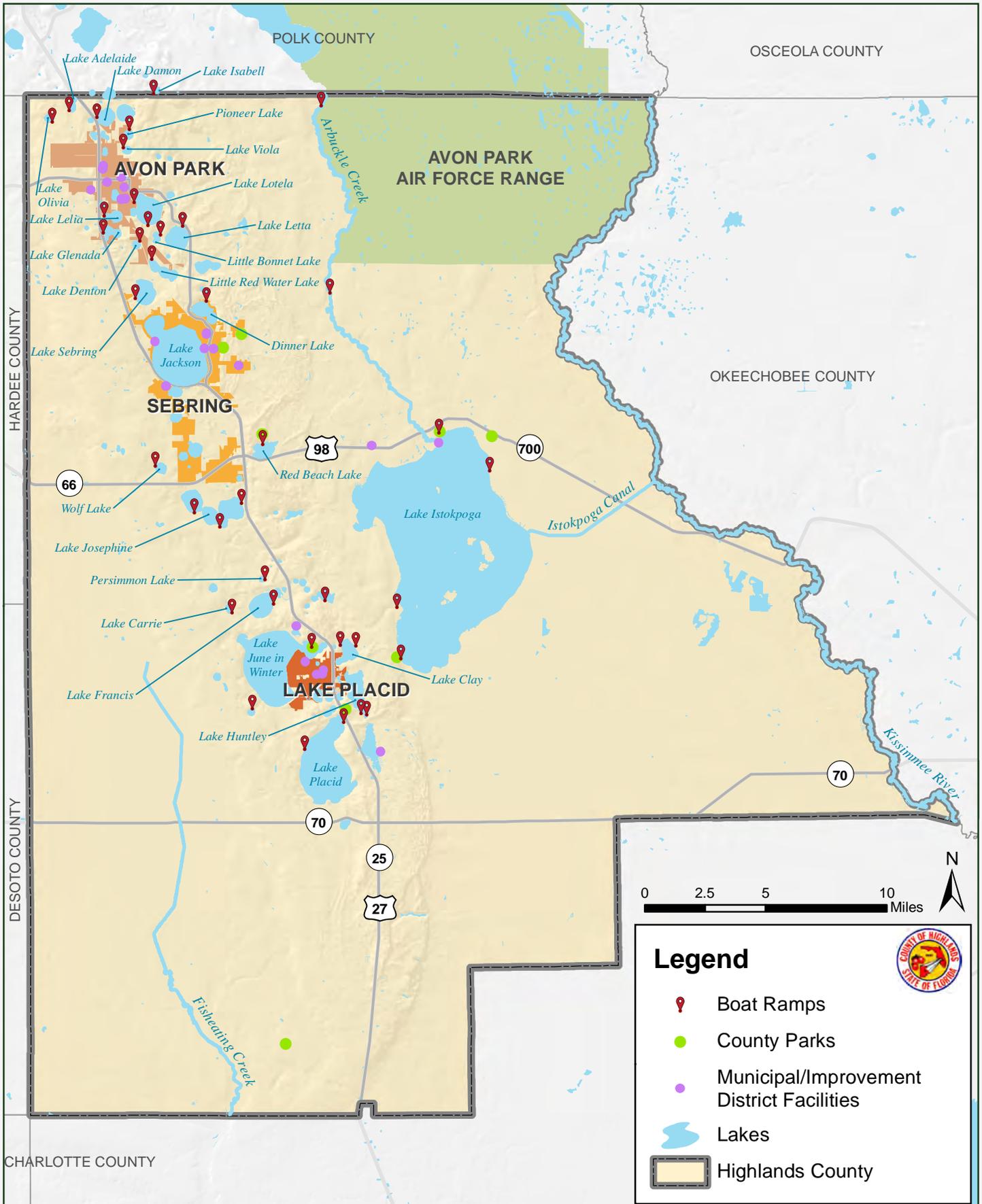
Map of County Parks and Recreation Facilities

Parcel Maps of County Parks and Recreation Facilities

County Parks and Recreation Facilities Inventory

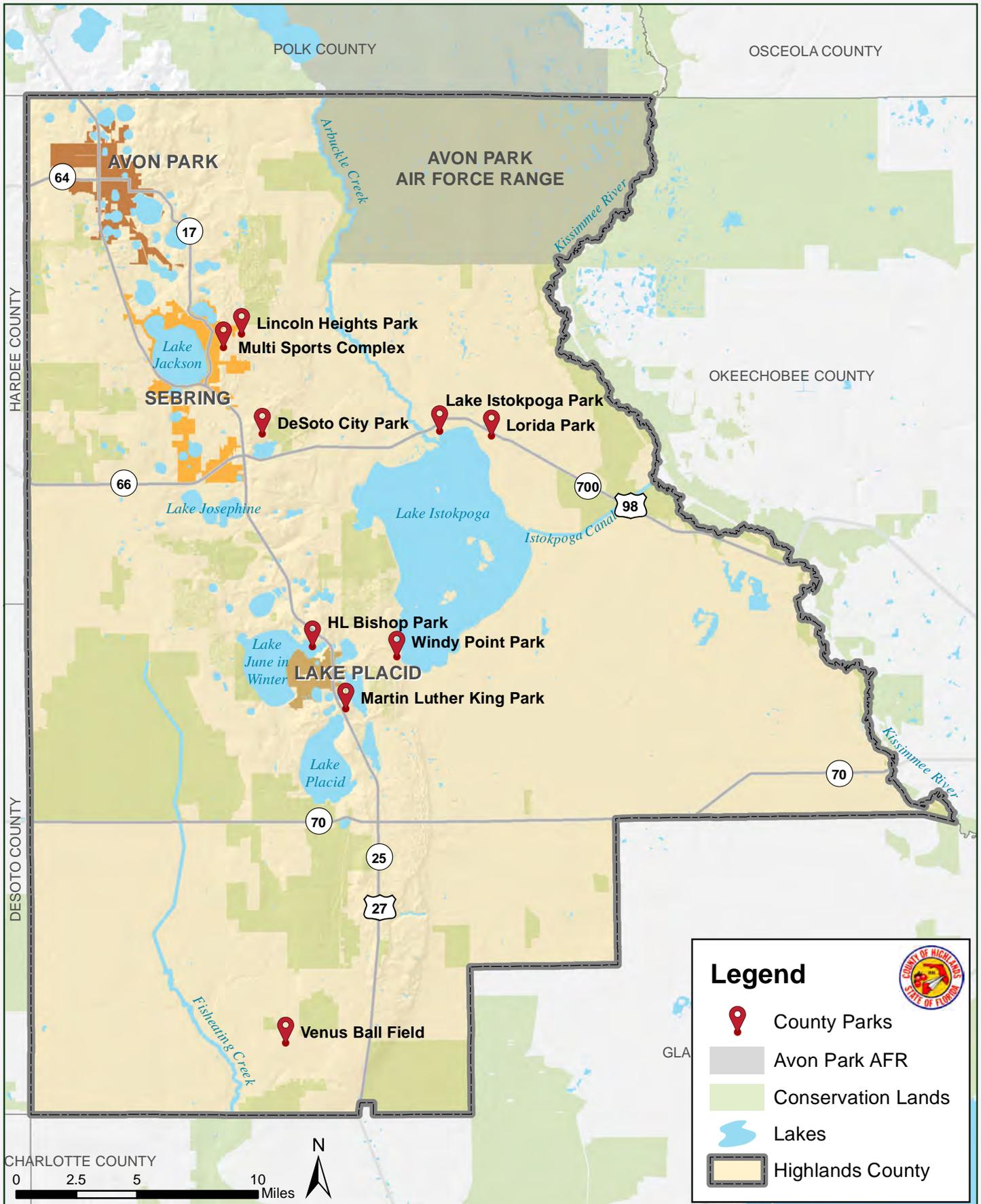
County Boat Ramp Inventory

Boat Ramp Locations



Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Park Locations in Unincorporated Highlands County



DeSoto City Park



HL Bishop Park



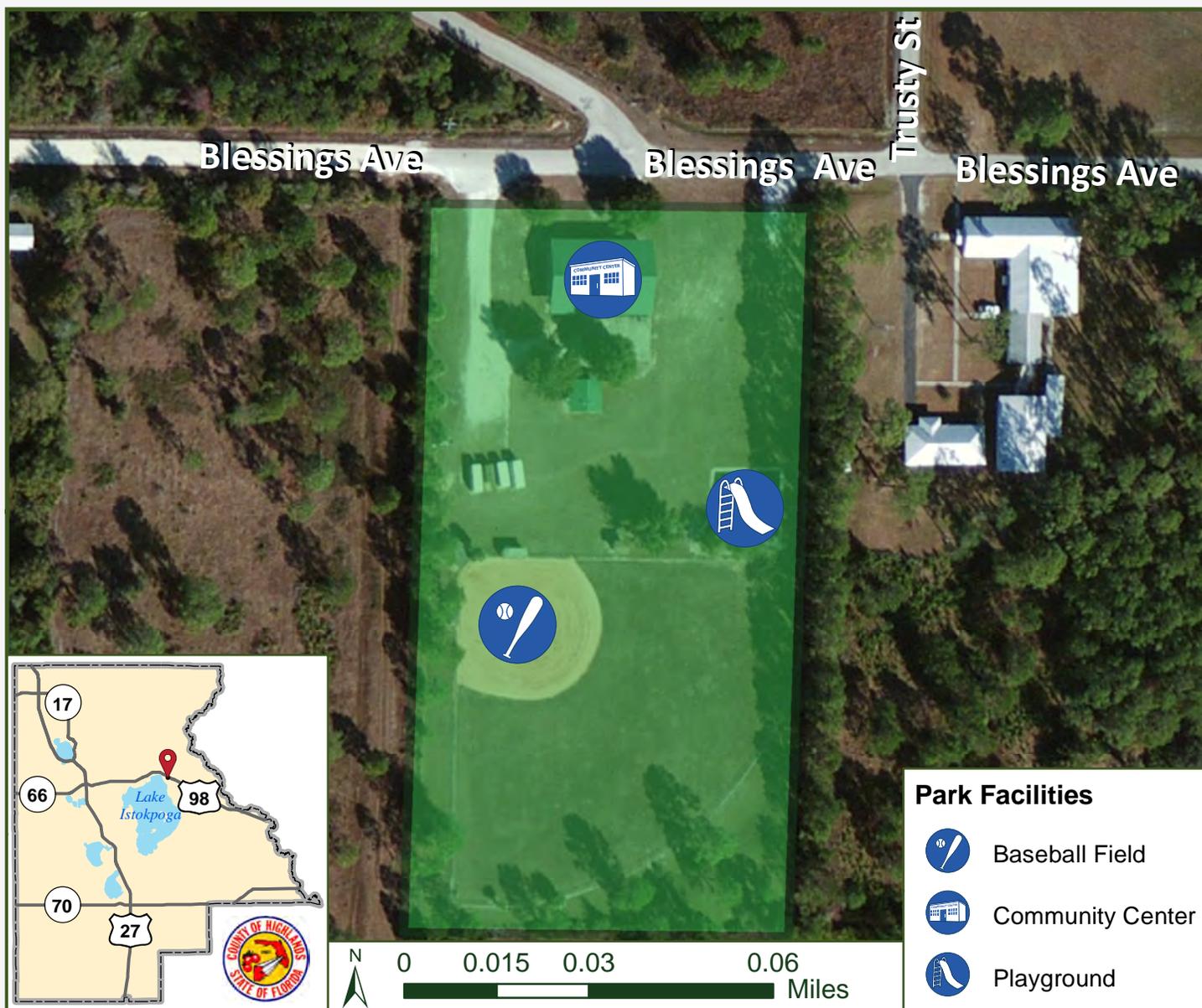
Lake Istokpoga Park



Lincoln Heights Park



Florida Park



Martin Luther King Park



Multi Sports Complex



Venus Ball Field



Windy Point Park



Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Highlands County Boat Ramp Inventory

COUNTY BOAT RAMPS	Address	Location/ Address	Property Owner	Parcel Number	Latitude	Longitude	Comments/Notes
Arbuckle Creek (Burnt Out Bridge)	6391 E. Arbuckle Creek Rd.	Avon Park	BCC	C-01-33-29-020-0080-001A	27deg 38'21.1"	81deg 21'52.6"	Close to this parcel in r/w
Lake Adelaide	2124 N. West Shore Rd.	Avon Park	BCC	C-01-33-28-010-00A0-0000	27deg 38'13.2"	81deg 32'04.4"	Land is owned by Avon Park Lakes Homeowners Association
Lake Damon	1065 W. Lake Damon Dr.	Avon Park	BCC	A-04-33-28-010-0390-0000	27deg 37'58.2"	81deg 30'56.4"	Close to this parcel in r/w
Lake Denton	800 Lake Denton Access Rd.	Avon Park	BCC	C-02-34-28-020-0080-0020	27deg 33' 29.8"	81deg 29' 14.4"	South of this parcel in r/w
Lake Glenada	2475 US Hwy 27 S	Avon Park	BCC	C-34-33-28-A00-0061-0000	27deg 33'48.0"	81deg 30'42.4"	Within this parcel
Lake Isabelle	N. Oak Island Rd.	Avon Park	BCC	C-01-33-28-130-0010-0000	27deg 38'49.1"	81deg 28'38.5"	North of this parcel partially in Polk County
Lake Lelia	890 W Martin Rd.	Avon Park	BCC	C-34-33-28-A00-0031-0000	27deg 34'25.5"	81deg 30'39.6"	North of this parcel in r/w
Lake Letta	2490 E. Victoria Ln.	Avon Park	BCC	C-31-33-29-020-00C0-0010	27deg 34' 02.5"	81deg 27'30.4"	West of this parcel in r/w
Lake Lotela	1005 Lake Lotela Dr. 420 Ben Hicks St.	Avon Park	BCC	C-25-33-28-050-0170-0210	27deg 34'04.3"	81deg 28'54.1"	West of this parcel in r/w
Lake Olivia	2712 Nautilus Dr.	Avon Park	BCC	C-01-33-28-010-00H0-0000	27deg 37'48.9"	81deg 32'45.0"	North of this parcel in r/w
Lake Pioneer	100 Lake Pioneer Boat Ramp Rd.	Avon Park	BCC	C-11-33-28-A00-0170-0000	27deg 37'32.1"	81deg 29'38.7"	West of this parcel in r/w
Lake Viola	1500 Oak Park Ave.	Avon Park	BCC	C-15-33-28-110-0000-0600	27deg 36'52.2"	81deg 29'52.9"	North of this parcel in r/w
Little Lake Bonnet	2300 Little Lake Bonnet Dr.	Avon Park	BCC	C-36-33-28-A00-0110-0000	27deg 33'44.2"	81deg 28'23.7"	Within this property
Little Lake Redwater	3026 Holiday Beach Dr.	Avon Park	BCC	C-01-34-28-020-0010-0210	27deg 32' 50.5"	81deg 28' 44.4"	East of this parcel in r/w
Arbuckle Creek	8100 Arbuckle Creek Rd.	Sebring	BCC	C-18-34-30-A00-0020-0000	27deg 31' 37.0"	81deg 21' 33.4"	SE corner of top parcel break in r/w
Dinner Lake	2400 Yachting Rd.	Sebring	BCC	C-17-34-29-020-0000-1070	27deg 31' 26.4"	81deg 29' 25.4"	Off SE corner of this parcel in r/w
Istokpoga Park	720 Istokpoga Park Access Rd.	Sebring	BCC	C-15-35-30-100-0030-0000	27deg 25'09.2"	81deg 15'08.7"	Within this parcel
Lake Josephine	10809 US 27 S 1536 Lake Josephine Dr. 2500 Oak Beach Blvd.	Sebring	BCC	C-27-35-29-030-00A0-0000 C-33-35-29-020-0030-0330 C-03-36-29-070-0440-0290	27deg 24' 03.0"	81deg 25' 09.9"	West of this parcel
Lake Sebring	626 Memorial Dr.	Sebring	BCC	C-14-34-28-020-3400-0130	27deg 23' 10.9"	81deg 26' 02.9"	North of this parcel in r/w
Red Beach Lake	6701 Commerce Dr.	Sebring	BCC	C-22-35-29-030-0371-0000	27deg 23' 42.8"	81deg 27' 05.1"	East of this parcel in r/w
Wolf Lake	6346 Lakeside Dr. West	Sebring	BCC	C-24-35-28-040-0060-0250	27deg 31' 19.7"	81deg 26' 32.8"	Within this parcel
		Sebring	BCC		27deg 26' 10.3"	81deg 24'18.7"	Within this parcel
		Sebring	BCC		27deg 27' 55.0"	81deg 26' 01.6"	SE of this parcel in r/w



Highlands County Boat Ramp Inventory

COUNTY BOAT RAMPS	Address	Location/ Address	Property Owner	Parcel Number	Latitude	Longitude	Comments/Notes
Lake Apthorpe	2017 Lake Blvd.	Lake Placid	BCC	C-20-35-31-A00-0053-0000	27deg 20'30.9"	81deg 21'49.5"	Within this parcel
Lake Carrie	1022 Jonquil St.	Lake Placid	BCC	C-21-36-29-011-0220-0060	27deg 20'05.8"	81deg 25'34.8"	West of this parcel in r/w
Lake Clay	1700 Lake Clay Dr.	Lake Placid	BCC	C-29-36-30-030-0010-0290	27deg 18'52.2"	81deg 20'34.9"	NW of this parcel in r/w
	1300 Lake Clay Dr.	Lake Placid	BCC	C-30-36-30-010-0060-0130	27deg 18'54.3"	81deg 21'12.8"	East of this parcel in r/w
Lake Francis	300 Cloverleaf Rd.	Lake Placid	BCC	C-14-36-29-020-0000-0390	27deg 20' 24.9"	81deg 23' 53.6"	West of this parcel in r/w
Lake Huntley	170 Anderson St.	Lake Placid	BCC	C-08-37-30-A00-0030-0000	27deg 16'27.3"	81deg 20'23.9"	Off SE corner of this parcel in r/w
	121 Lake Huntley Dr.	Lake Placid	BCC	C-08-37-30-050-0000-0120	27deg 16'23.2"	81deg 20'10.3"	Off SE corner of this parcel in r/w
Lake Istokpoga	621 Lakesedge Dr.	Lake Placid	BCC	C-20-36-30-090-0180-0110	27deg 25'09.2"	81deg 15'08.7"	West of this parcel in r/w
	65 Windy Point Rd.	Lake Placid	BCC	C-34-36-30-A00-0040-0000	27deg 18'24.4"	81deg 18'46.5"	North of this parcel in r/w
	Boggy Branch				27deg 20'14.9"	81deg 18'55.7"	
Lake June	10 Lake June Clubhouse Rd.	Lake Placid	BCC	C-25-36-29-A00-0240-0000	27deg 18'51.4"	81deg 22'21.8"	Within this parcel
Lake August					27deg 16'37.8"	81deg 24'46.0"	
Lake Persimmon	150 Hillside Dr.	Lake Placid	BCC	C-10-36-29-010-0060-0230	27deg 21' 17.6"	81deg 24' 14.7"	Within this parcel
Lake Placid	3349 Placid View Dr.	Lake Placid	BCC	C-24-37-29-010-00A0-0630	27deg 15'09.2"	81deg 22'39.8"	North of this parcel in r/w
	136 Benton Dr.	Lake Placid	BCC	C-08-37-30-020-0010-0130	27deg 16'07.6"	81deg 21'05.3"	Off NW corner of this parcel in r/w

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Appendix C Municipal and Improvement District Recreation Facilities Inventory

Map of Municipal and Improvement District Facilities

City of Avon Park Facilities

City of Sebring Facilities

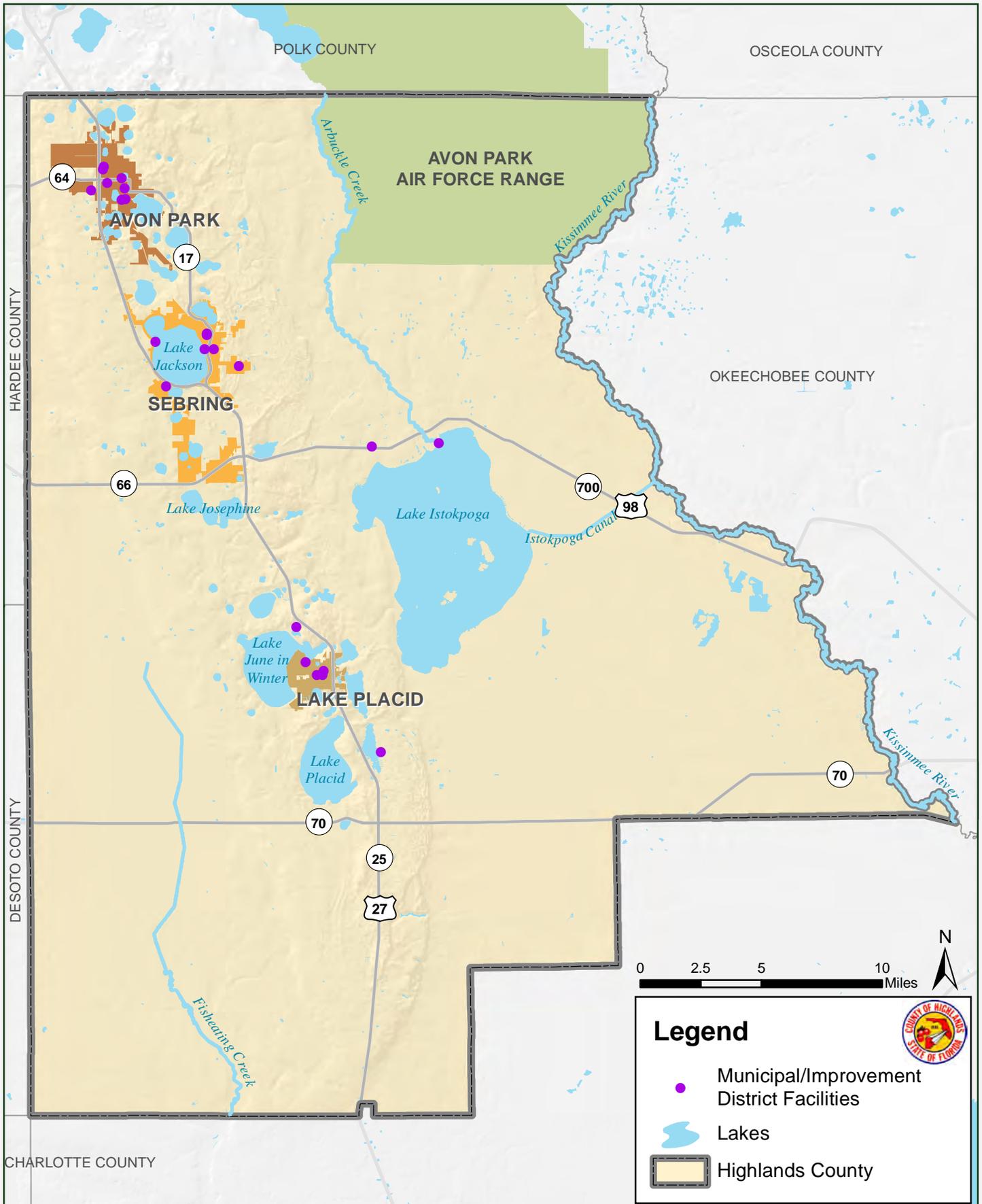
Town of Lake Placid Facilities

Spring Lake Improvement District Facilities

Sun 'N Lake Improvement District Facilities

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Municipal and Improvement District Facilities



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Appendix D Community Engagement Documentation

Workshop Sign-in Sheets

Workshop Presentation Materials

Community Survey

Highlands County Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Community Workshop

Bert J. Harris Jr. Agricultural Center

Sign-In Sheet

July 31, 2014 6:00 pm



Name	Would you like to be contacted about future workshops?	Mailing Address	Email Address
Kay Royce	Yes	594 Sunset Pointe Dr. L.P. 33852	rroyce@chcqa.com
Joe Eck	Yes	4311 NAVARRO AV SEBRING FL 33872	-
Sandra Foster	yes	2885 W. County Line Rd Avon Park, FL 33825	
Vicki Pontius	Yes	434A George Blvd Sebring, FL 33875	on file
Janet Hipe	No	4200 Ramiro St Sebring, FL 33872	
Bob Hummel	Yes	310 Sparrow Av Sebring, FL 33870	none
Tiffany Sauer	Yes	144 Crestmore Dr. Lakeland	tiptop89@yahoo.com
Ross Handrick	Yes	Po Box 325 Caledonia, FL 33862	





Highlands County Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Community Workshop

Bert J. Harris Jr. Agricultural Center

Sign-In Sheet

July 31, 2014 6:00 pm

Name	Would you like to be contacted about future workshops?	Mailing Address	Email Address
Rev. George Miller	yes	2029 Arbuckle Creek Rd SE Sebring, FL 33870	partormiller224@aol.com

Highlands County Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Community Workshop

Bert J. Harris Jr. Agricultural Center

Sign-In Sheet

July 31, 2014 6:00 pm



Name	Would you like to be contacted about future workshops?	Mailing Address	Email Address
Jim Pelland	Yes	1906 Shore Pk. Owen Park 33826	jap2247@aol.com
Berry Foster	Yes	colanradio@earthlink.net	863-382-9999
Tom Macklin	yes		863-453-7223 TMMACKLIN@YAHOO.COM
Tommy Macklin	yes		453-7223
Ken LeBlanc	Yes	241 N. Main Ave LP FL 33852	Ken@CottageLangumy.net
Ruthanne Barry	No	1616 Carrington Ave.	
Evelyn Colon	Yes		e_colon@bellsouth.net
Annette Hendricks	yes		

Highlands County Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Community Workshop

Bert J. Harris Jr. Agricultural Center

Sign-In Sheet

July 31, 2014 6:00 pm



Name	Would you like to be contacted about future workshops?	Mailing Address	Email Address
DONALD BOWDEN	YES	3202 SE HAYLERS ST AVALON PK 33825	m.f.f17s@hcbcc.org
Martin L.F. 175		4511 Vantage Circle Sebring, FL 33872	DALE.F.FLUE@Yahoo.com
DALE FFLUE	YES	3312 BEARTRON PARK SEBRING, FL 33872	ToddW Moore@aol.com
TODD W MOORE	YES	9434 Tappan Park Circle app. 317 Jacksonville Fla 32244	
Alphonso Koutos	YES	10 Meadowlark Dr., LP, 33852	jkoutos@mail.com
Jennifer Koutos	Yes		





Highlands County Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Community Workshop

Bert J. Harris Jr. Agricultural Center

Sign-In Sheet

July 31, 2014 6:00 pm

Name	Would you like to be contacted about future workshops?	Mailing Address	Email Address
ROBERT SUMMERS	yes	201 KANIER DR. LP. 33852	robertsummers@hthoneT
Greg Dunlop	yes	901 Jersey ST NE LP. 7133852	gdunlop13@gmail.com
Jedene Thayer	yes	1208 Cougar Blvd Sebring 33892	jthayer@htrbic.org
Bill Youngman	yes	1407 INDIAN PR SEBRING	J.B.YOUNGMAN@E-MAIL.COM
Merritt O'Brien	yes	2706 Greenacre Dr.	mfob32@aol.com

Highlands County Parks & Recreation Master Plan Community Workshop

Sebring Civic Center

Sign-In Sheet

November 6, 2014 6:00 pm



Name	Would you like to be contacted about future workshops?	Mailing Address	Email Address
Joedene Thayer	Yes	1208 Cougar Blvd. Sebring	JThayer@hcbcc.org
Gowmacke	no	609 E. Main St AURK	
Bob Hummel	yes	310 Sparrow Av Sebring 33870	none
Jennifer Koukus	Yes	10 Meadowlake Dr., Lake Placid 33872	j.koukus@mail.com
Patty Lloyd	yes	6511 A Lane Sebring 33875	pepsiholik@yahoo.com
Greg Can	Yes	1028 Glenwood Ave Sebring FL 33870	greg@gregcain.com
Phil William	Yes	311 West Interstate Blvd Lake Placid, FL	PhilWilliams.TownofLakePlacid@gmail.com

Highlands County Parks & Recreation Master Plan Community Workshop

Sebring Civic Center

Sign-In Sheet

November 6, 2014 6:00 pm



Name	Would you like to be contacted about future workshops?	Mailing Address	Email Address
VICKI PONTIUS	✓	HC BCC	ON FILE
MARK HILL	✓	HC BCC	ON FILE
DOR NOSTRUCHI	✓	EMPASSING 368 S. COMMERCE	scottmehlich@mysebring.com
Tiffany Green	✓	144 Crestmore Drive Lake Placid 33852	tiptop9@yahoo.com
JEFF SCHMUCKER		CFRPC	jschmuckter@cfrpc.org
MARIST BARMBY		CFRPC	mbarmby@cfrpc.org

Highlands County Parks & Recreation Master Plan Community Workshop

Sebring Civic Center

Sign-In Sheet

November 6, 2014 6:00 pm



Name	Would you like to be contacted about future workshops?	Mailing Address	Email Address
Susan Buchanan	✓	501 S. Commerce Ave Annex	sbuchans@hcbee.org
RICHARD RICHMOND		575 E. COTTON COT ST	richmond@cfrcpc.org
TODD W MOORE	✓		Todd.WMoore@aol.com



Highlands County Parks & Recreation Master Plan Community Workshop

Sebring Civic Center

Sign-In Sheet

November 6, 2014 6:00 pm

Name	Would you like to be contacted about future workshops?	Mailing Address	Email Address
Martin L. Fitts		4511 Vantage Circle, Sebring, FL 33870	mfitts@hcbcc.org



07-31-14

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan



July is Parks & Recreation Month!

RICK SCOTT
GOVERNOR

RECREATION AND PARKS MONTH

WHEREAS, parks and recreation programs enhance our quality of life by contributing to a healthy lifestyle, increasing communication skills, building self-esteem, teaching life skills, and providing places for enjoyment; and

WHEREAS, parks and recreation programs boost our economy, enhance property values, attract new business, increase tourism, and reduce crime; and

WHEREAS, recreation builds family unity, strengthens neighborhood involvement, offers opportunities for social interaction, enhances education, develops creativity, and promotes cultural diversity; and

WHEREAS, our parks and trails ensure ecological beauty, provide space to enjoy nature, help maintain clean air and water, and preserve plant and animal wildlife; and

WHEREAS, recreation, therapeutic recreation, and leisure education are essential to the rehabilitation of individuals who have been ill or disabled; and

WHEREAS, Florida recognizes the benefits derived from quality public and private recreation and park resources at the local and state level; and

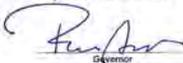
WHEREAS, to increase enjoyment for those individuals and families who want to enjoy a healthy environment, the State recognizes that patrons and wildlife deserve clean air and surroundings free from tobacco-related pollution and hazards; and

WHEREAS, local, state, and national parks located within the State of Florida contribute to the overall quality of life enjoyed by residents of and visitors to our State; and

WHEREAS, the National Recreation and Park Association and the Florida Recreation and Park Association designated July as Recreation and Parks Month;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Rick Scott, Governor of the State of Florida, do hereby extend greetings and best wishes to all observing July 2014 as Recreation and Parks Month.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Florida to be affixed at Tallahassee, the Capital, this 10th day of June, in the year two thousand fourteen.



GOVERNOR

THE CAPITOL
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399 • (850) 485-7771



Parks & Recreation for the future...

- **Develop a County-Wide Comprehensive Open Space, Parks and Recreation Plan**
- **Update the County's Trails Master Plan**
 - Blueways
 - Greenways
 - Equestrian Trails
 - Hiking Trails
 - Bicycle Trails

The Master Plan will...

- Plan for the provision of parkland, recreational areas and open space.
- Offer a range of active and passive recreational opportunities.
- Provide an adequate amount of parkland and open space where such facilities are most needed.

The Master Plan will include...

- Inventory of existing facilities, programs, & open space.
- Needs assessment and recreation survey.
- Community Input.
- Update of the Trails and Greenways Master Plan.
- Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- Public workshops and hearings for the proposed Master Plan.
- Final approval of Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

We want your ideas!

- **Discussion Groups**
 - Active and Passive Recreation
 - Recreation Programs
 - Park and Recreation Facilities
 - Connections

Next Steps

August 15, 2014:

- Survey Closes

October 2014:

- Open House to review the Draft Plan

Project Updates on Website:

- www.cfrpc.org/highlandsparksandrec

Please deposit “P&R Money” as you leave.



07-31-14

HIGHLANDS COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

Your input is needed!

Highlands County is developing a County-wide Open Space, Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Let us know your thoughts by completing the Community Survey and/or attending the Community Workshop.



<h4>Community Workshop</h4> <p>Thursday, July 31, 2014 at 6:00 PM Bert J. Harris, Jr. Agricultural Center 4509 George Blvd., Sebring, FL 33875</p>	<h4>Community Survey</h4> <p>Please complete the online survey by August 15, 2014 www.cfrpc.org/highlandsparksandrec</p>
--	--

11-06-14

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan & Trails Master Plan Update



November 6, 2014

The Master Plan will...

- Plan for the provision of parkland, recreational areas and open space.
- Offer a range of active and passive recreational opportunities.
- Provide an adequate amount of parkland and open space where such facilities are most needed.

11-06-14

Parks & Recreation for the future...

- **Develop a County-Wide Comprehensive Open Space, Parks and Recreation Plan**
- **Update the County's Trails Master Plan**
 - Blueways
 - Equestrian Trails
 - Hiking Trails
 - Bicycle Trails



The Master Plan will...

- Plan for the provision of parkland, recreational areas and open space.
- Offer a range of active and passive recreational opportunities.
- Provide an adequate amount of parkland and open space where such facilities are most needed.

11-06-14

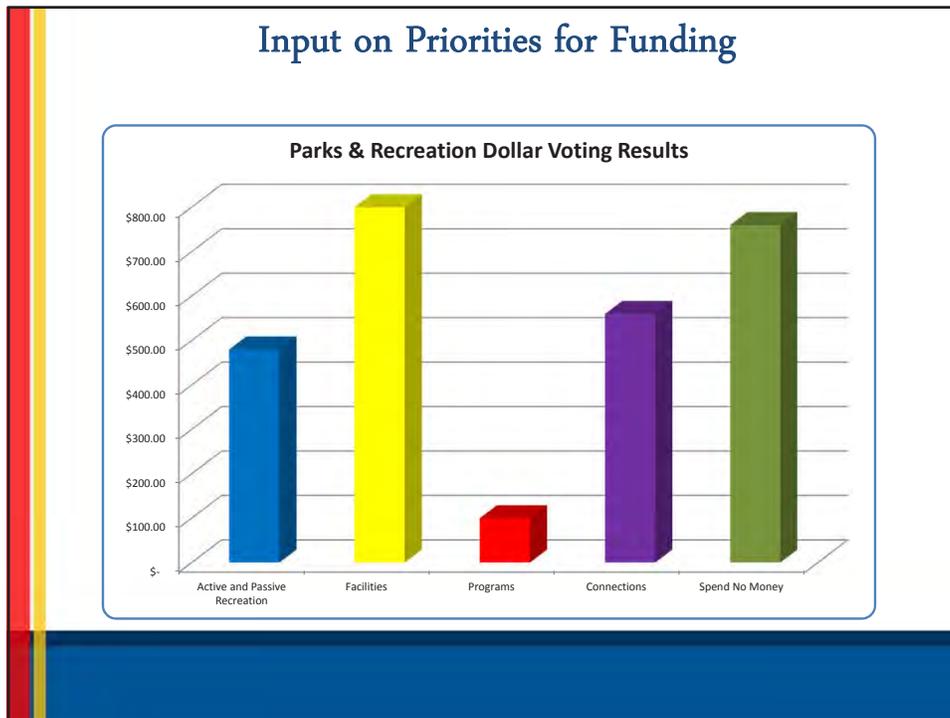
Developing the Master Plan...

- Inventory of existing facilities, programs, & open space.
- Needs assessment and recreation survey.
- Community Input.
- Update of the Trails Master Plan.
- Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- Public workshops and hearings for the proposed Master Plan.
- Final approval of Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

July 2014 Community Workshop

- **Discussion Groups**
 - Active and Passive Recreation
 - Recreation Programs
 - Park and Recreation Facilities
 - Connections

11-06-14



HIGHLANDS COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

Your input is needed!

Highlands County is developing a County-wide Open Space, Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Let us know your thoughts by completing the Community Survey and/or attending the Community Workshop.

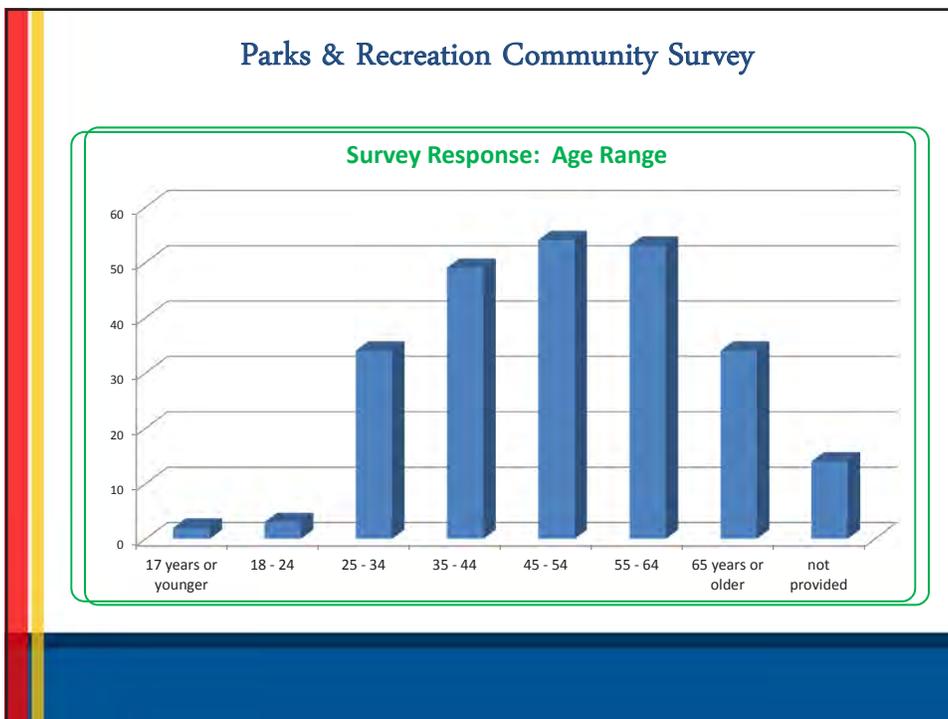
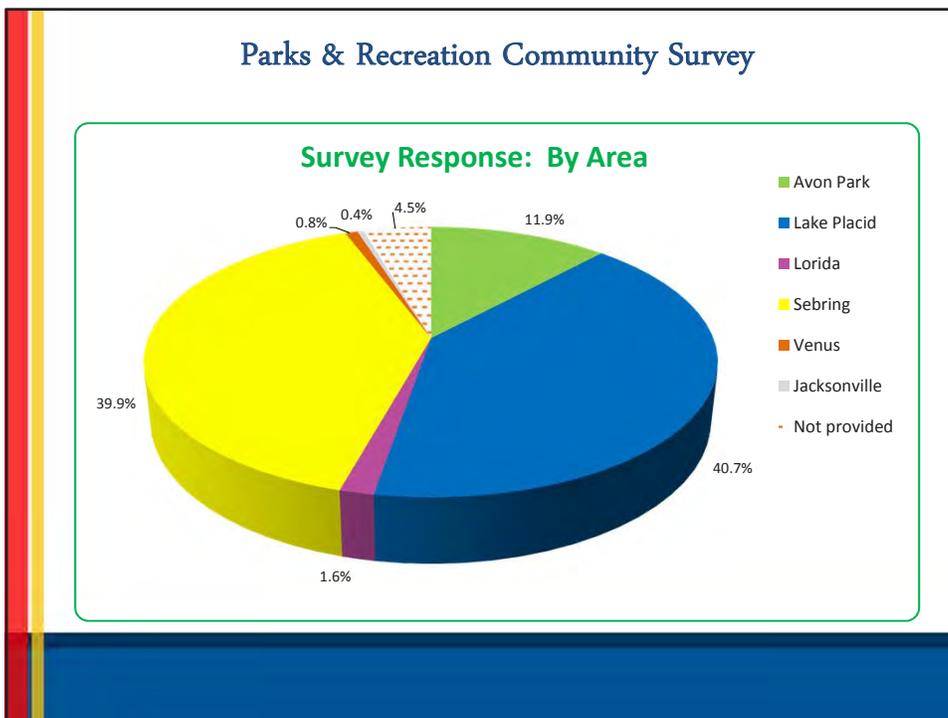
Community Workshop

Thursday, July 31, 2014 at 6:00 PM
Bert J. Harris, Jr. Agricultural Center
4509 George Blvd., Sebring, FL 33875

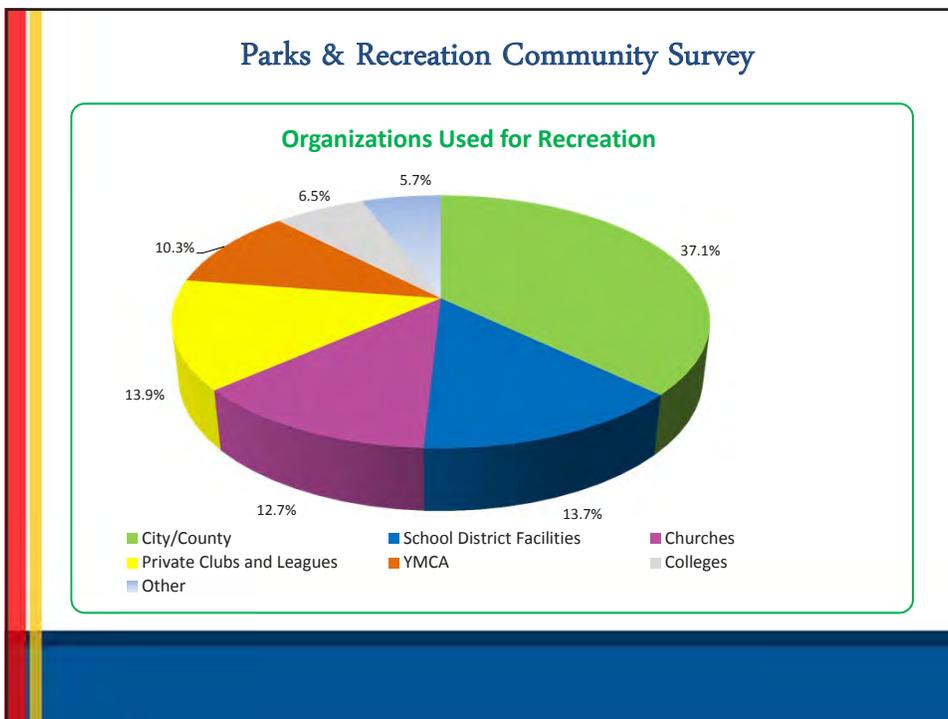
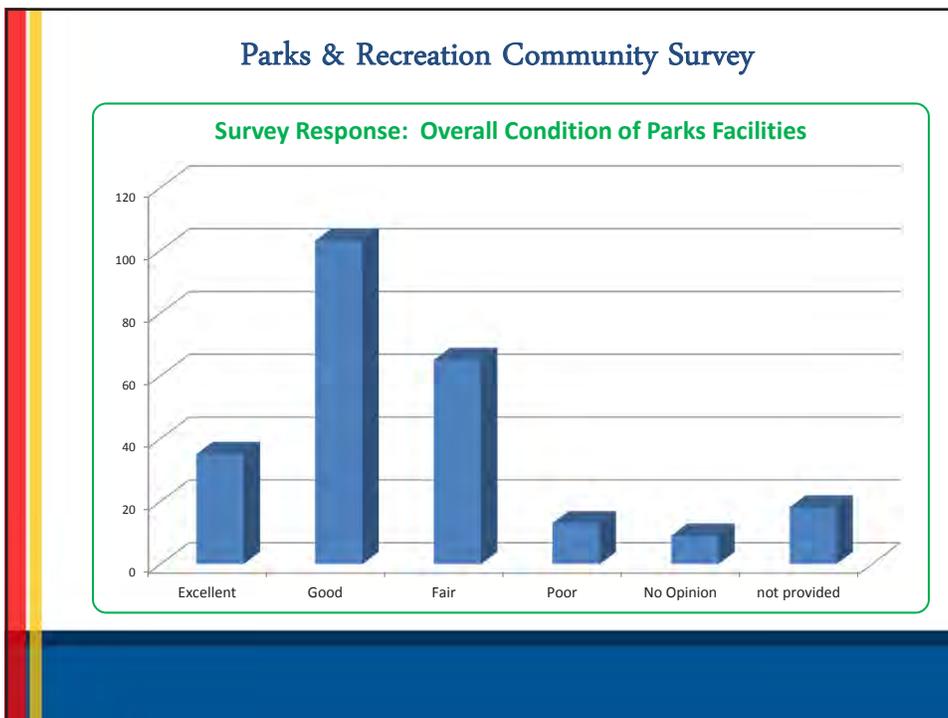
Community Survey

Please complete the online survey by August 15, 2014
www.cfrpc.org/highlandsparksandrec

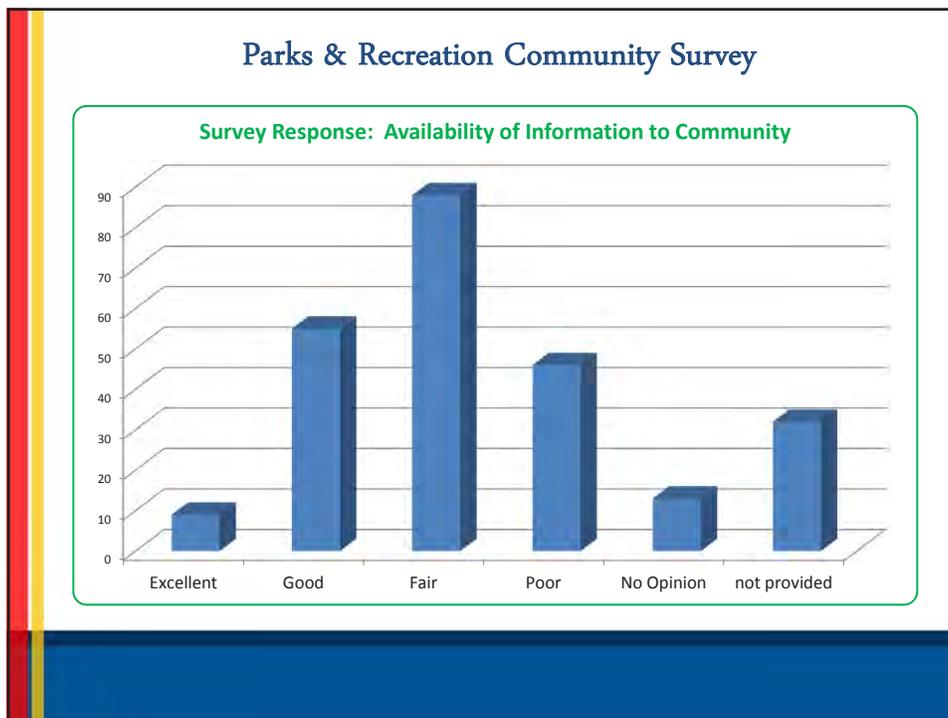
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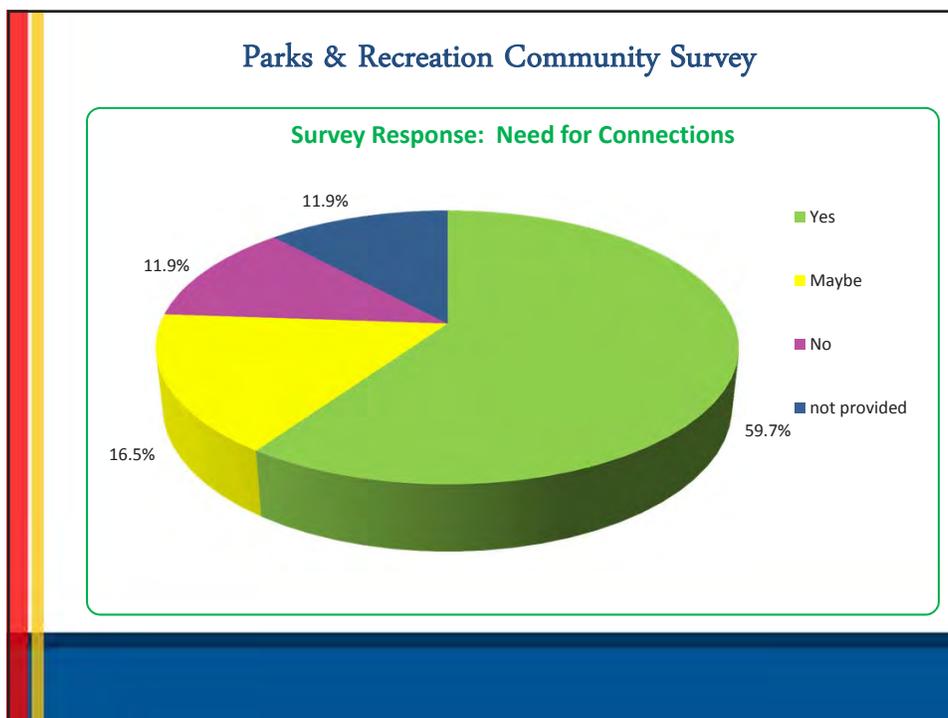
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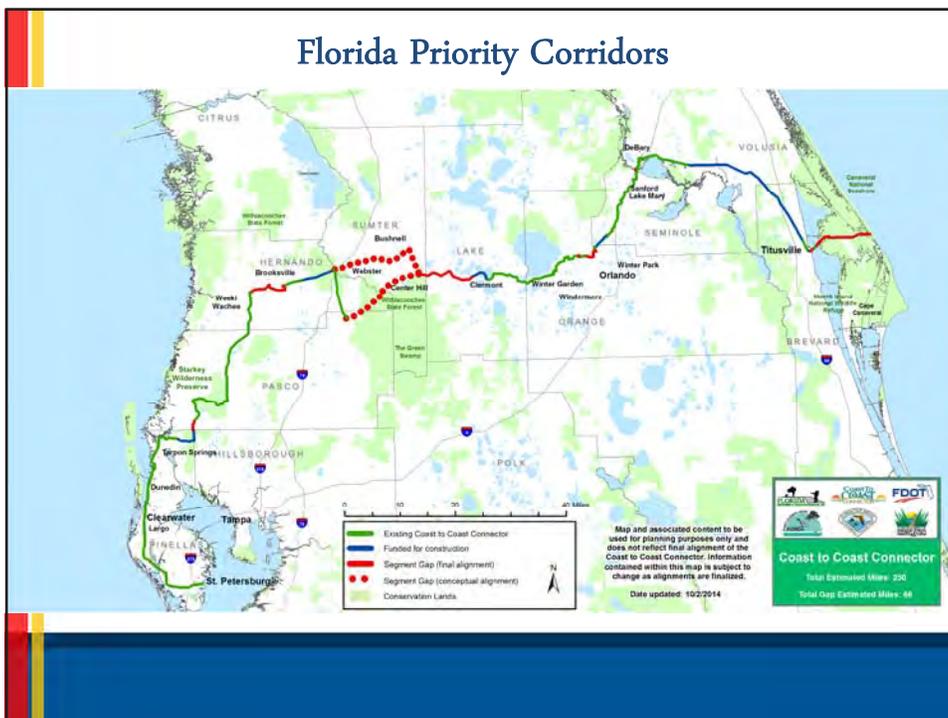
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11-06-14

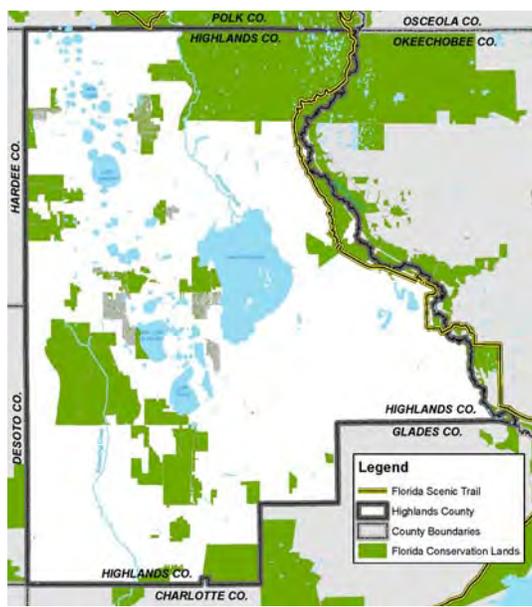


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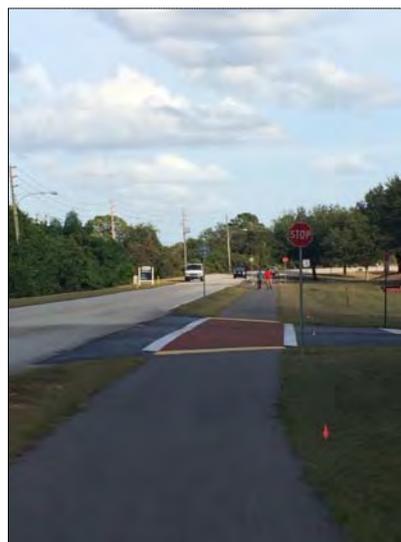
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Florida Priority Corridors: Highlands County Connection



Trail:

Linear corridor & any adjacent support parcels on land/water providing public access for recreation/authorized modes of transportation.



11-06-14

Trail Types

HIKING – Path used solely for backpacking or long distance hiking.

BICYCLE– Designated trail or system of trails used primarily for bicycling.

INTERPRETATIVE/NATURE – Trail designed or marked for nature interpretation and study.

EQUESTRIAN – Improved or unimproved trail designated and used primarily for horseback riding.

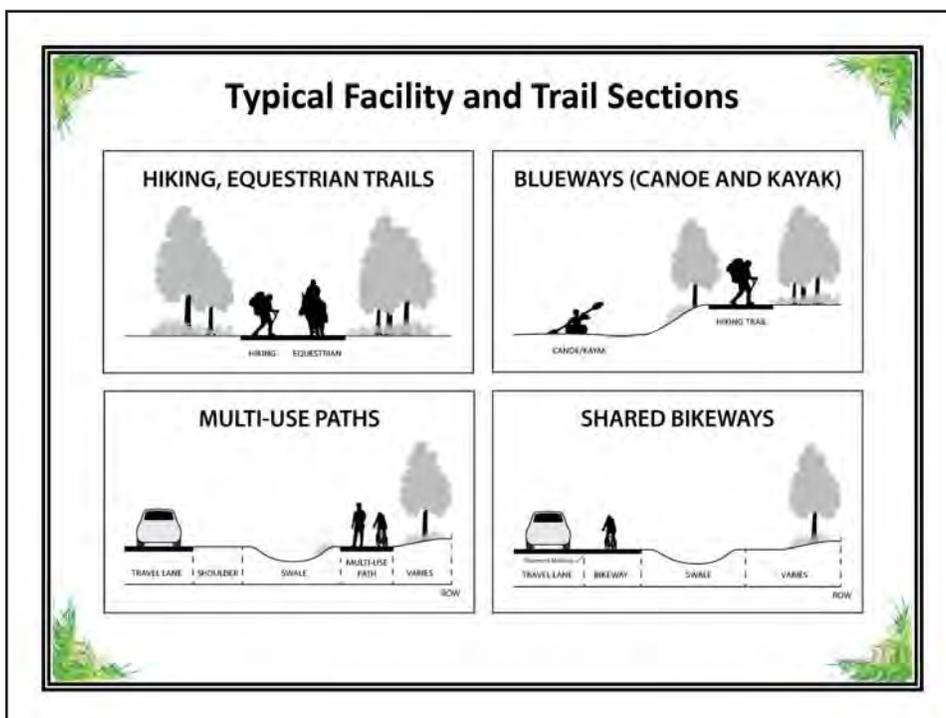
Trail Types

CANOE & KAYAK – Distance along most commonly used route on a designated or undesignated waterway used for canoeing.

EXERCISE PARCOURSE – Course designed generally for jogging, but may or may not have exercise stations.

MULTIPURPOSE, MULTI-USE, OR SHARED – Trail used for more than one of activity (hiking/bicycle/nature/equestrian/canoe & kayak).

11-06-14



Current Trails Plan:



11-06-14

Breakout Groups

Connectivity by Area

- *Avon Park, Sebring, Lake Placid*
 - *Priority Connections*
- *Connectivity to other counties*

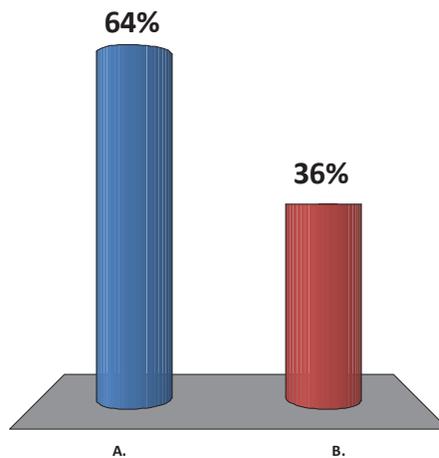
Voting

Which is most important to you?

11-06-14

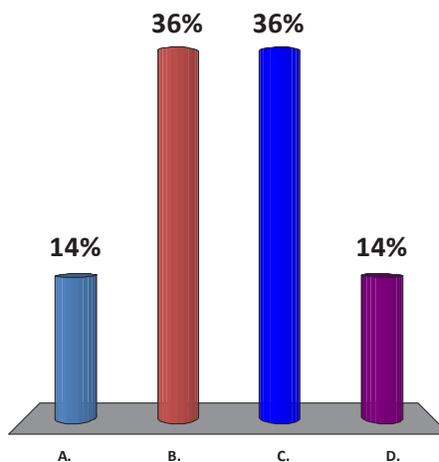
Do you think I'm cute?

- A. Yes
- B. No

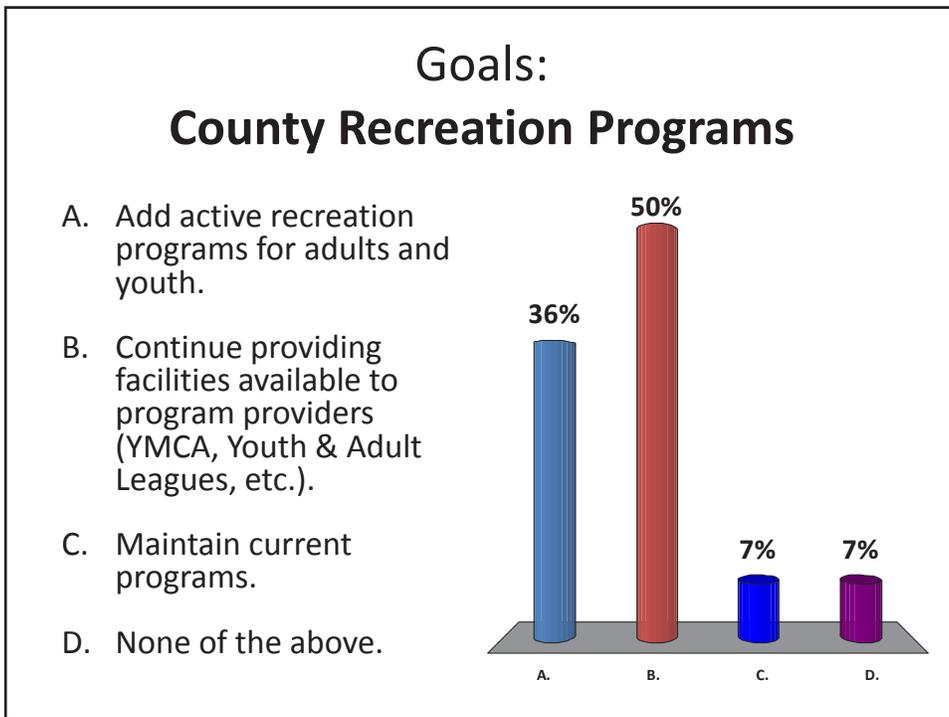
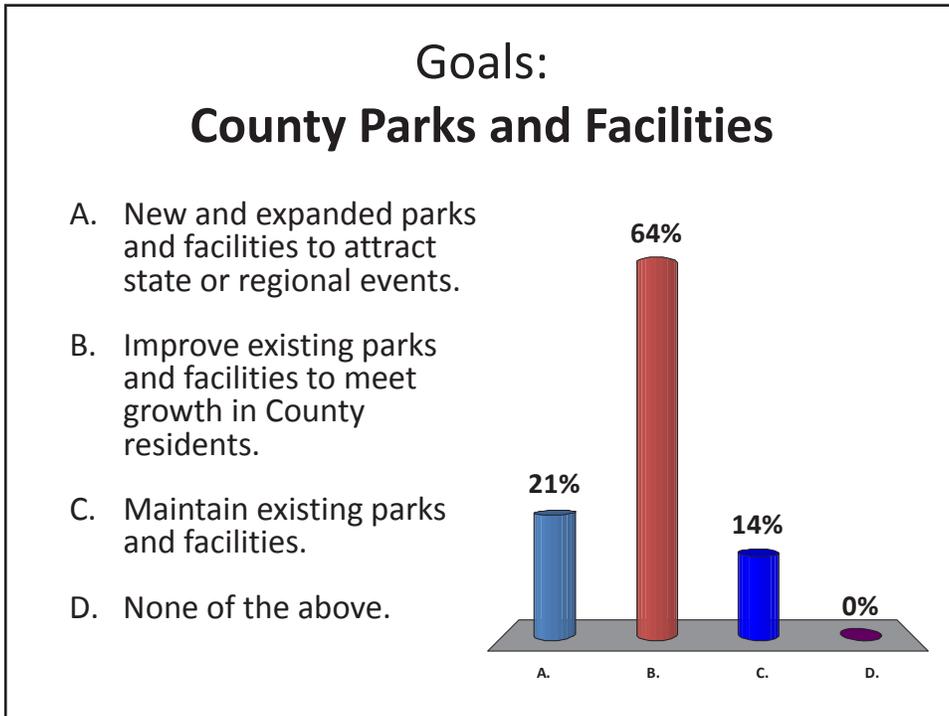


Where would you like to be this evening?

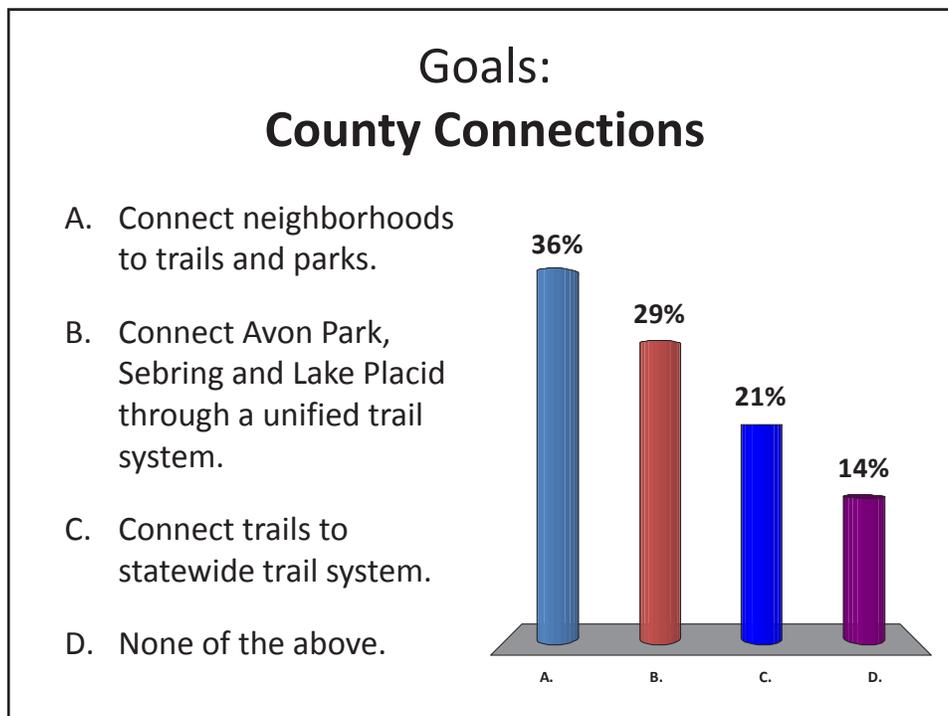
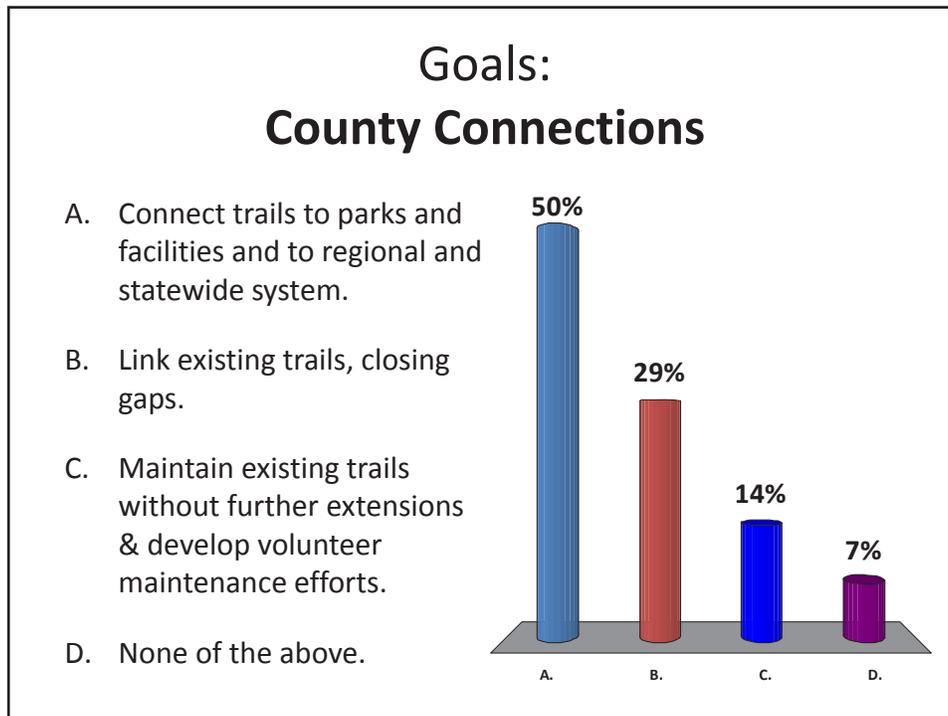
- A. Taking a walk
- B. Eating dinner
- C. On the couch
- D. Here!!



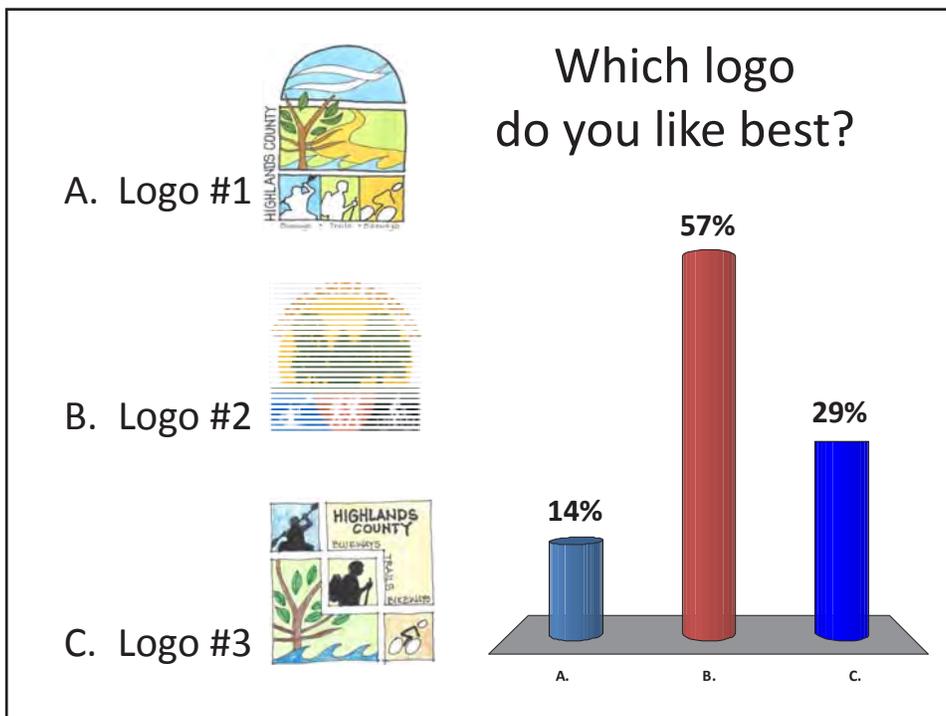
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11-06-14



Thank you for your input!

11-06-14

Next Steps

Project Contact Information:

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Highlands County Parks & Recreation

Survey

1. Do you live in Highlands County?

- Yes
- No

2. If you answered "yes" to Question 1, do you live in Highlands County more than 6 months out of the year?

- Yes
- No

3. What area of the County do you live?

(Please enter your zipcode)

4a. Which of the following best describes your age range?

4b. How many children below the age of 18 live in your household?

5. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

6. How would you rate the overall condition of the parks and recreation facilities you or members of your household have visited within Highlands County in the past 12 months?

7. Have you or other members of your household participated in any recreation or sports activities or programs offered at Highlands County facilities in the past 12 months?

(If yes, please answer Questions 7a, 7b and 7c; If no, please go to Question 8)

- Yes
- No

7a. Approximately how many different recreation or sports activities or programs have you or members of your household participated in over the past 12 months?

7b. Please list the recreation or sports activities or programs you or members of your household have participated in over the past 12 months. *(ie. baseball, softball, basketball, tennis, swimming, walking trails, fishing, boating, etc.).*

7c. How would you rate the overall quality of activities or programs that you and members of your household have participated in?

8. Which park(s) have you or members of your household used during the past 12 months? *Please*

Quick Links

- [→ Home](#)
- [→ Workshops](#)

Contact Us

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Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

7/24/2015

Survey | Highlands County Parks & Recreation

mark all that apply

Facilities

Avon Park Facilities

- Avon Park Recreation Center
- Head Field Complex
- Walnut Street Park
- Activities Club
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Field (Memorial Field)
- Lucy Derkman Softball Complex
- Durrah Martin Complex
- Donaldson Park Tennis Courts
- Aline McWhite Basketball Courts

Sebring Facilities

- Veterans Beach Park
- Skate Park
- Sebring Golf Course
- City Hall Tennis Court
- City Pier
- Charlie Brown Park
- Gabe White Park

Lake Placid Facilities

- Lake June Park/Sports Complex
- John's Park
- Stuart Park
- Devane Park

Highlands County Facilities

- HL Bishop Park
- Lincoln Heights
- Venus Ball Field
- Multi Sports Complex
- DeSoto Ball Field
- Martin Luther King Park
- Lorida Ball Field

Nature Trails

- The Preserve of Sun 'N Lake
- Lake Istokpoga Park
- Hammock Trail

Boat Ramp Facilities

Avon Park Boat Ramps

- Arbuckle Creek (Burnt Out Bridge)
- Lake Damon
- Lake Glenada
- Lake Lelia
- Little Lake Bonnet
- Lake Lotela
- Lake Pioneer
- Lake Adelaide
- Lake Denton
- Lake Isabelle
- Lake Letta
- Little Lake Redwater
- Lake Olivia

<http://www.cfrpc.org/highlandsparksandrec/survey/>

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Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

7/24/2015

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Lake Viola

Sebring Boat Ramps

- Arbuckle Creek (6401 E. Arbuckle Creek Rd)
- Dinner Lake
- Istokpoga Park
- Lake Josephine (Sentinal Point)
- Lake Josephine (425 Lake Josephine Shore Rd)
- Lake Josephine (2430 Oak Beach Blvd)
- Red Beach Lake
- Lake Sebring
- Wolf Lake

Lorida Boat Ramps

- Lake Istokpoga (off Cow House Rd)
- Lake Josephine (Sentinal Point)

Lake Placid Boat Ramps

- Lake Apthorpe
- Lake Carrie
- Lake Clay (East side)
- Lake Clay (West side)
- Lake Huntley (end of Anderson St)
- Lake Huntley (123 Lake Huntley Dr)
- Lake Francis
- Lake Istokpoga Windy Point
- Lake Istokpoga Boggy Branch
- Lake June - H.L. Bishop Park
- Lake Placid (3349 Placid View Dr)
- Lake Placid (150 Harris Dr)
- Lake Persimmon

9. From the following list, please mark ALL the organizations that you or members of your household have used for indoor and outdoor recreation and sports activities in the last 12 months.

- School District Facilities
- Colleges
- Churches
- Private clubs (tennis, health, fitness, golf)
- Private youth sports leagues
- YMCA
- City of Avon Park
- City of Sebring
- Town of Lake Placid
- Highlands County facilities
- Other (please explain)

10. Please check ALL the ways you learn about parks and recreation facilities and activities.

- Avon Park Website
- Sebring Website
- Lake Placid Website
- Highlands County Website
- Newspaper Articles
- From friends and neighbors
- Other (please explain)

11. How would you rate the availability of information to the community about recreation offerings in Highlands County?



Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

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Survey | Highlands County Parks & Recreation

12. How can the Highlands County parks and recreation system be improved? Please mark your top TWO (2) choices.

- Acquiring land for future parks
- Developing new passive parks (greenways, multi-use paths, picnic shelters, boat ramps, bird watching)
- Developing new active parks (baseball, football, soccer, tennis, swimming, skateboard, etc.)
- Upgrading existing passive parks
- Upgrading existing active parks
- Building major new facilities (please specify below)*
- Acquiring natural areas
- Providing recreation programs and activities
- Other (please specify below)*

13. As Highlands County works to acquire and/or develop parks and recreation purposes, there are many options regarding the way parks can be used. Please rank the following options that your household would support most. (1 = most support, 5 = least support)

- ▼ Passive recreation
- ▼ Active recreation
- ▼ Both passive and active recreation
- ▼ Leave undeveloped
- ▼ The County should not seek to acquire and/or develop parks

14. Recreation programs and facilities serve various purposes within the county, some of which are listed below. Please rate how essential your household believes each purpose is to Highlands County by marking the corresponding number. (5 = Essential, 4 = Very Valuable, 3 = Somewhat Valuable, 2 = Not Valuable, 1 = No Opinion)

- ▼ Providing recreational opportunities for children
- ▼ Providing recreational opportunities for teens
- ▼ Providing recreational opportunities for adults
- ▼ Providing recreational opportunities for seniors
- ▼ Helping to improve the physical health of residents
- ▼ Creating links to open space opportunities

15. Please indicate if you or any member of your household has a need for each of the recreation and sports programs listed below. (If Yes, please rate how well your needs are met for the that program)

15a. Youth Swim Lessons

Do you have need for this program?

- Yes
- No

If Yes you have a need, how well are your needs being met?

15b. Youth Summer Camp

Do you have need for this program?

- Yes
- No

If Yes you have a need, how well are your needs being met?

15c. Youth Sports

Do you have need for this program?

- Yes
- No



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If Yes you have a need, how well are your needs being met?

15d. Youth Fitness & Wellness

Do you have need for this program?

Yes

No

If Yes you have a need, how well are your needs being met?

15e. Youth Tennis Lessons & Leagues

Do you have need for this program?

Yes

No

If Yes you have a need, how well are your needs being met?

15f. Youth Golf Lessons & Leagues

Do you have need for this program?

Yes

No

If Yes you have a need, how well are your needs being met?

15g. Adult Fitness & Wellness

Do you have need for this program?

Yes

No

If Yes you have a need, how well are your needs being met?

15h. Adult Sport Lessons & Leagues

Do you have need for this program?

Yes

No

If Yes you have a need, how well are your needs being met?

15i. Adult Programs for 55 years or older

Do you have need for this program?

Yes

No

If Yes you have a need, how well are your needs being met?

15j. Adult Tennis Lessons & Leagues

Do you have need for this program?

Yes

No

If Yes you have a need, how well are your needs being met?

<http://www.cfrpc.org/highlandsparksandrec/survey/>

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Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

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15k. Adult Golf Lessons and Leagues

Do you have need for this program?

- Yes
 No

If Yes you have a need, how well are your needs being met?

15l. Programs for people with disabilities

Do you have need for this program?

- Yes
 No

If Yes you have a need, how well are your needs being met?

16. In your opinion, is there a need to provide a connection between neighborhoods and parks and recreation facilities?

17. In your opinion, the most important addition or improvement to the Highlands County Parks and Recreation activities, programs or facilities would be:

18. Would you be interested in Highlands County providing additional recreation activities or programs if there was an additional fee?

Send



Designed by [Central Florida Regional Planning Council](#).



Appendix E Definitions

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

ACTIVITY-BASED RECREATION

Recreation facilities provided for a specific game or sport such as basketball, baseball, soccer, swimming, hiking, boating, etc. which involves specialized physical manipulation by the participant. These facilities are usually geared toward team sports or special events and are managed for frequent and scheduled use. These types of facilities are typically located in neighborhood, community, district and special use parks and sometimes located within large resource-based parks as well.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN WAYS

Any road, path or way which is open to bicycle travel and traffic afoot and from which motor vehicles are excluded.

BOAT RAMP PARK

A park associated with a water resource that includes launching ramps for boating.

BUFFER AREA

An area, or space, separating an outdoor recreation area from influences that would tend to depreciate essential recreational values of the recreation area, or where the outside influences are of a particularly harsh and incompatible nature, as in urban or industrial areas, or along a busy highway.

COMMUNITY PARK

A park located near major roadways, designed to serve the needs of more than one neighborhood. Community parks usually provide a wide range of athletic or team sports opportunities as well as cultural and artistic programs and services. Recreational facilities in community parks should be designed for flexibility along with specific uses allowing the recreation provider to respond to changing recreation programming trends. Community parks are often located adjacent to public schools or other activity centers.

COMPATIBLE RECREATION ACTIVITIES

These are recreational activities that do not interfere with each other and which are not harmful to the environment.

CONCURRENCY

The necessary public facilities and services to maintain the adopted level of service standards are available when the impacts of development occur.

CONSERVATION USES

Activities or conditions within areas designated for the purpose of conserving or protecting natural resources or environmental quality, including areas designated for such purposes as flood control, protection of quality or quantity of groundwater or surface water, floodplain management, commercially or recreationally valuable fish and shellfish, or protection of vegetative communities or wildlife habitats.

DISTRICT PARK

A park serving many communities or larger geographical area of the County. District parks can be associated with a natural resource area or serve as a major activity center for sports and active recreation.

ECOTOURISM

Tourism based principally upon natural and archaeological/historical resources; that segment of tourism that involves traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific object of admiring, studying and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural features (both past and present) found in these areas.

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

FLORIDA GREENWAYS AND TRAILS SYSTEM

Statewide system proposed to link natural areas, open spaces and trails in Florida, consisting of large or medium-sized hubs, smaller sites and extensive to small connective landscape features.

FLORIDA SCENIC HIGHWAY

Any public road on the State Highway System that is so designated by the Department of Transportation pursuant to Section 335.093, F.S.

FUNDING ASSISTANCE

The awarding of funds for assistance in financing the acquisition and development of a recreation project.

- **COST SHARING**—The awarding of funds for financial assistance for the acquisition and development of a recreation project, which is matched in varying amounts by the project's sponsor.
- **MATCHING BASIS** – The awarding of funds for financial assistance in the acquisition and development of a recreation project that is matched equally by the project's sponsor.

GREENWAY

A linear open space established along either a natural corridor, such as a riverfront, stream valley, or ridgeline, or over land along a railroad right-of-way converted to recreational use, a canal. A scenic road, or other route; any natural or landscaped course for pedestrian or bicycle passage; an open space connector linking parks, nature reserves, cultural features, or historic sites with each other and populated areas; or a local strip or linear park designated as a parkway or greenbelt.

INDOOR RECREATION

Recreation activities that are provided primarily in buildings or community centers.

LAND ACQUISITION

Obtaining land and related resources for public recreation by various means.

LAND PURCHASE

The acquisition of land and related resources in which title to the property is obtained by transaction involving payment to the grantor.

LEVEL OF SERVICE

An indicator of the extent or degree of service provided by, or proposed to be provided by a facility based on and related to the operational characteristics of the facility. Level of service shall indicate the capacity per unit of demand for each public facility.

LINEAR PARK

A park usually associated with a greenway, established along wither a natural corridor or trails such as a riverfront, stream valley, or ridgeline or over land along a railroad right-of-way converted to recreational use.

MANAGEMENT AREA

An area devoted to specialized management for either game (wildlife management area) or sport fish (fish management area), or other special natural resources.

MITIGATION BANKING

Preserving, restoring, or enhancing wetland areas for the purpose of setting them aside to compensate for future conversions of wetlands for development activities.

MULTI-PURPOSE RECREATION FACILITY

A recreation facility that is designed for more than one activity use; e.g. athletic field, racquetball/handball court, community center.

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

A park that serves the population of a neighborhood and is generally accessible by bicycle or pedestrian ways. Neighborhood parks could include practice areas, green spaces, or playing courts for drop-in games of all types. Neighborhood parks should provide a balance of active and resource based facilities and designed for causal play with very little programming.

OPEN SPACE

Undeveloped lands suitable for some types of recreation activities or conservation uses.

OUTDOOR RECREATION

The pursuit of leisure-time activities that occur in an outdoor setting.

OUTDOOR RECREATION RESOURCES

Those natural resources used for the support of outdoor recreation, such as land, water, wildlife, natural scenery, etc.

PARTICIPANT ACTIVITIES

Those recreation activities that involve direct participation, either active (as in the case of swimming) or passive (as in the case of nature study), by the individual.

PASSIVE RECREATION

Passive recreation is typically associated with quiet, non-obtrusive facilities. Such activities are more mental than physical and include sightseeing, nature study, scenic appreciation, picnicking or cultural interpretation. Passive recreation may be provided at either an activity-based park or a resource-based park.

PLAYGROUND

A recreation area with play apparatus.

POCKET PARKS (MINI PARKS)

Pocket parks serve as the local park within neighborhoods or are small urban green spaces that provide a park atmosphere. Natural or landscaped these parks are usually located within built-up areas.

PRIVATE RECREATION SITES

Sites owned by private, commercial or non-profit entities available to the public for purposes of recreational use.

PUBLIC ACCESS

The ability of the public to physically reach, enter or use recreation sites including beaches and shores.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

Transportation systems or facilities, sewer systems or facilities, solid waste systems or facilities, drainage systems or facilities, potable water systems or facilities, educational systems or facilities, parks and recreation systems or facilities and public health systems or facilities.

PUBLIC LANDS

Any lands in the state that are owned by, leased by, or otherwise assigned to the state, counties, municipalities or any of its agencies and which are used by the general public for recreation purposes.

PUBLIC RECREATION SITES

Sites owned or leased on a long-term basis by a federal, state, regional or local government agency for purposes of recreational use.

Highlands County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

RECREATION ACTIVITY

A specific, individual type of recreation. Recreational activities may be active or passive.

RECREATION FACILITIES

Those improvements or artificially installed accessories that facilitate the use of an area or a resource for outdoor recreation.

RECREATION PLAN

An overall framework for the planning and provision of balanced recreation opportunities for potential and actual users.

RECREATION PROGRAM

An ongoing series of related and coordinated efforts designed to further a common recreation purpose.

RECREATION SUPPLIER

An agency, organization, group, or individual, either public or private, with a broad area of responsibility for providing public recreation, distinguished on the basis of both the nature of the supplier and the nature of the recreation supplied. Six categories of recreation suppliers have been defined: federal and state government, county and municipal government, private commercial enterprise, private non-profit, private club and private un-inventoried.

RECREATION SYSTEM

A purposeful assemblage of physical units or elements made up of recreation areas, resources, and facilities designed to meet the demands of a given segment of the public.

RECREATION USE

The use of recreation areas, resources, or facilities in the purpose for which they were intended.

RECREATION USER

One who uses recreation areas, resources, or facilities.

REGIONAL PARK

A park that is designed to serve countywide or even multiple counties. Regional parks are usually located in areas of diverse natural resources. Regional parks are located based on the resource.

RESOURCE-BASED RECREATION

Outdoor recreation dependent on certain specific outdoor recreation resources, contrasted with “user-oriented” recreation. For this plan, these activities include such activities as bicycle riding, boating, camping, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, nature study, off-highway picnicking, freshwater swimming, visiting archaeological and historical sites.

RESOURCE (FACILITY) REQUIREMENTS

The total amount of recreation resources (facilities) necessary to accommodate the total recreation demand at any given time.

USER-ORIENTED RECREATION

Recreation opportunities that can be placed at the convenience of the user to take advantage of proximity to population centers. May be either “user-oriented” or “resource-based” depending on the setting they utilize and the conjunctive values involved, as with the case of swimming, bicycling, picnicking, camping, etc.