

Greenspace Manual

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OBJECTIVES OF THE GREENSPACE PLAN

The objective was to develop a long-range vision that:

- Has broad-based public consensus
- Identifies greenspace needs in newly developing areas
- Identifies opportunities for linkages and partnerships
- Provides recreation opportunities for all residents
- Includes a comprehensive variety of facility types
- Protects targeted natural communities
- Creates opportunities for recreation and education programs
- Accommodates changing demographics
- Respects individual neighborhood needs
- Develops an implementation strategy
- Establishes priorities for land acquisition and park development

Elements of the plan include:

- The long-range vision for Collier County's greenspace system, which includes identification of proposed parks, greenways, trails and open spaces
- The cost to implement and operate the vision
- The top priorities and strategies for funding these priorities.
- Natural resource management strategies
- Top priority projects that could be completed in the near future

Our development of a vision and implementation strategy for the Collier County Greenspace System began with an idealized, prototyped model based on visions from other communities. The model (**Exhibit 1**) shows that an ideal system is comprised of a variety of



Exhibit 1 - The Greenspace Model

parks, natural lands, urban open spaces and other greenspace "nodes," linked by a network of greenways, trails, bikeways and other greenspace "connectors." The task of this study was to determine what variation of the model is appropriate to meet the specific needs and priorities of residents in Collier County, and to determine the most effective means of implementing the model.



FACILITY NAME	TYPE	ACRES	PARKING	RESTROOMS	BEACH ACCESS	PLAYGROUND	PICNIC TABLES	PICNIC SHELTER / PAVILION	OPEN FIELD / SPACE		BASEBALL/SOFTBALL	BASKETBALL
Frank E. Mackle Community Park	Public-Community	29	X	X		X	X	X				1
Marco Island Racquet Club	Public-Community	5	X	X								
Winterberry Park	Public-Community	5	X								1	
Leigh Plummer Park	Public-Neighborhood	5	X									
M. Jane Hittler Park	Public-Open Space	0.25	X									
Tommie Barfield Elementary School	School-Neighborhood	3	X								1	
YMCA	Private-Community	9	X	X		1					1	1

Source: Recreation facility data provided by City of Marco Island
 * Managed by Collier County

Exhibit 3 - City of Marco Island Park Facilities Analysis Source: Marco Island Parks and Open Space Master Plan

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

To test our model, we analyzed the following components of Collier County's existing Greenspace system:

1. Parks
2. Natural Lands
3. Linkages

EXISTING PARKS

A total of 45 Community, Neighborhood, and Open Space Parks are managed by the County for a total of 1,235 acres. Private recreation providers such as condominiums, hotels, churches, and non-profit nature centers provide additional recreation opportunities including swimming pools, tennis courts, basketball courts, trails, and community center facilities.

Furthermore, other facilities throughout southwest Florida managed by the City of Naples, Marco Island, the State of Florida and the federal government are available to Collier County residents. **Exhibit 2** provides a detailed inventory of the County's Community Parks, Neighborhood Parks and urban open spaces, as well as regional and private recreation facilities. The total acreage and types of recreation activities available within the County's recreation system are included.

Larger Community Parks, as well as well-maintained beach access points generally characterize the County's existing park system. For the most part, the County has not been in "the business" of creating and maintaining Neighborhood Parks. Most existing Neighborhood Parks are city parks, owned and managed by the City of Naples or Marco Island (**Exhibit 3**). This trend, however, is beginning to change through the County's Neighborhood Park Assistance Program - a program where a neighborhood can request the creation of a Neighborhood Park. Currently, this program creates one new County Neighborhood Park per year.

FACILITY NAME	TYPE	ACRES	PARKING	RESTROOMS	WATER/BEACH ACCESS	PLAYGROUND	PICNIC AREA	OPEN FIELD / SPACE	BASEBALL/SOFTBALL	BASKETBALL	RACQUET / HANDBALL
Eagle Lakes Community Park	Public-Community	32	X	X		1	X	X	2	1	
East Naples Community Park	Public-Community	47	X	X		1	X	X	1	4	4
Golden Gate Community Park	Public-Community	35	X	X		1	X		4	2	4
Gulf Coast Community Park	Public-Community	5	X	X		1	X		2		
Immokalee Community Park	Public-Community	23	X	X		1	X	X	3	3	2
Max A. Hasse Jr. Community Park	Public-Community	20	X	X		1	X	X	4	1	
Pelican Bay Community Park	Public-Community	15	X	X		1	X	X	1	1	4
Tony Rosbough Community Park	Public-Community	6.8	X	X					2		
Veterans Community Park	Public-Community	40	X	X		1	X		4	2	4
Vineyards Community Park	Public-Community	35.5	X	X		1	X		2	2	4
Golden Gate Aquatic Complex	Public-Special Use			X							
Immokalee Sports Complex	Public-Special Use	14	X	X						1	
Barefoot Beach County Park	Public-Beach Access	342	X	X	X						
Barefoot Beach Beach Access	Public-Beach Access	5	X	X	X		X				
Clam Pass County Park	Public-Beach Access	35	X	X	X						
North Gulf Shore Boulevard Beach	Public-Beach Access	0.5	X		X						
Tiger Tail Beach County Park	Public-Beach Access	32	X	X	X	1	X				
South Marco Beach	Public-Beach Access	3	X		X						
Vanderbilt Beach County Park	Public-Beach Access	5	X		X						
Bayview Park	Public-Water Access	4.2	X	X	2*	1	X				
Caxambas Bay	Public-Water Access	4.2	X	X	2*		X	X			
Cocohatchee River Park	Public-Water Access	7.2	X	X	4*	1	X	X			
Lake Trafford Park	Public-Water Access	2.3			1*		X				
State Road 951 Boat Ramp	Public-Water Access	0.5	X		2*						
Aaron Lutz	Public-Neighborhood	3.2	X			1	X	X		1	
Coconut Circle	Public-Neighborhood	1.2	X			1	X	X		1	
Copeland Park	Public-Neighborhood	0.5				1					
Dreamland	Public-Neighborhood	0.5				1					
East Naples Tot Lot	Public-Neighborhood	0.3				1					
Rita Eaton Neighborhood Park	Public-Neighborhood	5				1		X			
Immokalee Airport Park	Public-Neighborhood	5	X	X		1	X				

Exhibit 2 - Collier County Park Facility Analysis Source: Collier County Park and Recreation Department

The following are some additional general observations and issues regarding existing park facilities:

1. Collier's Community Parks are generally in good condition and appear to be well-attended;
2. Collier's newest Community Park, Eagle Lakes Park, is a state of the art, high quality facility that can be used as a model for future development of active parks;
3. Because of the growing demand for active facilities in the urban areas, Community Parks are in danger of losing multipurpose open space in favor of sports fields and other recreational facilities;
4. Some prime beaches are limited to members only (such as Residents Beach in Marco Island);
5. Many beach areas have limited parking, such as South Beach in Marco;
6. Boat ramp access is probably adequate - user surveys are needed to verify the adequacy of existing boat ramps and related parking areas;
7. Walking access to the beach is difficult in some areas, and there are limited direct routes from neighborhoods;
8. The parks system already takes advantage of partnerships with the School Board - such as the joint use / programs at East Naples Community Park;
9. Not every resident has easy access to a Neighborhood or Community Park.



Playgrounds are one of the many pieces of Collier County's recreational facilities.



NATURAL LANDS

Collier County has a variety of natural upland and wetland habitats. Since early settlers began colonizing the area in the middle nineteenth century, much of the upland habitats have been converted to agricultural uses, residential or mixed-use development. The majority of development has occurred in the western side of the County associated with the US 41 and I-75 corridors. Approximately 60% - 70% of the County has been preserved in its natural state by the federal, state and private agencies. The majority of preserved or protected lands occur in the following areas (See **Exhibit 4**):

1. Big Cypress National Preserve
2. Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge
3. Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve
4. Picayune Strand State Forest
5. Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary
6. CREW Trust Lands
7. Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
8. Ten Thousand Islands Aquatic Preserve and National Wildlife Refuge
9. Everglades National Park
10. Collier Seminole State Park
11. Several state, local and private preserves along the gulf coast and beaches
12. Collier County regulatory overlay zones over areas of environmental concern [Natural Resource Protection Areas (NRPA)].

The parks and wildlife refuges were designated to restore the

Everglades ecosystem, protect water quality and aquifer recharge, and protect listed species, such as the Florida panther (*Felis concolor coryi*), Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*), and other species, which utilize this region for their migrations and home ranges. In addition, several of the preserves have been established to protect marine fisheries and the diverse freshwater and brackish estuarine habitats. Although these areas are already under preservation, or in the process of being acquired, the imminent long-term conversion of natural and agricultural lands to urban and rural development has the potential to negatively impact the listed species and water quality in southwest Florida. A variety of upland and wetland habitats still remain throughout the County.

The upland habitats include:

- Coastal Dune and Strand
- Dry Prairies
- Pine Flatwoods
- Xeric Scrub
- Hardwood Hammocks
- Tropical Hammocks
- Agricultural Lands

The wetland habitats include:

- Coastal Saltmarshes
- Freshwater Marshes and Wet Prairies
- Scrub Cypress
- Cypress Swamps
- Hardwood Swamps
- Mangrove Swamps

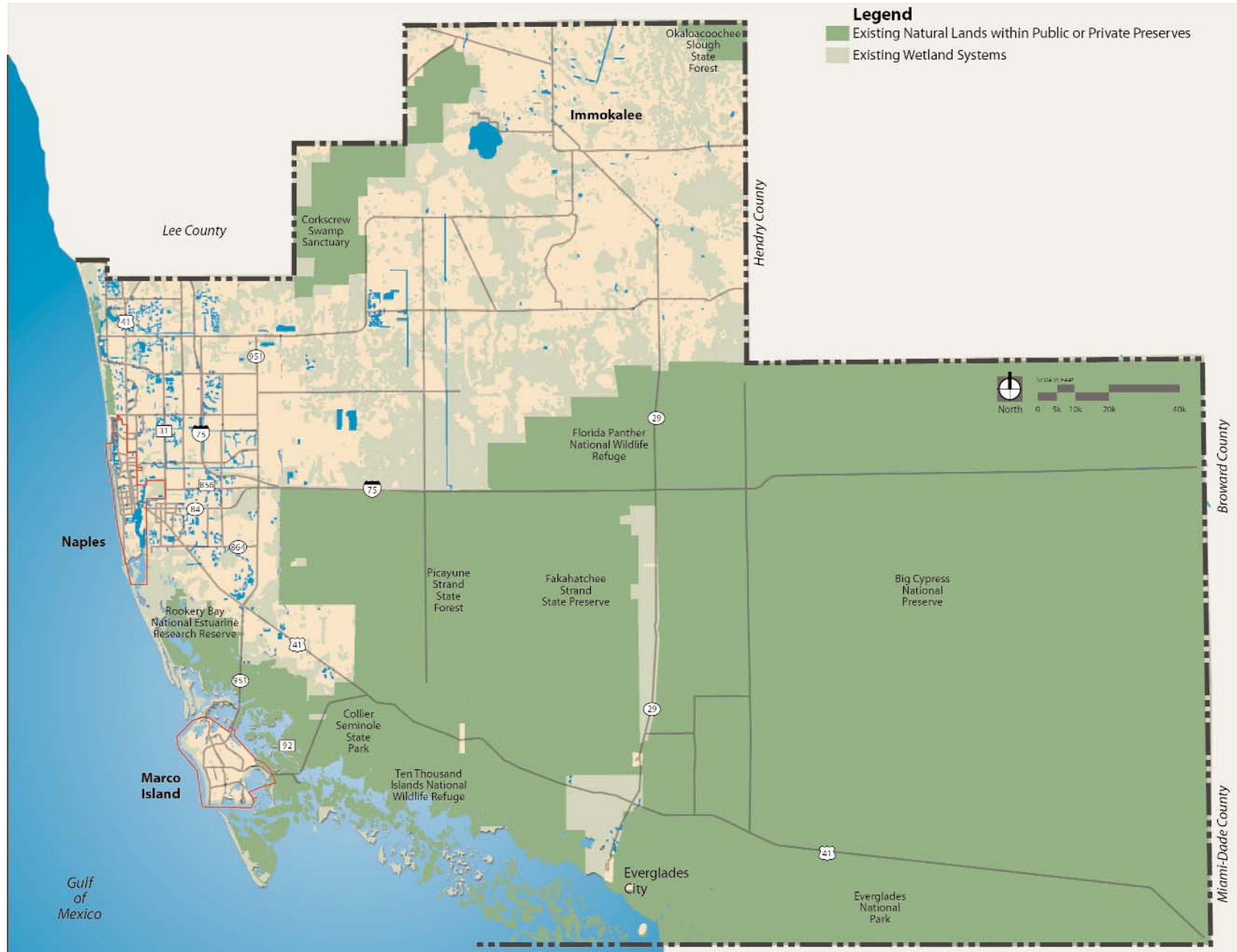


Exhibit 4 - Natural Lands Inventory

As a result of the diversity of the habitat types throughout the County and the low density development in the east side of the County, many species classified as threatened or endangered (T & E) and Species of Special Concern (SCC) occur throughout the County. Some of the more notable species include the Florida panther, Florida black bear, red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*), sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis pratensis*), Florida scrub jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*), gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) and associated commensals and many other listed plant species.

LINKAGES

Collier County's roadway system can be characterized primarily as a connected network of major roadways with wide rights of way. Few areas of the County, such as the traditional neighborhoods mostly west of US 41, have interconnected networks of smaller, local streets. While the County continues to build segments of sidewalks and bike-ways, they do not yet constitute an interconnected sidewalk/bikeway system. Sidewalks are continuous along most major roadways, but are fragmented and incomplete within the residential neighborhoods. The urbanized areas of the County lack a system of dedicated bicycle paths or bike lanes. Although there are some bike lanes and paths, the system, on the whole is fragmented. Also, shade trees are absent from most of the major roadways.

Regarding transit linkages, the County is starting to run its new bus system, and private shuttles are operated within the Cities. Not all of the County's parks and open space are accessible via transit, however.



POPULATION AND GROWTH CHARACTERISTICS

In 1980, the population of Collier County was only 85,000 - about the equivalent of a medium-sized city. Over the last 20 years, the population has more than doubled. Overall, there are several important trends in the growth of Collier County:

The overall population growth is steady. Collier County has grown to over 220,000 residents today. By 2010, the anticipated population is estimated at over 300,000 residents, or an increase of 26% within this decade (see **Exhibit 5**).

The Naples Metropolitan Area is the fastest growing area in the State. While the population growth pattern is relatively steady, the actual percentage of growth is the highest in the State of Florida, with the Naples Metropolitan Area population growing an estimated 35% between the years 1990 and 1998. This dramatic growth rate emphasizes the need for public services to keep pace with development.

The Collier County population is getting older. Although population growth and land use trends are expected to remain constant, it is anticipated that the median age will continue to rise.

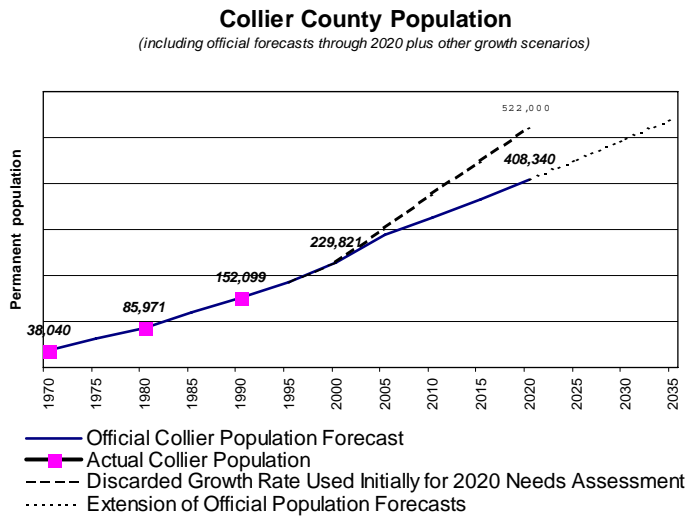


Exhibit 5 - Population Trends

SUMMARY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

By analyzing the population growth and demographic trends of the County, and the inventory of existing facilities, the following conclusions can be made:

1. Population is increasing;
2. The ability of the County to keep up with the demand for additional parks lands and facilities will continue to be tested by the fast pace of development;
3. The population is getting older, therefore public facilities must be flexible to accommodate changing needs;
4. The existing Parks and Open Space System facilities are of generally high quality;
5. The County's Parks and Recreation Department does a good job of taking advantage of partnerships with other local governments and entities;
6. Existing pedestrian and bicycle links are fragmented and are not well connected;
7. The existing system of natural lands protects a large portion of Collier County. However, new development has already negatively affected natural habitats and water quality and continues to have detrimental effects on the current population of listed species;
8. Currently about 60-70% of Collier County's land is being preserved through ownership by public and private agencies. This is a fairly high percentage, but most of that land is part of the western Everglades or coastal wetlands and would not be developable regardless of ownership. The western half of Collier County contains vast environmental resources that are mostly in private ownership. Many of the most valuable lands, especially uplands, are not protected under any governmental or private habitat protection program;
9. Public "green" open space in urban areas is in danger of disappearing due to the demands for active sports fields and through the development of new neighborhoods and communities.

IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

The next step in the Greenspace Planning process is to identify the parks, recreation and open space needs and priorities of the community. Needs assessment is not an exact science. Therefore, a number of techniques were used to determine countywide needs and priorities, including the following:

1. Comparison to State Standards
2. Level of Service Analysis - Population
3. Service Areas Analysis
4. Public Workshops
5. Natural Lands Needs and Priorities (Identification of target plant communities, wildlife population and associated habitat, and natural areas including those that have been significantly altered from historic conditions)

COMPARISON TO STATE STANDARDS

In addition to collecting input from recreation users, recreation providers and interested stakeholders, it is helpful to examine the supply of various recreation facilities to identify specific recreation needs. To further analyze recreation facility needs in Collier County, the existing inventory of the County's recreation facilities were compared to recreation and park guidelines provided in the State of Florida Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 1994 (SCORP). Population guidelines are estimates of the amount of outdoor recreation resources and facilities that are required to support a given population.

Although every community has different recreation priorities, the State guidelines do provide a valuable technique to evaluate the potential recreation needs of an area. The guidelines help assess community recreational needs by determining the minimum number of resources and facilities required to serve the local population. The guidelines provide low, medium and high standards so they may be adjusted for application to different types of communities.

The following is a summary of the analysis based on state standards (refer to the tables included in **Appendix G** for detailed analysis):

- Collier County is deficient in several facility types, including football/soccer fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, swimming pools, volleyball courts, shuffleboard courts, and jogging and hiking trails. It is important to note, however, that many of these facilities, such as swimming pools and tennis courts, are being provided through residences and private communities;
- Including the Naples and Marco Island populations and park facilities in the total count, deficiencies in tennis courts are reduced;

User surveys should be conducted to further analyze the County's recreation needs for specific recreation facilities. User surveys would provide data on patterns of use of existing facilities, allowing for a true assessment of deficient facilities as well as identifying possible management strategies to accommodate unmet recreation demand. For example, tennis is more popular in the winter than in the summer, but the hot summer weather changes the demand patterns. In Marco Island, for example, existing public and private facilities reach capacity during the morning hours due to excessive heat in the afternoons. Covering the tennis courts may allow current use to be distributed throughout the day, alleviating the need for the construction of more facilities.

LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS - POPULATION

Another method for evaluating needs is to review the Level of Service (LOS) included in the County's Comprehensive Plan. It is important to note, however, that LOS is a planning term used to establish a community's minimum requirement for certain services, and often has no relation to actual community needs and priorities.

Collier County's LOS, based on total park acreage of 1,2882 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 residents, is used for this analysis. Based on this guideline and the existing park system of 1,235 acres, the County will have a "surplus" of 814 acres of parkland by 2010 considering the projected population of 283,000 permanent residents. However, this includes the 342 acres of Barefoot Beach, as well as undevelopable land in existing community parks, which tends to give a "false" reading of actual level of service. **Exhibit 6** summarizes the LOS analysis for the County's current parks system.

LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS - SERVICE AREAS

Service areas are used to determine how far people have to walk, bicycle or drive to get to area parks and green spaces. The service areas of the various elements of the recreation system were analyzed to identify potential service voids. The approximate geographic areas served by Neighborhood Parks and Community Park facilities were reviewed using the service area radii adopted by the National Recreation and Parks Association. According to the adopted guidelines, there should be a Neighborhood Park and/or open space within a ½ mile distance,

considered easy walking distance for most residents (**Exhibit 7**). In addition, there should be a Community Park within 3 miles, considered an easy driving distance for most residents (**Exhibit 8**).

Conclusions from the Service Area Analysis include:

1. Most urban areas of Collier County have access to Community Parks. However, Golden Gate Estates does not have sufficient access to Community Parks.
2. Most residents do not have access to a Neighborhood Park within walking distance of their home. Older areas in Naples and on Marco Island are generally sufficiently served. However, a majority of other neighborhoods do not have access to Neighborhood Parks within this specified radius.

	1997	2005	2010
Population	165,608	288,198	326,452
Park Acres Owned	1,235	1,235	1,235
(2000)	213	371	421
Acres Needed	1,022	864	814

(Based on Collier County Level of Service for Developed Acreage = 1.28 acres per 1000 population for Community Parks)

Exhibit 6 - Collier County Level of Service for Park Acreage

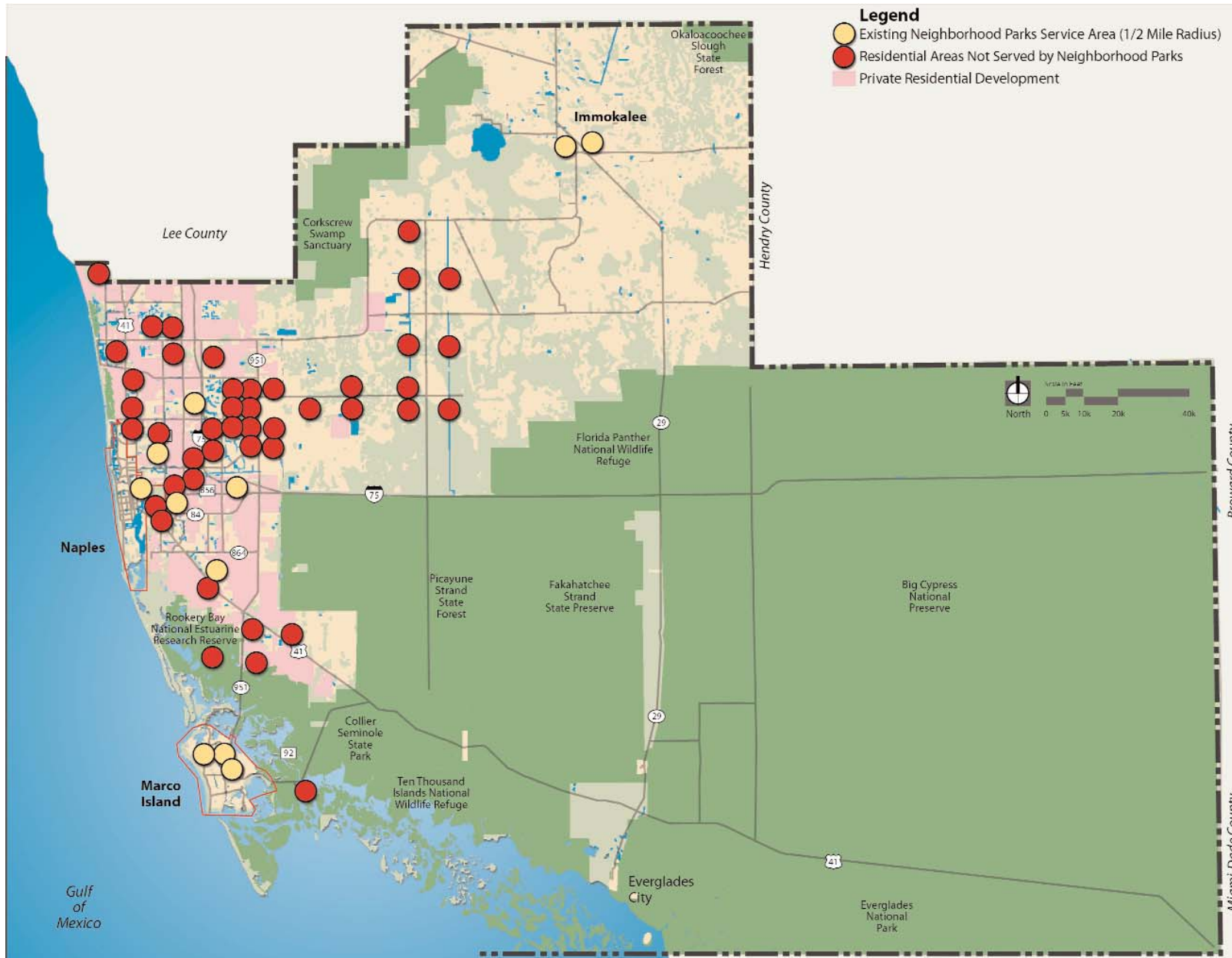


Exhibit 7 - Neighborhood Parks Service Areas Source: Collier County Parks & Recreation Department

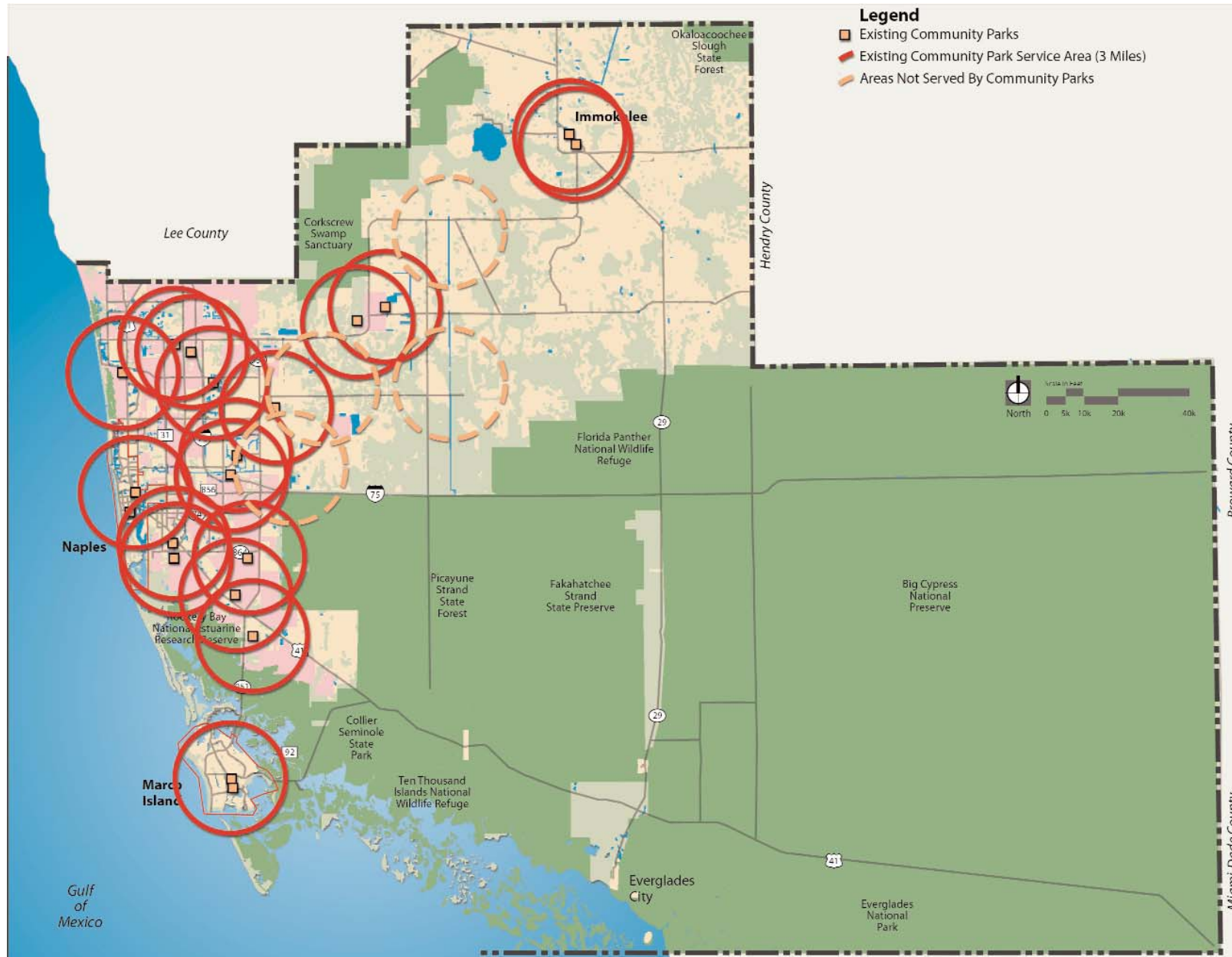


Exhibit 8 - Community Parks Service Areas Source: Collier County Parks & Recreation Department, Glattig Jackson

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS SUMMARY

The following workshops were held to gather input from the community concerning the character of Collier County:

- Parks, Recreation and Open Space Needs
- Immokalee / Golden Gate Workshop
- Lely / Southeast Collier Workshop
- Lely High School Workshop
- Ready, Set, Draw Hands-On Workshop
- Greenspace Focus Group
- Collier County Parks and Recreation Department Interview

As a part of this process, the following questions were asked of the participants regarding the existing Greenspace system, as well as potential needs:

1. What's special about living in Collier County?
2. What parks, recreation facilities and/or programs do you currently use the most?
3. What types of parks, recreation facilities and/or programs do you wish were available in Collier County?
4. Do you have adequate:
 - Mini Parks / Urban Open Spaces?
 - Small Neighborhood Parks?
 - Large Community Parks?
 - Sports complexes, aquatic centers and/or other special purpose facilities?
 - Bikeways, sidewalks and trails?
 - Beach and river access (including boat ramps)?
 - Natural areas?
5. Of those listed above, which are most important to you?



Community members and planners at the Ready, Set, Draw Workshop

The results of these workshops indicated that the highest priority needs included:

- Safe bike and pedestrian paths and sidewalks to parks, green-spaces, commercial areas, etc.
- Neighborhood Parks in areas that are not currently served
- Additional Conservation Lands and preservation of greenspaces
- Additional multi-purpose open spaces in Community Parks
- Additional facilities in Community Parks
- Additional beach parking / access
- Urban Open Spaces that could accommodate concerts, art shows, etc.
- Additional special use facilities, such as skate parks

In addition, interviews with Collier County Parks staff indicated that programmed sports have been on the rise with an increase of over 200 teams in the last two years. The greatest increase (average 30%) in team sports were for softball and soccer.

NATURAL LANDS NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

A significant amount of natural resources data was compiled to determine the need for the protection and/or acquisition of Natural Lands in Collier County. This information was obtained from the Collier County Department of Natural Resources, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, National and Florida Wildlife Federations, The Conservancy of Southwest Florida, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), The US Army Corps of Engineers, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the US Department of Agriculture (Natural Resource Conservation Service), US Geological Survey, and a variety of other engineering and environmental consultants, and non-governmental organizations.

Site visits were conducted throughout the County to generally characterize the conditions of the habitat. Site visits were conducted on the parks and preserves previously listed above, the agricultural regions, Lake Trafford area, Golden Gate Estates, Belle Meade, Everglades City, Immokalee, the beaches, Naples, Marco Island and the US 41 corridor. An aerial reconnaissance was conducted by a fixed wing aircraft to obtain an overview of the development patterns, the character, and the connectivity of wildlife habitat in the County. This aerial reconnaissance was immensely valuable to obtain an overview perspective of the remaining habitat in the County, particularly in Golden Gate Estates and agricultural regions.

The consultants also used Geographic Information Systems (GIS) by overlaying data files from federal, state and local agencies, private



One of Collier County's natural areas

consultants, and non-profit environmental groups, including:

- Soils
- Current and historic flowways
- Wetlands and floodplains
- Collier County Future Land Use Map
- Non-developed and non-agricultural habitat
- Approved development not yet constructed
- Listed species locations and their movements
- Biodiversity "hot spots"
- Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (SHCAs)
- Proposed state and federal land acquisition projects
- Collier County's Natural Resource Protection Area (NRPAs regulatory overlay zones)

To further develop the analysis, meetings were conducted with a variety of federal, state and local agencies and non-governmental organizations. These meetings allowed the design team to collect and better understand site-specific information and gauge public opinion on current environmental issues.

The existing wetlands in the County, as identified by the SFWMD (**Exhibit 9**), were overlaid on the existing and proposed state and federal land acquisitions. The major existing and historic flowways were then mapped through the County (**Exhibit 10**) to understand regional drainage patterns prior to the excavation of the miles of ditches and canals. The known locations of listed species and existing data on wildlife movements were added (**Exhibit 11**) to develop a strategy for maintaining existing wildlife corridors throughout the County. Finally, the existing Collier County NRPA regulatory overlay zones (**Exhibit 12**) were added to depict areas which have already been identified as needing additional protection. The natural lands acquisition and protection zones were identified as a result of this analysis (**Exhibit 13**). The creation of these zones provides the vision for protecting wildlife corridors throughout the County. Most of these lands are in private ownership, and cooperation with the landowners will therefore need to occur in order to develop innovative strategies for wildlife protection.

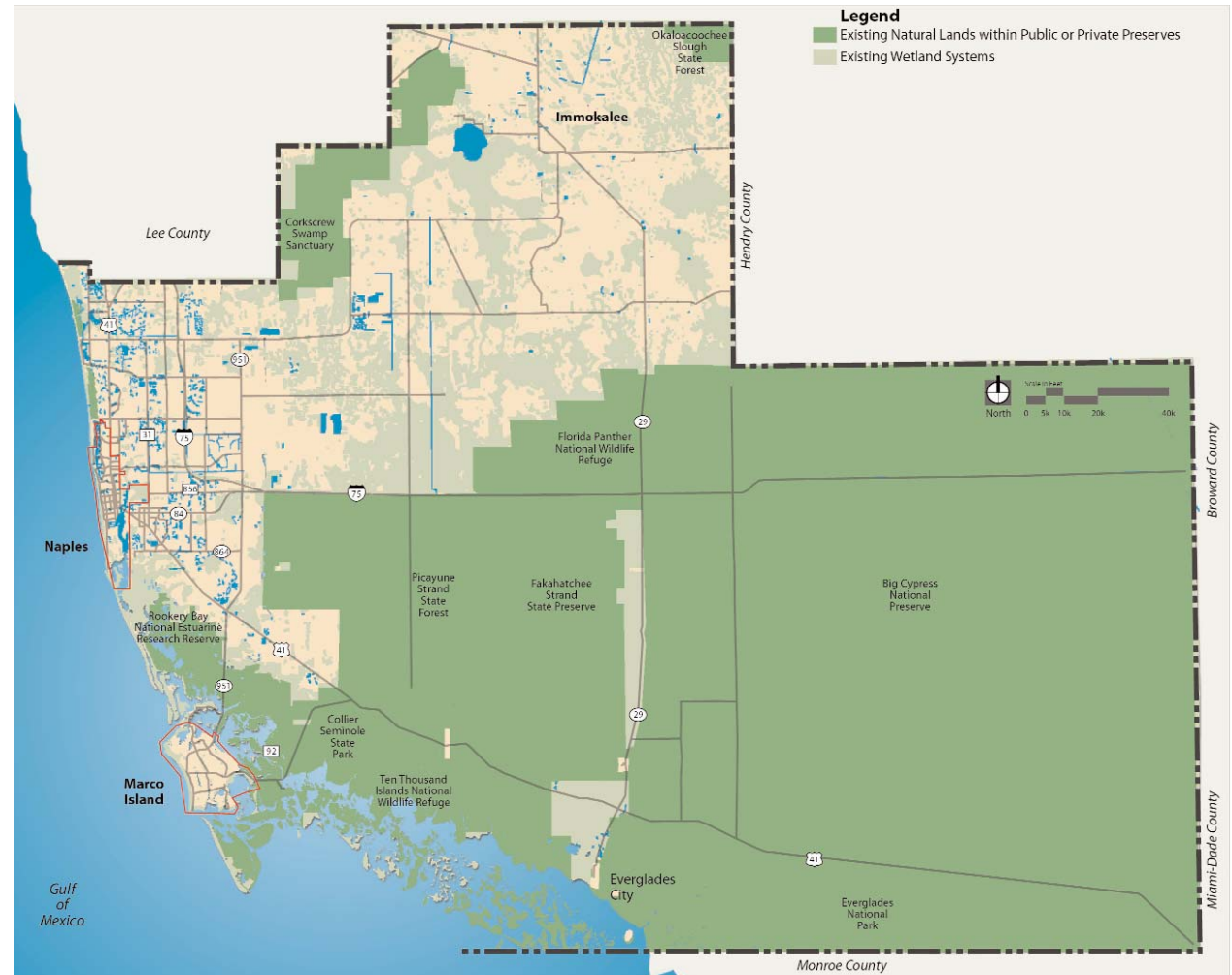


Exhibit 9 - Existing Wetlands Source: South Florida Water Management District



Exhibit 10 - Major and Historic Flowways (Conceptual) Source: US Soil Conservation Service

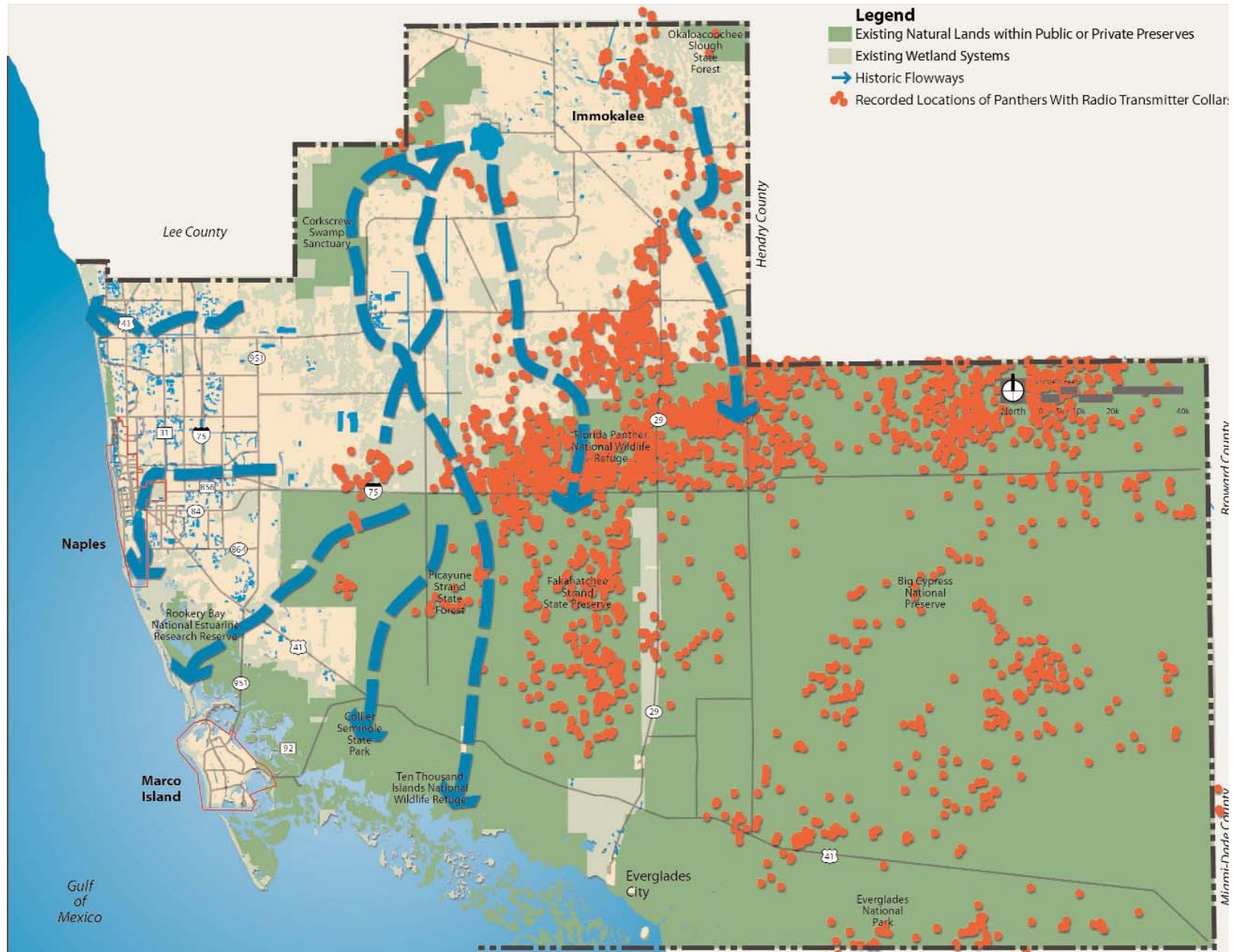


Exhibit 11 - Panther Telemetry (Recorded location of panthers with radio transmitter collars) Source: US Fish and Wildlife Service

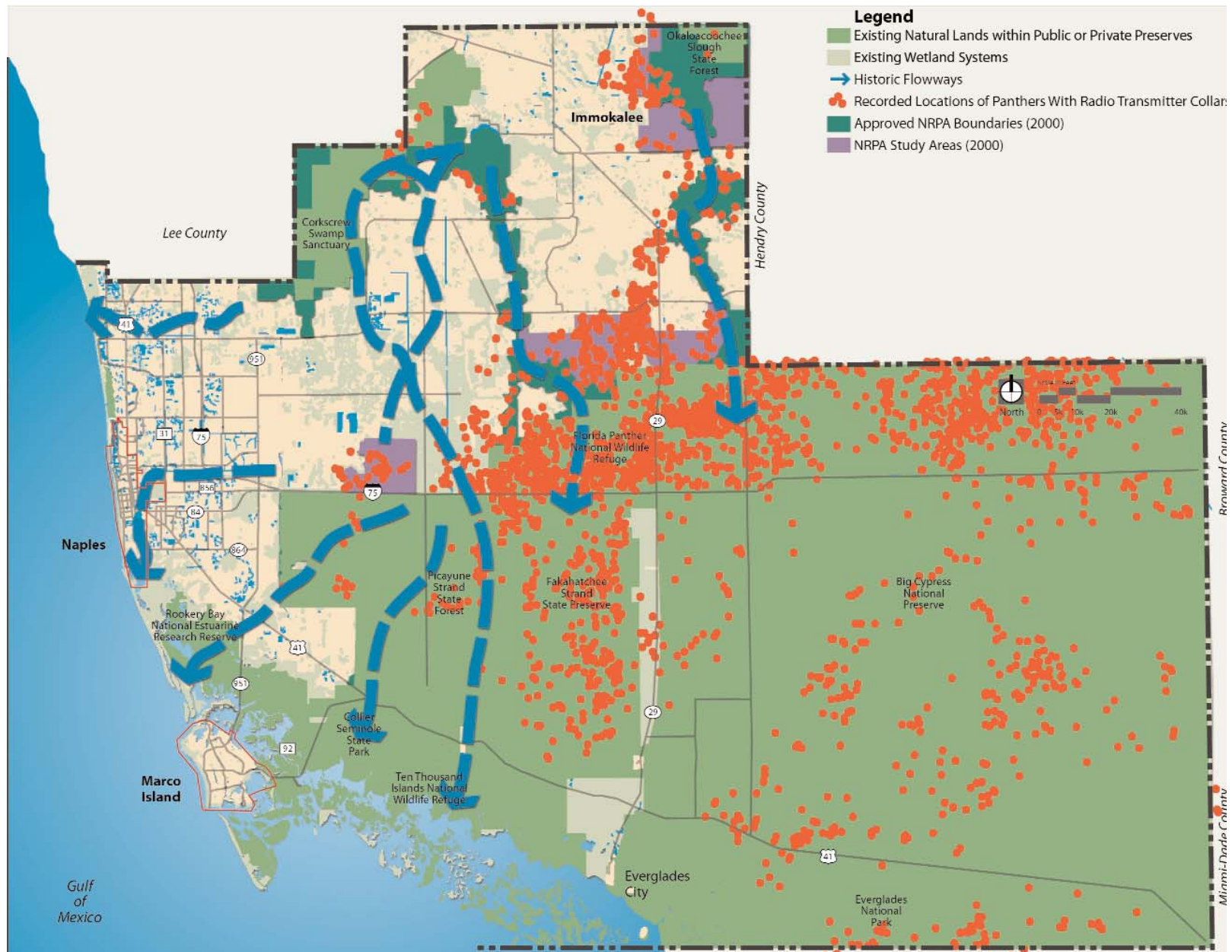


Exhibit 12 - NRPA Zones (Proposed) Source: Collier County

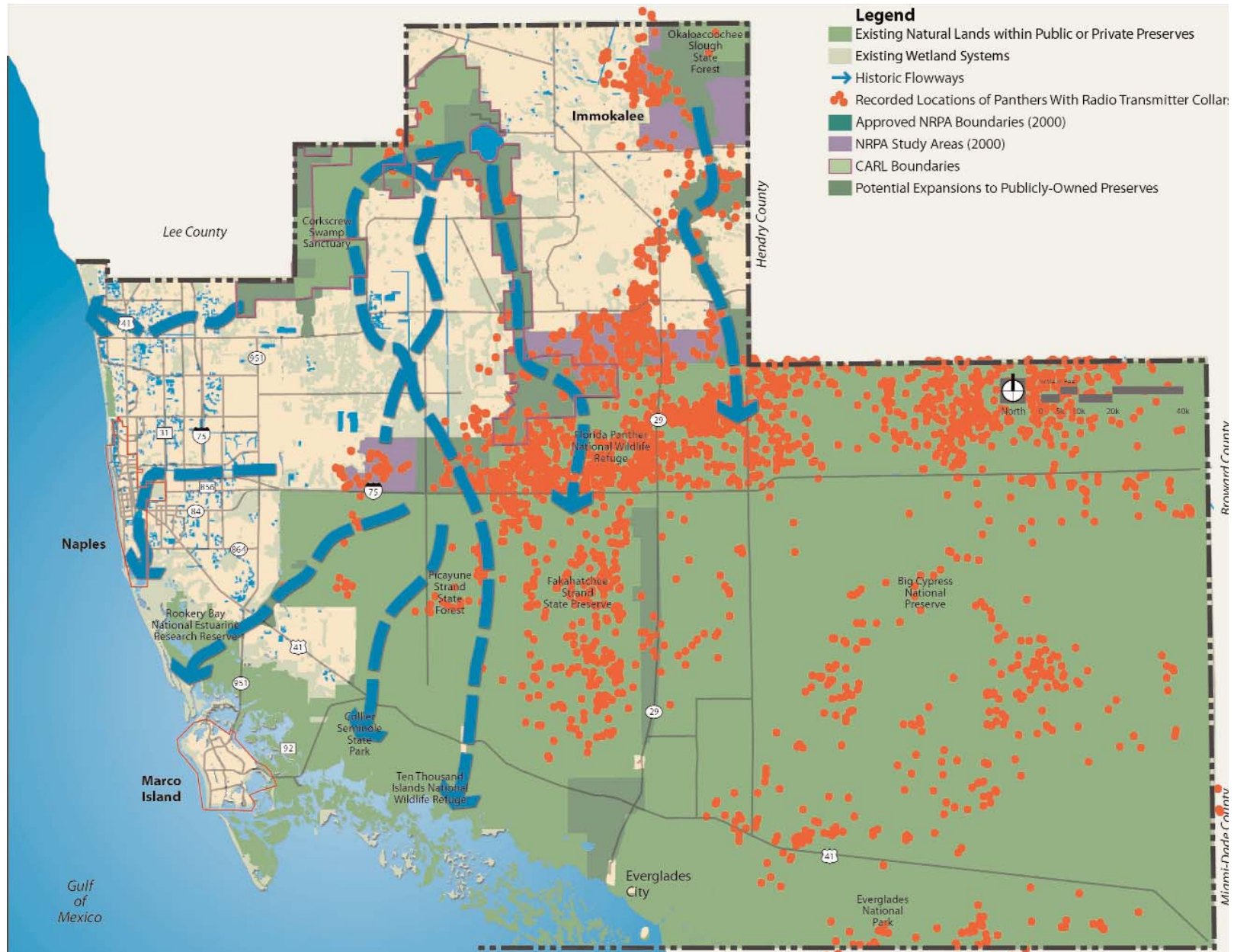


Exhibit 13 - Potential Zones for Protection Source: Glatting Jackson

SUMMARY OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A wide variety of greenspace needs were identified through the needs assessment techniques outlined in this section. Following is a summary of our findings:

- 1. Comparison to State Standards:** According to State standards, and based on estimated population, the County will be significantly "deficient" in many types of public recreation facilities within the next ten years, including tennis courts, baseball/softball fields, football/soccer fields, handball/racquetball courts, basketball courts, swimming pools, shuffleboard courts, jogging/hiking trails, play areas, and multipurpose fields and courts.
- 2. Level of Service Analysis-Population:** According to the County's Comprehensive Plan, there is adequate parkland to serve both existing and future needs. Level of Service (LOS) is an arbitrary number, however, and does not necessarily reflect the needs or desires of County residents. The County's parkland acreage also includes undevelopable park and beach lands.
- 3. Service Area Analysis:** The Service Area Analysis indicated that many County residents do not have easy access to neighborhood and/or community parks. Approximately thirty additional neighborhood parks are required to provide a neighborhood park for every resident within ½ mile of their home, and four additional community parks are required to provide a large 50+ acre park within three miles of every resident.
- 4. Public Workshops:** Public workshops with residents, youth sports representatives, parks and recreation staff and others indicated that there is a significant need and/or desire for additional bicycle/pedestrian paths, neighborhood parks, conservation lands, open spaces, recreation facilities, beach parking/access areas, urban open spaces, and special use facilities such as skate parks.
- 5. Natural Lands Assessment:** The assessment of the County's natural areas by the consultant identified the need to acquire, protect and/or restore large, connected greenways and agricultural areas.

With the exception of the Level of Service Analysis in the County's growth management plan, the findings from the needs assessment techniques outlined above were consistent; the County needs to acquire and develop more park lands for both active and passive recreation, and protect and/or acquire more conservation lands for habitat protection. Based on the results of the needs assessment techniques, the following conclusions can be made:

- 1.** New development, both commercial and residential, are generally not providing sufficient urban open spaces;
- 2.** Additional neighborhood parks are needed to serve deficient areas. At least 16 additional neighborhood parks are needed (not including the potential for approximately 14 additional parks in the Golden Gate Estates area). Based on a 3-acre average per park, approximately 48 acres of parkland is needed;
- 3.** There is a need for additional active recreation facilities such as basketball courts and soccer/football fields. These deficiencies may be met through expansion and modification of existing park facilities, continued partnership with the school board for the use of existing and future facilities, and the addition of new facilities;
- 4.** There is a need to complete the sidewalk network countywide;
- 5.** There is a need for additional safe bicycle facilities (bike lanes, bike paths);
- 6.** Improved public access should be provided to existing conservation lands;
- 7.** There is a need for additional preserved public land to ensure the continued viability of the natural ecosystems present in Collier County as well as maintaining the character of Collier County;
- 8.** Additional special use facilities are needed (i.e. skatepark);
- 9.** Public access to the beach and waterway system should be enhanced.

COLLIER COUNTY'S GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN

Collier County's current growth management plan has specific goals and policies relating to the greenspace system, including:

Parks *(from the recreation and open space element)*

- Provide sufficient parks, recreation facilities and open space areas to meet residents/visitor needs (Goal 1)
- Encourage developers to provide recreation sites/facilities consistent with park and recreation guidelines (Policy 1.4.1)
- Acquire suitable lands for new park sites in areas where major population growth is expected (Policy 1.1.4)
- Provide 1.2882 acres of community park land per 1,000 population (Policy 1.1.1)
- Provide 2.9412 acres of regional park land per 1,000 population (Policy 1.1.1)

Bicycle/pedestrian ways *(from the transportation element)*

- All future capacity improvements will include provisions for bicycles and pedestrians (Policy 4.6)
- The subdivision regulations provide for bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout developments (Policy 7.3)
- The pathway plan provides for the systematic completion of an integrated system by the year 2020 (Policy 4.3)

Natural resource areas *(from the conservation and coastal management element)*

- Identify, protect, conserve and appropriately use native vegetative communities and wildlife habitat (Goal 6)
- Create incentives to allow development to continue but also ensure that some of the most ecologically sensitive habitat and

vegetative communities are retained (Policy 6.1.8)

- There shall be no unacceptable net loss of viable naturally functioning marine and fresh water wetlands, excluding transitional zone wetlands (Objective 6.2)
- All wetlands are designated as environmentally sensitive areas (Policy 6.2.2)
- Support the efforts of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Panther Recovery Plan by designating a significant portion of the known habitat for the Florida Panther as "Areas of Environmental Concern" on the Future Land Use Map (Policy 7.3.9)

Natural resource areas *(from the future land use element)*

- Delineate "Natural Resource Protection Areas" as overlays on the Future Land Use Map (pages 34-35)
- A "Conservation Designation" is applied to certain primarily publicly owned natural resource areas on the Future Land Use Map (pages 37-38)
- An "Area of Critical State Concern" overlay on the Future Land Use Map indicates the boundaries of the Big Cypress area of critical state concern (pages 38-39)
- Another overlay indicates "Areas of Environmental Concern," primarily beaches, marshes, hardwood swamps, cypress forests, wet prairies, and low pinelands; this overlay is for informational purposes only and has no regulatory effect (page 40)

Collier County's growth management plan should be expanded to provide the framework for the future greenspace system recommended in this report. Of primary importance are new parks in developing areas and a county-run natural lands program.

THE FUTURE GREENSPACE SYSTEM

VISION

Collier County's high quality of life continues to draw visitors and new residents. To ensure that this high quality of life is maintained, this plan proposes a long-range greenspace vision that will:

- Provide useable outdoor open spaces within a 5 minute walk of urban Collier County residents;
- Provide Golden Gate Estates residents a system of recreational greenways and restored flowways;
- Provide access and multi-modal linkages to and between all community green spaces and natural areas;
- Provide large community parks and centers for active and passive recreation within a 15 - 20 minute drive of every resident;
- Protect and restore regionally significant wetlands and flowways;
- Protect habitat and corridors used by Florida panthers and other species listed as endangered, threatened, or "of special concern."

CHARACTER OF BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

Collier County can be seen as having five distinct built and natural environments. Moving from west to east, these can be generalized as:

- Traditional neighborhoods (mainly near US 41)
- Suburban planned communities (mainly between US 41 and Collier Boulevard)
- Semi-rural North Golden Gate Estates
- Immokalee
- Rural and agricultural lands

Following is a description of the greenspaces within each "character zone," with implications for the character of the built environment.

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS (mainly near US 41, but also including Golden Gate City)

Many of these neighborhoods display the desirable traits of traditional neighborhoods, such as calm, pedestrian-friendly streets; mature tree canopies; interconnected sidewalks; small neighborhood parks; and a broad range of well-designed housing types, oriented to the street. Those areas lacking these traits can be retrofitted, over time, through both public and private actions. The County can purchase a cluster of vacant lots or deteriorating homes to create a neighborhood park, for example, or build new sidewalks along existing streets. A private developer can build traditional homes on infill lots, or establish a corner grocery for the neighborhood.



It is important that the greenspaces in these neighborhoods – neighborhood parks, village squares, community gardens, etc. – are developed in such a way as to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods, and to be safe and inviting for residents to use. Traditional neighborhood park elements include paved walkways (concrete, pavers, etc.), clipped lawns, shady canopy trees, comfortable benches (with backs), play structures, picnic tables and/or shelters, and fountains or other focal features. Incompatible elements include dense veg-

etation that blocks views into the park, fencing (except low decorative fencing around tot lots), large parking lots or structures, and other harsh or out-of-scale elements.

In traditional neighborhoods, habitat may be provided or restored for urban wildlife species such as songbirds, rabbits and squirrels, but will probably not be sufficient to support threatened or endangered species such as gopher tortoises or scrub jays.

SUBURBAN PLANNED COMMUNITIES (mainly between US 41 and Collier Boulevard)

Many of the planned communities between US 41 and Collier Boulevard have private neighborhood-oriented open space and recreation facilities for the use of their residents.

Communities wishing to change the character of their green spaces can do so through their neighborhood or community associations without the involvement of the county.



SEMI-RURAL NORTH GOLDEN GATE ESTATES

Northern Golden Gate Estates (NGGE), with its existing configuration of large platted lots, has a different character than either the urban or rural areas of the county. The greenspace vision would maintain the

current lot/street configuration and build on the existing canals, wetlands, and wooded areas to provide opportunities for social interaction, alternative transportation, recreation, and wildlife habitat.

The backbone of the proposed North Golden Gate Estates open space system is the existing system of canals. These are proposed to be developed into a system of greenways that include bicycle/pedestrian paths as well as habitat for a variety of small wildlife species. The greenways could be created either within the existing canal right-of-ways, if space allows, or possibly through easements along canal banks.



A system of neighborhood parks, approximately 1 - 2 miles apart, would also be created along the greenways. These would not be manicured parks such as those in urban and suburban areas, but would be natural parks, more suited to passive recreation and similar activities such as casual sports and family picnics. Depending on the site, these parks could also serve as neighborhood gathering places or could provide wildlife habitat through the protection of existing vegetation or the restoration of disturbed sites.

Enforcement of existing regulatory requirements and development of new recommended best management practices are other tools that can

be utilized to enhance the character of the North Golden Gate Estates greenspace. Wherever possible, existing wetlands, wooded areas and other open spaces should be preserved, protected and enhanced to maintain the natural character of the area and to provide wildlife habitat. The Greenspace Master Plan identifies historic flowways that would be of particular value as natural forested areas. These flowways could even serve as firebreaks, especially if groundwater levels could be raised and prescribed burns could reduce the fuel loads that build up in the total absence of fire.

IMMOKALEE

The Immokalee Area Master Plan envisions the expansion of Immokalee in accordance with traditional town planning principles, much as outlined in the previous discussion of coastal traditional neighborhoods. An important part of Immokalee's character is its role as this agricultural region's traditional town center rather than an extension of commonplace suburban sprawl.



Immokalee's greenspace system should include neat, well-maintained, high quality parks and recreation facilities to meet residents' needs. The greenspace system also includes its prosperous agricultural belt which can be enhanced with interconnected areas of natural open spaces.

RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL LANDS

The health of Collier County's rural and agricultural lands and the economy they support are very important to the entire county. Unless agriculture ceases to be economically feasible, a mosaic of farmed and forested land, wetlands, and natural preserves can function together to provide a healthy farm economy, wildlife habitat, rural



lifestyles, and open space aesthetics. There is no need for public agencies to acquire and manage active farmland except where needed to restore natural systems or if the county proves unable to successfully balance the demands of farming and protection of the natural environment. The county and private landowners need to work together to ensure the preservation of the most important natural systems while meeting the economic demands of continuing agriculture. It is particularly important that landowners avoid disruptive activities directly adjacent to the conservation greenway corridors to minimize impacts to wildlife.

COMPONENTS OF THE GREENSPACE PLAN

The proposed greenspace master plan is illustrated conceptually in **Exhibit 14**. It includes the following components:

- Urban open spaces
- Neighborhood parks/school parks
- Community/regional parks
- Sidewalks, bikeways, and trail networks
- Natural lands

The following general recommendations form the basis for implementation of the Greenspace System:

1. Incorporate the Greenspace System plan into the recreation and open space element of the County's Comprehensive Plan and Capital Improvements Program (CIP).
2. Maintain the urban boundary to protect the rural/natural character of east Collier County, and ensure that future land uses are compatible with proposed greenways and natural areas.
3. Complete the neighborhood parks system to provide useable open space within a 5 minute walk of every County resident in the urban areas, and within a 10 - 15 minute walk in the Golden Gate Estates.
4. Provide large community parks and centers for active and passive recreation within a 15 - 20 minute drive (or bike ride) of every county resident in the urban areas.
5. Provide interconnected network of sidewalks, bikeways and transit routes to provide multi-modal access to/between all greenspaces.
6. Provide convenient access to public beaches and waterways for all county residents.
7. Protect and restore regionally significant wetlands and flow ways, as well as habitat/corridors used by Florida panther and other listed (endangered, threatened, special concern) species.

The next section describes each component of the greenspace system and outlines specific recommendations toward the implementation of the system.

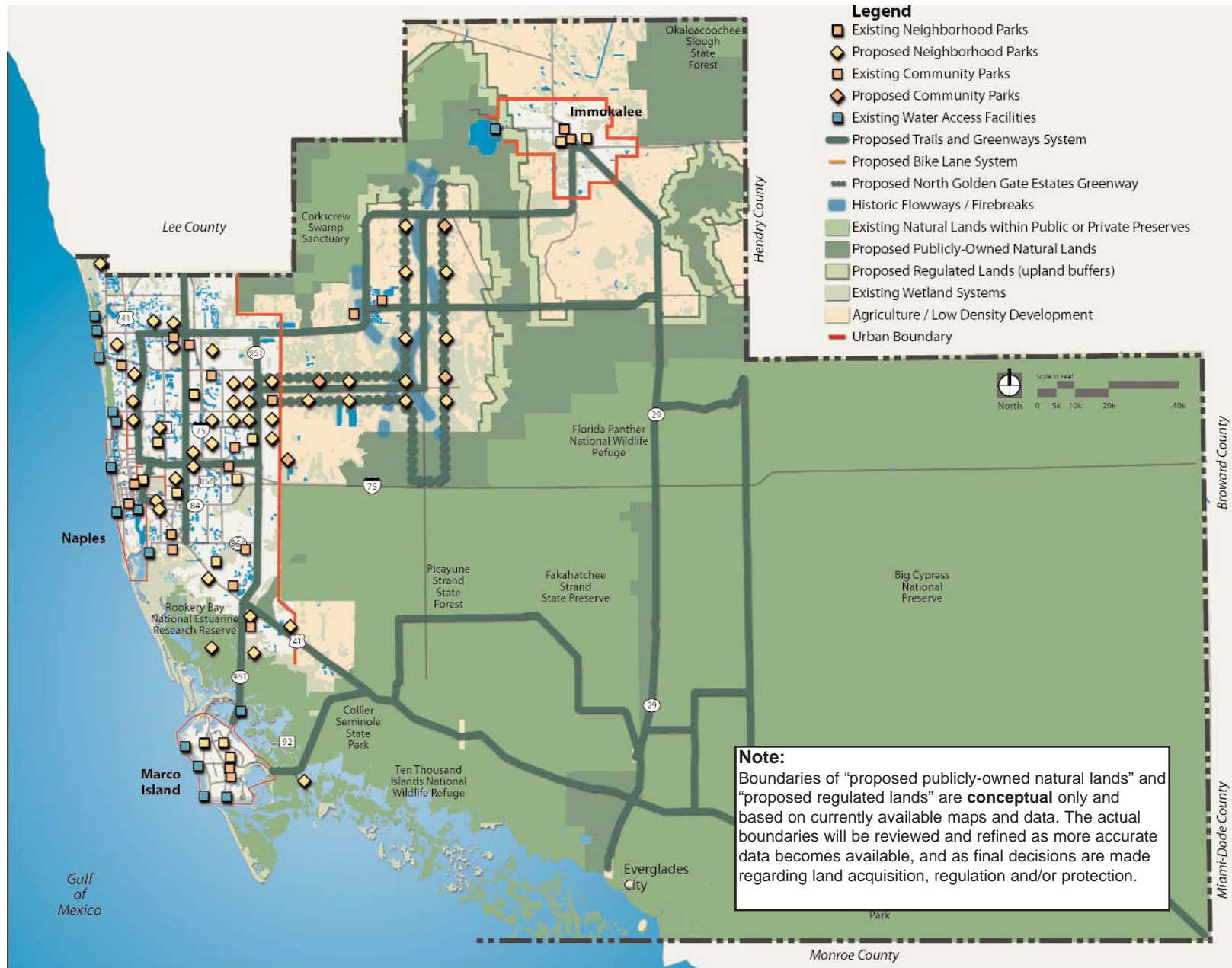


Exhibit 14 - Conceptual Greenspace Master Plan



URBAN OPEN SPACES

Small urban parks or plazas can be developed in or near town centers to provide a setting for planned and spontaneous community activities and as physical and visual relief from the surrounding buildings and pavement.

Urban open spaces are small "pockets" of public space in an urban area. These spaces are attractive and have safe pedestrian access, are generally one-half acre or less in size, and include urban plazas, gateways, and small urban parks. Some may have simple park furnishings such as park benches, picnic tables, or play equipment.

Cambier Park in Naples is an ideal example of the impact that an attractive urban open space can have on the overall appearance of a city. Currently, there are no true urban open spaces in the unincorporated county. As development continues to intensify throughout the county, the need for urban open spaces - or "people spaces" - will become more evident.

NEIGHBORHOOD / SCHOOL PARKS

Every Collier County resident living in the urban designated area (generally west of Collier Boulevard) should have access to a neighborhood park within walking distance from home. A neighborhood park is a place where neighbors get together, a place where residents may walk or bicycle to the park within a given neighborhood. Due to the low population density of Golden Gate Estates, neighborhood parks there would be spaced one to two miles apart.

Neighborhood parks can be as large as five acres and may be associated with an elementary or middle school. In older neighborhoods



where existing homes might need to be purchased and demolished to provide land for a neighborhood park, they may be only an acre or less.

Existing Neighborhood Parks

Collier County's existing neighborhood parks are mainly passive spaces and range from 0.3 acres to the 6-acre Palm Springs Park. They allow diverse recreational opportunities such as playgrounds, picnic areas, court and field games, as well as landscaping and gardens. Existing neighborhood parks include:

1. Aaron Lutz
2. Coconut Circle
3. Copeland Park
4. Corkscrew Elementary/Middle School
5. Dreamland
6. East Naples Tot Lot
7. Rita Eaton Neighborhood Park
8. Immokalee Airport Park
9. Oil Well Park
10. Palm Springs
11. Poinciana Village
12. South Immokalee Park

Also included in the inventory of neighborhood facilities are several schools:

1. Big Cypress Elementary School
2. Naples Park Elementary School
3. Vineyards Elementary School

Potential Neighborhood Parks

Potential neighborhood park sites have been identified within existing neighborhoods that are not currently served (see the Greenspace Master Plan, Exhibit 14). These sites include 16 new parks in the urban areas of the county and the potential for up to 14 in Golden Gate Estates, ensuring that as neighborhoods are fully built, residents will have neighborhood parks available. Total costs for the neighborhood parks are estimated at approximately \$12.3 million over the next twenty years, assuming that all of the sites must be purchased and developed. This estimate assumes a cost of approximately \$380,000 per park for land acquisition, design and construction of each facility. Costs can be reduced significantly, however, by utilizing existing County/school/church sites, joint-use agreements, grants, and donated land. Private funding can be leveraged by using county funds as matching grants for local contributions; or special assessments can be charged to neighborhood residents. This plan assumes that through these methods, the county's average cost can be reduced to \$250,000 per neighborhood park

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Neighborhood parks should be integral parts of new neighborhoods, designed and built with other essential public facilities rather than being retrofitted years later. Where this has not taken place, neighborhood parks can still be created; Collier County can purchase a suitable

site and develop the park itself or through a partnership with the school board or another entity.

Collier County can purchase land for neighborhood parks using its property or other general taxes, grants, and special taxing districts. Although national standards suggest five acres for each neighborhood park, it is more realistic in developed urban areas to acquire smaller sites, as small as two to four building lots. This can be accomplished over time, as vacant lots or homes come on the market in a targeted area, or as owners express a willingness to sell.

Many communities are successfully partnering with elementary schools and churches to plan or upgrade recreational facilities and make them available to the public. Generally the school or church provides the land, the county upgrades or constructs the facilities, the two entities negotiate maintenance responsibilities, and public hours of operation are discussed and posted.

A requirement to include neighborhood parks in new land developments can be placed in the county's land development regulations, or developers can be required to simply dedicate a suitable vacant site. Collier County's land development code currently states that dedications of park and school sites may be required through the PUD process (§2.2.20.3.7), but this has not occurred as standard practice because for many years new neighborhood parks have not been a priority of Collier County.

Impact fees could also be charged to pay for neighborhood parks that would be built by Collier County. Presently, the County charges a park

impact fee for all new development, but those funds are used mainly for community and regional parks, not neighborhood parks (as the impact fee ordinance is currently written). With most new development occurring in planned communities that already provide their own neighborhood recreational facilities, there would be serious problems in establishing a separate impact fee to build only neighborhood parks in already developed areas. Therefore, in undeveloped areas, emphasis should be placed on the development of neighborhood parks as a developer responsibility at the time of new development.

Collier County has been creating one new neighborhood park per year through its Neighborhood Parks Assistance Program using \$100,000 in property taxes from the general fund to buy land and \$95,000 in community park impact fees for improvements. At the rate of one park per year, it would take 16 years to correct the backlog of neighborhood parks described in this plan, not including any neighborhood parks in Golden Gate Estates. To speed up this process, the county should allocate \$500,000 each year to the Neighborhood Park Assistance Program to acquire and improve land for two neighborhood parks per year, in the approximate locations shown on the Greenspace Master Plan. (Some grant funds are available to construct park improvements, but they rarely can be used for site acquisition.)

All new parks will result in additional operational and maintenance costs. At present, Collier County operates its parks using a property tax that is levied only on land in the unincorporated area. If neighborhood park expansions outpace the natural growth in those property tax revenues, this expansion program will have to be slowed down or other recurring revenues will have to be allocated to neighborhood parks.

Many existing neighborhoods do not have organized associations, and new neighborhood parks should be seen as a critical component of the county's redevelopment/infrastructure initiatives. Often the county can generate multiple benefits through the development of a neighborhood park, such as the removal of derelict housing; additional areas for stormwater storage; improvement of neighborhood appearance; improved resident safety and security; creation/enhancement of neighborhood identity and spirit; and opportunities for new social/recreation programs. Through such joint efforts, additional funding may be available to the County.

County staff members specializing in parks, public works, and planning should meet with school board planners to carefully review the proposed neighborhood park locations on the Greenspace Master Plan and to develop a coordinated strategy to acquire land in the selected areas over the next several years. Actual park improvements can be phased thereafter as funds become available.

Year 2000-2001	Lead Responsibility	Funding Source(s)
Amend the growth management plan as described above.	Planning Services	(staff time)
Include the parks staff in the development review process.	Planning Services	(staff time)
Amend the capital improvements program as described above.	Parks / Rec. Dept.; OMB	General Fund
Inventory and analyze school and church sites to determine accessibility and suitability for neighborhood parks.	Parks / Rec. Dept.	(staff time)
Contact school board and churches regarding their interest/willingness to develop joint-use neighborhood parks.	Parks / Rec. Dept.; School Board	(staff time)
Identify vacant/candidate sites for new neighborhood parks, (including those in North Golden Gate Estates) as shown on Greenspace Plan.	Parks / Rec. Dept.; Planning Services; School Board	(staff time)
Upgrade existing school/park/church facilities to meet neighborhood "standards."	Parks / Rec. Dept.; School Board	Grants; General Fund
Continue the joint planning of new school/park facilities to serve as neighborhood parks.	Parks / Rec. Dept.; School Board	(staff time)
Evaluate the existing interlocal agreement between the county and the school board; create a new interlocal agreement for joint development of additional facilities.	Parks / Rec. Dept.; School Board	(staff time)
Develop a "parks & schools buildout plan" with detailed costs and a specific financial strategy, which might include a referendum to raise funds to accelerate park construction.	Parks / Rec. Dept.; Consultants	(staff time)
Survey neighborhood residents to determine neighborhood park needs (for both new and redeveloped facilities).	Parks / Rec. Dept.; Consultants	(staff time); General Fund
Amend the land development code as described above.	Planning Services	(staff time)
Year 2002-2005 Improve existing neighborhood parks to meet the needs of area residents.	Parks / Rec. Dept.	General Fund; Grants; Partnerships
Begin acquiring land for all proposed neighborhood parks.	Parks / Rec. Dept.	General Fund; Grants
Develop park master plans and begin improvements on half of proposed neighborhood parks	Parks / Rec. Dept.; Consultants	General Fund; Grants
Fund additional staff for new neighborhood and school parks.	Parks / Rec. Dept.	Unincorporated; MSTD
Year 2006-2010 Develop park master plans and begin improvements on the remainder of the neighborhood park system as shown on the greenspace plan.	Parks / Rec. Dept.; Consultants	General Fund; Grants; Partnerships
Fund additional staff for new neighborhood and school parks.	Parks / Rec. Dept.	Unincorporated; Grants

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

SETTING THE COURSE

Small parks make ideal centers for neighborhoods. Collier County should require neighborhood parks in new neighborhoods and should increase its existing program that creates small parks in existing neighborhoods.

GETTING THERE

Growth Management Plan

- a. Add a new goal to the recreation and open space element supporting a neighborhood park goal to complete the neighborhood park system in order to provide useable open space within a five-minute walk of residents in urban areas.
- b. Add an achievable objective to the recreation and open space element that can be used to measure progress toward this goal. Measures might include: park sites identified; park sites acquired; park improvements installed; expenses incurred for neighborhood parks; etc.
- c. Add new policies to the recreation and open space element about the following activities:
 - i. Require recreational or civic facilities in all new residential developments.
 - ii. Carefully site new neighborhood parks for maximum integration into existing neighborhoods and/or in conjunction with schools, churches, or other recreational facilities.
 - iii. Include a map showing generalized locations for proposed neighborhood parks over the coming ten years.
 - iv. Increase the current public funding level for the Neighborhood Park Assistance Program.

Land Development Code

- a. Amend the land development code to require recreational or civic facilities in new neighborhoods; these facilities can be privately owned and maintained, or can be a publicly owned neighborhood park if the location and design is approved by Collier County.

Capital Improvements Program

- a. Beginning in Fiscal Year 2001-2002, allocate \$500,000 annually for the Neighborhood Park Assistance Program to begin funding two new neighborhood parks per year. (Current-year funding for this program comes from the county's general fund, part of about \$8 million traditionally allocated to capital improvements. This \$8 million is fully allocated for FY 2001-2002, but has only been partially allocated for the remainder of the five-year capital improvements program.)



COMMUNITY/REGIONAL PARKS

Collier County's goal should be to provide its residents with a 50-acre or larger community/regional park within a 15 to 20 minute drive from their homes. These are multi-purpose parks that include recreation centers, athletic fields and courts, swimming pools, and other facilities for all age groups. At least 50% of each park should remain in passive open space (lawns, natural areas, lakes) to provide opportunities for passive recreation such as picnicking, walking, nature study, sunning, etc.

Community and regional parks constitute the majority of existing parks within Collier County. In response to resident needs, Collier has aggressively expanded its community park system. Recently, the county secured 208 acres south of Immokalee Road near I-75 to serve as the county's largest regional park. In addition, 7 acres were added adjacent to Golden Gate Community Center. The county is in the initial design phase at both locations. Max A. Hasse Jr. Community Park's Community Center is also in the design phase with a projected opening in October 2001, and the county recently dedicated the new Eagle Lakes Community Park in South Naples.

Existing Community Parks

1. Eagle Lakes Community Park
2. East Naples Community Park
3. Golden Gate Community Center
4. Golden Gate Community Park
5. Gulf Coast Community Park

6. Immokalee Community Park
7. Immokalee Sports Complex
8. Max A. Hasse Jr. Community Park
9. Pelican Bay Community Park
10. Tony Rosbaugh Community Park
11. Veterans Community Park
12. Vineyards Community Park

Existing Regional Parks

1. North Naples Regional Park (site acquired but not yet developed)
2. Sugden Regional Park

Potential Regional Parks

Three additional community park sites have been identified on the Greenspace Master Plan (**Exhibit 14**). Community parks should be developed in these general locations, plus on the additional site recently purchased by Collier County. Construction of these parks will necessarily be phased over time. Total costs for the community parks are estimated at approximately \$22.5 million. This estimate assumes a design and construction cost average of about \$5,450,000 per park.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON COMMUNITY PARKS

Collier County charges a park impact fee for all new development. It charges each new dwelling unit in the unincorporated area \$821 for community parks, and all dwelling units in the county \$250 for regional parks. These funds are dedicated solely for park acquisition and development. Last year Collier County collected park impact fees

of \$5,700,000 from the unincorporated area and \$175,000 from the cities. As acquisition and construction costs increase, the fee schedule for impact fees should be adjusted accordingly.

The county can also use other revenue sources to build community parks, including grants and property taxes. Many counties and cities borrow funds to build community parks, or establish special taxing districts for this purpose.

All new parks will result in additional operating and maintenance costs. At present, Collier County operates its parks using a property tax that is levied only on land in the unincorporated area. If community park expansions outpace the natural growth in those property tax revenues, this expansion program will have to be slowed down or other recurring revenues will have to be allocated.

Some partnerships can be developed with the school board to develop joint middle and high school community parks, but the logistics are much more difficult than elementary schools because middle schools and high schools program their facilities so heavily already, and security is much more difficult to maintain.

As suggested for neighborhood parks, county staff members specializing in parks, public works, and planning should meet with school board planners to carefully review the proposed community park locations on the Greenspace Master Plan and to develop a coordinated strategy to acquire land in the selected areas over the next several years. Actual park improvements can be phased thereafter as impact fees become available.

Year 2000-2001	Lead Responsibility	Funding Source(s)
Amend the growth management plan as described above.	Planning Services.	(staff time)
Amend the capital improvements program to begin acquiring three community park sites as described above.	Parks / Rec. Dept.; OMB	Impact Fees
Amend the capital improvements program to begin developing additional community parks as described above.	Parks / Rec. Dept.; OMB	Impact Fees
Inventory and analyze private neighborhood parks and school/church sites to determine their suitability to serve neighborhoods.	Parks / Rec. Dept.; School Board	(staff time)
Continue the joint planning of new school/park facilities to serve as community parks.	Parks / Rec. Dept.; School Board	(staff time)
Create a new interlocal agreement between the county and the school board for joint development of additional facilities.	Parks / Rec. Dept.; School Board	(staff time)
Identify potential sites for three additional community parks as shown on the greenspace plan.	Parks / Rec. Dept.	(staff time)
Develop a "parks & schools buildout plan" with detailed costs and a specific financial strategy, which might include a referendum to raise funds to accelerate park construction.	Parks / Rec. Dept.; Consultants	(staff time)
Year 2002-2005		
Acquire additional land contiguous to existing community parks where needed for expansion.	Parks / Rec. Dept.	CIP, Bonds, Grants, Impact Fees
Develop park master plans and construct two community parks as shown on the greenspace plan.	Parks / Rec. Dept.; Consultants	General Fund
Fund additional staff for new community and school parks.	Parks / Rec. Dept.	Unincorp. MSTD
Year 2006-2010		
Develop park master plans and construct final two community parks as shown on the greenspace plan.	Parks / Rec. Dept.; Consultants	CIP, Bonds, Grants, Partnerships
Fund additional staff for new community and school parks.	Parks / Rec. Dept.	Unincorp. MSTD

COMMUNITY PARKS

SETTING THE COURSE

Collier County needs four more community parks to serve its residents. Sites for three of these parks have not yet been selected. These sites should be selected and purchased in the very near future, and all four parks should be constructed as quickly as recreation impact fees become available.

GETTING THERE

Growth Management Plan

- a. Add a new goal to the recreation and open space element supporting a community park goal to provide large community parks for active and passive recreation within a 15 - 20 minute drive of residents in urban areas.
- b. Add an achievable objective to the recreation and open space element that can be used to measure progress toward this goal. Measures might include: park sites identified; park sites acquired; park improvements installed; expenses incurred for community parks; etc.
- c. Add new policies to the recreation and open space element about the following activities:
 - i. By 2006, acquire three additional community park sites in the general locations shown on the greenspace master plan, with sufficient land to allow 50% of each site to remain as passive open space.
 - ii. Design and construct four new community parks as quickly as impact fees become available.
 - iii. Consider available options for combining community parks with new or existing schools.
 - iv. Regularly update the recreation and open space impact fee rates to match increases in land and construction costs.

Capital Improvements Program

- a. Beginning in Fiscal Year 2001-2002, schedule the acquisition of one community park site every two years so that all three needed sites will be available in advance of demand (funding source: recreation and open space impact fees).
- b. Also beginning in Fiscal Year 2001-2002, schedule the design and construction of four additional community parks in accordance with anticipated recreation and open space impact fee collections.



LINKAGES (SIDEWALKS, BIKEWAY, TRAILS, AND TRANSIT)

An interconnected system of concrete sidewalks, on-street bike lanes, and both paved (asphalt) and unpaved (mulch, shell, grass, lime rock, etc.) trails should be developed for both recreation and transportation. Residents may use the system to commute from their home to work or school, or drive to strategically located trailheads for recreational bike riding, walking, or skating. Once completed, this system would allow residents to walk, skate, or bicycle between the county's parks and natural lands. In some areas of the county it will not be feasible to provide connections between segments of sidewalks, bikeways, or trails. A good county public transit program can bridge the gap, especially if transit vehicles are equipped with bicycle racks.

The countywide interconnected system of pedestrian-friendly facilities should include shaded sidewalks in all neighborhoods, safe facilities for bicycle use, and improved safety at pedestrian crosswalks. The system of sidewalks and bikeways should connect neighborhoods to town centers, parks, public buildings, and natural areas. The benefits of an interconnecting alternative transportation system include:

- Improved safety for pedestrians and cyclists
- Less dependence on cars and other motorized travel
- Better air quality
- Improved quality of life for residents

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON LINKAGES

Shaded sidewalks are needed within neighborhoods along residential

streets, especially near schools and commercial areas. Consistent with the proposed improvements in the county's Pathway Plan, multi-purpose sidewalks will be constructed along major roadways. These walkways can accommodate cyclists, walkers, joggers, and skaters. The design of these paths should also include "trailheads" consisting of a bike rack, water fountain and possibly a pavilion.

Opportunities exist in the urbanized areas for the creation of an urban "greenways" network along existing major canal banks and existing major power easements. These greenway corridors could be developed with a wide multipurpose path as well as landscaping and other amenities, such as drinking fountains, air stations, etc. The location of these multipurpose paths within the developed areas created unique opportunities to connect to local businesses, schools, and neighborhoods, as well as create a meaningful outdoor recreation experience.

A multi-purpose looped path could be created in the Golden Gate Estates area. This path, which would allow for safe pedestrian, bicycle, and jogging within Golden Gate Estates, could be routed along the major canal system. These paths would be a major recreation amenity as well as allowing for the safe movement of residents.

Total costs for a County-wide system of bikeways and trails are estimated at approximately \$32 million over the next twenty years. It is anticipated that many of the proposed segments along road rights-of-way can be constructed as part of proposed roadway improvement plans. Typical greenway segments consisting of paths on average of 8'-14' in width typically run about \$200,000 per mile. As an example, the cost of completing the approximately 50 miles of the Golden Gate Estates Greenway could cost up to \$10,000,000.



Year 2000-2001	Lead Responsibility	Funding Source(s)
Amend the growth management plan as described above.	Planning Services	(staff time)
Continue to implement the county's Pathway Plan by including its proposals in the county's capital improvements program.	Transportation Dept.	Gas Taxes; Grants
Modify the land development code to require community interconnectivity through pedestrian/bicycle facilities and meandering off-road pathways.	Planning Services.	(staff time)
Design desirable buildout typical sections in ROW manual, including separated sidewalk/path, off-street and on-street bicycle facilities where appropriate.	Transportation Dept.	(staff time)
Consider aesthetics in future transit develop (i.e., shade, benches, lighting) at transit stops, in transportation projects.	Transportation Dept.	(staff time)
Include landscaping in standard cost of construction (i.e., not as optional or an afterthought).	Transportation Dept.	(staff time)
Inventory existing easements and rights-of-way available for pathway improvements (e.g., canals, power lines, greenways).	Transportation Dept/MPO/Consultant	(staff time)
Create neighborhood and regional connection opportunities plans.	MPO's citizen committee	(staff time)
Refine plan through interdepartmental and agency task force.	County Appointments	(staff time)
Prioritize available grant funds (i.e., Collier County TEA-21 funds) towards priority projects.	MPO; Citizen committee	(staff time)
Establish public-private partnerships for developing and sustaining funding.	MPO, SFWMD etc., SW FL Land Preservation Trust, Naplescapes, others	(staff time)
Combine stormwater, roadway, utility and landscaping functions while improving public roads.	Transportation Dept.	(staff time)

Year 2002-2005		
Develop the landscape treatments, multi-purpose sidewalks – and possibly bicycle lanes – identified in the county's Pathway Plan.	Transportation Dept.	Gas Taxes; Grants
Continue construction of sidewalk improvements countywide.	Transportation Dept.	Gas Taxes; Grants
Designate the north-south power easement through eastern Naples as a "greenway."	Transportation Dept.	(staff time)
Designate the major north-south canal through eastern Naples as a "greenway."	Transportation Dept.	(staff time)
Allocate funding within the CIP for improvements to the power easement and canal greenways.	Transportation Dept.	General Fund; Grants
Allocate funding within the CIP for the creation of the North Golden Gate Estates greenways.	Transportation Dept.	General Fund; Grants
Encourage the planting of street trees within neighborhoods through neighborhood/partnership agreements including the efforts of the city of Naples' tree planting program.	Transportation Dept.	General Fund; Grants Partners
Year 2006-2010		
Continue to partner with local businesses, neighborhoods, and service organizations to complete a continuous canopy of shade trees throughout the county.	Natural Resources; Transportation Dept.	General Fund; Grants Partnerships
Coordinate all long-term roadway improvements on state roads with FDOT to ensure compliance with Collier County's vision.	Transportation Dept.	(staff time)
Implement construction of trails within the power easements, canal ROWs, and North Golden Gate Estates.	Parks / Rec. Dept.	General Fund; Grants Impact Fees; Partnerships

LINKAGES

SETTING THE COURSE

Collier County has a pathway plan to build sidewalks, bike paths and lanes. The plan should be fully funded and include shade trees and design features suitable for pedestrian comfort and safety in relation to the adjacent roadway type and land uses. Shaded sidewalks are also needed within neighborhoods, especially near schools and shopping. In addition, an interconnected system of sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails should be developed for both recreation and transportation.

GETTING THERE

Growth Management Plan

- a. Amend Objective 4 of the transportation element to provide an objective measure of progress toward the goal of providing an interconnected network of sidewalks, bikeways and transit routes to provide multi-modal access to/between all greenspaces. Measures might include miles of sidewalks, bikeways, and trails constructed.
- b. Modify Policy 4.4 to ensure that the five-year pathway work program is funded through the five-year capital improvements program.
- c. Add new policies about the following activities:
 - i. Encourage shaded sidewalks along residential streets, especially near schools and commercial areas.
 - ii. Explore the creation of an urban greenway network along existing major canal banks and powerline easements.

Land Development Code

- a. Amend the land development code to require community interconnectivity through pedestrian/bicycle facilities and meandering off-road pathways.

Capital Improvements Program

- a. Beginning in Fiscal Year 2001-2002, include all projects on the five-year pathway work program in the county's five-year capital improvements program.



BEACH AND BAY ACCESS FACILITIES

Collier County's sparkling beaches and waterfront homes are one of the main attractions for residents and visitors. Access to the Gulf of Mexico, the Ten Thousand Islands, and surrounding estuarine waters provide numerous recreation opportunities. Fishing, diving, and cruising are extremely popular recreational activities for residents and visitors. It is critical that access to Collier County's natural assets be preserved as the County continues to grow.

Existing Facilities

1. Barefoot Beach County Park
2. Barefoot Beach Beach Access
3. Clam Pass County Park
4. North Gulf Shore Boulevard beach
5. Tigertail Beach County Park
6. South Marco Beach
7. Vanderbilt Beach County Park
8. Bayview Park
9. Caxambas Bay
10. Cocohatchee River Park
11. Lake Trafford Park
12. State Road 951 Boat Ramp

There are additional public and private marinas within Collier County that offer a variety of amenities and services to visitors and residents.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON BEACH AND BAY ACCESS

Collier County is blessed with beautiful beaches, but there is a severe shortage of access points for the public. For instance, a single county park at Vanderbilt Beach is forced to provide access to several miles of public beachfront, which is inconvenient to beach users and causes severe traffic problems and neighborhood impacts to those living near the park.

The county should aggressively investigate opportunities to provide additional water access, especially to the beaches along the Gulf of Mexico. Alternatives include acquiring vacant parcels or easements across privately owned properties. In some cases, an access point might be available but not have sufficient land to provide parking; frequent public transit could be provided from locations with surplus parking (such as underused shopping centers).

Total costs for improving existing water access facilities (boat ramps, picnic areas, boardwalks, etc.) are estimated at approximately \$600,000. This does not include the costs of acquiring new access points; however, the County needs to investigate the feasibility of providing additional access points in order to refine the estimated costs.

Year	Lead Responsibility	Funding Source(s)
Year 2000-2001		
Amend the growth management plan as described above.	Planning Services.	(staff time)
Identify alternatives to relieve parking congestion at the beaches, including the purchase of additional public access points.	Parks / Rec. Dept.	(staff time)
Identify existing or new parking facilities that could be linked to beach access points by public transportation.	Parks / Rec. Dept.; Transportation Services Dept.	(staff time)
Survey boat ramp and beach users to determine specific needs; willingness to pay user fees; and other information needed to make informed decisions.	Parks / Rec. Dept.	(staff time)
Identify opportunities to provide additional beach/bay access within easy walking/bicycle distance of residents.	Parks / Rec. Dept.	(staff time)
Year 2002-2005		
Upgrade beach access parks by providing higher quality/ additional facilities and amenities, including additional parking or public transportation.	Parks / Rec. Dept.	General Fund; Grants Tourist Tax
Year 2006-2010		
Acquire and/or negotiate easements or out-parcels of land for public /beach/water access as properties become available.	Parks / Rec. Dept.	General Fund; Grants Tourist Tax

BEACH AND BAY ACCESS

SETTING THE COURSE

Collier County is blessed with beautiful beaches, but there is a severe shortage of public access. A single park at Vanderbilt Beach provides access to several miles of beachfront. The county should aggressively pursue additional access, either by acquiring land for a new park, or through access easements.

GETTING THERE

Growth Management Plan

- a. Expand Objective 10.2 of the conservation and coastal management element to include a measure of progress toward increasing public access to the beaches and waterways of Collier County. Measures might include: additional access points acquired in fee simple or by easement; access improvements installed, including parking lots; and public transit provided to access points.
- b. Add new policies under this objective about the following activities:
 - i. Aggressively seek additional public access points to the Gulf beaches.
 - ii. Expand public transit to provide regular service from parking facilities to beach access points.



NATURAL LANDS

An improved system of natural lands would protect Collier County's incredible natural resources while also providing opportunities for recreation and tourism. The greenspace plan provides a conceptual plan that would target lands for acquisition or protection based on the following specific objectives:

- Protect targeted wetlands and uplands
- Preserve and enhance biological diversity
- Protect the habitat and corridors for the Florida panther and other listed species
- Protect rare or unique habitats
- Protect the quality of surface water and aquifers
- Protect watersheds
- Protect scenic views
- Provide opportunities for passive recreation and tourism

The proposed north-south greenways in the central and eastern areas of the county connect the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge and other public lands to the south with the protected lands in northwestern Collier County and southern Lee County. The greenways follow natural drainage patterns, and are comprised of both wetlands and upland buffers. The greenways are ideally a mile or more wide, with a minimum 3,000-foot-wide "core reserve" area, and adjacent minimum 1,000-foot-wide buffer zone on both sides of the "core reserve." Both the core reserve and the buffer zones need to be revegetated, wherever necessary, with native vegetation, including pine flatwoods, hammocks, and wet prairies to provide adequate habitat for panthers, deer, and other mammals. The buffer zones will separate development activities from the core reserve area and must accommodate wildlife movement.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON NATURAL LANDS

Public agencies do not need to purchase all of the natural land protection zones shown on the greenspace plan in order to protect those lands. Other protection techniques include stricter land-use regulations, management agreements, purchase of development rights, tax incentives and donations. This plan has not examined whether stricter regulations might provide the protection that is needed for sensitive natural lands.

However, a county-run public acquisition program could complement lands already protected by public ownership, and could greatly enhance passive recreational opportunities. Valuable regional water recharge areas, flowways and wildlife habitat could be much better protected with a fairly modest expansion of existing public lands. Existing preserves could be connected to other outstanding natural resources or expanded to match natural boundaries that may have been overlooked when the preserves were originally created. The greenspace master plan has identified the most important additional land that would benefit from public ownership; it includes considerably more land than could be acquired by Collier County acting on its own.

A successful county-run land acquisition program would require funds beyond those available from current taxes. Elected officials are typically reluctant to raise taxes for anything that might be deemed non-essential, yet in recent years voters across the country have strongly supported new taxes to preserve open spaces and wildlife habitat (see data on recent special taxes approved last year by Florida voters).

Voters overwhelmingly approved ballot measures to fund open space protection in 2000, according to the Land Trust Alliance, which has gathered the results of such elections for the past three years.

Land Trust Alliance data show that 167 of 204 such ballot questions passed in 2000, providing more than \$7 billion for land conservation. In most of these referenda, voters approved tax increases to pay for land conservation.

The 2000 results reflect voters' continuing support for open space protection.

In 1999, voters passed 90 percent of the 102 referenda, authorizing more than \$1.8 billion in local taxing authority and bonds for open space preservation.

In 1998, voters passed 84 percent of 148 referenda across the country, providing approximately \$8.3 billion to open space protection.

YEAR 2000 FLORIDA RESULTS:

*Alachua County, 11/7/00, Open space acquisition, \$29,000,000, Passed
Boca Raton, 3/14/00, Land acquisition & recreation, \$30,000,000, Passed
Broward County, 11/7/00, Land acquisition & other, \$400,000,000, Passed
Jacksonville, 9/5/00, Part of sales tax for land acquisition \$50,000,000, Passed
Leon County, 11/7/00, Part of sales tax for land acquisition, \$400,000,000, Passed
Seminole County, 11/7/00, Part of bond issue for open space, \$25,000,000, Passed
Volusia County, 11/7/00, Property tax for land acquisition, \$40,000,000, Passed
West Palm Beach, 3/14/00, Bond issue for parks, \$20,000,000, Passed*

- Nov. 15, 2000, Land Trust Alliance, Washington, D.C.

In 1996, a similar referendum was defeated in Collier County, and as a result there has been considerable reluctance to approach local voters again. As a practical matter, the Collier County Commission can provide valuable assistance to local environmental and business groups and private citizens who have already begun to explore the potential for a conservation lands acquisition program. Questions that need to be answered include:

- What funding source would be most appropriate (ad valorem property tax or sales tax)?
- What level of taxation should be proposed?
- Should land be acquired on a pay-as-you-go basis, or should funds be borrowed to speed up acquisitions?
- What type of lands should be the highest priority for purchase?
- Should specific types of lands (or specific parcels) be identified prior to a referendum?
- How many decisions on what land should be purchased should be made before a referendum, and how much flexibility should be retained until later?
- What degree of recreational activities should be allowed on purchased land (passive vs. active)?
- Would Collier County be wise to make joint purchases with state and federal agencies?
- How would the perpetual maintenance of natural lands be funded?

It would be very helpful for county government to assist this grass-roots movement to develop, with county staff involvement, in order to propose the most viable land acquisition program possible, because a technically sound proposal that will also meet with strong public support would be needed for a referendum to succeed at the polls.

If a referendum is not held in Collier County, or is not approved by the voters, there are still opportunities to expand the existing natural preserves. The State of Florida has active land acquisition programs and has increased funding for them through the new "Florida Forever" initiative, which funds the existing Florida Communities Trust, Conservation and Recreational Lands (CARL), and Save Our Rivers programs. Because these programs have a statewide focus, they would never be able to replace a successful local acquisition program; however, they respond to their perception of what local communities want, and in the past Collier County has been less than supportive of their efforts and sometimes even antagonistic. With a reversal of that attitude, additional funds may become available for natural lands preservation in Collier County.

Some other opportunities are available for acquiring land. Environmental agencies sometimes accept mitigation funds for unavoidable damage to wetlands. These funds can be used within Collier County if suitable lands have been identified in advance for purchase and/or restoration.

If public agencies were to acquire all of the approximately 120,000 acres of lands identified on **Exhibit 14**, at an average cost of \$3,000 per acre, then the total estimated cost would be \$366 million. Obviously, the costs can be reduced significantly by utilizing the alternative resource protection techniques discussed above, and by leveraging acquisition funds through state and private partnerships.

Year	Lead Responsibility	Funding Source(s)
Year 2000-2001		
Amend the conservation and coastal management element of growth management plan as described above.	Planning Services.	(staff time)
Conduct a natural lands workshop for the County Commission, including the Environmental Advisory Council, Planning Commission, Select Committee on Community Character, and other stakeholders.	Natural Resources; Conservancy of Southwest Florida	(staff time) Private donations
Conduct a poll of citizens as to determine their willingness to support a referendum to acquire natural lands.	Conservancy of Southwest Florida	Private donations
Approach major landowners to determine availability of land for acquisition.	Citizens' committee	Private donations
Suggest general priorities for a county land acquisition program, including land to be acquired (such as core greenways land and land that is contiguous to existing natural lands, as shown on Exhibit 18); type of funding (ad valorem vs. sales tax); and use of funds (bonding vs. pay-as-you-go).	Citizens' committee	Private donations
Consider placing a referendum on the ballot to establish a special tax to fund a natural lands acquisition program	County Commission (upon request by citizens' committee)	Ad valorem or sales tax; Private donations
Prepare formal outline of land acquisition criteria and identify alternative funding sources and acquisition techniques/roles.	Natural Resources; Citizens' committee	(staff time) Private donations
Conduct a program to inform voters about the merits of a natural lands acquisition program.	Citizens' committee	Private donations
If voters approve the referendum, determine the county's exact role in negotiations and real estate closings, considering potential advantages of all alternatives including a staff function; local real estate agencies; or non-profits groups such as Trust for Public Land, Nature Conservancy, Conservancy of SW Florida, local land trusts, etc.	Natural Resources; Citizens' committee	(staff time) Private donations
Year 2002-2005		
If voters approve the referendum, prioritize land for acquisition on a parcel-by-parcel basis and begin negotiations with landowners.	[acquisition agency]	Referendum proceeds
Initiate land management activities to restore and preserve acquired lands.	Natural Resources	Referendum proceeds
Whether or not a referendum is approved, seek acquisition funding from state and federal sources; identify lands to be acquired by others; generate letters of support for acquisition.	Natural Resources; Conservancy of Southwest Florida	(staff time) Private donations
Work with private landowners to develop "best management practices" for privately owned buffers along "core" greenway lands.	Natural Resources; Conservancy of Southwest Florida	(staff time) Private donations
Year 2006-2010		
Continue land acquisition.	[acquisition agency]	Referendum proceeds
Continue land management activities.	Natural Resources	Referendum proceeds

NATURAL LANDS

SETTING THE COURSE

Voters in many communities enthusiastically support special taxes to set aside valuable natural lands. A similar program in Collier County could connect existing preserves and improve recreational opportunities, as suggested in the Greenspace Master Plan. County government should assist the citizens' movement that is exploring this idea and should place a referendum before the voters if a sound proposal results from that process.

GETTING THERE

Growth Management Plan

- a. Add a new goal to the conservation and coastal management element supporting the acquisition of additional property rights where needed to protect regionally significant wetlands and flowways and to preserve habitats and corridors essential to the survival of the Florida panther and other listed species (endangered, threatened, special concern).
- b. Add an achievable objective that can be used to measure progress toward this goal. Measures might include: holding a referendum on funding sources; number of acres of natural lands purchased and protected; or number of acres of natural lands that other public agencies are able to protect within Collier County.
- c. Add new policies about the following activities:
 - i. COUNTY LAND ACQUISITION:
 1. If presented with a credible proposal from a citizens'

group, place a referendum on the ballot for a county-run program to acquire and manage natural lands.

2. If approved by voters in a referendum, establish a county-run land-acquisition program and manage those lands in their natural state.

ii. ACQUISITION BY OTHER AGENCIES:

1. Formally express support for legitimate efforts by other government agencies or non-profit entities to acquire lands for preservation purposes, including the use of less-than-fee acquisitions for the same purpose.

Financing Issues

- a. If a land-acquisition referendum is approved by the voters:
 - i. Dedicate a portion of the proceeds for restoration and continuing maintenance of acquired land.
 - ii. Commit the remainder of the proceeds through the county's capital improvements program for the sole purpose of acquiring natural lands.
- b. If a land-acquisition referendum is not held or not approved by the voters:
 - i. Seek whatever acquisition funding can be obtained from state and federal sources.
 - ii. Work with private landowners to develop "best management practices" for privately owned buffers along "core" greenway lands.