



PARKS & PUBLIC SPACES ELEMENT INTRODUCTION

Element Purpose

The Parks & Public Spaces Element is essential to achieving West Melbourne’s community planning vision as it establishes the framework for developing public areas that unite the community and establishing community centers. Public spaces, parks, and recreational facilities are a key component for the City to provide a distinct, small hometown feel. Through the Parks & Public Spaces Element, the Horizon 2030 Comprehensive Plan framework helps ensure that the City’s character and quality of life are supported and enhanced by its parks and public spaces.

Through the goal, objectives, and policies established in the Parks & Public Spaces Element, the City establishes a planning framework for uniting the community’s residents, businesses, and visitors together. This Element sets the development framework in a series of policies for creating multipurpose community spaces that include civic buildings, shops and business services, parks, and other public spaces. This Element will help create unique community places that provide members and visitors a high quality of life and exceptional municipal services. Some of these spaces will be created by government entities and others will be created by the private development community.

Parks & Public Spaces Background

Located in the southern portion of Florida’s Space Coast region, the City of West Melbourne is located within a ten (10) minute drive to many park and recreational resources provided along water bodies, including the Atlantic Ocean, the Indian River, and the St. John’s River. Additionally, the City is located about an hour drive from many Central Florida theme parks and family vacation areas—including the nearby Kennedy Space Center.

In addition to the region’s numerous park and recreational resources, the West Melbourne has a diverse array of park and recreational resources within its own jurisdiction (see attached “Public Park Facilities” map). West Melbourne has eight (8) City or County owned parks in its city limits as well as a few privately owned facilities. These facilities offer a variety of resources including active recreational facilities, passive park areas and community center resources.

Even with its various park and recreational resources, the City and its community members recognize the desire to create community spaces that foster the community’s identity and image and support the City’s small hometown Florida lifestyle. The updated goals, objectives, and policies are designed to

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address the City's needs while enabling West Melbourne to achieve its adopted community planning vision.

Evaluation and Appraisal Report: Identified Concerns

Issues related to Parks & Public Spaces were discussed in the following chapters of the 2009 Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR).

- **Chapter 1—Community Identity and Image:** relates to how public spaces areas can be used to support the qualities that provide West Melbourne its community identity, quality of life, and sense of place.
- **Chapter 2—Community Core, Neighborhood Centers, and Gathering Spaces:** addresses the need to create a central community area, neighborhood centers, and gathering spaces which support the social community and provides West Melbourne a heart, unifying core, neighborhood centers, and community gathering areas.
- **Chapter 3—Integrated Development Patterns:** addresses the need to utilize public spaces, parks, and recreational areas to integrate neighborhoods, commercial areas, and public spaces together.
- **Chapter 6—Land Development Practices and Design Standards:** relates to the need to develop and design public space areas in such a way that such resources promote and support the community's quality of life, small town character, and sense of place.

According to the EAR, residents desire to have both a wider variety of open space and community programs as well as public spaces that lend an identity to the City. The goal of this Element is to provide the City's community members a variety of recreation resources within walking or biking distance.

The 2009 EAR explains that the City's predominant suburban land use pattern has resulted in disconnected park and recreational resources which do not link the community's neighborhoods, activity centers, destinations, and civic resources together. Indeed, rather than connecting the community together, some of the park and recreational resources act as dividers between neighborhoods. Large playgrounds, ball fields and greenbelts divide areas through lack of sidewalks or easements to adjacent streets and neighborhoods.

In order to address this lack of connection between public spaces and neighborhoods, the report suggests that the City review and revise its current park and recreation development practices to ensure they help create public space areas that integrate the community's land uses and community resources.

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Specifically, the EAR recommended that the Horizon 2030 Comprehensive Plan planning framework focus on:

- Integrating public spaces throughout the community over time with sidewalks or other connections.
- Enhancing transitional areas by creating public spaces within the built environment.
- Recognizing the value of public spaces to West Melbourne’s character.
- Providing access to park and recreational areas throughout West Melbourne.
- Establishing development standards that foster connectivity and accessibility of the City’s public spaces.

INVENTORY OF RESOURCES

The City of West Melbourne has a variety of public spaces, parks, and recreational resources in its City limits which meet the needs of the community, both at present and in the future. The inventory of the parks and recreation resources is based on types of recreation and size and function classification. Resource type describes the activities available including: passive recreation, active recreation, special use area public spaces, or pathway and trails. Resource classification speaks to size, location, and targeted population that the resource is to serve. These broad types and classifications include private and public parks, although the public parks are more numerous and available to everyone. As identified by the City’s community planning vision, there is a need to provide an array of public spaces, parks, and recreation resource in order to meet the many needs of a multi-generational population (see attached “Public Park Facilities” map).

Resource Type

Resource types describe an array of activities (picnics, playgrounds, and swimming), sport facilities (basketball, football, and baseball), and nature oriented resources (nature walks, hiking, and fishing).

There are five (5) types of recreation and open space resources in the City:

1. Passive-oriented parks
2. Active-oriented parks
3. Special use areas
4. Public spaces
5. Pathways and trails

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Passive-Oriented Parks

Passive-oriented parks include unstructured play, relaxation, family picnics and similar activities since the intent of these types of parks is to allow for non-structured enjoyment. These parks are often within walking or biking distance of most users. The activities passive parks support may become a daily pastime for neighborhood children. Support facilities, such as covered picnic or play areas, are not usually part of this subset of parks.

Active-Oriented Parks

Active-oriented parks provide playing fields and other facilities that can be used for team and individual sports and activities. Active-oriented parks are intended to serve a large area. As a result, parks with these features will require more support facilities such as restrooms, playgrounds, shelters and parking.

Special Use Areas

Special use areas are public recreation areas occupied by a single purpose facility or contain activities that do not fall into the other categories. Design of these facilities should be specific to the needs of that facility and intended user group. These uses are not considered essential to the development of a basic parks inventory and should only be considered when full cost benefit analysis and understanding of operation and maintenance costs are understood and justified. Facility space requirements are the primary determinants of site size. Examples of special use parks are dog or skateboard parks.

Public Spaces

City beautification areas are intended to provide for the aesthetic needs of the residents. Many of these spaces are five (5) acres or less in size. Rather than place an emphasis on physical activity, these areas provide a visual experience. They can take the form of landscaped entryways to the City, medians, or street corners. As expressed through the community's planning vision and defined in the 2009 EAR, the public space category includes community gathering places such as plazas and squares, where the emphasis is on outdoor gatherings such as concerts, farmers markets, street fairs, and socialization. Typical amenities include benches, tables, gazebos or pavilions.

Pathways and Trails

Pathways and trails may be incorporated into park facilities, but may also be the sole purpose of a facility. Communities provide urban paths and trails for their recreational value. Trails and paths should be developed to provide linkages between schools, parks, neighborhoods, and the community and should connect with regional trail systems. An example would be the trails and paths that are in the Erna Nixon Park and the sidewalk that traverses the Westbrooke Park, connecting the Saddlebrooke and

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Westbrooke neighborhoods along Wingate Boulevard. This connection makes it possible for children to access school on foot or bicycle in relative safety.

Resource Classification

Park classification is determined by the resource's use, purpose, size, target area, demographics and location. There are three (3) park classifications:

1. Neighborhood parks
2. Community parks
3. Regional parks

Neighborhood Parks

The neighborhood park is a "walk to" park, generally located along local streets where pedestrians will not encounter heavy traffic. It serves the population of a neighborhood in a radius of up to one-half mile and should be easily accessed. Examples of this type of park include: Tallwood, Clement's Wood, Hammock Lakes, and Westbrooke Parks.

Since the service areas of neighborhood parks and elementary schools often coincide, it is desirable for the neighborhood park to physically join elementary schools when feasible. Parks and schools serve the same basic population, share compatible land uses and maintain recreation facilities that are of mutual benefit. Recreation needs vary from one neighborhood to another and between different segments of the population. To meet the particular needs of each neighborhood, site design should also reflect the character of the neighborhood and incorporate compatible elements of both passive and active types of recreation.

Typical facilities developed in the neighborhood park may include playgrounds, recreation buildings, multi-purpose sport courts, sports fields, picnic areas, and open space. Additional facilities may be added, depending on the recreation demands of the neighborhood or community area. Neighborhood parks typically serve a population in a one-half mile radius and approximately 2000 persons, but these are just guidelines and are based on ideal circumstances, but neighborhood parks may draw from a larger area.

Although the City does not currently have any interlocal agreements with schools, there are non-profit recreation leagues that contract with the School Board of Brevard County to utilize their facilities for various recreational activities.

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Community Parks

A community park is designed to serve the needs of multiple neighborhoods and larger sections of the City and have been described as medium size, typically ten to 40 acres in size based on national averages. While community parks ought to be accessible via pedestrian and bicycle pathways, community parks are also expected to meet the needs of automobile-oriented users with parking lots and easy access to major streets or arterials. Community parks offer a wide range of programs and facilities for all community individuals and families ranging from passive to active uses. Just as the neighborhood park fulfills the recreation needs of the neighborhood, the community park is designed to meet the recreational needs of the entire community.

Typical facilities at a community park include a swimming pool, ballfields, tennis courts, play areas, multi-purpose courts, picnic areas, recreation buildings, and sports fields. Additional recreation facilities may be added to meet a particular recreation demand for each community. If school sites are used, an important consideration is adequate parking areas.

The Max K. Rodes Park is an example of a community park within the city limits.

Regional Parks

Regional parks are large, resource-based areas that serve two or more counties and are usually located within one hour's driving distance of the residents they serve. The only regional park within the City limits is Erma Nixon Park, which is a natural park. Additionally, West Melbourne residents can utilize the many facilities available at two nearby County owned and operated regional parks—Wickham Park and Palm Bay Regional Park.

Since regional parks are generally designed for resource-based activities, location is dependent upon the availability of high quality natural resources capable of being developed and used for outdoor recreation. Typical facilities include water-based recreation sites, camping areas, hiking, nature trails, picnic areas and other facilities not requiring extensive development. Parking areas are necessary support facilities and should be designed to minimize adverse impacts upon the natural environment.

The County is currently constructing another regional park, located west of Minton Road and just north of Flanagan Avenue next to Interstate 95. The proposed park will be located west of the existing Max K. Rodes Park, however, the new park will retain the name "Max K. Rodes Park". The current Max K. Rodes Park will be renamed and probably be used as a special use park for children with disabilities. The new regional park is not currently in the city limits, but is sufficiently close to most of the City's residential

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neighborhoods. This regional park will draw heavily from West Melbourne residents that currently use the existing regional parks such as Wickham Park and Palm Bay Regional Park.

Recreation Areas Within and Near West Melbourne

Table PPS-1

Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities

Site	Ownership	Type	Classification	Acres	Facilities
Erna Nixon Park	County	Special Use	Regional	52.0	Nature Trail, Picnic Pavilions
Jan Lieson Crossroads Park	City	Passive Park	Neighborhood	0.3	Nature Trail, Picnic Tables, Pedways, Water Fountain
Bryant Adams Park/Veterans Memorial Complex	City	Active Park	Community	4.5	Tennis Courts, Restrooms, Racquetball Courts, Community Center
Tallwood Park	City	Special Use	Neighborhood	4.6	Exercise Trail, Basketball Court, Picnic
Max K. Rodes Park	County	Active Park	Regional	18.0	Community Center, Swimming Lake, Football Field, Baseball Fields, Concession Stand, Basketball Courts, Volleyball Court, Shuffleboard Court, Playground, Pavilions
Westbrooke Park	City	Active Park	Neighborhood	4.4	Basketball Court, Picnic Areas, Pavilion, Restrooms
Clements Wood Park	City	Active Park	Neighborhood	5.4	Picnic Tables, Baseball, Football, Playground, Pavilions,
Hammock Lakes Park	City	Active Park	Neighborhood	11.4	Beach Volleyball, Court, Multi-purpose Field, Pavilions, Grill / Water Spigots, Water Fountains, Walking Trail, Playground, Basketball Court
Total Acreage				100.6	

Erna Nixon Park

A County owned passive and special use park located on the west side of Evans Road, just north of the intersection of Hibiscus Boulevard. It is a 52-acre naturally wooded site with a nature trail and boardwalk.

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Jan Lieson Crossroads Park

A City-owned passive park site located between Minton Road and Meadowlane Avenue. It is a 0.25 acre passive park with picnic tables, exercise trail, and a pavilion.

Bryant Adams Park/Veterans Memorial Complex

A City-owned active recreation area located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Henry Avenue and Minton Road. It is a 4.5 acre park site with four (4) lighted tennis courts and two (2) lighted racquetball courts. Also included on the property is the new Veterans Memorial Complex. Converted from the previous City Hall location, Veterans Memorial Complex is being renovated to accommodate community activities and services such as classes, demonstrations and meetings.

Tallwood Park

A City-owned passive park with some active recreational facilities located on the west side of Hollywood Boulevard, south of Henry Avenue. It is 4.6 acres in size with walking trail, picnic facilities, basketball court, multi-purpose field, and exercise facilities.

Westbrooke Park

A City-owned active park located on the west side of Hollywood Boulevard, adjacent to the Westbrooke neighborhood. The 4.4 acre park includes a pavilion and shelter with picnic tables, a basketball court, children's play area and a volleyball court.

Clement's Wood Park

This active park is located on 5.4 acres on the south side of Fell Road, east of Hollywood Boulevard. The park includes a baseball field, soccer field, playground equipment and picnic area.

Max K. Rodes Park

An 18-acre active park located on the west side of Minton Road, north of Flanagan Avenue. This park includes a community center, swimming lake, football field, three (3) baseball fields, concession stand, basketball court, volleyball court, playground, and two (2) picnic pavilions.

Other Park Resources

Private Subdivisions

Several subdivisions have set aside land for private neighborhood and pocket parks. Five (5) subdivisions in the City have their own private recreation areas. The Hunter's Creek recreation area has a playground and picnic pavilion. The recreation area at Sheridan Woods contains a playground and a picnic pavilion.

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The Falls at Sheridan recreation area contains basketball courts, a playground, and a picnic pavilion. West Melbourne Landings and Oak Grove each have playground areas.

Sidewalks

In May 2009, the City of West Melbourne conducted a sidewalk gap study titled “Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Grant Application and Sidewalk Gap Study” that included local roads and roads within the city limits that are owned and maintained by other entities including Brevard County and FDOT. (see attached “Sidewalk Gap Study” map). The study determined the following roads lack complete sidewalks or need sidewalk improvements:

- Minton Road: need sidewalks wider than five feet to accommodate two sets of pedestrians.
- Hollywood Boulevard: intermittent sidewalks on both sides of the road.
- Sheridan Road: needs sidewalks, none present.
- Milwaukee Avenue: intersection improvements needed on the County side of Minton Road to make the crosswalk wider.
- Henry Avenue: needs ADA ramps, better signage and restriping at the crosswalks.

All parks and each of the five public or charter schools—Imagine Schools at West Melbourne, West Melbourne School of Science, Meadowlane Primary Elementary School, Meadowlane Intermediate Elementary School, and Central Middle School—have sidewalks leading up to their entrances. The City received a grant as a result of the “Safe Routes to School” program to add sidewalks on the west side of Hollywood Boulevard from Fell Road north to Henry Avenue. The City will also be adding road segments and sidewalks to the following:

- Doherty Drive: extending south from Henry Road to Heritage Oaks Boulevard.
- Fell Road: extending east from Hollywood Boulevard to Dairy Road.
- Henry Avenue: extending east from Park Hill Boulevard to Dairy Road.

Population Trends and Level of Service Issues

Recreation needs are based on facilities for the existing population and on future facilities to provide for the projected population.

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Parkland Level of Service Standards

Year	Population	Park Land Required to meet LOS of 4 acres per 1,000 residents
2000	10,857	43
2005	15,058	60
2010	17,122	69
2015	19,603	78
2020	22,553	90
2025	25,510	102
2030	28,188	113

Source: University of Florida Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, 2010

As can be seen in Table FLU-6 , the City is currently meeting the adopted LOS standard for park acreage, and will continue to do so through 2025, based on current Shimberg Center population estimates. An additional 1.4 acres will be required to meet the recreational needs of the projected 2025 population, and given the land development regulations, it is probable that the city will continue to meet the LOS standards throughout the long term period. The current supply of park facilities will continue to meet the adopted LOS through 2025.

Recreation Demand

As the population continues to grow in West Melbourne, recreation facilities will be in greater demand by the residents of all ages. With the requirement that all new residential developments dedicate land for parks or pay a recreation fee in lieu of park construction, the City can ensure new parks are created and maintain and upgrade existing parks. In the future, park design should include facilities to satisfy demands of all age groups.

Recreation Level of Service Standards

In order to plan for future recreation, setting level of service (LOS) standards is an appropriate way to ensure the needs of the community are being adequately met. The standards for West Melbourne are based on needs of specific types of recreation, available land to meet these needs and population projections. The LOS standard is four (4) acres per 1,000 residents. With a total of 100.6 acres of parks within the city limits, this standard is currently being met and is expected to be able to be met for the required five (5) year and ten (10) year planning periods. Beyond the short and long term State required planning periods, the City will purchase land or require developer contributions to assist in park development, when needed. The Recreation Master Plan has identified a need for a new park in the northwest part of the City, north of US 192, since there are no public parks in this area available to the public.

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Proximity and Access to Recreation Facilities

All parks presently in the City provide ease of access for the residents that live near them. Since the land area of the City is relatively small (9.9 square miles), the travel time for most residents south of US 192 is relatively short. As identified earlier, there are no public parks north of US 192 available for residents, however, there are several private parks. Any future parks will be designed for easy access to maintain short travel times. Also, the future parks will be designed to accommodate access for the handicapped and will address the needs of children and senior citizens.

Future Recreation Demand and Implementation Strategy

While the City's parks currently meet the adopted LOS, the City is committed to developing and executing a park strategy which enables the community to achieving its planning vision. The goals, objectives, and policies established within this element seek to promote a variety of resources which interconnect the community by providing a central core, local neighborhood centers and a variety of gathering spaces.

Specific resources that will be the focus of future park and recreation efforts include:

- Development of small, local development focused public spaces and neighborhood parks which can be utilized by all community members.
- Expansion of pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- Improved access to all public space, park, and recreational resources.
- Promotion of special use parks which provide areas for handicap children and other types of sole use activities.
- Improved connectivity between parks, neighborhoods, and other activity centers.

Future Recreation Facilities in the Private Sector

The land development regulations (LDR) require developers of subdivisions to either dedicate land to the public or pay a recreation fee in lieu of dedication. In general, the larger developments have provided private recreation areas, while smaller developments have paid the fee in lieu of dedication. These fee payments are used to help finance improvements to the existing parks. It is recommended that the City continue this policy as it benefits all concerned. The City and the private sector have participated jointly in several projects that benefitted the recreation facilities. When applicable, the City should continue to participate with the private sector to improve the City's park system.

Funding Mechanisms

Funding for parks and recreation improvements is generated from several funds. Items such as the community center, baseball fields and basketball courts are funded by the general fund. The recreation

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special revenue fund represents the expenditure of the recreation fees collected from residential development projects. Bike paths, tennis courts, racquetball courts, playgrounds and jogging and exercise trails could be constructed using this fund. The fund will not be used for maintenance of the facilities or to purchase maintenance equipment. The recreation fee collected from residential developments is based upon the appraised value of the land prior to development (per acre value) times the required recreation acreage on-site, less up to 75 percent of any approved public or private recreational improvement.

The solid waste recycling grant fund also can be used to fund certain recreation improvements. Outdoor furniture can be purchased using this fund as long as the items are made of recycled materials. It is possible that the City could qualify for state or federal grants that could be used to increase parks and open space in the City. The City should pursue any grants of this kind in the future, if appropriate.