

# 7

## RECREATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS

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## 7.1 FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the Assessment of Existing Conditions section of the master plan, the public input findings, national best practices, and the need to position parks and recreation in the Village of Palmetto Bay to be successful in meeting the needs of community residents for the next 10 plus years.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RECREATION PROGRAMS

The Village of Palmetto Bay will need to determine the areas of focus for future recreation programming efforts based on the level of financial and resource commitment that it wants to make to recreation programs and services.

#### Formalize a Programming Philosophy

Parks and Recreation should formalize an overall basic programming philosophy based on the current method of providing services. This should include the following objectives:

- The Village will not be the primary provider of most recreation programs and services that are available in the community but will coordinate these efforts to ensure that adequate recreation services are obtainable.
- Develop partnerships with other providers to bring a full spectrum of recreation programs and services to the community.
- For recreation programs and services that occur at Village parks and facilities develop an approach the relies on:
  - Parks and Recreation staffed programs for key program areas only.
  - Contract provided programs where revenues are shared

for most programs.

- Rental of space to other providers for limited programs.
- Ensure that recreation program and service opportunities are available to all ages, incomes, abilities, gender, and ethnic groups in an equitable and inclusive manner.
- Ensure that recreation program and service opportunities are available in areas of interest that are identified as a need in the community.
- Village recreation and program service offerings will respond to identified community needs in a cost effective and efficient manner.

#### Develop a Program Plan

Based on the programming philosophy, develop a program plan that includes the general direction of recreation programming for the next 5 plus years. This would include the following areas:

- Establish the basics of the plan:
  - Determine which programs will be primarily offered by Village staff. This currently includes:
    - Special events
    - Youth
    - Seniors
    - Self-directed
  - Respond to priorities for general programming expansion based on community input (primarily the survey) including:
    - Fitness/Wellness
    - Nature/Outdoor Adventure

- Aquatics/Water Related
- History and Museums
- Family Events

The role of the Village in providing new programs in these areas will need to be determined but in keeping with the overall programming philosophy, it should be expected that most will be offered by other providers.

- Maintain and enhance programming contracts with existing organizations, including fitness providers, youth sports organizations, outdoor recreation providers and others for the following:
  - Youth Sports
  - Adult Sports
  - Fitness/Wellness
  - Outdoor Recreation
  - Cultural arts
- Determine the approach to other program areas that currently do not have organized program opportunities including:
  - Education
  - Special Needs
  - Teens
  - Social Services

Although not as high of a priority as the programs that were identified by the public for additional focus, there still should be opportunities for Palmetto Bay residents to participate in programs in these areas. It is expected that any programs would either be provided by contracts with other providers or by referral to other organizations.

| PROGRAM AREAS      | VILLAGE | OTHER PROVIDERS | FUTURE PROVIDERS |
|--------------------|---------|-----------------|------------------|
| SPORTS             | YES     | YES             | --               |
| FITNESS/WELLNESS   | YES     | YES             | --               |
| CULTURAL ARTS      | --      | YES             | --               |
| AQUATICS           | --      | --              | YES              |
| YOUTH              | YES     | --              | --               |
| EDUCATION          | --      | --              | YES              |
| GENERAL            | --      | YES             | --               |
| SPECIAL NEEDS      | --      | --              | YES              |
| SPECIAL EVENTS     | YES     | YES             | --               |
| OUTDOOR RECREATION | --      | YES             | --               |
| SENIORS            | YES     | YES             | --               |
| TEENS              | --      | --              | YES              |
| SELF-DIRECTED      | YES     | --              | --               |
| SOCIAL SERVICES    | --      | --              | YES              |

TABLE 35 – PROGRAMS AREAS AND PROVIDERS

- Adopt the following future program responsibility directives:
  - **Youth Sports:** Most all competitive youth sports leagues and programs will continue to be the responsibility of community-based youth sports organizations in the area. Parks and Recreation will provide limited recreationally focused team sports as well as only a few select programs for individual sports.
  - **Adult Sports:** Any new adult sports will be offered by other providers, but it will be difficult to add team sports due to a lack of available time on athletic fields as well as indoor gym space.
  - **Fitness/Wellness:** This is a strong area of need as identified by the community, but the Village does not have adequate facilities to support a high level of programming in this category. Parks and Recreation should increase in-house programs where possible, but any significant

growth will have to be through contract or other providers and likely at their own facilities in the future.

- **Cultural Arts:** This is not a major program area for Parks and Recreation and will likely remain so into the future. Any new programs will be offered by contract providers.
- **Aquatics:** With no Village pool available, any programming in this area should be done by referral to other organizations that have aquatic facilities and programming available. This includes the YMCA and Cutler Bay. It is not expected that the Village will develop an aquatic center in the future.
- **Youth:** Parks & Recreation will continue to be primary provider of most after school and summer camp programs, but other contract providers could be utilized to expand programming opportunities in this area.
- **Education:** Parks and Recreation does not currently have education programming for youth or adults (other than what is integrated into youth programs), so most future programming needs should be provided by local school schools, specialized non-profits, the library, or private providers. However, Parks and Recreation should have information regarding these types of programs or services for referral.
- **General Interest:** It is not expected that there will be a significant growth in this area in the future, but most any new programming opportunities will be offered by contract or other providers.
- **Special Needs:** With no programs currently being provided in this area by either Parks and Recreation or other contract providers, there should be a focus in the future on identifying possible providers of programming for special needs either on a contract or referral basis.
- **Special Events:** It is expected that this will continue to be a primary program focus for Parks and Recreation in the

future.

- **Outdoor Recreation:** This is one of the top recreation program areas that was requested by the community. Parks and Recreation has limited offerings and most programming is offered by contract providers. This will need to be a focus for future recreation programming by the Village and by contract providers.
  - **Seniors:** It is expected that Parks and Recreation will continue to be the primary provider of programs and services that focus on seniors, but additional programs will be needed.
  - **Teens:** In the future providing services and programs specifically designed for teens will likely need to be the responsibility of contract and other providers.
  - **Self-Directed:** With the Village's recreation facilities, self-directed activities will remain as a significant program area.
  - **Social Services:** This area of programming is provided by some parks and recreation agencies but not by others. This is currently not a program area for Parks and Recreation and there are no existing contracts with other providers in place. The Village will need to determine if this is an area that requires their direct involvement in the future. It should be expected that all services will be by referral to other providers only.
- Contracts with other providers need to clearly outline specific roles and expectations as well as limits to facility scheduling, fees, and operations. Contract requirements should include:
    - A program plan.
    - Safety and security plans
    - Participant code of conduct
    - Background checks for all staff and volunteers

- Quarterly and annual reports on program numbers and participants
  - DEI policy
  - Youth sports: Coaches training program and concussion protocol
- For those program areas where there are no contracts, utilize other providers on a referral and clearinghouse basis. This could involve promotion of their activities, coordinating of some programs, and permitting of facilities. However, this process needs to be closely managed to be successful.
- Ensure that recreation programs (inhouse, contractual or referral) are available for a wide range of demographic groups including:
  - **Preschool:** Programs and activities that assist with the development of young children both as individuals and with parents or caregivers.
  - **Youth:** Programs that serve a variety of interest areas beyond just sports including after-school and summer camps.
  - **Teens:** Activities designed specifically for teens that are both organized and drop-in in nature.
  - **Seniors:** Programs and services that serve a wide range of the senior age category, including an appeal to the younger more active based senior.
  - **Intergenerational/Multigenerational:** Offering programs and services that have an appeal to multiple generations or across generations. This should include family focused activities.
  - **Ethnic/Culturally Based:** There should be an effort to offer programs and services that are appropriate for the cultural orientation of the community.
- Adapt the demand for future programming to the facilities that are available within the Village to support the desired activities. This will limit the ability to deliver programs in some areas.
- Programming should include some limited virtual options in addition to traditional in-person offerings.
- There will need to be the establishment of basic performance measures to track recreation programming effectiveness. This includes the following for both Village programs as well as those that are contracted:
  - Rates of fill for programs and activities (capacity vs. actual numbers).
  - Resident and non-resident participation rates
  - Participation numbers and comparisons to past years/seasons.
  - Rate of program cancellations (should be between 15% and 20%)
  - Financial performance including cost per participant.
  - Evaluations from participants.

**RECREATION PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY**

- Formalize a formal programming philosophy.
- Develop a program plan that builds on the programming philosophy.
- Pursue additional contracts with other providers for program areas that are not currently available to the public.
- For those program areas where there are no contracts, utilize other providers on a referral and clearinghouse basis.
- Ensure that recreation programs are available for a wide range

of demographic groups, regardless of who is the provider.

- Establish basic performance measures to track recreation programming effectiveness.

## 7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RECREATION FACILITIES THAT SUPPORT RECREATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Specific recommendations for active use recreation facilities in Palmetto Bay include:

- The public process (especially the survey) indicated that the top priorities for new amenities that can support recreational activities are:
  - Exercise/Fitness Room
  - Community Centers/Recreation Centers
  - Larger Community Parks
  - Outdoor Pools
  - Walking Running Tracks

It is not expected that Village will be able to significantly address these priorities by building additional facilities due to the lack of space (large community parks), high cost of development and operation (community/recreation centers and outdoor pools and the staffing requirements.

- It is important to realize that the ability to deliver a wide range of recreation programs and services is impacted by the limits of the parks and facilities that are available. This includes:
  - Without a public pool in the Village, aquatic programming is not available directly by Parks and Recreation.

- There is not an appropriate indoor space to develop fitness/wellness programming.
- Indoor sports (basketball, volleyball, etc.) are impacted by the lack of public gym space.

The Village will either need to develop the required amenities to support these activities or rely on other providers in the Palmetto Bay area. Adding a splash pad is an alternative to building an actual swimming pool but it will not provide the opportunity for actual aquatic programs.

- Develop operations plans for each of the major parks and recreation facilities in the Village including:
  - Coral Reef Park
    - Recreation Room/Facility (new)
  - Palmetto Bay Park
    - Recreation Room
  - Thalatta Estate
  - Ludovici Park
    - Community Room
  - Perrine Community House
- This needs to include safety and security concerns and an emergency action plan (EAP).
- Ensure that there are current operational and management agreements in place for any facilities that are being contract operated.
- Thalatta Estate is an outstanding facility for events but the ability for this facility to maximize its full potential would be significantly enhanced if indoor event space could be added to the back of the building. Completing a feasibility study to

investigate the viability of adding indoor space should be completed in the future.

- A lack of parking at Thalatta Estate, Ludovici Park and Perrine Community House impacts the use of these facilities. Developing additional on-site parking is not possible but utilizing shared parking opportunities with other entities will need to continue and should be expanded if possible.
- Parks and Recreation should complete an athletic field capacity analysis to determine the accepted level of use for existing fields. Establish an annual hourly level of use ceiling for fields to minimize turf damage and keep fields usable.
- All playgrounds in the Village should be on a replacement schedule that ensures that there is a system in place for keeping playgrounds safe and usable.
- Establish clear priorities of use for the larger parks and buildings (new Coral Reef recreation room, Palmetto Bay recreation room, Ludovici community room) by time of day, day of week, and season the year to ensure that the parks and spaces are being used to their full potential and meet the goals of the amenities and programs. Priorities should include drop-in use, programs, and rentals.

#### RECREATION FACILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

- Develop the required amenities to support community desired recreation activities or rely on other providers in the Palmetto Bay area.
- Build off existing policies and procedures to develop formal operations plans for each of the major parks and recreation facilities in the Village.

- Have current operational and programming agreements in place for all facilities that are being contract operated.
- Complete an athletic field capacity analysis to determine the accepted level of use for existing fields.
- Determine funding mechanisms for capital development and operations.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

Critical to having strong management and operations of recreation programs, services, and facilities; is having a strong staffing, maintenance, budgeting, policies and procedures, and marketing measures in place. The following are specific recommendations for these areas.

##### Staffing

- Currently Parks and Recreation has only an adequate level of staffing for operations, maintenance, and recreation programming. However, if there is a desire to increase the level of maintenance and operations at existing parks, add new parks and park amenities, or recreation programming is expanded, then further staffing will be required.
- Establishing a formal staffing philosophy for Parks and Recreation will be important. This should be tied to levels of service for parks and facilities as well as for recreation programs (existing or new). It should also reflect what operations and programming tasks will be contracted to other organizations or providers.
- Review all job descriptions for full-time and part-time staff to ensure that they adequately reflect the actual duties of each position.

- Formalize a staff succession plan to plan for the inevitable turnover in key staff positions over time.
- Critical to the long-term success of parks and recreation staffing is a commitment to staff training and ultimately certification when appropriate. Developing a formal annual training program is important.
- A comprehensive staff manual should be developed that builds off Village policies and procedures.
- The Village may want to consider establishing a Park Ranger program with two full-time rangers. This may need to be augmented with part-time staff as well. These positions could assist with customer service issues, rules enforcement, safety and security concerns, and even opening and closing of parks.
- Most parks and recreation agencies that have a significant number of athletic fields, establish an athletic fields maintenance crew that focuses on this aspect of parks maintenance. This does not have to be the crew's sole job function, but they should have the specific knowledge and experience to complete this work. Designating two of the existing Parks Maintenance Workers for this role should be considered.
- There should be at least two Certified Playground Safety Inspectors (CPSI) in the Parks and Recreation Department in the next year. This is simply certifying existing staff with no additional staff needed. This could also be a contracted service.
- Consider adding a facilities maintenance crew (1-2 staff) within Parks and Recreation to enhance indoor facility maintenance.

### Maintenance

- The maintenance of parks and recreation facilities is currently at a high level and the Village needs to commit to continuing this level of service in the future.
- Parks and Recreation needs to develop a comprehensive maintenance management plan for parks and facilities as a whole. This needs to include specific maintenance functions that need to occur, their frequency, method(s) for delivery, required resources, and tracking of work and budget. This plan should also have a specific focus on preventative maintenance and should include not only the growing environment but also buildings and structures as well. Ideally each major park or recreation facility should have its own maintenance plan that is specific to that location.
- Once the maintenance management plan is in place, the process needs to continue to develop to the next level where actual time and resource allocations are utilized to validate the plan that is in place. This could take several years until enough real-world numbers (number of hours spent per park/building and per maintenance function as well as actual costs for each park for supplies and contracted services) are available to adjust the existing standards. From this, specific benchmark standards can be determined (cost per acre, per square foot, etc.). This will require a maintenance management software system.
- Develop an asset management plan and lifecycle replacement schedule for all Village parks and recreation facilities with provisions for a yearly update.
- There should also be a detailed deferred maintenance list for all Village owned parks and recreation facilities that prioritizes needed improvements per facility and overall.



- Most parks and recreation agencies strategically contract for some maintenance services in addition to providing staff led maintenance. Parks and Recreation, with minimal staffing levels, should complete an analysis of which additional parks maintenance services could possibly be contracted. This should include the possibility of contracting for restroom cleaning on a daily basis.
- Formal park/facility inspections should be completed on a bi-weekly basis.
- Staff schedules, maintenance plans, tracking of inventories, facility inspections and actual maintenance time and materials records should be fully automated with the ability to make entries from the field on tablets or other hand-held devices.

#### Budgets

- Establish clear staffing and operational budget requirements for Parks and Recreation to support maintenance, operations, and the program plan.
- Utilizing the asset management plan and lifecycle replacement schedule for parks and recreation facilities, a 5-year capital improvement plan (CIP) should be developed and updated annually. This will need to be fully funded to keep from developing an ever-expanding list of deferred maintenance issues.
- Sound financial practices require good budget monitoring procedures and strong record keeping. The operational budgets need to continue to be monitored on at least a monthly basis with any possible deviations or modifications noted at that time.

- For any budget accounts where there are direct revenues associated with costs (recreation programs and facilities), revenues should be linked and shown with expenses to determine a true net cost.
- Rates of compensation for part-time staff will likely need to have significant increases over the next five years to attract and keep staff.
- Parks and Recreation needs to establish a formal recreation fee philosophy and a supporting policy to guide the fee process and provide a rational reason for establishing specific fees for service. There should be fee increases for most programs, services, and rentals at least every two years.
- Strong consideration should be given to eliminating the surcharge for the use of credit cards as a form of payment for parks and recreation services as this discourages their use and makes the collection of funds more difficult and time consuming. Most services should be available for on-line sign up which eliminates much of the staffing requirements for this function.
- It must be recognized that recreation is a discretionary use of an individual's time and money and as a result there needs to be an adequate budget and staff commitment to marketing and promotions on an annual basis.
- Parks and Recreation should utilize the quarterly Managers Report to complete a comprehensive annual report for all aspects of parks, facilities, and recreation operations. There should be an annual report that succinctly summarizes yearly financial statistics and utilization rates and compares them with previous years. Each area should utilize the same format and the information should be available in a single document for the Village.

### **Policies and Procedures**

- There needs to be standard operating procedures for Parks and Recreation as a whole and for individual parks and facilities.
- It is critical to have safety and security measures in place for all parks and facilities as well as an emergency action plan (EAP).
- It is absolutely essential that Parks and Recreation utilizes a software program for all recreation program registrations, point of sale transactions, rentals, scheduling and other functions. This should be tied to the Village's financial system for easy integration.
- Develop an athletic field use policy to determine priorities of use, use requirements and fees for use.
- It is important that Parks and Recreation establishes a continuity plan that covers possible interruptions of operations from natural disasters, pandemics, terrorist acts or other conditions.
- Current agreements for all contract service providers should be in place.
- The department needs to develop a diversity, equity, and inclusion policy (DEI).
- Key performance metrics for parks/facility maintenance and recreation services are not present and are necessary for tracking purposes.

### **Marketing**

- Parks and Recreation needs to focus on improving and expanding its marketing efforts. This requires the development of at least a basic yearly marketing plan that reflects the

priorities of the organization. The focus of the plan should include:

- Integrating the promotional efforts that are in place for Thalatta Estate for general parks and recreation services.
  - The unique parks and recreation facilities that are available to the residents of the community.
  - Promoting the recreation programs and services that are available by not only Village staff but by contract providers.
  - That Parks and Recreation serves all age groups, interests, and backgrounds.
- There should be an every other year (in-house and on-line) survey of parks and recreation users' needs and concerns. This survey should gather opinions regarding maintenance, staff, programs and services, and future needs.
  - Parks and Recreation should have a branded web page that is accessible from the Village web page or independently.
  - Development of a 3 time a year digital parks and recreation programs and services brochure should be strongly considered.
  - Designating one full-time staff member as the coordinator for marketing will be important.

### **OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY**

- Establish a formal staffing philosophy for Parks and Recreation.
- Review and update job descriptions for full-time and part-time staff.
- Formalize a staff succession plan.
- A comprehensive staff manual should be developed.

- Consider establishing a Park Ranger program as well as an athletic field maintenance crew. Also consider adding a facilities maintenance crew.
- Develop a comprehensive maintenance management plan for parks and facilities overall, as well as for individual amenities.
- Develop an asset management plan and lifecycle replacement schedule for all Village parks and recreation facilities.
- Complete a detailed deferred maintenance list for all Village owned parks and recreation facilities.
- Establish clear staffing and operational budget requirements for Parks and Recreation.
- A 5-year capital improvement plan (CIP) should be developed and updated annually.
- Establish a formal recreation fee philosophy and a supporting policy to guide the fee process.
- Complete an annual report for all aspects of parks, facilities, and recreation operations.
- Have safety and security measures in place for all parks and facilities.
- Utilize a software program for all recreation program registrations, point of sale transactions, rentals, scheduling and other functions.
- Develop an athletic use field policy to determine priorities of use, use requirements and fees for use.
- Develop a basic marketing plan that reflects the priorities of Parks and Recreation.
- Develop a branded web page that is accessible from the Village web page or independently.
- Develop 3 times a year digital parks and recreation programs and services brochure.