

# CHAPTER 8: RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Recreation and Open Space Element is to present an overview of the existing open space and recreational facilities available to both the citizens of and visitors to the City of Milton.

### 1. *Element Overview*

The element is divided into six main sections which include the Introduction, Existing Conditions, Demand Analysis, Future Considerations, Goals and Objectives, and Recommendations. The Existing Conditions section will describe the availability of recreational and open space opportunities within the City and surrounding areas. The Demand Analysis section will discuss the intricacies of the provision of recreation and open space facilities and land. The Future Considerations section will describe the potential characteristics of the available open space and recreation areas. The Goals and Objectives section list the single Goal and five objectives. Finally, the Recommendations section sums the element up and makes some final comments on the element.

### 2. **Relationship to other Elements of the Comprehensive Plan**

There are several key linkages between the Recreation and Open Space Element and other elements of the Comprehensive Plan which include the following:

The *Future Land Use Element*, as an overall blueprint for managing growth in the City, it serves to locate and describe land use densities and intensities that will strongly influence future growth and development. Together, the Future Land Use Element and the Recreation and Open Space Element will function together to implement growth-management strategies in relation to the availability and placement of recreation and open space areas.

The *Conservation Element* identifies all of the City's natural resources (i.e., geology, topography, minerals, soils, surface water quality and groundwater quality and quantity; floodplains, natural vegetative communities, wildlife habitats, fisheries, and air quality) which will help to shape future decisions relating to recreational opportunities.

The *Intergovernmental Coordination Element* provides opportunities to improve City collaboration and coordination with other local governments and agencies, such as the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Northwest Florida Water Management District, Santa Rosa County, Escambia County, and the Forest Service, in the provision of open space and recreation opportunities and programs.

The *Capital Improvements Element* will reflect the City's strategies for the delivery of infrastructure and other public services, which may be necessary apart of any additional recreational services. In addition, the Capital Improvements Element will reflect the five-year budget plan for capital plan for capital outlay, which should support the Goals, Objectives, and Policies of this Element.

The *Infrastructure Element* consists of the Sanitary Sewer, Potable Water, Natural Groundwater Aquifer Recharge, Solid Waste and Stormwater Management Sub-Elements. From a growth management perspective, the Recreation and Open Space Element may help to guide some strategies which will have an impact on the timing, planning, and location of open space and recreation opportunities.

The City of Milton finds itself ideally located to provide its citizens and visitors with an abundance of various types of recreational activities. Resources provided by Santa Rosa County, Escambia County, and the nearby state forests and natural environments, including coastal dunes, wetlands, bays, rivers, and marshes, combine to provide the variety of outdoor recreation which has long been associated with the Florida panhandle.

The rivers, wetlands, estuaries, City and State Parks, floodplains, and open-space areas provide recreational opportunities for the residents and visitors to Milton. The City is acting now to ensure that open space and recreation will continue to be added to both private and public components of the City and County. This element of the Comprehensive Plan serves as a tool for assuring that the City's goals and objectives provide a full range of recreational opportunities in and around Milton.

## **A. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**GOAL 1:** TO PROVIDE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND OPEN SPACE FOR THE CURRENT AND FUTURE RESIDENTS OF THE CITY OF MILTON.

**OBJECTIVE 1.1:** THE CITY OF MILTON WILL ENSURE, WITH THE LIMITS OF FISCAL CONSTRAINTS AND NATURAL LIMITATIONS THAT PUBLICLY OWNED RECREATION FACILITIES ARE PHYSICALLY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL CITY RESIDENTS BY IMPLEMENTING POLICIES 1.1 THROUGH 1.4.

**POLICY 1.1.1:** The City will provide adequate parking for all City-owned recreation facilities.

**POLICY 1.1.2:** The City will provide access for the physically handicapped to all City-owned parks.

**POLICY 1.1.3:** The City will maintain all access corridors to City-owned parks including sidewalks, streets, bike paths, and stairways.

**POLICY 1.1.4:** The City will continue to provide and maintain current levels of public riverfront access to recreational surface waters within its jurisdiction.

**OBJECTIVE 1.2:** THE CITY OF MILTON WILL CONTINUE TO IMPLEMENT A PROGRAM TO COORDINATE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RESOURCES IN ORDER TO MEET RECREATION DEMANDS IN CONJUNCTION WITH DEVELOPMENT.

**POLICY 1.2.1:** The City of Milton will coordinate public and private resources to meet recreational needs.

**POLICY 1.2.2:** The City of Milton will coordinate public resources to ensure the continued availability of public access to beaches, waterways and other recreational resources at an adequate level of service as defined in Policy 1.3.1.

**OBJECTIVE 1.3:** THE CITY OF MILTON WILL CONTINUE TO ENSURE THAT ADEQUATE PARK AND RECREATION NEEDS ARE PROVIDED TO ITS CITIZENS CONSISTENT WITH THE CITY'S RECREATION LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARD AND BY IMPLEMENTING POLICIES 1.3.1 AND 1.3.2.

**POLICY 1.3.1:** The City will continue to provide recreation lands at the adopted level of service standard of five (5) acres per 2000 residents.

**POLICY 1.3.2:** Upon adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the City will not permit any development activity that degrades the recreation level of service standard identified in Policy 1.3.1 and/or does not comply with the provisions contained in the Concurrency Management System.

**POLICY 1.3.3:** The City will provide appropriate facilities at City-owned park and recreation areas to ensure public use and enjoyment of those sites.

**OBJECTIVE 1.4:** THE CITY OF MILTON WILL MAINTAIN, AS PART OF ITS LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE BY PUBLIC AGENCIES AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISES THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RECREATIONAL IMPACT FEE PROGRAM, AND DEVELOPMENT OF A TREE PROTECTION AND LANDSCAPE ORDINANCE ADDRESSING CRITERIA ESTABLISHED IN POLICIES 1.4.1 THROUGH 1.4.3.

**POLICY 1.4.1:** As part of its revised Land Development Regulations, the City will adopt specific open space definitions and standards which will address, at a minimum, the use of buffer zones, and vegetated non-use areas in public parks, as open space.

**POLICY 1.4.2:** The City will maintain an updated inventory of publicly-owned and specifically designated open space sites to ensure that the open space needs of City residents are met.

**POLICY 1.4.3:** The recreation impact fee program will require that an appropriate percentage of funds be allocated to acquisition and maintenance of open space areas.

**OBJECTIVE 1.5:** THE CITY WILL ENDEAVOR AS MUCH AS PRACTICABLE TO LINK CONSERVATION AND RECREATION LANDS IN SUCH A WAY AS TO CREATE AN OPEN SPACE NETWORK WHICH WOULD ALLOW FOR MOVEMENT BETWEEN SITES BY BOTH WILDLIFE AND PEOPLE.

**POLICY 1.5.1:** The City's Open Space Network may be linked via existing rights-of-ways, existing and extended bike paths and sidewalks, nature trails, and other corridor open spaces.

**POLICY 1.5.2:** The City will continue to pursue funding options for expansion of the Open Space Network in an effort to improve public recreation opportunities as well as to protect environmentally sensitive lands.

**B. EXISTING CONDITIONS**

Recreation and open-space planning is generally focused on two types of recreation: “user-oriented” and “resource-oriented”. User-oriented types of outdoor recreation can be provided almost anywhere for the convenience of the user and are typically provided by the local government. Table 8.1 shows user-oriented categories as established by the State of Florida. Resource-oriented outdoor recreation is different in that it cannot be provided anywhere, but instead it is a function of some aspect of either the natural or cultural environments, or a combination of the two. The State of Florida Department of Natural Resources utilizes twelve resource-based outdoor recreation activities as shown in Table 8.2.

**Table 8.1:  
State of Florida User Oriented Recreation Activities**

Golf	Handball/Racquet ball
Tennis	Shuffle board
Baseball/Softball	Basketball
Football/Soccer	Outdoor Swimming Pool Use

FDEP, Outdoor Recreation Defined

**Table 8.2:  
State of Florida Resource Oriented Outdoor Recreation Activities**

Saltwater Beach Activities	Hunting
Bicycle Riding	Nature Study
Boating/Canoeing/Kayaking	Picnicking
Camping	Freshwater Swimming
Freshwater and Saltwater Fishing	Visiting Archaeological/Historical Sites
Hiking	Horseback Riding

FDEP, Outdoor Recreation Defined

The City of Milton possesses approximately 69 acres of park land which have been developed for recreational purposes. There are six main City-owned park areas in Milton. Both, resource-based and activity-based parks are represented. For instance, the Sanders/Hindall Park is a large activity-based park that includes a community center, baseball fields, volley ball, and six newly upgraded USTA compliant tennis courts as well as a new skate park; while Carpenters Park is essentially a mid-sized resource-based park with boat ramps and picnic areas.

The Blackwater River is an Outstanding Florida Water and its designation as such provides that its natural attributes are worthy of special protection. The close proximity of both Adrian-Carpenters Park and Riverwalk Park provide recreational access to the River and resource-based activities including fishing, canoeing, and boating. There are also a number of designated conservation areas that are located adjacent to the River and provide additional access. The Milton Community Center, located on Byrom Street, provides for a community meeting place and less intensive recreational activities, along with a gymnasium for indoor basketball and other sports.

There are also a number of recreation and open space areas located near the city which provide additional recreation opportunities. Whiting Field Naval Air Station, located north of the City, provides recreational facilities for military personnel and their dependents. The base offers a full range of recreational services which adequately serves military personnel in the area. Whiting field also owns and operates a 2-acre park within its Milton housing area. There is also the A.G. Mayo facility, a 2.1 acre park administered by Santa Rosa County located on Highway 90 west of Milton which provides picnicking and river access.

**Table 8.3:  
City of Milton Developed Parks, 2013**

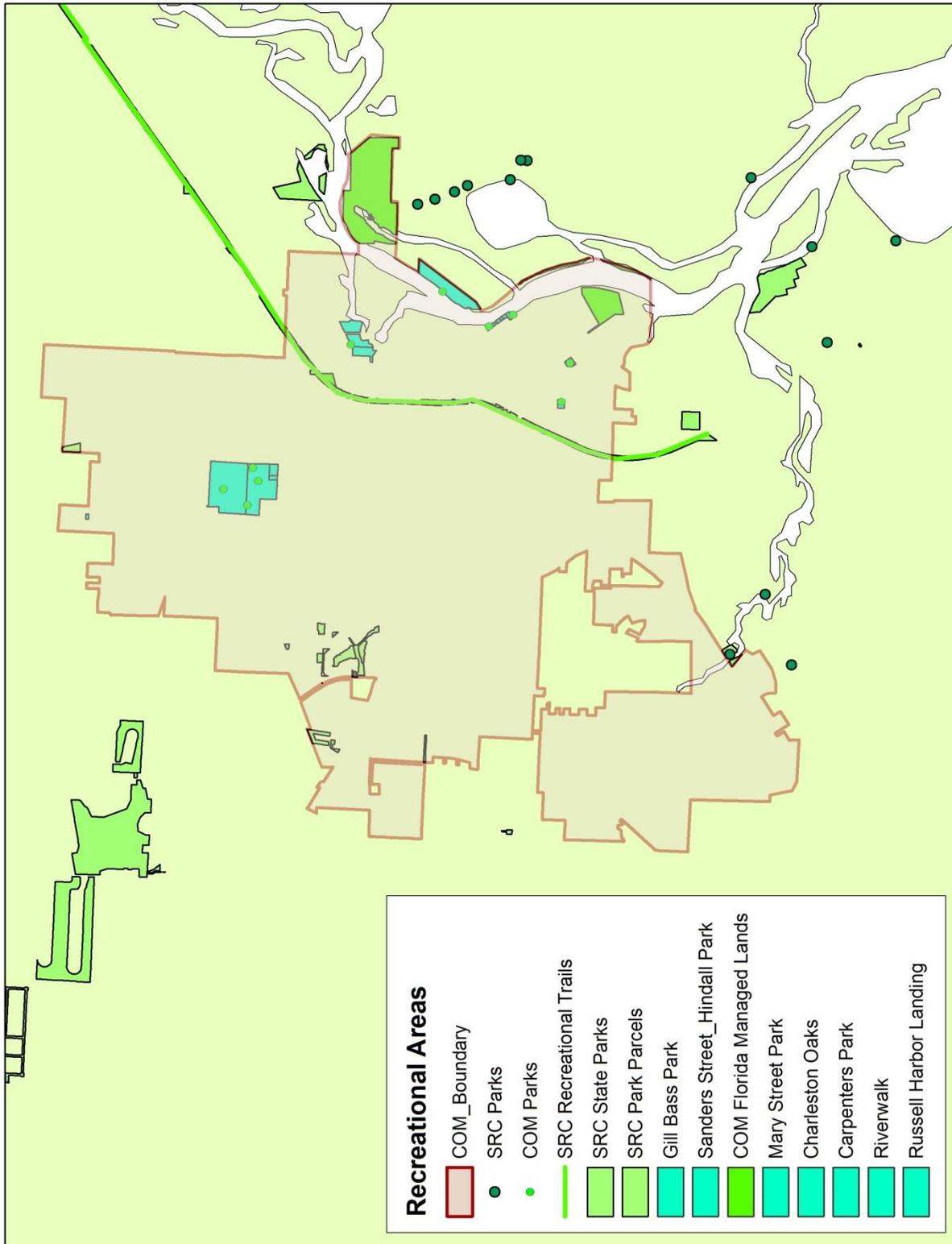
<b>Park Name</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Function</b>
Carpenter's Park	8.93 acres	Boat ramps, playground, picnic areas
Charleston Oaks Park	0.22 acres	Picnic areas
Gill-Bass Park	0.83 acres	Picnic areas
Mary Street Park	0.86 acres	Sports courts, playground, picnic areas
Riverwalk Park	1.68 acres	Picnic areas
Russell Harber Landing	11.75 acres	Picnic areas, boat ramps
Sanders St / Hindall Park	44.38 acres	Community center, sports courts, skate park, picnic areas

The Blackwater River State Park is located approximately 15 miles north of the City, covers nearly 360 acres and is one of only six State parks in the Northwest Florida area. The Blackwater Wildlife Management Area, encompassing 183,000 acres in northern Santa Rosa and Okaloosa Counties and the Eglin Wildlife Management Area, part of Eglin Air force Base, covers 463,360 acres in Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton Counties and provides further resource-based recreation opportunities for Milton residents and visitors.

The lacustrine and fluvial environments that surround Milton are havens for canoeists, kayakers and paddlers alike, validating the City's reputation as the "Canoe Capital of Florida". Within Santa Rosa County alone, four canoe trails are designated as part of the Florida Recreational Trails system. These include Coldwater Creek, Sweetwater/Juniper Creeks, the Blackwater River, and the Yellow River.

Though municipalities generally take the primary role in providing recreational opportunities there are a relatively large number of commercial enterprises which supply outdoor recreation and represent a fairly significant factor in recreation and open space planning. The private sector's contributions make up a large portion of the overall recreation and open space component within Santa Rosa County as a whole. The private sector also participates in the recreational activities of the area by sponsoring athletic teams (youth football, softball) and by providing support mechanisms for resource-based recreation (i.e., bicycle shops, bait and tackle shops, etc). County-wide, undeveloped private lands make up a large percentage of the land providing thousands of acres for outdoor recreation such as hunting, camping, hiking, picnicking, etc.

**Figure 8.1:  
City of Milton and Surrounding Area Recreation and Open Space**



**Table 8.4:  
City of Milton, Selected Recreation Programs**

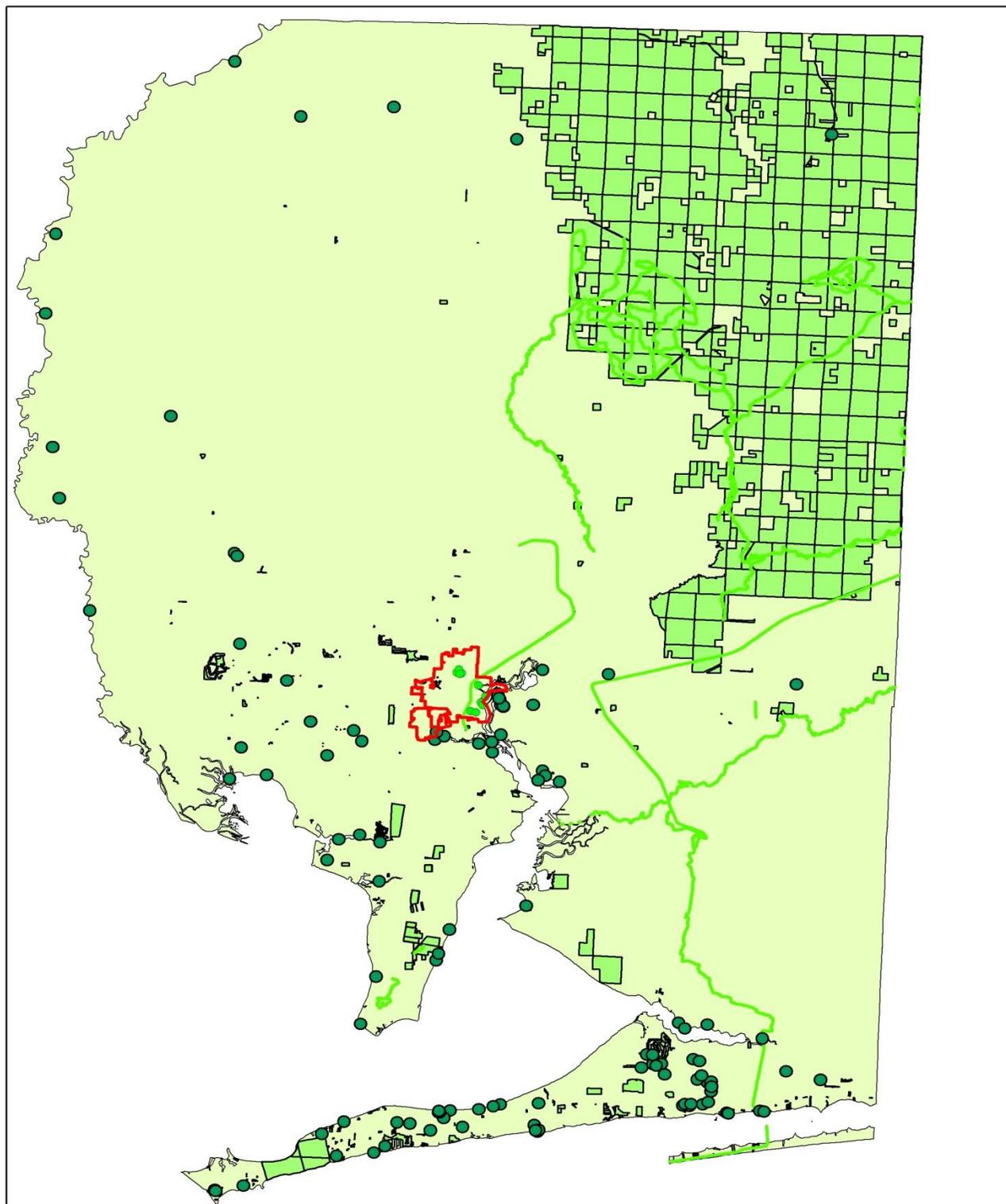
<b>Men's Softball Programs</b>	Milton Women's Invitational
Men's Church League	Milton Invitational
Men's Open League	Women's Class A Tournament
Men's Winter League	<b>Tennis Tournaments</b>
<b>Women's Softball League</b>	Spring Tournament
Women's Church League	Fall Tournament
Women's Open League	<b>Flag Football</b>
Girl's 13-15 Year Old League	<b>Little League</b>
Girl's 9-12 Year Old League	Football
<b>Men and Women's League</b>	Baseball
<b>Invitational Softball Tournaments</b>	Basketball
Northwest Florida Classic Invitational	Soccer
Gulf Coast Classic Invitational	

City of Milton, Department of Planning and Development

The City of Milton is not generally considered a tourist destination. However, the City's location and proximity to destinations such as the Blackwater River, the Blackwater River State Park, and the miles of Santa Rosa County's white sand beaches, can make it an ideal way point in many tourists' plans. Recreation and open-green spaces enhance the quality of life and in turn the community. The abundance of available recreation activities and open space in and around the City make Milton a prime location for residents and visitors alike.

Milton provides sufficient recreational/open space areas as shown on the Existing and Future Land Use Maps and will adopt specific open space definitions and standards to be included in revised Land Development Regulations. These definitions and standards will address, at a minimum, the use of buffer zones and vegetative non-use areas in public parks as open space. Additionally, there are several areas specifically dedicated to conservation use as shown on the Existing and Future Land Use Maps. Furthermore, substantial amounts of open space and conservation area is provided by State and Federal agencies within Santa Rosa County including pastoral lands, such as the Blackwater River State Forest; utilitarian lands along the Blackwater River and Escambia Bay; and corridor lands along railroad tracks and major arterial roads.

**Figure 8.2:**  
**Recreation and Open Space areas within Santa Rosa County**



Source: Santa Rosa County, City of Milton Planning and Zoning Department

### C. DEMAND ANALYSIS

Recreational facilities serving the City of Milton have been classified as either resource-based or user-oriented. In determining the need for and developing future recreational and open space area requirements, level of service standards have been developed using population estimates and minimum acreage criteria. The level of service standard adopted by the City of Milton is five acres per 2000 residents within City limits. Based on the 2010 population of 8,826 residents and the current available recreation and open space of 69 acres the City of Milton far exceeds the standards set forth. It is however important to look at projected population data and corresponding demand in order to insure the availability of open space and recreation facilities for the future. Based on Shimberg Center population projections and the adopted recreation and open space level of service standards, the City of Milton should have more than enough available recreation and open space available for the years to come.

**Table 8.5:  
Projected Population Growth and Recreation Level of Service Standards**

Year	Population	Acreage Needed	Existing Acreage	Surplus / Deficiency
2010	8,826	22.07	67.82	+45.75
2015	9844	24.61	68.65	+44.04
2020	10923	27.31	68.65	+41.34
2025	11980	29.95	68.65	+38.70

Shimberg Center, City of Milton Department of Planning and Development, 2013

Table 8.6 provides, as an example of future demand upon recreational resources, FDEP projected population and recreation facility demand for the following open space and recreational facilities found in this region of Florida: freshwater fishing and boat ramp areas, recreational trails, and picnicking area.

**Table 8.6:  
Regional Sample of Recreation and Open Space Activities Demand  
Based on Population Projections**

Year and Criteria	Freshwater Area (linear ft, beach, jetty...)	Recreational Trails (miles)	Picnicking Area
2015			

Level of Service	64 ft / 1000 Participants	.35 miles / 1000	3 tables / 1000
Demand	1830 additional linear feet required	38 additional miles required	859 additional tables
<b>2020</b>			
Level of Service	60 ft / 1000 Participants	.32 miles / 1000	3 tables / 1000
Demand	3118 additional linear feet required	68 additional miles required	1523 additional tables

FDEP Outdoor Recreation Defined; City of Milton, Department of Planning and Development, 2013

#### D. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Although the City of Milton will have ample open space and recreational facilities available into the near future, some consideration must be given to facility needs, such as basketball courts, baseball fields, picnic tables, and tennis courts. The following table, 8.7, illustrates the projected demand on a sample of facility amenities currently available to the citizens and visitors of the City of Milton. The projected City of Milton population for 2020 is 10,923 people. The various levels of service were taken from FDEP data and are based on resident and visitor populations. There will certainly be some variance in demand considering that the population of the Northwest Region as a whole utilizes beach area resources more than inland resources. Regardless of this possible variation in the output data, the City of Milton is cognizant of its growing population and its increasing demand on public recreation facility resources.

**Table 8.7:**  
**City of Milton Projected Demand for Sample Recreation Facilities and Amenities**

Resource	Current Supply	2020 Demand
Tennis Courts	6	9
Basketball Courts	2	9
Baseball Fields	6	14
Boat Ramps (lanes)	6	6
Picnic Tables	18	26

Shimberg Center; FDEP; City of Milton, Department of Planning and Development

As demonstrated in the analysis contained in the previous section, recreational sites and open spaces required through the year 2020 for the City of Milton are generally in place. Resource-based activities exist in abundance within the City and in adjacent areas, and user-oriented facilities are sufficiently available as well. The City will continue its Riverwalk Park expansion program that is currently underway. The best way to provide new user-oriented facilities will be through coordination with development interests. The City has developed a Recreation Impact Fee Program in conjunction with revision of its Land Development Regulations. The Impact Fee Program requires specific financial commitments in lieu of land dedications. These funds may be used by the City to acquire additional land area (as needed) and to enhance and maintain existing sites. Such a program fully incorporates the private sector into the provision of recreation and leisure services within the City.

In 1989, the U.S. General Services Administration made available 8.5 miles of abandoned railroad right-of-way from Milton to the Naval Air Station Whiting Field through the Federal Surplus Property Program. The State of Florida acquired this right-of-way as a multi-purpose trail facility and is now designated as the Blackwater Heritage State Trail. The trail is a user-oriented facility that provides roughly nine miles of paved trail for citizens of and visitors to Milton and Santa Rosa County alike.



There are currently two land-based conservation corridors within the City as well; the Rails-to-Trails Corridor and the Utility Corridor which link Locklin Lake with the Blackwater River and provide multi-purpose trails suitable for recreational biking, hiking and horseback riding. There are also approximately 97 acres of state managed conservation lands within the city as well. The Blackwater Heritage State Trail and Blackwater River Water Management Areas provide additional natural recreational areas, access to the Blackwater River and more open space. The City of Milton realizes the value of its pastoral, corridor and utilitarian spaces. The City of Milton shall continue to monitor these important recreational resources and cooperate with all Federal and State agencies in insuring the integrity of these resources and, hence, continued contribution to the overall quality of recreation and life in the City.

## **E. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The City of Milton is currently achieving the goals and objectives adopted by its Comprehensive Plan. Furthermore it is surpassing its recreation and open space level of service standards by nearly three hundred percent. Planning for recreation and open space is an essential part of ensuring the sustained quality of life the City aspires to. The recent annexations of the NFWMD lands have provided increased green/open space and access to recreation areas. The continuation of projects involving the Riverwalk and Sanders parks show the City's intent to pursue the realization of the above goals and objectives.

The City of Milton will continue to apply for grants and other funding sources through the utilization of such programs as the *Rural Development Program*, the *Florida Greenways and Trails Acquisition Program*, and the *Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program*.