

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLEMENTATION

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXISTING PARKS

The following are recommendations for park improvements for the existing city-owned parks in the City of Lakeland.

CITY HALL PARK

1. Move soccer fields to an athletic complex or Community Park Facility.
2. Develop a Master Plan to consider the following:
 - a. Address the connection between existing municipal land, parkland, and newly acquired adjacent property.
 - b. Reassess program for the park, considering the needs for a municipal park for city employees versus previous needs of a neighborhood park.
 - c. Explore possibility of re-allocating the shape of the parkland, keeping in mind the regulation that 4 acres of land must remain in parkland for perpetuity.
3. While City Hall Park continues to serve as a neighborhood park, the following should be considered:
 - a. Create trail connecting existing parking to pavilion and playground area.
 - b. Complete connection of trail crossing creek by playground to the playground.
 - c. Upgrade safety surface and fix broken equipment.
 - d. Upgrade pavilion by installing a ceiling to minimize bird and insect nesting and to reduce maintenance. Incorporate recessed commercial grade lighting to reduce vandalism.
 - e. Add concrete pads around grills, benches, trash cans, etc. for easier maintenance.

- f. Construct an overflow parking area with grass pavers south of the existing parking lot to accommodate parking needs for soccer leagues and large public meetings at City Hall.

I. H. MANAGERIAL PARK

1. Evaluate sight lines and consider relocating entrance to crest of hill or directly across from church entrance for safety of visitors both entering and exiting the park.
2. Upgrade pavilion by installing a ceiling to minimize bird and insect nesting and to reduce maintenance. Incorporate recessed commercial grade lighting to reduce vandalism.
3. Remove portable restrooms and replace with a permanent restroom facility.
4. Emphasize importance of park as trailhead for proposed greenway.
5. Improve trail system.
 - a. Create an overall trail map including locations, distances, and connections to other trails and the greenway system. Use a GPS device and mapping software in the winter to locate and map trails.
 - b. Incorporate wayfinding signage at trailheads and ground level trail markers in addition to existing markers on trees to make navigating trails easier.
 - c. Control poison ivy along trails.
6. Develop a Master Plan to enhance the park and create greater opportunities for citizens to enjoy the lake. This plan should take into account the following:
 - a. Addition of new amenities such as an open lawn, a small play structure, disc golf, an additional pavilion closer to the lake, an ADA accessible fishing pier, and a trail following the entire edge of the lake.

- b. Evaluate any historical, cultural, or environmental significance to the park and incorporate educational and interpretive elements.
 - c. Evaluate the need for an outdoor classroom to implement environmental and wildlife educational programs.
 - d. Evaluate overall ADA accessibility of the lake, trails, and other amenities such as benches, grills, and tables.
- 7. Develop a Master Trail Improvement Plan for the existing trail system. The plan should address materials for treadways, location, and method of improvement for steep grades, surface drainage erosion areas, drainage crossings, and hillside trails.
- 8. Develop a Maintenance Manual/Strategy to evaluate the level of maintenance needs and staff the park accordingly.
- 9. Consider ways to improve and utilize the I.H. Managerial Clubhouse.
 - a. Consider possible uses of large assembly space (able to serve approx. 150-190 people) such as Arts/Crafts Classes, Dances, Community Meetings, Dinners, Aerobics/Fitness, Information Gatherings, Private Parties, and Receptions.
 - b. Obtain a detailed assessment of the building to determine what code issues will need to be addressed, as well as what upgrades are necessary or desired.
 - c. Consider the following general recommendations for building upgrades:
 - i. Upgrade toilets, lavatories, and doors to meet ADA requirements.
 - ii. Confirm existence of asbestos in floor tiles and, if so, abate as needed. It is recommended that an asbestos survey be conducted before any renovation is started.

- iii. Add exterior windows to allow natural light into assembly space.
- iv. Upgrade all interior finishes of walls, floors, and ceilings.
- v. Repair or replace exterior elements as needed, such as gutters and downspouts, concrete walks, roof shingles, doors, and miscellaneous painting.
- vi. Verify use of building with occupancy requirements and sprinkler requirements (Small Assembly – 1999 SBC).
- vii. Repair or replace all door hardware for code compliance.
- viii. Verify building can be “grandfathered-in” as an existing occupied building.
- ix. Upgrade lighting to provide adequate lighting for an assembly or meeting space.

OAK RIDGE PARK

1. Develop a Master Plan to consider the following:
 - a. Addition of new amenities such as expansion of the trail system around edge of park and pond, more picnic tables in pavilion, benches, a playground, a level play area, picnicking facilities, and a spray park.
 - b. Evaluate overall ADA accessibility of the pond, trails, and other amenities.
2. Upgrade pavilion by installing a ceiling to minimize bird and insect nesting and to reduce maintenance. Incorporate recessed commercial grade lighting to reduce vandalism.
3. Add landscaping to define and beautify the space and to provide shade.

PLANTATION HILLS

Several challenges facing Plantation Hills Park made it difficult to make recommendations for, and as a result, two possible solutions are offered. These solutions are in reaction to the following challenges:

- A. Access to the park is very limited. A large drainage ditch along the east of the park acts as a barrier to the nearby neighborhoods to the east, the street on which it is located is a dead end which is far from any main roads, and the entrances are very hard to find and unmarked. Also, the playground is remotely located in the corner farthest from the parking area and hidden behind a natural area of mature trees and understory growth.
- B. Maintenance requirements of the park are very high. The densely wooded location of the playground causes the need for constant cleaning of mold and pollen and for removal of branches for it to even be useable. This park poses high maintenance cost for a very small percent of population actually served.
- C. The existence of designated wetlands limits usage of site.
- D. The densely wooded nature of the park poses safety issues as sight lines are blocked in and out of the park by dense vegetation.

The solutions offered for this park are to:

- 1. Mitigate enough wetlands as to allow visibility into the park and relieve density of vegetation that is causing maintenance and safety issues for the play areas.
- or
- 2. Remove playground equipment and allow the wetlands to grown in. Utilize this space as a trailhead to the greenway and incorporate educational features into the wetlands such as a plant identification area.

WINDWARD SLOPES

1. Complete Master Plan, including construction of play lawn and wetland educational boardwalk and pier.

ZADIE E. KUEHL MEMORIAL PARK

1. Update playground with a play surface edging to stop deterioration of outer edge of play surface.
2. Replace existing hard patches and exposed concrete footing in play surface with a soft rubber surface in a geometric pattern such as a circle or square.
3. Remove portable restroom and replace with a small permanent unisex restroom facility.
4. Add concrete pads around grills, benches, trash cans, bike racks, etc. for easier maintenance.
5. Replace existing picnic tables, benches, trash cans, etc. as they wear over time with a more durable, heavy commercial grade product such as a recycled plastic or powder coated metal.
6. Evaluate overall ADA accessibility of trails, facilities, and other amenities such as benches, grills, and picnic tables.
7. Upgrade pavilion by installing a ceiling to minimize bird and insect nesting and to reduce maintenance. Incorporate recessed commercial grade lighting to reduce vandalism.

EL HILL PARK

1. Develop a Master Plan for the park with passive uses inspired by the natural character of the site.
2. Provide a greenway/streetscape connection along El Hill Road that leads all the way to Canada Road.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

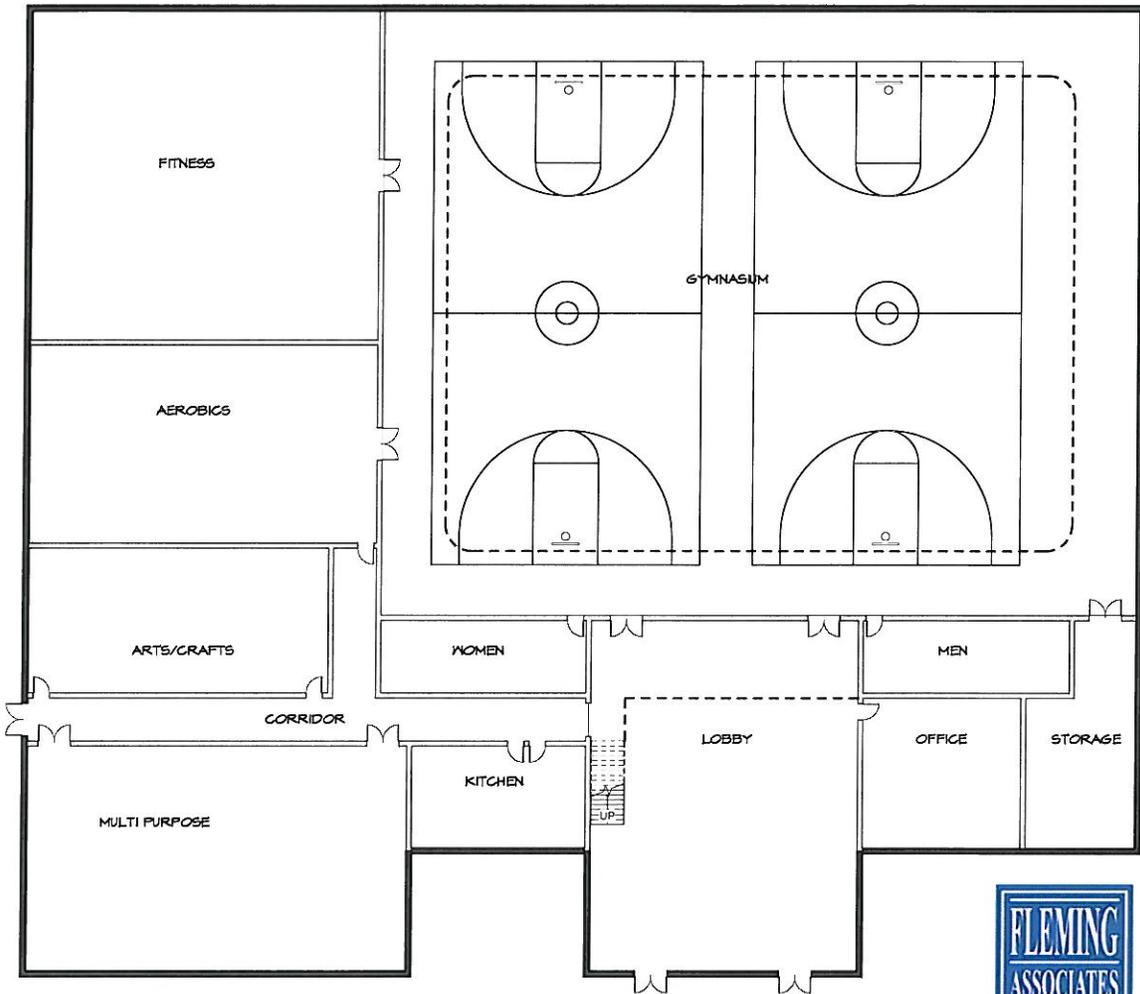
The development of a successful Parks and Recreation Master Plan is based on realistic and accurate goals and objectives that focus on the vision for not only the parks and recreation department, but the community vision as a whole. It should be understood that the Master Plan serves as a planning tool for making future decisions in the development of the City's Parks and Recreation Department. Development of facilities and programs and implementation will be dependent upon availability of staff and funding. The following recommendations are beyond park-specific and will need to be considered over a longer time frame than the specific park recommendations.

COMMUNITY CENTER NEED

During the Citizens Focus Group Session, participants were asked to list the most needed type of parks and recreational facilities. In both cases, the participants overwhelmingly listed an indoor recreation/community center as the number one need. The need for a community center facility actually preceded the next needed facility by 50%.

A sample Community Center of Lakeland could be as follows:

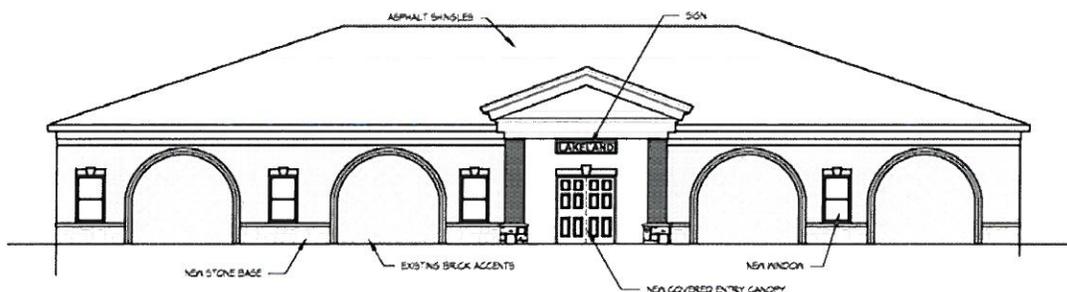
1. Entry Lobby	3,500 SF
• Reception Area	
• Snack Area / Coffee Bar	
2. Administrative Area	800 SF
• Office	
• Breakroom	
3. Gym	16,000 SF
• Two (2) Full-Size Basketball Courts - Volleyball Courts	
• Elevated Walking Track	5,000 SF
4. Arts / Craft Rooms (2)	2,000 SF
• Pottery Class with Kiln	
5. Assembly / Multi-Purpose Room	3,000 SF
• Dining for 200	
• Dividable Areas	
6. Kitchen	600 SF
• Catering Kitchen	
7. Aerobics Room	2,400 SF
8. Fitness Area	4,000 SF
• Free Weights	
• Cardio Machines	
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Subtotal	37,300 SF
Mechanical / Circulation 30%	11,190 SF
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TOTAL BUILDING SF	48,490 SF



SAMPLE COMMUNITY CENTER FLOOR PLAN
CITY OF LAKELAND



Until land and funding for a Community Center can be obtained, we recommend that general improvements be made to the I.H. Managerial Clubhouse, as stated in the specific park recommendations, so that the clubhouse can be used as a small community center facility. We would also recommend that the city consider some exterior elevation upgrades to the facility. A example of possible exterior upgrades is shown below.



1 CONCEPTUAL BUILDING ELEVATION UPGRADES
SCALE 1/8"=1'-0"



COMMUNITY PARK NEED

Another highly ranked facility by the Citizens Focus Group Session was the need for a “large multi-use park that can serve the whole community.” By definition, a community park is 30 to 50 acres in size. At present, several of the city’s neighborhood parks are functioning as community parks (City Hall Park, Windward Slopes, and Zadio Kuehl). Once a community park can be developed, the stress on the neighborhood parks will be alleviated.

ATHLETIC FIELD NEED

Athletic fields are a highly demanded activity and indicated on the demand and need projections. Athletic fields were also ranked 7th out of 15 highly needed facilities within Lakeland and 1st as the most needed program. One of the best solutions to meet this need

is to plan and construct an athletic complex. The phasing of this type of facility is common in smaller communities.

This complex should not only meet the immediate needs for fields, but also allow for future expansion to meet the needs in 10 years. The plan for this complex should be comprised of 8 baseball fields, 8 softball fields, 4 soccer fields (which would be equivalent to 8 small soccer fields), 4 youth football fields, and support facilities. The complex will need to be approximately 100 to 150 acres in size to accommodate these needs.

Many communities are utilizing this concept for several reasons:

1. It avoids duplication of support facilities such as restroom, concessions, parking and infrastructure such as utilities serve.
2. Reduces the personnel required to operate sports fields.
3. Maintenance requirements are easier and more cost-effective since equipment and personnel do not have to be transported from site to site.
4. Sports field lighting can be concentrated in one area of the community, reducing light pollution.
5. This type of facility has the capability to draw local and state tournaments, which in turn provides revenue through participation fees and bolsters local business.

LAND NEED

The constant effort by the City of Lakeland to provide a quality standard of living for its citizens has made Lakeland extremely appealing to families and businesses. This quality of living has also caused a steady increase in land cost. The city should consider ways to obtain land to meet its recreational land needs for a community center, community park, and future athletic complex as one of its highest priorities.

PARKLAND DEDICATION

Upon review of the City's Parkland Dedication requirements, the dedication formula was found to be adequate and conforming to the local area. It should be noted as part of this document that open space requirements are contained within the Development Code as well and should be considered during the development review process. However, a few minor recommendations are being made for the City's review:

1. The City could set the average family size rather than requiring the applicant to determine the size from census data.
2. Set a per acre price in lieu of preparing an appraisal for each application. This per acre price should be an average of land cost across the entire City of Lakeland. The per acre cost should be evaluated every few years to make any adjustments with the real estate market.
3. Add language to the requirement that gives the City the option to require the fee in lieu of dedication, regardless of size, for overall community need. Since the City is in need of large land purchases such as a community park and/or athletic complex property, payment in lieu of dedication may be more advantageous to the City at this time.

DETAILED GREENWAY PLAN

- "Develop a Connected Community"
- "Serve the Entire Community"
- "Preserve the Natural Environment"
- "Environmental Stewardship"

All of these statements ranked among the highest during the Citizens Focus Group Sessions. In an effort to pursue this vision, the city should consider the preparation of

a detailed Greenway Master Plan. The plan could include a detailed evaluation of the connections indicated on Exhibit III and evaluate connections of schools, parks, public spaces, location of trailheads, and address design and construction guidelines. The development of this plan will help preserve open space and the natural environment, while providing an extensive bicycling and pedestrian trail systems.

The City is planning to develop a Pedestrian and Bikeway Plan in the near future. Since the Pedestrian and Bikeway Plan could function as a stand-alone plan, we recommend the development of the Greenway Plan either follow or be prepared at the same time as the Pedestrian and Bikeway Plan. In the development of the Greenway Plan, certain segments of the Pedestrian and Bikeway Plan may serve as multiple uses for the Greenway Plan.

STANDARDIZED SIGNAGE

The city should address the issue of standardized park signage as a whole. It is recommended that the city develop standard identification signage, directional signage and information signage to be used at each park, thus identifying them as public, city-owned parks, as opposed to private facilities.

GRANT APPLICATIONS

It is recommended to apply regularly for grants to help implement the development of the city's park and recreation system. A list of some available grants is included in the funding source section of the master plan.