

INTRODUCTION

The City of Fort Lauderdale Parks and Recreation Long Range Strategic Plan is the culmination of a yearlong effort by the City to develop a long range plan for the park facilities and programs and strategically plan for the future needs of residents. By strategically planning parks, greenways, trails, streets and public open spaces, as well as providing recreational opportunities that are relevant to the lifestyles and demographics of the community, the City can greatly influence the quality of life for present and future generations of residents and visitors.

The planning process includes an inventory and analysis of existing facilities, an assessment of the community's future needs and recommendations for changes to the parks system to meet those needs. The assessment of facilities and future needs has been derived through quantitative evaluations as well as qualitative expressions of community desires through public involvement.

The Long Range Strategic Plan has taken into account the entire City of Fort Lauderdale neighborhood residential areas, the Downtown, North-West and South Regional Activity Centers and the Barrier Island /Beach areas and reflects the City's historical context. Ultimately, the plan seeks to integrate with other City efforts to advance a common framework of a more livable and sustainable community. To this end the planning process incorporated and built upon the results of previous planning studies. Previous studies that were reviewed include:

- 2007 Evaluation and Appraisal Report
- Building a Livable Downtown Plan
- South Andrews Avenue Master Plan and Development Guide
- Davie Boulevard Master Plan
- Flagler Village Precinct Plan
- Northwest-Progresso-Flagler Heights Redevelopment Plan Update
- Tarpon River Civic Association Future Plan
- New River Master Plan
- Central Beach Master Plan

The purpose of the Parks and Recreation Long Range Strategic Plan is to set forth a clearly defined mission and long range plan for the Fort Lauderdale Parks and Recreation Department that reflect community interest and significant levels of support. The Plan seeks to maximize citizen use and enjoyment of existing parks, facilities and recreation services while setting forth specific recommendations for meeting the future needs of the community. This plan seeks to position the Department to strategically meet the recreational needs of an urbanizing City as well as the changing demographics and lifestyles of its residents.

2.1 BACKGROUND

The South Florida Region

The recently completed publication "Charting the Course: Where is South Florida Heading" by the Center for Urban and Environmental Studies at Florida Atlantic University, describes the issues being faced by the South Florida Region. Fort Lauderdale is at the heart of this area and is inextricably linked to the context of the region. The South Florida Peninsula "Megapolitan" area has challenges, but also many positive qualities that distinguish it from other regions of the country. The trends can be categorized into three general areas: people, place and prosperity.



The population of South Florida is changing. The area is rapidly growing and the demographic profile is becoming increasingly diverse. This influx of new people to the community has created challenges in social equity seen in high unemployment and poverty, especially for recent immigrants. Education in this atmosphere will continue to be an issue, but signs of increasing civic engagement—evidenced through increased voter turnout—and declining crime rates are indicative of the trend of amalgamation into the community.

South Florida is a beautiful place and has traditionally brought thousands of people to its shores every year. The warm temperatures, sunshine and beaches attract both residents and visitors, but the natural environment is fragile. Additionally, the traditional patterns of development have created suburban sprawl that has caused a dependence on automobiles. This dependence has contributed to a dual problem of unaffordable housing and traffic congestion. Recent projects in the region have focused on more sustainable, mixed use developments that will provide a greater array of housing options and create more walkable communities.

The South Florida region is also prosperous. The region continues to be competitive and there is consistent growth in the number of jobs. The challenge for the region is that many these jobs are in the low paying service sector. In order to maintain the economic viability of the area, efforts need to be made to attract a more diverse business base and promote the area as a world financial and trade hub.

The regional issues described above provide the context in which the City of Fort Lauderdale exists. By being aware of these issues and the partner agencies that are striving to address them, the City can position its self to capitalize on the positive qualities of the region while mitigating the potentially negative consequences. And all of these issues--changing demographics, environmental protection and economic viability-- have significant implications for the City's Parks and Recreation Long Range Strategic Plan.

The City of Fort Lauderdale

The City of Fort Lauderdale is the largest city in Broward County and is the economic and cultural center of the County. The City has almost reached build out but the population continues to grow by annexation and redevelopment. Fort Lauderdale has a thriving and diversifying local economy with a strong downtown business district. The crime rate within the City is declining and there is a diversity of cultural facilities available. Recent changes in the City's fiscal policies have made it more accountable and effective. Truly, Fort Lauderdale is poised to be a leader in the region.

The City of Fort Lauderdale has recently completed its Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) for the Comprehensive Plan that evaluates the changes that have occurred in the community, determines objectives and recommends policy changes. The report provides an assessment of all City policies, including Recreation and Open Space. Through the EAR process, City staff has identified several specific implications for recreation and open space planning:

- Expansion of the park system will require the use of innovative methods in view of limited opportunities for land acquisition
- Ongoing updates and enhancement of existing facilities will be a prime concern
- New opportunities for cooperative development of facilities and program provision will be needed
- Opportunities for incorporating public art and historic preservation into the park system will need attention
- Evolving demands for types of recreational facilities and activities need to be accommodated within the park system
- Higher priority will need to be given to the quality and continuity of landscaping associated with both private and public development.



Many of the objectives and critical issues identified in the EAR report are also based on urban planning principles and have an important influence on the future of Parks and Recreation. Issues identified in the transportation, transit, infrastructure, school districts development and redevelopment all reference parallel goals and a common mission of building a more sustainable community. By taking an integrated approach to all of the public realm elements, the Parks and Recreation Long Range Strategic Plan can better coordinate all of the City's efforts into a holistic solution with multiple benefits toward building a more sustainable and livable community.

Parks and Recreation Department Background

Parks and Recreation Department Vision Core Values and Mission

VISION

To inspire all to experience more out of life in our nationally recognized parks and facilities.

DEPARTMENT CORE VALUES

Fun - Provide and enjoy innovative programming and events that captivate and direct our youth, motivate and reinvigorate adults and stimulate all to get "More out of Life" in a safe, comfortable environments.

Environmental Stewardship - Promote the optimum health of our land, water and air through the use of earth-friendly materials, recycling and conservation practices. Develop and maintain clean, aesthetically pleasing parks and recreation facilities.

Professional Development - Keep abreast of current trends in the field of Parks and Recreation through continued education and involvement in professional organizations. Be proactive and mentor those with aspirations to enter the profession.

Accessibility - Provide parks and programming, regardless of ability and geographic location, at a reasonable cost to the user, making reasonable accommodation for the needs of all.

Wellness - Promote healthy, active lifestyles, environmental awareness and socialization through recreation programming and community-friendly parks.

Customer Service - As demonstrated by prompt and courteous service, responsive to all.

Cooperation/Respect - Work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust and good sportsmanship, toward a common goal.

MISSION

To provide the opportunity to experience fun and rewarding recreation programs, events and leisure activities, in an aesthetically pleasing and safe environment, accessible to all.

Project Vision - This is the first Long Range Plan for the Fort Lauderdale Parks and Recreation Department. The scope of the project focuses on public process, level of service analysis for the parks system, CIP development, benchmarking, gap analysis, and core services identification for recreation programs and funding sources. Table 1 shows the critical success factors and performance measures outlined for this project through discussions with the Department Director, key leadership staff and the project consultants.



Table 1: Project Critical Success Factors

Critical Success Factors	Performance Measures
<p>1. Use this project process and resulting document to educate and communicate the current City’s facilities, parks, and programs that are available to the public, realistic priorities and financial constraints.</p>	<p>1. Balance the public’s input with the consultants’ expertise to create a realistic and attainable plan.</p>
<p>2. Create a roadmap of who, what, and where the community priorities are for the park system’s level of service, recreation programs, and other services.</p>	<p>2. Using GRASP®, alternative providers, the Pyramid methodology and public involvement, create a realistic picture of core services and optional ancillary services now and in the future. Include a CIP.</p>
<p>3. Create a strategic plan for land purchases including the “purposes for and benefits” of park and recreation development.</p>	<p>3. Using GRASP®, needs assessment, funding mechanisms, and public involvement, develop a realistic and phased approach for land acquisition.</p>
<p>4. Create a revenue plan and fee schedule of why we do what we do. Answer “should we charge more and should we increase cost recovery?” What about sponsorships and partnerships? Consider impact of the proposed legislative initiative to decrease property tax and mitigation measures.</p>	<p>4. Using budget analysis, current and desired level of service, benchmarking data, needs and values understood from the public process and the Pyramid Methodology, introduce the methodology and create a core services pyramid for the City as a starting point for their further refinement. Recommend policy changes, traditional, and alternative funding sources.</p>
<p>5. Analyze customer service efforts and provide recommendations for improving responsiveness and personalization.</p>	<p>5. Through facility tours, observations, and meetings with staff, identify key customer service issues and develop recommendations for improvement through staff training.</p>
<p>6. Assess park maintenance standards and potential use of synthetic turf.</p>	<p>6. Though GRASP® analysis, inventory tours, observations, meetings with staff, and needs and values understood from the public involvement process, recommend level of service improvements.</p>



2.2 DEMOGRAPHICS

This analysis uses figures from the City of Fort Lauderdale, the 2000 US Census as well as projections from ESRI Business Information Solutions. ESRI offers a more current look at Census data by calculating current year estimates, as well as five year projections for population and breakdowns.

- The City of Fort Lauderdale's 2007 estimated population is 164,054 according to ESRI Business Solutions (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census of Population and Housing), although the City is using an estimate of 181,095 to include peak seasonal population. ESRI forecasts an additional 8,070 by 2012.
- The current population numbers from ESRI represent almost 73,200 households with an average household size of 2.17. Owner occupied household units (HUs) represent 57% and renter occupied HUs represent almost 43%.
- The median age according to the 2000 Census was 39.4 years. ESRI has forecast this to be 42.2 years in 2007 and 43.8 years in 2012.
- The median household income was \$38,142 according to the 2000 Census. In 2007, ESRI forecast is to be \$47,558 and \$56,446 in 2012. Per capita income was forecast to have risen from \$27,798 in the 2000 Census to \$33,525 in 2007 and \$39,392 in 2012 according to ESRI. Figure 1. shows the percent of households by income for the City of Fort Lauderdale according to ESRI.

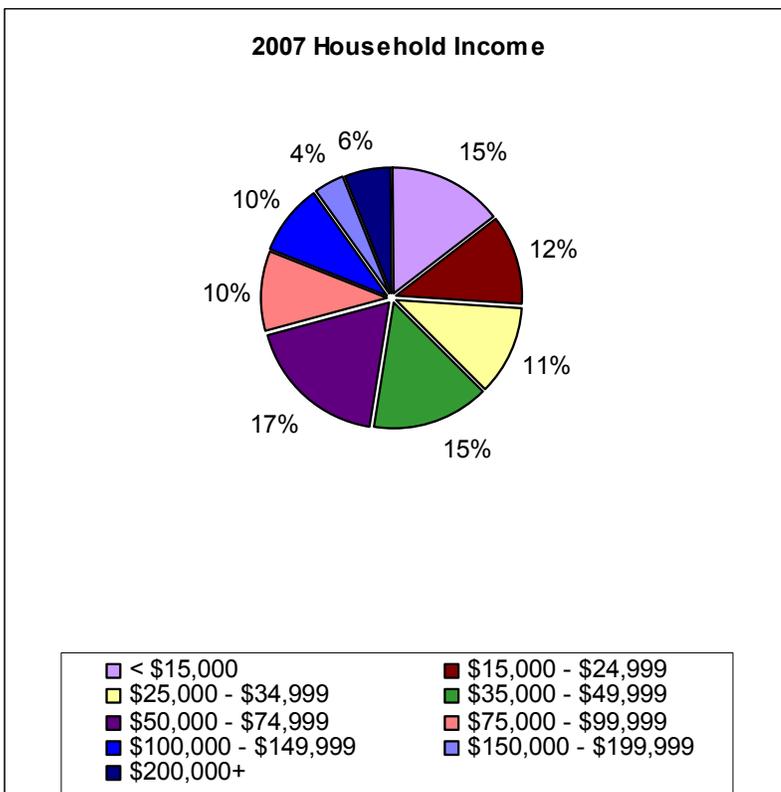


Figure 1: Percent of Households by Income

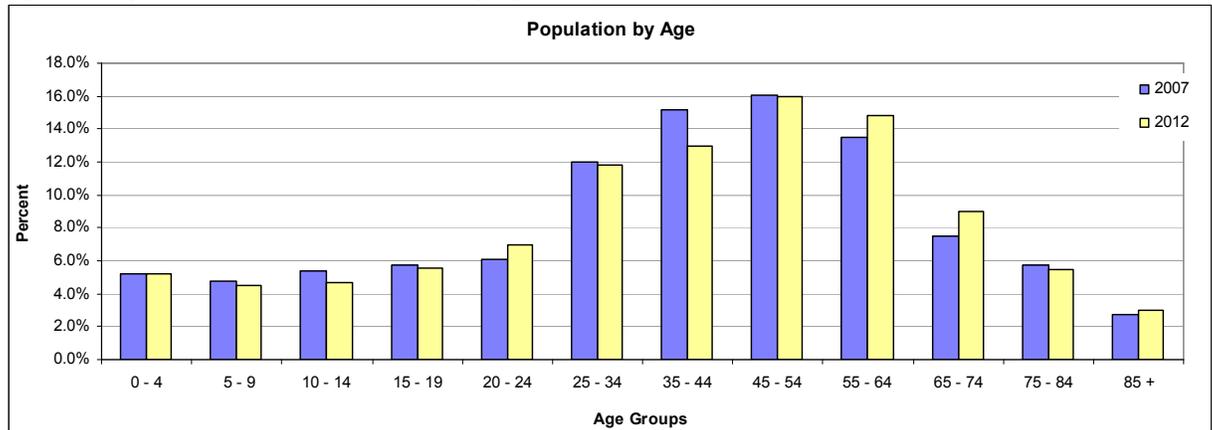
Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions



Age Distribution

The following age breakdown provided by ESRI based on the 2000 Census Data is used to separate the population into age sensitive user groups and to retain the ability to adjust to future age sensitive trends. Percent of population distribution by age for the City of Fort Lauderdale in 2007 and 2012 are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: City of Fort Lauderdale Population by Age Group 2007 Compared to 2012



Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions

- Under 5 years: This group represents users of preschool and tot programs and facilities, and as trails and open space users, are often in strollers. These individuals are the future participants in youth activities.
- 5 to 14 years: This group represents current youth program participants.
- 15 to 24 years: This group represents teen/young adult program participants moving out of the youth programs and into adult programs. Members of this age group are often seasonal employment seekers.
- 25 to 34 years: This group represents involvement in adult programming with characteristics of beginning long-term relationships and establishing families.
- 35 to 54 years: This group represents users of a wide range of adult programming and park facilities. Their characteristics extend from having children using preschool and youth programs to becoming empty nesters.
- 55 to 64 years: This group represents users of older adult programming exhibiting the characteristics of approaching retirement or already retired and typically enjoying grandchildren.
- 65 years plus: Nationally, this group will be increasing dramatically. Current population projections suggest that this group will grow almost 70% in the next 13 years. Programming for this group should positively impact the health of older adults through networking, training and technical assistance, and fundraising. Recreation centers, senior centers, and senior programs can be a significant link in the health care system. This group generally also ranges from very healthy, active seniors to more physically inactive seniors.



Table 2 details the forecasted change in population by age groups from the 2000 Census. This information doesn't take into account any re-development to higher density living, seasonal market growth or future annexations.

Table 2: Population by Age

Age	Fort Lauderdale 2000 Census Data	Fort Lauderdale 2007 ESRI Forecast	Fort Lauderdale 2012 ESRI Forecast
0-4 years	8,068	8,478	9,022
5-14 years	16,668	16,819	15,845
15-24 years	16,630	19,370	21,532
25-34 years	23,036	19,743	20,276
35-54 years	49,580	51,444	49,824
55-64 years	15,109	22,090	25,443
65 years plus	23,306	26,109	30,182
Total	152,397	164,054	172,124

Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions

Race/Ethnicity

As shown in Table 3, the race with the largest population is White Alone followed by Black* or African American alone. Those of Hispanic/Latino Origin may be of any race and are forecast to be over 12% of the current population.

Table 3: Race/Ethnicity Comparisons for 2006

Race *	Fort Lauderdale 2000 Census Data	Fort Lauderdale 2007 ESRI Forecast	Fort Lauderdale 2012 ESRI Forecast
Caucasian Alone	64.3%	61.1%	58.9%
African American Alone	28.9%	30.9%	32.1%
American Indian Alone	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%
Asian Alone	1.0%	1.3%	1.5%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Some Other Race Alone	1.8%	2.2%	2.6%
Two or More Races	3.8%	4.2%	4.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Ethnicity *	Fort Lauderdale 2000 Census Data	Fort Lauderdale 2007 ESRI Forecast	Fort Lauderdale 2012 ESRI Forecast
Hispanic/Latino Origin (Any Race)**	9.5%	12.2%	14.7%

Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions

* Terminology from the Census Report

** Persons of Hispanic Origin may be of any race. This number reflects the percentage of the total population.



Health and Obesity

The United Health Foundation has ranked Florida 41st in its 2006 State Health Rankings. It was 40th in 2005. The State's biggest strengths include:

- low rate of cancer deaths
- low prevalence of obesity

Some of the challenges the State faces include:

- low High School graduation rate
- high violent crime rate
- high rate of uninsured
- high incidence of infectious disease

Changes from the past year include:

- the prevalence of smoking increased
- the immunization coverage decreased

Changes since 1990 include:

- the percentage of children in poverty declined
- the rate of motor vehicle deaths decreased

Source: <http://www.unitedhealthfoundation.org/ahr2006/states/Florida.html>

2.3 CURRENT TRENDS

The following information represents the national, state and local trends which impact the City of Fort Lauderdale in their delivery and management of programs and services. Priorities for the future and recommendations for implementation strategies will take into account these influences.

Finances and Funding***National Trends***

- Cost recovery percentages through fees, charges and alternative funding vary across the nation. They can range from 5% to 80% and higher, depending upon the mission of the organization or facility, construction funding payback, operation funding availability, the community's philosophy regarding subsidy levels and user fees, and structure of agency budgets.
- At a 2005 Parks and Recreation Association state conference in Colorado, Dr. John Crompton from Texas A&M, a leading educator and researcher on the benefits and economic impact of leisure services indicated that the national average for cost recovery is around 34%. Conversely this indicates an average of around 66% tax subsidy or taxpayer investment.

Florida Trends

- The recent economic downturn has slowed growth and housing starts in Florida.
- The Florida Legislature passed one reform in June 2007 that took immediate effect: providing an average seven percent tax cut to all property owners and a cap on the growth of local governments.
- Property tax relief and reform measures, passed by the legislature and was approved by voters on the January 29, 2008 ballot, will result in approximately \$32 billion in taxpayer savings over the next five years.



User Fees

National Trends

- The average recreation fee that people are willing to pay is slightly over \$12 per month. However, the more satisfied they are with the experience, the more they are willing to pay.
- In a recent study published in Recreation Management “State of the Industry” in June of 2007, it was reported:
 - 62.7% of respondents reported charging a membership or usage fee for people taking part in programs or using their facilities.
 - Although 55.9% of respondents did not change their fee from 2005 to 2006, 53.7% are anticipating an increase in fees from 2007 to 2008.
 - Private, for-profit organizations were more likely to have increased fees or be planning an increase in fees.
 - In general, revenue for all types of facilities was reported on the rise from 2005 to 2006, with 54.3% of facilities seeing higher revenues than the previous year.

Aging

Fort Lauderdale is experiencing the national aging trends and is perhaps impact to a greater degree due to the fact that the 55 years plus age plus age group currently accounts for 29% of the total population in 2007 and will account for over 32% of the population in 2012 according to ESRI and the demographic trends.

National Trends

The following are trends related to the aging population in the United States:

- America is aging and it is estimated that by 2010, the median age will be 37 years, and by 2030 the median age will be 39 years.
- The current life expectancy at birth in the United States is 77.9 years.
- There is a growing body of evidence that indicates that aging has more to do with lifestyles and health behaviors than genetics.
- Seniors control more than 70% of the disposable income and have more than \$1.6 trillion in spending power, according to Packaged Facts, a division of MarketResearch.com, which publishes market intelligence on several consumer industries.
- Seniors also are the fastest growing segment of health club memberships, according to the International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA).
- The top three sports activities for persons 65 years and older in 2004 were: exercise walking, exercising with equipment, and swimming. (NSGA)

Baby Boomers are adults born between 1946 and 1964. This generation makes up approximately 25% of the total population in the United States. The following are trends of this generation:

- According to International, Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association data for 2003, 91% of Boomers feel the need to take measures to ensure their future health and Boomers claim 37.6% of all health club memberships.
- In a study by American Association of Retired Persons, 80% of Boomers believe they will continue to work either full- or part-time into their retirement years.



Obesity

From the sources cited, it appears as though the City of Fort Lauderdale is experiencing the obesity epidemic like all Florida cities; however proximity to the beach, the great weather and the desire for a healthy active lifestyle can help combat these trends.

Trends provided by Florida Recreation and Parks Association Journal - Fall 2007, Just for the "Health of it" - Parks and Recreation's Future, Dr. Ellen O'Sullivan, CPRP

National Trends

- Obesity remains an important cause of death in the United States; 75% of excess deaths from obesity occur in people younger than 70 years old (Center for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Being overweight as an adult increases blood pressure and cholesterol levels. It increases the chances of getting Type II diabetes and developing other health problems
- Overweight people are at greater risk of becoming obese
- Overweight children and teenagers are at greater risk for developing Type II diabetes (once rare in childhood) and risk factors for heart disease at an earlier age
- In one large study, 61% of overweight 5 to 10 year olds already had at least one risk factor for heart disease, and 26% had two or more risk factors for the disease
- Health care expenditures in the United States will reach \$3.4 trillion by 2013; almost double the size of the 2004 projection of \$1.8 trillion (The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the Department of Health and Human Services)
- By 2013 Medicare expenditures are projected to reach \$532.1 billion, representing almost 16% of all health care spending

Florida Trends

- Florida has adult obesity rates of 21.8%, ranking it the 35th heaviest in the nation (Trust for America's Health - F as in Fat August 2006 report)
- Regionally, the South was found to be the "Biggest Belt"
- Florida ranks 7th in the nation for adult diabetes levels, at 8.4%
- Florida ranks 11th for rates of hypertension, at 28%
- Twenty-four states have passed laws limiting obesity-related law suits including Florida
- Florida has not required their school lunches to meet higher nutritional standards than U.S. Department of Agriculture requirements as 11 other states in the nation have
- Florida has not passed taxes on junk food or sodas as 16 other states in the nation and Washington, D.C have
- In 2005, 60.7% of Florida adults were overweight (37.9%) or obese (22.8%) (Florida Department of Health's website)
- Also in 2005, 14.4% of high school students were at risk for overweight and an additional 10.9% are overweight
- Obesity related medical expenditures for adults in Florida total over \$3.9 billion, with over half of the cost being financed by Medicare and Medicaid
- In Florida, 26.9% of adults are physically inactive (Prevalence of Obesity in the State of Florida)
- In Florida, 45.3% of adults meet the guidelines for moderate or vigorous physical activity
- Almost 41% of high school students watch TV for three or more hours on an average school day
- Almost 50% of middle school students watch television for three or more hours on an average school day
- More than 37% of children use the computer for fun or play video games for three or more hours on an average school day



Income

National Trends

- Americans spend more than \$300 billion on recreation annually.
- Young adults with annual household incomes of more than \$50,000 are more inclined than the total population to engage in frequent outdoor activity.
- More than 50% of those with incomes over \$75,000 visit historic sites. (2007 Statistical Abstract)
- The greater the household income, the more likely that members started a new recreational activity in the last year, and patronized public parks and recreation services.
- Frequency of outdoor activity appears to increase as household income increases. The most socially and politically active group in the United States is also the most recreationally active.

Youth

National Trends

- Top Reasons Kids Say “No” to Drugs (ages 9 – 17): Sports, 30%; Hobbies, 16%; Family and Friends, 14%; Arts, 12%, and Music, 11% (White House Office of National Drug Control).
- Over half of teens surveyed (54%) said they wouldn’t spend so much screen time if they had other things to do. The same number indicated they wished there were more community or neighborhood based programs and two-thirds said they’d participate, if they were available (Penn, Schoen & Bertrand).

Athletic Recreation

National Trends

The National Sporting Goods Association Survey on sports participation found the top five most participated in activities are: walking, swimming, bicycle riding, hiking, and fishing. Additionally, the following active, organized, or skill development activities still remain popular: field sports, skateboarding and inline skating, golf, aerobic exercise and working out, yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates, and Martial Arts. Additional sports and athletic trends include:

- Overall participation in amateur softball has been declining since 2000. The number of adult Amateur Softball Association teams decreased 3% between 2004 and 2005. (2007 Statistical Abstract)
- The top three active outdoor recreation activities in terms of participation are: wildlife watching, bicycle-based, and trail-based. (OIA)
- Overall participation in Lacrosse has doubled between 2000 and 2005. (SGMA)
- Among the team sports tackle football and soccer experienced the largest increases in participation between 1995 and 2005. At the same time a decline in softball and volleyball participation occurred. (NSGA)

Aquatics

According to the National Sporting Goods Association, swimming ranked second in terms of participation in 2005. There is an increasing trend towards indoor leisure and therapeutic pools. Additional amenities like “spray pads” are becoming increasingly popular as well. Some recent statistics regarding swimming include:

- Swimming experienced the third largest increase in participation (8.5%) from 2004 to 2005, after weightlifting (35.4%) and working out at a club (9.2%). (NSGA)
- Swimming was the second most participated in activity, after exercise walking, with 58 million participants in 2005. (NSGA)



Youth Sports

- According to the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA), **Table 4** shows that six of the 15 most popular activities for children are team sports.
- Participation in out-of-school activities and programs offer support for youth and working families; and benefit the youth socially, emotionally, and academically. (trendSCAN)
- According to the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association, health clubs could play a key role in providing the missing fitness and exercise in students’ lives. Organized, after-school activities, club sports, and programs targeted to school-age children in communities around the country could fill the fitness void that is growing wider in United States schools.
- The number of youth participants in amateur softball increased 6.7% between 2004 and 2005. The number of youth Amateur Softball Association teams increased 6.25% for the same time period. (Statistical Abstract 2007)
- Specific offerings for kid’s fitness are slowly increasing in health and fitness facilities. (IDEA)
- In 2005 the top three activities that youth ages 12 to 17 years old participated in are: basketball, bicycle riding, and fishing. (NSGA)
- For youth seven to 11 years of age, bicycle riding has the highest number of participants. The fastest growing activity by change in participation rate is skateboarding (219%), followed by snowboarding (91%) between 1995 and 2005. (NSGA)

Table 4: Youth Participation in Selected Activities and Percent Change 1995-2005

Activity	Ages 7-11 Years Percent Change 1995-2005	Ages 12-17 Years Percent Change 1995 to 2005
Baseball	-13.7%	-22.2%
Basketball	-3.9%	-11.6%
Bicycle Riding	-23.3%	-27.4%
Football (Tackle)	3.0%	-3.5%
In-Line Skating	-46.9%	-44.2%
Skateboarding	219.1%	156.5%
Soccer	1.6%	8.4%
Softball	-18.9%	-34.2%
Tennis	-9.0%	-1.5%

Source: Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA)

Outdoor Recreation

Florida Trends

According to a 2001 statewide survey, conducted by the University of Florida, to identify “Attitudes, Participation, and Trends in Outdoor Recreation” among Florida statewide residents:

- Visiting saltwater beaches, followed by participation in outdoor swimming pools, and visiting historical or archeological sites were the most participated activities.
- Overall, respondents agreed that more outdoor facilities were needed, and the existing facilities needed better repair.
- Respondents felt that increased accessibility to parks and public lands was necessary to facilitate outdoor recreation participation.
- Respondents strongly identified with the need to maintain current funding levels, and possibly to also increase funds for public parks while also expressing support for more land acquisition.
- Respondents supported the idea of increasing accessibility to the general public, and especially for people with disabilities.



Trails and Specialty Parks***National Trends***

- Trails, parks, and playgrounds are among the five most important community amenities considered when selecting a home, according to a 2002 survey of recent homebuyers by the National Association of Home Builders and National Association of Realtors. (Pack & Schunuel)
- Two of the emerging specialty parks include skate parks and dog parks. (van der Smissen et al.)
- The Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association estimates there are about 1,000 skateboard parks in the United States.

Facilities***National Trends***

Regarding recreation facilities, the following national trends are relevant to the City of Fort Lauderdale. The current national trend is toward a “one-stop” facility to serve all ages. Large, multipurpose regional centers help increase cost recovery, promote retention, and encourage cross-use. Agencies across the U.S. are increasing revenue production and cost recovery. Amenities that are becoming “typical” as opposed to alternative include:

- Multi-purpose, large regional centers (65,000 to 125,000+ sq. ft.) for all ages/abilities with all amenities in one place. This design saves on staff costs, encourages retention and participation, and saves on operating expenses due to economies of scale.
- Leisure and therapeutic pools
- Interactive game rooms
- Nature centers/outdoor recreation and education centers
- Regional playground for all ages of youth
- In-line hockey and skate parks
- Partnerships with private providers or other government agencies
- Indoor walking tracks
- Themed décor

Amenities that are still considered “alternative” but increasing in popularity:

- Climbing walls
- BMX tracks and Indoor Soccer
- Cultural art facilities
- Green design techniques and certifications such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). A recent BCA survey indicated that 52% of the recreation-industry survey respondents indicated they were willing to pay more for green design knowing that it would significantly reduce or eliminate the negative impact of buildings on the environment and occupants.

The June 2007 “State of the Industry” report surveyed all types of organizations including public, private, and non-profit, from all over the country.

- More than three-quarters of respondents reported that they have plans to build new facilities, add to their existing facilities, or renovate their existing facilities within the next three years.
- On average, facilities are planning to spend nearly \$3.8 million on new facilities, additions and renovations over the next several years.
- Across the board, the most common amenity included in facilities of all kinds were outdoor sport courts for such sports as tennis and basketball, locker rooms, bleachers and seating, natural turf sports fields for sports like baseball, football and soccer, and concession areas.
- More than 60% of respondents said their facility included an outdoor sports court.



Partnerships

In the Parks and Recreation industry it is common to form partnerships with other organizations either to increase funding potential or to improve programming options. According to the June 2007 State of the Industry Report published in Recreation Management Magazine, 96.3% of survey respondents in the Parks and Recreation industry have found one way or another to partner with other organizations to accomplish their missions.

- Over 78% of parks and recreation departments reported forming partnerships with local schools.
- Local government was the second most common partnership. More than 67% of parks and recreation departments in the survey listed local government as a partner.
- Other partners listed in the survey include: the International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA), the American Camp Association, Professional Golf Association (PGA), Rotary International, Lions and Elks Clubs, faith-based organizations, the Boys and Girls Clubs, Boy Scouts and Girl Scout, the Special Olympics, and local and state tourism boards.
- Facilities least likely to form partnerships with external organizations included: resorts and hotels, water parks, amusement parks and theme parks, campgrounds, youth camps, private camps, and RV parks.

Operations***National Trends***

- Cities are becoming the facility providers, schedulers and maintainers, with sports organizations operating the leagues and tournaments and renting facilities from cities.
- Private sports organizations are operating local, regional, and national tournaments and renting facilities from cities.

Recreation and Park Administration***National Trends***

- Level of subsidy for programs is lessening and more “enterprise” activities are being developed, thereby allowing subsidy to be used where deemed appropriate.
- Recreation programmers and administrators are being involved at the beginning of the planning process.
- Information technology allows for tracking and reporting.
- Pricing is often done by peak, off-peak, and off-season rates.
- More agencies are partnering with private, public, and non-profit groups.

2.4 SUMMARY

The City of Fort Lauderdale exists in the very dynamic context of South Florida. The region as a whole is changing and the City is rapidly urbanizing. The demographics and lifestyle of the residents is also changing. The changes are consistent with state and national trends and will necessitate a new approach to parks, recreation and open space planning. The Parks and Recreation Department can better meet those evolving needs of the community and better serve the residents of the City by proactively repositioning itself. The parks and recreation industry as a whole is moving away from being focused on sports and recreation and is moving toward a more holistic, sustainable model of services. The background, demographics and current trends are indicative of an urbanizing community with broader parks, recreation and open space needs.

