

LONG RANGE PLAN

A physical long range plan for the future of Fort Lauderdale

The future plan for parks and recreation in the City of Fort Lauderdale is inextricably linked to the future vision of the City as a whole. Parks, recreation facilities, open spaces and natural areas, the sum total of the public realm, are woven into the community fabric and are integral to what makes the City a great place to live. To this end, this plan strives to integrate the relevant components of all previous planning efforts and build upon them to enhance the overall vision for the City as a whole. In this planning effort, the relevant public realm elements of the following planning efforts were incorporated into this plan:

- 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

Ultimately, this plan will provide a clear layout for not only the strictly defined parks and recreation facilities of the department, but also provide a framework for all open space within the City. The hope is in by doing so that mutual interests can be identified and multiple public benefits can be achieved.

The Preface to the City of Fort Lauderdale's Downtown Master Plan, adopted in 2003, states:

"The next period of growth [in Fort Lauderdale]...can knit together the urban fabric into a seamless pattern of walkable, beautiful streets, public spaces, and buildings of the highest quality. It can combine the energy and optimism of a rapidly growing city with a balanced approach that tackles the serious challenges of traffic, parking, transit, schools, and infrastructure. The City must focus on all of these issues to create a truly livable Downtown, and to achieve the long term economic sustainability that would accompany it".

The Parks and Recreation Long Range Plan extends this concept to the entire City, and proposes to "knit the urban fabric" through improvements to the public realm, including the following seven initiatives:

- 1) Improve neighborhood access to local recreation amenities
- 2) Improvements to existing community-wide parks
- 3) Expand access to greenways and trails
- 4) Improved water access
- 5) Expansion of Indoor, Health and Fitness Oriented Community/ Recreation Centers
- 6) Improved "complete" streets to create a network of sidewalks and bike lanes/paths to serve schools, parks and neighborhoods
- 7) Expanded public transit service to parks and the beach

Following is a discussion of each:



6.1 IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD ACCESS TO LOCAL RECREATION AMENITIES

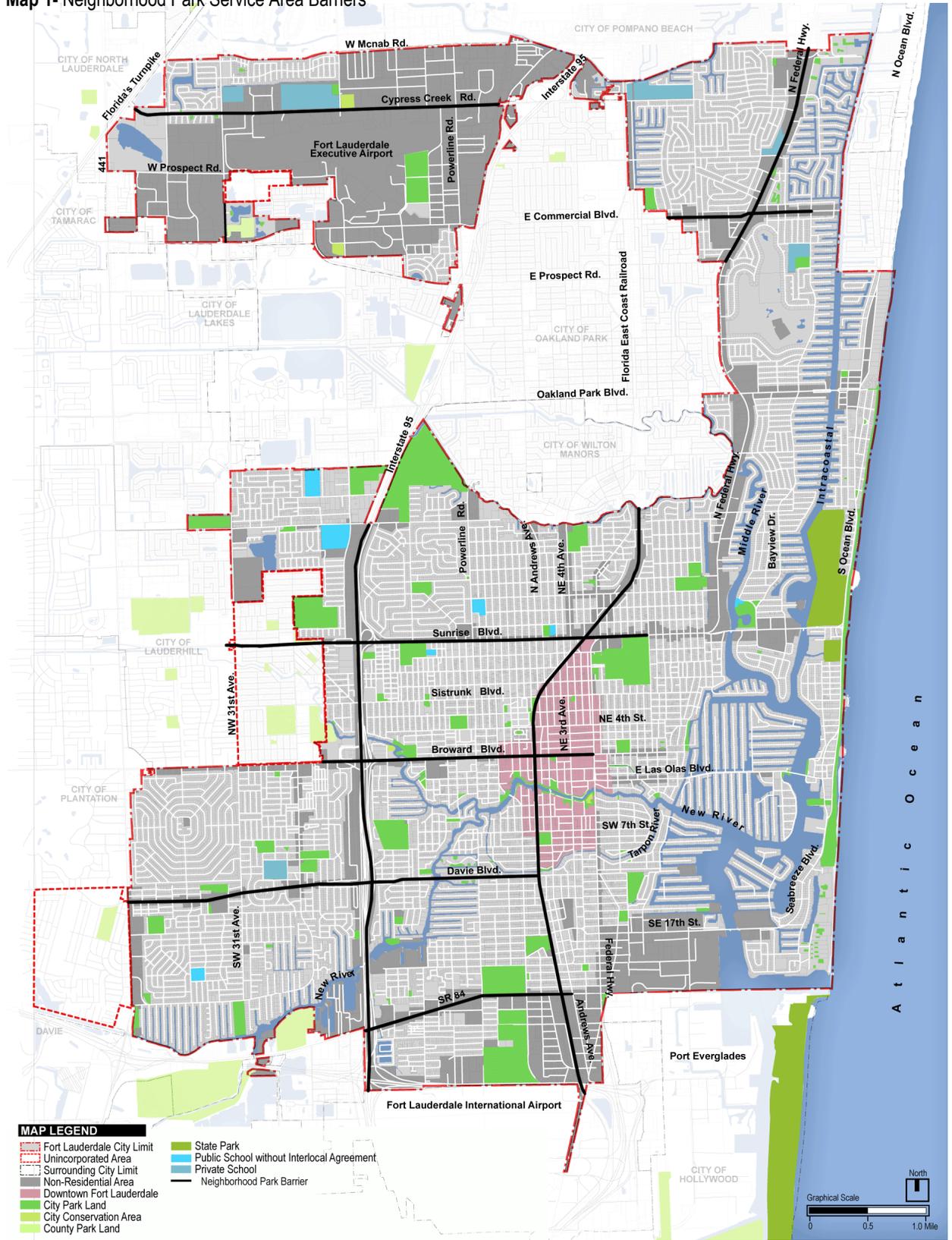
Fort Lauderdale's park and recreation facilities serve a very neighborhood oriented city, with those neighborhoods reflecting the city's ethnic and economic diversity. The City of Fort Lauderdale has embraced the concept of neighborhoods and has already established fifteen different park planning districts. Concurrent with this commitment, the City has done a very good job in providing equitable distribution of neighborhood parks throughout the City. Small areas of variable service still exist in some of the peripheral areas of the City, however many opportunities exist in those areas to partner with other public and private entities to potentially better serve those areas.



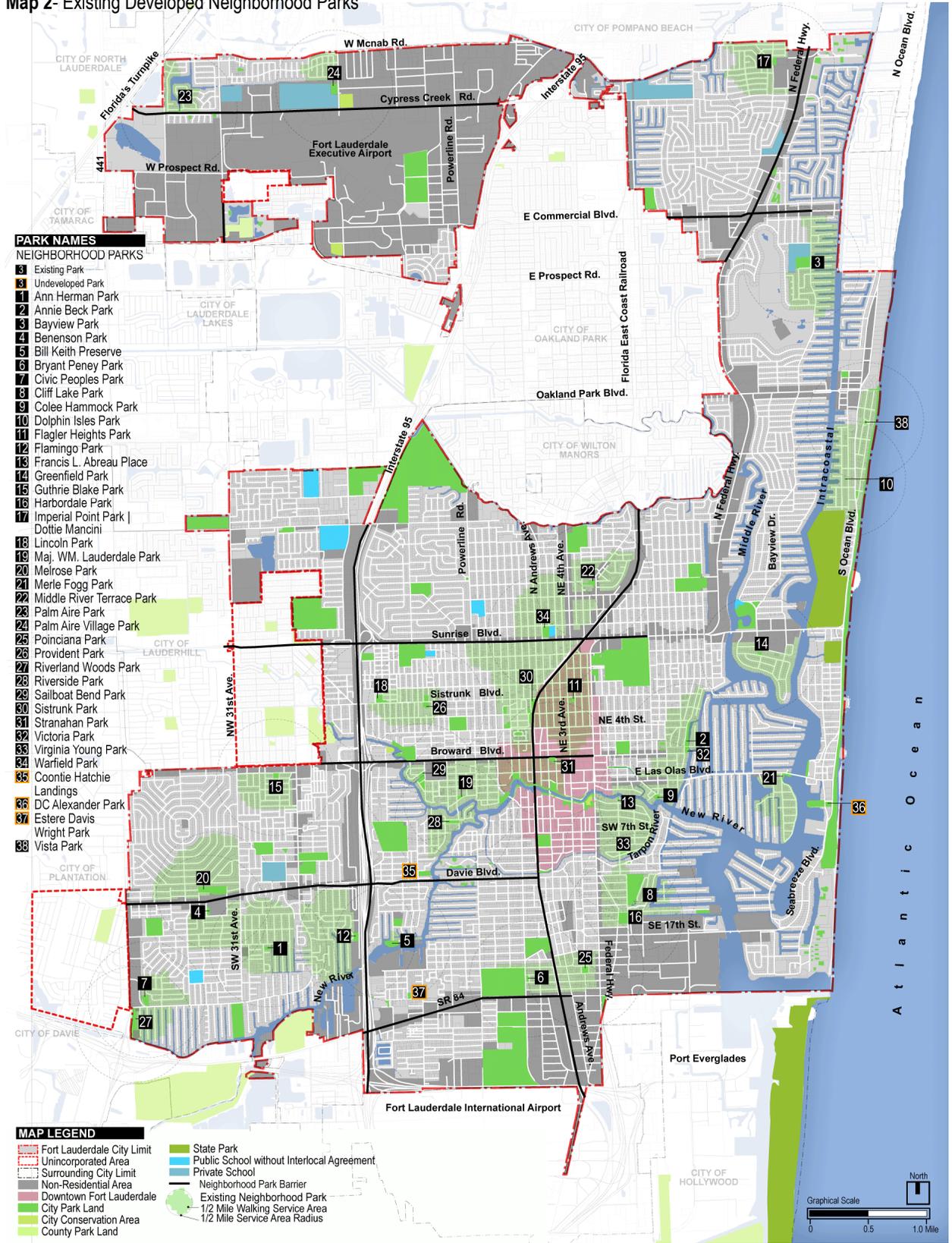
The planning process for an ideal park system for the City of Fort Lauderdale began with neighborhood parks as the "basic unit" and as an integral element of strong neighborhoods. To that end, the first effort was to define logical boundaries for neighborhoods. The City of Fort Lauderdale is bisected by multiple arterial and collector roads as well as major waterways that preclude safe crossing by children and were therefore deemed boundaries for walkable, neighborhood parks. Map 1 depicts the distribution of those boundaries throughout the City. Next, a ½ mile service area was plotted around all existing parks. This service area is approximately five to six city blocks and assumes a seven to eight minute walking time. These service areas were then truncated by the defined boundaries to establish the areas of the City that were presently being served by neighborhood parks. Working within those logical boundaries, while attempting to use already publicly owned properties, a pattern of proposed neighborhood parks was plotted throughout the remaining residential areas of the City. Maps 2 -8 illustrate a progression of locations and service areas of existing parks and potential park areas throughout the City. This approach first strives to maximize the land available through existing City facilities and progresses toward the utilization of existing open space in the City that would require partnering with other public and private entities. The intent of this approach is to maximize the use of available open space in the City first, pursue all partnership opportunities second and minimize any potential acquisition of property.



Map 1- Neighborhood Park Service Area Barriers



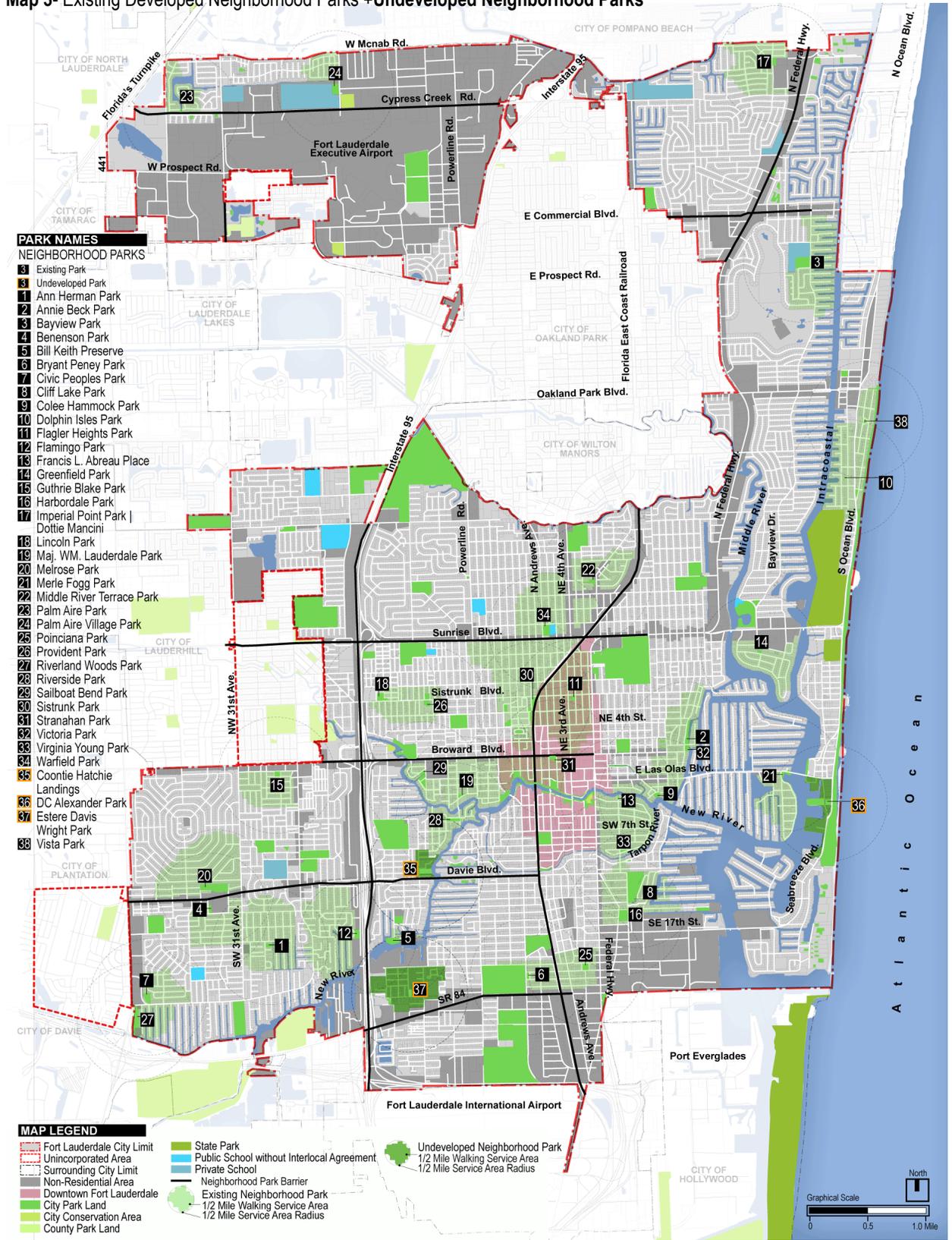
Map 2- Existing Developed Neighborhood Parks



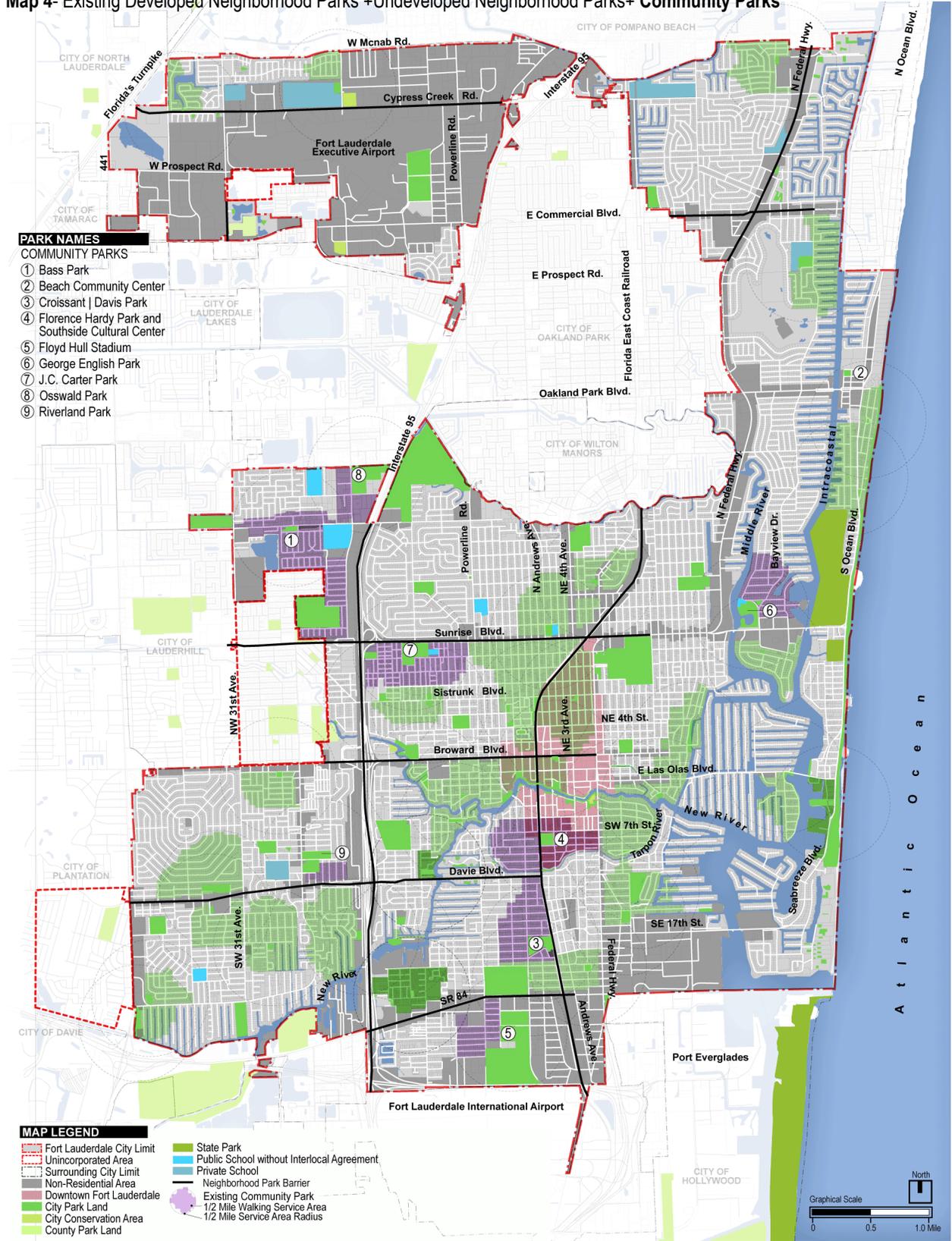
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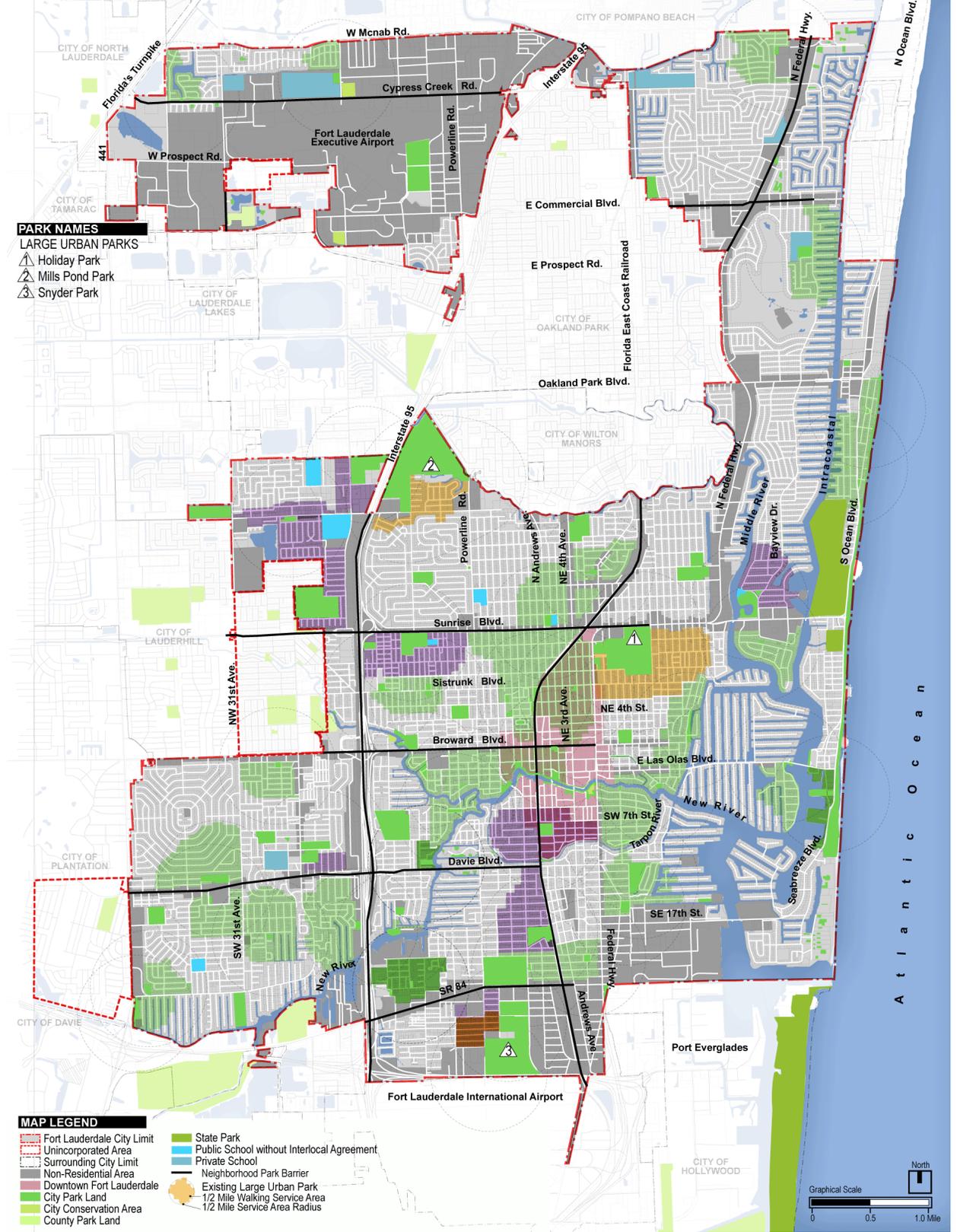
Map 3- Existing Developed Neighborhood Parks +Undeveloped Neighborhood Parks



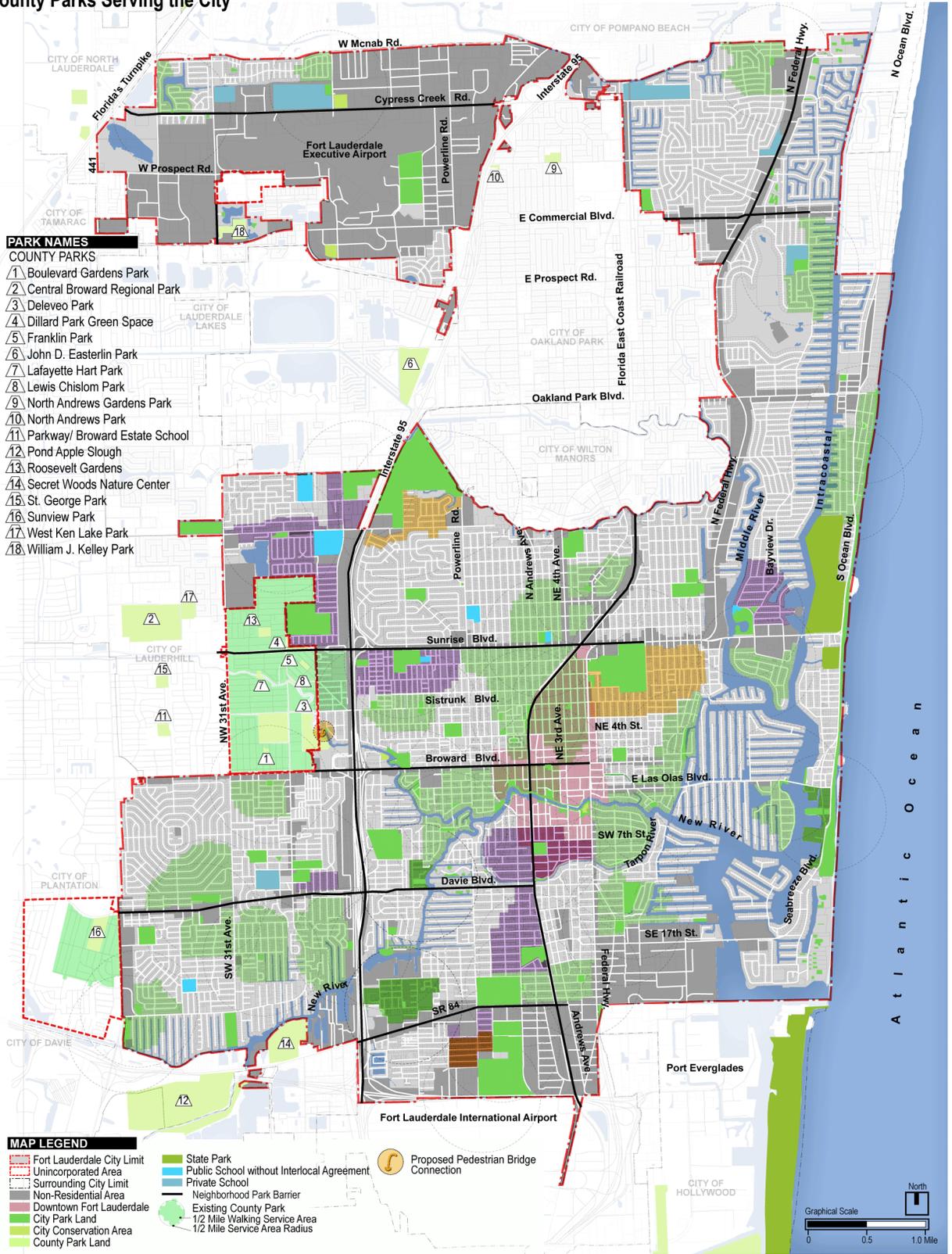
Map 4- Existing Developed Neighborhood Parks +Undeveloped Neighborhood Parks+ Community Parks



Map 5 - Existing Developed Neighborhood Parks + Undeveloped Neighborhood Parks + Community Parks + Large Urban Parks



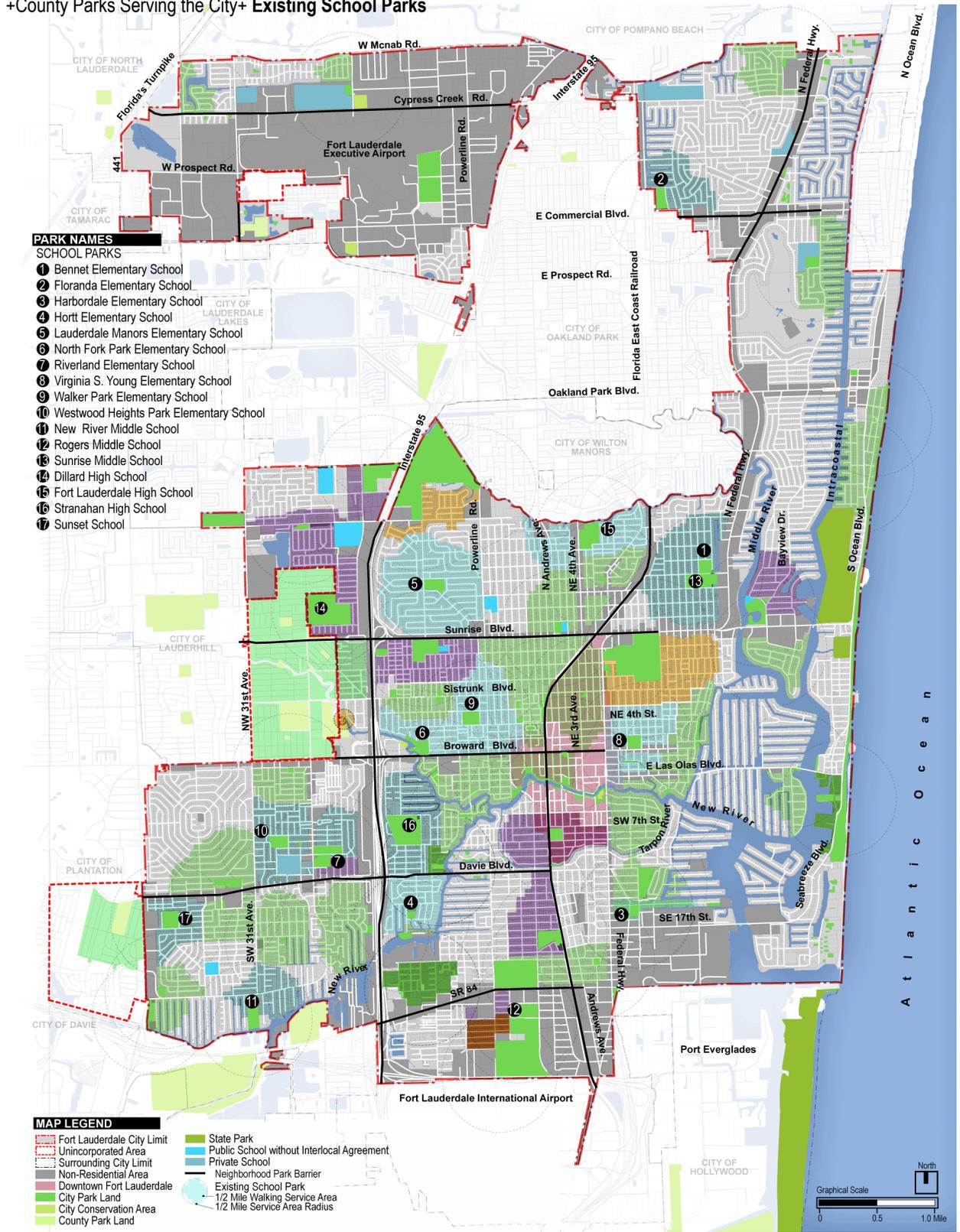
Map 6 - Existing Developed Neighborhood Parks + Undeveloped Neighborhood Parks + Community Parks + Large Urban Parks + County Parks Serving the City



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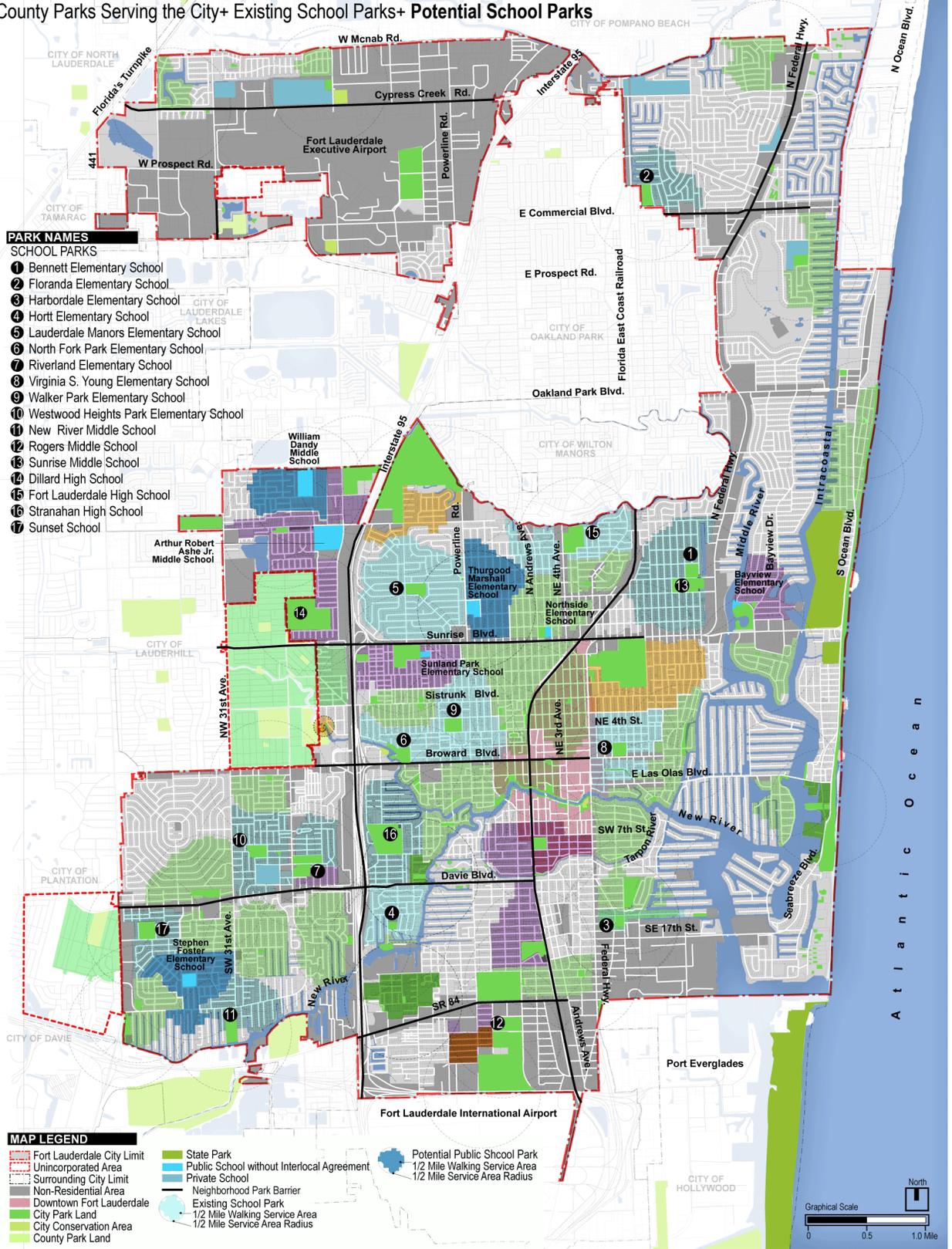
Map 7 - Existing Developed Neighborhood Parks + Undeveloped Neighborhood Parks + Community Parks + Large Urban Parks + County Parks Serving the City + Existing School Parks



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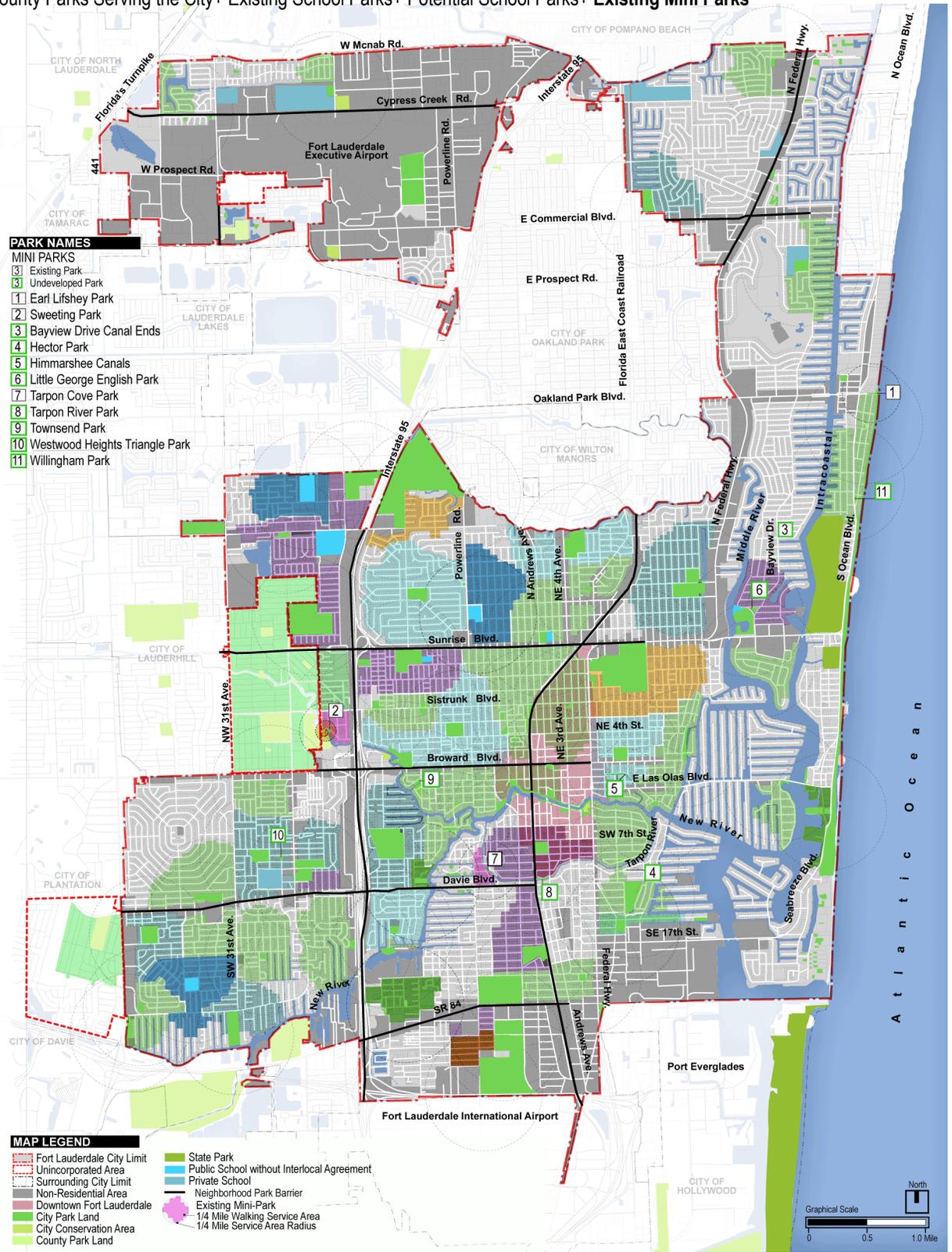
Map 8 - Existing Developed Neighborhood Parks +Undeveloped Neighborhood Parks + Community Parks +Large Urban Parks +County Parks Serving the City+ Existing School Parks+ Potential School Parks



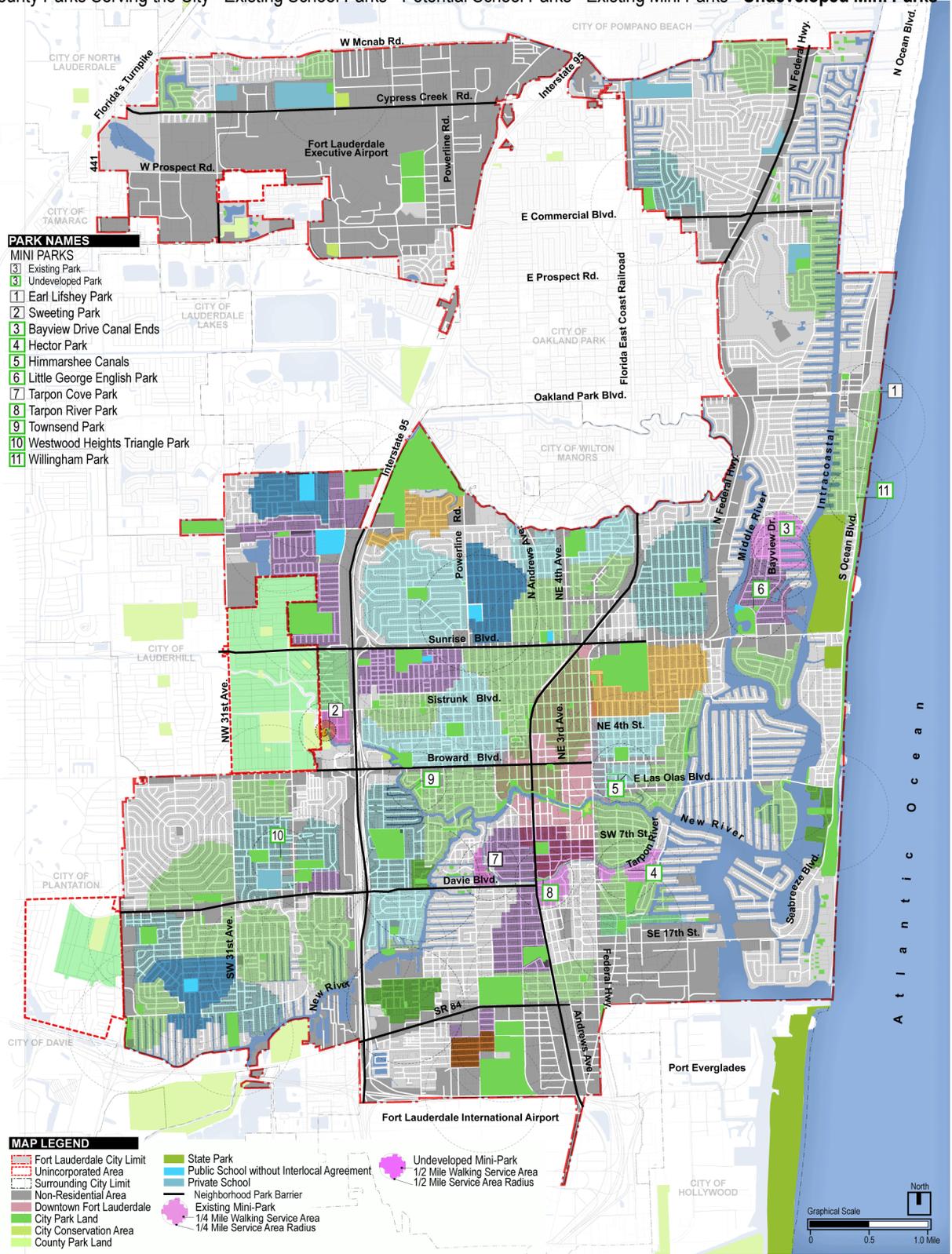
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Map 9 - Existing Developed Neighborhood Parks + Undeveloped Neighborhood Parks + Community Parks + Large Urban Parks + County Parks Serving the City + Existing School Parks + Potential School Parks + Existing Mini Parks



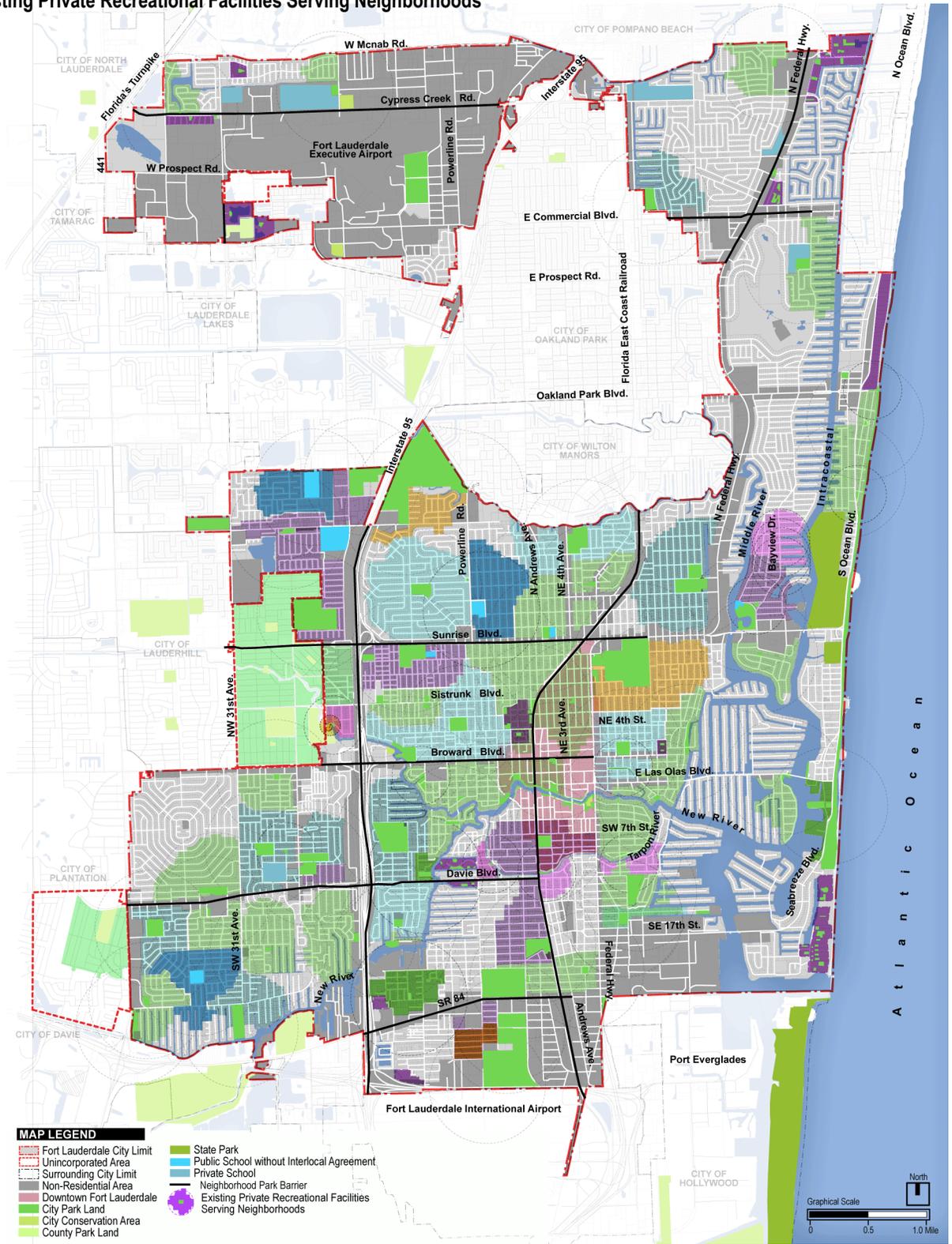
Map 10 - Existing Developed Neighborhood Parks + Undeveloped Neighborhood Parks + Community Parks + Large Urban Parks + County Parks Serving the City + Existing School Parks + Potential School Parks + Existing Mini Parks + Undeveloped Mini Parks



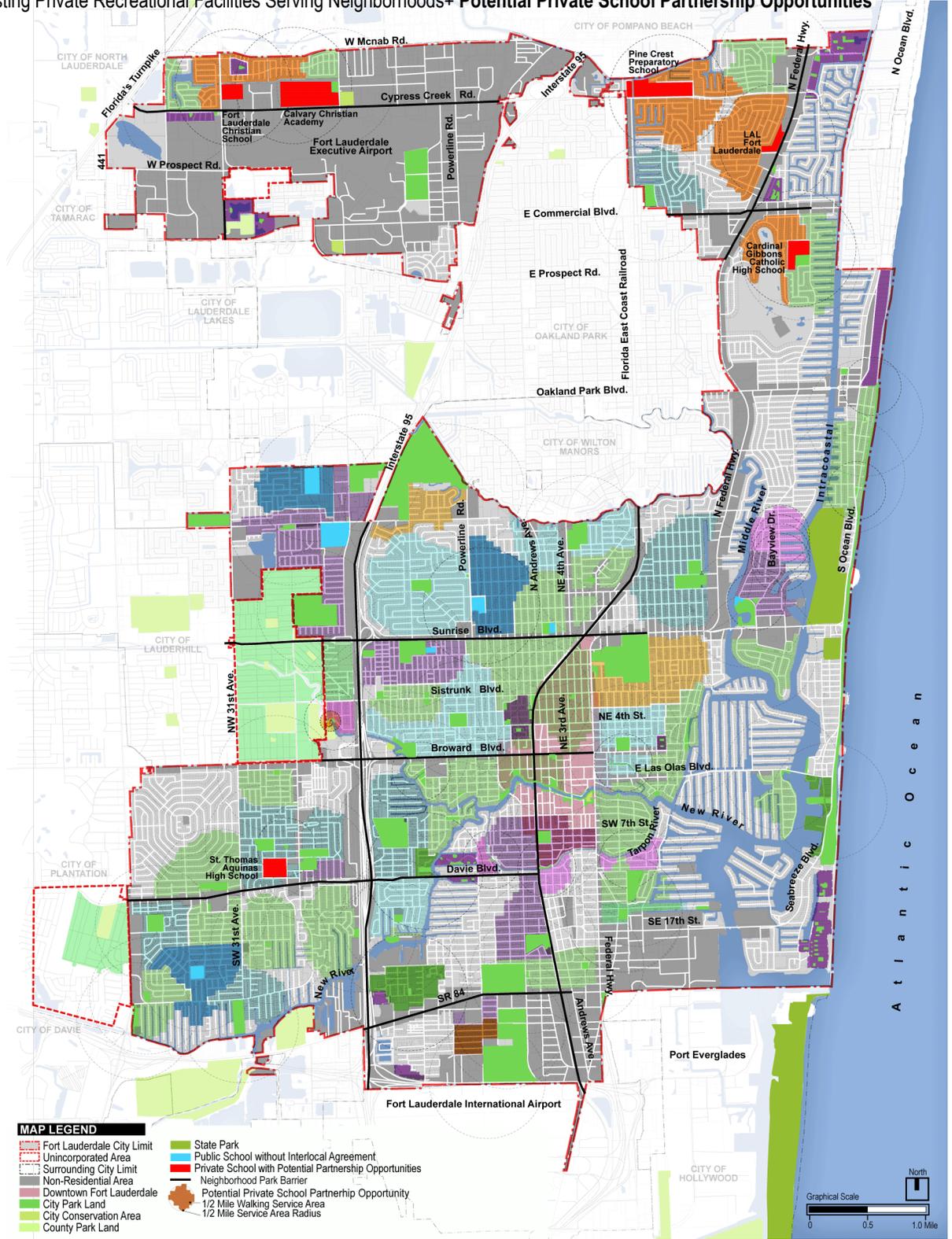
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Map11- Existing Developed Neighborhood Parks +Undeveloped Neighborhood Parks + Community Parks +Large Urban Parks +County Parks Serving the City+ Existing School Parks+ Potential School Parks+ Existing Mini Parks+ Undeveloped Mini Parks+ Existing Private Recreational Facilities Serving Neighborhoods



Map12- Existing Developed Neighborhood Parks +Undeveloped Neighborhood Parks + Community Parks +Large Urban Parks +County Parks Serving the City+ Existing School Parks+ Potential School Parks+ Existing Mini Parks+ Undeveloped Mini Parks+ Existing Private Recreational Facilities Serving Neighborhoods+ Potential Private School Partnership Opportunities

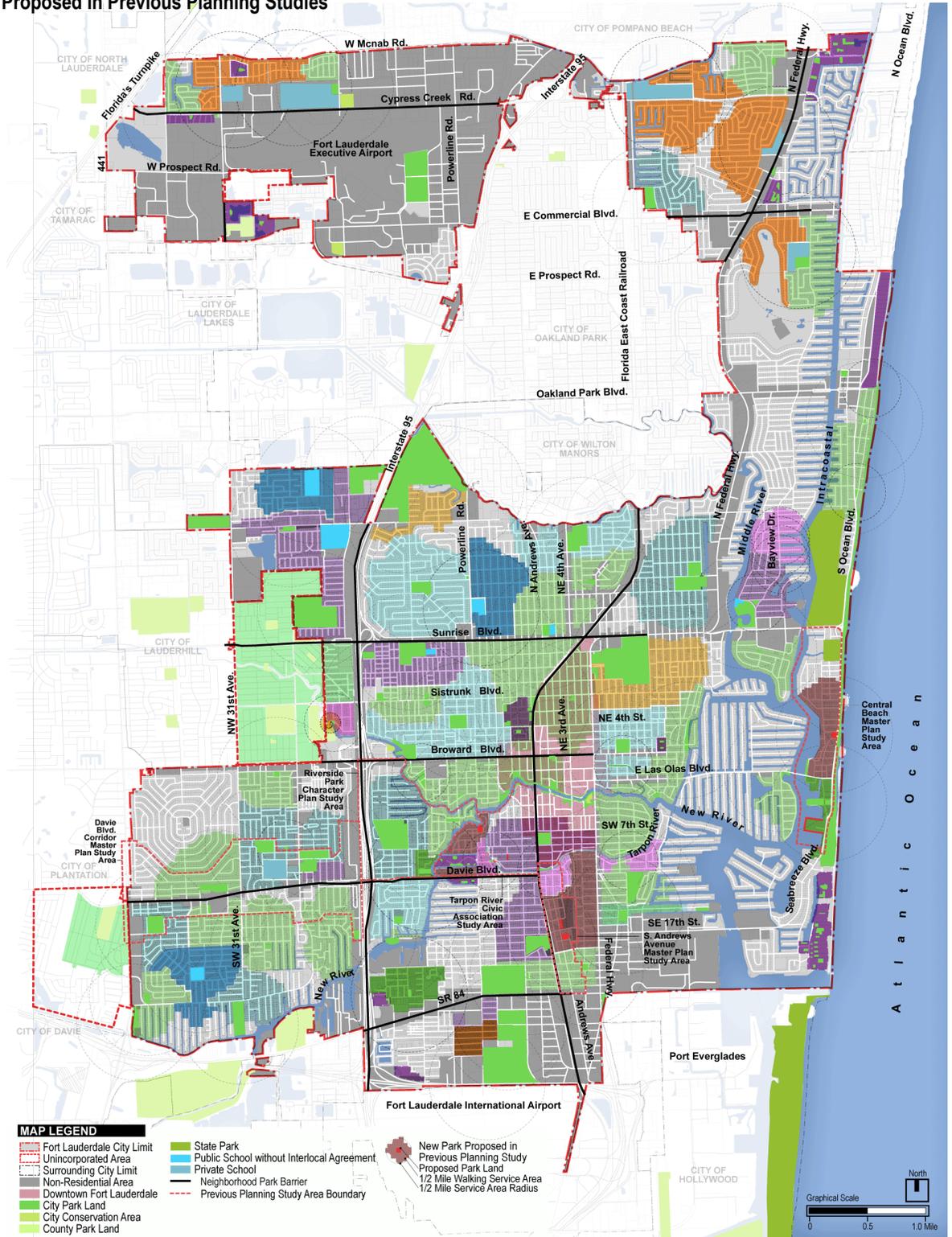


The City has also been actively developing individual master plans for various neighborhoods and districts within the City. The Downtown Master Plan identifies the issues of inadequate park land, connectivity, landscaping and walkability in the downtown. The Flagler Heights Precinct Plan recognizes the area as being underserved by neighborhood parks and proposes new parks and greenway connections. The South Andrews Avenue Master Plan Development shows the deficiency of parks, greenways and bike lanes within the district. The Beach Streetscape Master plan identifies the need for Intracoastal overlook parks, a gateway park and plaza and a parkway along Bayshore Drive and Birch Road. The Davie Boulevard Master Plan establishes linkages to public open space and a pedestrian friendly environment as guiding principles for the plan.

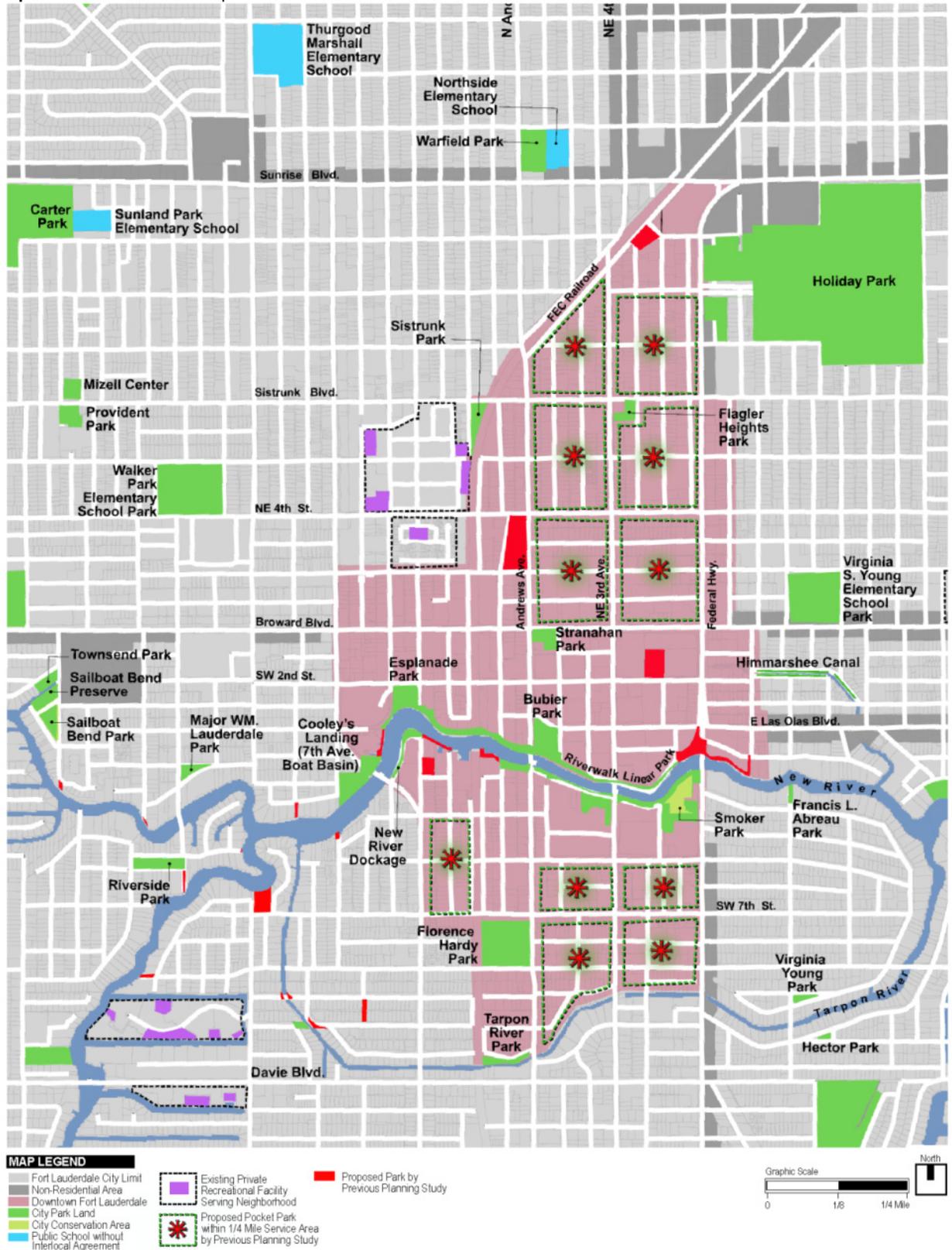
All of these neighborhood and district plans are appropriately derived from the unique concerns of these individual areas, but are also consistently promoting the same guiding principles of access to public open space, connectivity, and walkability. The development of a Parks and Recreation Long Range Strategic Plan for the entire City provides a framework that will benefit the individual neighborhood and district planning efforts. Maps 13 and 14 show how these open space areas would integrate into the overall parks system long range plan. There are also some areas, particularly in the coastal areas for which the analysis shows a less than even distribution of services; however demographics and lifestyles in these areas make it questionable whether a traditional neighborhood park is needed. Map 15 show the areas that could still be considered for potential neighborhood parks, however their consideration should only be initiated by the residents of those areas.



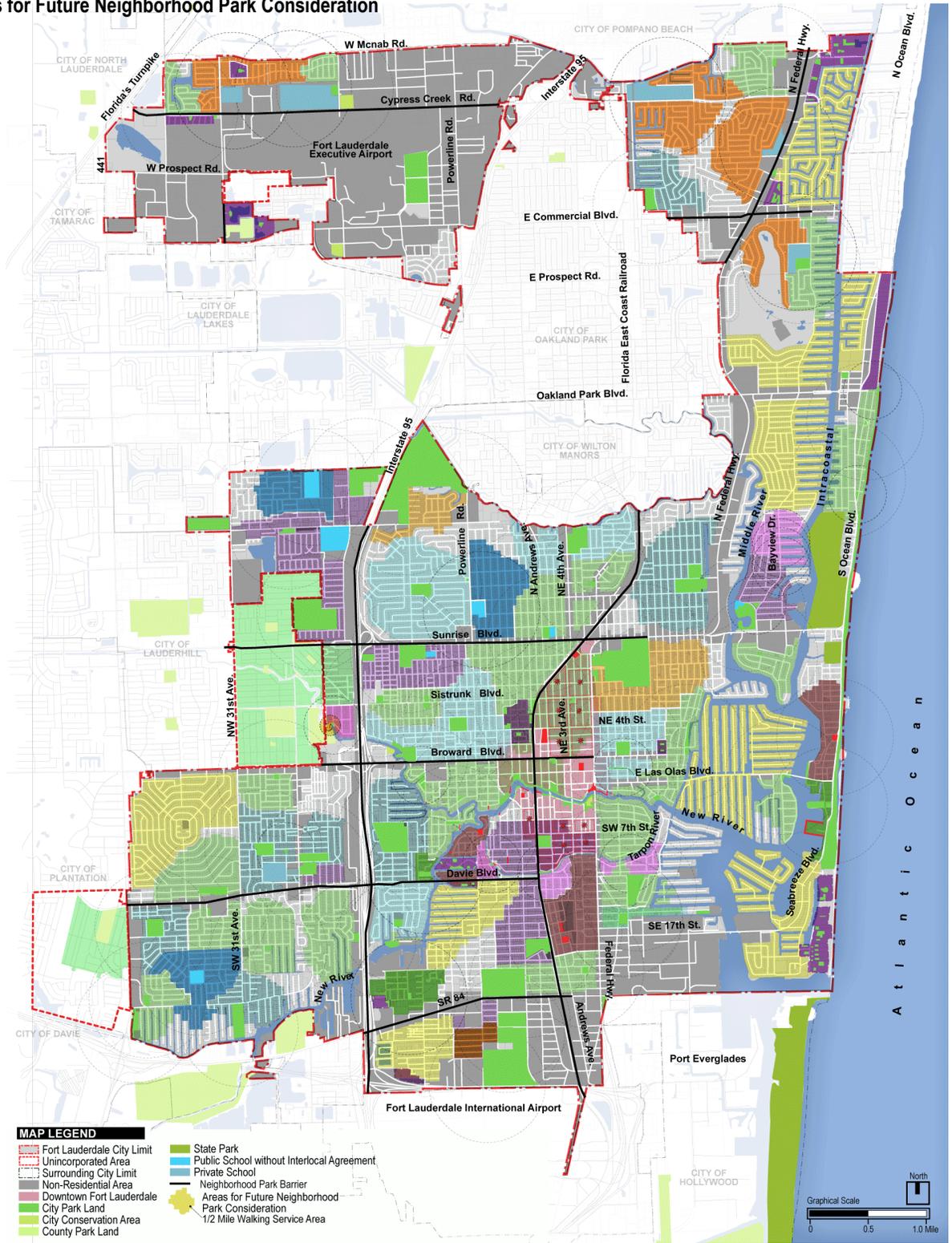
Map13 - Existing Developed Neighborhood Parks + Undeveloped Neighborhood Parks + Community Parks + Large Urban Parks + County Parks Serving the City + Existing School Parks + Potential School Parks + Existing Mini Parks + Undeveloped Mini Parks + Existing Private Recreational Facilities Serving the Neighborhood + Potential Private School Partnership Opportunities + New Parks Proposed in Previous Planning Studies



Map 14 - Downtown Detail Map



Map15 - Existing Developed Neighborhood Parks +Undeveloped Neighborhood Parks + Community Parks + Large Urban Parks +County Parks Serving the City + Existing School Parks + Potential School Parks + Existing Mini Parks+ Undeveloped Mini Parks+ Existing Private Recreational Facilities Serving the Neighborhood+ Potential Private School Partnership Opportunities + Areas for Future Neighborhood Park Consideration

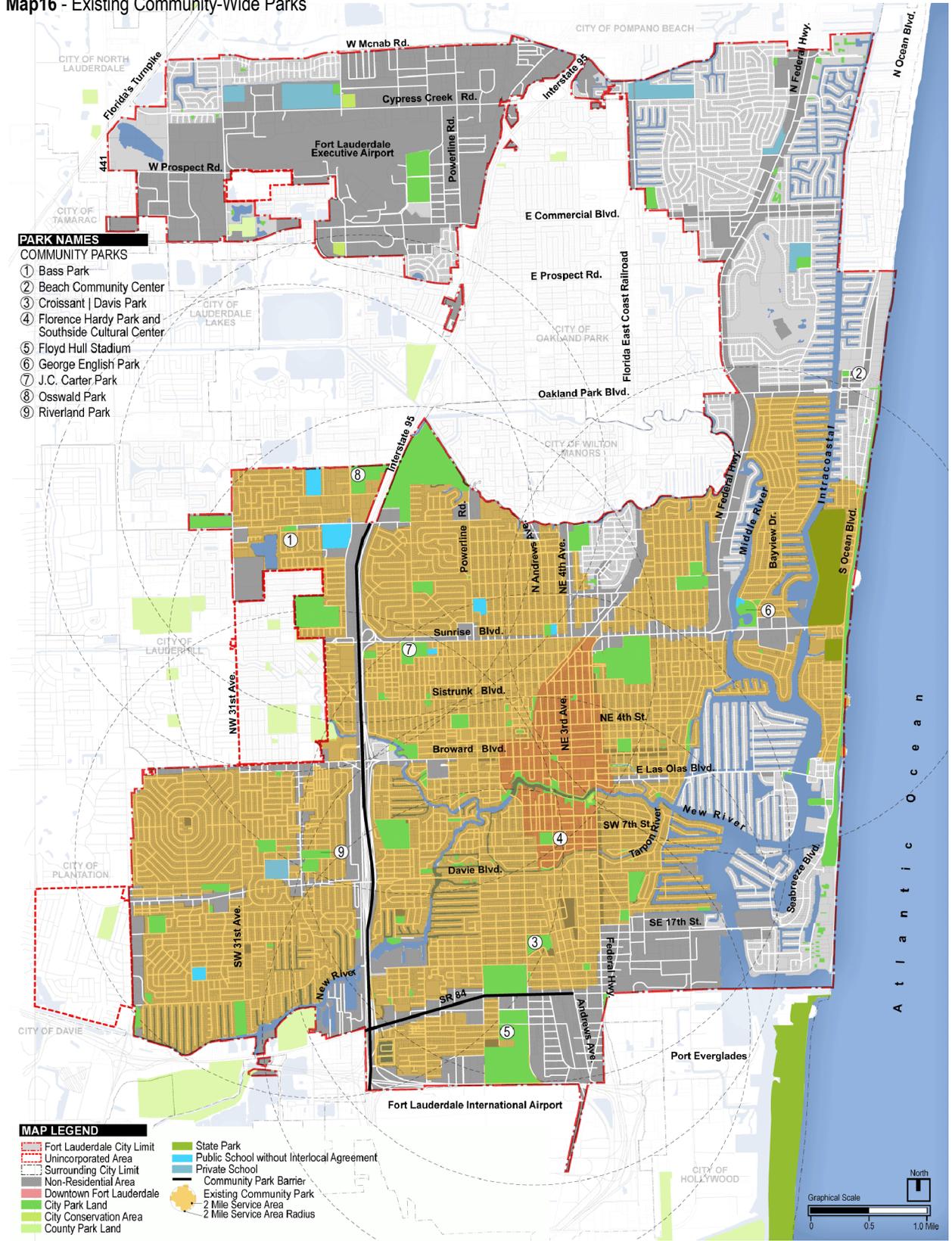


6.2 IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING COMMUNITY-WIDE PARKS

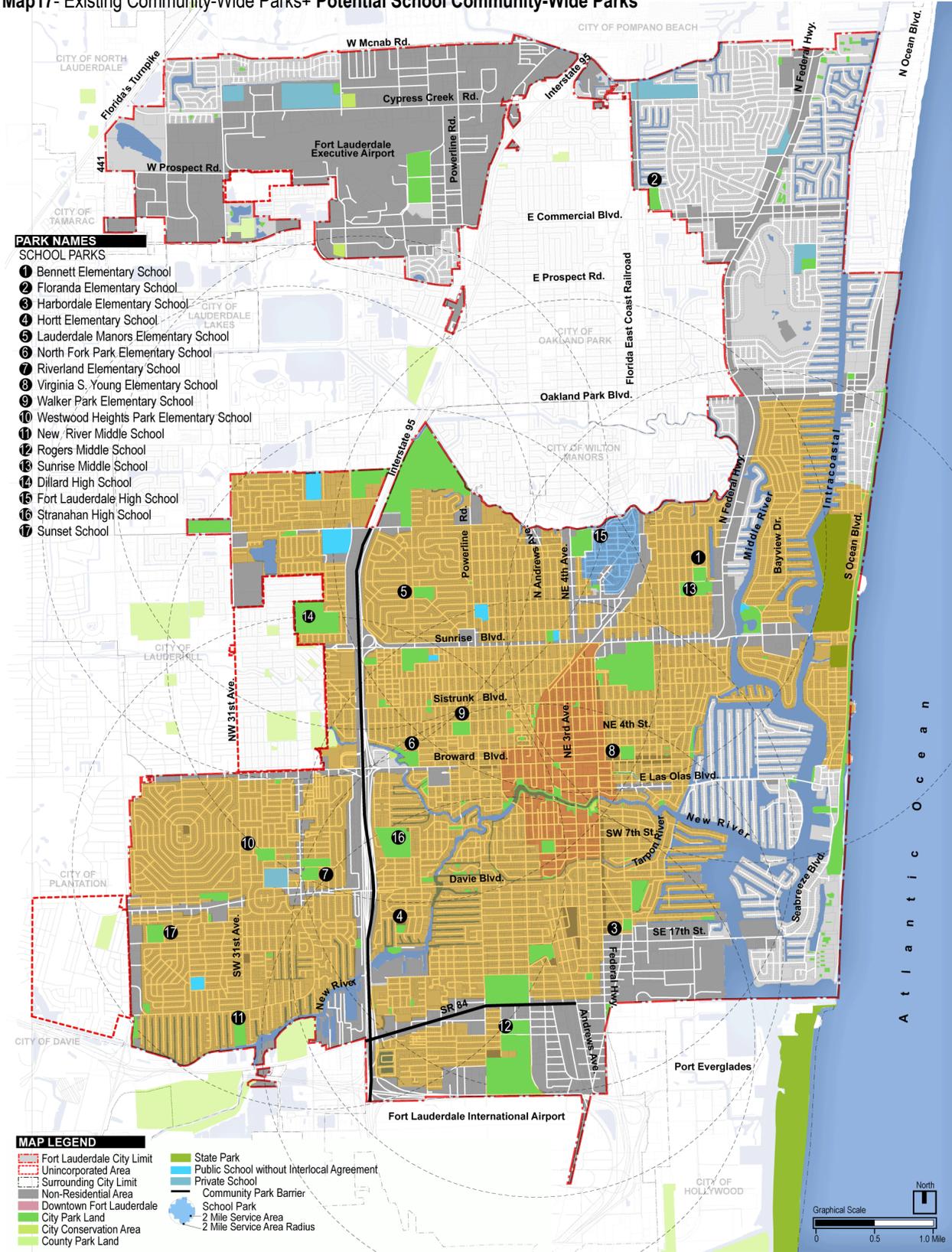
The City of Fort Lauderdale has a great collection of community-wide parks. These parks are classified as both community parks and large urban parks and provide for a variety of active recreation and sports activities. Today these facilities are serving the majority of the central portion of the City well within a 2 mile service area of most residents. Map 16 depicts the location and distribution of community-wide parks and service areas for the City. Map 17 shows how the possible use of some large public school locations could augment the system and map 18 shows how much of the demand for active recreation could be improved through the joint use of several private school facilities. These facilities are a part of the effective open space in the City, whether they are managed by the City's Parks and Recreation Department or not. Irrespective of the availability of private recreation facilities in Fort Lauderdale, the potential for adding large parks within the City is limited. The greater challenge for the City is in assuring that the land that is available for recreation activities is being used to the maximum benefit to the community.



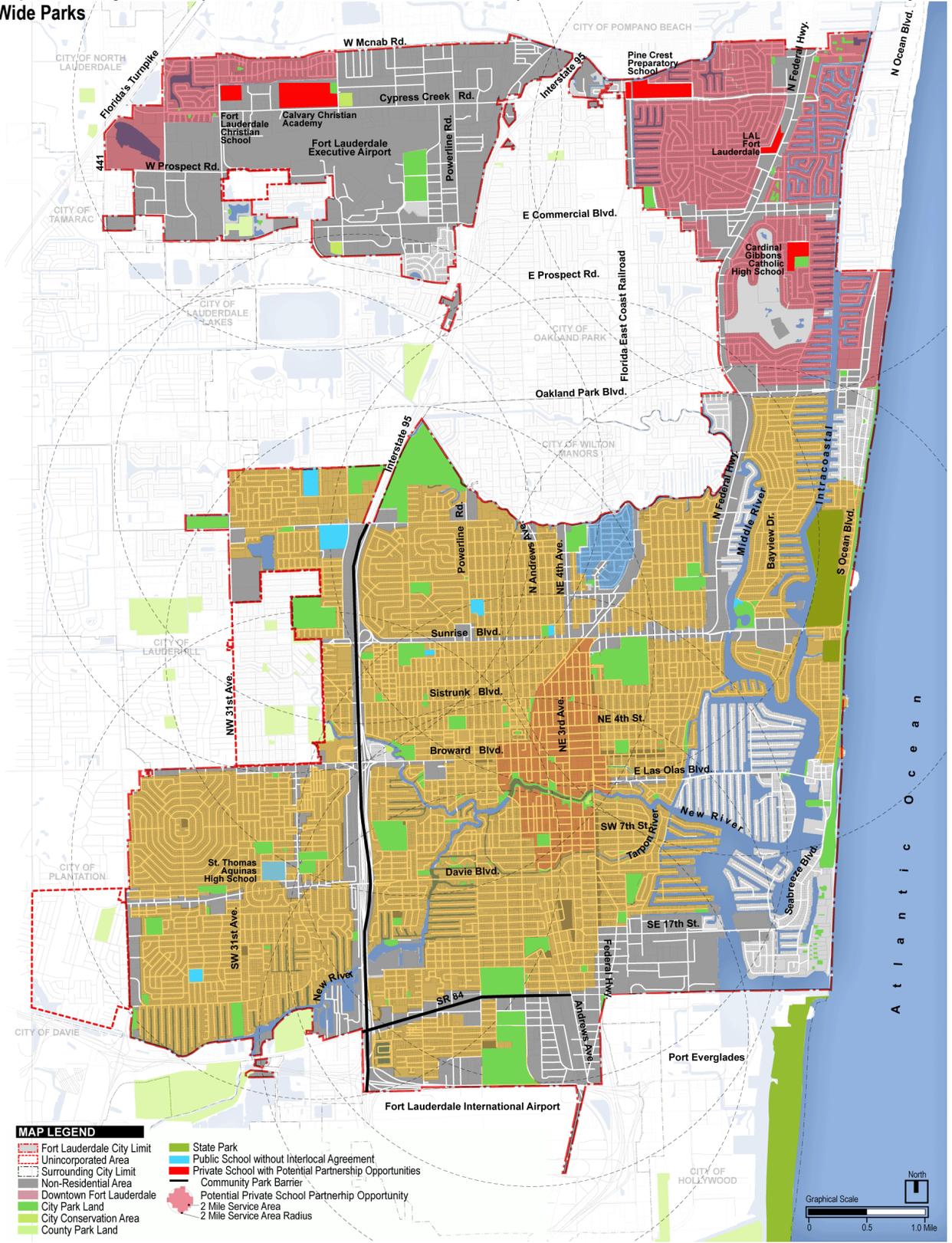
Map16 - Existing Community-Wide Parks



Map17- Existing Community-Wide Parks+ Potential School Community-Wide Parks



Map18 - Existing Community-Wide Parks+ Potential School Community-Wide Parks+ Potential Private School Community-Wide Parks



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The City of Fort Lauderdale is typical of many urbanizing cities in Florida and throughout much of the southern United States. The parks system that developed in the City is focused on providing active recreation and sports. Additionally, these parks are dependent on automobile transportation for access. The current Parks and Recreation system is based on a sub-urban development context and assumes the availability of large tracks of land for parks development. This model will not work in a City that is experiencing much of its growth through redevelopment and increased density. The new long range plan for parks needs to acknowledge that parks vary widely across the City depending on the development context and the demographics and lifestyles of a particular area.

For parks system planning purposes there are three general development types that were identified through the visioning workshops. They are urban coastal, downtown and sub-urban. Each development type has different associated lifestyles and therefore a different set of priorities as they pertain to recreational needs. Following is a summary of the generalized recreational lifestyle types and priorities associated with each of the different development patterns:

Urban Coastal:

- Beach access
- Walking
- Wellness/health
- Community center
- More programs
- Hospitals, condo associations
- Special events
- Awareness of facilities programs; connectivity; partnerships with hotels, condos, hospitals, etc.
- Therapeutic Aquatics centers
- More playgrounds

Downtown:

- Access to Holiday Park
- Dog walking; riverwalk
- Access/signage to riverwalk is an issue; redesign
- Sidewalks, streets being redesigned
- Need to connect north, south sides of river
- Uses/activities along riverwalk
- Amphitheatre, festivals, music
- Multi-purpose center – 30-40,000 sq. feet – gym, fitness, cultural arts
- More playgrounds, public art more active
- Wayfinding – how do people find, get to riverwalk?
- Work with “Docks and waterways” to designate appropriate places to dock – don’t block views

Suburban:

- Walk safely
- Ride bike safely
- Neighborhood green space – one acre minimum in each neighborhood
- In SE, need pool; in other suburbs, need spray grounds
- Partnerships with schools (public and private), churches for athletic fields
- Increase capacity of fields with synthetic turf

The needs assessment process clearly shows a desire by the residents of the City for more programs and facilities that are not the traditional athletic programs that are being offered. These athletic programs are still important, however people are asking for a wider variety of health and quality of life programs. This shift is consistent with a national trend toward livability and sustainability. The Fort Lauderdale Parks and Recreation Department has done a very good job in providing for the recreation and sports activities that it has been tasked to do, however, there is a need to expand the Department’s role in building a more livable and sustainable City. This effort will necessitate a better a more integral role for the Parks and Recreation Department in other City planning efforts and will require the proactive promotion of partnerships with other organizations.



6.3 EXPANSION OF INDOOR, HEALTH AND FITNESS ORIENTED COMMUNITY/ RECREATION CENTERS

The top priority programming need identified in the public opinion survey is for adult fitness and wellness programs. Concurrently, the public opinion survey showed a high pent up demand for such facilities as well as a low market availability for the types of facilities that people are asking for. This expressed opinion is consistent with national trends of greater concern for healthy lifestyles. Many people are becoming increasingly concerned about the effects of diet and sedentary lifestyles. Recent data on the prevalence of obesity and diabetes has caused a nationwide health concern. The City of Fort Lauderdale has the Opportunity to address this issue through the renovation and development of more health and fitness oriented facilities.

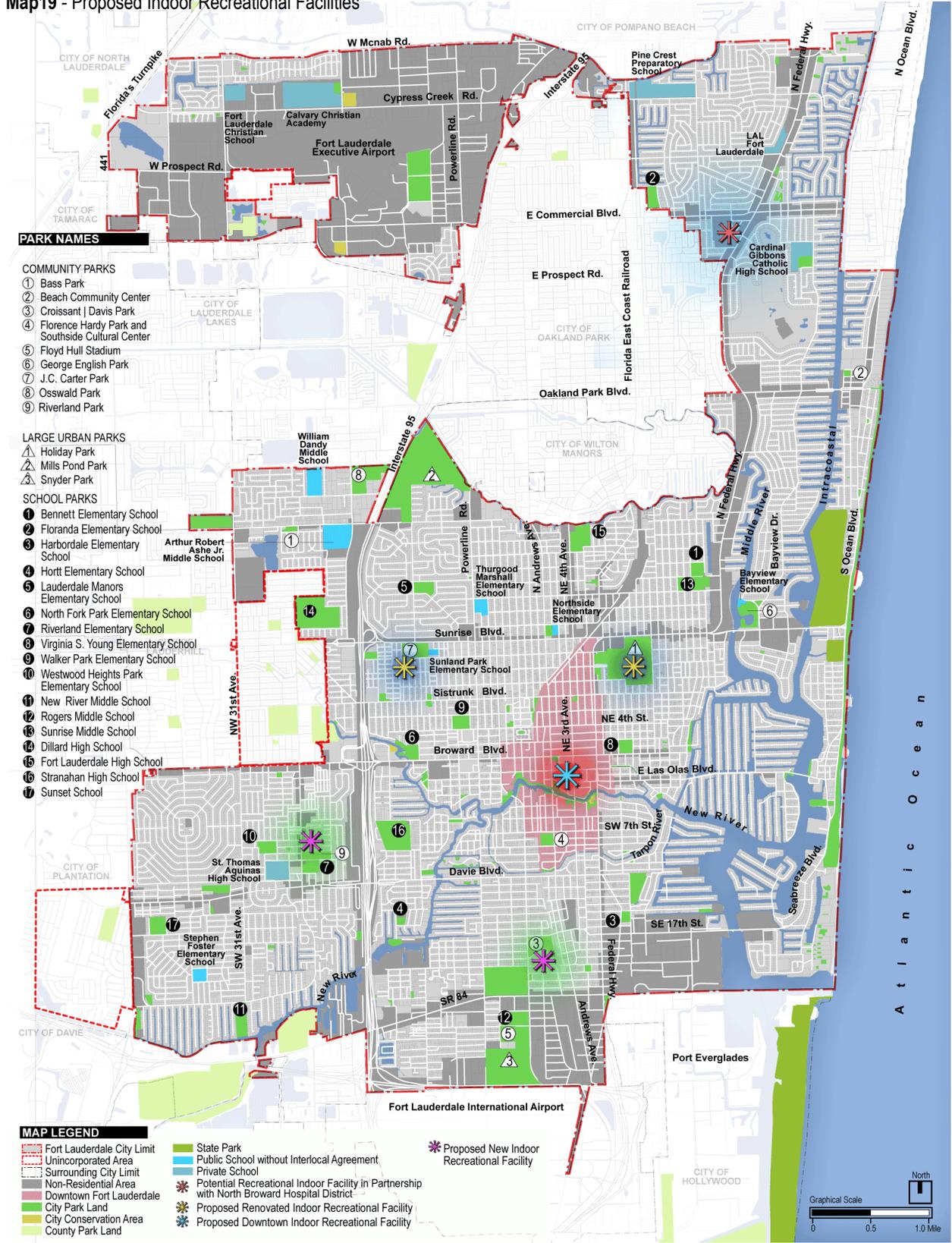
The existing community and recreation centers in the larger community-wide parks are designed for recreation programs and are not equipped for the needs fitness activities. Additionally, there is land available in existing park areas to provide new facilities in the southern portion of the City. Finally there is the potential to pursue a possible partnership opportunity with some of the health care providers in the northern part of the City.

Map 19 depicts the location of proposed health and fitness centers that could provide access to such facilities for residents throughout the City. One approach to this new area of concentration for the Parks and Recreation Department would be to begin with the renovating the existing community centers at Holiday and Carter Parks and pursue further partnerships and ultimately additional new development based on the measured success of those facilities. This approach is based on a community based approach to providing these facilities and will require the development and management of multiple facilities across the City.

Another approach to providing better health and wellness facilities would be to initially develop one large facility in the central portion of the City and then proceed to the more community based facilities as population and demand increases. This approach could provide multiple benefits to other City initiatives and ultimately be a more prudent approach. This type of facility could provide needed foot traffic for local businesses and better safety in the downtown area during non-peak entertainment times. The parking for this facility could be integrated with other daytime parking facilities and not require additional parking to be built in the already stressed community-wide parks. A central facility of this type would need to be carefully planned in active cooperation with the downtown businesses and residents, however it could prove to be a critical economic generator as well as a social center for the entire City.



Map19 - Proposed Indoor Recreational Facilities



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6.4 GREENWAYS AND TRAILS

The top priority facility type identified in the public opinion survey is for walking and biking trails. The Long Range Plan for the City of Fort Lauderdale Greenways and Trails identifies the use of existing rail corridors and the major waterfront right-of-ways as the backbone of a multi-use trail system. This system is integrated with a connected network of on street bike lanes and sidewalks to provide a “greenway” system throughout the City. The goals of the City of Fort Lauderdale Greenways and Trails system are to:

- Help protect remaining natural areas in a community, such as stream corridors and wetlands. These areas should be for the enjoyment of people as well as provide habitat for native flora and fauna.
- Provide alternative transportation and recreation opportunities for bicyclists, walkers, skaters and equestrians within 2 miles of every resident in the community. By linking the greenways and trails with a comprehensive pedestrian and bikeways system, the system can provide a true multi-modal transportation network.



The existing system of greenways in the City is limited to the areas along the New River and the oceanfront. These systems need to be further enhanced to assure that they are safe and viable as well as providing a variety of activities along them that promote their use. Map 20 shows the location of identified corridors in Fort Lauderdale.



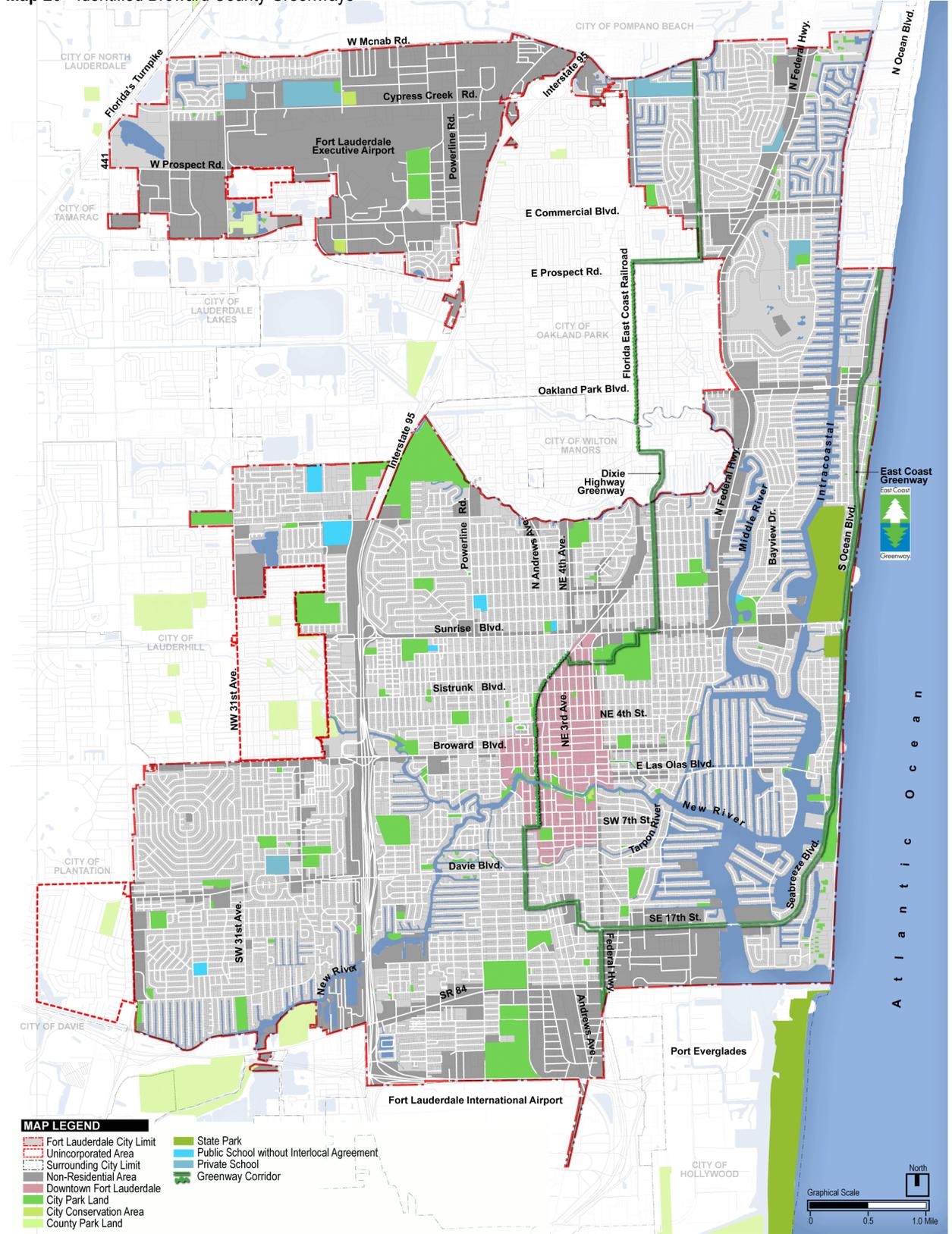
The Riverwalk area along the New River is presently underutilized and needs to be more of an integral part of the downtown area. This area has the potential to be the recreation and social hub of the downtown, urban lifestyle. New efforts need to be made to activate this space and provide critical connection into the surrounding neighborhoods. Additionally, cooperative arrangements need to be pursued with adjacent “third realm” recreation providers (restaurants, drinking establishments, etc.) to provide multiple benefits to the community as well as promoting the economic vitality of the area.

The famous walkway along Fort Lauderdale’s oceanfront is a rare asset to the City. Many people from the City as well as the region come to the Fort Lauderdale oceanfront area for the unique combination of beach access and commercial development. One of the biggest limiting factors to the area is the availability of parking. Better bicycle and pedestrian facilities along this corridor could provide alternative means of accessing the area and help to reduce the burden of parking demand. Recently the East Coast Greenway Alliance together with regional bicycle and pedestrian advocate in an effort to promote this section as a part of a national greenway extending from Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida. With additional improvements to the greenway and the development of high quality trip end facilities the area could be promoted as a bicycle tourism destination.

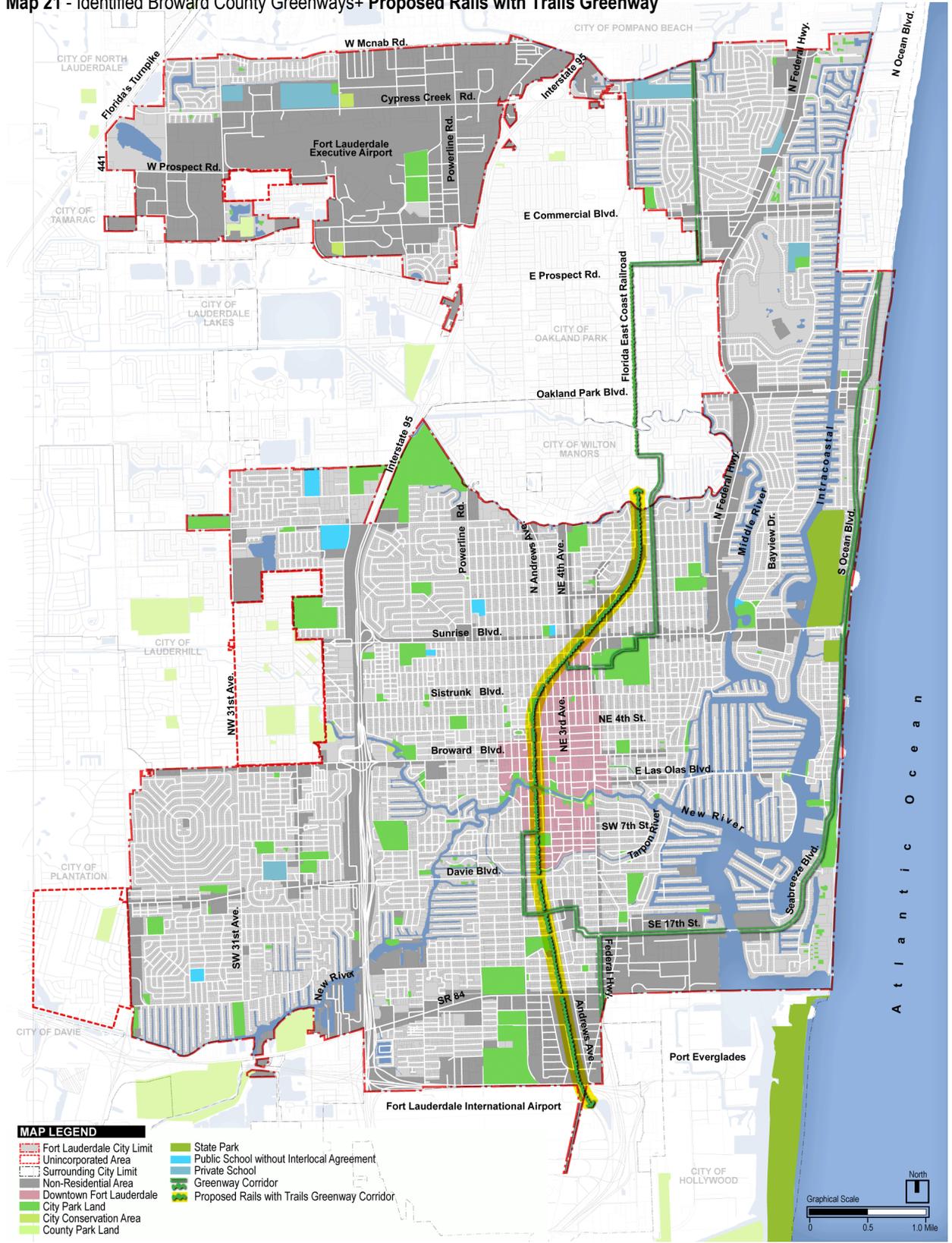
The biggest potential greenway corridor in the City is along the Florida East Coast Railway line. At present, the rail line is in active use and several efforts have been made to encourage a rails-with-trail system with the cooperation of the railroad. This corridor could provide a key link between the surrounding neighborhoods in the City and the downtown area. Map 21 shows how this line could provide critical north-south non-vehicular access in the City. Further efforts should continue to be made to potentially use this corridor.



Map 20 - Identified Broward County Greenways



Map 21 - Identified Broward County Greenways+ Proposed Rails with Trails Greenway



6.5 INCREASED WATER ACCESS AND ACCESS TO NATURAL AREAS

Fort Lauderdale is a city blessed with a beautiful waterfront location; however, much of the land adjacent to the waterways is not readily accessible to the general public. The needs assessment process identified a high desire by City residents for better access to the beach, but also, to the other water way areas in the City. Map 22 depicts the location of the few remaining public access points to the urban waterways throughout the City. These areas are not intended for large use, but should be clearly identified and made available to the residents living in the surrounding neighborhood.



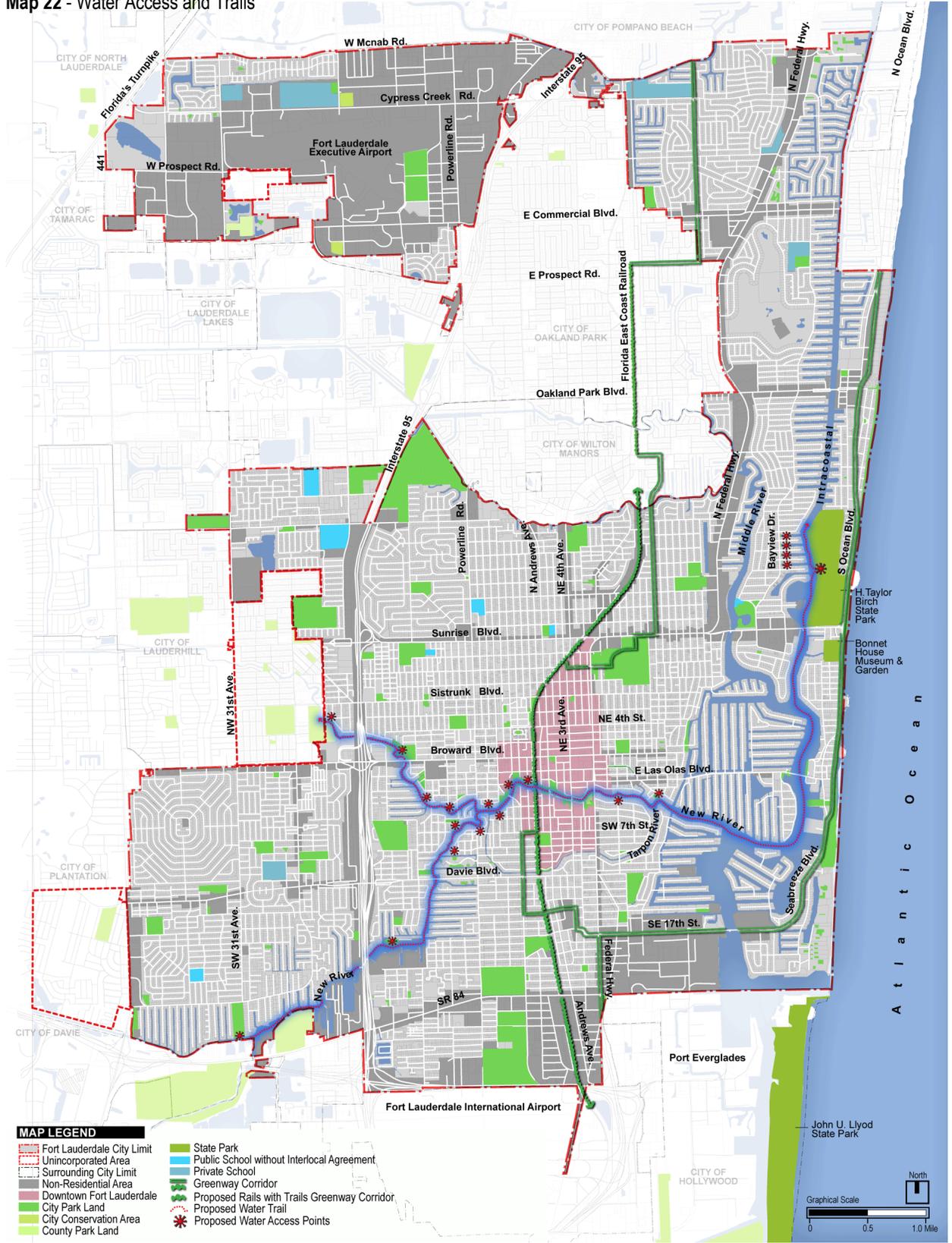
Map 22 also shows the location of a proposed water trail through the City waterways. This trail would link several of the natural areas throughout the City and provide a means for non-motorized water access through the City. Some of the natural area parks are under-utilized, such as Snyder, Mills, Sterling Pond and Birch and Lloyd State Parks and could provide better natural experiences. Many City residents expressed a desire for more nature based programs, but have not even been to the State Parks or many of the County Parks in the area. Much of this concern could be addressed through an integrated marketing program that helps City residents know what programs are available in the area. This could be accomplished through brochures and the City web site as well as promoted through active programming in the areas.



The Parks and Recreation Department needs to work with Broward County and the State Parks service to provide an overall awareness of the natural areas to residents and visitors. Additionally, most of the natural areas are not readily available to people who do not have cars. Bike routes in the city should connect to the natural areas and transit stops should be provided at each of the major sites. Signage should be provided and a special branding of the



Map 22 - Water Access and Trails



6.6 COMPLETE STREETS

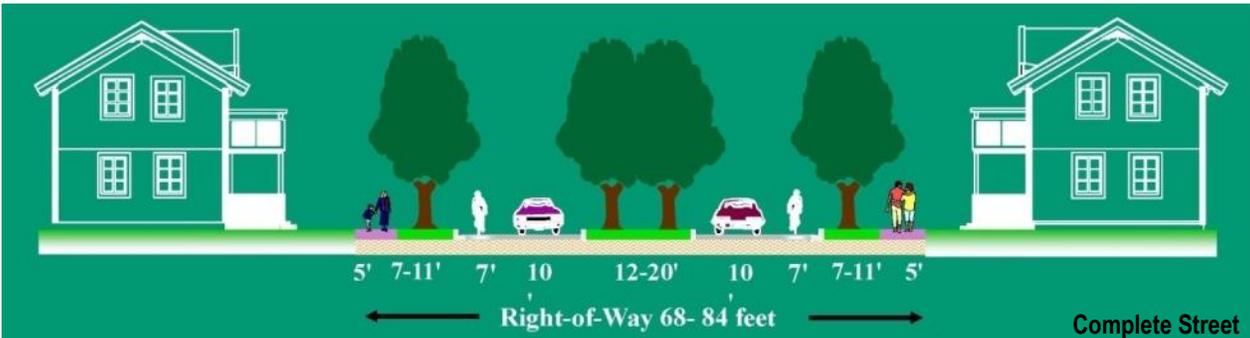
The City of Fort Lauderdale is typical of many communities in Florida in its organization and hierarchy of streets. The organization of streets is disproportionately focused on automobile traffic with little facilities for bicycles and pedestrians. The street pattern is characterized by many small residential streets and several very large arterial streets with a shortage of intermediate streets to disperse traffic evenly. Consequently, many of the large arterial streets bear a large amount of peak traffic and become difficult for pedestrians to cross. This condition has pervasive effects on many aspects of the City and is critical to the problem of providing equitable access to parks and recreation facilities. Many of the spaces in the community which are intended to create a sense of place are being undermined by their lack of connectivity and integration with the surrounding neighborhoods and communities for which they are intended to serve. Creating “Complete Streets” is critical to, and an extension of, the greater parks and open space system.

Complete Streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and bus riders of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street, (Complete the Streets, 2005). This process of sustainable street design integrates streets with the form and function of the surrounding land uses and provides for all travel. This includes travel along the corridor as well as the ability to safely cross the street. This is a context sensitive approach and necessitates careful planning to remain appropriate to the varying locations within the urban to rural transect.

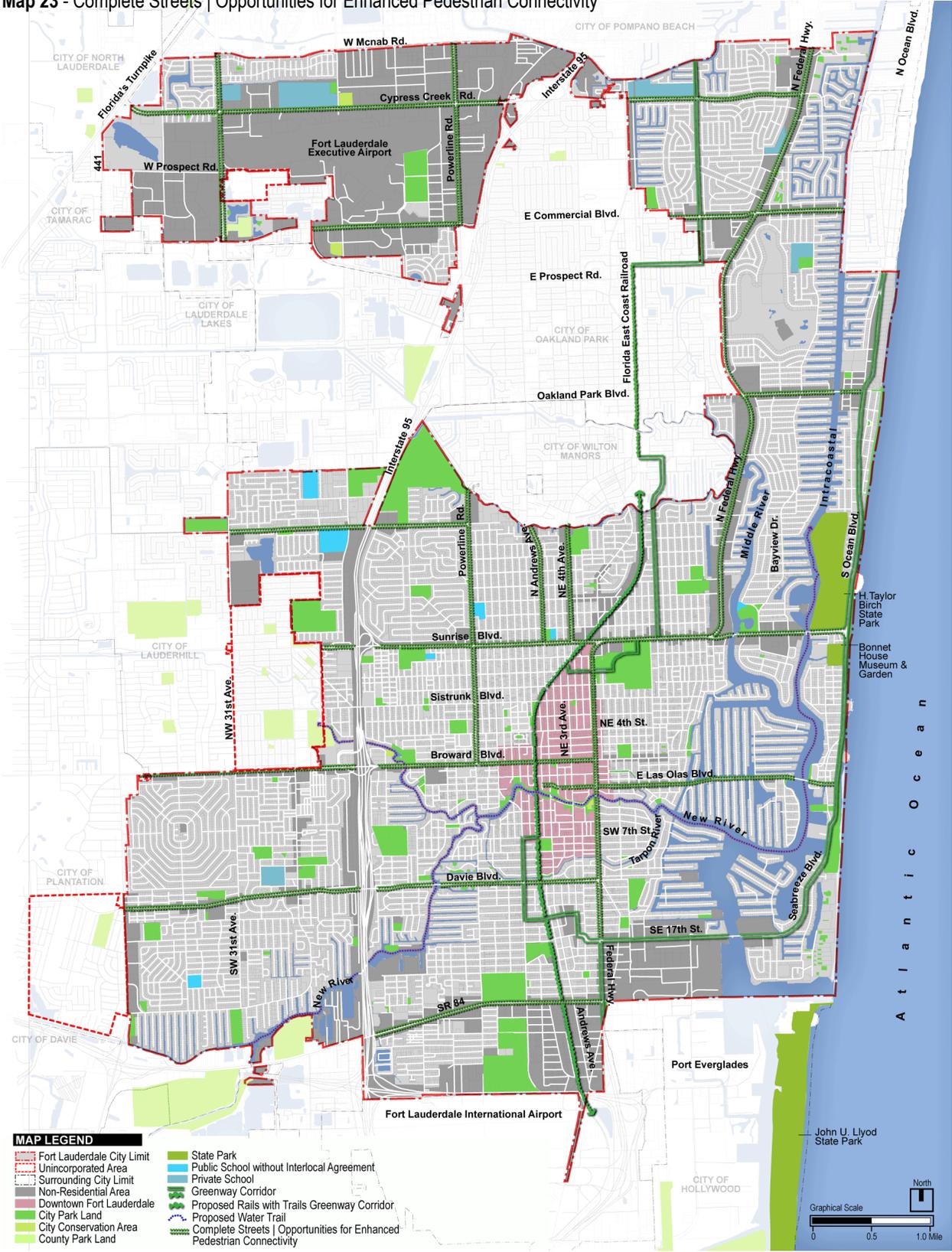
Map 23 shows the location of several arterial roads throughout the City that should, when reconstructed, be considered for a more complete design. Most of these streets are also a part of the Broward County and State of Florida roadway systems and therefore any alterations to them must be done in cooperation with these agencies. However, the City must continue its already progressive efforts to encourage these agencies to consider the impact of the street design on the neighboring communities. The desire to create a livable City should not come solely at the expense of the efficiency of moving people through the area.



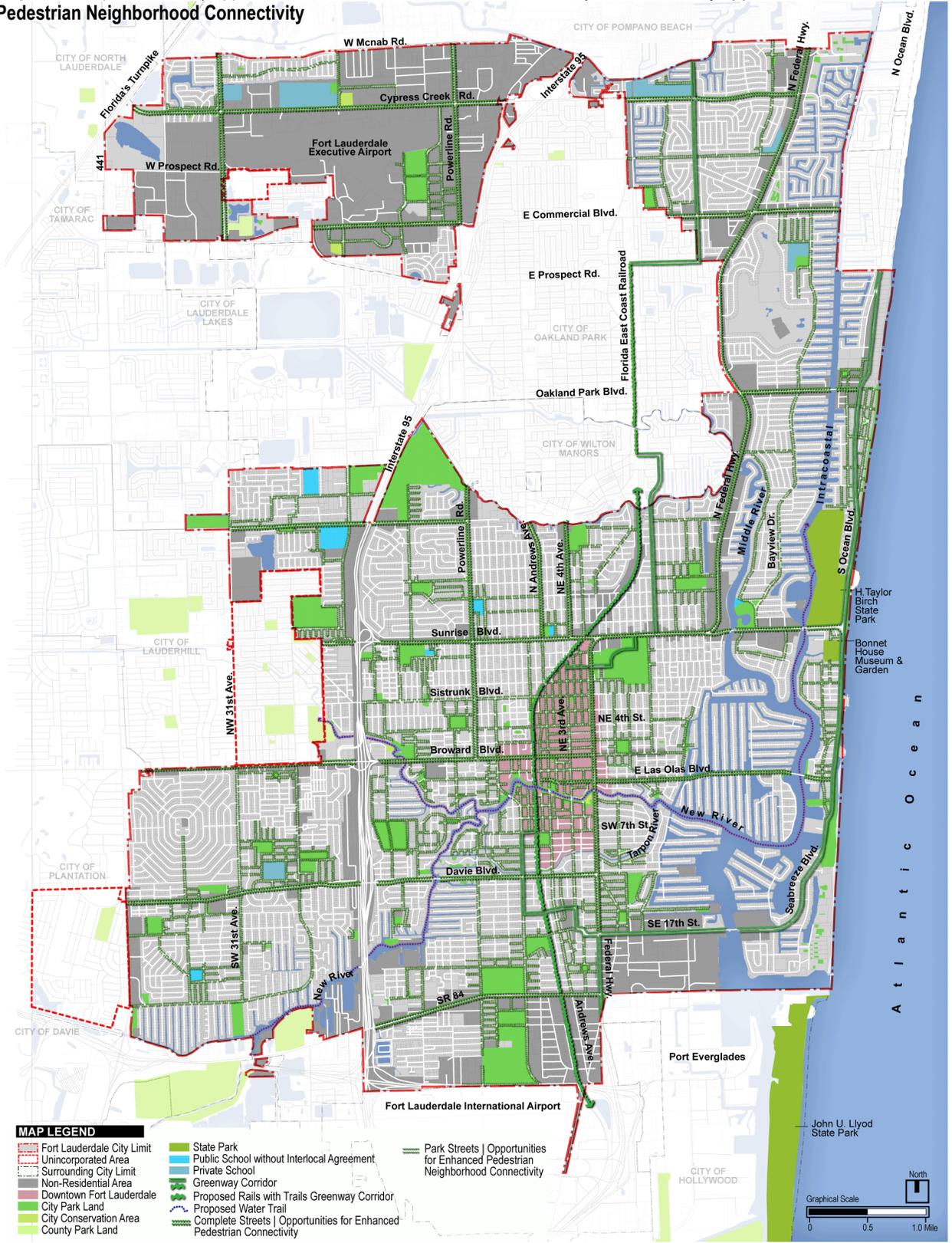
Map 24 also shows how a more refined system of pedestrian oriented streets could be developed emanating from neighborhood parks. Many of the users of these smaller parks are young children, who do not drive, and therefore need a safe way to get to the parks by bike or foot. The concept is to apply the same principles of the State “Safe Routes to Schools” program to “Safe Routes to Parks.” Wide, shaded sidewalks should be provided and bike lanes should be included where possible. Detailed traffic analysis and a careful design process is needed to develop a true bicycle and pedestrian master plan for the City, however, these maps provide a framework for initiating that process.



Map 23 - Complete Streets | Opportunities for Enhanced Pedestrian Connectivity



Map 24 - Complete Streets | Opportunities for Enhanced Pedestrian Connectivity+ Park Streets | Opportunities for Enhanced Pedestrian Neighborhood Connectivity



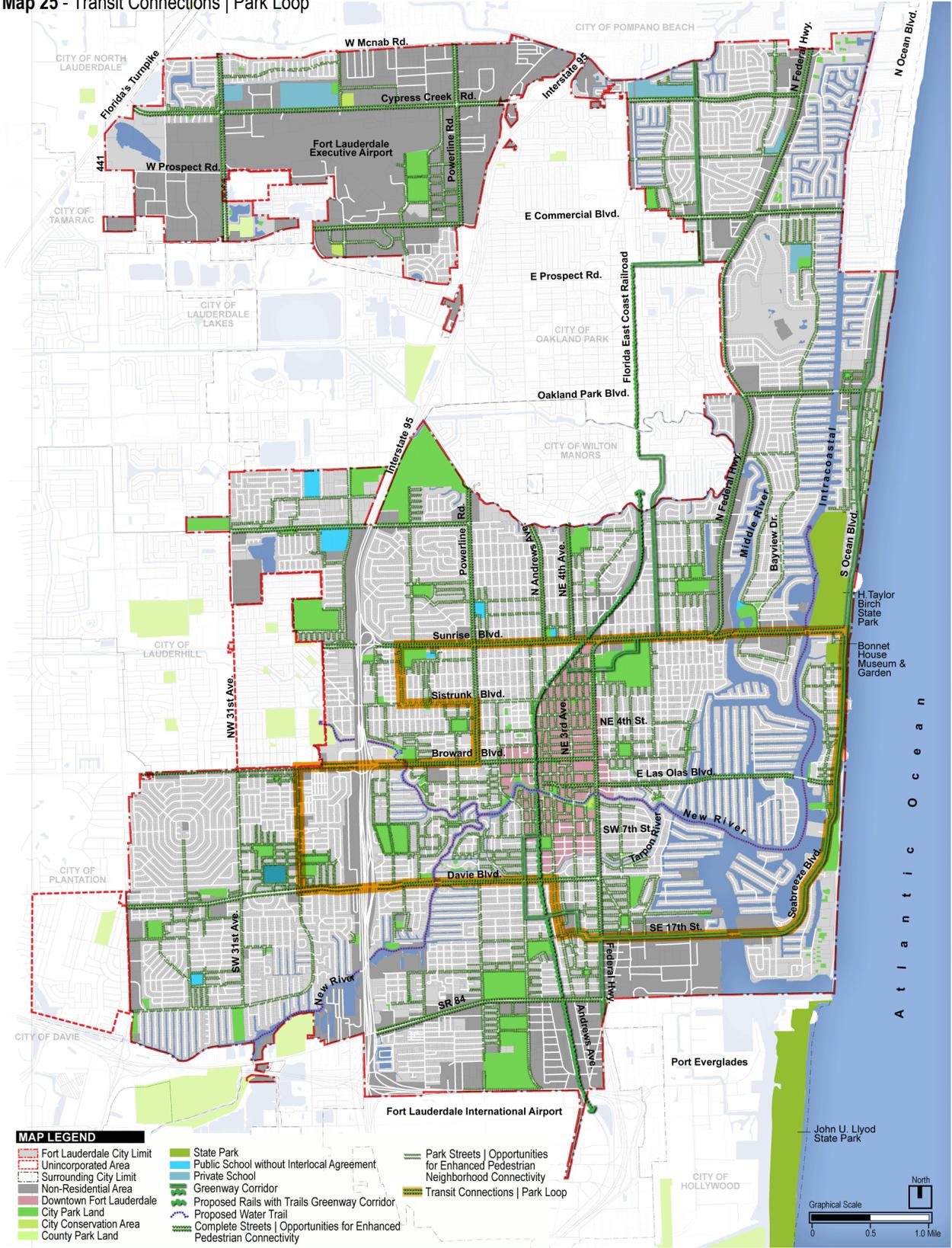
6.7 EXPANDED PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICE

Early in the public involvement process portion of this study a concern arose from both the public in general and the youth athletic league focus groups. The concern was for a safe and efficient transportation system to get participants to and from organized activities. The community felt that the existing Broward County Transit system did not adequately address these issues and that an alternative should be developed. To address these concerns and promote the fair and equitable access to youth activities, the idea was developed to create a park oriented bus loop. This system would be organized by the Parks and Recreation Department to be concurrent with organized activities and would provide a means for children living in the peripheral parts of the City to get to athletic and recreation activities. Map 25 shows a preliminary route that would link the major community recreation parks with the surrounding neighborhoods as well as provide access to the beach.

Another major concern of residents that evolved through the needs assessment process was the lack of access to the beach. Through discussion the problem was more clearly defined as a lack of adequate parking facilities near the beach. This is a chronic problem for coastal communities in Florida. The limited availability of land near the beach makes providing parking both physically and financially difficult. To address this situation Fort Lauderdale provides shuttle bus services to bring beach goers from remote parking areas to the beach. Unfortunately, many people are not aware of this service, nor are they aware of the availability of parking areas near the beach. The City needs to provide additional information and promotion of the parking and access opportunities available to the public.



Map 25 - Transit Connections | Park Loop



6.8 SUMMARY

The Long Range Plan for Fort Lauderdale Parks and Recreation is intended to graphically articulate the physical form of the future parks, recreation and open space system in the City of Fort Lauderdale. It seeks to address all of the expressed needs of the community and the evolving trends in Parks and Recreation. The plan further brings together and builds upon the previous planning efforts for open space in the City with the hope of advancing the broader goals of making Fort Lauderdale a better place to live, work and play.

