7.0 OVERVIEW - RECOMMENDATIONS

The preparation of the Cape Coral Parks and Recreation Master Plan spanned a period of approximately 12 months. Plan preparation included the input of a wide range of citizens and interested stakeholders. This chapter provides the recommendations that have been formulated throughout the planning process.

The recommendations in the chapter are provided to assist and guide decision makers regarding the setting of priorities and funding of park and recreation facilities over the next 10 years. The recommendations have been formulated in response to the specific needs and conditions of the City of Cape Coral. The driving force behind the recommendations are summarized by the following statements:

- Mission Statement
  
  To establish a plan that meets the diverse recreational and social needs of Cape Coral citizens as individuals and as part of larger groups. This Plan shall establish a vision through the year 2010 that protects and enhances the quality of life for ourselves today and our families of tomorrow.

- Support the implementation of Cape Coral's Comprehensive Plan.

- Protect and utilize the unique natural resources in the City.

- Meet the demands of the City's growing population.

- Respond to changes in development patterns influenced by transportation improvements and utility expansion.

- Reflect Cape Coral's emphasis on its waterfront opportunities for boating and recreation.

- Identification of new funding sources and revisions to existing sources to meet the existing and future park and recreational needs of the City.

- Establish cooperative relationships with other entities such as the Lee County School Board to meet the growing demand for recreational facilities in an efficient manner.
7.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1  All existing parks and recreational facilities should meet or exceed standards for those facilities.

Action 1.1  Continue to improve and expand maintenance of existing parks.

Action 1.2  Upgrade and expand facilities within existing parks as identified in Chapters 4 and 7 of the Master Plan.

Action 1.3  Assure that existing parks and facilities meet or exceed American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements through a comprehensive ADA accessibility review.

Action 1.4  Implement a City wide park signage program to install consistent park signage in order to develop a sense of character for the park system.

Action 1.5  Significant landscaping and entryway improvements should be provided at the Yacht Club Community Park, Four Freedoms Park, Jaycee Park and Lake Kennedy Park. These four parks are the most visited and are the signature parks of the City's parks and recreation system.

Action 1.6  Dumpsters located in parks should be screened from public view.

Action 1.7  Maintenance of existing parks should concentrate on improving the overall appearance of the parks to provide a positive image to users and visitors of the park.

Recommendation 2  Parks and recreational facilities should be provided by the City of Cape Coral to meet the existing and future demands of City residents through the year 2010.

Action 2.1  The following additional parks are required by 2010 to meet the projected demand for park and recreation facilities:

- 10 Neighborhood Parks
- 2 Community Parks
- 1 Regional Park
Recommendations

7 Boat Access Parks
2 Environmental Parks

Action 2.2 Cape Coral should add recreational facilities to meet the demand identified in Table 4-5 of the Master Plan.

Action 2.3 The variety of recreational facilities provided by the City should be expanded to include alternative recreational activities such as skateboard parks and dog parks.

Action 2.4 New swimming facilities should be designed as a water park to provide a wide array of aquatic opportunities in addition to the standard lap pool.

Action 2.5 New recreation centers proposed for construction in the Community Parks are intended for users of all ages.

Action 2.6 New recreation centers, located in appropriate areas of the City, should be considered for use as hurricane evacuation and emergency shelters. Hurricane and disaster preparedness grants should be used to offset the additional cost to design and build the recreation centers to hurricane shelter standards.

Action 2.7 The City should continue to support the development of the Youth Center at Lake Kennedy Park.

Action 2.8 A festival gathering area should be developed within the City of Cape Coral. Potential locations for the area include 154 acres surrounding the existing Seahawk Park, 135 acres north of the Regional Park on Del Prado, and undesignated land along Pine Island Road in central Cape Coral. The preferred location is the area surrounding the existing Seahawk Park.

Action 2.9 The Cape Coral Parks and Recreation Master Plan should be updated at least every other year with a complete revision at least every five years to reflect shifts in development trends and recreational desires of the community.
Recommendation 3  
Cape Coral should aggressively pursue park land acquisition to not only meet existing demands for parks and recreation but also to meet the long term demands.

Action 3.1  Property should be acquired to implement the recommendations for new park development and existing park improvements as identified in Chapters 4 and 7 of this Master Plan.

Action 3.2  The City should not limit park land acquisition to only those parcels identified in the Master Plan. Other parcels, as they become available, should be considered for acquisition.

Action 3.3  A land banking program should be maintained to assemble parcels for future park development or to use for trade for areas targeted for park development.

Action 3.4  The current Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program should be revised to provide for greater flexibility.

Action 3.5  Eminent domain should be used for land acquisition in circumstances that direct purchase is infeasible due to absentee ownership or other obstacle to direct purchase.

Action 3.6  The City should develop changes to the Land Development Regulations to require land dedication for parks to offset the impact of new development. Impact fee credits or other mitigation will be provided in exchange for dedication in excess of the development's fair share.

Action 3.7  The Future Land Use Map of the City's Comprehensive Plan should be amended to remove the park designation from parcels identified in Chapter 6 and to designate other parcels as parks also identified in Chapter 6.
Recommendation 4: Cape Coral should continue to protect its unique natural habitats and integrate appropriate passive recreational use of those areas.

Action 4.1: Cape Coral should coordinate with the Department of Environmental Protection to provide public access to State owned lands in northwest Cape Coral.

Action 4.2: Cape Coral should continue to utilize Four Mile Cove Ecological Park and Rotary Park as centers for environmental education and recreational opportunities.

Action 4.3: Dialogue should be established with environmental/conservation groups to assist in the identification and protection of environmentally sensitive habitats.

Action 4.4: Access to Cape Coral's coastal areas should be preserved and increased when feasible. Coastal access should promote and reflect the natural habitats along the coastline of Cape Coral.

Action 4.5: The Regional Park in northeast Cape Coral should be developed to provide additional resource based passive recreational opportunities.

Recommendation 5: By the year 2010, Cape Coral should increase access to its freshwater and saltwater canal systems for boating and other recreational opportunities.

Action 5.1: 7 additional boat access parks should be provided within the City of Cape Coral.

Action 5.2: Cape Coral should develop a boat ramp master plan to develop siting criteria and determine appropriate sites for new boat ramps in order to provide the greatest access with the least impact.

Action 5.3: Boat ramps should be located to provide access to not only saltwater systems but also to freshwater systems as well.
Recommendations

Action 5.4 Areas used as "unofficial" boat ramps or for government agency access should be evaluated for future boat ramp development.

Action 5.5 In addition to motorized boat access, canoe, kayak and other rowing opportunities should be provided at City parks.

Action 5.6 Parks that have frontage or access to waterways either freshwater or saltwater should emphasize and utilize the water resource to provide opportunities of water related recreation activities including but not limited to boating and fishing.

Recommendation 6 Recreation and Social Service programs provided by the City should be maintained and expanded over time to meet the needs of the City's growing population.

Action 6.1 Aquatic programs should be expanded as new aquatic centers are developed within the proposed Community Parks.

Action 6.2 The City should continue to coordinate with private fine and cultural arts organizations to provide expanded cultural and fine art opportunities. In addition, the City should pursue the implementation of the Cultural Park Master Plan.

Action 6.3 The City should expand its youth programs to serve the growing number of children in the City. The development of the proposed Youth Center provides an excellent opportunity for future youth programs and should continue to be supported and coordinated with the City.

Action 6.4 Special events, such as art/craft shows, festivals, block parties, concerts and other events should be continued to enhance a sense of pride within the Cape Coral community.

Action 6.5 As new parks and athletic facilities are developed, athletic programs available to the citizens of Cape Coral should expand in coordination with private athletic leagues and organizations.
**Recommendations**

**Action 6.6** A coordinating committee of representatives of athletic organizations should be established to maintain communication between each of the organizations and with the City.

**Action 6.7** The City's social service programs for seniors, special populations and the transportation disadvantaged should be maintained and expanded to provide a consistent level of service to those citizens that rely on these programs.

**Action 6.8** As the City provides additional parks for environmental/resource based recreation, the City should expand its eco-tourism/environmental programs.

**Action 6.9** Based on the proposed increase in the number of City parks and recreation facilities and to maintain a consistent level of service, the City should consider, at a minimum, adding an additional 3 Park Rangers by the year 2010.

**Recommendation 7** Bicycle and pedestrian access to City parks and recreational facilities should be increased.

**Action 7.1** The City should continue to construct sidewalks and bicycle lanes to provide connections between residential areas and parks and schools.

**Action 7.2** A greenways and trails master plan should be developed to identify and plan for an interconnected system of trails throughout the City. The existing 10 year sidewalk plan can provide a starting point for this effort.

**Action 7.3** The greenways and trails master plan should evaluate the feasibility of developing a greenway through north Cape Coral connecting the Regional Park in the northeast to the State owned lands in the northwest.
Recommendation 8

Cape Coral should provide park and recreational facilities in an economical and efficient manner.

Action 8.1  Cape Coral should coordinate the provision of parks and recreation facilities with Lee County in order to avoid potential duplication of services.

Action 8.2  Cape Coral should aggressively pursue coordination with the Lee County School Board for the joint use and planning of school facilities for recreational purposes during non-school hours.

Action 8.3  Other appropriate public City facilities such as fire or police stations should be considered to be integrated or located adjacent to parks.

Action 8.4  The City’s Land Development Regulations should be reviewed to assess the requirements for park development for new subdivisions.

Action 8.5  Cape Coral should further develop incentives for private developers to provide public parkland and/or open space. Incentives may include but not be limited to density bonuses, transfer of development rights or impact fee credits.

Action 8.6  The City should aggressively promote its parks and recreation system and its wide array of parks and recreational opportunities to increase awareness of the parks and facilities. Opportunities for increased promotion include, but are not limited to, distribution of the parks and recreation catalogue, use of Cape TV to highlight specific parks and programs, speaking appearances with community organizations and schools and a concentrated marketing campaign and slogan for the City’s parks and recreation system.

Action 8.7  The City should implement a metered parking system at the Yacht Club Community Park, Horton Park and Burnt Store Boat Ramp. City residents should be given the opportunity to acquire a pass, either for free or for a small administrative fee, that enables them to park without having to utilize the meters.
Recommendation 9

Alternative Funding sources must be identified and provided to assure adequate support, construction, and continual maintenance of park and recreation facilities.

Action 9.1 The expenditure of funds for parks and recreation facilities should generally adhere to the following priorities:

1. Maintenance and improvements to existing parks.
2. Development of new parks on existing City owned land.
3. Acquisition and development of new parks.

Action 9.2 The City should thoroughly reevaluate the existing parks and recreation impact fee ordinance. Issues to be addressed include, but are not limited to, the following:

Review the currently adopted park and recreation impact fee to determine if the fee should be adjusted to reflect the true impact of new residential development on the City's parks and recreation system.

Revise the impact fee ordinance to expand park types covered by the impact fee. Specifically, neighborhood parks should be included in the impact fee.

Revise the impact fee ordinance to expand the opportunities for the exchange of land in lieu of impact fee payment.

Investigate the feasibility of participating in the Lee County parks and recreation impact fee program for regional parks.

Action 9.3 A portion of revenues generated from the recently adopted Communications Service Tax should be directed toward parks and recreation needs.
## Recommendations

| Action 9.4 | A public services tax should be considered for implementation to assist with the funding of parks and recreation needs. |
| Action 9.5 | User fees for City recreational and social service programs should be evaluated to assure that the fee is sufficient to cover the cost of providing the service. |
| Action 9.6 | State and Federal grants should continue to be aggressively pursued by Cape Coral. The Parks and Recreation Department, with assistance from the Finance Department, should aggressively track and apply for all applicable grant opportunities. |
| Action 9.7 | Cape Coral should establish a cooperative relationship with the Lee County Tourist Development Council in order to utilize potential revenue streams from the tourism tax allocated to Lee County. |
| Action 9.8 | Cape Coral should work to generate community support for a 1% sales surtax to assist in funding the parks and recreation needs of the City as well as other public improvements related to education, transportation and public safety. Proposed revenues from the surtax should be earmarked for specific parks and recreation projects. |
| Action 9.9 | Cape Coral should investigate the feasibility of a bond issue to pay for the upgrade and development of park and recreation facilities within the City. The bond proceeds should be earmarked for specific park and recreation projects to assure the effective use of the money. |
| Action 9.10 | Cooperative agreements with non-profit organizations, civic clubs, churches and other groups should be initiated to assist with the maintenance of existing parks and development of new park and recreational facilities. Specifically, the City should continue its cooperative partnership with the Youth Center Board for the development of the Youth Center. |
Recommendations

Action 9.11 Cape Coral should explore joint ventures with private businesses or donors to assist with the financial requirements of maintaining and developing a park system.

Cape Coral, as with most cities in Florida, faces a difficult task to adequately provide parks and recreation facilities for this quickly growing city. Parks and recreation are an integral, if not the most critical, aspect of assuring a high quality of life for a community and its residents. Through the implementation of this Master Plan and the continual update and reevaluation of park and recreation needs as the City continues to grow, Cape Coral will be able to provide a park and recreation system that is able to meet the diverse needs of its population.