

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT



TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS

LAKE COUNTY, FLORIDA

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**RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT
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CHAPTER 6 RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose

The purpose of the *Recreation and Open Space Element* is to plan for a comprehensive system of public and private recreation and open space sites which are available to the public, but which are not inappropriate for the size and physical constraints of the Town.

This *Element* of the *Comprehensive Plan* assesses current opportunities, analyzes future needs and contains goals, objectives and policies that shall be used by the Town to ensure public and private recreation and open space sites available to the public within the Town's boundaries are adequate for the needs of the Town and its citizens, but are not inappropriate for the size and physical constraints of the Town.

B. EXISTING RECREATION SITES

Long-range recreation and parks systems planning is a vital component of community planning. In order to facilitate the accomplishment of a successful comprehensive parks plan, an inventory of existing recreational facilities and programs must be undertaken. Recreation and open space opportunities in Howey-in-the-Hills and its immediate vicinity are described below.

1. PUBLIC FACILITIES

This section assesses the public facilities in Howey-in-the-Hills and its immediate vicinity.

a. Town Parks and Recreation

There are 22.93 acres of parkland in Howey-in-the-Hills. The largest park in Town is the Sarah Maude Nature Preserve, which is about 54 acres of preserve and 17 acres of upland (the Town only includes the upland acres in the overall parkland acres) and the smallest Town park is Tangerine Point Park at 0.1 acres. Table 1 below features the list of Town parks with their corresponding acreage.

TABLE 1: HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS PARKS, 2010

Park	Acreage
Griffin Park	5.5 acres
Sarah Maude Nature Preserve	54.4 acres preserve 16.9 upland acres
Blevins Park	0.25 acres
Market Park	0.11 acres
Tangerine Point Park	0.1 acres
Central Park	0.43 acres
TOTAL	23.29 acres

Source: Town of Howey-in-the-Hills Staff

The Town requires that level of service be met for park space. Table 2 below outlines the requirements for park space.

TABLE 2: EXISTING LEVELS OF SERVICE FOR PARKS

Land/Facility	LOS	Adopted LOS	Land/Facilities Needed Based on BEBR Pop. Of 1,106 as of 2015	Surplus or Deficiencies 2015
Park Space	23.29 acres	6.5 acres of park space per 1,000 residents	7.2 acres of park space	Surplus of 16.09 acres

b. School Board of Lake County

Lake Hills School, which serves students with moderate to profound disabilities from Pre-K to the 12th grade, is the only public school located in Town. Lake Hills sits on approximately 17 acres of land along South Lakeshore Drive. The recreational and open space facilities at the school include playground areas and equipment for young school children and varied open spaces between such facilities. The Lake Hills School has sufficient space needed to accommodate ball fields on the site.

There are three Lake County public schools (Astatula Elementary School, Tavares Middle School and Lake Technical Center - Astatula) within 5 miles of Howey-in-the-Hills. Astatula Elementary and Tavares Middle have the typical recreational facilities provided onsite such as ball fields, gymnasiums, outdoor tracks, children playground areas, etc. All these schools can be easily accessed by the Town’s residents.

c. Libraries

There is a library located in Howey-in-the-Hills, the Marianne Beck Memorial Library located on West Central Avenue next to the Town Hall building. The Town owns and operates the library. The Marianne Beck Memorial Library's card enables residents to tie directly to the Lake County Library System catalog.

There is also a public library in Tavares about 5 miles from Howey-in-the-Hills. It also provides library services to the residents of Howey-in-the-Hills. Although it is not within the Town limits, it is within easy access of all Town's residents.

d. Lake County

The County's Parks and Trails Division maintains parks, recreation sites and boat ramps, and natural public lands in the County. There are three dozen parks, preserves and boat ramps dispersed across the County.

The Hickory Point Recreational Waterfront Park, which is about 2 miles northeast of Town, is the closest County operated facility to the Town. Hickory Point premiered in February 1992. With 12 paved boat ramps, including two that can accommodate deep-draft vessels, and ample parking for vehicle and boat trailers, the park offers the basic amenities for all sort of anglers. Along with the boat ramps into Lake Harris, Hickory Point offers a day-use marina (no overnight mooring allowed) with an observation platform and two fishing piers. The park also features a swimming beach, boardwalks, outdoor picnic areas with barbecue grills, open-field play areas, nature trail, playground, horseshoe pits and a sand volleyball court. The highlight of Hickory Point is its two-story, screened picnic pavilion with first-floor picnic tables and barbecue grills. The second floor features two screened banquet rooms. The pavilion can accommodate small groups or large gatherings of up to 275 people.

The Lake Jem Park, which is about 8 miles northeast of Town in Tavares, is the second closest County operated facility to the Town. Lake Jem Park offers visitors the opportunity to launch a boat, canoe or kayak into the Beauclair Canal, hike the 1/2-mile nature trail, fish from the banks of the canal or have a family picnic while the children enjoy the playground shaded by huge Live Oaks.

e. State of Florida

The Division of Forestry of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services does not administer any state forest lands in and/or adjacent to Howey-in-the-Hills.

2. PRIVATE FACILITIES

The private sector provides recreation and leisure opportunities that reduce demands for public recreation services. Through its site plan review process the Town can encourage developers to construct pedestrian and bicycle paths linking residential developments with off-site recreational facilities.

The Mission Inn Resort and Country Club, which is located partially within the Town, provides a world class golf course, tennis and a state-of-the-art fitness center for its members and guests.

Other for-profit sites in the Howey-in-the-Hills area may provide facilities for indoor activities, such as movie theaters, a bowling alley and game rooms.

3. EXISTING OPEN SPACE

The Town defines natural reservations and open spaces as land that is relatively free of manmade structural mass, and shall be provided for the aesthetic, health, environmental and economic benefits in any new development. Open space can provide buffering, assist in insuring privacy, provide a forum for growth of trees and animals, and provide recreational activity areas. Open space lands may be preserved, enhanced and restored in order to maintain or improve the natural, scenic, ecological, cultural, hydrological, or geological values of a given property.

There is 4.5 acres designated as Recreation lands on the Town's *Future Land Use Map*, almost all this land is considered to be open spaces. The majority of these open spaces is adjacent to the lakes in Town and lack the space needed to accommodate active-related facilities other than small recreational uses.

4. EXISTING BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN PATHWAYS

While the Town has not adopted an official Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan, it has developed an inventory of the bicycle and pedestrian pathways in the Town. Overall, there are about 11.5 miles combined of bicycle/pedestrian pathways in Town (see Table 3 and the Town's *Existing and Future Transportation Maps*). The residents and guests of Howey-in-the-Hills value the quality of life associated with the bicycle/pedestrian pathways in Town. Additionally, the bicycle/pedestrian pathways contribute to the unique hometown charm.

The pedestrian pathways are primary located in the downtown area, along a few residential streets in the northern portion of Town, and along Lakeshore Drive. There are about 4 miles of pedestrian pathways in Town.

The bicycle pathways in Town are along State Road 19 and County Road 48. While there is no striping indicating that these are bicycle lanes, the shoulders are wide enough to classify them as bicycle lanes. There are about 8 miles of bicycle pathways in Town.

TABLE 3: EXISTING BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN PATHWAYS, 2010

Facility Type	General Description	Miles
Pedestrian	Lakeshore Dr. from E. Laurel Ave. to Lake Hills School	1.25
Pedestrian	SR 19 on left side heading north from W. Oleander Dr. to W. Magnolia Ave.	0.84
Pedestrian	SR 19 on Left heading south from N. Citrus Ave. to E. Lakeview Ave.	0.81
Pedestrian	E Laurel on north side from SR 19 to 2nd House from Lakeshore	0.26
Pedestrian	E Laurel on south side from SR 19 to 2nd House from Lakeshore	0.26
Pedestrian	E Magnolia on north side from SR 19 to 3rd house from Temple	0.12
Pedestrian	W. Central Ave. on north side from Library parking edge to SR 19	0.06
Pedestrian	W. Central Ave. on south side from Library parking edge to SR 19	0.06
Pedestrian	E Central Ave. on south side from SR 19 to 3rd building from N. Lakeshore Dr.	0.10
Bicycle	SR 19 Right Shoulder from southern town limits to northern town limits	3.22
Bicycle	SR 19 Left Shoulder from southern town limits to northern town limits	3.22
Bicycle	CR 48 left shoulder from town limits to SR 19 intersection	0.67
Bicycle	CR 48 right shoulder from town limits to SR 19 intersection	0.67
	TOTAL	11.53

Source: Town of Howey-in-the-Hills and B&H Consultants, Inc.

5. Waterways

There are no rivers or streams that flow through the Town. Lake Illinois and several unnamed lakes are within the Town limits. Additionally, the Town is adjacent to Little Lake Harris. The majority of these lakes are maintained by the County. There are no lakes in Town classified as “A Florida Outstanding Water”. The lakes are used for boating, swimming, fishing and other water activities. Additionally, the Town has classified the land that is adjacent to Little Lake Harris or Lake Illinois as either conservation/open space or recreation lands on the *Existing and Future Land Use Maps*. The Town has adopted measures to ensure the conservation and protection of these lands from development.

C. ANALYSIS

There are more than adequate passive recreational facilities and open spaces readily available and accessible to the residents and guests of Howey-in-the-Hills.

The Town shall continue to coordinate with the County on establishing measures to enhance the recreation and open space opportunities in Town. The Town will also continue to solicit grants from public and private agencies and donations of money to improve and enhance existing public recreational facilities.

There are no known problems regarding the accessibility of the Town's parks or recreational facilities by the elderly, the handicapped or the economically disadvantaged.

The County operated parks in the area will serve populations well beyond the residents and guests of the Town. Access to these parks will be almost exclusively by car.

The existing road network is not severely congested and there is a significant opportunity for additional bicycle/pedestrian pathways in Town. The proposed bicycle pathways are presented on the Town's *Future Transportation Map*.

Lakeshore Drive, which is considered a local scenic route, runs along Little Lake Harris. The existing residential structures, presence of environmentally sensitive areas, recreational paths and open spaces, and proximity to Little Lake Harris make it a valuable asset to the Town. As such, to preserve the quality of life for the residents and visitors of Howey-in-the-Hills, the Town has declared Lakeshore Drive as a constrained facility. A constrained roadway is one in which adding lanes to meet current or future needs is not possible due to physical, environmental or policy barriers.

Table 4 below outlines the requirements as well as the current and projected levels of service for park space. The Town does have the sufficient land needed to support the demand for park space and bicycle/pedestrian pathways during the planning period. As developments are considered, the Town will continue to ensure that park space and bicycle/pedestrian pathways will be required as part of those residential developments and that adopted level of service standards are met.

The Town shall continue to enforce the *Goals, Objectives, and Policies* of this *Element* to ensure the provision and maintenance of sufficient parks, recreation facilities, and open space areas are available to the residents and visitors of Howey-in-the-Hills.

TABLE 4: HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS' PROJECTED LEVELS OF SERVICE FOR PARKS, 2015 -2035

Land/Facility	2015 Park Area	Adopted LOS	Land/Facilities Needed to support 2020 population	2020 Surplus or Deficiencies	Land/Facilities Needed to support 2025 population	2025 Surplus or Deficiencies	Land/Facilities Needed to support 2030 population	2030 Surplus or Deficiencies	Land/Facilities Needed to support 2035 population	2035 Surplus or Deficiencies
Park Space	23.29 acres	6.5 acres per 1,000 population	11.47 acres	Surplus of 11.82 acres	13.77 acres	Surplus of 9.52 acres	15.14 acres	Surplus of 8.15 acres	16.20 acres	Surplus of 7.09 acres

D. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

GOAL 1: Ensure maintenance and improvement of existing public parks, recreation facilities and open space areas to satisfy the health, safety, and welfare needs of the Town’s citizens and their guests, and enhance the total quality of life within the Town, in an efficient and appropriate manner.

OBJECTIVE 1.1: *Provision of Adequate Recreational Opportunities.* Assure the provision of adequate recreational opportunities for all residents and their guests to meet the Level of Service Standards during the short-range and long-range planning periods.

POLICY 1.1.1: *Level of Service Standards.* The Town hereby adopts the following minimum level of service through the year 2035.

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Level of Service</u>
Park Space	6.5 Acres per 1,000 residents

POLICY 1.1.2: *Size and Population Guidelines.* The Town hereby establishes the following size and population guidelines for recreational facilities and user-oriented parks:

Population Guidelines for User-Oriented Outdoor Recreation Activities

Activity	Resource* Facility	Population Served
Golf	9-hole golf course	25,000
Golf	18-hole golf course	50,000
Tennis	Tennis court	2,000
Baseball/softball	Baseball/softball field	3,000
Football/soccer	Football/soccer field	4,000
Handball/racquetball	Handball/racquetball court	10,000
Basketball	Basketball court	5,000
Swimming (Pool)	Swimming (Pool)*	8,700
Shuffleboard	Shuffleboard court	1,000
Freshwater fishing non-boat	800 feet of Fishing pier	5,000
Freshwater fishing power boating, water skiing, and sailing	Boat ramp lane	1,500

* Based on a standard community swimming pool measuring 81 ft x 60 ft (4,860 ft).

Size and Population Guidelines for User Oriented Park Sites:

District Park:	5 acres per 1,000 population and a minimum park size of 5 acres
Vest Pocket /Tot Lot Park	0.5 acres per 1,000 population and a minimum park size of 1 acre or 0.25 acres for parks adjoining schools
Community Park	2 acres per 1,000 population and a minimum park size of 20 acres or 5 acres for parks adjoining schools
Neighborhood Park	2 acres per 1,000 population and a minimum park size of 5 acres or 2 acres for parks adjoining schools

Source: Florida Department of Environmental Protection – Division of Parks and Recreation, Outdoor Recreation in Florida – 2000: Florida’s Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Tables 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5.

Urban-District Park - An urban-district park is designed to serve the recreation needs of several communities, a city, or a county, and usually provides some areas and facilities that are resource-based. Typical areas and facilities include natural areas, campgrounds and play apparatus. Additional facilities may include a zoo, a golf course or a botanical garden.

Driving periods of up to 30 to 40 minutes may be required to reach an urban-district park, which should, when possible, be located on the periphery of a large urban area. Such parks should serve an average population of 50,000, with a desirable space allowance of 5 acres per 1,000 people. While 100 acres may meet minimum requirements, a size range of 200 acres or more is desirable.

Vest Pocket/Tot Lot Park - Equipped play areas, or "tot lots" as they are often called, are open areas with play apparatus for preschool and school age children. It is recommended that an equipped play area serve neighborhoods of between 500 and 2,500 people on a minimum of 1/4-acre at a site adjoining an existing recreation facility or elementary school. Elsewhere, 1 acre is suggested. Recommended facilities include play apparatus, landscaping, benches and open space. Depending on local recreation needs, picnic tables may be included.

Community Park – A community park is a "ride to" park, located near major streets. It is designed to serve the needs of 4 to 6 neighborhoods. It serves an area with a radius of up to 3 miles, or a service population of up to 25,000. A minimum of 20 acres for each community park is recommended, with acreage needs based on a standard of 2 acres per 1,000 population. Typical facilities at a community park may include swimming pools, ball fields, tennis courts, play areas, picnic areas, multipurpose courts, recreation buildings, and sports fields.

Additional recreation facilities may be included to meet a particular recreation demand in the community. Two important elements of every community park are the use of landscaping and the provision of passive recreation activity areas.

Neighborhood Park – The neighborhood park is a "walk-to" park, generally located along streets where people can walk or bicycle without encountering heavy traffic. It serves the population of a neighborhood in a radius of up to one-half mile and should have at least 2 acres for each 1,000 population. Its size usually ranges from 5 to 10 acres, and it serves a population of up to 5,000.

Because the service areas of a neighborhood park and an elementary school often coincide, it is desirable for the neighborhood park to physically join the elementary school, when feasible. Typical facilities developed in the neighborhood park may include play apparatus, recreation buildings, multipurpose courts, sports fields, picnic areas and free play areas. Additional facilities may be added, depending on the recreation demands of the neighborhood.

POLICY 1.1.3: *Concurrency Management System.* Minimum land requirements needed to comply with the above adopted level of service standard shall be monitored and evaluated on an annual basis during the Town's Concurrency Management System annual update.

POLICY 1.1.4: *Planned Capital Improvements.* The Town shall include land acquisition for recreation space and facilities within the *Capital Improvement Schedule* if future demand warrants additional recreation space.

POLICY 1.1.5: *Mandatory Dedication of Land.* The Town shall require new development to provide recreation space and/or facilities, or pay fees in lieu thereof, consistent with the *Park and Impact Fee Ordinance* minimum level of service acreage requirements as applied to anticipated population associated with said development.

POLICY 1.1.6: *Incentives to Developers.* The Town shall, by December 2012, adopt incentives in the Land Development Regulations for developers to provide additional recreation facilities in their developments and recognize that private parks, open space and recreational areas within a development are an integral part of the recreational facilities provided to the Town's residents and guests.

OBJECTIVE 1.2: *Maximize Use of Existing Recreation Space.* Maximize the use of existing recreation space by promoting recreation activities.

POLICY 1.2.1: *Implementing Organized Recreation Activities.* The Town shall consider implementing organized recreational activities for the Town's residents.

POLICY 1.2.2: *Innovative Site Design.* The Town shall encourage the use of innovative site design and development techniques in order to maximize the provision of usable recreational facilities and open space areas at a minimum cost.

POLICY 1.2.3: *Maintenance of Existing Public Recreational Facilities.* The Town shall actively solicit grants from public and private agencies to improve and enhance existing public recreational facilities.

OBJECTIVE 1.3: *Efficient and Convenient Access.* Recreation sites and facilities shall be accessible to the public through efficient and convenient entry and through availability of parking where feasible.

POLICY 1.3.1: *Access to Recreation Sites.* Vehicular access ways leading to recreation sites shall meet all Town standards as outlined in the Land Development Regulations.

Access ways for bicycle and pedestrian traffic shall also be included, unless analysis of traffic circulation facilities indicates that such design lacks feasibility due to cost limitations, design constraints, or a threat to public safety.

POLICY 1.3.2: *Available Automobile Parking.* The Town shall require the provision of designated parking areas, either paved or unpaved, at all recreation sites according to parking requirements established within the Land Development Regulations.

POLICY 1.3.3: *Secure Storage Areas for Bicycles.* Bicycle storage areas shall be provided at all recreation sites. The type and quantity of such facilities shall be determined by the Town Council.

POLICY 1.3.4: *Access to Sites and Facilities for Transportation Disadvantaged.* The Town shall assure that all recreation sites are accessible to transportation disadvantaged (handicapped and elderly) citizens through the provision of designated handicapped parking areas, as required by State law, and through design consideration to recreation facilities that enable participation.

OBJECTIVE 1.4: *Access to Little Lake Harris and Lake Illinois.* Provide public access points to Little Lake Harris and Lake Illinois.

POLICY 1.4.1: *Acquire and Maintain Access Points to Lakefront Areas.* The Town shall emphasize recreation facilities, when a public demand has been identified, which promote access to Little Lake Harris.

POLICY 1.4.2: **Coordinate Public and Private Efforts.** The Town shall coordinate public and private efforts to provide, improve, and enhance public access points to Little Lake Harris and Lake Illinois to be used as recreational opportunities for the Town’s residents and guests.

OBJECTIVE 1.5: *Assure Provision of Open Space.* Assure provision of Open Space through land acquisition or dedications.

POLICY 1.5.1: *Open Space Definitions.* The Town hereby adopts the following definition for open space.

Open Space: Open space is figured on the Gross Land Area. No greater than 50% of the open space requirement may be met with wetlands. Open space may include landscaped buffers and stormwater facilities if they are designed to be a park-like setting with pedestrian amenities and free form ponds. Open space may be passive or active. Open space may include public recreational components of developments. The majority of the open space shall be permeable; however, up to 10% may be impervious (plazas, recreational facilities, etc.). Wet ponds are not counted as part of that 10%.

	Minimum open space requirements
Rural Lifestyle	50%
Low Density Residential	2 dwelling units per acre
Medium Density Residential	25%
Town Center Mixed Use	25%
Village Mixed Use	25%
Neighborhood Commercial	0.50 floor area ratio; 70% max. impervious surface coverage

	Minimum open space requirements
Light Industrial	70% max. impervious surface coverage; .6 FAR
Institutional	25%
Recreation	Max. 30% impervious surface coverage
Conservation	No buildings except boardwalks, docks, observation decks, and similar facilities as allowed by the Town and all regulatory agencies.
Public/Utilities	0.25 FAR; max. impervious surface coverage of 50%

OBJECTIVE 1.6: *Coordinate Public and Private Recreation Resources.* Coordinate recreation planning activities with Local and State Governments to avoid duplication of services.

POLICY 1.6.1: *Public Access to School Facilities.* The Town shall coordinate with Lake County and the Lake County School Board to establish an interlocal agreement which allows public access to school recreation sites when school is not in session including the Lake Hills School along S. Lakeshore Drive and any proposed public schools in and/or adjacent to the Town .

POLICY 1.6.2: *Coordination with Lake County Park System.* The Town shall coordinate with the Lake County Parks and Recreation Division prior to the scheduling of recreation improvements in the Town’s *Capital Improvement Element* to assure that duplication of recreation services does not occur with Lake County parks and recreation facilities and that existing facilities are used to their maximum capacities. Coordination shall also include a review of the priority of County recreation improvements in order to incorporate Howey-in-the-Hills recreation interests and needs.

POLICY 1.6.3: *Coordination with Private Recreation Space and Facilities.* The Town shall coordinate with the private development sector to assure that new residential developments within Howey-in-the-Hills provide a fair and equitable share of recreation space and facilities demanded by their occupants. This will be primarily accomplished through the *Park Impact Fee Ordinance*.