

Parks and Recreation Master Plan - Goals & Recommendations

The purpose of this master plan is to evaluate the Town of Hilton Head Island’s public parks and recreation system and submit recommendations designed to increase the level of service across the community over the next ten years. This Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan is part of the larger Our Plan comprehensive planning effort. This report provides recommendations regarding parks and recreation facilities, programming, and administration in the community from 2020 to 2030.

The planning team, led by Lose Design, includes The Sports Facilities Advisory. Lose Design is a multidisciplinary design firm specializing in park and recreation planning and was responsible for the development of this report. The process included researching demographics, assessing current facilities, and conducting public input meetings. This document serves as both a strategic plan and an action plan. It provides the Town of Hilton Head Island with guidelines and strategies for future program planning efforts and capital improvement projects. The Sports Facilities Advisory evaluated opportunities for sports tourism within the Town.

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Lose Design (LD)

Stakeholder(s):

Town of Hilton Head Island :

The Town of Hilton Head Island stands out from Beaufort County and the State of South Carolina due to its relative affluence and demographic composition. Overall, the population has increased slowly but steadily over the past five years and, not surprisingly, researchers found that the 55 and over age group represents the largest segment of the community. Researchers also found that school-aged children represent a relatively small segment of the Town. Based on projections conducted as part of this study, Hilton Head Island is expected to grow steadily over the next 10 years but not at the same rate as Beaufort County. As growth occurs in other parts of Beaufort County, Hilton Head Island may find that competition for County funds will increase. Hilton Head Island appears to buck the trend observed in most communities pertaining to obesity, physical inactivity and access to recreation. Many, if not most, residents of the Island have chosen to live there in search of active lifestyle opportunities. This is reflected in the relatively low obesity and physical inactivity rates when compared to state and national data. In order to remain a premier destination for active families and adults, the Town of Hilton Head Island should continue to strategically invest in high-quality recreation and park facilities.

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Mission

To guide the development of recreation facilities and services

1. Quality of Life

Recognize the value parks and recreation facilities add to the quality of life of Island residents and visitors.

1.1. Public Spaces

Provide public space for community events and gatherings.

1.1.1. Betsy Jukofsky Xeriscape Garden

This xeriscape garden provides unique open space near Town administrative offices for employees and residents. It is a great demonstration of gardening with little supplemental watering. Recommendations:

1.1.1.1. Identification

Identify garden as a public park

1.1.1.2. Signage

Interpretive signage for plantings

1.1.1.3. Plantings

reimagined/updated plantings

1.1.1.4. Maintenance

improved maintenance

1.1.2. Compass Rose Park

Recondition of elements of the park.

Compass Rose Park is a small park on a major intersection with public art and plazas that relate the story of Hilton Head Island's historic development. The structures and art are engaging; however, installations are showing signs of age and require reconditioning and potential replacement or upgrades of interpretative elements. Recommendations: ° Address reconditioning of park elements.

1.1.3. Greens Shell Park

Replicate the restroom building and picnic pavilion in other parks of this size.

Greens Shell Park is a great neighborhood park with a hidden cultural component. The park proper contains a picnic pavilion, playground, restroom building, basketball goal and small parking areas, which are scattered among impressive mature trees. Accessible pathways are provided to all park features and the playground surface is well maintained. Immediately adjacent to the park property is Stoney Cemetery and Greens Shell Mound, a South Carolina archaeological site. Recommendations: Greens Shell Park is a great example of a small neighborhood park. The restroom building and picnic pavilion are good examples to replicate in other parks of this size. Other improvements to consider are:

1.1.3.1. Equipment & Surface

Replace the playground equipment and add a poured-in-place surface to reduce maintenance requirements of the current mulch.

1.1.3.2. Cemetery & Archaeological Site

Make a stronger connection to the adjacent cemetery and archaeological site with the addition of historic interpretive panels or public art.

1.1.4. Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park

Celebrate the local, regional and national historic significance of Mitchelville.

Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park is an important cultural resource to the Town of Hilton Head Island. As the location of the first freedmen community established during the Civil War, Mitchelville has local, regional and national historic significance that can be celebrated. Located on the north end of the Island near Barker Field, this wooded open space contains a picnic pavilion, restroom building, historic markers, trails and an observation deck. Recommendations: This park should be celebrated for its cultural significance and natural beauty. Efforts to continue and expand the story of the families who founded Mitchelville should be supported by the Town through interpretive programs, tours and special events. A 501c3 has been established to preserve the history of and educate the public about this important site. A conceptual plan has been developed to further these goals. Physical improvements to consider in support of this effort are:

1.1.4.1. Classroom/Amphitheater

Outdoor classroom or small amphitheater

1.1.4.2. Pavilion

Larger pavilion for community events and celebrations

1.1.4.3. Replica Structures

Replica structures from the Mitchelville period

1.1.4.4. Fort Howard

Connect Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park with Fort Howard by installing public art or statues that connect to the Mitchelville story.

1.1.5. Honey Horn

Attract even visitors with the addition of features that reflect the mission of the park.

Honey Horn is owned by the Town of Hilton Head Island but maintained and operated by the Coastal Discovery Museum... Admission to the park is free of charge while some tours and programs charge a fee. Recommendations: Honey Horn is a large facility that could attract even more visitors with the addition of features that reflect the mission of the park. An adventure playground or Lowcountry themed splashpad might complement the mission of the Coastal Discovery Museum while adding a community recreation component to this special park property.

Stakeholder(s):

Coastal Discovery Museum :

The Coastal Discovery Museum is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization that provides educational

exhibits about the environment, culture and history of the Lowcountry.

1.1.6. Shelter Cove Community Park & Veterans Memorial

Connect the park to the pathway system.

Shelter Cove Community Park is one of the Town's newest public parks and hosts numerous special events throughout the year. The park includes: Recommendations: Shelter Cove is one terminus of the 2012 Chaplin Linear Park and is one of the few parks that are not directly connected by public pathway to the larger pathway system. Today, bicyclists must navigate the Shelter Cove Town Centre parking areas to reach the pathway system. This is inappropriate for a destination park like Shelter Cove and should be addressed through construction of the Chaplin Linear Park. The area southwest of the playground appears to be used as a staging area for event vendors. This area should be screened in a way that allows this use while Shelter Cove Vendor Parking Area not impacting aesthetic components of the park.

- a large shelter that functions as a stage for performances;
- an event lawn;
- playground;
- public art;
- two restroom buildings.

The park offers incredible views of Broad Creek, related marsh habitat and wildlife. The park is a tremendous complement to the Shelter Cove Towne Centre shopping area and demonstrates how cooperative redevelopment agreements can benefit private development and the community at large Shelter Cove Park includes Veterans Memorial Park according to the Town website. The parks are connected by a public pathway that runs along Broad Creek around a residential development. Veterans Park includes a walking trail, public art, a landmark flagpole, and seating areas. A parking area is also provided. Veterans park is a great setting for small special events. The lawn area is capable of hosting a variety of events.

1.2. Maintenance

Maintain parks and recreation facilities at a high level to maximize value to the community.

1.3. Outdoor Recreation

Promote outdoor recreation for health, wellness, and enjoyment of the natural environment.

1.3.1. Barker Field

Redevelop Barker Field as a neighborhood park.

Barker Field should be redeveloped as a neighborhood park to include the following:

- 3 to 4 practice fields (football, soccer, etc.).
- A new playground with poured in place surface,
- 1/2-mile walking path,
- 120 parking spaces, and
- New bathroom building in the area of the existing baseball/softball fields.
- Work with partner agency to improve level of maintenance or consider taking over maintenance responsibilities from PALS.

1.3.2. Bristol Sports Arena

Incorporate Bristol Sports Arena into Crossings Park.

Bristol Sports Arena seems very secluded and may benefit by being incorporated into the larger Crossings Park with connections made by pathways that allow the existing improvements to stay in place.

1.3.3. Chaplin Community Park

Develop a Concept Plan for Chaplin Community Park.

Chaplin Community Park provides a wide variety of recreation opportunities for residents and visitors to the Town of Hilton Head Island. The recommendations for Chaplin Community Park were included in the initial recommendations provided by Lose Design in November of 2019. The planning team is recommending a Concept Plan be developed for the park with the following considerations:

- 2-bathroom buildings; concessions; pathways.
- 3 Natural turf multi-sport rectangular fields to be used for casual activities in addition to organized athletics. (Synthetic turf fields will be better suited for the another location to not conflict with Chaplin's use as a debris management site. See page 4.34)
- Tennis & Pickleball Complex (12 replacement tennis courts; 24 pickleball courts, clubhouse, pro shop and support amenities, parking & plaza with restroom buildings)
- New large ADA accessible playground structure.
- Overall park redevelopment (parking; lighting & trails).

1.3.4. Cordillo Park

Add signage to the Cordillo Parkway entrance.

Park signage should be added to the Cordillo Parkway entrance to identify the park as open to the public. More tennis and pickleball players may choose this location due to the recent improvements. Play should be monitored to determine if other improvements are needed. Additional improvements to consider based on demand are:

- Court lighting
- Additional parking
- Bathroom building

1.3.5. Crossings Park

Diversify the offerings at Crossings Park.

Crossings Park is a large park property on the south side of the Island and primarily serves youth baseball with a 3-field complex. The baseball complex is complemented by a small playground. A grass meadow is in the northwest corner of the park and contains a picnic shelter. Interviews and public engagement indicated the meadow is occasionally used as an informal dog park. Soccer fields are located across from the grass meadow which are lighted, and bleachers are provided. Most of the park property is heavily wooded. The park has been designed as a sports park; however, the public is using the park property in a broader context by utilizing the meadow as a dog park and the wooded areas for informal mountain bike trails. This indicates a desire by the public to diversify the offerings in this park. This could include a more formal dog park or expanded trail network for single track bike trails. Crossings Park would also be a great location for a splashpad and/or playground. By adding these elements, Crossings Park will serve a larger cross-section of the community and improve recreational delivery in this portion of Hilton Head Island. Recommendations:

- Redevelop existing baseball fields
- Replace existing concessions & plaza
- 2 Additional 300' baseball fields that can accommodate youth baseball and adult softball
- Concession building & plaza
- Additional parking
- Park amenities (dog park; splashpad and/or playground; pathways)

1.3.6. Hilton Head Park

Hilton Head Park or Old Schoolhouse Park is a Town-County park. Improvements include a small neighborhood park with tennis courts that are also striped for pickleball, a basketball pad, open fields that can be used for soccer or football practice, and a parking lot. The park borders a tidal marsh. The planning team had a difficult time finding this park due to the lack of signage. The tennis courts and basketball pad are more than 150 feet away from the parking lot and accessible pathways to these park features are not present. Recommendations:

1.3.6.1. Signage

Add signage to identify the park property.

1.3.6.2. Pathways

Add ADA accessible pathways connecting the parking area to park amenities.

1.3.6.3. Playground & Pavilion

Consider adding a small playground feature and picnic pavilion to diversify the park's offerings and attract more visitors.

1.3.6.4. Pier

Evaluate possibilities for a non-motorized boat launch or pier.

If conditions do not support this improvement, add an observation deck to provide opportunities for birding and marsh views.

1.3.7. Island Recreation Center

Identify new programmatic and facility needs for the center.

The Island Recreation Center or "Island Rec." is a comprehensive community recreation center capable of serving all age groups through a variety of facility and programmatic offerings. The facility includes a double gymnasium, walking track, wellness area, outdoor pool and community rooms. The facility was expanded in 2018 to include improvement and expansion of the indoor gymnasium, pool, restrooms, parking, storage, and relocation of the previous outdoor basketball courts. The center is located adjacent to the high school and near two other public schools allowing easy access for youth and potential shared use of facilities between the Island Recreation Center and schools. Recommendations: With recent improvements, the Island Recreation Center appears to be meeting current needs of the community. While the planning team does not foresee additional improvements within the next 10 years, the Town should work with staff of the Island Recreation Center to identify new programmatic and facility needs for the center.

1.3.8. Jarvis Creek Park

Reduce the amount of maintenance required at the park.

Jarvis Creek Park includes a large pond, fishing pier, picnic shelter, restroom building, playground and a 1-mile walking trail with workout stations. The park improvements are in very good condition and the grounds are well maintained. Recommendations: Consider a poured-in-place surface for the playground to reduce necessary maintenance of the sand fall surface.

1.3.9. Squire Pope Community Park

Expand the park.

The Rowing and Sailing Center at Squire Pope Community Park provides an access point for non-motorized boats (i.e., kayaks and rowing shells). The park has a fishing pier equipped with an ADA accessible kayak launch, large picnic shelter, fire pit, restroom building and boat storage area. A new playground and exp (sic) Recommendations: There appears to be room for future expansion of the park. If interest in rowing increases, the

Town may want to consider a facility with classrooms to use for rowing and kayak instruction, safety training or related outdoor education activities.

Stakeholder(s):

Rowing and Sailing Center

1.3.10. Beach Parks

The Town of Hilton Head Island's beach parks have attracted visitors from around the world for years. The Town's beach parks include:

- Alder Lane Beach Access
- Burkes Beach
- Coligny Beach Park
- Driessen Beach Park
- Fish Haul Beach Park
- Folly Field Beach Park
- Islanders Beach Park

All but Burkes Beach have beach mats assisting individuals with mobility issues. Lifeguards and chair and umbrella rentals are available at most locations. Bicycles are common on the beach and at beach accesses. Four beach parks: Burkes; Driessen; Folly Field and Islanders are near one another but are disconnected by private land holdings. The addition of discreet wayfinding signage for beach cyclists from the Burkes Beach access to Islanders Beach Park would connect these public parks and add a loop to the public pathway. Recommendations:

1.3.10.1. Mats

Add beach mats to Burkes Beach Park.

1.3.10.2. Path

Create a low impact "beach path" for bicyclists linking Burkes Beach Park and Islanders Beach Park.

1.3.10.3. Signage

Include discreet beach path signage identifying Burkes, Driessen, Folly Field and Islanders Beach Park accesses.

2. Recreation

Provide recreation experiences in public parks that are on the same level as recreation facilities found in Hilton Head Island resorts.

Benefits of Community Recreation — Recreation activities and programs should offer numerous benefits to any community. High-quality offerings that are well-designed and effectively run will produce high participation rates. Consistent involvement in these offerings should increase health benefits for participants. It is important to make programming decisions based on public and staff input, participation levels, current research, data analysis, revenue generation, plus the cost of operations. A process for annual review will need to be created and consistently implemented to provide continuity of services that meet the needs of the community.

2.1. Maintenance & Furnishings

Improve park maintenance and furnishings to higher standards across all public parks located on Hilton Head Island.

2.1.1. Programming

Expand and make improvements to existing facilities to provide improved programming opportunities as outlined in the facility evaluation section of this master plan.

2.2. Activities & Amenities

Provide a variety of activities and amenities to meet the needs of the community and contemporary trends.

2.2.1. Program Evaluation

Evaluate all programs on an annual basis.

2.2.2. Additions & Deletions

Create a guide or policy to be followed when adding or deleting programs.

2.2.3. Surveys

Conduct short surveys with participants at the completion of each activity/program to ensure the programs are staying relevant and meeting the needs of the participants.

2.2.4. Non-Sports Programming

Expand alternate non-sports programming for youth and adults.

Stakeholder(s):

Youth

Adults

2.2.5. Adult Programs

Develop a broader offering of adult programs for both young and older adult age groups.

Stakeholder(s):

Young Adults

Older Adults

2.2.6. Three Pillars

Study the Three Pillars of NRPA, especially the Conservation area, and look for ways to expand nature-based programs and introductory classes for water-based activities.

Stakeholder(s):

National Recreation and Parks

Association :

National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) has created Three Pillars, or goal areas, that define the critical role of parks and recreation in our communities. The Three Pillars are:

- *Conservation: Protecting open space, connecting children to nature, and engaging communities in conservation practices.*

- *Health and Wellness: Leading the nation to improved health and wellness through parks and recreation.*
- *Social Equity: Ensuring all people have access to the benefits of local parks and recreation.*

2.2.6.1. Conservation

Protect open space; connect children to nature, and engage communities in conservation practices.

2.2.6.2. Health & Wellness

Lead the nation to improved health and wellness through parks and recreation.

2.2.6.3. Social Equity

Ensure all people have access to the benefits of local parks and recreation.

2.2.7. Participation

Track participation numbers and analyze three years of data when conducting program evaluations.

2.2.8. Facility Usage

Develop a facility use agreement and review the current facility rental agreements.

2.2.9. Senior Sports & Programming

Explore development of senior sports leagues and other senior programming opportunities.

Stakeholder(s):

Seniors

DEMONSTRATION ONLY

3. Parks

Use parks to highlight the unique natural and cultural significance of this coastal community.

3.1. Staffing

Consider addition of nature program staff to better address environmental education programs for residents and visitors to the Island.

3.1.1. Maintenance Supervisor

Fund a park maintenance supervisor who is an Island Rec employee.

The parks maintenance supervisor will be responsible for working with town and county employees who provide park and greenway maintenance to ensure that maintenance activities are provided at a higher level than current levels. They will work to establish maintenance policies and standards that will be used to establish annual maintenance budgets and capital projects for each park.

Stakeholder(s):

Island Recreation Association

3.1.2. Recreation Coordinator

Fund an outdoor recreation coordinator position to focus on expanding non-traditional outdoor recreation classes and programs.

This staff member would work to implement recommendations covered in the program recommendations in Section 5 of this report.

3.1.3. Organization Charts

Update staff organization charts to provide titles that are more consistent with parks and recreation agencies.

Current staffing titles use the term director for three levels of staffing. Consider using the title for director only for the Executive Director and change director reports to the Executive Director to Assistant Director or Superintendents. Director reports to the Assistant Directors or Superintendents should be managers or coordinators.

3.2. Signage, Exhibits & Art

Add interpretive signage and interactive outdoor exhibits or public art to enhance the natural and cultural aspects of the area.

4. Water Access

Improve water access for people and non-motorized water-craft.

4.1. Opportunities

Identify opportunities for improved water access in areas that are conducive to canoeing, kayaking, rowing, sailing, and paddle-boarding.

4.2. Programs

Provide programs based on community interest in learning to swim, row, sail, or paddle.

DEMONSTRATION ONLY

5. Trails

Provide a connected multi-use trail for cyclists and pedestrians across the Island.

Stakeholder(s)

Cyclists

Pedestrians

5.1. Access & Expansion

Identify areas for improved access to public pathways and expansions of the current system that enhance user experiences in new ways.

5.2. Safety

Identify areas for pathway enhancements towards ensuring cyclist and pedestrian safety.

DEMONSTRATION ONLY

6. Sports Tourism

Explore opportunities for sports tourism on Hilton Head Island

6.1. Specialized Sports

Pursue specialized sports tourism

such as pickleball, sand volleyball, tennis, and paddleboarding, based on opportunities offered within the unique context of Hilton Head Island.

DEMONSTRATION ONLY

Budget & Funding

General Fund

Increase funding from the Town of Hilton Head Island general fund budget to allow for improved maintenance of existing park facilities.

Alternative Revenue Sources

Continue to look at alternative methods of increasing self-generated revenues to expand programming and special event opportunities.

Fees

Develop a tiered revenue policy to guide fees for programs and events.

Spending

Increase per capita spending so the recreation facilities and programs on Hilton Head Island better reflect the best-in-class image of the island.

Staffing

Provide additional funding for Island Rec staff as new park facilities are added to the system.

Funding Alternatives

Consider other funding alternatives such as naming rights and beverage rights agreements to increase overall per capita funding.

Administrative Information

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DEMONSTRATION