

**Hernando County Comprehensive Plan
2040 PLAN**

Section A. Chapter 7.

**RECREATION & OPEN SPACE
ELEMENT**

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GOAL 7.01 – Park System

Hernando County will provide opportunities for recreation and enjoyment of natural and cultural areas for its citizens and visitors by ensuring a diverse parks system that is sufficient to meet the needs of the population served. [F.S. 163.3177(6)(e) and 163.3180(1)]

County Park Plan

Objective 7.01A: Hernando County should evaluate the extent and operation of its current parks, establish standards for the provision of parks, and use citizen input to plan for parks infrastructure and facilities.

- Strategy 7.01A(1):** Hernando County will consider developing and maintaining a countywide master plan for parks, park facilities and open space that includes, at a minimum:
- a. an evaluation of the parks system in conjunction with annual budgetary allocations, capital funding and adequate facilities;
 - b. development of a long-term strategy for parks and major facilities that will meet identified needs for both the permanent and visitor population;
 - c. identification of options for development of a County Recreation Center to serve the recreation needs of Hernando County citizens, attract visitors, and serve regional user populations.

Park Classifications

- Strategy 7.01A(2):** Hernando County will use the following park classification standards based on park size, location and recreation type:
- a. active recreation includes outdoor or indoor activities that involve physical activity to engage in competition or exercise including such facilities as athletic fields of any kind, courts (tennis, basketball, handball, etc.), gymnasiums, swimming pools, playgrounds, jogging and exercise trails;
 - b. passive recreation includes outdoor activities that are based on or dependent upon natural resources and may or may not involve physical activity such as walking and biking trails, nature centers, hunting, fishing, boating and canoeing. Passive recreation includes lands designated as preserves.

Regional Parks

- Strategy 7.01A(3):** Regional park and open space facilities are generally recognized as those lands in Hernando County located primarily within the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge, the Withlacoochee State Forest, the Weeki Wachee Preserve and other state and

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federal owned preserve and recreation areas. Regional facilities generally involve over 100 acres and are maintained by state and federal entities.

District Parks

- Strategy 7.01A(4):** Hernando County District parks are:
- a. generally 40 acres or larger in size;
 - b. accessible to the residents of the district(s) it is designed to serve;
 - c. designed to include five or more active recreation facilities of any type.

Community Parks

- Strategy 7.01A(5):** Hernando County Community parks are:
- a. generally 20 acres or larger in size;
 - b. accessible to the residents of the surrounding community, accessible by bicycles and pedestrians;
 - c. designed to include three or more active recreation facilities of any type.

Neighborhood Parks

- Strategy 7.01A(6):** Hernando County requires a system of neighborhood and mini-park type parks that are owned, developed and managed by private developers, neighborhood organizations, homeowners' associations and community groups. These types of parks are:
- a. generally less than 20 acres in size;
 - b. have appropriate facilities designed to meet the recreation needs of the development;
 - c. provided by subdivisions, single family planned development projects and multi-family projects that include more than fifty dwelling units in accordance with the County land development regulations.

Preserves

- Strategy 7.01A(7):** Hernando County shall manage preserves under its Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESL) Program for the purpose of providing ecologically valuable open space that is also accessible for passive recreational and educational pursuits where appropriate.

Levels of Service

Objective 7.01B: **Hernando County will maintain a park system that provides its citizens with sufficient levels of service for both active and passive recreation.**

Strategy 7.01B(1): Hernando County will utilize a level of service of 2 acres of parks containing active recreation facilities per 1,000 residents at peak population, and, at least 2 additional acres of parks containing passive recreation and open space per 1,000 residents at peak population calculated on a countywide basis.

Strategy 7.01B(2): At least one district park or one community park shall be located and maintained in each of the designated impact fee park districts.

Strategy 7.01B(3): The provision of acceptable sites or facilities for district or community parks by proposed development may be used to mitigate recreational needs and maintain adopted levels of service.

Strategy 7.01B(4): Review of projects with greater than 1,000 new residential units will require an analysis of the proximity and accessibility of a district or community park by the proposed development to determine whether additional facilities are needed.

Alternative Funding

Strategy 7.01B(5): Hernando County should pursue alternative funding and partnership opportunities for park lands acquisition, facilities and management as appropriate including, but not limited to, grant funding, private/corporate funding where appropriate, adoption of appropriate user fees, private contracts for management or maintenance, public-private partnerships, and volunteer arrangements with community groups.

Coordination of Facilities

Objective 7.01C: **Hernando County should explore opportunities for the coordination of joint use of facilities, public-private partnerships and creative management arrangements to expand and enhance recreational opportunities and experiences for Hernando County residents.**

Strategy 7.01C(1): Identify opportunities for joint or shared use recreation facilities such as those at municipalities, county schools, colleges, churches, community centers and private facilities that are open to the public.

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Strategy 7.01C(2): Work with the Hernando County School Board through the joint interlocal agreement to identify and discuss the opportunities for joint-use recreation facilities at County schools.

Strategy 7.01C(3): Coordinate with federal and state agencies to facilitate the expansion and management of passive recreational opportunities through the limited development of facilities in natural areas.

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GOAL 7.02 – Park Design

Hernando County shall provide for park design and access standards that maximize use including opportunities for special needs populations of the County. [F.S. 163.3177(6)(e)]

Objective 7.02A: Hernando County should utilize design standards for parks that enhance them as community focal points, and provide attractive and convenient accessibility and function.

- Strategy 7.02A(1):** The parks and open space standards for Hernando County should include the following design features:
- a. incorporation of low-impact development principles that maximize drainage efficiency, promote green space and incorporate valuable natural resources into the design including karst features, wetlands, forest units, shade trees and scenic views;
 - b. incorporation of layouts, amenities and design themes that encourage direct bicycle and pedestrian connection to surrounding communities for convenient and safe alternatives to automobile access;
 - c. incorporation of parking for daily use and additional low-impact overflow parking for events;
 - d. coordination of nearby transit access as part of a focal point;
 - e. provision of convenient and safe vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle access to district and community parks;
 - f. mitigation of noise, lighting and other potential encroachments on the peaceful enjoyment of adjacent property, especially residential.

Special Needs

Objective 7.02B: Hernando County should accommodate the special needs of physically and mentally impaired residents at the Hernando County Parks system.

Strategy 7.02B(1): Hernando County shall comply with all Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements in designing parks facilities and upgrading or retrofitting older facilities as funding becomes available.

Strategy 7.02B(2): Hernando County should determine the need for recreation programs for special needs groups including the mentally impaired, elderly and other groups with mental or physical disabilities or limitations.

The County shall consider opportunities to join with other entities such as schools, the County Library system and community groups to make parks available or to conduct programs to meet special needs.

Waterways Access

Objective 7.02C: **Hernando County encourages access to and responsible enjoyment of its waterways resources including rivers, springs, bays and the Gulf of Mexico, including a system of waterway access into its parks system.**

Strategy 7.02C(1): The County should expand, enhance and maintain boat ramps, kayak launches, public docks and other facilities where feasible at parks and other popular boating destinations such as Hernando Beach and the Withlacoochee River.

Strategy 7.02C(2): Water access facilities should be designed using low-impact development and Florida Department of Environmental Protection Clean Marina standards and should accommodate non-motorized craft such as canoes, kayaks and paddleboards in a safe manner, where possible and appropriate for the waterbody being accessed.

Strategy 7.02C(3): Hernando County should develop and implement a “blueways” water-access trail system for paddle-craft that seeks to enhance the user-experience in a manner that promotes tourism volume and length of stay. The blueways plan shall be consistent with and enhance the “Nature Coast” segment of the Florida circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail.

Strategy 7.02C(4): The County should work to promote and market the Coast to Coast Connector multi-use trail as a major recreation and tourism asset and ensure the consistency of development initiatives with trail objectives and standards.