

H. Ancillary General Findings Affecting Service Delivery

Communications and Marketing

Feedback from stakeholders suggests a lack of awareness in the community regarding parks, trails, and programs, despite a strong presence by the Division on the internet and consistent use of available social and print media outlets. Collaborative promotions (in new channels), increased marketing campaigns, and targeted messages are possible tools for getting the word out consistently and increasing awareness of the County's programs and services, parks, and natural areas and available trail system.

The County has a comprehensive Marketing and Communications Plan and dedicated staff resources working on these tasks; however, there are many factors that make it challenging to reach the community with information. The County is geographically large, with a large population and 31 municipalities. There are dozens of local media outlets, and not all are as responsive as could be desired in terms of releasing submitted information. Paid advertising is costly with so many varied media channels. Fortunately, 57 percent of respondents indicated that their preferred method of communication from the County is by web or email. This provides strong opportunities for improvements as the County moves forward.

Greenways and Trails

Findings indicate that trails and greenways are residents' highest priority for amenities to be added and/or enhanced. For purposes of this plan, the term "greenways" is used to identify connecting regional trail systems, and the word "trails" means in-parcel or loop trails. The Parks and Recreation Division is perceived to be meeting expectations with regard to planning and management of trails within parks. However, the County is currently lacking connections for greenways, and it is not possible to easily utilize greenways and trails for alternative transportation (biking, walking, skateboarding, etc.) from east to west and/or north to south throughout the County. There have been community efforts to connect Broward County to broader regional trail systems, but those connections are not yet fully functional, and there are a lot of areas with no connection. **Appendix D includes a list of the current status of Greenways Planning Projects.**



Some community members and several County staff from other divisions (most notably, the Environmental Protection and Growth Management Department and the Water Management Division, as many of the Greenways are planned along the canal systems) are working toward a common plan for the future of greenways in the County. The Parks and Recreation Division may be well served to formally appoint staff and provide resources that focus on the leadership of goals toward connectivity. The following section outlines current goals identified for the Greenways Program. However, the County has not identified focused staff responsibility and/or funding to meet these goals.

Current Vision for Greenways Program

Broward County's Greenways System will be a fully funded, countywide network of safe, clean, bicycle and equestrian paths, nature trails, and waterways.

Greenways will connect each neighborhood, from the Everglades to the Atlantic Ocean to conservation lands, parks and recreation facilities, cultural and historic sites, schools, and business areas. The system will provide opportunities for recreation, restoration, and enhancement of native vegetation and wildlife habitat, and alternative modes of transportation.

Current Status of the Greenways Planning Process

In the spring of 1999, the Broward County Board of County Commissioners, recognizing the need to improve the quality of life in our urban environment, identified the creation of a county-wide system of greenways and trails as a priority goal. The County's Department of Planning and Environmental Protection was tasked with the responsibility of developing the plan to achieve this goal. A technical advisory committee, with members representing the Florida Department of Transportation, South Florida Water Management District, Florida Turnpike Authority, Broward County Engineering, Broward County Transportation Planning Division, and the Broward County School Board was created to oversee the plan preparation. Over the following two-year period, numerous public meetings were held around the County to seek public input at various stages in the development of the greenways plan. Public support was enthusiastic, and a wide variety of interests participated at the meetings including municipal officials, bicyclists, equestrians, boaters, developers, environmentalists, state and regional governmental representatives, and others.

The County's greenways planning kicked off in the fall of 1999 with an all-day visioning session facilitated by the South Florida Regional Planning Council. Over 100 participants gathered at Anne Kolb Nature Center to draft the vision statement for the plan. Following the completion of the vision statement, planning for the actual greenways corridors was initiated with a request to Broward's municipalities to submit greenways corridor proposals for inclusion in the plan. Approximately 20 municipalities submitted proposals. Several cities had on-going greenways programs and some, most notably the Town of Davie, already contained developed local greenways systems. County staff also began assembling information on canal rights-of-way, wide road rights-of-way, utility easements, waterways, and other potential greenways corridors. This information along with other planning information was utilized to draft a conceptual greenways system plan. In the fall of 2000, the public was invited to attend a meeting at Fern Forest to review the planning information and draft plan and assist in preparing the final conceptual greenways system plan. It was the consensus of meeting participants that the conceptual plan should provide a framework that could link together the planning efforts of individual municipalities.

Based upon the public's input and planning considerations, six priority corridors were selected for more detailed planning. These corridors included Dixie Highway, Cypress Creek, Conservation Levee, New River (State Road 84), Flamingo Road, and Hiatus Road corridors. Detailed right-of-way information was collected on the five corridors and draft plans were prepared. Five public meetings were held in the spring of 2001 at locations around the County to seek public comment on the detailed corridor plans. Following endorsement by the Broward County League of Cities Technical Advisory Committee, the Broward County Commission approved an amendment to the Broward County Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the conceptual greenways system plan.

Greenways Conceptual Master Plan

There are over 370 miles of regional greenways, land trails, and water trails delineated on the current conceptual master plan. The regional network of greenways depicted are essentially the regional backbone which may supplement, augment or serve as a foundation for the local trail networks, such as the trails of Davie, Plantation, Parkland, and Southwest Ranches.

In addition to the six priority corridors selected during the planning process, public input and subsequent planning meetings led to addition of two other Greenways to be included in the priority list. Thus, eight corridors now represent the “Phase One” corridors of the Broward County Greenways System. They include the Dixie Highway, Cypress Creek, Conservation Levee, New River, Flamingo Road, Hiatus Road, Barrier Islands, and Griffin-Orange Greenways. These Phase One corridors were identified as those with the highest priority for development. These corridors effectively form a framework that traverses all parts of the County, and provide a good representation of differing types of trails, from wide paved and unpaved trails through natural and rural areas, to wide sidewalks through urban areas. This approach provides opportunities for all types of Greenway users and interests. Ideas for a Greenways Action Plan have been summarized but not formally adopted, and they do not include formal involvement from the Parks and Recreation Division. They are to:

- Adopt the Broward County Greenways Master Plan
- Continue the Mission of the County's Greenways
- Create a Technical Advisory Committee
- Establish Greenway Funding Sources
- Establish an Implementation Schedule
- Promote Greenway and Trails within Broward County
- Construct Greenway Corridors



Safety and/or the Perception of Safety

Evidence-based research from criminology, social science, the institute of medicine, and public health recognizes the “perception of safety” as a growing barrier to physical activity engagement most specifically in parks and recreation facilities. In Broward County, the Needs Assessment indicates mixed results relative to the perception of safety from residents. In focus groups, many reported that a perception of unsafe conditions may preclude their usage of various facilities. There are many reports of “smash and grab” car break-ins at parking lots, and often the media does not help perception as they tend to use public lands for news conferences when crimes occur, even if they occur on private property.

There is crime in Broward County. Is it higher than national averages? Is it regularly happening in parks? This study does not have the capacity to fully explore that issue, but it is necessary to include focus on the fact that this topic area can and does affect participation and usage. The statistically-valid survey shows that sixty-eight percent (68%) rated safety while using parks as good or very good. The Division can focus on methods for action that help to increase that percentage, addressing ways to minimize opportunities for crime, along with media coverage containing messages that may exacerbate fears.

If people feel unsafe, they are less apt to use an area for physical activity. The concern and stigma of crime is threatening to the use of park and recreation areas, especially in urban environments. Research has shown that the kind of experience park-goers receive is a psychological imperative for relaxation and happiness. It is a resource for physical activity – an important element in the reduction of obesity and sedentary behavior which can accelerate other numerous negative health conditions. Professionals in the provision of parks and recreation need to understand that fear and perceptions of safety have several different meanings to individuals within the community.

Regardless of whether or not perceptions are accurate, they have the power to affect individual actions and motivations, because **“What is perceived as important is important.”** (*Loukaitou-Sideris, Anastasia. Is it Safe to Walk? 1 Neighborhood Safety and Security Considerations and Their Effects on Walking. Journal of Planning Literature 2006 20: 219.*)

Taking a safety inventory of the community can help uncover areas of priority and action.

A Safety Inventory of a specific park or region may include evaluating:

- What are characteristics of the neighborhood and/or park?
- What are their relevant physical activity needs of the population?
- How do the characteristics of the physical setting reflect safety or lack of safety?
- Which groups are most afraid?
- What are they afraid of?
- How do fears constrain walking and physical activity?
- How do age, gender, and socio-demographics affect perception of fear?
- What are lists of perceived fears for each?
- What obstacles are identified that need to be addressed in order to overcome perceptions and create a sense of safety again?
- What indicators define safety?
- How are community and individual perception of safety the same or different?

It is evident from the literature that a collaborative effort is re-evolving to become aware and take action surrounding the issue of safety. Community Based Participatory Research includes identifying community members along with local police departments, city council officials, parks and recreation directors, local businesses, school administrators, urban planners, landscape designers, and youth to be “at the same table” and engaged in the process of addressing safety elements, park design, and crime reduction strategies to create results.

Some specific national initiatives that may help improve public safety and perception of safety in Broward County include:

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Principles

- Creating by design, the space for people (volunteers and visitors) to be close to trails, activity areas, restroom facilities, and the parking lot to maintain a feeling of safety.
- Utilizing materials such as stone work and split-rail fencing which provide territoriality and access control along with visibility and presence of space. A sidewalk’s varying material adds to the transition of the utility of the area.
- Drawing people into the area (activation) by creating “a sense of ownership,” a place for specific activities such as a donated rose garden or community garden which encourages regular tending and volunteer participation.
- See <http://www.eprevco.com/policydocuments/Crime%20Prevention%20through%20Environmental%20Design.pdf>

Children Friendly Cities (CFC)

- A Child Friendly City is a local system of good governance committed to fulfilling children's rights.
- Involve the local community and youth of the community in design and planning places to play, access to play, and removing physical barriers to play and be physically active.
- See <http://childfriendlycities.org>

Community Policing Consortium Project (CPCP)

- Including active community adults and older adults who are no longer driving and who may live alone or in an active senior living center and local law enforcement to create community patrols on foot.
- See <http://www.policefoundation.org/docs/foundation.html>

Building Assets Reducing Risks (BARR) Program

- Collaborative efforts between schools and parks and recreation staff including training, programming, and recognition of this “tipping scale” time of transitions in high-risk and academically challenging behaviors which occur during middle school transition to high school.
- See <http://www.search-institute.org/building-assets-reducing-risks>

Identifying the safety needs and perceptions from individuals and a community can help drive Broward County and relevant alternative providers toward solutions. Growing evidence supports the belief this will increase physical activity and the advancement of a healthier community. Addressing the real and perceived fears of community members will identify priorities for action and enable engaged community members to build and maintain collaborations so that the natural resources of parks, trails, and recreation centers are used to their capacity for young and old alike.

Many specific suggestions for improving safety for Broward County Parks and Recreation are included from summaries of the Visioning Workshops located in Appendix E.

Information Technology

Information Technology is not technically a community need, but the provision of these services does affect the effectiveness for meeting those needs, and it was often reported by stakeholders as a key challenge hindering service and efficiency. The County's need for Information Technology is vast, and as the technology grows and changes, the staff often struggle to keep up with the needs, uses, and training of those technologies. The following non-prioritized list includes a summary of IT-related comments from a variety of staff and stakeholder interviews.

Reported Summary Findings related to IT

- Updates in technology must be continually implemented and tested, and sometimes it takes many hours just for small issues.
- A very small IT staff services a larger number of users and technology, including: 500 computers, wi-fi, cameras, car counters, safes, etc.
- Increased resources are needed as new facilities are upgraded in technology. For example, Everglades Holiday Park is now being added to the list of served areas. Now, all concessions that were handled by a vendor are again being serviced by the County, and will revert to the County for IT issues, but there are no additional trained staff members trained in IT to handle this.
- Staff members estimate that they currently need two more analysts and/or desktop support people to meet existing demand for IT services, and there will be a need to fill retiring supervisor positions.
- There was a technology plan, but it is outdated and not detailed enough to address the key issues.
- There should be better coordination between the Parks and Recreation IT staff and the overall County IT staff, but there should still be a larger number of staff to handle Division-specific issues.
- There are antiquated policies and procedures, and software is not fully integrated from registration, to finance, to maintenance.
- As technology is added, routine processes need to be re-examined and changed. For example, Daily Activity Reports are still required to be printed, but staff can go to Rec Trac and pull reports if needed. This type of reporting may be duplicative and inefficient.
- There needs to be an integrated IT Plan including a review of hardware, software integration, and ancillary equipment. Items such as car cameras are big issues, and as new equipment is added, it should be incorporated into the overall plan.
- The Division has consolidated maintenance, but there is a need for technology to have the ability to respond to specific issues.
- The Division is losing employee knowledge of technology. New employees need to be trained before retirees leave.

- New staff members do not often get full training on the software they are expected to use – especially part-time and/or seasonal staff.

County-wide Collaborative Leadership for Parks and Recreation Services

While not necessarily specifically identified as a “community need,” Broward County contains 31 municipalities and many private and non-profit service providers. There is confusion in the minds of community members and taxpayers regarding where, who, why, and how the services of all of these providers are offered.

The County can continue its recent focus on facilitating enhanced collaboration with the cities and towns and alternative providers and businesses to better integrate service provision, economic development, and participation for all providers. Some collaboration options may include:

- Continued, regular, formal meetings between the County and leaders of these other providers to identify areas of collaboration and minimization of duplication of services.
- Integration of the schools system in program and facility provision.
- Focus on regional transportation and trails planning including public transportation, local transportation planning, and active transportation options.

In addition, Broward County has been growing in terms of recruitment of corporate businesses. This can provide opportunities for sponsorships for high visibility, revenue-centered facilities (such as Central Broward Regional Park with the Cricket Stadium). Site specific business plans can help identify potential sponsorship and business partnership opportunities.

Opportunities to partner with local Chambers of Commerce, the Tourism Board, and other business promoting entities are also available to the Parks and Recreation Division. The Fort Lauderdale Airport brings in tourists from all over the world to enjoy the area’s natural draws. However, while many people come for beaches and golf, after a few days they may be looking for other recreational options. The Shipping Port brings in a large number of cruise ships, and there is opportunity for increased partnerships to provide ancillary recreational experiences for passengers. There are possibilities to increase visibility, revenue, and participation through these types of offerings, especially the nature centers, fresh-water activities, and specialty sports.

Miscellaneous Management and Organizational Structure Findings Affecting Service Delivery

- The County has centralized into two districts, and there is a need to combine more resources and efficiencies. However, budgeting, etc. is mostly de-centralized so that supervisors are empowered. It can be confusing as to roles and requirements.
- Purchasing is a challenge in a variety of ways. More action needs to be taken on recommendations from the efficiency study. The purchasing process is slow and onerous. This needs to be a priority for analysis and change, as it is hindering efficiency for the public and economies of service.
- There is a need to continue to make sure decisions are made within a 24-hour turnaround with appropriate autonomy and responsiveness. There is no effective process in place regarding responsiveness, and there is a need for a centralized telephone help center.
- A Division-wide orientation is needed, along with better training in general. Training areas include leadership and skill-set training. A training manager is also needed. This will be an up and coming issue next year. Support should be provided for training.

- There is strong support from Commissioners, but at times, the trust level in staff is not completely identified. A stronger identification of Commissioner desires, involvement, and expectations would be beneficial.
- A foundation that can assist with focused funding should be contracted and established.
- A focus should be on collaborative effort to offer synergy between locals and non-profits to provide services in more efficient, affordable way.
- Strategies should be developed to examine loss of budgets and staff – break the mold.
- The Division should develop collaborative assessment tools to help commissioners and others identify what the public wants.
- Better data analysis methods are needed, i.e.: “Can we do it and pay for it?” (including operations and maintenance).
- Self-sufficiency and more of an enterprise park system should be stressed, but the fact that the Division serves diverse populations should always be considered.
- There could be a scholarship program to help serve lower income populations.
- There is an opportunity to fully analyze the pricing and cost recovery structure (perhaps implement an Annual Car Pass Fee; develop a Sun Pass system, or scholarship?).
- It is necessary to know what the public wants – how do we get them in?
- The County has four or five elite destinations to highlight – this could be enhanced.
- The Division has several beautiful facilities at its disposal, such as Anne Kolb and Westlake, Holiday Park, Everglades, and Long Key. They can be marketed more efficiently, and evaluated for other services that they could provide to both residents and visitors.
- Customer demand can be better utilized to determine what customers who do not use facilities every day desire.
- The Division needs to determine its niche and pull out of other areas.
- The Division cannot be everything to everybody. Strengths of the Division include services and facilities related to natural areas. The Division provides good sports facilities, but it should determine whether or not this is a niche that they should be servicing or turning to other local providers. There are a lot of local agencies and school boards that could pick up these services, but sports tourism analysts think that there are not enough.
- Budgets will continue to be an issue. Conflicts exist with regard to the need to be more enterprise oriented and more efficient, as well as duplication of services. Money is and will be tight. Funding may not be increasing for staff, but the Division could be doing more with less staff. An option would be smaller permanent, dedicated staff, and seasonal employees. Money can then be directed to operations or partnerships, not to dedicated staff.
- The security contract is not at an appropriate level. The Division could include park ambassadors as more than a “ranger.” There is a need to determine what to call them, and it cannot be enforcement.