

RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND GREENWAYS ELEMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

GOAL R-1: DEVELOP A RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND GREENWAYS SYSTEM AS AN INTEGRAL COMPONENT OF AN OVERALL, COUNTY-WIDE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY.

Objective R-1.1: Walton County shall provide ecotourism attractor facilities for permanent and seasonal residents.

Policy R-1.1.1: Walton County shall support and assist, as requested, the state in expediting development order review and issuance of development orders for improvements, renovations and expansions at State park facilities located in Walton County.

Policy R-1.1.2: The Tourist Development Council shall sponsor the annual Environmental Forum for South Walton as an educational expo for local businesses, visitors, and residents bringing together local, regional State, and nationally recognized experts in natural resources management.

Policy R-1.1.3: Walton County shall seek support from citizens', environmental and ecotourism groups in the designation, acquisition, and maintenance of county parks, recreational facilities, and state greenway systems.

Policy R-1.1.4: The Tourist Development Council shall target a marketing effort to support green/sustainable tourism project and programs.

Policy R-1.1.5: Walton County shall coordinate with the Tourist Development Council, and the Walton County Chamber of Commerce to promote the area's rare natural resources recreational opportunities, and historical attributes to attract eco-tourists while benefiting economic development.

GOAL R-2: TO PROVIDE A RECREATIONAL SYSTEM THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF PERMANENT AND SEASONAL RESIDENTS OF WALTON COUNTY.

Objective R-2.1: Ensure that parks, amphitheaters and recreation facilities are provided to adequately maintain the adopted level of service.

Policy R-2.1.1: Walton County shall acquire open space, natural areas, parks and recreational facilities through local, regional and state funding programs and where appropriate, partner with public / private organizations for such acquisitions.

Policy R-2.1.2: Walton County through partnership with the Tourist Development Council shall provide, maintain, and improve existing beach access, coastal dune lake access, and Choctawhatchee River and Bay System

access, and boat launching facilities for all visitors and residents of Walton County. These facilities will be identified and mapped in a Geographic Information System (GIS) supporting the comprehensive plan.

Policy R-2.1.3: Walton County and the Tourist Development Council shall establish a partnership in improving existing deficiencies in parks and recreational facilities.

Objective R-2.2: Walton County shall coordinate public and private resources to meet recreational demand.

Policy R-2.2.1: Walton County shall establish alliances and partnerships with a variety of public and private entities such as Walton County School Board, municipalities, natural resource organizations and park management agencies to meet Walton County's recreational demand.

Objective R-2.3: Accessibility to key ecotourism attractors shall be expanded and reinforced to ensure public access to identified greenways and trails, recreation sites, parks, beach accesses, Coastal Dune Lakes, karst springs, and the Choctawhatchee River and Bay System.

Policy R-2.3.1: Walton County shall continue the acquisition of beach and shoreline access through fee simple purchase and the recreational land dedication provisions of the Land Development Code.

Policy R-2.3.2: The TDC shall continue its program of beachfront access and park development, including the construction of parking facilities.

Policy R-2.3.3: Walton County, in coordination with the Tourist Development Council and West Florida Regional Planning Council (WFRPC), shall introduce a beach jitney/trolley to provide access to the beaches along CR30-A and Scenic Gulf Drive.

Objective R-2.4: Walton County shall continually evaluate its system of parks and recreation to determine deficiencies and future needs, based on level of service requirements and design standards.

Policy R-2.4.1: The level of service for recreation shall be composed of a "core system" of parklands, with a minimum of 6.25 acres of recreation and open space per 1,000 population. More specific requirements as addressed to specific locations, population centers, and needs of age groups inhabiting those population centers will be addressed in the design standards to be developed and included in the Land Development Code.

Policy R-2.4.2: Design standards for development of new recreation sites and redevelopment of existing recreation sites shall be consistent with applicable local, regional, state, and federal codes.

Policy R-2.4.3: Walton County shall prioritize current deficiencies for renovation of existing recreational facilities. Criteria for deficiency ranking shall be developed and included in the Land Development Regulations.

Policy R-2.4.4: Walton County shall continue to explore funding sources for recreation.

Policy R-2.4.5: Walton County shall continue to require developers to dedicate a minimum of 5% of the gross area of a subdivision development for public recreation purposes, including public beach access ways. Alternatively, the developer of a subdivision or mixed-use development shall pay cash in an amount equal to 6% of the gross value of the subdivision, said value to be estimated on a basis of platted land without improvements (the “platted land”).

Policy R-2.4.6: Walton County shall make parks a part of community design through its Land Development Code. Parks shall connect to multi-use paths and greenways with mandatory linkage in development if bikeways and greenways exist.

Objective R-2.5: Walton County shall annually designate target areas that are deficient in recreational opportunities.

Policy R-2.5.1: Walton County shall coordinate the Tourist Development Council, municipalities, and the Walton County School Board in soliciting input regarding recreational needs of visitors and residents of Walton County, in order to target funding for the recreational facilities development and construction.

Policy R-2.5.2: Walton County shall evaluate population centers/clusters for placement of recreation facilities in areas deficient in recreation opportunities and rank the results in order of need.

Policy R-2.5.3: Walton County shall coordinate with WFRPC and evaluate the need for and feasibility of development of pedestrian facilities in the form of multi-use paths in existing recreation and open space sites.

GOAL R-3: ESTABLISH A PERMANENT OPEN SPACE AND GREENWAY SYSTEM, PASSIVE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO COMPLEMENT THE NATURAL RECREATIONAL FEATURES OF WALTON COUNTY.

Objective R-3.1: Walton County shall provide for a permanent open space and greenways system.

Policy R-3.1.1: Walton County shall support an acquisition and disposition strategy that creates permanent open space, recreation, and greenway areas.

Policy R-3.1.2: Walton County shall seek state, federal and private funding to improve recreational facilities and acquire recreational and conservation lands within the greenway system.

Policy R-3.1.3: Walton County shall permit neighborhood, village, and town center developments adjacent to the established open space and greenway system utilizing urban planning principles.

Objective R-3.2: Walton County shall identify greenway systems and ecological corridors necessary to support ecotourism, environmental education, recreational opportunities, and habitat protection.

Policy R-3.2.1: The greenway systems and ecological corridors necessary to support ecotourism, environmental education, recreational opportunities, and habitat protection shall be identified in a GIS map.

Policy R-3.2.2: Walton County shall seek to establish or maintain greenway systems in South Walton through a north/south connection between the Gulf and Bay for wildlife and recreational purposes; and an east/west connection between Topsail Hill and the State Forest south of US 98 to provide habitat and resource protection and promote environmental education through partnership with appropriate agencies.

Objective R-3.3: Walton County will pursue public and private partnerships to promote the development and acquisition of open space and greenway systems.

Policy R-3.3.1: Walton County shall seek public input regarding the greenway development, and the protection of greenways by stakeholders, through Walton County's website and long range planning programs.

Policy R-3.3.2: Walton County shall promote, participate, and coordinate with the Florida Greenways Commission in its efforts to create a statewide network of greenways.

Policy R-3.3.3: Walton County shall promote preservation of greenways and ecological corridors to facilitate wildlife movement and protect designated Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas as designated by the FWC.

Policy R-3.3.4: Walton County shall support limited clearing for the purpose of passive recreation and access ways for maintenance, preservation and restoration of native vegetation in established greenways.

Policy R-3.3.5: Walton County shall work with public land managers, historians, and citizens in developing signs to aid interpretation of the greenway's historic and natural sites and to provide continuity along the greenway.

Policy R-3.3.6: Walton County will coordinate with citizens, federal, state, regional agencies and adjacent local governments to promote and conserve the designated greenways by incorporating appropriate management and protective measures into local planning processes.

Policy R-3.3.7: Walton County shall continue to evaluate and pursue acquisition of any State lands that are deemed surplus lands that would enhance and further the goals of connecting public or privately owned greenway corridors.

Policy R-3.3.8: Walton County may use surplus State properties as a base to create and maintain an east/west recreational greenway connecting Topsail Hill and the State Forest south of US 98.

Policy R-3.3.9: Walton County shall investigate alternative methods of acquisition and grant programs in an effort to assist the State in connecting the greenways and trails.

Policy R-3.3.10: Walton County shall coordinate, through the development order review process, development linkage of privately established watershed management plans to conserve the greenways and solve area specific stormwater treatment, storage, and discharge volumes.

Policy R-3.3.11: Walton County shall coordinate with the TDC and the State to initiate and maintain a local greenways database using GIS as a tool.

Policy R-3.3.12: Walton County shall sponsor workshops with local builders and developers to promote appropriate site planning, design, and landscaping for residential, commercial, and industrial development adjacent to the greenways, utilizing Xeriscaping™, Water Wise, and Florida friendly landscaping design principles.

Policy R-3.3.13: Walton County shall coordinate with the NFWFMD to use mitigation alternatives to conserve the greenways.

Policy R-3.3.14: Walton County shall work with the Walton County School Board and others to incorporate into local education programs an environmental natural resources component outlining the importance of conserving greenways.

Policy R-3.3.15: Walton County shall work with state and federal natural resource management agencies utilizing the South Walton Trust Plan in planning, designating, acquiring, and developing enhancements to the existing greenway system in Walton County.

Objective R-3.4: Passive Recreation

Walton County shall recognize the value of neighborhood parks, open space, and passive recreation, implementing policies to protect and increase the value of the passive recreational experiences.

Policy R-3.4.1: Walton County will utilize public information and outreach tools to solicit input on desired passive recreation programs and similar opportunities, including the degree of public interest in funding passive recreation projects.

Policy R-3.4.2: Upon acquisition of lands to be used as parks allowing passive recreation only, Walton County shall evaluate the extent and the location of appropriate recreational facilities consistent with the observation areas, nature trails, boardwalks, and picnic areas. These facilities should be designed and constructed in a manner that minimizes impacts to the natural resources on or adjacent to the site.

Objective R-3.5: Functional wildlife corridors will be retained where practicable for those species occurring in reasonably sustainable populations.

Policy R-3.5.1: Walton County will request state and federal resource management agencies to conduct an Urban Wildlife Survey to assess the functional assistance needed in the area. This survey and its recommendations will be considered during construction of private and public development. Creation of functional habitat through vegetative buffering and protected greenways that would assist in sustainability of the species will be used for mitigation as preferred alternative to area-based mitigation efforts.

Policy R-3.5.2: Walton County shall coordinate with regional, state, and military agencies to implement strategies that support the retention of any identified crossing points for wildlife corridors and investigate the best possible manner to ensure their functionality.

Policy R-3.5.3: Wildlife crossings within public rights-of-way for species of primary management interest will be identified in the Walton County GIS as it comes available.

Policy R-3.5.4: By 2012, for the purpose of maintaining habitat quality and functionality across public rights-of-way, gaps in otherwise linked habitat area segments will be identified.

Policy R-3.5.5: Three primary habitat patterns should have protective priority:

1. The high-dry longleaf pine/turkey oak habitat;
2. An area along the beach dune line paralleling the coast; and
3. A corridor along the stream lines and associated wetlands and floodplains, which generally run north-south. The stream line corridor should include the stream, the associated shrubby-brushy area adjacent to the stream line and a strip of the upland that is amenable to easy fire management. The widths of these stream line corridors should be evaluated based on the studies of wetland and surface water buffer zones that have been prepared by National Wetlands Inventory.

GOAL R-4: TO ENHANCE THE ECOLOGY THROUGH THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF RECREATION, OPEN SPACE, AND GREENWAYS DEVELOPMENT.

Objective R-4.1: Walton County shall, wherever possible, develop open space linkages to maintain ecosystems.

Policy R-4.1.1: Walton County shall coordinate with the State to utilize the State Forest lands and park holdings as a core open space system oriented toward resource protection.

Objective R-4.2 Encourage private conservation of natural resources.

Policy R-4.2.1: The Future Land Use Plan shall have designations to protect and enhance the natural resources.

Policy R-4.2.2: Walton County shall seek to establish, through coordination with the Walton County Property Appraiser's Office, an incentive system, in accordance with §193.625 High Water Recharge Lands; Classification and Assessment, to encourage private forest conservation.

Policy R-4.2.3: Walton County shall protect natural resources within conservation residential areas through encouraging low impact and conservation subdivision development techniques.

Policy R-4.2.4: The Rural Lands Stewardship Area Program will be used as a guide for property owners.

Policy R-4.2.5: Walton County shall adopt and implement Land Development Code provisions that focus on protection of natural systems and use Best Management Practices developed by relevant state agencies as reference tools.

Objective R-4.3: Establish linked recreation, open space, and greenway system as development occurs throughout Walton County.

Policy R-4.3.1: Walton County shall encourage the linkage of public and private greenways and open space through site plan review and approval.

Policy R-4.3.2: Walton County's Land Development Code shall require and encourage creation of linked systems which provides environmental protection, open space, recreation space, special ambience and ensures that the natural environment is preserved, enhanced and made usable for the natural and man-made environment. The surface water buffers, protection zones, habitat and vegetative communities shall be interconnected both within development sites and between adjacent properties, as well as public and private conservation lands, in order to create linked systems. The dimensions of these connections shall be sufficient to facilitate the movement of affected wildlife species to the maximum extent possible.

Policy R-4.3.3: The following uses shall be specifically allowed within the linked open space system, consistent with other provisions of the comprehensive plan:

- a. Wetlands
- b. Wetland mitigation
- c. Stormwater retention/detention
- d. Passive recreation
- e. Greenways
- f. Wildlife corridors
- g. Floodplains
- h. Coastal Dune lakes;
- i. Karst Springs
- j. River and bay systems
- k. Steephead Ravines

Policy R-4.3.4: Walton County, in conjunction with state natural resource management agencies, shall prepare a GIS layer that includes the greenway system, Florida managed lands, County parks, private conservation areas, and areas that may be included in the linked open space system

Policy R-4.3.5: All developments in Walton County shall conform to a linked open space system consisting of the wetlands and uplands including a connected bikeway/pedestrian system. Bicycle or pedestrian facilities that are dedicated for public use shall be required within the linked open space system, both within and between development projects, except where it is determined by a wildlife biologist that such activity would cause significant harm to the protection of listed species. These bicycle and pedestrian facilities shall be linked to the greenway system and to public conservation and recreation lands, wherever feasible.

Policy R-4.3.6: Preserved wetlands of ten (10) acres or more, as well as preserved habitat and native vegetative community areas of ten (10) acres or more, within development projects shall be required to connect to and create a linked open space system.

GOAL R-5: WALTON COUNTY WILL EVALUATE THE POTENTIAL FOR OPEN SPACE SITES WITHIN THE COUNTY.

Objective R-5.1: Walton County will combine open space areas with recreation sites wherever feasible in future location of recreation sites or open space sites.

Policy R-5.1.1: Walton County will continue, through the development review process, to require the developers to provide reasonably convenient access from all occupied structures to common open spaces, such open spaces to preserve valuable site amenities such as dunes, natural land forms, and beach access.

Objective R-5.2: Walton County will annually evaluate land for potential open space.

Policy R-5.2.1: Walton County shall develop policies and procedures for the acquisition of land suitable for open space.

GOAL R-6: REINFORCE THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY THROUGH THE STRATEGIC PLACEMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY PARKS

Objective R-6.1: Walton County shall require neighborhood and community parks.

Policy R-6.1.1: Walton County shall prioritize use of the parkland dedication funds to encourage and facilitate the development of community parks within the County.

Policy R-6.1.2: Walton County hereby establishes fifteen (15) acres as a minimum size for a neighborhood park and twenty-five (25) acres for a community park. Active and passive facilities shall be included.

Policy R-6.1.3: Neighborhood parks shall be located central to a neighborhood and shall be provided through the development approval process.

Policy R-6.1.4: Community parks shall be located to serve several neighborhoods or a village, and they should link to a greenway or other open space, if applicable.

Policy R-6.1.5: Walton County will continue to work with the Walton County School Board to jointly fund and program park facilities.

GOAL R-7: IMPLEMENT THE 30-A CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN BY WAY OF THE SCENIC 30-A ACTION PLAN; A REQUIRED COMPONENT FOR SCENIC HIGHWAY DESIGNATIONS; REALIZING THE VISION FOR SCENIC 30-A.

Objective R-7.1: Provide Resource protection, maintenance and enhancement to preserve and protect the existing 30-A natural landscape.

Policy R-7.1.1: Walton County will adopt a heritage tree preservation ordinance, continue to enforce native vegetation preservation regulations, and continue support of removal of exotic plants.

Policy R-7.1.2: Walton County supports trail development and will continue to seek funding for additional trails and trail projects along Scenic 30-A and connector roads.

Policy R-7.1.3: Walton County will pursue acquisition of land for recreational learning centers and public uses.

Policy R-7.1.4: Walton County will coordinate with the TDC to provide resource interpretation and education along the Scenic 30-A corridor through signage, information and education kiosks.

GOAL R-8: WITHIN SPRINGSHEDS, ESTABLISH A GREENWAY NETWORK TO INTEGRATE CRITICAL SPRINGSHED RESOURCES, PROVIDE FOR RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION, RESOURCE-BASED RECREATION, EDUCATIONAL AND HISTORICAL INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES, AND PATHWAYS THAT CONNECT THESE RESOURCES.

Objective R-8.1: Delineate critical lands to be acquired, preserved or otherwise included in the greenway network, and develop a management plan for the protection of the spring shed and greenway network. The management plan will address natural resource and habitat protection, public access, recreation, education and opportunities for economic development consistent with protecting the greenway network.

Policy R-8.1.1: Walton County will pursue connection of existing dedicated open space areas, trails, pedestrian pathways and, where appropriate, utility corridors to form a greenway system.

Policy R-8.1.2: Walton County will coordinate with the Walton County Property Appraiser to develop an incentive system in accordance with §193.625 *High-water recharge lands; classification and assessment* for private landowners to encourage their participation in the creation and maintenance of the spring shed and greenway system.

Policy R-8.1.3: Walton County will adopt a greenway land acquisition priority list to coordinate the acquisition and protection of the system.