

2019-2021



Hillsborough  
County Florida

# STRATEGIC PLAN

Hillsborough County Parks and  
Recreation Department

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Signature

## Department Overview

### Mission

“Enhancing lives through people, parks, and enjoyable experiences.”

### Vision

“To be the best Parks and Recreation Department in the Country.”

### Core Values

Having FAITH in ourselves, our customers, and our co-workers

- To treat people Fairly.
- To hold ourselves Accountable for our actions.
- To have Integrity when making decisions and engaging with others.
- To be Trustworthy to our community and co-workers.
- To be Honest at all times.

Parks and Recreation plays a key role in accomplishing the vision of our County Administrator. We provide cultural recreation opportunities for all ages and abilities. The department improves public safety by managing, staffing and coordinating the use of the following resources for over 1.4 million residents.

- A large-scale recreation system consisting of 53 recreation centers, 8 off-leash dog parks, 4 splash pads, 7 gymnasiums, 7 fitness centers, 4 outdoor adult fitness areas, 5 skate parks, 2 outdoor hockey rinks, and 1 fair ground
- 6 cemetery/memorial locations
- 104 non-programmed neighborhood parks consisting of approximately 1,200 acres of open green space, athletic courts, walking paths, playgrounds, and picnic shelters
- Staffed with a combination of full- and part-time employees along with several hundred volunteers, the Department is organized as follows:
  - **Executive Team** – 1 Director, 1 Park Services Manager, 1 Recreation Services Manager, 1 Fiscal Manager, 1 Business Operations Manager, 1 Program Coordinator
  - **Recreation** – 1 Administrative Specialist, 2 Recreation Managers, 2 Senior Supervisors, 27 Recreation Program Supervisors, 3 Park Rangers, 5 Adaptive Recreation Specialists, 9 Recreation Program Specialists, 21 Recreation Leaders, 84 Part Time Recreation Leaders
  - **Park Services** – 1 Section Manager, 2 Administrative Specialists, 1 Administrative Assistant, 2 Unit Managers, 1 Supervisor Buildings/Grounds, 2 Storekeepers, 1 Electrician, 2 HVAC Technicians, 4 Field Operations Supervisors, 26 Multi-Trades Workers, 5 Part Time Multi-Trades Workers, 1 Trades Helper, 3 Construction Equipment Operators, 2 Contract Compliance Inspectors, 2 Recreation Leaders, 5 Part Time Recreation Leaders

- **Athletics** – 1 Athletics Manager, 2 Program Coordinators, 3 Community Safety Inspectors, 1 Recreation Program Specialist
- **Planning and Development** – 1 Planning and Development Manager, 1 Project Coordinator
- **Operations** – 1 Program Coordinator, 1 Security Supervisor, 2 Loss Control Coordinators
- **Fiscal** – 1 Database Coordinator, 1 Accountant, 1 Accounting Clerk, 1 Special Projects Coordinator
- The Athletics section is a direct provider and facilitator of athletic programs throughout the County. Most youth sports leagues in the County are independently organized and operate as non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable associations on County property

### The Customer Segments for The Recreation and Therapeutics Section

- Hillsborough County residents including families, toddlers, youth, adults, senior citizens, Veterans, Therapeutic Recreation participants, Adaptive Sports athletes (youth and adult), Special Olympics athletes
- Neighborhood groups including Civic Associations, HOA's, Non-Profits and Chambers
- Senior groups including the Senior Stars of Town n' Country, Northdale OWL's, Brandon Seniors, Twelve Oaks, Lutz, and Keystone
- Private sector instructors
- Home School groups
- Action Sports participants such as BMX riders and skateboarders
- Youth Athletic partners including Tampa Bay United, Tampa Bay Youth Football League and various Little Leagues
- Dog owners
- Partners and self-directed organizations including Hillsborough County Aging Services, Head Start, Supervisor of Elections, HCSB (Adult Ed., ATOSS), Boys & Girls Club, RCMA, Carrollwood Cultural Center, Ruskin Fire House, Lutz School House, and University Area Community Development Center

### *Customer Needs and Expectations*

In alignment with the BOCC's strategic plan, Parks and Recreation's mission is leaving each park's visitor with a distinctively positive memory from their experience. The department devotes significant resources to surveying a wide berth of customer experiences. Our customer core runs from very active community leaders to sporadic visitors. Examples include: participants at the Tampa Bay Active Life Games, youth through senior athletes engaged in a sports league, mothers supervising children at the community playground, attendees at a community center program, partnered community groups for large-scale events or activities, participants in the After School program and many more. Our challenge is continuing to excel for the very active users and formulating programs to reach out to the ones that use us sporadically.

### *Recreation and Open Space Opportunities*

These services available to County residents and visitors are provided through recreation centers, neighborhood parks, skate parks, dog parks, destination parks and athletic complexes. Common customer expectations are areas for congregating inside and outside; like meeting rooms, picnic shelters, splash pads, fitness centers, playgrounds, trails for walking, running, bicycling, open fields, and courts. A wide variety of inclusive activities are offered at various sites including out of

school programs and summer camps for youth of all ages. Programs for active and non-active seniors are offered at all regional centers and various neighborhood parks. Special events are offered seasonally throughout the county to promote community building and healthy lifestyles. These events are hosted by Parks and Recreation staff and neighborhood partners for all ages and demographics. Supervised skate parks, challenge courses, and well-maintained dog parks are located throughout the county to meet the needs of those customers with specialized interests.

### *Therapeutic Recreation*

Therapeutic Recreation activities are provided to individuals of all ages with physical and cognitive disabilities. These inclusive services are delivered by highly trained staff, including Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists. Services include after school programming, summer camp, instructor led classes, and sports leagues. Customers can utilize inclusive playgrounds, splashpads, walking trails, ADA athletic fields, fitness centers, and other programmable spaces.

The Adaptive Sports program includes a variety of sports such as, wheelchair basketball, quad rugby, wheelchair football, track and field, and so much more. Hillsborough County's partnership with Special Olympics Florida has allowed athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities to compete in various sports and display their talents. We are looking to expand our adaptive sports and recreation programming to include more competitive sports in the future that will provide our athletes with more opportunities to grow.

### *Athletics*

The County provides program assistance, athletic complex maintenance, training and education to the leagues, their Board of Directors, coaches, volunteers, parents, and players. Each league has its own set of by-laws and policies to govern programs and set their own fees for registration. There are currently over 27,000 registered youth participating in baseball, football, lacrosse, soccer and softball on 47 county-owned and maintained sports complexes. There are over 5,500 volunteers associated with the sports leagues that are required to take the mandatory training provided by the Parks Athletic Division.

Staffing level for Athletics consists of the Athletics Manager, 2 Program Coordinators, 1 Recreation Program Specialist and 3 Community Safety Inspectors, for a total of seven full time employees.

### *Special Events*

These services are primarily provided to Hillsborough County residents through the Parks Department and partners including, but not limited to: neighborhood groups, civic associations, HOA's, and non-profits. The primary service delivery areas include regional recreation centers and neighborhood parks. Customer expectations are the use of well-maintained county facilities and equipment as well as event support to include staffing, planning, coordination and implementation. Annual signature events include seasonal and family fun festivals throughout Hillsborough County, Tampa Bay Active Life Games, The Great American Campout, Veterans Day Parade, and the Gramatica Family Foundation Charity Kickball Tournament. Thus far, this partnership has raised over \$100,000 for the Homes for Wounded Veterans Program. Future events with the Sports Authority are currently in development.

### *Cultural and Community Led Programs*

These services are provided to Hillsborough County residents at designated community centers, particularly University Area Community Development Center, Carrollwood Cultural Center, Lutz School House, Gardenville School House, and Ruskin Fire House. Customer expectations include well maintained facilities, quality programs and stellar customer service.

### Operating Environment

At the core of the mission of Parks and Recreation is to provide cultural recreation opportunities through places, programs and preservation of resources. We currently have 53 recreation centers including 7 gymnasiums, 7 fitness centers and 4 outdoor fitness areas. We provide After School programs at 11 locations in addition to 6 inclusive recreation After School, and 2 adaptive recreation only After School programs. We manage 8 off-leash dog parks and 3 fully staffed skate parks that provide year around events and activities for our citizens and visitors with these special interests.

Athletics manages and coordinates the use of 217 athletic fields which are in use 365 days of the year. The business of managing and coordinating field use is highly sensitive. It requires ethical decision making and sound judgment to ensure equity for the entire community. Applications are processed, agreements are entered into, and contract conditions are continually monitored and assured. The safety of field users is paramount.

During tough economic times, Parks and Recreation was forced to scale back program offerings in many areas and move to a more regional approach. Citizens living in or near neighborhoods with unstaffed recreation centers are increasingly requesting higher service levels to be restored. A recent turnover in our top management has resulted in an opportunity to reevaluate processes and the organization of key positions. Additional staff engagement is required for the five new gymnasiums leading to expanded operating hours and added revenue generating leagues and programs. It is a challenge to provide the staffing levels our citizens would like at the smaller neighborhood centers. We continue to look for partnership opportunities in an effort to fill these areas with educational opportunities and substitute programs. However, community leaders in areas that understand the value and safety a staffed center brings to their community are requesting more. As the economy continues to recover and our citizens continue to request more this would be an area that we would request clear direction from leadership. Do we continue with the regionalized approach or do we strategically engage more communities at our neighborhood centers?

Administrative functions have been relocated to a centralized location convenient to participants, families, and the programmers in the field. A comprehensive policy review annually, ensures all PR policies are compliant with county policies, current law, and best practices.

A fee schedule analysis was completed, presented to the Board of County Commissioners and approved in 2014.

## Outcomes

Parks and Recreation devotes significant resources to surveying a wide berth of customer experiences. Covering park programs, youth and adult athletic leagues, therapeutic recreation, and special events, we have identified several outcomes related to delivery of services.

1. **Maintain high levels of customer satisfaction** – Customer satisfaction is tracked and measured through online surveys for recreation programs and events. Parks and Recreation received 90% customer satisfaction rating during FY18 – FY20, surpassing the 85% goal outlined in FY17 business plan.
2. **Health Benefits** – Parks and Recreation offers programs which result in improved physical fitness, nutrition and lifetime skills. Outcomes are measured within the After School Rec2Fit program by measuring baseline fitness data, then re-measuring at three-month intervals to track improvements. If a decline in physical fitness is shown, the individual program is modified for maximum participant benefit. 83.6% of Rec2Fit participants showed improvement during FY20. FY21 fitness improvement goal in our Rec2Fit program is 80%. We will maintain this goal by continuing to be innovative with our program development and connecting with each child in our program to enhance their individual performance and improve their fitness score. We can impact more children by expanding our After School program to sites that are in close proximity to schools.
3. **Increase access to nature-based programming** – Parks and Recreation provides in-depth nature experience for children through our Nature Programs. Those programs include the Hiking Spree, guided hikes, campouts, SOAR, and Explorers which resulted in 4,110 participants in FY20. The Great American Campout, a facilitated family camping experience, is offered two weekends each year.

## Strategic Alignment

Parks and Recreation plays a key role in accomplishing the vision of our County Administrator. We build the community by engaging people. Our well-kept facilities, parks, and playgrounds provide great places and increase public safety. Our emphasis on services with a focus on culture and the utilization of natural resources create distinctive experiences that keep our customers returning. Our community centers add value and provide health, safety, economic, and social benefits for all. This makes communities desirable places to live, work, play and visit, thereby contributing to the ongoing economic vitality of our county. Furthermore, our centers will be hubs for all services offered by our Compliance, Communities and Conservation Team and a safe place in times of emergency.

We coach all ages and abilities for a healthier lifestyle, we help build strong communities and we connect citizens with resources and services that help everyone prosper. Programming and activities combat the obesity epidemic through the development of healthy lifestyles, strong minds, and fit bodies. These programs also help to deter crime and give our youth the tools to develop into contributing members of their own neighborhoods. Recreation experiences help older members of

Hillsborough County continue to stay healthy and active. Parks give individuals with disabilities the opportunity to participate in adaptive programs and engage in the environment around us.

As described in our Key Initiatives the 2015 Hillsborough County Commissioners (BOCC) Strategic Plan contains two strategies relevant to Parks and Recreation:

1. ***Distinctive Experiences*** – This strategy seeks to expand the number of people visiting or retiring in the County. Parks and Recreation focuses on providing memorable experiences to each visitor through facilities, activities, and programs. As illustrated in our Key Initiatives, emphasis is being placed on developing places and programs that appeal to tourist and visitors from other counties by expanding cultural, arts and active senior programs including socials and day trips as well as partnering with community organizations to provide large-scale community events.
2. ***Great Places*** – This strategy seeks to provide safety, arts, culture, recreation and other community features that make it a desirable place to live, work and do business. As illustrated in our Key Initiatives, Parks and Recreation develops programs with a focus on providing safe, well maintained recreation facilities and parks. Emphasis is placed on asset preservation and amenities that create destination locations and utilize our natural resources. During FY15, we will continue to pursue opportunities with other out of county agencies.

## Key Initiatives

While Parks and Recreation will pursue many actions as needed each year to meet objectives, there are some major initiatives underway through Capital Improvement Projects.

\*For all specialized fields the following are in the unfunded CIP list and they appear in the order of priority

- **Asset Preservation** – Operations and management of our new facilities are essential to preserving our assets and maintaining a safe environment for our users in line with the vision of our County Administrator.
- **Technological Innovation** – Parks and Recreation improved our customers experience navigating our website and registering for programs and activities due to an approximate \$15,000 investment on RecTrac software, kiosks and internet site upgrades. Improved kiosks were installed at all active recreation sites to provide customers with access to register and pay for programs. Access controls, the newest security alarm and surveillance systems on and off the County network allow for safer access to our buildings and sports complexes.
- **Training and Education** – Many of our employees are certified in their perspective field. Certifications include CPRP, CTRS, CPSI, NAYS, CPR, CDL with Passenger Endorsement, Archery, Kayaking and more. As we recruit candidates for key positions it is essential that we build on our internal training program as well as invest in continued education opportunities provided by qualifying organizations. A two-year budget of \$30,000 will provide us the opportunity to invest in our future and provide our staff with appropriate training.

- **Regional Turf Fields Lighting Upgrades** – Lightning controls need to be switched to computerized and cellular connected, so it is available for league leadership via mobile devices. Lights will be programmed and utilized only during schedule league usage to minimize wastage.
- **LED Sports Light Upgrades** – By December of 2020, the Department will complete upgrades to the Skyway and Ed Radice Sports Complex. The benefits to the community are improved safety, cost reduction of maintenance and power consumption, decreased spill illuminance, and repair time.
- **Athletic Turf Manager** - A need exists for one FTE Manager fully loaded position valued at a starting salary of \$85,000. The Department has added over 100 athletic fields to date and now manages the care on these fields for their Youth Sports Providers.
- **Marketing and Outreach** – For Parks and Recreation to remain competitive with other agencies in Florida and help fulfill the BOCC’s strategic mission to attract new residents and increase revenue, marketing our programs and events will be essential for our success. Parks and Recreation has identified a need of approximately \$20,000 per year to invest in marketing materials including, giveaways, billboards, signage, newspaper ads, magazines and events.
- **Improved Sustainability and Resiliency of Park System** – The Department will enhance the park system in four ways:
  - An improved and increased park system canopy will increase air quality and reduce stormwater runoff.
  - We will be ameliorating stormwater treatment on site by improving green infrastructure in parks.
  - Tittivating the connectivity of Parks through trail connections and multimodal transportation options that reduce the communities carbon footprint.
  - Provide cultural connections to the local area in parks and ensure park improvements are made equitably on social and economic basis.
- **Parks and Playground Improvements** – Studies have shown parks to be an economic driver in communities, from increased property values due to proximity of parks to customers, to attracting new County residents with amenities and programs. This \$1,000,000 initiative will improve various areas and add amenities that will develop our parks and recreation centers into destination locations.
  - **Splash Pads** – Inviting alternatives to swimming pools that increase attendance and help boost revenue. Splash pads will create destination locations, help revive County parks and invoke pride amongst community leaders. Additional locations have been identified in the Northeast zone for development.
  - **Playground Covers** – Adequate playground coverage must be considered to maximize use and benefits of public playgrounds. Playground covers not only protect children from harmful UV rays while playing stationary activities, but protect the playground equipment from sun damage, adding years to the structure’s useful life. Parks and Recreation will need approximately \$150,000 to invest in playground covers at various locations.
  - **Covered Basketball Courts** – Covered basketball courts offer children and adults more opportunities to play without the worries of sun and rain. Parks and Recreation will demonstrate leadership on sun safety practices in our communities by promoting and



supporting sun protection. This will be accomplished by providing cover for our outdoor courts at heavy use areas that do not have indoor gymnasiums. Parks and Recreation will need approximately \$475,000 to cover courts at three sites.

- **Dog Parks** – The Department has eight dog parks featuring dedicated zones for small and large breeds. Many locations need improvements and shade to encourage use and enhance safety and comfort. Park improvements will focus on shade, accessible routes, amenities, solar lights for extended use where warranted, and improved seating.
- **Countywide Safety Nets** – Install safety nets at all ball fields countywide \$1,100,000.
- **Waterset Sport Complex** – Construction of County- owned property within the Waterset Area is in the engineering phase. Phase 1 will add four synthetic turf regulation soccer fields, concession stands, maintenance storage and playgrounds. Funding for Phase 2 is being considered for FY21. Phase 2 will add five baseball/softball fields, concessions, a maintenance yard, additional parking and batting cages. When completed the sports complex will cost an estimated \$12M and total 90 acres of park space.
- **Lightning Detectors** – Add lightning detection devices to the two adult athletics softball complexes. The estimated cost is \$11,000 with approximately \$1,200 in maintenance costs annually.

## Future

### OBSERVATION

- The number of people living in Hillsborough County is projected to reach 1,500,000 in 2025.
- The population per mile has been increasing steadily County-wide. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the population density was 1,082 people per square mile.
- Hillsborough County's growth rate is predicted to increase over 15% by 2025.

### IMPLICATIONS

- Population growth will place a larger demand on existing facilities and programs. The County can expect to see increased use of existing facilities as well as increased demand for new ones. The number of athletic fields and facilities will need to correspondingly increase to meet the growing population.
- New facilities should be located strategically in areas of high population growth to meet new and previously unaddressed demands.
- Population growth will increase the land demands, which will simultaneously reduce the amount of available land and drive up the costs for additional acquisitions. As a result, future park land acquisition may become increasingly difficult.
- Additional facilities and maintenance will be required to accommodate the increase in Parks, Recreation and Athletics participation.

## Objectives and Outcomes

*Update to reflect 2014-2017 plans Objectives*

1. Convert the current mowing contract from twice-weekly mowing to a schedule that reflects current weather and ground conditions as well as add chemical treatment especially for athletic fields.
  - a. Contracted with World Sports to re-sod or sprig sports turf fields in disrepair with Bermuda Grass, including removing access clay that forms trip barriers on baseball and softball fields. Contracted with JSM to provide after sodding/sprigging care for Bermuda Grass fields. This includes insect control, weed control, pre and post emergent, dethatching, aerating, top dressing, and irrigation repair. Both World Sports and the Parks and Recreation grounds team provide a high-level of turf mowing to these fields. Parks and Recreation provides monthly grooming and maintenance for synthetic turf.
2. Provide safe, well-maintained and accessible parks, facilities and open space for all.
  - a. Staff attended many safety trainings such as COVID 19, Return to Work, Human Trafficking and De-escalation training. We amplified precautions such as heightened cleaning measures, created Return to Summer/Afterschool/Recreation Programming guidelines, and encouraged/monitored social distancing. Parks Security Team was brought onboard to investigate and work with local law enforcement for ongoing Parks issues such as vandalism, illegal dumping, homeless camps, drug use, and other crimes. In addition, this team conducts safety training for Active Shooter and assists with De-escalation training. Surveillance systems are being installed on all staffed sites and many athletic complexes to deter and review these crimes to try and catch the perpetrators.
3. Implement nature-based programming in year-round after school programs.
  - a. A new curriculum-based program was initiated at every after school location called Jr. Explorers. This program is implemented by our two nature specialists. One of our nature specialists, Brad Lympany, won the Rising Star Award at the 2020 FRPA specifically highlighting this program.
4. Develop signature events promoting family-oriented nature programming.
  - a. We have implemented two versions of the annual Great American Camp Out. One version is for novice family campers while the other is more primitive and geared towards more experienced camping families. Activities include guided hikes, campfire cooking, canoeing, and fishing. In conjunction with the Hiking Spree Kick-off, Parks and Recreation and CELM offered a kickoff event where families can come make a hiking stick, enjoy an interpretive hike, learn about controlled burning, take part in a cook-out, and acquire information about local nature-based organizations and social groups.

5. Create an enhanced, recreation-based special events team to ensure continued support of County special events.
6. Develop Signature Events.
  - a. Continue to grow events like Heart of Hillsborough Wimauma to other areas of the county that are in need of county services and support. This is an educational and fun event that helps build trust in the community. We are working with the Carrollwood community to create two signature events a year at Carrollwood Village to utilize the amphitheater and space available. A departmental policy has been put in place to increase the presence of food trucks at county provided events.
7. As appropriate, add new services and/or facilities that promote a wide range of uses and revenue streams within parks and recreation sites.
  - a. We have added many new facilities/amenities and services. Examples include locations like Carrollwood Village, FishHawk Skate Park, Apollo Beach Splash Pad and Community Garden, and All Peoples Playground. Many new shelters have been added to locations to increase revenue. Shelters at Carrollwood Village are available to be rented 365 a year. Carrollwood Village also boasts a new amphitheater, nature center, and arboretum. New programs such as Toddler PE, Tone and Stretch, interpretive hikes, and partnered programs are taking place at Carrollwood Village as well. The team is in the process of developing a sponsorship program that allows for public and private companies to put their names on park amenities as a sponsor benefit.
8. Attract large conferences and tournaments to sports complexes and recreation centers.
  - a. Continue to host tournaments such as Gramatica Kickball, ISSA Winter National, Brian Ashton Memorial, Gasperilla Classic, Freedom Sports Winter National, Freedom Sports State Championship, Chad Chronister One Pitch. The team at Northdale hosts an annual one-day Line Dance Conference. The creation of e-Sports cafes at Northdale and Emanuel P Johnson will allow for both local and online tournament play of this popular activity.
9. Support therapeutic sports programs.
  - a. A new graphic has been designed for the Adaptive Sports program and a strong media push has boosted participation in activities such as archery, hand cycling, Special Olympics, therapeutic yoga and more. Two staff have been certified to deliver physical training for persons with disabilities. Hiring of four Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists has enhanced quality programming. This has also given us the opportunity to provide assessments and goals for participant tracking and benefit.
10. Pursue partnerships with other organizations to provide more programming.
  - a. We have merged forces with Glazer Museum to offer Learn and Play, a grant supported program. Also, Tampa Museum of Art to offer quality art programming as part of a partnership. Recreation has teamed up with Positive Coaching Alliance to offer a quality

Character building program to staff and youth participants. We worked with USF to develop an E-Sports program. The Tampa Bay Lightning started outdoor ball hockey clinics, watch parties and stick giveaways at park locations with new street hockey courts. The team is currently working with The Department of Juvenile Justice to offer beneficial programs for at risk youth. The department partners with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office and the City of Temple Terrace to bring Boys and Girls Clubs of Tampa Bay to recreation centers in Winston, Bethune, Town and Country, Nuccio, Temple and Brandon.