Chapter 3: Needs and Priorities Assessment

Building on the information gathered as part of the Community Inventory and Assessment, the System Master Plan's team utilized innovative techniques to conduct a comprehensive city-wide needs and priorities assessment. Techniques used are a combination of qualitative and quantitative industry best practices that provide a system of cross checks to determine the top needs and priorities for parks, recreation and cultural resources in the City of Fort Lauderdale. The following details summarize the findings from each technique:

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3.6 Needs and Priorities Assessment Summary

Chapter 3

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Two, Community Inventory and Assessment, utilizes a number of observational techniques to better understand the current condition of parks, recreation facilities, programs and policies throughout the City of Fort Lauderdale. These techniques, though valuable to the System Plan team, do not provide the data needed to fully understand how residents use, value and envision their parks, recreation facilities, programs and services. This chapter documents two additional research types, qualitative and quantitative, which allow the team to gather this input through public participation, community surveys and inventory analyses.

In their singular form, each technique provides only a snapshot of information, but when combined, these three research types form a mixed methods, triangulated approach that can demonstrate overall trends in needs and priorities. Thirteen comprehensive methods of input or data collection were utilized as part of this triangulated approach (see **Figure 3-1**). Though some techniques are more statistically valid than others, by utilizing a comprehensive array of 12 techniques, the Master Plan team can cross-check results to better determine an accurate understanding of the City's needs and priorities.

Figure 3-1: Mixed Methods, Triangulated Approach

3.2 Community Involvement

3.2.1 Overview

Community involvement is the cornerstone of the qualitative technique method for the City of Fort Lauderdale's Parks and Recreation System Plan. A primary goal of the plan's community involvement was to provide opportunities for geographical, topic specific, and policy related input. The first element of the public participation phase of the project included conducting three community meetings in different geographical regions of the city. The second element consisted of conducting ten topic-based focus groups for various park and recreation topics. The third element included stakeholder interviews with elected officials, Parks and Recreation administrators, community officials and community leaders in Fort Lauderdale. The final tool utilized for public participation was a public engagement website (www.playfortlauderdale.com) that was launched on June 23, 2015 and remains operational throughout the entire system planning process. The following are summaries of findings for each method.

3.2.2 Community Meetings

Three community meetings were held throughout the City in geographically distinct areas: City of Fort Lauderdale City Hall (Downtown); Beach Community Center (northeast); and Osswald Park (northwest). Each meeting was publicly advertised in print, by flyers posted throughout the community, email blasts by the Department, website postings, and business card handouts.

Each meeting consisted of a presentation of the overall planning processes, findings from the Inventory and Analysis Overview, interactive voting questions, a sample survey, and a review of additional public participation opportunities.

Community Meeting #1: Fort Lauderdale City Hall

The first of three community meetings was held in the downtown area of Fort Lauderdale at City Hall on September 23, 2015. Comments were provided by residents throughout the meeting by means of written responses to questions on flip charts, interactive survey results, and Project Team members recording comments. Primary comments summarizing all methods included:

- Most important action is to upgrade existing facilities
- Coordinate with schools for facility use
- Utilize public-private and public-public partnerships
- Need parks that reduce user conflicts and cater to aging populations
- Revenue generation and improved safety in parks are priorities

Community Meeting #2: Beach Community Center

The second of three community meetings was held at Beach Community Center in the northeast area of Fort Lauderdale on September 24, 2015. Comments provided by residents throughout the meeting included:

- Better communication to the public regarding park and program offerings
- Future improvements should focus on upgraded existing facilities, as well as acquiring additional space
- Desire for more parks in highly commercial areas
- More opportunities for waterfront and intracoastal access, including pier attractions (such as San Francisco)
- Green space needs to accompany new development; impact fees need to be applied to the areas that are being impacted
- Public access for art in parks and community centers
- Conversion of surface parking lots to greenspace

Community Meeting #3: Osswald Park

The third of four community meetings was held at Osswald Park in the northwest area of Fort Lauderdale on September 26, 2015. Comments provided by residents throughout the meeting included:

- Need to address demographic changes and population projections for the city
- Parks and Recreation department needs more staff to maintain parks and public spaces
- Need to improve customer service in parks and facilities - concerns over program management and communication between park staff and users

City Hall Community Meeting

Beach Community Center Community Meeting

- Improvements need to focus on upgrading existing facilities and upgrading security of parks and nearby areas
- More programs for youth; integration and collaboration with schools
- Specific programs to activate underutilized parks
- More fitness stations and walking trails in parks
- Safety, crime prevention and cultural diversity must be top priorities
- Urban farms in parks
- Improve wayfinding and signage

In addition to the input taken from the participant comments and interactive polling exercise, community meeting attendees were invited to complete a written survey intended to identify needs and priorities for facilities and activities, attendees were also provided the opportunity to contribute written comments on a series of three display boards. The following provides a summary of the survey results and display board comments for the three community meetings:

Community Meeting Themes

Information gathered from each community meeting was recorded in meeting notes and coded by the consultant staff to identify consistent themes of community-wide needs and priorities. The primary themes from the focus groups included:

- Improved safety and security in parks
- Improvements to system; need to focus on upgrading existing facilities
- Need to improve communication between public and parks and recreation department, especially regarding what is available
- Increase opportunities for public art
- More community gardens and urban farms
- Provide programs and activities for youth and seniors, especially for health and fitness

Osswald Park Community Meeting

Community Meeting Survey Results

A. Most Important Facilities with Highest Unmet Needs

1. Walking and biking trails
2. Outdoor swimming pools / water parks
3. Nature center and trails
4. Small neighborhood parks
5. Outdoor amphitheaters / bandstand
6. Indoor swimming pools / leisure pools
7. Indoor fitness and exercise facilities
8. Playground equipment
9. Beach access parks
10. Indoor running / walking track

B. Most Important Activities with Highest Unmet Needs

1. Adult fitness and wellness programs
2. Adult art, dance, performing arts
3. Senior adult programs
4. City-wide special events
5. Water fitness programs
6. Parties/ celebrations
7. Youth fitness and wellness programs
8. City-wide special events
9. Adult sports programs
10. Preschool programs

Display Board Results

Why are you here today?

- Parks need to be more child friendly
- Desire for community gardens, urban farming and edible plants to be more present in parks
- More places for people to gather
- Promote ecosystems and natural areas within parks
- Need more designated dog parks to address the presence of unleashed dogs and dog waste in parks
- Better connectivity between parks, greenways and neighborhoods
- Include public art in parks
- Upgrade facilities to reflect Fort Lauderdale as a world-class city
- All parks need to be non-smoking areas
- More activities and programs for youth and seniors, focusing on fitness, health and education

What will your needs be in 5, 10 and 20 years?

5 YEARS

- Shaded seating areas
- Sustainable gardens and farming opportunities
- More opportunities for seniors
- Lightning predictors
- Clean air in parks
- More programmable field space
- Mentorship programs between youth and seniors

10 YEARS

- Farmers markets in parks
- More tree cover
- Organized senior exercise classes
- Community and family events
- Ample security
- Yoga and fitness classes

20 YEARS

- Activities for every age group
- ADA compliance across the system
- More exercise and nutrition classes for all age groups

If you could change or add items to the park and recreation system, what would you change/ add?

CHANGE

- Outdoor theaters
- More facilities and activities for children
- Better trees for shade
- More gardens in parks
- Increase the amount of exercise stations
- Public art in parks
- No smoking in parks
- Clean rooms
- More activities available to adults

ADD

- Green space; trees; improved maintenance
- Wi-Fi hotspots in parks and facilities
- More meeting spaces and events
- Passive parks and green spaces throughout the city
- Allow vendors such as food trucks in parks
- Sculptures and public art
- Improved programs for seniors
- Security cameras and better lighting

3.2.3 Focus Groups

Ten focus groups were held at Fort Lauderdale City Hall, Beach Community Center, Hortt Park, and Osswald Park covering various topics ranging from facilities, geographical areas and social groups. The meetings occurred between September 23 and September 30, 2015. Combined, the focus groups meetings were attended by nearly 50 residents and interested parties. Each meeting was one hour in length and started with a brief introduction of the parks and recreation system planning process, followed by an in-depth discussion of needs and priorities, then capped by a discussion of preliminary vision ideas for each topic and potential implementation strategies. The focus group topics were as follows (in order of completion):

- **City Departments**
- **HOA Associations Commission District 2**
- **HOA Associations Commission District 1**
- **Arts**
- **Civic Organizations**
- **Tourism**
- **Sports**
- **HOA Associations Commission District 4**
- **HOA Associations Commission District 3**
- **City Departments (Additional meeting)**

Comments and ideas from participants were recorded in meeting notes, cross-checked through audio recordings and finally coded to reflect consistent themes for primary findings. Items coded include topics or ideas which had more than one comment or included a detailed discussion during the focus group meeting. These themes are as follows for each focus group:

City Departments (9/23/15):

- Need more communication between Sustainability Planning and the Parks Department
- Attempt to identify performance measurements for the parks and recreation department and system
- Amending zoning to allow for parks and open spaces to be in all residential zoning types within the City - status of effort is unclear
- Criteria does not exist to provide adequate greenspace in dense development areas
- Impact fee allocation is not always appropriate
- Need to consider other initiatives such as the Central Beach Master Plan, Las Olas Marina expansion, D.C. Alexander Park, and Uptown area near Executive Airport
- Need to evaluate how parks that are impacted by dense urban growth relate to the incoming populations

HOA Associations - District 2 (9/23/15):

- Concerns of drug use and inappropriate behavior in some parks
- Need to activate these parks in order to discourage such behaviors
- Need to explore bench designs that discourage use by homeless - also include sustainable materials
- Larger pavilions
- Upgraded community centers
- Dedicate smoke-free parks and beaches
- More lighted volleyball courts
- Address conflicts between group vs. individual uses in parks
- Lack of opportunities for pick-up activities
- Encourage partnerships with school sites
- Art in parks
- Need neighborhood, walk-to parks in denser areas

HOA Associations - District 1 (9/24/15):

- Concerns that current service gaps will be exacerbated by population growth
- Access to school parks is not always appropriate
- The current impact fee model does not provide the greenspaces needed
- Need a linear park/greenway that goes through downtown
- Many areas deemed walkable are difficult to traverse
- Need more information on when/where certain activities and programs are being held

Arts (9/25/15):

- Need to include art and culture in parks to help create civic and neighborhood identity, commemorate history and enhance aesthetic value
- Amend zoning to allow for parks and open spaces to be in all residential zoning types in the city
- Have art programs to advance art in public places - encourage people to create art
- Some think art is not for lower economic groups - misconception
- Analyze how people from different economic groups and cultures use art in parks and public spaces
- There are art programs already present that could be used for the city, but more funding is required
- Establish a dedicated fund for art work - including department and guidelines for administration
- Create alliances between various groups in the community

Civic Organizations (9/25/15):

- Continue the same quality of public parks as population increases
- Consider that sports are no longer seasonal-many are played year-round
- Need user-friendly programs for senior citizens, especially those that encourage physical activity
- Encourage the development of mix-use complexes where all facilities are in close walkable distances
- Color the City - Public Art Initiative
- Downtown locations and parks should be treated as destinations
- Create a comprehensive Master list of public events taking place round the city that are organized both by the City and Civic Organizations
- Outside sponsorship is helpful in completion of public art projects
- Riverwalk is the ideal location for events
- Pocket parks are needed in some areas, but no point in acquiring more spaces if they cannot be properly maintained
- Deferred maintenance is an issue
- Increase open space with the addition of rooftop parks.

Sports Focus Group

Tourism (9/25/15):

- Safety and security concerns in the downtown areas
- Need for parks with more active programs; interactive features or activities, special events and memorable features
- Need more information available about parks, including marketing materials and a comprehensive events calendar
- Parks for all age groups
- Collaboration between cities and local partners
- Need to restore iconic historic places
- Priority projects should include 17th St. Causeway, Snyder Park, Riverwalk and Las Olas Boulevard
- Community outreach programs could help with some of the issues in the parks
- Need for capital reinvestment, as well as collaboration between City, County and State

Sports (9/25/15):

- Need land for large sports complexes, with specialized, multi-use facilities
- Lauderdale Stadium needs to be better utilized
- Snyder Park is underutilized and should incorporate more facilities
- Need more tennis courts at Joseph C. Carter Park
- Develop land that City already owns and acquire land adjacent to existing parks
- Sports are year-round activities
- Soccer, track and field, and tennis are becoming more popular
- Lockhart Stadium needs many improvements
- Support the development of more passive parks
- More fitness stations in parks
- Bike friendly pathways to and within parks
- Consider using artificial turf

HOA Associations - District 4 (9/25/15):

- Concerns over dumping in canals
- Developers are building too many units on small lots that would be well suited for pocket parks
- Coral Shores neighborhood only has one park, and needs another
- Encourage collaboration with Broward County Schools and the City park system
- Vandalism is an issue in some parks; need appropriate equipment for the area
- Consider surveillance systems in some parks
- Free Wi-Fi in parks
- Need more pocket parks in neighborhood areas
- Consider the diversity of the community when planning activities
- Shaded picnic areas
- Need funding to buy new equipment and upgrade buildings

HOA Associations - District 4 Focus Group

HOA Associations - District 3 Focus Group

HOA Associations - District 3 (9/26/15):

- Issues in Mills Pond Park such as quality of fields and administrative issues such as scheduling conflicts and preference
- Need to explore opportunities for Nova Southern University (NSU) East Campus - lease expiring in 2016
- Not much focus on the needs of the African American Community - need to focus on community priorities and programs for youth
- Parks need to address the age diversity of communities
- Provide more opportunities and activities in Sistrunk Park
- Need to demonstrate demand for transportation needs
- Snyder park is underutilized and not well maintained
- Edgewood neighborhood is under-served - residents desire more walkable parks with more activities
- Need more indoor sports facilities for rainy season
- Provide a park transportation system to help people get to different parks that they may not otherwise visit
- More flexible, multi-use park spaces
- Volunteer opportunities might help overcome the problems due to under-staffing

City Departments (9/30/15):

- Connectivity is a priority - need for more linear parks, possibly in the FEC corridor
- East Coast Greenway
- Open space at the convention center can be used as park space
- Buffered bike lanes planned in areas throughout the city
- Top safety concerns include Little Lincoln Park, Provident Park, Joseph C. Carter Park, Holiday Park, Lauderdale Manors and Mills Pond
- Utilize Sun Trails Grant (+/- $25 million per year for entire State)
- Use developers dedication

Focus Group Themes

Information gathered from each focus group meeting was recorded in meeting notes and coded by the consultant staff to identify consistent themes of community-wide needs and priorities. The primary themes from the focus groups included:

- Park safety and lack of use are primary concerns for many residents
- Providing small parks and open spaces in residential areas where there currently are few recreation opportunities, especially as the population grows and urbanizes
- Greater connectivity and walkability throughout the parks system
- Increasing need for athletic fields and sports facilities for year-round use
- Providing public art in parks and other public spaces throughout Fort Lauderdale
- Providing programs and activities for people of all age groups, especially youth and seniors
- Considering the specific needs and priorities of the diverse communities in Fort Lauderdale
- Need more information available about parks, events and programs
- Provide more fitness stations and other health and wellness opportunities in parks
- Concerns over the allocation of impact fees
- Collaboration between the City, other public agencies, special interest groups, community groups, and private companies
- Maintaining current and future parkland at a high level
- Promote Downtown and Riverwalk areas as destinations

3.2.4 Stakeholder Interviews

In order to better understand the priorities that the City of Fort Lauderdale's elected officials are facing, the consultant team conducted a series of ten interviews with the mayor, city council members, the city manager, and various city department and community leaders. Each interviewee was asked a series of questions regarding the issues they are hearing from constituents throughout their district or the city, thoughts on comparable cities or regions, and potential implementation strategies for improvements or enhancements to the parks, recreation and cultural resources system. Responses were recorded by the consultant team and coded to identify consistent themes. The following are themes compiled from all ten interviews:

Needs and Priorities:

- 5 of the 10 interviewees mentioned the need for new neighborhood, "walk-to" or "pocket" parks in under-served areas, emphasizing access to open space for all residents
- 5 of the 10 interviewees emphasized the importance of Downtown Fort Lauderdale and the Riverwalk, and the expansion of parks and recreation services connected with these areas
- 4 of the 10 interviewees mentioned the need to provide more programs for both youth and adults
- 3 of the 10 interviewees mentioned the need for more athletic fields
- 3 of the 10 interviewees discussed the need for improved safety in parks through better lighting, security cameras, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)
- 3 of the 10 interviewees discussed the need for youth outreach and mentorship programs
- 3 of the 10 interviewees emphasized the need for safe routes to parks and better connectivity throughout the system via improved streets and greenways
- 3 of the 10 interviewees discussed the need for Fort Lauderdale to continue to focus on providing a high quality of life and/or a beach-oriented lifestyle
- 3 of the 10 interviewees mentioned the need for more special events, either in exiting parks like the Riverwalk or in potential venues near the beach
- 3 of the 10 interviewees mentioned the need for many parks to become more activated in order to stimulate usage and diminish criminal activities
- 3 of the 10 interviewees mentioned the need for the redevelopment of streets and/or surface parking lots to accommodate parks and recreation facilities
- Other needs mentioned by interviewees included: collaboration with schools, a focus on health and fitness, improved communication from the parks and recreation department on available programs and activities, and more dog parks

Funding/ Implementation:

- 6 of the 11 interviewees stated that they supported increased partnerships between other agencies, non-profits, and local businesses to fund parks and recreation facilities and programs
- 2 of the 10 interviewees mentioned a desire to use funding to acquire new parkland
- 2 of the 10 interviewees also mentioned a desire to use funds to build new facilities on land the City already owns
- At least one interviewee expressed support for a Parks Bond to provide funding
- At least one interviewee expressed concern over the current impact fee process and how these funds are being applied to the park system

Comparable Communities:

- Comparable communities mentioned include: San Diego, CA, Waikiki, Hawaii, Bronxville, NY, and Cape Cod, MA

Interview Themes

The following themes were recorded by consultant staff during multiple interviews with City of Fort Lauderdale stakeholders and elected officials. The primary themes for needs and priorities from the interviews included:

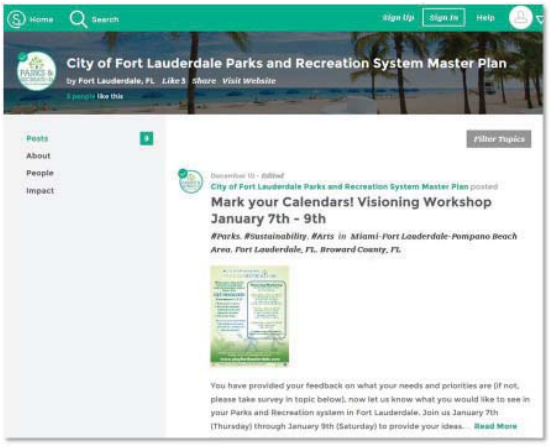
- Providing small neighborhood parks and open space in areas that are currently under-served, as well as areas with dense population growth
- Utilize strategic partnerships to provide additional support/funding for parks and recreation programs
- Continue to utilize Downtown, the Riverwalk, and the beaches as primary attractions to the City
- Improve efforts to market the parks system to both residents and tourists
- Provide more programming opportunities for all ages; particularly for seniors
- Youth outreach programs need to be a priority
- Increase the number and availability of athletic fields
- Improve park safety and connectivity throughout the system
- Activate park spaces to encourage park usage
- Promote health and fitness
- Improve the communication between the Parks and Recreation Department and residents

3.2.5 Public Engagement Website

A goal of the Department is to increase public involvement and that includes utilizing online content and social media to reach out to residents and users in a new way. This will help gather input and create better opportunities for residents and workers to stay engaged in the planning process. To fully engage citizens, the city has also included an interactive public engagement website. In addition, the Department's own website (**www.fortlauderdale.gov/departments/parks-recreation**) serves as a depository of information such as meeting notes, project schedule and announcements.

The interactive public engagement website (**www.playfortlauderdale.com**) was utilized to gain input from area residents and visitors throughout the planning process with various topics, questions and polls posted for public input and feedback. Comments, ideas and votes submitted through this website have been saved, compiled and coded by the consultant team and city staff. At the time of publishing, the website has received over 11,000 visits with over 8,400 page views. These visitors have provided valuable comments and ideas that have contributed to the public involvement effort. The following are examples of ideas submitted through the website as well as coded themes, which have received the highest amount of votes of support or have been identified by numerous residents in submitting their ideas or comments:

www.playfortlauderdale.com



3.2.6 Online Survey

Commenced on September 23, 2015 and concluded on December 31, 2015; Fort Lauderdale residents and anyone with an interest had an opportunity to participate in an online public opinion survey via SurveyMonkey. The System Plan team developed a questionnaire, which closely resembled the Citizen Opinion and Interests survey document in **Section 3.5** of this report. The Online Public Opinion Survey was accessible by two means: a link was provided on the public engagement website (www.playfortlauderdale.com); and a link was emailed to contacts via email blasts from the City of Fort Lauderdale. At each public event, the consultant and/or Department staff provided business cards to attendees with a domain address and QR Code to access the public engagement website and encouraged attendees to complete the survey. In total, 66 surveys were completed.

While findings from online surveys are instructive, it is important to note that this survey is not considered statistically accurate and does not reflect the demographics of Fort Lauderdale. Respondents self-select to complete the survey, rather than being randomly contacted in a sample such as the survey used in **Section 3.4.**

Survey Respondents

The intention of the survey was to reach as many City of Fort Lauderdale residents and interested parties as possible. Before completing questions regarding park and recreation facilities and activities, a series of basic demographic questions were asked to better understand the respondents.

Parks and Recreation Questions

A series of questions specific to park and recreation issues was asked to each respondent. The number of responses vary for each question. Questions are organized into five categories:

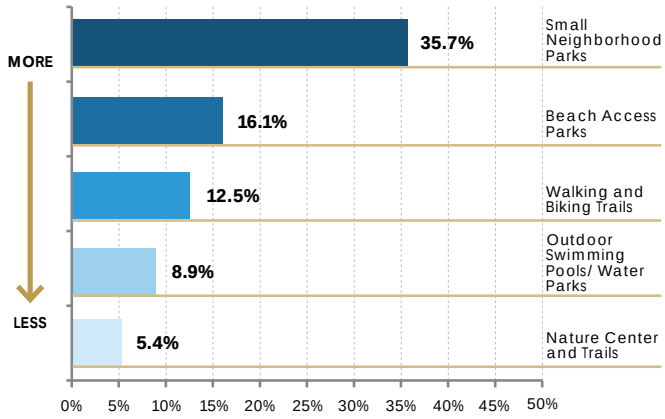
- Park and Facilities
- Recreation Program
- Satisfaction
- Priorities
- Communication

Online Survey

1. Please indicate how often you use the following major parks and recreation facility types provided by the City of Fort Lauderdale Parks and Recreation Department (Top 5)

The facilities that received the most responses were: small neighborhood parks (35.7%); beach access parks (16.1%); walking and biking trails (12.5%); outdoor swimming pools/ water parks (8.9%); and nature center and trails (5.4%).

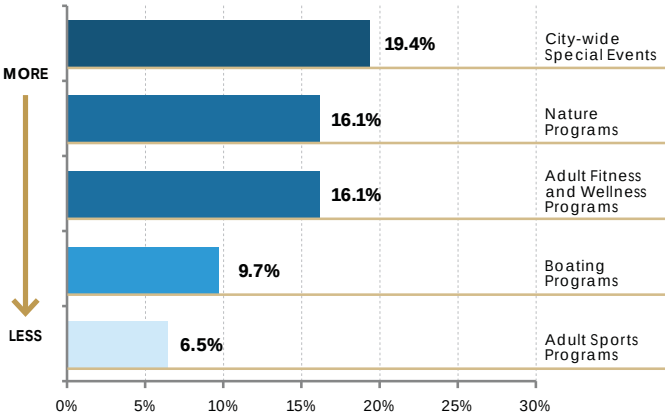
Table 3-1: Top 5 most used facilities



2. Which recreation programs are most important to your household? (Top 5)

The programs that received the most responses were: city-wide special events (19.4%); nature programs (16.1%); adult fitness and wellness programs (16.1%); boating programs (9.7%); and adult sports programs(6.5%).

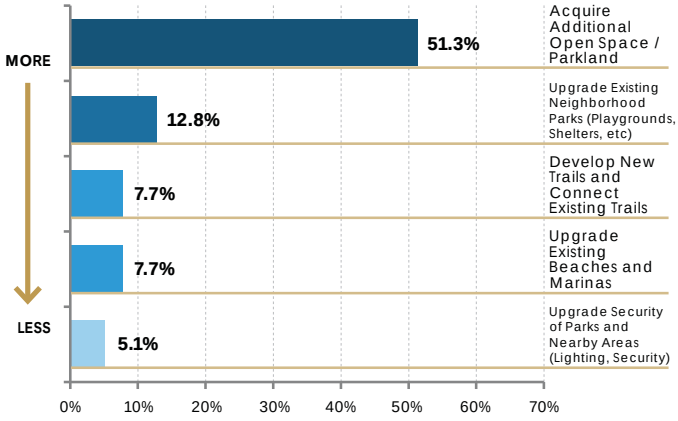
Table 3-2: Top 5 most important programs



3. Which actions should Fort Lauderdale take to improve the parks and recreation system? (Top 5)

The actions that received the most responses were: acquire additional open space / parkland (51.3%); upgrade existing neighborhood parks (12.8%); develop new trails and connect existing trails (7.7%); upgrade existing beaches and marinas (7.7%); and upgrade security of parks and nearby areas (5.1%).

Table 3-3: Top 5 actions to improve the parks and recreation system



Online Survey Themes

The following themes for needs and priorities were drawn from the online survey:

- Emphasis on small neighborhood parks, and the acquisition of more open space
- Increase connectivity and walkability throughout the parks system
- High importance for city-wide special events
- Continue to provide opportunities for health and fitness
- Utilize public art to provide multiple benefits to this city

3.2.7 Community Involvement Summary

Forming the foundation of the qualitative research, public participation provides a snap shot of the views of residents, stakeholders and elected officials for the vision and needs and priorities of the City of Fort Lauderdale's Parks and Recreation System. With the interaction of over 11,000 citizens through face-to-face meetings and online conversations, the System Plan team gained a better understanding of the community's needs. Below is a list that summarizes the top needs for facilities and activities based on input provided during the public involvement process. Following the needs list, a list of the top priorities themes is provided that summarizes input from each of the public participation events.

Beach Community Center Community Meeting

Needs *(Compiled from Public Participation in descending order)*

A. Most Important Facilities with Highest Unmet Needs

1. Walking and biking trails
2. Outdoor swimming pools / water parks
3. Nature center and trails
4. Small neighborhood parks
5. Outdoor amphitheaters / bandstand
6. Indoor swimming pools / leisure pool
7. Indoor fitness and exercise facilities
8. Playground equipment
9. Beach access parks
10. Indoor running / walking track

B. Most Important Activities with Highest Unmet Needs

1. Adult fitness and wellness programs
2. Adult art, dance, performing arts
3. Senior adult programs
4. City-wide special events
5. Water fitness programs
6. Parties/ celebrations
7. Youth fitness and wellness programs
8. City-wide special events
9. Adult sports programs
10. Preschool programs

***Priorities** (Compiled from Public Participation in descending order)*

- Improve **safety and security** in parks
- Focus on **upgrading existing facilities**
- Improve **communication** between public and parks and recreation department
- Increase opportunities for **public art**
- Provide more **community gardens and urban farms**
- Provide **programs and activities** for **youth and seniors**
- Better **connectivity and walkability** between parks, greenways and neighborhoods
- More designated **dog parks**
- Promote **ecosystems and natural areas** within parks
- More **shaded areas** to sit in parks
- Community and family **events** held more frequently
- Passive **parks and greenspace throughout the city**
- Consider the specific needs and priorities of the **diverse communities**
- Promote **Downtown and Riverwalk Areas**
- Outreach **programs for youth**
- Continue to provide opportunities for **health, fitness and education**
- Need more **information available** about **parks, events and programs**
- Increase the **availability of athletic fields**
- **Activated park spaces** to increase usage

Osswald Park Community Meeting

3.3 Park and Recreation Trends Analysis

3.3.1 Introduction

In addition to comparing successful park systems to the needs and priorities gathered from community input, the local trends identified through the input process are also linked with recreation trends that are experienced by parks and recreation systems across the nation. These trends may provide insight into the factors that are influencing the issues and concerns being voiced by Fort Lauderdale neighbors, and help explore potential solutions to improving the overall success of the parks system. Public parks and recreation agencies have been tested in the last ten years to alter their approach to providing parks and recreation services. This has been based on the following:

- ***Increasing Demands*** – Ever increasing facility, program, and service demands from the public.
- ***Inclusiveness*** – The requirement that agencies provide access to facilities, programs and services to an ever more diverse population.
- ***Cost Effectiveness*** - A demand that parks and recreation agencies be more cost effective in their development and operations of services and facilities.
- ***Measureable Outcomes*** – A strong need to be able to quantify the results and benefits of the programs and facilities that are provided. Establishing well defined levels of service (LOS) are critical.

As a result of these factors the following general best practices have been identified:

- Develop a clear vision statement regarding roles and responsibilities in providing services to constituents
- Ensure the vision statement is backed up by a number of pointed goals
- Utilize the vision, by ensuring a professional and updated master plan is in place to guide future development and operations of parks and recreation facilities and programs
- Develop on-going, long range, planning efforts to position the agency for success in the future
- Define the role of the public agency as a provider, facilitator and/or partner in the delivery of parks and recreation services and facilities. As a result, specific areas of focus are determined and certain functions are left to others

Athletic Facilities at Floranada Park

- Through careful analysis, determine which services should be provided in-house and which should be contracted to other providers
- Strong record keeping allows for trends and directional analysis. This also results in the development of specific performance measurements. For this to be effective there must be full computerization of all management records, including program registration, point of sale, rentals, facility scheduling, time card management, maintenance, etc
- Develop well written and comprehensive policies and procedures that cover all aspects of an agency's management and operation and update on a regular basis
- Ensure primary functions of the agency's operation are evaluated, tracked, and measured on a regular basis

3.3.2 General Approach to Providing Parks and Recreation Services

The delivery of parks and recreation facilities, programs and services face unique challenges in larger communities. These include:

Geography

Providing equity for all areas of a community is often difficult. Many larger cities have moved away from the idea of having all facilities and programs available on a neighborhood level to a concept of having some services provided in this manner (open lawns, playgrounds, etc.), while others are more regional (athletic fields, community centers, etc.) and still others are community wide facilities (tournament complexes, festival grounds, etc.).

Demographics

Understanding the demographic make-up of the overall community but also smaller sub areas is more important than ever. This can be based on ethnicity, age, income levels, and/or type of user (resident, seasonal resident, or even tourist).

Recognizing that different ethnic groups have different recreation interests and expectations has an impact on the types of facilities that are developed and the programs and services that are provided. There are also substantial differences by age with a greater focus on the growing active senior market. Many communities also have a variable population that they are attempting to serve from the occasional visitor or tourist who is looking for something unique or special, to the seasonal resident who desires specific activities and facilities, to the full-time resident who may have more traditional needs. Added to this is the need to serve the special needs segment of the community in an effective manner which is often through partnerships with other organizations.

Roles of Public Agencies

In the last ten years there has been the realization that public parks and recreation agencies cannot be the sole provider of services and cannot possibly be all things to all people. Increasingly public agencies have taken on more of the role of a coordinator of parks and recreation resources and a clearinghouse for community wide information. However, public agencies still work to ensure social equity in the provision of parks and recreation facilities, programs and services.

In order for this concept to work, the public agency has had to make a clear determination of the areas of focus that will be priorities for the future. This is based on the role that other agencies and providers can realistically provide.

Resource Allocation

Increasingly public agencies have been faced with the pressure to do more with less. This requires a careful allocation of existing resources to continue to provide parks and recreation facilities, programs and services. In addition to reducing costs, there is also a much stronger emphasis on revenue production in an effort to increase the level of cost recovery. With the need for improved allocation of resources comes the requirement to be able to measure results.

3.3.3 Recreation Programs and Services Delivery

It is important to understand some of the trends that are being seen nationally with recreation programming over the last ten years. However, it should be noted that each community is unique and the region of the country has a strong bearing on trends and other operational factors.

Some of the keys to providing recreation programs and services include:

Programming Philosophy

Essential to developing a comprehensive recreation program is strong administrative oversight of the process. It starts with the development of an overall philosophy that will direct programming efforts by the public organization and determine the role of other providers. The philosophy should emphasize areas of focus by age group as well as program areas and also prioritize future program development options.

As part of the programming philosophy a determination of what programs and services will be offered directly by the recreation staff and which will be contracted to other individuals or organizations must be determined. Increasingly recreation departments are turning to contracted services or the outright rental of facilities to other providers to broaden programming and limit the role of in-house employees.

Program Plan

Based on the program philosophy recreation agencies develop a well-conceived plan for the delivery of recreation services. This plan takes into consideration the future direction of recreation services in the agency along with the role of other organizations and recreation providers in the area. There are clearly identified areas of programmatic responsibility to ensure that there is not overlap in resource allocation. From this, recreation agencies establish a five-year program plan that identifies the priorities for program development, the responsible staff member and the required resources.

The plan also establishes programs that have not only an appeal for different age groups (youth, teen, adult and seniors) but also to the family unit and the different ethnic groups in the community. Establishing events and programs that will serve any seasonal population and might attract visitors to a community are often critical as well.

Fee Setting

In order to accomplish a high level of recreation services, recreation agencies have been much more aggressive in their fee setting with the goal of covering more operational expenses for most programs. However, with a more entrepreneurial approach to assessing fees for activities comes the need to develop a broad based scholarship program that allows for those individuals that cannot afford to pay the opportunity to participate in recreation activities. Such programs usually have a limited budget and do require the user to pay at least something for service.

Use of Other Service Providers

There has also been a movement away from the principle of public recreation departments having to be the actual provider of all recreation programs and services, to the concept of public agencies being the general coordinator and enabler of overall community recreation needs and resources. This has resulted in a great deal of programming now being conducted by volunteer youth sports organizations, adult sports associations, non-profit groups such as the YMCA and other social service organizations, as well as the private sector. This has reduced the financial obligations of the public sector, placed programming in the hands of organizations with the specific expertise (and often the facilities as well), and allowed the private sector to have a more active role in public recreation. There has also been an increase in the number of public agencies collaborating to bring a higher level

of recreation service on more of a regional basis especially for more specialized services (special needs, outdoor education, etc.).

Facilities

The vast majority of outdoor related recreation programming takes place in public parks with school facilities providing the other main venue. For indoor programs, school buildings are still the primary location for most activities with public recreation centers and other provider's facilities being the additional sites. With the demand for recreation programs and services continuing to expand at phenomenal rates, a new more innovative approach has been undertaken to find appropriate sites for many activities. This has resulted in partnering with private facilities (fitness centers, dance studios, outdoor aquatic clubs, etc.), non-profits (YMCA's, Boys & Girls Clubs, cultural arts centers, etc.) and even private schools for certain activities. With the demand for youth sports fields continuing to grow, it is not unusual for youth sports organizations to build and operate their own fields on their own property or on leased undeveloped public land.

Staffing

In order to continue to grow the number of recreation programs and services that are offered to a community, adequate staffing is necessary to not only conduct the program itself but also to supervise and administer the activities. With staffing costs being the single greatest expense item for parks and recreation departments, many agencies have attempted to minimize the number of full-time staff by contracting for certain programs or partnering with other providers for services (see above). The need to reduce full-time staff became even more acute with the poor financial condition of most agencies during the recent recession. However, even with this approach there still needs to be adequate full-time staff to oversee and coordinate such efforts. Part-time staff is still the backbone of most recreation departments and make up the vast majority of program leaders and instructors. Many departments have converted program instructors to contract

Table 3-4: General Programs and Services Trends by Focus Area

Focus Area	Programs
Sports	Youth
	Adult
	Team
	Individual
	Camps and Clinics
	Tournaments
	Adventure/ Non-Traditional
	Sports Specific Training
Fitness/ Wellness	Group Fitness Classes
	Personal/Small Group Training
	Education
	Nutrition
	Wellness Special Events
Cultural Arts	Performing Arts (dance, theater, music, etc.)
	Visual Arts (painting, ceramics, pottery, etc.)
	Arts Events
Youth	Before and After School
	Summer Camps/School Break Camps
	Preschool
	Teen
Education	Language
	Tutoring
	ESL
	Science
Outdoor	Outdoor Education
	Outdoor Adventure
	Environmental Events
Seniors	Fitness/Wellness
	Cultural Arts
	Self Improvements
	Education
	Trip Programs
Aquatics	Lessons
	Fitness
	Competitive (Swim/Dive/Water Polo)
	Therapy
	Specialty Classes
General Interest	Personal Development
	Specialty
Special Needs	Inclusion Programs
Special Events	Community Wide Events
	Facility Based Events
Self Directed	Activities organized and conducted by the participant themselves

Table 3-5: General Programs and Services Trends by Focus Area

Focus Area	Programs
Sports	Youth Lacrosse
	Adult Soccer
	Adult Cricket
	Youth & Adult Rugby
	Pickleball
	Youth Camps and Clinics
	Individual Sports (Fencing)
	Adventure/Non-Traditional (BMX, Mountain Biking, Disc Golf, Ultimate Frisbee)
	Youth Sports Specific Training
Fitness/ Wellness	Functional Training Classes
	Personal/Small Group Training
	Yoga
	Nutrition
	Healthy Lifestyle Education
Cultural Arts	Music Production for Youth
	Digital Media
Youth	Before and After School Programs at Recreation Centers, Specialty Summer Camps
Education	Camps
Outdoor	Eco-Tourism
	Environmental Education
Seniors	Fitness/Wellness
	Baby Boomer Focused Activities
Aquatics	Therapy
	Triathalon Training
General Interest	Personal Finance
Special Events	Community Wide Events

employees with a split of gross revenues (usually 70% to the instructor and 30% to the city) or developed a truer contract for services that either rents facilities and/or takes a percentage of the gross from another organization. The use of volunteers can help to augment paid staff but should not be seen as a substitute for them.

Funding

The basic requirement for the provision of recreation programs and services is a funding commitment associated with the development of facilities to support programs and staff to manage and provide the programming. This usually requires a tax dollar commitment but also other sources of funding including program fees, grants, and partnering with other agencies can also help with additional funding. In many recreation departments, funding limits have been the greatest single challenge to continuing to provide not only existing programs but also bringing on any new services.

Other

Recreation departments now often serve as a coordinating agency and a clearinghouse for multiple recreation organizations and providers, in an effort to bring a comprehensive scope of recreation programs to a community. This has also increased the number of partnerships that are in place to deliver a broader base of programs in a more cost effective manner.

There is a much stronger emphasis on revenue production and raising the level of cost recovery to minimize tax dollar use to offset recreation programming.

Specific programming development trends include:

- Developing programs that are single day or no more than four sessions at a time
- Developing programs for youth during non-school days, Christmas break, spring break and any other extended breaks
- A variety of summer camps
- More Saturday programs and the introduction of some Sunday programming (especially in adult sports leagues)
- Introducing programs that are oriented toward specific ethnic groups
- Developing a baseline of programs that appeal to the family unit
- Staggering the days and times of similar programs that are offered at multiple locations.
- Drop-in pay as you go fitness classes
- Expanded senior programming to include a greater focus on the Baby Boomer

generation which often means programs and services that are available in the evenings and on weekends

There has been a concerted effort to integrate conventional recreation programming with community based social service programs and education. Most social service programs are offered by other community based agencies and education is often coordinated with school districts.

Many agencies are now classifying programs into three areas. The placement of programs into these categories does not indicate the overall importance of these activities in the community but rather the role of the parks and recreation department in providing these programs.

- ***Core Programs*** – are those programs that are a primary responsibility of the parks and recreation to provide as agency based activities.
- ***Secondary Programs*** – are those programs that are a lower priority to be provided directly by the parks and recreation agency, but may be offered by other organizations through contract with the agency.
- ***Support Programs*** – are programs that are not a priority for parks and recreation to be providing directly to the community but where the agency may provide support through facilities and promotion of activities for other organizations.

Program characteristics (performance measures) are tracked including:

- Rates of fill
- Participation numbers and comparisons to past years/seasons
- Rate of program cancellations
- Financial performance including cost per participant
- Evaluations from participants

A lifecycle analysis is completed for all programs offered by the agency. Programs are classified in three categories and agencies strive to have program offerings distributed equally among each category.

- ***New*** – programs in the start-up phase that are just starting to build in popularity.
- ***Mature*** – programs that have consistent high levels of registrations and are still growing in popularity.
- ***Old*** – programs that are seeing a decline in popularity.

Summer Program at Osswald Park

3.3.4 Park and Facility Development

Developing and managing a variety of parks and recreation facilities is the main focus of the Fort Lauderdale Parks and Recreation Department. The types of facilities that are now being provided by parks and recreation departments have become more diverse, and expensive to acquire, develop and maintain. As a result, establishing a master plan is critical to determining park and facility development roles, timelines and priorities.

Parks

The development of parks has resulted in the establishment of a classification system for asset management for parks based on access to the community, size and amenities. It should be noted that there are a variety of classification systems that are utilized by communities and different levels of development that are often designated for certain park amenities. Common classification distinctions are:

Pocket/Urban

- **Site Size** – less than one acre
- **Focus** - mainly passive use but can have limited active recreational opportunities
- **Service Area** – 1/4-mile to 1/2-mile radius and / or a 5-10 minute walking distance

Major William Lauderdale Park - Urban Open Space

Neighborhood Parks

- **Site Size** – 1-10 acres
- **Focus** – designed to provide neighborhood based play fields for baseball, soccer, and football, playgrounds, courts, and picnic areas
- **Service Area** – 1/2-mile to 1-mile radius or 10-20 minute walking distance

Community Parks

- **Site Size** – 10+ acres
- **Focus** – designed to provide lighted athletic fields, large playgrounds, recreation center, picnic area and swimming pools
- **Service Area** – one to three mile radius or 10-15 minute driving distance

Regional Parks

- Site size – 50+ acres
- Focus – a one of a kind facility such as a sports complex, stadium, auditorium or large natural resource
- Service area – 15-30 minute driving time

Preserves/Open Space/Greenways/Blueways

Known by a number of different titles, this classification usually includes open areas that have limited active use amenities and are often left in a natural state.

Preserves

Usually large tracts of land and/or water areas that include environmentally sensitive amenities. These areas remain in a natural setting but might include interpretative areas, soft surface trails, and nature viewing areas.

Open Space

These are also often larger tracts of land that are open areas that are left in their natural state. These often are buffers between developed areas and other natural resources. These areas

can include soft surface trails and nature viewing areas.

Greenways/Blueways

These are usually linear parks or waterways that connect to other parks or natural resources and often serve as linkages to other areas of the community. Greenways can be developed parks or natural areas. Greenways may also have hard surfaced community or regional trails. Blueways can be canals, rivers, or creeks.

Trails

Trails are an important amenity that are often found in the other park areas noted above or could be by themselves. Trails are often categorized into four areas.

Natural

These are soft surface and generally unimproved trails that are found in preserves and open spaces

Neighborhood

These are usually trails that circle a neighborhood or community park and are usually hard surfaced and six to eight feet wide.

Fort Lauderdale Aquatic Complex

Community

These trails will usually connect various community amenities such as schools, community parks, regional parks, recreation/ community centers, aquatic center, shopping areas and other civic buildings. These trails are hard surfaced and can be 10-12+ feet wide.

Regional

Community trails can connect with a regional trail system that is developed in conjunction with other neighboring cities or districts and will allow for longer trips. These trails are hard surfaced and can be 10-12 feet wide.

Specialized Facilities

This includes unique facilities such as marinas, swimming pools, nature/interpretative center, dog parks, amphitheater, tennis centers, beaches, golf courses and other amenities. The following is a breakdown of basic specialized facilities.

Aquatic Centers

Aquatic centers or swimming pools are usually developed on four levels.

- **Neighborhood** – Smaller pools that are designed to serve specific neighborhoods. The bather load is often less than 200. These amenities are often built and maintained by a developer or HOA next to a neighborhood park.
- **Community** – Larger pools that serve a community. These vary in size and amenities (competitive to recreational) and can range from a bather load of 400 to over 1,000. They are developed as part of a community park. A usual standard is one per 20,000 population.
- **Regional** – These are large water parks that are designed to serve a significant geographic area. They usually contain an expansive recreational pool but can also have a strong competitive focus. Bather loads are 1,000 or more. These are often

developed through a partnership with other organizations. They would be located in a regional park or as a standalone facility. A usual standard is one per 100,000.

- **Splash Pad** – Many communities are either replacing existing pools with splash pads or adding them to the inventory of aquatic facilities.

Recreation/Community Centers

Recreation/Community centers are usually developed on three levels.

- **Clubhouse/Community Building** – are smaller buildings that are designed to serve as a community room for individual neighborhoods. The size is usually less than 5,000 sq.ft. and requires less than three acres. These amenities are usually and are often located next to a neighborhood pool or park.
- **Community Center** – are larger community buildings with multiple, more passive use, spaces that serve a community. These vary in size and amenities and can range from 5,000 to well over 20,000 sq.ft. and requires three to five acres. This level of center can also be combined with a comprehensive community recreation center or community aquatic center. These centers are usually part of a community park.

Community Center at Riverland Park

- **Comprehensive Community Recreation Center** – This is a large center that contains both active (pool, gym, fitness, etc) and passive use elements (community rooms) and is designed to serve a substantial geographic area (50,000 or more). The facility is usually over 40,000 sq.ft. to as much a 80,000 sq.ft. and requires eight acres or more. These are often developed through a partnership with other organizations or other groups (YMCA, etc). These centers are normally part of a community or regional park.

Performing Arts Center

A performing arts center is a regional indoor facility with a large theater. Seating can vary from 300 to over 1,000. The center can be 30,000 to 70,000 sq.ft. and requires eight acres or more. This type of center is normally developed by a number of organizations or large communities. They can be located as part of a larger civic campus, in conjunction with a comprehensive recreation center, or as an amenity in a regional park.

Sports Complex

A youth or adult oriented sports complex (50-200 acres) with a series of lighted game fields for baseball/softball (6-8 fields in a wagon wheel with central restrooms/concessions/press box) and football/soccer/lacrosse (10-20 fields with central restrooms/concessions/press box). The complex could also include a stadium for either or both sports. A sports complex is built as a regional park.

Tennis Center

An 8-24 lighted court complex on two to four acres that has a stadium court, central restroom, concession, and pro-shop area.

Pickleball Courts

The fastest growing court sport in America is pickleball and the demand for both indoor and outdoor courts has soared in the last five years.

Outdoors either dedicated courts (usually four or more) are built or tennis courts are being striped for such use. Indoors gyms are utilized as pickleball courts with three to four courts being laid out over basketball and volleyball courts.

Amphitheater

An amphitheater can be either a community sized amenity (under 1,000 seats, some permanent and some lawn with a small stage and storage area) or a large regional facility (1,000 to 2,000 seats, some permanent and some lawn with a large covered stage, restrooms and concessions). An amphitheater requires two to four acres of land with a community facility being located in a community park and a regional facility in a regional park.

Nature Center/Interpretive Center

A small indoor and outdoor space (usually under 10,000 sq.ft.) for viewing and observing nature as well as for classroom space and exhibits. A nature center is located in conjunction with a preservation area.

Adventure Sports Park

Can include a variety of amenities.

- **Skate Park** – a lighted concrete structure with bowls, streetscapes and a variety of ramps. A total of 20,000 to 25,000 square feet. This can be located in a community or regional park.
- **BMX Track** – a lighted dirt track area on a two to three acre site. A single large BMX track is recommended. This can be located in a community or regional park.
- **Mountain Bike Trails** – designated trails often in open space areas.
- **Rock Climbing or Bouldering Wall** – an outdoor artificial rock wall for climbing.
- **Disc Golf Course** – a course that is usually nine holes that is laid out over a more natural area of a park.

Boat Launch/Marina

With the presence of natural bodies of water or access to other waterways, a boat launch and/or marina is possible. The size of these amenities

Boat Launch at George W. English Park

must match the size of the water area. For smaller lakes less than 20 acres there will need to be limited amenities and a focus on smaller water craft. For larger bodies of water and ones that have access to other waterways the ability to handle larger boats may be necessary.

Beaches

For communities that have large bodies of water or ocean access, managing and maintaining a beach is often an amenity. This could also include concession areas, shelters, restroom/ change rooms, and other amenities.

Golf Course

A nine or 18 hole course that includes a clubhouse, teaching area and driving range. Courses are usually stand-alone recreation facilities but can be located as part of a large regional park as well.

Dog Park

A dog park could be a fenced area of one to three acres with the ability to close off different sections. There are often small dog and large dog areas. Water, benches and shade are necessary. Smaller dog parks can be located in large neighborhood parks while larger dog parks are more appropriate in community or regional parks.

Campground

Some communities also develop and operate campgrounds in more natural park areas. These can either be unimproved camping sites or ones that support RV's with full hook-ups, restrooms and other support facilities.

Other

There has been a much stronger emphasis on preserves and open space acquisition and trails development in the past ten years than most other types of facilities.

3.3.5 Maintenance of Parks and Recreation Facilities

Over the last 10 to 15 years there have been significant changes in how maintenance of parks and recreation facilities is accomplished. Some of the more significant trends include:

1 The responsibility for maintenance and custodial services now varies considerably by agency. As has been noted, many municipalities have moved parks maintenance functions to public works departments and recreation facilities maintenance and custodial services to a separate facilities maintenance department or a division within public works.

Specialized facility maintenance (athletic fields, aquatic centers, etc.) still often remain the responsibility of parks and recreation departments or even the recreation division.

On the other side, functions such as right of way maintenance are now being moved from public works to parks operations.

2 The development of a comprehensive maintenance management plan for parks, open space, trails and recreation facilities is now considered essential. This document must not only deal with an overall plan for the parks and recreation agency but also specific plans for each park or facility. This plan should include:

- Classification of outdoor parks, preserves and open space into six levels of maintenance standards (see below).
- A listing of specific maintenance tasks that need to be performed, their frequency and the quality level that is expected.
- A determination of manpower, equipment and operating supplies that are required to complete the tasks.
- Tracking of maintenance tasks and overall performance.
- The establishment of a preventative maintenance plan.

3 The maintenance division develops specific levels of service for each facility that is under their responsibility utilizing the NRPA's maintenance standards that divides outdoor park maintenance into six different levels. These include:

- ***Level 1*** – High visibility areas that require the highest level of maintenance.
- ***Level 2*** – Is the normal standard and what an individual expects to see on a regular basis.
- ***Level 3 & 4*** – These two levels are just below the norm and include reductions in frequency of maintenance with a focus on safety. These levels are often utilized when there are budget and manpower reductions.
- ***Level 5*** – This level is one step above allowing the land to return to its original state.
- ***Level 6*** – This level allows the land to return to its original natural state or open space that is already in its natural condition.

4 When assigning levels of maintenance to a park, it is acceptable to have varying levels within different areas of the same park. Highly developed areas often have a higher level assigned while less developed have a lower level.

For indoor facilities there is usually a similar three level classification for building maintenance functions. Each existing indoor facility would then be classified in the same manner as parks.

Naturalized area of Palm Aire Village Park

5 More and more parks maintenance functions are now being contracted. As a result agencies are developing specific guidelines to determine which maintenance functions or activities could possibly be considered for contract service. A primary aspect of this plan is a cost/benefit assessment of providing a function in house vs. contracting for the service. General guidelines often include:

- Basic maintenance functions that occur on a regular basis usually are not contracted if they occur in highly visible locations or for facilities where there is a very strong level of public use. However, other basic functions such as trash removal and mowing are often contracted regardless of the location.
- Specialized functions that require special training or equipment, are inherently dangerous, or do not occur on a regular basis could be considered for contract service. This could include functions such as tree trimming, fertilization and chemical applications.
- Basic maintenance functions that occur in remote or low use areas could be considered for contract.
- Very small parks (under two acres) that require the allocation of a high level of time and resources are often considered for contract.
- Remote locations that take significant travel time to maintain could also be considered for contract.

6 Many parks and recreation agencies are contracting for custodial services for indoor facilities as well as restrooms and other amenities in parks.

7 Developing strong contracts that detail specific tasks to be completed, the frequency and expected quality of service is essential. Contracts must have specific performance standards to ensure that recreation facilities are adequately cleaned. Contract maintenance also must be supervised, managed, and evaluated on a regular basis.

8 Parks maintenance (and even facilities maintenance) either have their own maintenance centers or yards or share with public works. For larger communities which cover significant geographic areas, there is often the need to develop smaller satellite maintenance yards to reduce travel time and the trailering of equipment.

9 A maintenance cost assignment system is developed that tracks costs by major parks or recreation facilities so that the true costs of maintaining these facilities is known. This system is also valuable in estimating future costs for any new or renovated parks or facilities. Cost assignment is also done by task (mowing, sweeping, fertilization, etc.) to develop costs per function or for determining a cost per acre or mile.

10 Agencies are establishing life-cycle cost estimates for major capital assets associated with parks and recreation facilities and equipment. An asset inventory is established for all major equipment as well.

11 For each new proposed park or recreation facility, a detailed projection of the cost of maintaining the amenity on an annual basis is completed. This usually includes not only additional manpower requirements but also equipment, operating supplies and necessary contractual services. An on-going system with specific procedures is often in place to accomplish such estimates in a consistent and organized fashion.

12 Maintenance supervisors and parks administrative staff are becoming more actively involved in the design review process for all new planned facilities. The review process often focuses on materials and surfaces/finishes being specified, maintenance equipment required to maintain the amenity, access for maintenance equipment, and brand of materials for continuity.

13 Many parks and recreation agencies develop an energy management plan for all buildings and structures, that attempts to not only control energy costs but promotes energy conservation and also attempts to utilize alternative forms of energy.

14 Most agencies have a risk management plan that deals with safety, security and an emergency action plan. This responsibility is usually in parks or agency administration.

15 Agencies have multiple Certified Playground Safety Inspectors (CPSI) on staff. For aquatic centers, in addition to the aquatic staff, at least one maintenance person is a Certified Pool Operator (CPO).

16 Maintenance tasks, schedules and costs are managed by a maintenance management software system.

Well-maintained area of Smoker Park

Playground in Virginia S. Young Park

3.3.6 Operations Funding and Fee Setting

With a greater emphasis on operations costs and revenue opportunities, parks and recreation agencies are focusing on new ways to fund operations and maximize revenues. Trends in these areas include:

Managing Existing Funding

The rate of cost recovery for recreation departments across the United States varies considerably based on the goals of the agency, the demographics of the market, and the types of facilities and services that are being provided. However, over the last five to seven years there has been a much greater emphasis on increasing the overall level of cost recovery from levels well below 50% to now as much as 100% of direct and indirect costs for recreation programs.

The development of a financial sustainability plan that outlines how program and facility costs will be tracked and controlled as well as revenues enhanced and tracked in an effort to clearly delineate the overall rate of cost recovery. Ideally this is a five year plan with individual cost recovery targets set for each year.

Parks and recreation agencies continue to move toward a cost center accounting system where major budget sections are set up with sub-categories based on specific facilities or program areas. This provides greater transparency for the entire budget process, allows for an accurate picture of both costs and revenues for individual areas, and requires supervisory employees to be directly responsible for their own budgets.

Operational and management contracts with outside vendors are ideally reviewed at least every three years and rebid on a regular basis.

Operational Funding Sources

There are a variety of funding sources that are being utilized for parks and recreation facilities, programs and services. These include:

Fees and Charges

Collecting fees for services continues to be one of the primary sources of revenue for parks and recreation agencies. In fact there is a great deal of pressure in most agencies to increase the level of funding from this source.

General Fund

Most agencies continue to rely on a yearly budget allocation from the general fund of a city or county for most parks and facility maintenance functions as well as some programs and services. However, for many agencies the level of funding from this source has been reduced in the past five years.

Dedicated Taxing Source

This type of funding is difficult to obtain but some communities have been successful in establishing a dedicated funding source for parks and recreation services. This has come in the form of a specified mill levy, a particular sales tax amount, the use of bed/restaurant taxes, and other specific tax sources.

Sponsorships

There has been a strong effort nationally to establish comprehensive sponsorship programs for recreation facilities, programs and services. This has been particularly beneficial for special events and for senior activities. This has required the development of a detailed sponsorship program to be effective.

Partnerships

Partnering with other organizations and businesses to share costs or enhance revenues has been effective.

Grants

There are a number of grants that are available for programs and services that serve the disadvantaged, youth, teens and seniors. There are also facility grants including ones

for energy efficiency, emergency shelters and other functions. Grants can come from other governmental agencies, from lottery proceeds, as well as private sources.

Foundation

Most agencies have established a 501(c)3 foundation for parks and recreation. This provides a tax free way to collect a variety of fundraising dollars as well as qualify for a broader range of grants.

Endowment Fund

This form of operational funding is relatively rare as it requires a large fund balance to establish an annual operational endowment level of any magnitude.

Fee Setting & Methodology

As parks and recreation agencies are becoming much more aggressive in revenue generation the need to continuously evaluate overall fee policies is critical.

The first step in evaluating a clear user fee policy is to review general models for setting fees:

- Continue goal of cost recovery for programs, services and facilities with Pricing and Cost Recovery Pyramid Model, and review annually.
- Ensure general access to recreation programs and services is not denied simply based on the ability to pay.
- Require that exclusive use of any public parks, facilities or services by individuals or organizations results in the compensation for the costs associated with such use.
- Require that users pay for programs and services when there is an instructor, official or other personnel associated directly with the provision of the service.
- Require that at least a portion of other direct and indirect expenses associated with the delivery of a program or service to the user be recovered through fees.

From this, the agency has developed a comprehensive fees and charges policy that is updated annually. This may include the following recommendations:

Programs and Services

Categorized into four levels of offerings that are divided by the level of instruction, expertise, or importance to the community's well-being, priority for funding and facility usage should be based on the category in which they fall, with fees being set accordingly. The four categories should include:

- **Community Events** – Special community wide events, activities or festivals that are one- time events. There is generally little to no fees for these activities. Some revenues may be collected from sponsorships and sales of goods and services.
- **Basic or Core Programs** – Those that are essential to recreation and community needs (such as teen activities, senior programs, youth sports activities, special populations, etc.). These program's direct costs are usually subsidized.
- **Enhanced** – Those that are beyond basic and are focused on an audience that has the ability to pay. Programs in this area could include adult fitness and sports, or general programs. These programs are generally recovering 100% of direct costs and some in-direct costs.
- **Specialized** – These are activities that are very specialized in nature. These often include activities such as private swim lessons, fitness assessments, trip programs, facility rentals and the like. Fees are set based on what the market will bear but at minimum would require 100% of direct costs and most indirect costs to be covered.

Outdoor Facilities

Outdoor facilities can be sorted into three categories for fee assessment:

- **Drop-in Outdoor Facilities** – Drop-in use of basic park amenities should remain free. Examples would be open park areas, playgrounds, trails, picnic areas, outdoor courts, skate parks, etc.
- **Specialized Outdoor Facilities** - such as swimming pools, lighted/organized sports fields, and similar facilities should have market rates established for use. There should be a rate differential for youth, adult and senior users.
- **Facility Rentals** – Rentals of specialized facilities should require a fee for use that could be based on categories of non-commercial and commercial. Fees for non-commercial should be based at minimum on recovering all direct costs of renting the facility and commercial should be significantly higher. All field or facility maintenance fees required for a rental plus any other amenities not normally associated with the facility will be charged to the renter.

Indoor Facilities

Indoor facilities can also be sorted into three categories for fee assessment:

- **Drop-in Indoor Facilities** - Drop-in use of basic indoor facilities such as youth game rooms, open lounge areas, community gathering spaces and similar areas usually do not require a fee for use.
- **Specialized Indoor Facilities** - such as, fitness areas, gyms, pools, racquetball courts, ice rinks, etc. should require a fee for use. Specific cost recovery goals need to be established for each specialized facility to determine the basic fee structure that needs to be developed. There should be a rate differential for youth, adult, disabled and senior users.
- **Facility Rentals** – Rentals of specialized facilities shall require a fee for use based on categories of non-commercial and commercial. Fees for non-commercial should be based at minimum on recovering all direct costs of renting the facility and commercial should be considerably higher. All facility maintenance fees required for a rental plus any other amenities not normally associated with the facility will be charged to the renter.

Other

Programs and services offered by outside contractors should be required to pay a minimum of 30% of their gross revenues to the agency with all direct costs to the agency being covered.

Youth sports organizations are increasingly being expected to pay a fee for use of facilities for games or practices. Fees are usually either calculated on a cost per hour basis (with a differential for lights) or on a cost per player per season basis. Organizations that utilize an agencies facilities on an on-going basis are usually required to show that at least 50% (or higher) of the participants are from the community.

Agencies are establishing the definition of "direct costs" to include costs that are directly related to the provision of the activity. This usually includes instructor, officials, leaders and direct supervisors (plus benefits), supplies associated with the activity, contractual service obligations, and any internal service fund charges.

Agencies also are establishing the definition of "indirect costs" to include costs that are not directly related to the delivery of the activity or service. This often includes administrative personnel and other staffing overhead, facility maintenance, utilities, insurance, capital replacement and debt service.

With a more aggressive approach to cost recovery and an on-going increase in user fees, there has been the development of more robust scholarship programs.

There is a comprehensive internal budgeting process that focuses on cost center accounting on a very detailed level. There is also thorough, on-going, budget monitoring and tracking where financial performance issues can be quickly identified and dealt with. Economic impact studies are conducted for events and activities that draw outside users to a community.

3.3.7 Capital Funding

One of the major challenges for parks and recreation agencies is determining a method for funding capital development costs for new or renovated facilities.

For most agencies, a combination of a number of different funding sources are generally utilized for new capital projects.

Government Funding

In most cases the governmental agency is still the primary funding source for new parks and recreation facilities, several options to acquire the necessary tax dollars for a project can include.

- **General Tax Dollars** – The utilization of any existing non-allocated tax dollars for a project. This usually results in the slow development of new facilities by simply allocating existing tax funding when possible.
- **Capital Improvement Fund** – Establishing a dedicated funding source for capital projects from either a percentage of existing tax revenues or through a tax increase established for that purpose.
- **Bond Measure** – A voter passed tax initiative to fund specific capital projects.
- **Certificates of Participation** – A form of lease-purchase, Certificates of Participation are issued for debt periods similar to normal bonds but the amenity itself serves as the collateral. This funding mechanism does not require voter approval.

Partnerships

The ability to include equity partners in projects is critical to developing new parks and recreation facilities. Partnerships can be with other public agencies, the non-profit sector and even with for-profit providers.

Fundraising

A possible source of capital funding can come from a comprehensive fundraising campaign. Contributions from local businesses, private individuals and social service organizations can be targeted. To maximize this form of funding a private fundraising consultant may be necessary.

Grants

There are a number of grants that are available for parks and recreation projects. It is more difficult to fund active recreation facilities than parks and open space from these sources, but efforts are still made to acquire funding from these sources. Key areas that should be targeted for grants are serving youth, teens, seniors and families as well as environmental projects.

Naming Rights and Sponsorships

Although not nearly as lucrative as for large stadiums and other similar facilities, the sale of naming rights and long term sponsorships could be a source of some capital funding as well. It is often necessary to hire a specialist in selling naming rights and sponsorships if this revenue source is to be maximized to its fullest potential. No lifetime naming rights should be sold only 20 year maximum rights should be possible. Determining the level of financial contribution necessary to gain a naming right is crucial.

Signage in Harbordale Park Indicating Financial Partnership with Broward County

3.3.8 Marketing

There is a realization that recreation is a discretionary use of people's time and money and as a result it is critical that there is a strong marketing effort to promote the facilities, programs and services that are offered by a parks and recreation agency. This includes the following trends:

1 A comprehensive marketing plan for recreation facilities, programs and services is developed for the agency. This document is usually a simple, easy to implement, document that serves as a guideline for specific marketing efforts.

2 There must be a strong recognition of the different demographic markets that must be served. The youth, senior and family populations in the area should be specifically addressed as should any different ethnic groups.

3 There is usually an effort to "brand" an agency, its facilities, and its programs through all publications, promotional materials, flyers, signs, web site, and other items. All marketing materials often have the same format, look, logo, etc.

4 Most agencies have an interactive web site that is updated seasonally. In addition, separate web sites for specific facilities and even large program areas (summer camps) are often utilized as well, with links to and from the agency's main site.

5 There is strong use of Facebook, Twitter and other social media sources to promote the agency's facilities, programs and services. This is backed up with a formal social media policy.

6 A formal sponsorship plan is in place for facilities as well as events and programs.

7 For marketing efforts to be effective, it is critical that the agency provide an on-going annual funding level. The amount is usually tied to implementing the annual marketing plan.

8 Agencies increasingly have at least a part-time marketing professional on staff to coordinate all marketing efforts.

9 The manner in which users find out about parks and recreation facilities, programs and services, is tracked on a regular basis and guides future marketing resource allocation and areas of focus.

10 Agencies often survey the community and existing parks and recreation users every other year to determine overall levels of satisfaction as well as future needs and expectations for facilities and services.

11 Many agencies also conduct a series of focus groups for residents who do not use parks and recreation facilities and services to determine what can be done to attract these individuals.

12 Agencies heavily promote the use of on-line program registration as well as facility rentals. This requires a fully computerized registration software package with point of sale and the ability to make payments over time.

13 Some agencies are now using a web based survey instrument for program and facility evaluations by users as an option/or in addition to paper based forms.

14 The annual marketing efforts have a formal evaluation mechanism to determine the overall effectiveness of the plan.

Typical Park Signage in Townsend Park

15 Agencies establish a strong customer service training program for all of its employees (full-time and part-time). Areas of focus often include, dealing with difficult people, diversity, how to handle discipline and behavioral issues, and effectively implementing emergency procedures.

3.3.9 Partnerships

Partnerships with a variety of entities is now a major way to provide for parks and recreation services as well as new or renovated facilities.

These partnerships often include:

- **Health care providers**
- **School districts**
- **Other governmental agencies**
- **YMCA's/Boys & Girls Clubs/Jewish Community Centers**
- **Community organizations**
- **Private health clubs**
- **Sports organizations**
- **Business and corporate community**

For Partnerships to be effective:

- The roles and expectations of other organizations and providers are clearly articulated by an agency in an effort to promote the effective use of overall community resources.
- Equity partnerships are actively pursued for facilities and programs.
- Formal written agreements are in place for any partnerships.
- Coordination efforts with other government agencies are pursued and documented.

Programmatic Partnerships

As has been noted, there has been a movement away from the principle of public recreation departments having to be the actual provider of all recreation programs and services. This has resulted in a great deal of programming now being conducted by volunteer youth sports organizations, adult sports associations, non-profit groups such as the YMCA and other social service organizations, as well as the private sector. This has reduced the financial obligations of the public sector, placed programming in the hands of organizations with the specific expertise (and often the facilities as well), and allowed the private sector to have a more active role in public recreation. However, parks and recreation agencies often still need to be a provider of many of the facilities (especially outdoor parks) for other organizations to use.

Other organizations that could provide programs and services can include:

Youth Sports Organizations

These organizations can be responsible for providing team sports for youth. However, the agency will still need to provide most if not all the facilities for these activities.

School Districts

Coordinating with school districts to provide youth after school programs and services, education classes for youth (and even adults), as well as youth sports (location for practices), can be beneficial. The school's facilities should be a location for at least some recreation programming in most communities.

Other Government Organizations

There need to be strong efforts to partner with other governmental agencies in an area to develop programs and services. This is most likely to occur with a county and neighboring communities. Program areas that could be provided by other organizations through a partnership include special needs, special events, outdoor recreation, and cultural arts events.

Non-Profit Providers

Coordinating with a variety of non-profit providers to deliver recreation services is often pursued. Organizations such as the Boys & Girls Club, YMCA cultural arts groups, etc. should be encouraged to continue to develop facilities and provide programs in a community. These types of organizations are often well positioned to provide a variety of programs in different areas.

Health Care Organizations

It is not unusual to have a health care organization offering fitness and wellness related services to parks and recreation agencies.

Private Providers

Since there are often a number of private recreation, sports and fitness providers located in a community (health clubs, dance, martial studios, arts studios, etc.), these entities could be counted on to provide more specialized activities that are not easy for the public sector to conduct.

Residential Communities, Condos and HOA's

There are often a number of residential communities, condos and HOA's in a community. Some of these have social and recreation facilities that serve their residents and provide a level of programs. Their role in providing recreation services needs to be recognized.

Woman's Club Facility in Stranahan Park

Faith Based Organizations

With a significant number of churches and other faith based institutions in most communities, faith based organizations often provide some recreation services for their congregation and community. These organizations should be seen as possible providers of some basic community based recreation services and facilities as well.

Facility Partnerships

A significant number of new public recreation facilities now involve some form of partnership with other community organizations and recreation service providers. Partnerships are generally on three levels.

Primary or Equity Project Partners

These entities would be the main partners in a project who have the most interest, the ability to fund, and a willingness to be a part of the development and operation of a facility.

Secondary Project Partners

These organizations could have a direct interest in the facility but not to the same level as a primary partner. Capital funding for the project is unlikely but there could be some assistance with program and service delivery.

Support Partners

These organizations support the development of a new facility but would see limited to no direct involvement in the development or operation of the facility.

Specific facility partnerships could include:

- **Health Care Providers** – A health care provider could offer capital funding for a portion of a facility or lease space in a building. In addition, they can also

possibly provide programs and services for the center. Partnerships between public entities and medical providers can be very beneficial for both parties.

- **Non-Profits** – YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, and Jewish Community Centers could be a possible operator of a facility and can also be part of a fundraising campaign for a project.
- **Private Health Clubs** – A partnership would most likely be in the form of a city or other agency leasing land at a very low rate and the club building a private fitness center. This is often not a realistic option for most communities.
- **School District** – A school district's role in a project could be considerable and include, offer of a site, a capital contribution for construction, or funding for operations (beyond possible fees for use).
- **Retail Operations** – It may be possible to integrate some retail services into a facility. This could come in the area of a small drink/food service operation and/or a small area to sell sports, recreation and fitness goods. The facility can either lease space in the amenity for these purposes and/or take a percentage of any goods that are sold. This could include food truck operations and other vendors.
- **Sports Organizations** – Local sports organizations could be primary users of a new facility if the amenities that they need are available and support their activities. It should be expected that these groups would be strong supporters of a new facility and would possibly pay for their use.
- **Community Organizations** – Developing working relationships with community organizations and service clubs could provide much needed support for a project as well as generate possible users of a facility.
- **Business and Corporate Community** – It is important to approach the corporate community with a variety of sponsorship opportunities to enhance the revenue prospects of a facility.

Concessions and Rental Stand in Fort Lauderdale Beach Park

3.3.10 Parks and Recreation Trends Analysis Summary

Changing trends in parks and recreation have resulted in an increase in demand, a desire for inclusiveness, a cost-effective approach to service delivery, and the need for measurable outcomes. In an effort to respond to these trends, agencies have developed strategies to become more efficient and effective with the delivery of services, in order to respond to challenges unique to communities with changing populations and recreation needs.

Many of these trends are also applicable to the Fort Lauderdale parks system and the need and priorities expressed through community involvement. Utilizing these trends in conjunction with input from Fort Lauderdale neighbors can help ensure that park systems remain diverse, inclusive and sustainable, providing high quality services and facilities well into the future.

Key Takeaways

In order to respond to changing parks and recreation trends as well as needs and priorities of its neighbors, Fort Lauderdale can incorporate the following responses:

- Develop a clear **vision statement** supported by goals, with an **updated master plan** in place.
- Continue to develop **on-going planning efforts** for future success.
- Develop **comprehensive, clearly-defined** policies for management and operation.
- Ensure all planning efforts and operational and management strategies **align with the needs and priorities** of neighbors gathered through **community involvement.**

Water Access in George English Park

3.4 Statistically Valid Survey

3.4.1 Methodology

The System Plan team conducted a Citizen Opinion and Interest Survey on behalf of the City of Fort Lauderdale during November, 2015. The purpose of the survey was to establish needs and priorities for the future development of parks, recreation facilities/ programs and services within the community. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout Fort Lauderdale and was administered by a combination of mail, telephone and website.

The survey was developed in cooperation with department staff, first through a workshop, and then through a series of draft survey instruments. A final survey was approved by the department in late August, 2015. The final survey was seven print pages in length and contained 24 questions. A target sample size of 800 was set for mail, telephone and website responses. Questions focused on parks, park and recreation facilities, needs and priorities, satisfaction, communications, funding, and sample demographics, which were used to validate the survey to the demographics of Fort Lauderdale.

Approximately 4,000 printed surveys were mailed to randomly selected households throughout the City. Respondents were provided three means to complete the survey; by mail, by phone (in either English, Spanish, or Haitian Creole); and through a website. An automatic voice message was sent to each house that had been mailed a printed survey. Three weeks after the mailing of surveys, follow-up phone calls were made to households. Households that indicated they had not returned a completed survey were provided an option to complete one by phone. The survey was completed by 852 respondents and has a level of confidence of 95%, which means results could be replicated 95 times out of 100. In addition, the survey has a margin of error of +/-3.3%.

3.4.2 Parks and Recreation Questions

City-Wide Results

A series of questions specific to park and recreation issues was asked to each respondent. The following information provides a summary of key findings for a **selection of survey questions at the city-wide level**. Detailed results can be found in the appendix. Questions are organized into four categories:

- Park and Facilities
- Recreation Program
- Satisfaction
- Priorities

1. Please indicate if you use the following major parks and recreation facility types provided by the City of Fort Lauderdale Parks and Recreation Department (Top 8):

The facilities that received the most responses were: beaches (86.1%); large community parks (73.8%); small neighborhood parks (71.0%); city marinas (45.0%); dog parks (35.9%); outdoor swimming pools (35.2%); tennis centers (32.0%); and Fort Lauderdale Aquatic Complex (29.9%).

2. Which facility should receive the most attention from the City over the next two years?

The facilities that received the most responses were: beaches (33.4%); small neighborhood parks (11.1%); large community parks (7.7%); dog parks (5.5%); and Fort Lauderdale Aquatic Complex (4.4%).

Table 3-6: Top 8 Most Used Parks and Recreation Facilities

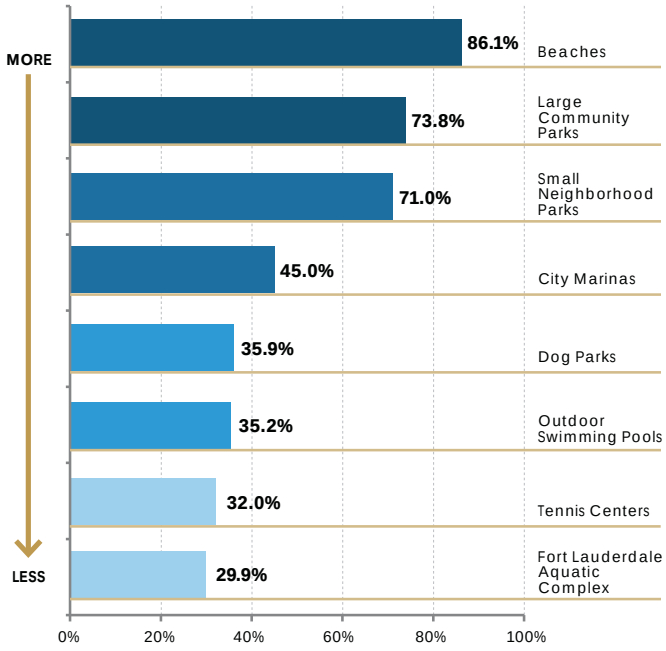
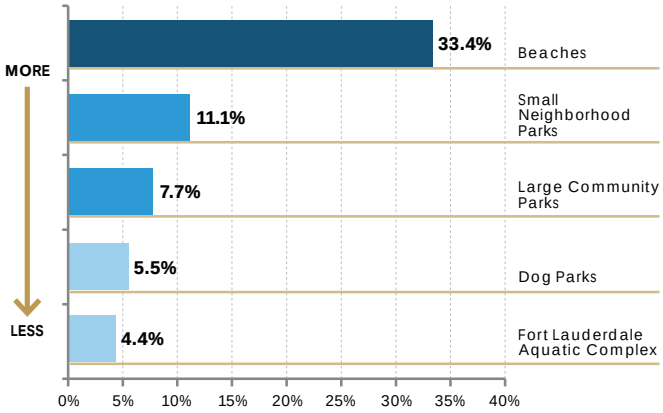


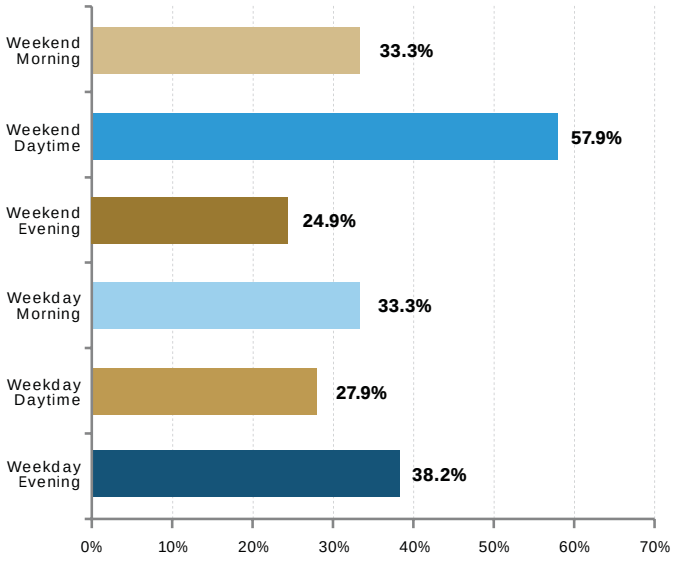
Table 3-7: Facilities that should receive the most attention



3. What days and times do you most frequently use parks facilities and programs?

Responses indicated that weekend daytime (57.9%) was the most popular time, followed by weekday evening (38.2%), weekend morning (33.3%); weekday morning (33.3%); weekday daytime (27.9%); and weekend evening (24.9%).

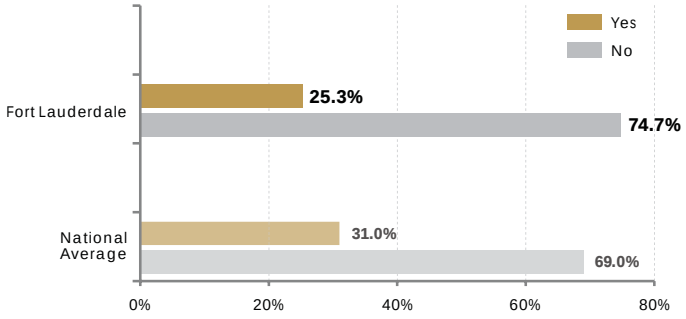
Table 3-8: Days and times of most frequent park use



4. Have you or other members of your household participated in any recreation programs offered by the City of Fort Lauderdale during the past 12 months?

25.3% of responders selected "Yes", which is lower than the national average of 31.0% .

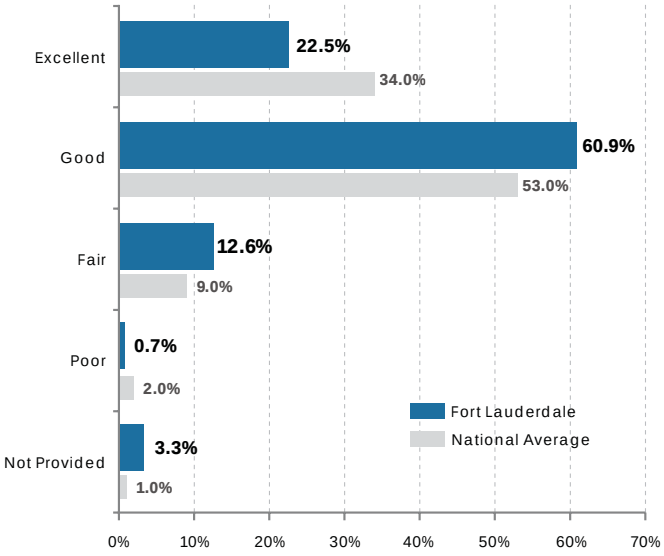
Table 3-9: Have you participated in any recreation programs in the past 12 months?



5. Overall, how would you rate the quality of programs that you and members of your household participated in?

22.5% of responders selected "Excellent", compared to the national average of 34.0%, however 60.9% of responders selected "Good", which is greater than the national average of 53.0%. 0.7% of responders selected "Poor", which is less than the national average of 2.0%

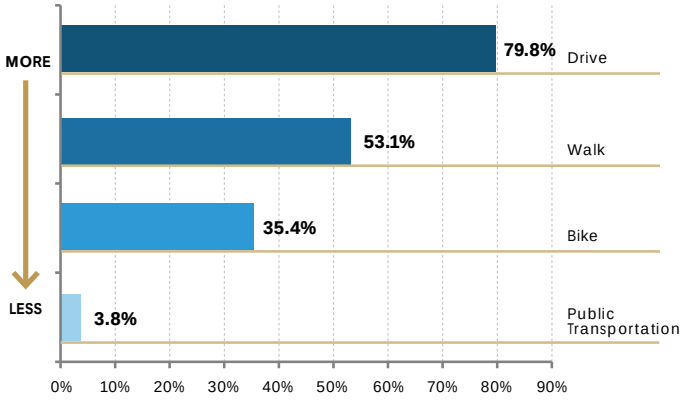
Table 3-10: Quality of programs participated in



6. Ways you travel to Parks and Recreation Facilities

Responses indicated that driving (79.8%), was the most prevalent mode of travel to parks and recreation facilities, followed by walking (53.1%), biking (35.4%); and public transportation (3.8%).

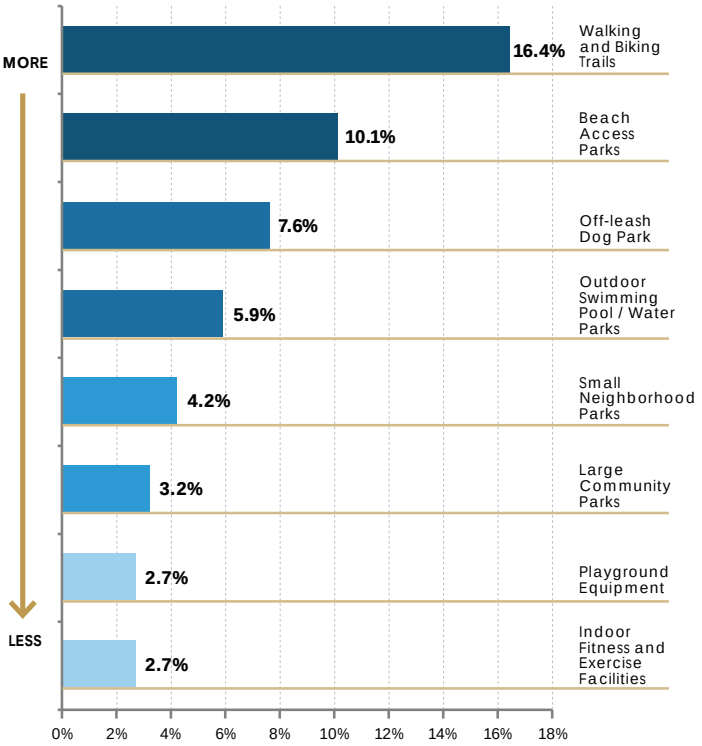
Table 3-11: Mode of travel to parks and recreation facilities



7. Which Facilities are most Important to your Household? (Top 8)

The facilities that received the most responses were: walking and biking trails (16.4%); beach access parks (10.1%); off-leash dog park (7.6%); outdoor swimming pool / water parks (5.9%); small neighborhood parks (4.2%); large community parks (3.2%); playground equipment (2.7%); and indoor fitness and exercise facilities (2.7%).

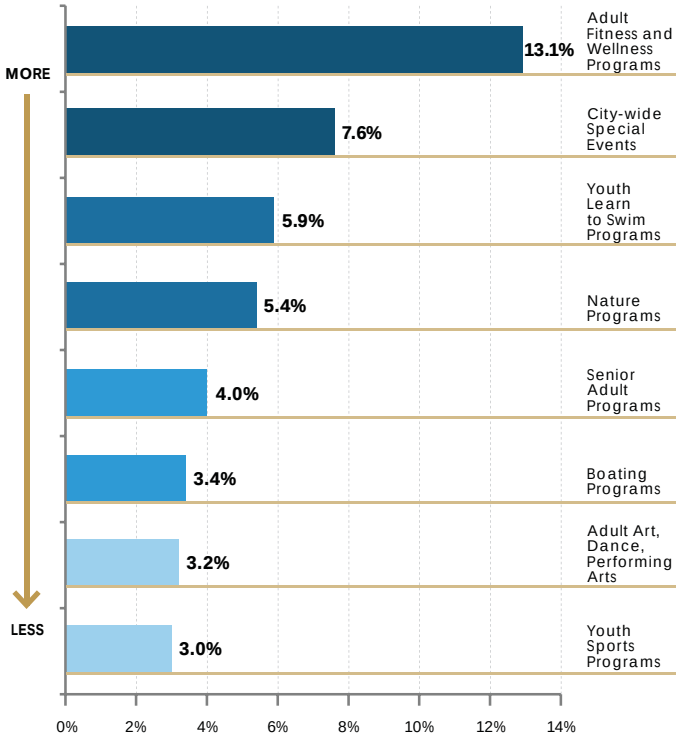
Table 3-12: Top 8 Most Important Facilities



8. Which Program is the most Important to your Household? (Top 8)

The programs that received the most responses were: adult fitness and wellness programs (13.1%); city-wide special events (7.6%); youth learn to swim programs (5.9%); nature programs (5.4%); senior adult programs (4.0%); boating programs (3.4%); adult art dance, performing arts (3.2%); and youth sports programs (3.0%).

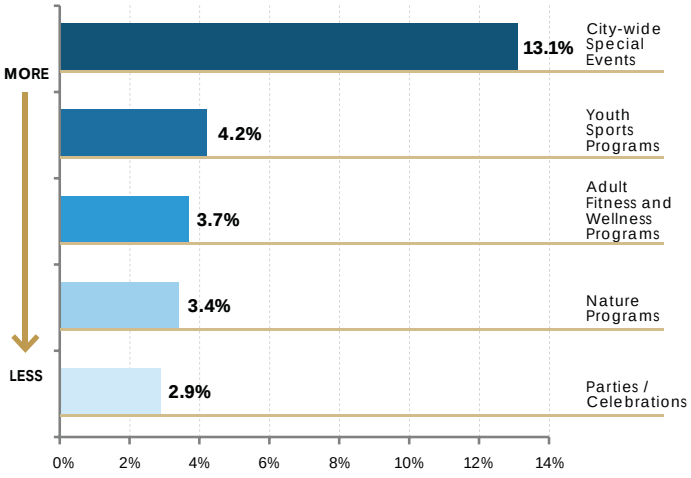
Table 3-13: Top 8 Most Important Programs



9. Which Events or Programs do you Participate in most Often? (Top 5)

The events or programs that received the most responses were: city-wide special events (13.1%); youth sports programs (4.2%); adult fitness and wellness programs (3.7%); nature programs (3.4%); and parties / celebrations (2.9%).

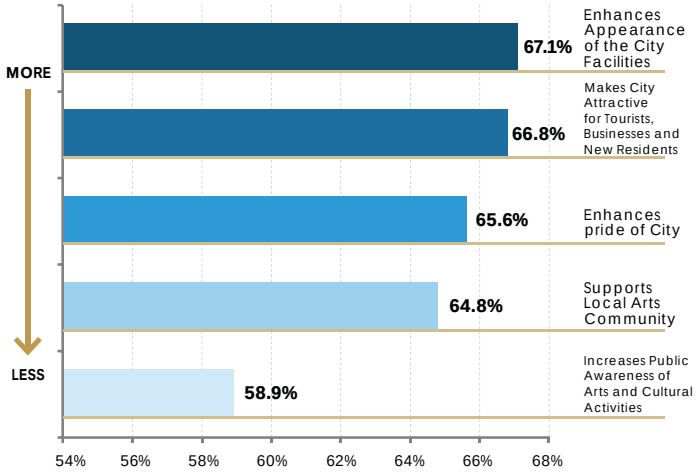
Table 3-14: Top 5 Events or Programs participated in most often



10. What impacts do you believe Public Art Provides to the City of Fort Lauderdale (Top 5)

The impacts from Public Art that received the most responses were: enhances the appearance of the City facilities (67.1%); makes the city attractive for tourists, businesses and new residents (66.8%); enhances pride of the City (65.6%); supports local arts community (64.8%); and increases public awareness of arts and cultural activities (2.9%).

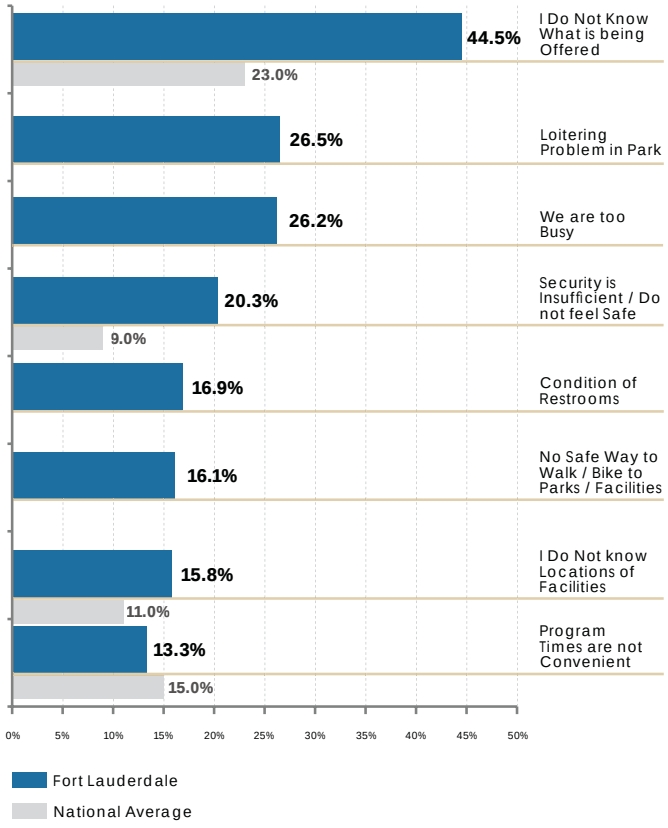
Table 3-15: Top 5 impacts of Public Art



11. What reasons prevent you or other members of your household from using parks? (Top 8)

The reasons that received the most responses were: "I do not know what is being offered" (44.5%), which is significantly higher than the national average of 23.0%; "loitering problems in parks" (26.5%); "we are too busy" (26.2%); and "security is insufficient / do not feel safe" (20.3%), which is also significantly higher than the national average (9.0%).

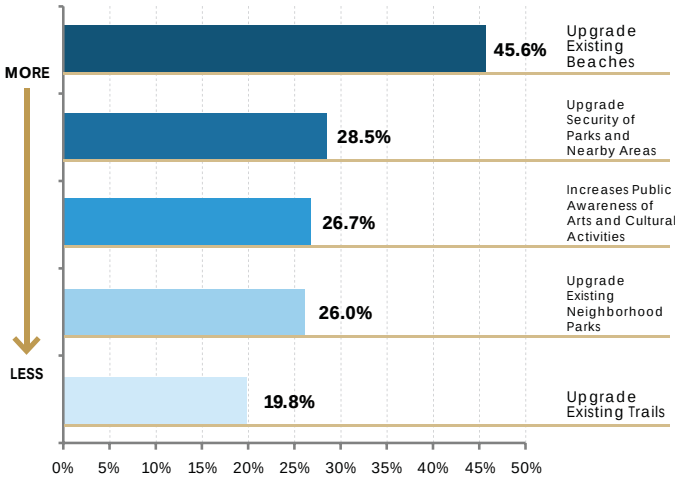
Table 3-16: Reasons preventing park use



12. Which actions would you be most likely to fund with tax dollars? (Top 5)

The actions that received the most responses were: upgrade existing beaches (45.6%); upgrade security of parks and nearby areas (28.5%); increase public awareness of arts and cultural activities (26.7%); upgrade existing neighborhood parks (26.0%); upgrade existing trails (19.8%).

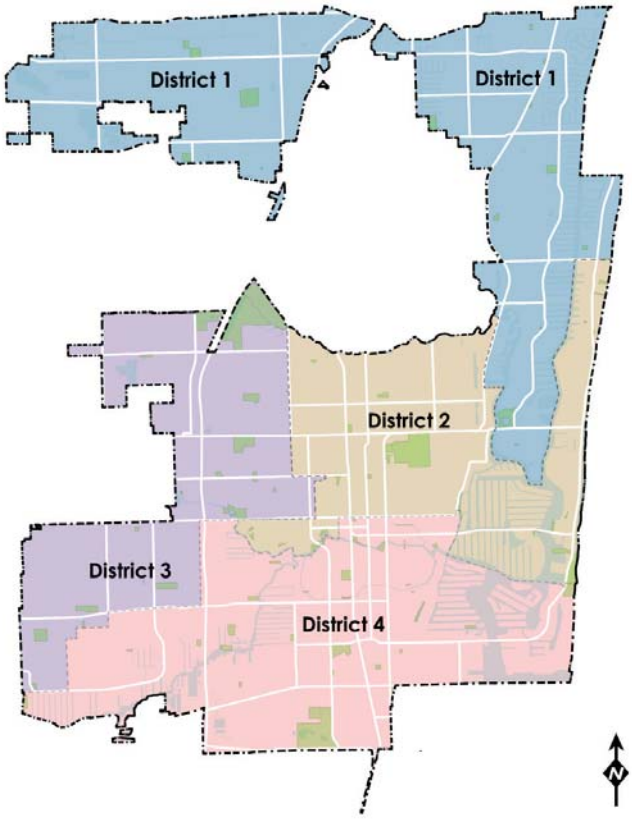
Table 3-17: Top 5 Actions supported by tax dollars



District Results

While the city-wide survey results provide an overview of the needs and priorities for Fort Lauderdale as a whole, examining the results by commission district can provide a more precise snapshot of the communities within the city. The following information provides a summary of key findings for a selection of survey questions with the responses broken down by each commission district (Shown in **Map 3-1** below). Detailed results can be found in the appendix.

Map 3-1: Fort Lauderdale Commission Districts



1. How would you rate the overall quality of the City of Fort Lauderdale parks and recreation areas you have used during the past 12 months?

Results for each district were relatively similar to City-wide responses. District 4 received the most "good" or "excellent responses with a total of 75.9% of responses above "fair". District 3 had the lowest amount of responses above "fair" with a combined 63.5%, however District 1 and 3 received the most "excellent responses" (20.5%).

2. Overall, how would you rate the quality of the programs that you and members of your household participated in?

Responses to this question varied by district, and in some cases differed significantly from the overall averages. District 2 received much fewer "excellent" responses (8.3%) than the overall results (27.0%),

Table 3-18: Quality of parks and recreation areas

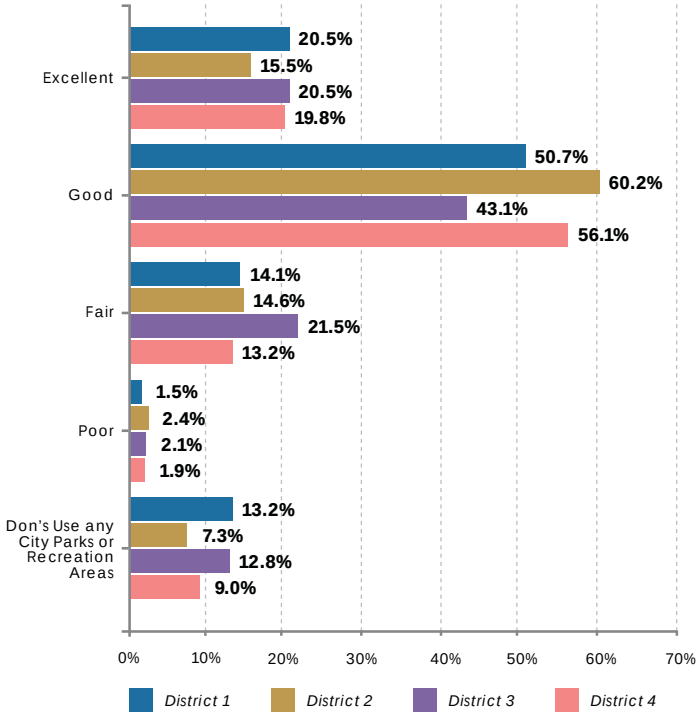
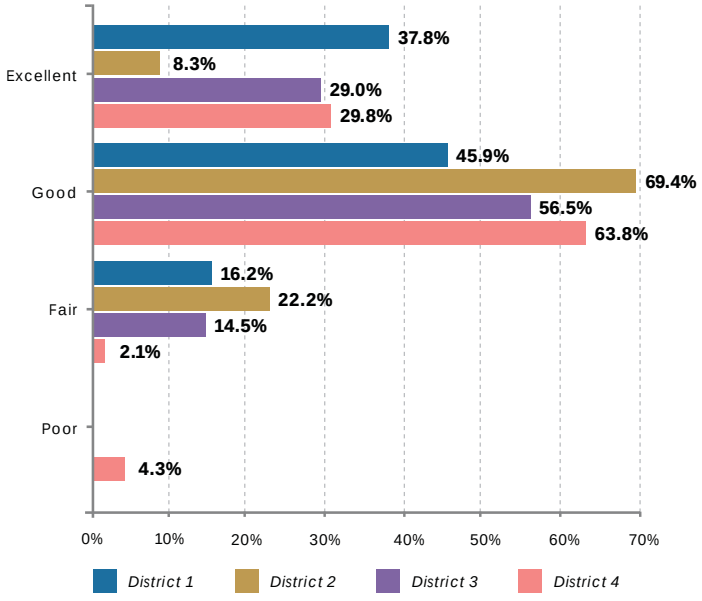


Table 3-19: Quality of programs participated in



3. What ways do you travel to parks and recreation facilities that you use?

Driving was the most selected response among all districts, followed by walking and biking. Walking was more prevalent in District 2 (64.0%) than all other districts, and biking was selected in Districts 2 and 4 at much greater response rates than Districts 1 and 3.

4. What reasons prevent you or other members of your household from using parks? (Top 8)

Responses were relatively consistent in Districts 1,2 and 4, with "I do not know what is being offered" and "we are too busy" receiving the most responses. District 3 received slightly different responses, with "loitering problem in the park" receiving the most responses.

Table 3-20: Ways you travel to parks and facilities

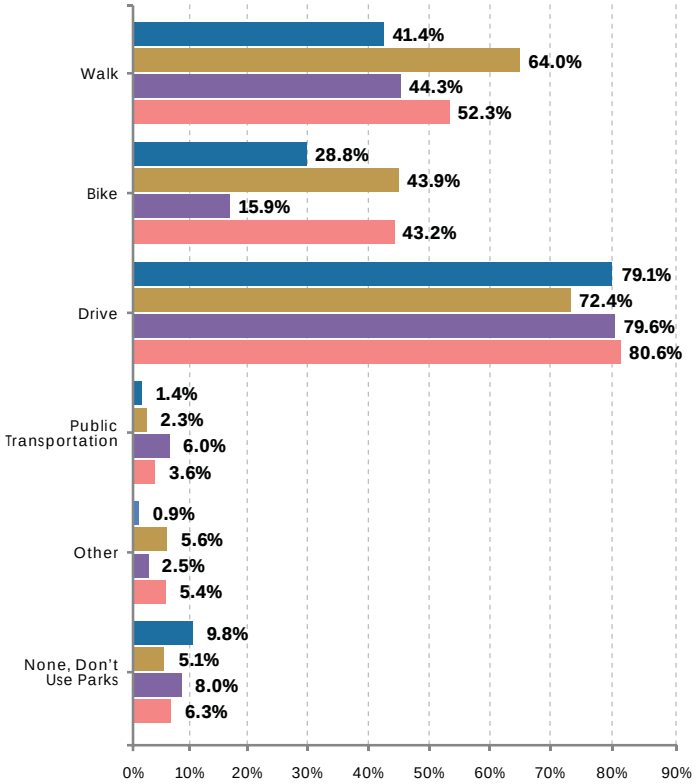
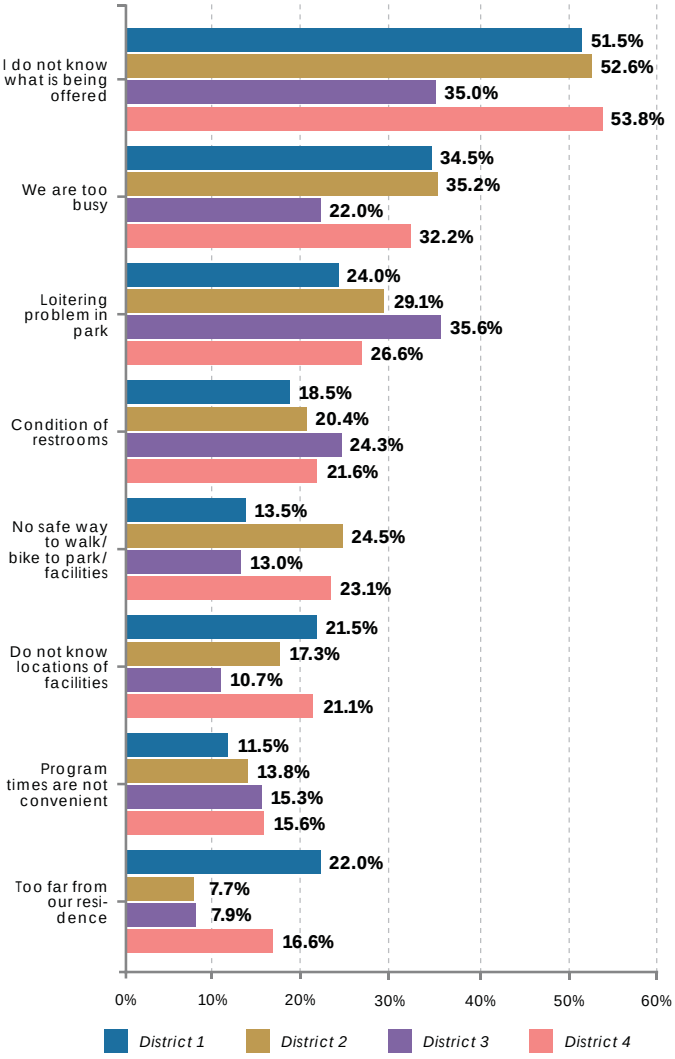


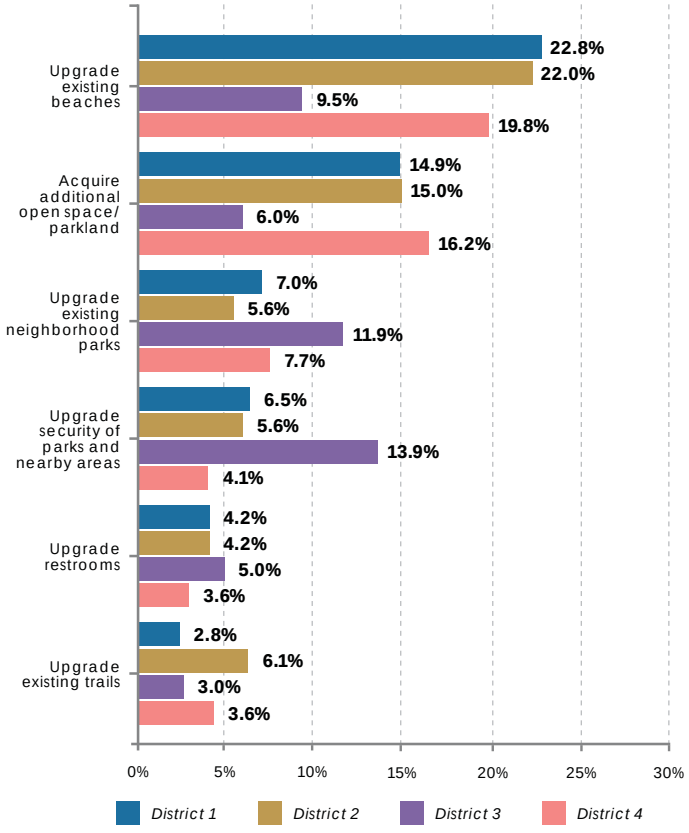
Table 3-21: Reasons preventing park use



5. Which actions would you be most likely to fund with tax dollars? (Top 6)

The actions that received the most responses in Districts 1,2 and 4 were to upgrade existing beaches and acquire additional open space/ parkland. The actions that received the most responses in District 3 were to upgrade security of parks and nearby areas and upgrade existing neighborhood parks.

Table 3-22: Quality of parks and recreation areas



3.4.3 Importance / Unmet Needs Matrix

The Importance / Unmet Needs Matrix is a tool for assessing the level of priority that should be placed on parks, recreation and cultural resource facilities and recreation activities in Fort Lauderdale. Each of the facilities and programs that were assessed in the survey were placed in one of the following four quadrants, and shown in matrix format in **Table 3-18** through **Table 3-27**:

Top Priorities - (higher unmet need and higher importance)

Items in this quadrant should be given the highest priority for improvement. Respondents placed a high level of importance on these items, and the unmet need rating is high. Improvements to items in this quadrant will have positive benefits for the highest number of Fort Lauderdale residents.

Special Needs - (higher unmet need and lower importance)

Respondents placed a lower level of importance on these items, but the unmet need rating is relatively high. Items in this quadrant should be given secondary priority for improvement.

Opportunities for Improvements - (lower unmet need and higher importance)

This quadrant shows where improvements may be needed to serve the needs of residents. Respondents placed a high level of importance on these items, but the unmet need rating is relatively low. These items need continued emphasis because the City is meeting the need of the items that the community has deemed important.

Less Important - (lower unmet need and lower importance)

Items in this quadrant should receive the lowest priority for improvement. Respondents placed a lower level of importance on these items, and the unmet need rating is relatively low.

Table 3-18: City-Wide Importance / Unmet Needs Matrix for Park and Recreation Facilities

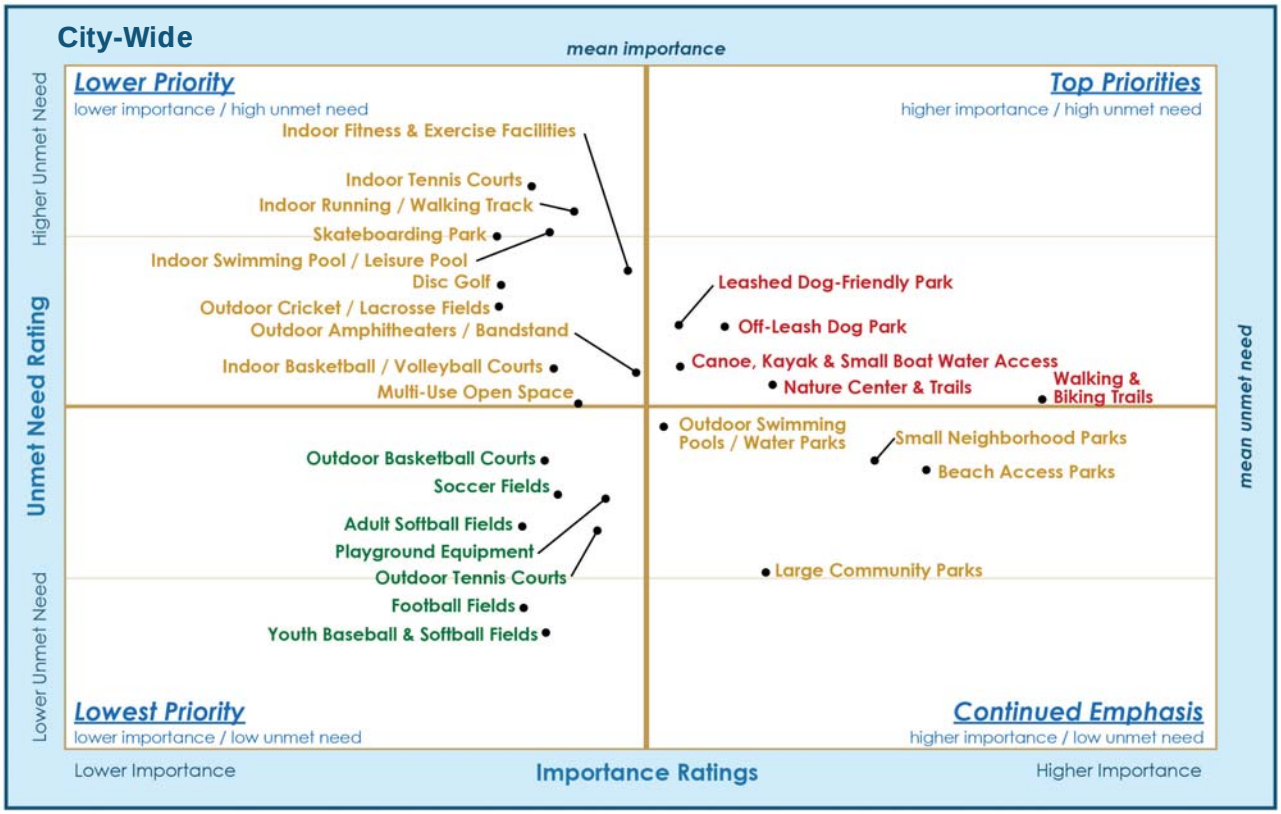
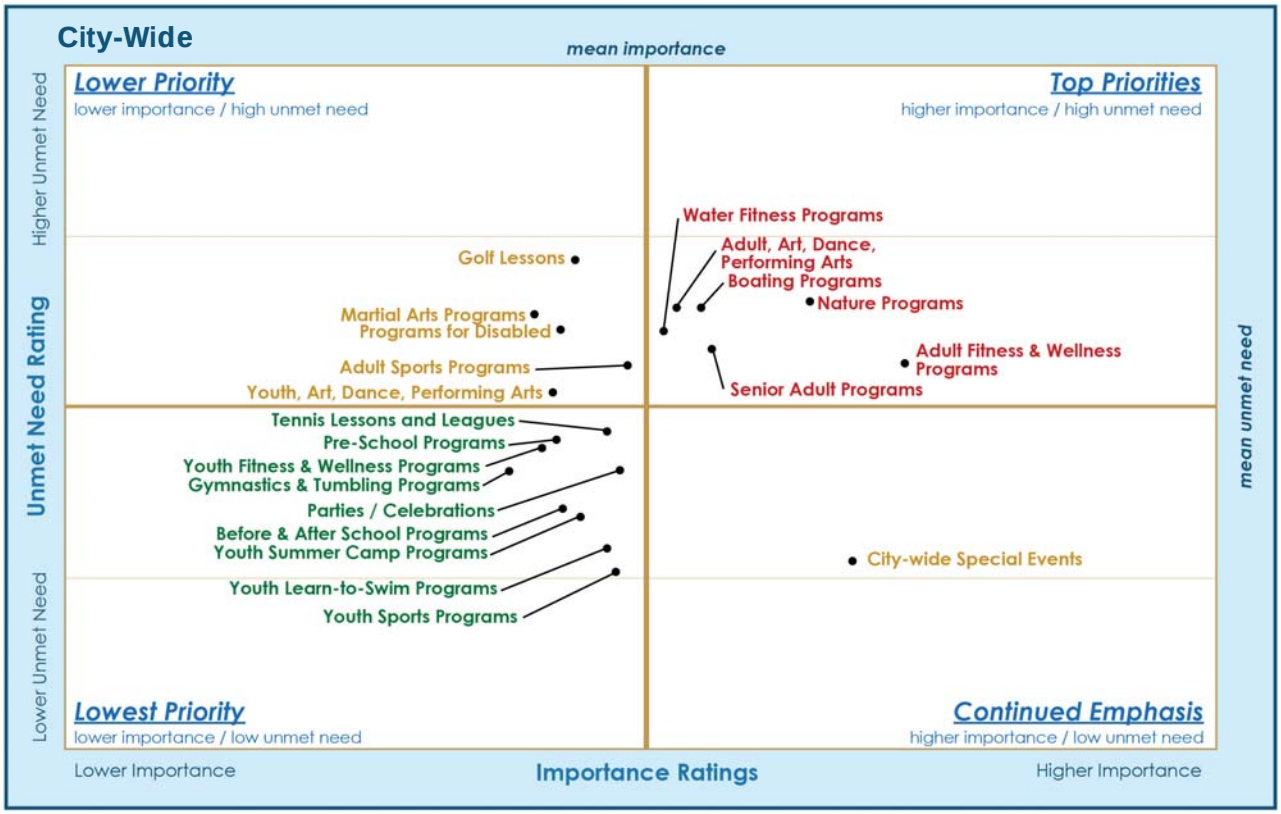
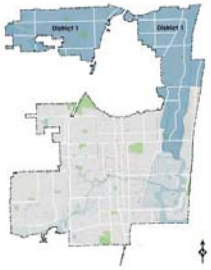


Table 3-19: City-Wide Importance / Unmet Needs Matrix for Park and Recreation Programs



District 1 Survey Results Analysis



Survey results indicate that neighbors in District 1 rated programs with more "excellent" responses than any other district. This district also received the lowest amount of responses for "walking" as a mode of commute, with reasons preventing park use including high responses for "too far from residence" and "lack of parking". These results indicate that neighbors in District 1 may have limited access to parks and facilities within walking distance. The top choice for actions funded with tax dollars in District 1 is "upgrade existing beaches", which is above the city-wide average.

Table 3-20: District 1 Importance / Unmet Needs Matrix for Park and Recreation Facilities

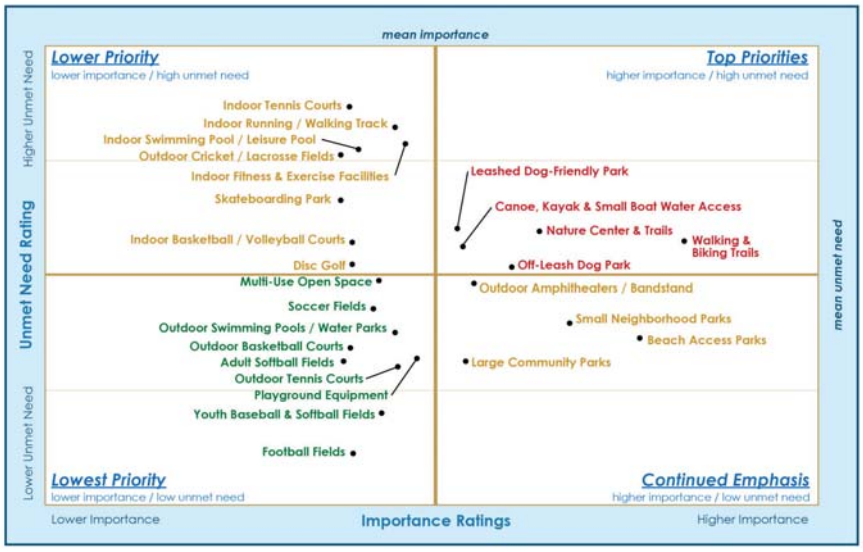
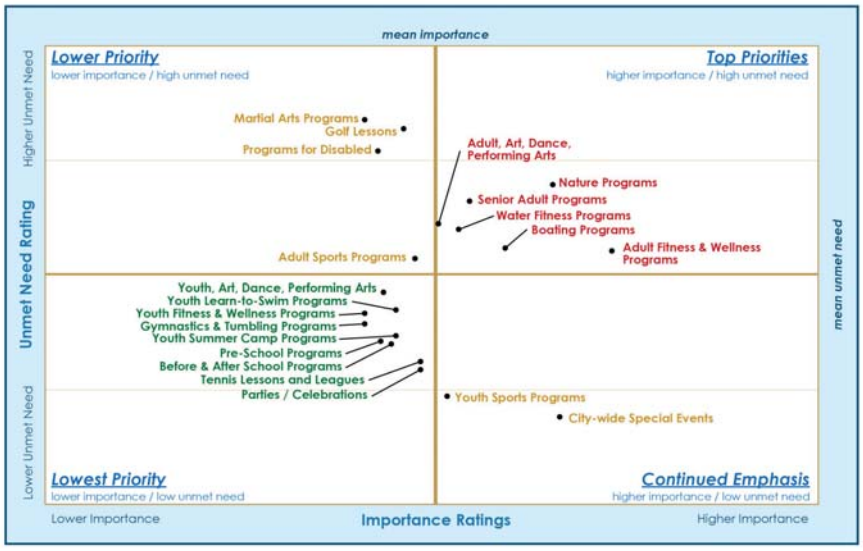


Table 3-21: District 1 Importance / Unmet Needs Matrix for Park and Recreation Programs



Select Comparison to City-wide Responses

The following tables show survey questions where **District 1** responses differed significantly from city-wide responses:

2. Overall, how would you rate the quality of the programs that you and members of your household participated in?

	District 1	City-wide
Excellent	37.8%	27.0%
Good	45.9%	58.7%

3. What ways do you travel to parks and recreation facilities that you use?

	District 1	City-wide
Walk	41.4%	50.6%

4. What reasons prevent you or other members of your household from using parks?

	District 1	City-wide
Too far from residence	22.0%	13.7%
Use facilities in other cities/counties	10.5%	5.7%
Lack of parking	17.0%	13.6%

5. Which actions would you be most likely to fund with tax dollars?

	District 1	City-wide
Upgrade Existing Beaches	22.8%	18.7%

District 2 Survey Results Analysis

District 2 was the only district below the city-wide average for "excellent" responses when asked to rate both facilities and programs. District 2 also has higher responses for walkers and bikers than any other district, however respondents indicated that having no safe way to walk/bike to facilities was a reason preventing park use. The top choice for actions funded with tax dollars in District 1 is "upgrade existing beaches", which is above the city-wide average.

Table 3-22: District 2 Importance / Unmet Needs Matrix for Park and Recreation Facilities

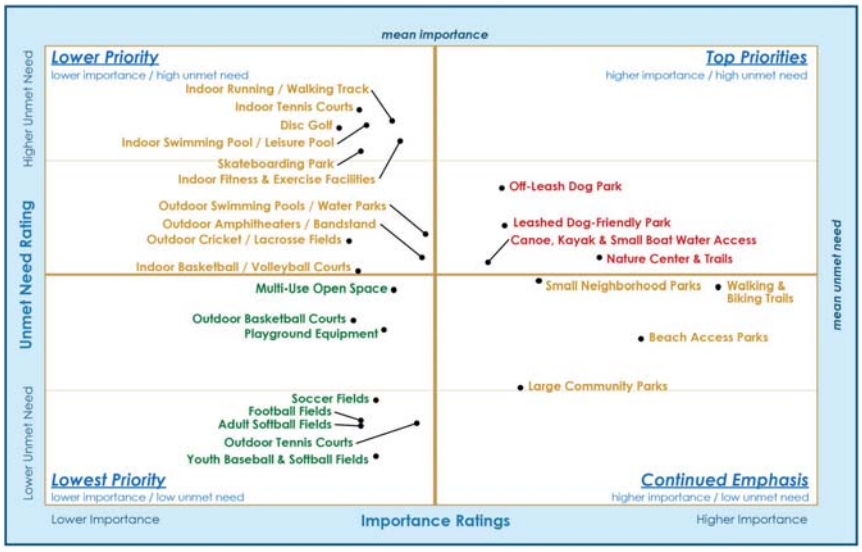
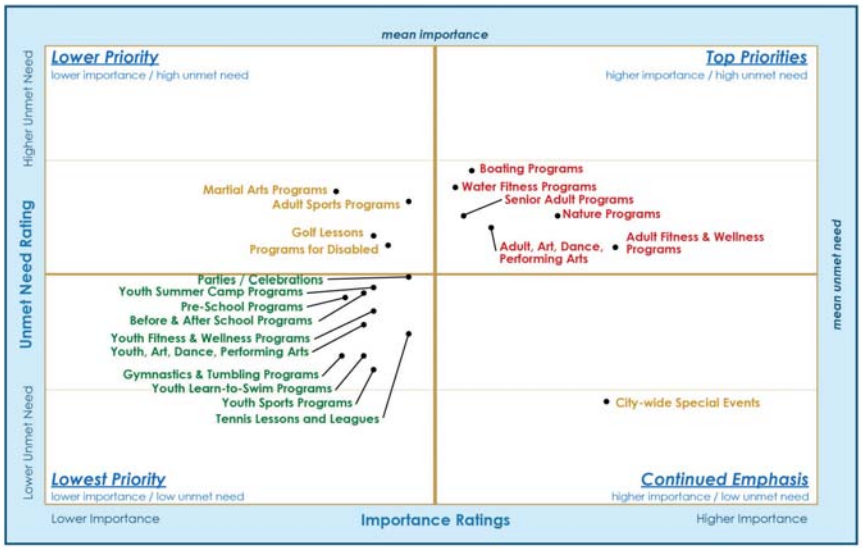


Table 3-23: District 2 Importance / Unmet Needs Matrix for Park and Recreation Programs



Select Comparison to City-wide Responses

The following tables show survey questions where **District 2** responses differed significantly from city-wide responses:

1. How would you rate the overall quality of the City of Fort Lauderdale parks and recreation areas you have used during the past 12 months?

	District 2	City-wide
Excellent	15.5%	19.8%
Good	60.2%	52.7%

2. Overall, how would you rate the quality of the programs that you and members of your household participated in?

	District 2	City-wide
Excellent	8.3%	27.0%
Good	69.4%	58.7%
Fair	22.2%	13.2%

3. What ways do you travel to parks and recreation facilities that you use?

	District 2	City-wide
Walk	64.0%	50.6%
Bike	43.9%	33.3%

4. What reasons prevent you or other members of your household from using parks?

	District 2	City-wide
No safe way to walk/ bike to parks/facilities	24.5%	18.7%

5. Which actions would you be most likely to fund with tax dollars?

	District 2	City-wide
Upgrade Existing Beaches	22.0%	18.7%

District 3 Survey Results Analysis

District 3 respondents recorded high "excellent" responses for both facilities and programs, however the facilities in this district received more "fair" and less "good" responses than any other district. Neighbors in this district indicated low levels of walking and biking, however the use of public transportation is much higher than other districts. Neighbors in District 3 indicated the most barriers to park use when compared to other districts, however safety for walking/biking and connectivity were not among the top responses. The top choices for actions funded with tax dollars in District 3 are "upgrade existing neighborhood parks" and "upgrade security of parks and nearby areas".

Table 3-24: District 3 Importance / Unmet Needs Matrix for Park and Recreation Facilities

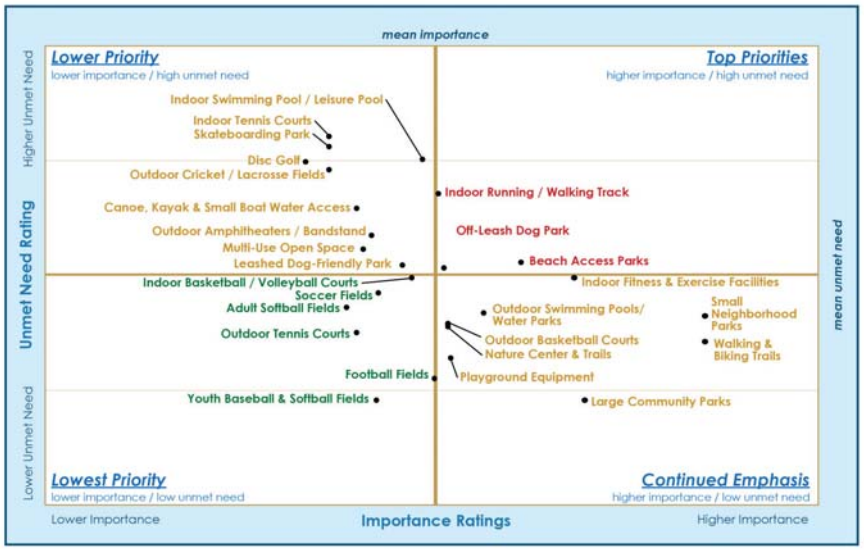
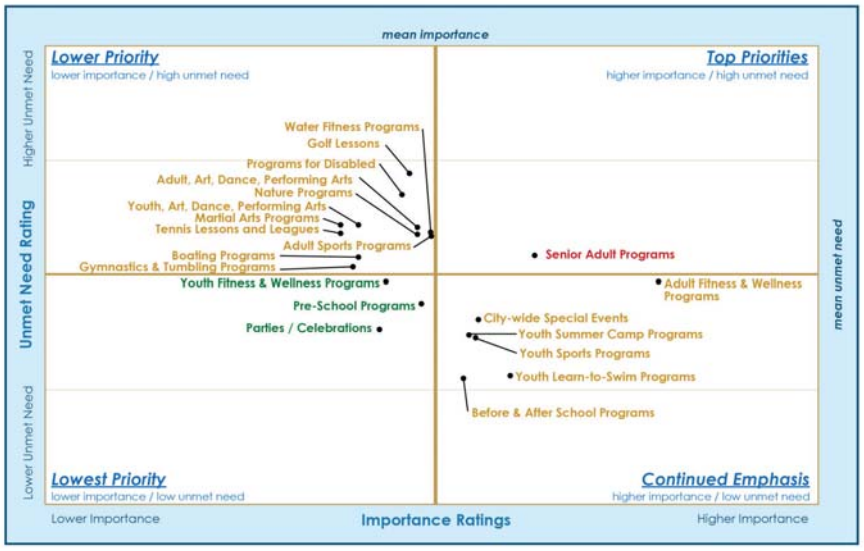


Table 3-25: District 3 Importance / Unmet Needs Matrix for Park and Recreation Programs



Select Comparison to City-wide Responses

The following tables show survey questions where **District 3** responses differed significantly from city-wide responses:

1. How would you rate the overall quality of the City of Fort Lauderdale parks and recreation areas you have used during the past 12 months?

	District 3	City-wide
Good	43.1%	52.7%
Fair	21.5%	15.8%

3. What ways do you travel to parks and recreation facilities that you use?

	District 3	City-wide
Walk	44.3%	50.6%
Bike	15.9%	33.3%
Public Transportation	6.0%	3.3%

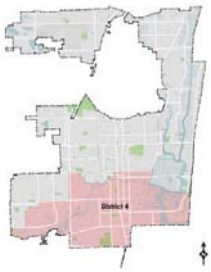
4. What reasons prevent you or other members of your household from using parks?

	District 3	City-wide
No safe way to walk/ bike to parks/facilities	13.0%	18.7%
Security is insufficient/ do not feel safe	29.4%	21.1%
Facilities are not well maintained	15.8%	12.6%
Lack of connectivity of trails	4.5%	11.3%
Fees are too high	14.7%	9.2%
Poor of lack of lighting	16.9%	12.7%
Loitering problem in park	35.6%	28.6%

5. Which actions would you be most likely to fund with tax dollars?

	District 3	City-wide
Upgrade existing neighborhood parks	11.9%	8.0%
Upgrade security of parks & nearby areas	13.9%	7.5%

District 4 Survey Results Analysis



Positive responses (excellent and good) for facilities and programs in District 4 were higher than any other district, however, District 4 was the only district to record any "poor" responses for programs. Biking to parks and facilities in this district is higher than the city-wide average, and safe places to walk/bike are the greatest concern for neighbors in this area. The top choices for actions funded with tax dollars in District 4 are "acquire additional open space/parkland" and "upgrade security of parks and nearby areas".

Table 3-26: District 4 Importance / Unmet Needs Matrix for Park and Recreation Facilities

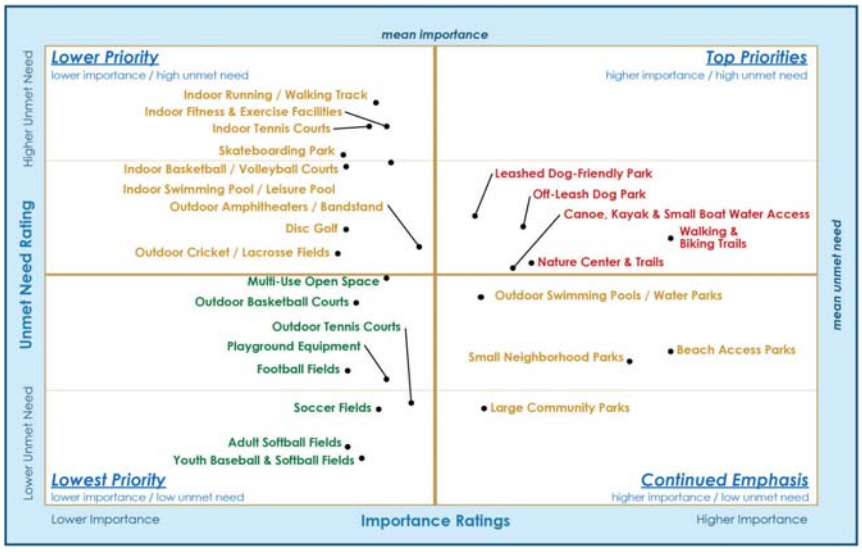
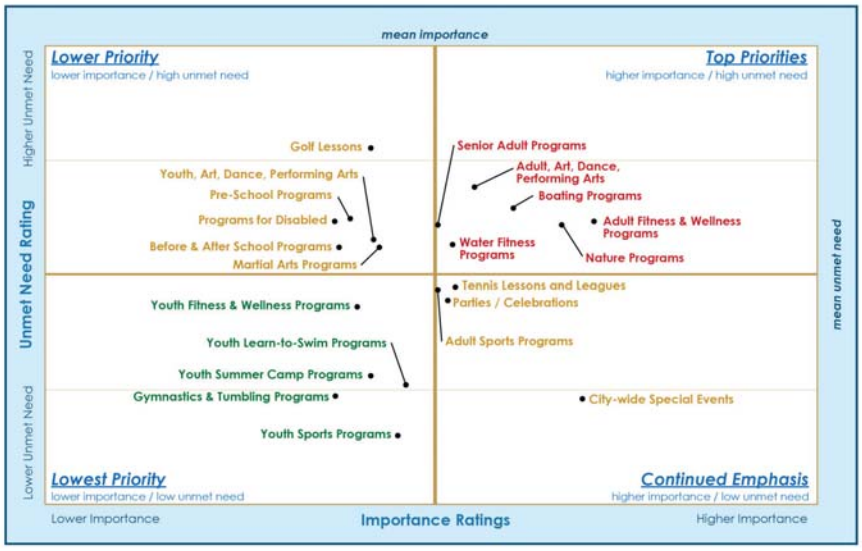


Table 3-27: District 4 Importance / Unmet Needs Matrix for Park and Recreation Programs



Select Comparison to City-wide Responses

The following tables show survey questions where **District 4** responses differed significantly from city-wide responses:

2. Overall, how would you rate the quality of the programs that you and members of your household participated in?

	District 4	City-wide
Fair	2.1%	13.2%
Poor	4.3%	1.1%

3. What ways do you travel to parks and recreation facilities that you use?

	District 4	City-wide
Bike	43.2%	33.3%

4. What reasons prevent you or other members of your household from using parks?

	District 4	City-wide
No safe way to walk/ bike to parks/facilities	23.1%	18.7%

5. Which actions would you be most likely to fund with tax dollars?

	District 4	City-wide
Acquire additional open space/parkland	16.2%	13.1%
Upgrade Existing Beaches	19.8%	18.7%

3.4.4 Statistically Valid Survey Summary

The mail/telephone survey is the strongest, most accurate tool available to determine needs of the general population and will serve to cross-check results of the On-line Public Opinion Survey. Significant findings include:

Priorities

- Walking and **biking trails, indoor fitness and exercise facilities, dog parks, water access, nature centers and trails** are the top priority facilities with the highest level of unmet need.
- **Nature programs, adult fitness and wellness, senior adult programs, water fitness, boating, and adult art, dance and performing arts** are the top priority programs with the highest level of unmet need.
- **Large community parks, small neighborhood parks, beach access, and outdoor swimming pools** are the top facility type and activity that needs continued emphasis in order to meet need and importance.
- An **exceptionally high satisfaction rating** for **condition and appearance** of park and recreation facilities.
- A majority of respondents use **beaches, large community parks, small neighborhood parks, outdoor swimming pools, city marinas, tennis centers**, the Aquatic Complex and dog parks.
- The most significant reasons that prevented respondents from using the City's facilities were a **lack of knowledge of what is being offered** (44.5%) and **loitering in parks** (26.5%); **too busy (26.2%)**; and **security is insufficient** (20.3%).
- A **high satisfaction rating for the quality of recreation programs**.
- The events or programs with the highest level of participation are: **city-wide special events, youth sports programs, adult fitness and wellness programs, nature programs, and parties / celebrations**.
- Highest levels of satisfaction for services provided by the Department were for **locations of programs, times programs are offered, and fees charged for value received**.
- Highest level of priority by respondents was for more emphasis on **beaches**, while the next highest levels of emphasis were on **small neighborhood parks and large community parks**.
- The action respondents selected as the most willing action they would fund to improve the parks, recreation and cultural resources system is **'upgrade existing beaches'**, followed by **'upgrade security of parks and nearby areas'**, **'increase public awareness of arts and cultural activities'**, and **'upgrade existing neighborhood parks and trails'.**
- Respondents believe that public art provides benefits to the City of Fort Lauderdale by **'enhancing the appearance of the city facilities'**, **'makes the city attractive for tourists, businesses and new residents'**, **'enhances the pride of the city'**, **'supports the local arts community'** and **'increases public awareness of arts and cultural activities'**.

3.5 Level of Service Analysis

3.5.1 Methodology

The purpose of an Existing Level of Service (LOS) analysis is to quantify how well the existing parks system is meeting the needs of residents. The National Recreation and Park Association's definition of LOS is "an allocation mechanism for the delivery of park land and basic recreation facilities throughout a community. By adoption of such a standard, a community in essence says that all citizens, [...], will have an equal opportunity to share in the basic menu of services implicit in the standard and accompanying spatial distribution and allocation of policies."

For Fort Lauderdale, the LOS analysis was measured based on three basic principles that will be continually refined based on public input in subsequent phases of this planning process.

- **Acreage** (Amount of Park Land)
- **Facilities** (Amount of Facilities)
- **Access** (Distance or Travel Time)

3.5.2 Acreage LOS

The most common way to measure LOS for existing acreage is the number of public park acres per 1,000 residents in a community. Currently, there are 957 acres of public park lands within the City of Fort Lauderdale. The 2014 population of Fort Lauderdale is estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau to be 176,013 residents, which translates into an Acreage LOS of **5.43** acres per 1,000 residents. According to the Broward County Planning and Environmental Regulation Division, the 2030 population is projected to increase to 202,072, and the 2040 population is estimated to reach 208,618. If no additional park land is acquired, the acreage LOS will drop to 4.73 acres per 1,000 residents in 2030, and 4.58 acres per 1,000 residents in 2040. **Table 3-28** shows the LOS analysis for each park type and calculates the projected LOS for 2030 and 2040, as well the acreage needed to maintain current acreage LOS figures as the population grows.

Table 3-28: Fort Lauderdale Acreage LOS Analysis per 1,000 Population

	Current Level of Service (Pop. - 176,013)*			2030 Estimates (Pop. - 202,072)**		2040 Estimates (Pop. - 208,618)**	
Park Type	**Number of Parks**	**Acreage**	**2014 LOS (acres/1000 pop)**	**2030 LOS (acres/1000 pop)**	**2030 Acreage needed to maintain current LOS**	**2040 LOS (acres/1000 pop)**	**2040 Acreage needed to maintain current LOS**
Total Parks	**104**	**956.50**	**5.43**	**4.73**	**141.61**	**4.58**	**177.18**
Large Urban Parks	3	319.19	**1.81**	1.58	47.26	1.53	59.13
Community Parks	9	102.62	**0.58**	0.51	15.19	0.49	19.01
Neighborhood Parks	47	88.98	**0.51**	0.44	13.17	0.43	16.48
Special Use Parks	18	372.29	**2.12**	1.84	55.12	1.78	68.96
Urban Open Space	21	11.83	**0.07**	0.06	1.75	0.06	2.19
School Parks	6	61.57	**0.35**	0.30	9.12	0.30	11.41
Other Parks							
State Parks	1	166.02	**0.94**	0.82	24.58	0.80	30.75

* Source: 2014 U.S. Census Population Estimate
** Source: Broward County Planning and Environmental Regulation Division

Also included in this analysis are other parks within the city limits that are managed by the State of Florida. The majority of these lands are resource-based parks, with the largest being H. Taylor Birch State Park, which provides over 166 acres near the ocean front. The park land managed by the County that falls within the Fort Lauderdale City Limits is primarily smaller pieces of larger parks that occupy other municipalities or unincorporated areas.

While Acreage LOS helps ensure a commitment to park land as the city develops, it has shortcomings. Comparison to other cities may be difficult as some cities operate golf courses, conservation areas, and other non-recreational facilities which are high in acreage but low in available capacity. Acreage LOS also does not consider amenities that are accessible to residents but owned and operated by entities other than the city or consolidated city/county park systems. Examples include school ball fields and playgrounds, county and state parks located near the city border, and privately operated programs such as YMCAs, church after-school programs, community meeting facilities, and non-profit senior programs.

For these reasons, this System Plan explores additional techniques such as Existing Facility LOS and Access LOS to better determine the extent to which parks, recreation and cultural resource facilities and programs are able to meet the needs of City of Fort Lauderdale residents. This methodology assumes the following principles:

- **Facilities** (Amount of Facilities) – Every resident should have similar opportunities to use recreation facilities; and
- **Access** (Distance or Travel Time) – Every resident should be able to access specific park facilities within similar walking, bicycling, public transit and/or driving distances.

Acreage LOS Findings

The 2013 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) provides a recommendation of 6 acres per 1,000 residents. Based on this metric, the City of Fort Lauderdale is currently providing an acreage LOS slightly below the SCORP recommendation based on current population estimates. As the city's population experiences rapid growth in the next 15 years, the overall park system will need to add over 140 acres of new park land in order to maintain current LOS levels. As the population growth slows between 2030 and 2040, Fort Lauderdale will need to add an additional 35 acres of parkland in order to achieve the current LOS of 5.43 acres per 1,000 residents.

Over 30% of the system's park acreage is contained within the three Large Urban Parks, and nearly 40% of the acreage is found in sites defined as "Special Use Parks". With the large amount of acreage found within a total of 21 parks, the remaining 30% of the park acreage is contained within 83 parks throughout the city, with the average park size being 3.2 acres.

From an acreage distribution perspective, it may appear that park system is unbalanced. However, this evaluation does not take into consideration the context of the smaller parks throughout the system or the access level of service that the system provides. The facilities and amenities found in each site will also provide a better understanding of how well each park site is meeting the needs of the users it serves. While **Table 3-28** provides deficit

SCORP Guidelines

The 2013 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is the tenth edition in a series required for Florida's participation in the Land and Water Conservation Program, and is the State's official document for outdoor recreation planning. While the plan compiles inventory benchmarks and level of service targets for city, county and private outdoor recreation providers, there are no standards for quantity or LOS of park and recreation resources. SCORP, instead, serves as a guideline for planning purposes only.

figures for each park type, this acreage may be better allocated to certain park types or areas of the city, and should be evaluated based on a combination of acreage distribution, facility priorities, and access needs.

3.5.3 Facility LOS

Acreage LOS Takeaways

- Fort Lauderdale is currently providing an acreage level of service of **5.43 acres of park land per 1,000 residents**
- An additional **177** acres will need be added by **2040** in order to maintain current LOS levels
- A majority of park acreage is contained within Large Urban Parks and Special Use Parks, with some school sites providing limited access to recreation amenities

Another way to measure existing parks and recreation LOS is by the number of facilities per population. Like acreage, there are no strict standards for the number of facilities that a community needs. This section documents the evaluation and comparison of the number of facilities per population to averages in the Southeast Region of Florida found in the 2013 Florida Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

Demand for Outdoor Recreation

The 2013 SCORP document, discussed in **Section 3.5.2**, contains a survey conducted in 2011 that included responses from 3,961 residents regarding their participation in 26 outdoor recreation activities during the previous 12 months.

The survey identified the top five most popular outdoor recreation activities with responses from Florida highlighted in **Table 3-21**. Saltwater beach activities is the most popular activity, with 63% of state residents participating.

Table 3-29: Top Five Outdoor Recreation Activities Based on Percentage of State Resident Participation (SCORP)

Activity	Percent
Saltwater Beach Activities (excludes fishing)	63
Wildlife Viewing	49
Fishing	46
Bicycling	44
Picnicking	40

Approximately 49% of the population enjoys wildlife viewing, and almost 46% participate in fishing. The survey also identified the top five desired facilities for Florida's residents. These facilities included:

- **Community Parks**
- **Biking Paths**
- **Playgrounds**
- **Outdoor public swimming pools**
- **Hiking/walking trails**

These results are helpful in determining the kind of recreational activities that citizens wish to engage in, and identifying the types of facilities that can best serve these demands.

Supply of Recreational Opportunities

The Florida SCORP uses the supply of recreation services and compares them to the resident demand figures to establish a LOS for the supply of resources. While acreage LOS is based on the entire resident population, SCORP considers the percentage of participation in its LOS calculations for recreation supply of facilities. This means that LOS is measured in the amount of resources and facilities that are available to support an activity, expressed in terms of units of supply per 1,000 participants.

Each region's level of service was estimated for 26 activities to provide a geographically relevant standard to which counties and municipalities can compare. The Southeast Region serves as

the benchmark by which Fort Lauderdale can be compared.

In addition to supplying participation data for these 26 activities, the SCORP divides the results into two categories: resource-based facilities, and user-oriented facilities. Resource-based facilities are those that are dependent upon some element or combination of elements in the natural or cultural environments that cannot be easily duplicated. Activities supported by these facilities include beach access, fishing, hiking, biking, and nature study. User-oriented facilities are those that can be provided almost anywhere for the convenience of the user. These facilities support more specific activities that include: soccer, tennis, baseball, basketball, and pool swimming.

Table 3-30 shows the current facility LOS for Fort Lauderdale and the Southeast Region of Florida. This data is evaluated based on the percentage of resident participants each unit is serving, and is also separated into resource-based, user-oriented, and indoor facilities for recreation activities with particular relevance to Fort Lauderdale's parks and recreation system. The LOS for these facilities is compared to the Southeast Region LOS, and facility deficits in Fort Lauderdale have been identified for the current population, and the populations estimates for 2030 and 2040. Facilities that are not quantified in the LOS calculations by SCORP are evaluated based on growth, with units needed to maintain current LOS figures provided.

Facility LOS Findings

User-Oriented

When compared to the SCORP LOS figures for the Southeast Region, Fort Lauderdale has an adequate number of athletic fields, tennis courts and swimming pools. The city currently has a deficit in basketball courts. These conditions are projected to continue as the population rapidly increases in the next 15 years, with a deficit eventually developing for tennis courts.

An additional 13 basketball courts and seven tennis courts are needed to meet the current Southeast Region LOS figures. However, as population growth slows between 2030 and 2040, the addition of one of each court type will be necessary to maintain the Southeast Region LOS. The number of baseball/softball fields, soccer fields and swimming pools is sufficient to allow the adequate levels to continue as the population grows towards 2040 and beyond.

The user-oriented facilities that are not quantified in the SCORP LOS calculations are evaluated based on the units that will be needed to maintain the current Fort Lauderdale LOS figures. Like the facilities discussed in the previous paragraph, almost all of the facilities necessary to maintain current levels are needed in the next 15 years. As these estimates are not based on SCORP participation levels, further input from the community will be necessary to identify the facilities that have the greatest unmet needs and highest demand.

It should also be noted that this facility LOS evaluation only includes facilities that are in the Parks and Recreation System inventory, and excludes all school sites that are not in the park system inventory. Many of these school sites contain additional facilities that could potentially supplement the deficits experienced in the user-oriented categories. However, as shown in **Table 3-31**, public access to these facilities is limited. During the project team's evaluation of the parks and facilitates, many of these sites were completely fenced in with the gates locked, even during hours when school was not in session.

Pool at Bass Park

Table 3-30: Fort Lauderdale Facility LOS Analysis per 1,000 Population

Legend: Above SCORP Averages | Below SCORP Averages

Facility Type	Current Level of Service (Pop. - 176,013)*				2030 Estimates (Pop. - 202,072)**		2040 Estimates (Pop. - 208,618)**	
	Southeast Region LOS units/1000 participants^	Number of Facilities in Fort Lauderdale Parks	FTL Existing LOS (2014) units/1000 participants^^	Units needed to meet Southeast Region LOS	FTL LOS (2030) units/1000 participants	2030 Deficit/ (Adequacy) to Current Southeast LOS	FTL LOS (2040) units/1000 participants	2040 Deficit/ (Adequacy) to Current Southeast LOS
User-Oriented								
Baseball/Softball Fields	0.88	38	**1.44**	**(15)**	1.25	(11)	1.21	(10)
Basketball Courts	1.27	36	**1.08**	**6**	0.94	13	0.91	14
Swimming Pools	0.08	9	**0.15**	**(4)**	0.13	(4)	0.13	(3)
Tennis Courts	2.00	50	**2.03**	**(1)**	1.77	7	1.71	8
Soccer	0.48	24	**0.91**	**(11)**	0.79	(9)	0.77	(9)
Resource-Based								
Saltwater Boat Launch Lanes	0.13	15	**0.37**	**(10)**	0.32	(9)	0.31	(9)
Saltwater Beaches (Linear Feet)	28.18	3,063.09	**27.19**	**111**	23.69	581	22.94	699
Historical or Archaeological Sites	0.05	7	**0.10**	**(3)**	0.09	(3)	0.08	(3)
Facilities not quantified in SCORP LOS analysis						2030 Units needed to meet Existing FTL LOS		2040 Units needed to meet Existing FTL LOS
User-Oriented								
Racquetball	n/a	8	**0.05**	-	0.04	1	0.04	1
Shuffle Board	n/a	7	**0.04**	-	0.03	1	0.03	1
Playgrounds	n/a	44	**0.25**	-	0.22	7	0.21	8
Volleyball	n/a	25	**0.14**	-	0.12	4	0.12	5
Resource-Based								
Water Frontage Areas	n/a	44	**0.25**	-	0.22	7	0.21	8
Fishing Facilities	n/a	15	**0.09**	-	0.07	2	0.07	3
Picnic Areas	n/a	50	**0.28**	-	0.25	7	0.24	9
Indoor Facilities (sq ft)								
Community/ Recreation Centers	n/a			-				
Gymnasiums	n/a			-				

* Source: 2014 U.S. Census Population Estimate
** Source: Broward County Planning and Environmental Regulation Division
^ Source: 2013 Florida State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan LOS Calculations
^^ Calculations include resident participation percentages for the Southeast Region from the 2013 Florida State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan LOS Calculations
[t] The following facilities were found to have limited public access: **Playgrounds (3), Basketball Courts (4)**, **Tennis Courts (1)**. These facilities are included in the facility LOS, however public access was not available during the facility evaluation visits.

Table 3-31: Facilities in School Parks, not included in Park System Inventory

Facilities in School Parks NOT Included in Park Inventory	Limited Access	Publicly Accessible	Total
Baseball/Softball Fields	10	1	**11**
Basketball Courts	24	3	**27**
Swimming Pools	2	-	**2**
Tennis Courts	18	-	**18**
Soccer Fields	3	-	**3**
Playgrounds	10	4	**14**
Volleyball Courts	1	-	**1**
Picnic Areas	2	2	**4**
Racquetball Courts	14	-	**14**

Publicly Accessible Playground at Walker Elementary School

Resource-based

The results indicate that the City is enjoying adequate numbers of resource-based facilities that can be compared to SCORP LOS levels. As the city grows to 2040 population estimates, this trend will continue for saltwater boat launches and historical or archaeological sites. However, while there is currently only a slight deficit for saltwater beaches in Fort Lauderdale's parks, this will become a larger deficit in 2030 and 2040. Beaches and water access are an important part of Fort Lauderdale parks system, and demand for these facilities will only increase as the population grows. Beach-front property is some of the most valuable in the City, and will make acquiring additional parkland difficult. However, improved access and utilization of park sites not directly on the beach, but close enough to provide access routes (such as D.C. Alexander Park), will be opportunities that can supplement the deficit of beach-front parkland.

The same principle can be applied to the resource-based facilities that are not quantified by the SCORP LOS analysis. Additional water frontage areas, fishing facilities and picnic areas will be needed to maintain current Fort Lauderdale LOS levels as the City grows, but these can be applied to existing parks that have the conditions necessary to create these amenities. Similar to the user-oriented facilities, the need for these resource-based facilities will be greatest in the next 15 years.

Facility LOS Takeaways

- Fort Lauderdale is currently providing **adequate** numbers of **athletic fields, swimming pools, saltwater boat launch lanes, and historical and archaeological sites**. This trend will continue as the population approaches 2040 estimates.
- There is currently only a slight deficit for **saltwater beach accesses**, however a **larger deficit** will begin to form as the **City grows**. Given the high value of beach front property and limited resources, improving access and utilizing existing parks adjacent to beach access points should be explored.
- School sites not included in this analysis contain a large amount of facilities, but public access to most of these sites is limited.
- **Basketball courts and tennis courts**, will experience increasingly larger deficits as the City continues to grow.
- A large majority of Facilities needed to meet current SCORP and Fort Lauderdale LOS figures, and maintain these levels into 2040, and needed to meet **rapid population growth during the next 15 years**.

Though a Facility LOS analysis provides a snapshot condition of the outdoor recreation facility capacity, it does not address the facilities provided by other recreation providers such as private providers, or State and County Parks. The Facility LOS also does not capture whether facilities are accessible for all residents, and conflicts with input from public participation on municipal, community and neighborhood levels. For this analysis the System Plan team conducted an Access LOS analysis to identify gaps in accessibility to facilities.

3.5.4 Access LOS

A third approach explored to better determine existing LOS is analyzing the level of access that residents have to park facilities. This is typically measured as a distance, either in miles or travel time. The City of Fort Lauderdale has established access standards for park types in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, and these standards will be applied to park types LOS analysis in this section. In addition to the predetermined park types, access LOS will also be evaluated for select facilities, consistent with the park classification or park type each facility is typically found in. Facilities types analyzed are also consistent with facilities identified in the Facility LOS section of the chapter. Elements analyzed include:

Facilities in Gore Betz Park

Existing Park Classifications Types:

- **Urban Open Space** - 1/4 mile and 1/2 mile
- **Neighborhood Parks** - 1/4 mile and 1/2 mile
- **Community Parks** - 2 miles
- **School Parks** - 1/2 mile and 2 miles
- **Special Use Parks** - 2 miles and 5 miles
- **Large Urban Parks**- 5 miles

Synthesis LOS Analysis:

- **All Parks with Open Space** - 1/2 mile
- **All Parks with Open Space + School Parks**- 1/2 mile

User-Oriented Facilities LOS Analysis:

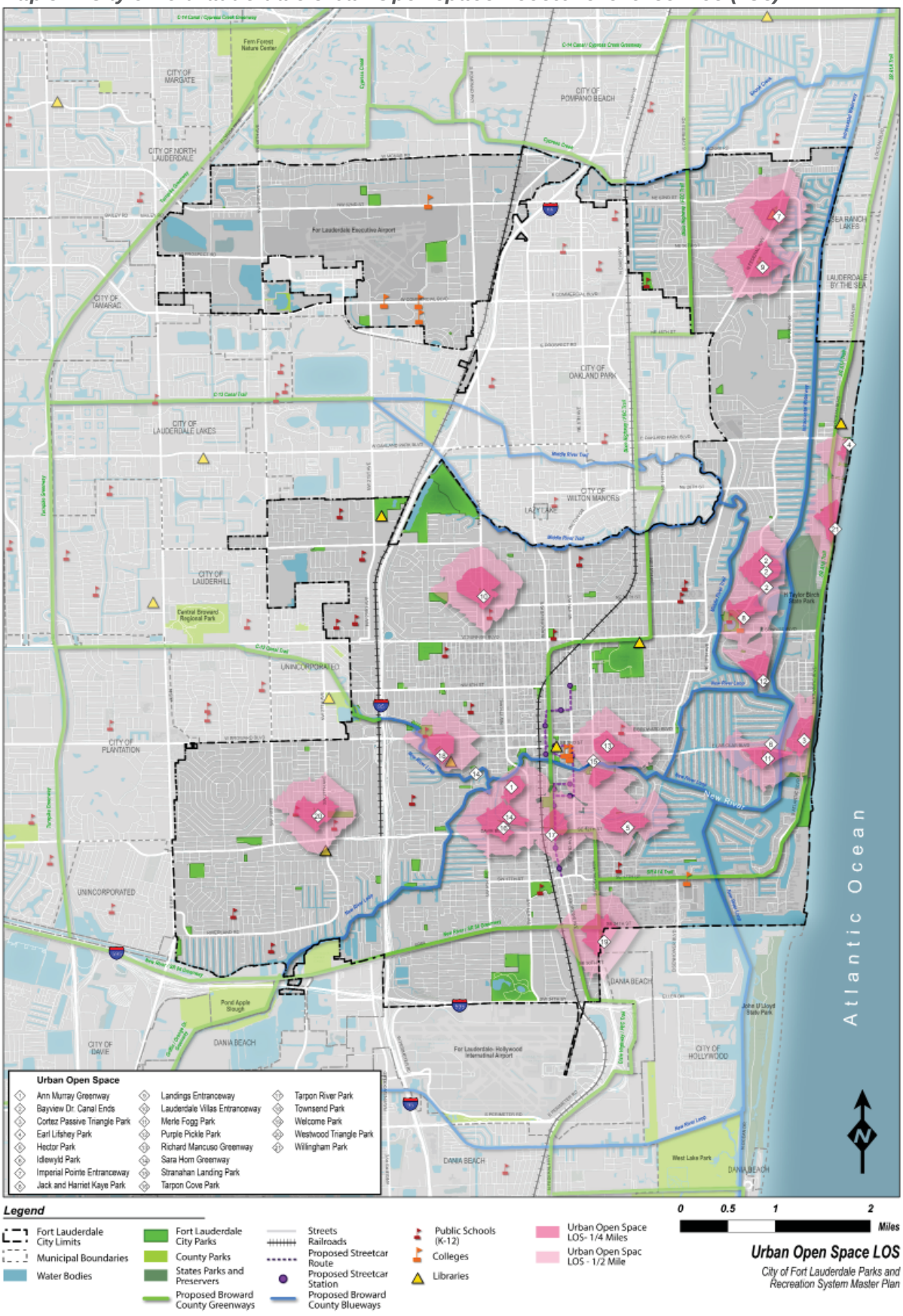
- *Neighborhood-Serving Facilities:*
  - **Basketball Courts** - 1/2 mile
  - **Playgrounds** - 1/2 mile
  - **Picnic Areas** - 1/2 mile
- *Community-Serving Facilities:*
  - **Tennis Courts** - 2 mile
  - **Soccer Fields** - 2 mile
  - **Volleyball Courts** - 2 mile
- *Regional-Serving Facilities:*
  - **Swimming Pools** - 5 mile

Resource-Based Facilities LOS Analysis:

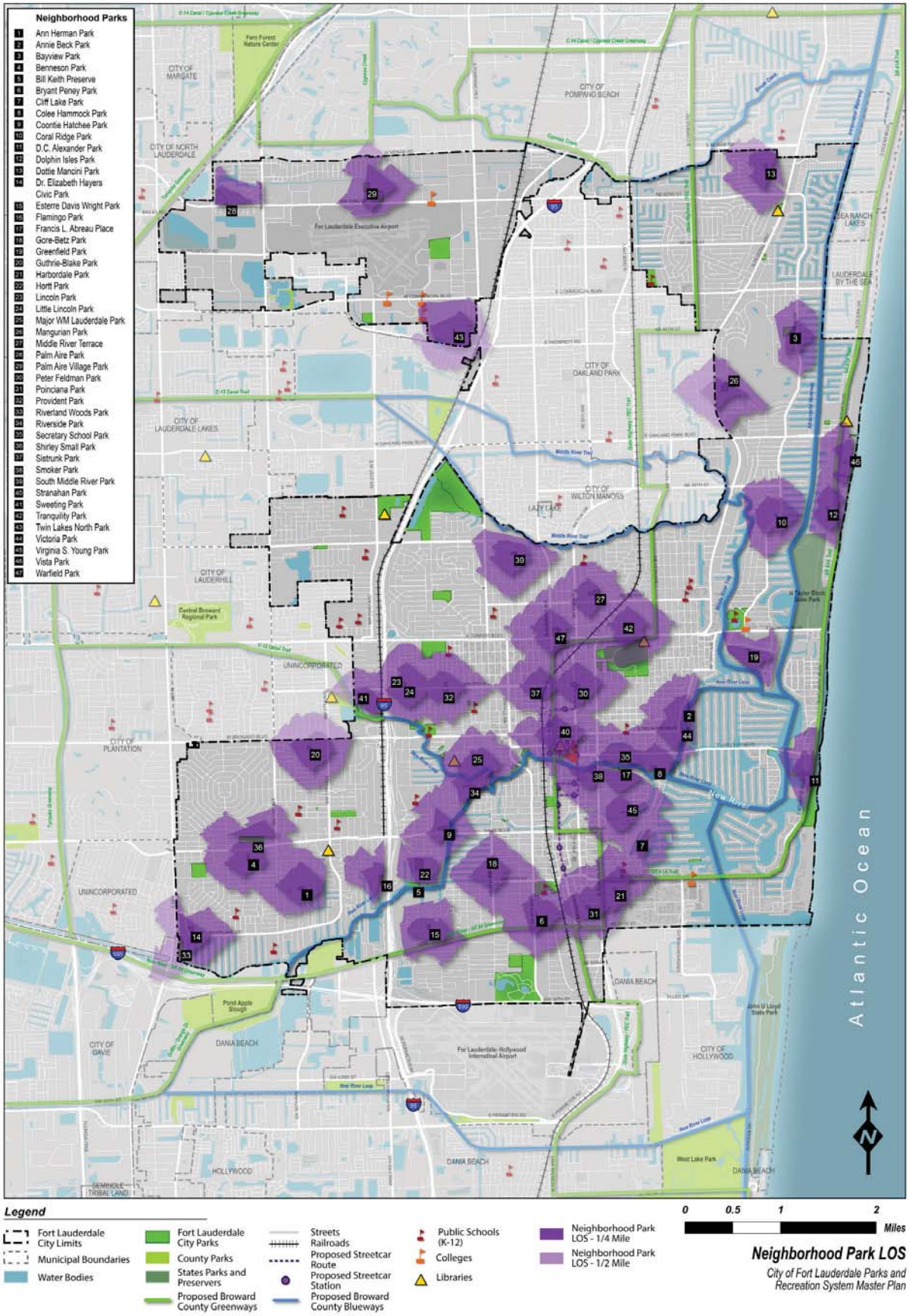
- *Neighborhood-Serving Facilities:*
  - **Water Frontage and Fishing** - 1/2 mile
- *Regional-Serving Facilities:*
  - **Boat Launches** - 5 mile

Maps 3-2 - 3-19 identify gaps in accessibility for each park classification and facility type.

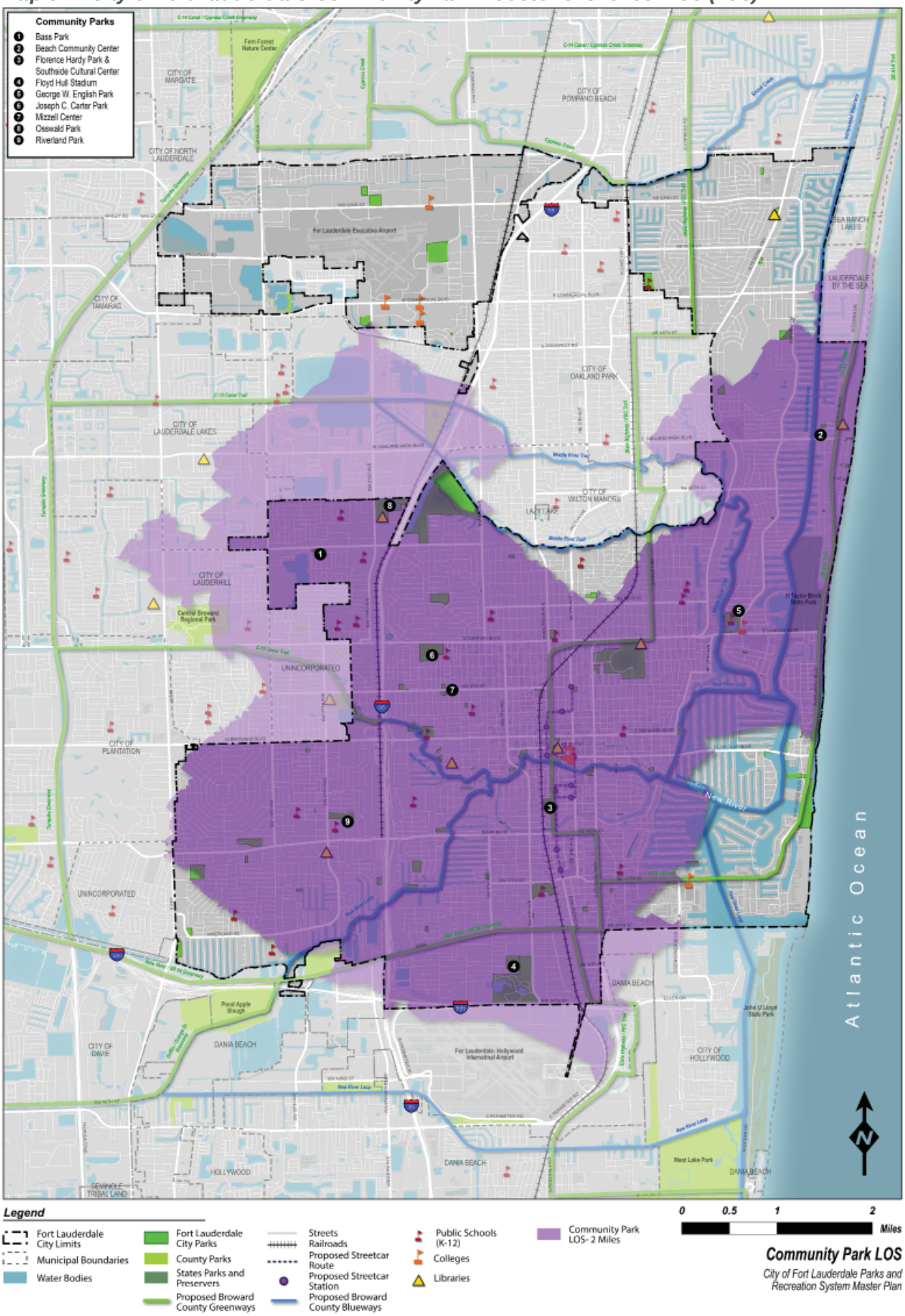
Map 3-2: City of Fort Lauderdale Urban Open Space Access Level of Service (LOS)



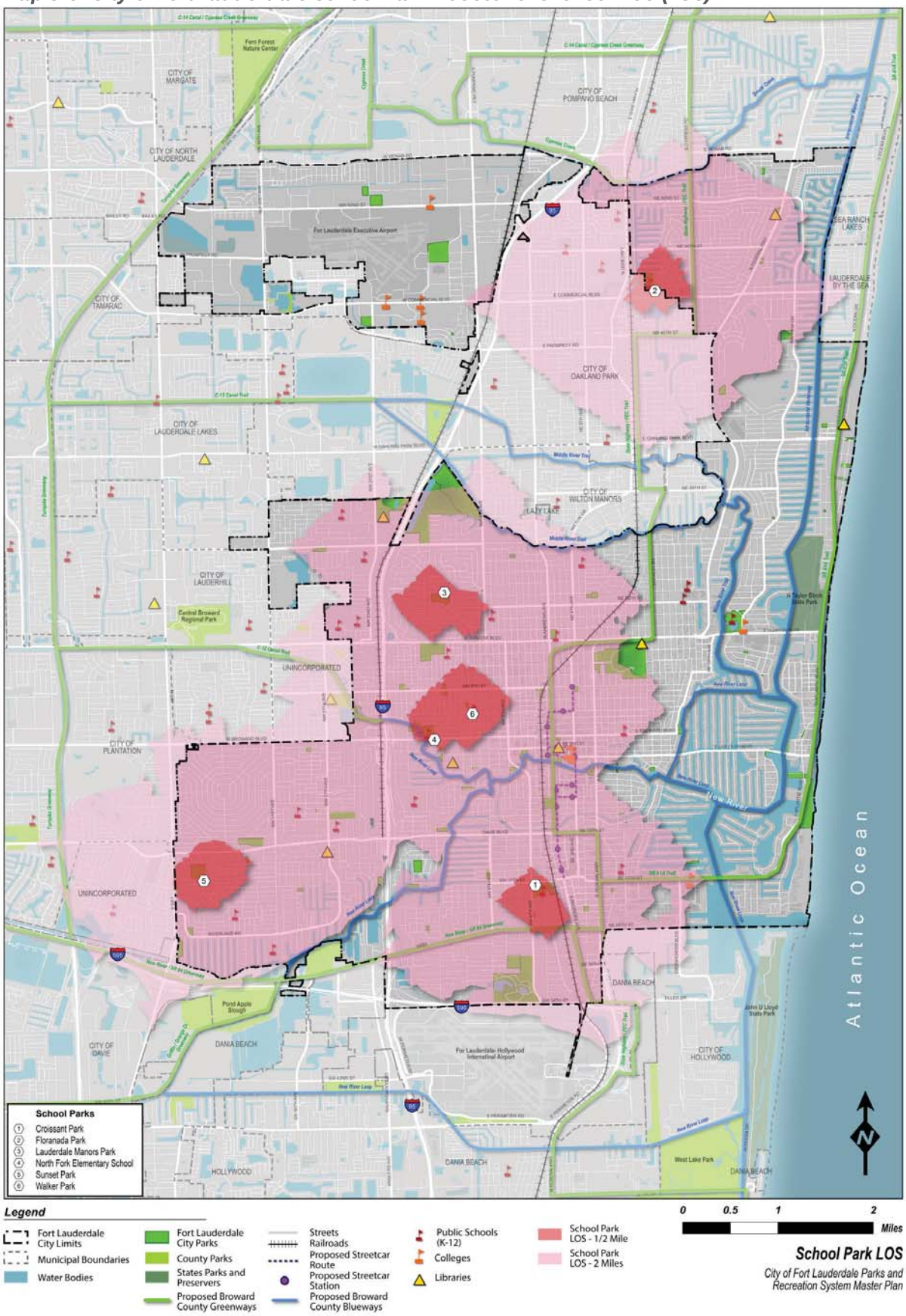
Map 3-3: City of Fort Lauderdale Neighborhood Park Access Level of Service (LOS)



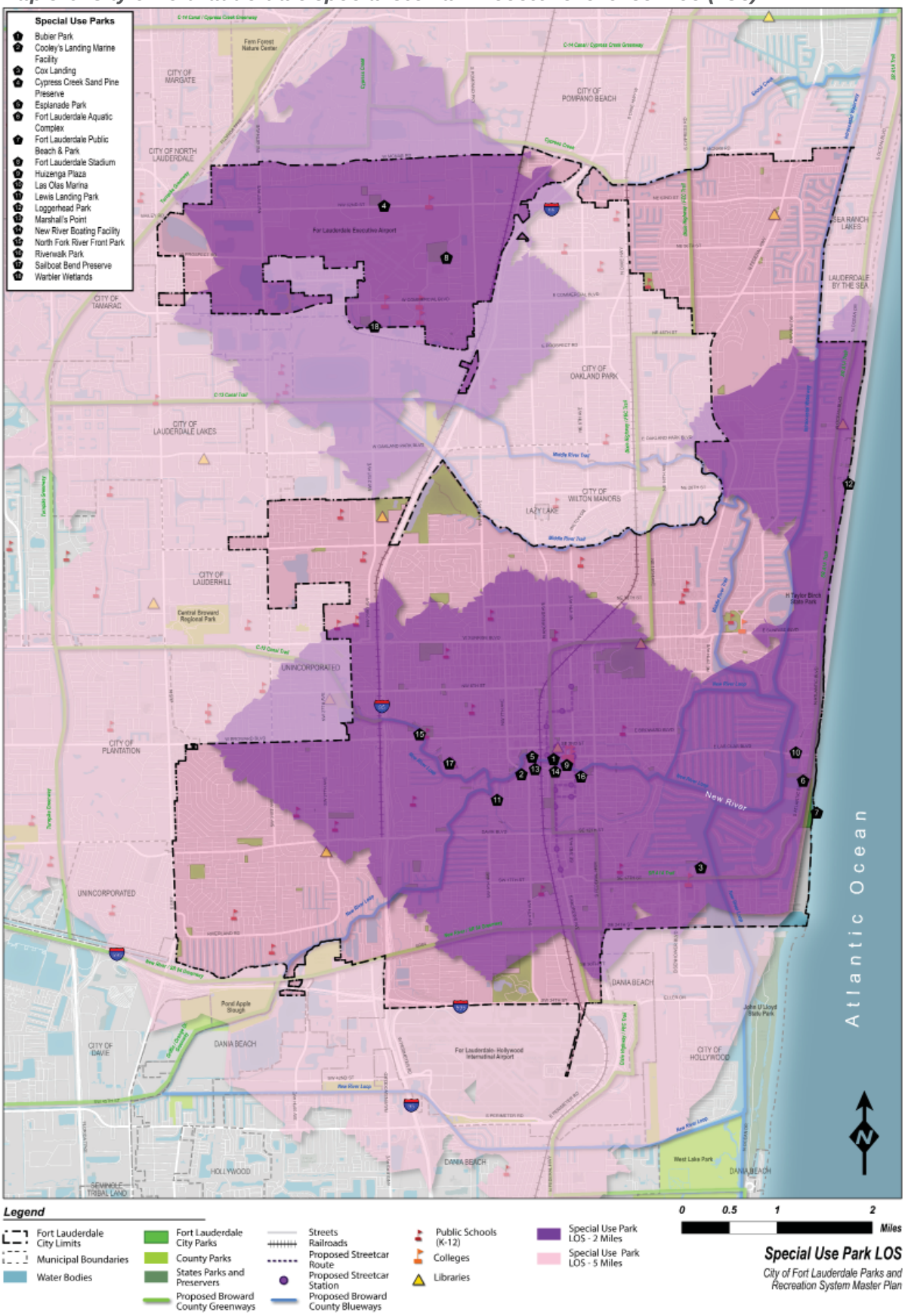
Map 3-4: City of Fort Lauderdale Community Park Access Level of Service (LOS)



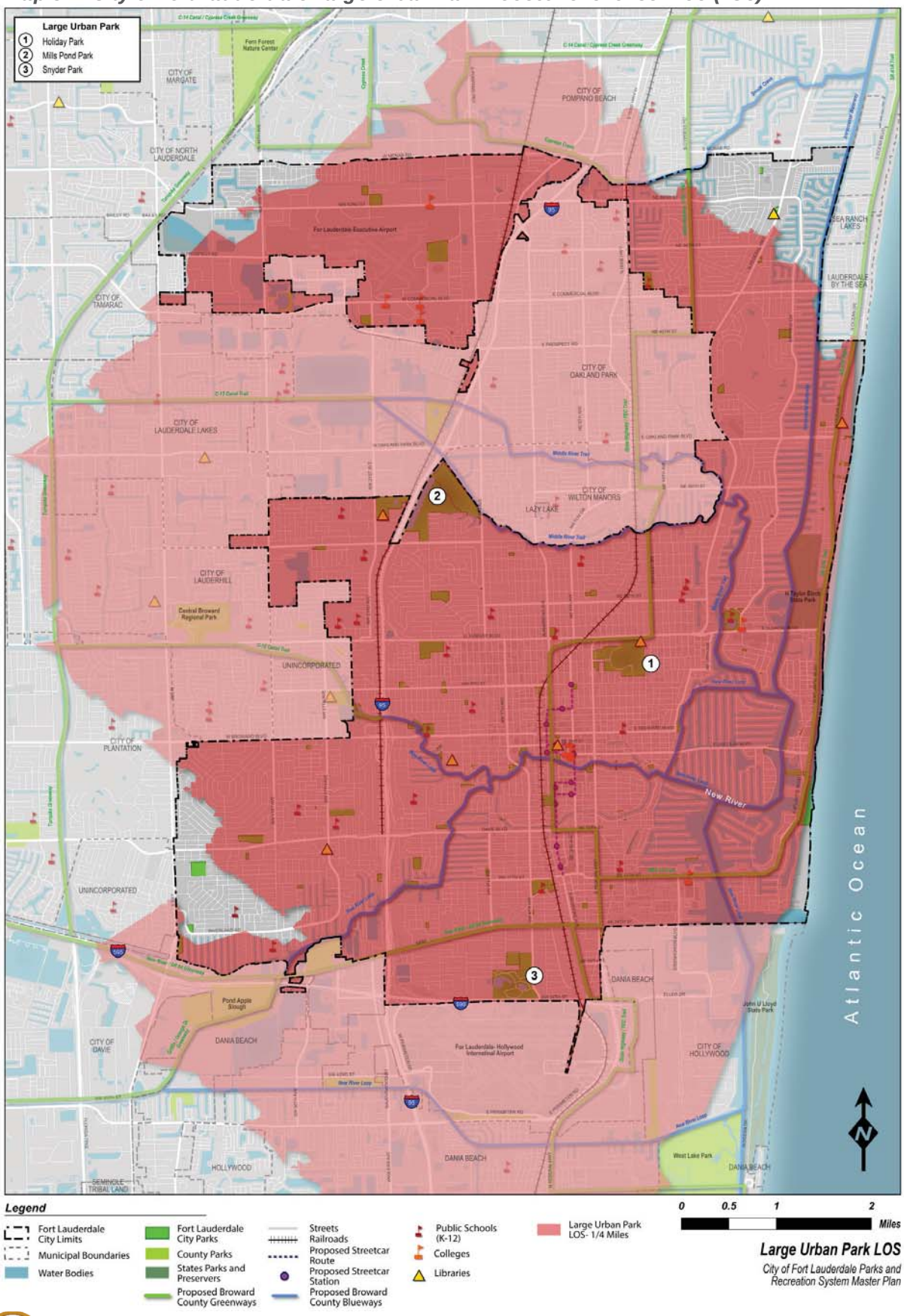
Map 3-5: City of Fort Lauderdale School Park Access Level of Service (LOS)



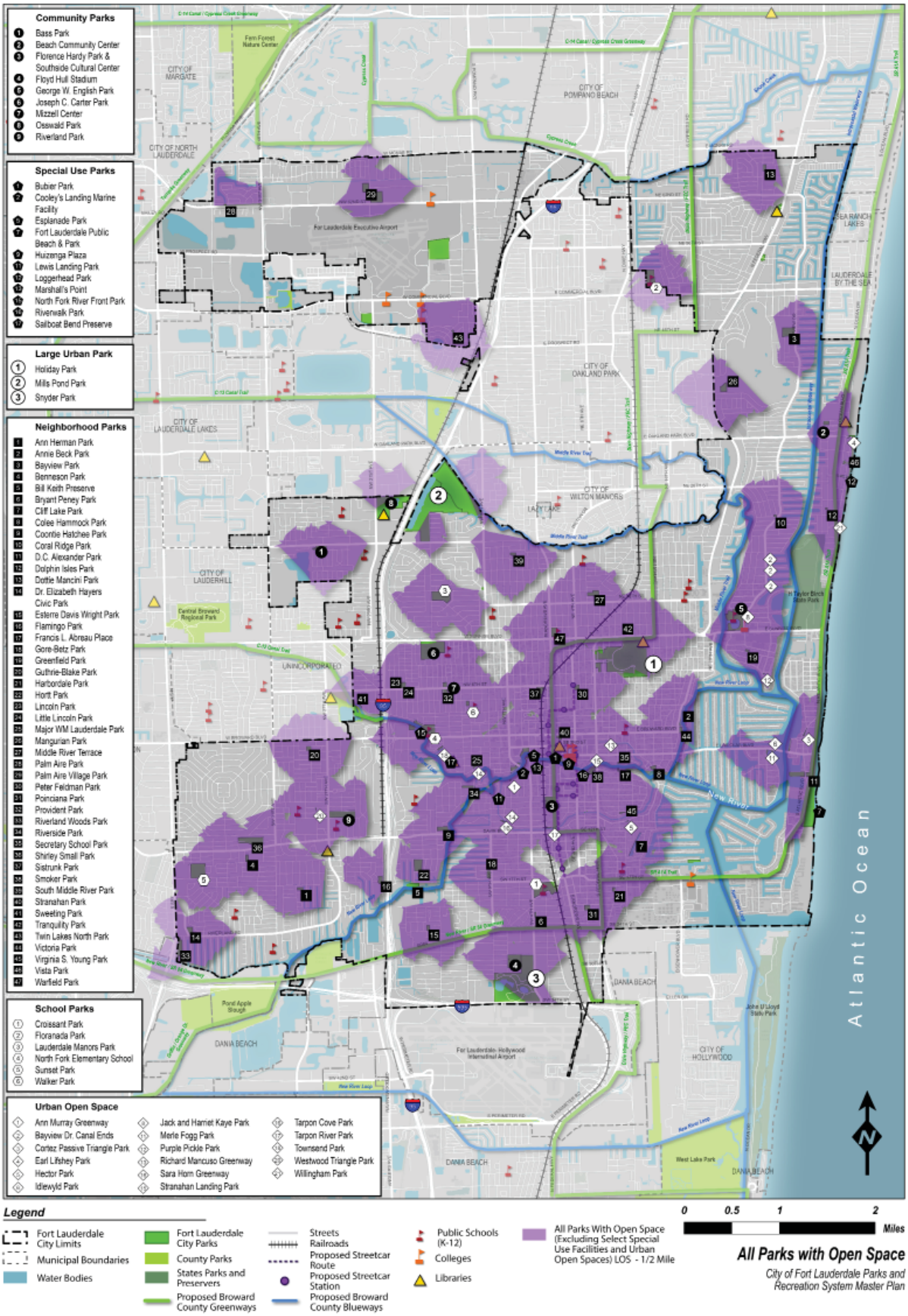
Map 3-6: City of Fort Lauderdale Special Use Park Access Level of Service (LOS)



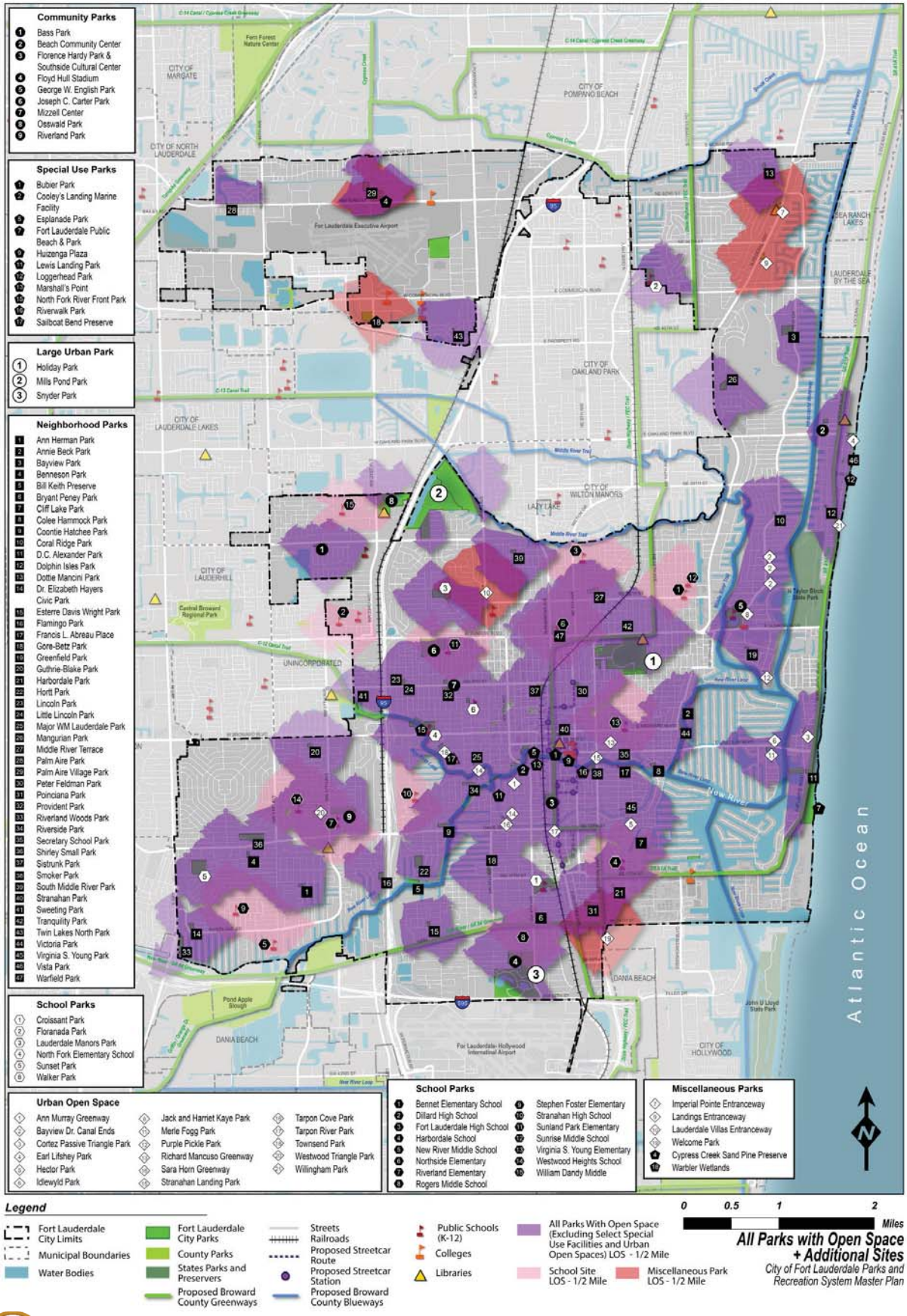
Map 3-7: City of Fort Lauderdale Large Urban Park Access Level of Service (LOS)



Map 3-8: City of Fort Lauderdale Open Space in Park Access Level of Service (LOS)



Map 3-9: City of Fort Lauderdale Open Space in Park Access Level of Service (LOS) + School Sites



Access LOS Findings

Overall, the Access LOS analysis indicates that park distribution and facility access varies across the City with portions of the City requiring long distances to access various facilities.

Existing Parks

Urban Open Space and Neighborhood Parks were found to have several gaps in services areas, or areas that are either within walking, biking, or transit range of this park or facility type. Community Parks, analyzed as drive-to or transit-accessible facilities, provide significant coverage throughout the southern portion of the city, however the northern areas are largely uncovered by the community park service area.

For Special Use and Large Urban park classification types, the Access LOS technique identified small gaps in service areas primarily along the fringe of the city. School parks included in the park system inventory are analyzed at 1/2-mile and 2-mile service areas, with gaps on the eastern side of the city, the beach areas and the northwest corner of the city.

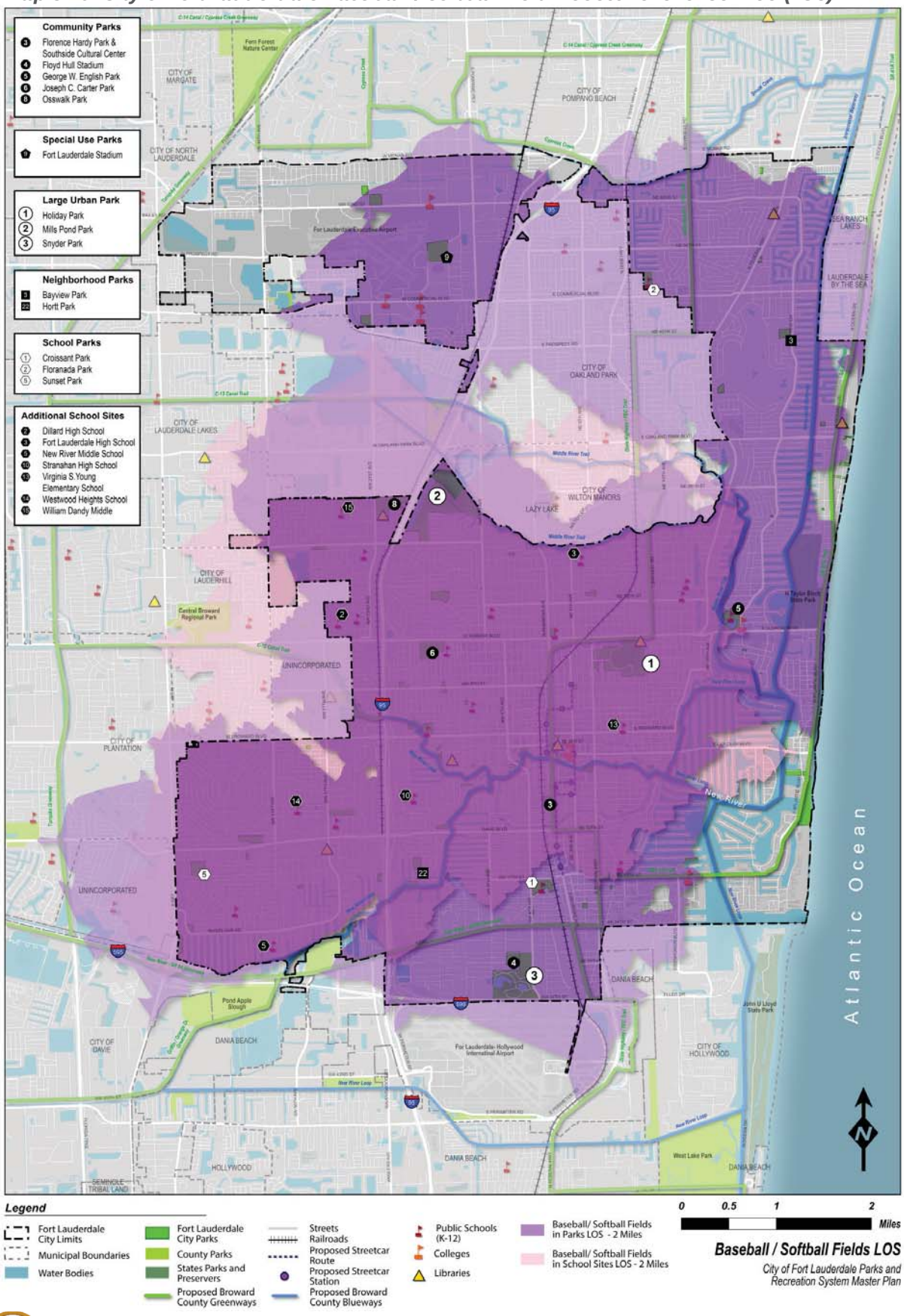
Park Synthesis Analysis

To provide a better understanding of the access LOS for the entire Park System, **Map 3-8** combines the different park types and analyzes access at a walking or biking range. Included are: Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, Large Urban Parks, select School Parks and the Urban Open Spaces and Special Use facilities that contain open space (facilities that contain no open space, such as marinas or aquatic centers, as well as open spaces that are primarily entranceways are excluded from this analysis). By analyzing these parks and facilities at a 1/2-mile service area, walking and biking access to open spaces can be identified for the Park System. The analysis identifies gaps in the northern portion of the city, as well as a few pockets on the fringe of the southwest and southeast edges.

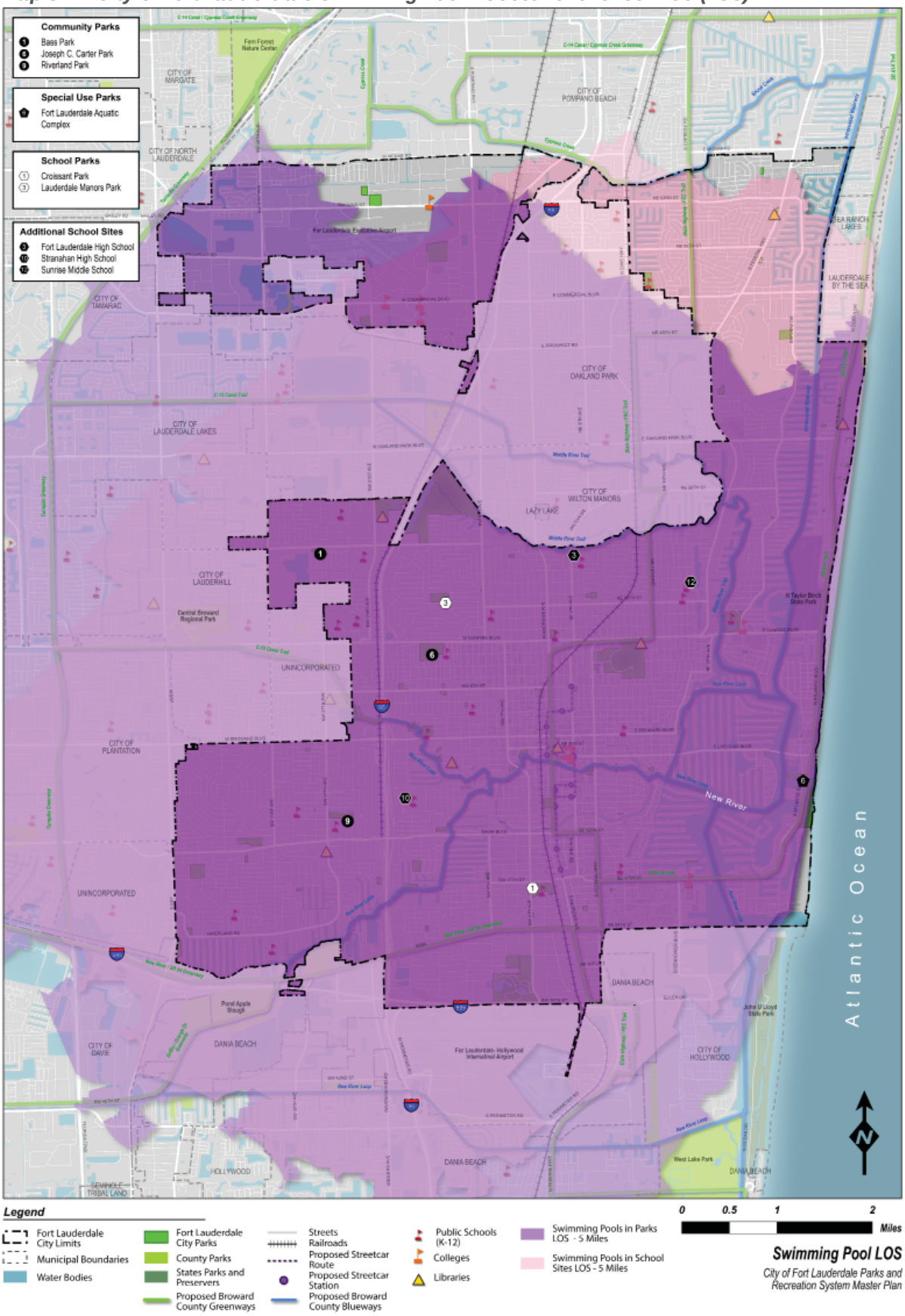
Map 3-9 adds to this analysis by including school sites that contain recreation amenities and additional special use parks and open spaces that could be utilized. These locations are analyzed at the same 1/2-mile service area. While public access to some of these sites is limited, they provide the potential for additional open space access that could help eliminate some of the existing gaps in service.

Basketball Courts at Holiday Park

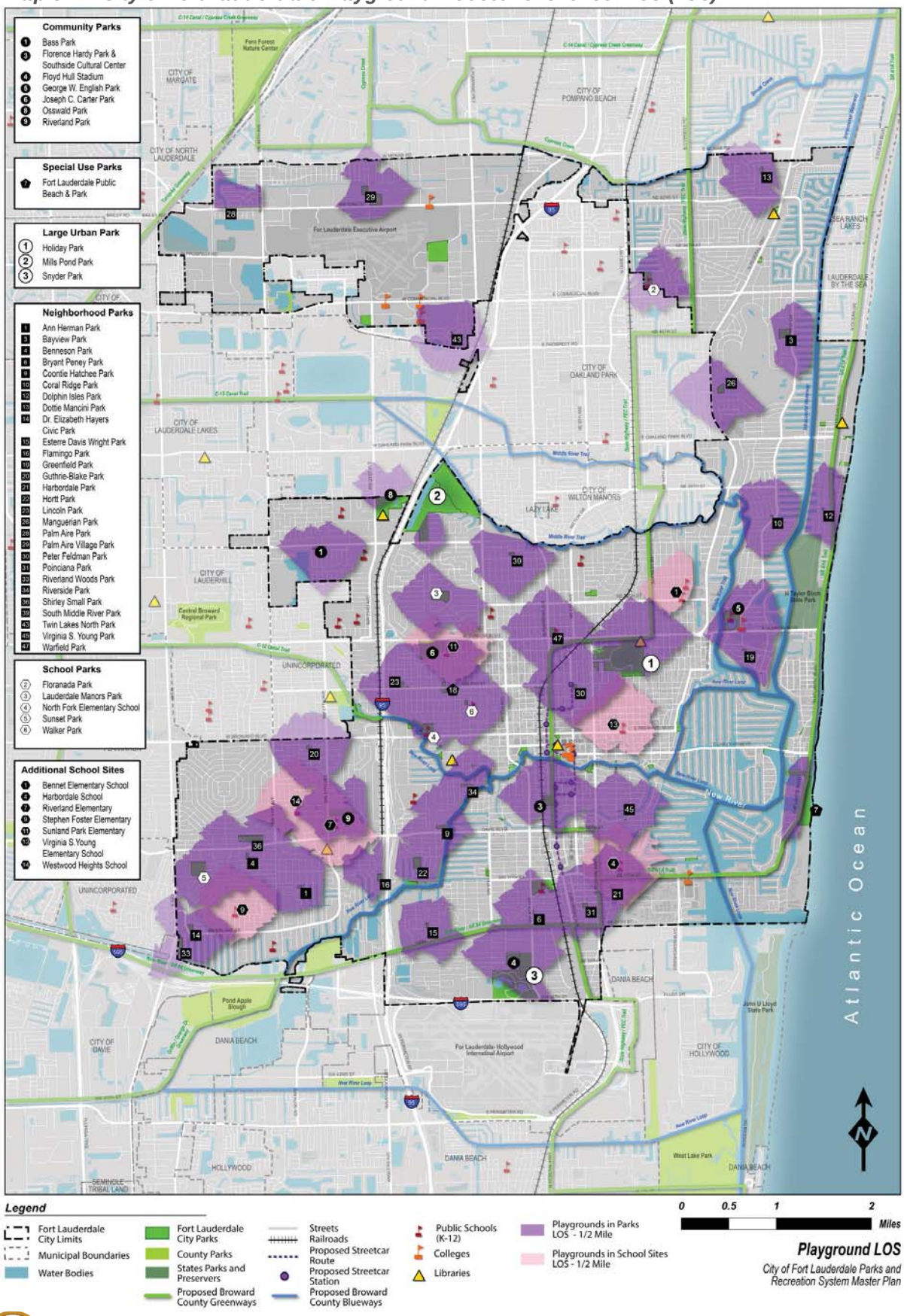
Map 3-10: City of Fort Lauderdale Baseball / Softball Field Access Level of Service (LOS)



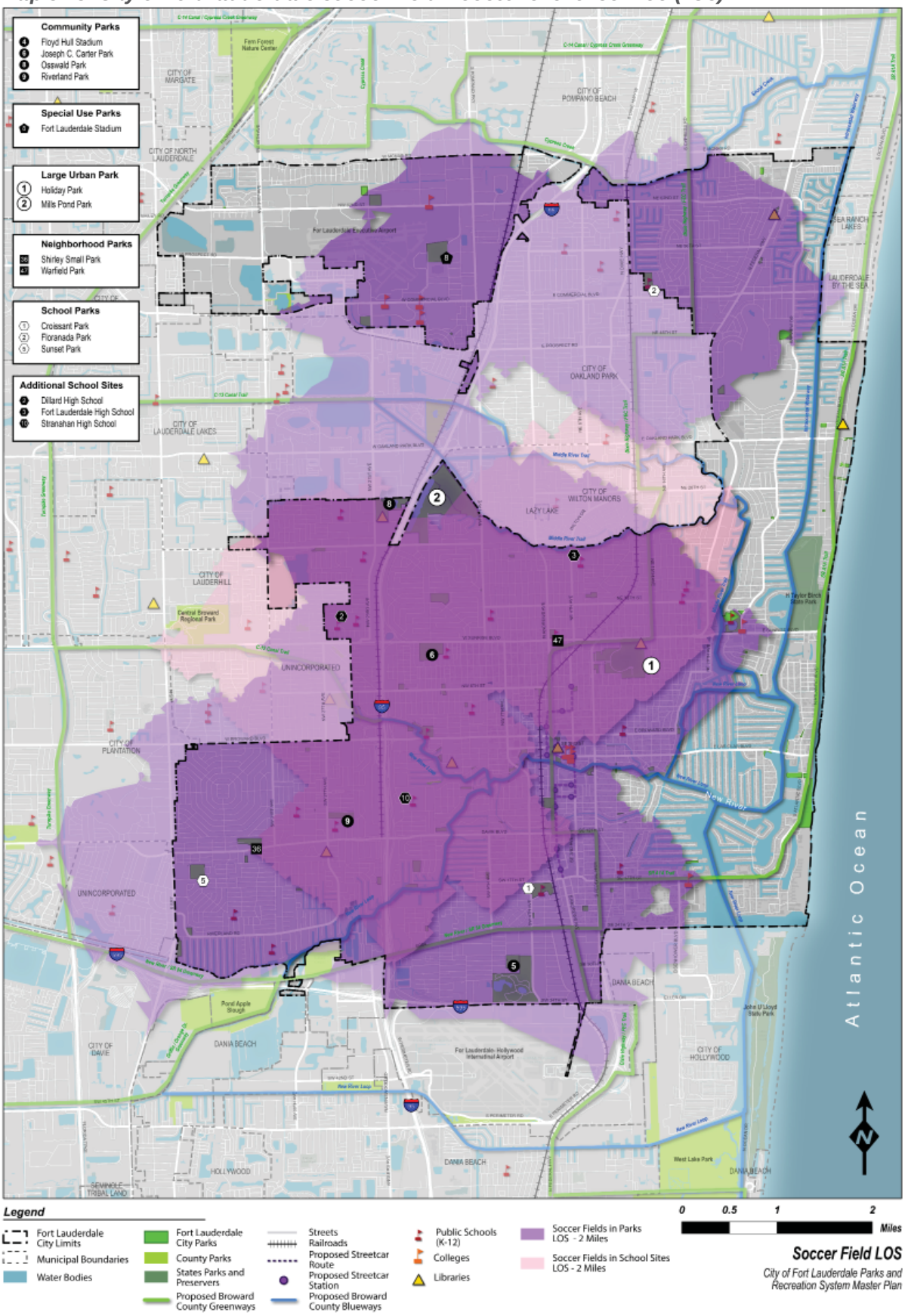
Map 3-11: City of Fort Lauderdale Swimming Pool Access Level of Service (LOS)



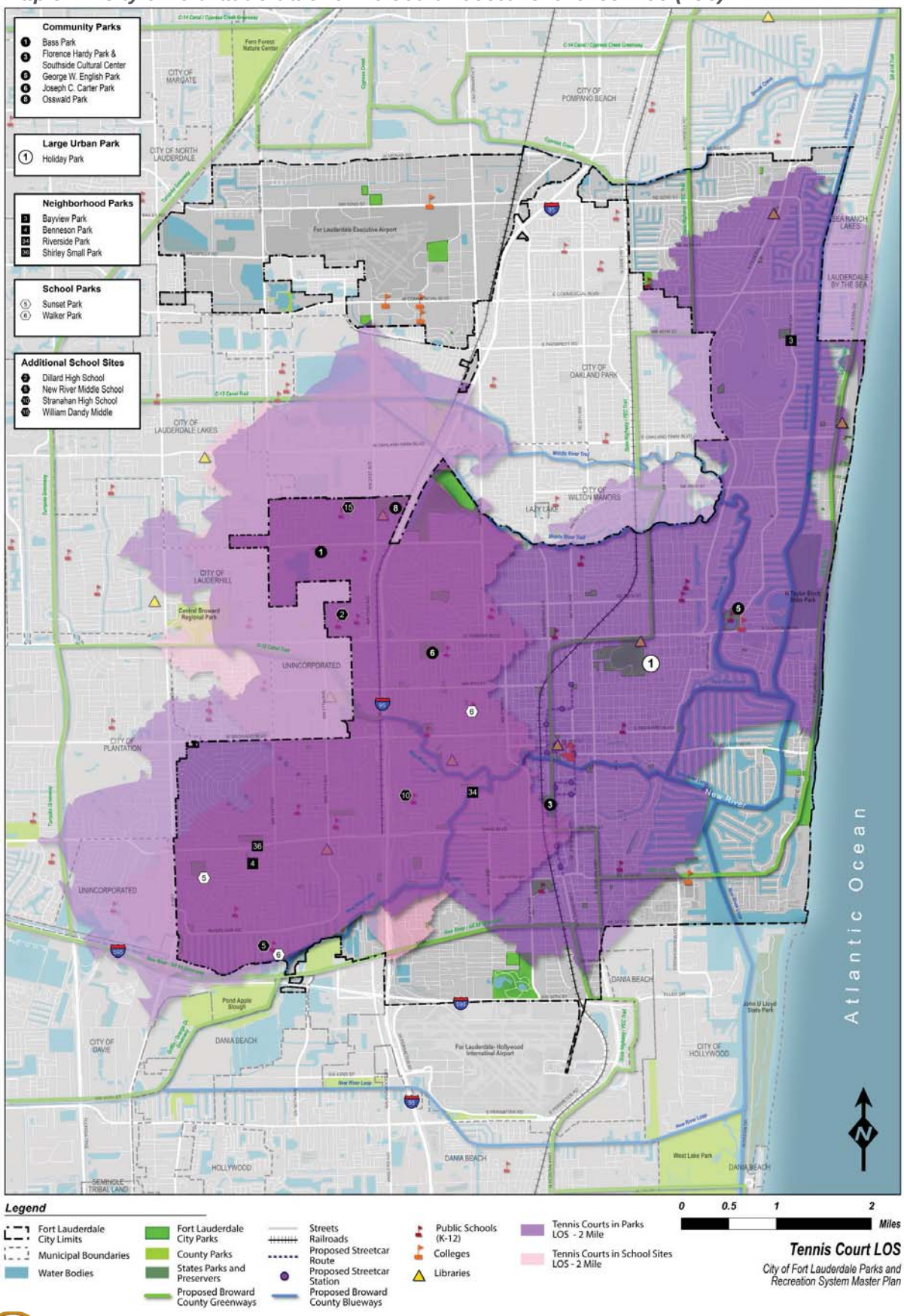
Map 3-12: City of Fort Lauderdale Playground Access Level of Service (LOS)



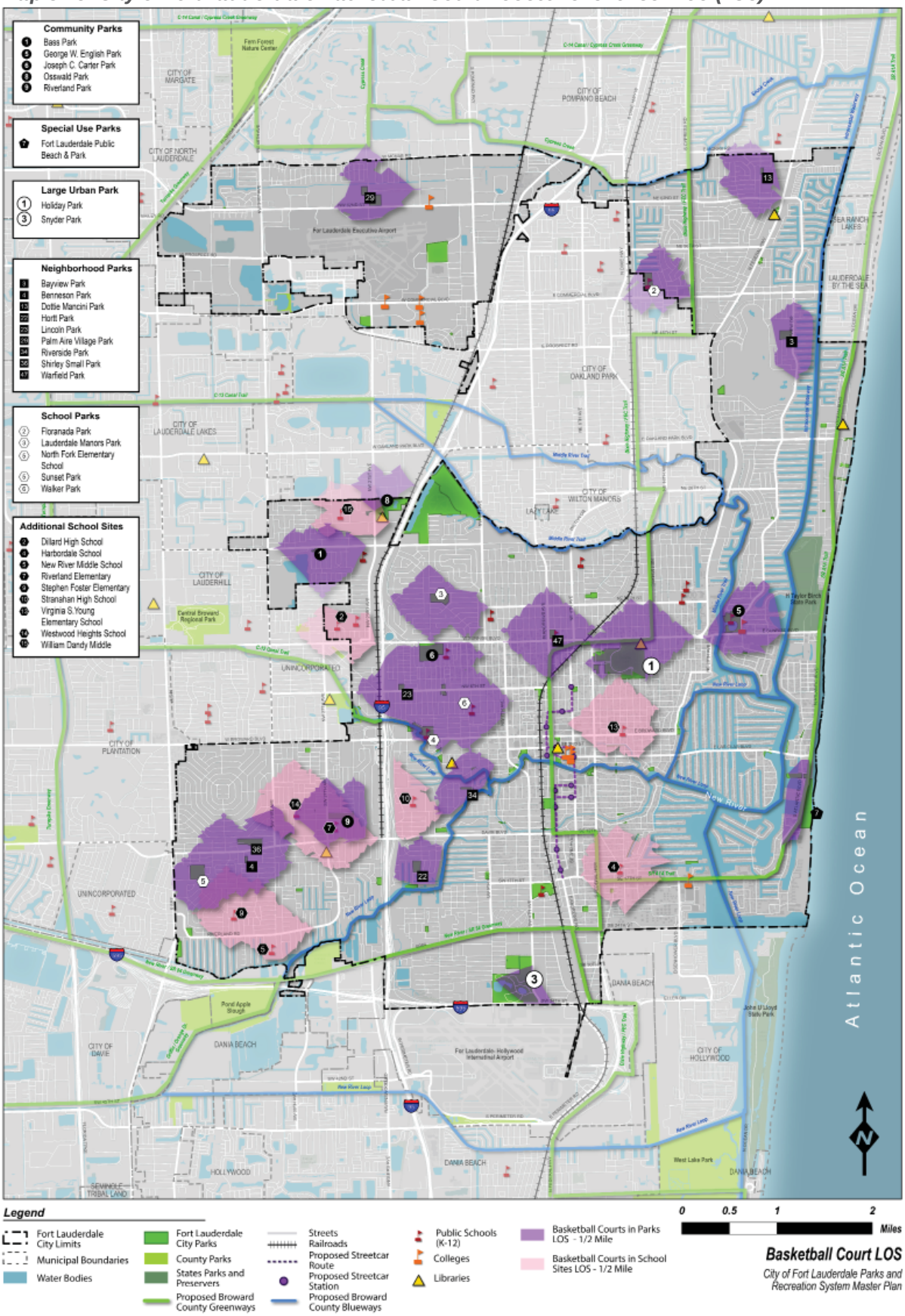
Map 3-13: City of Fort Lauderdale Soccer Field Access Level of Service (LOS)



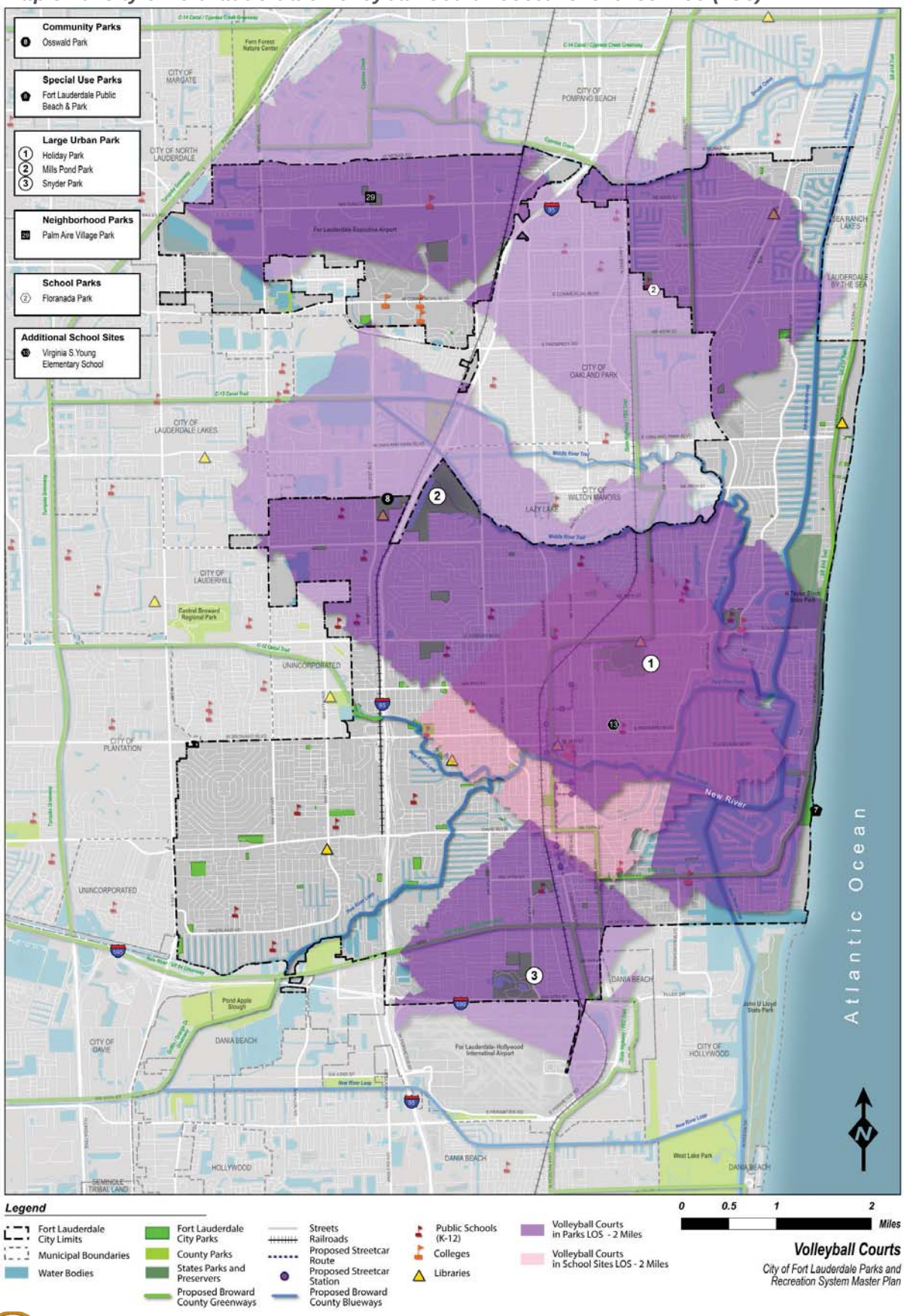
Map 3-14: City of Fort Lauderdale Tennis Court Access Level of Service (LOS)



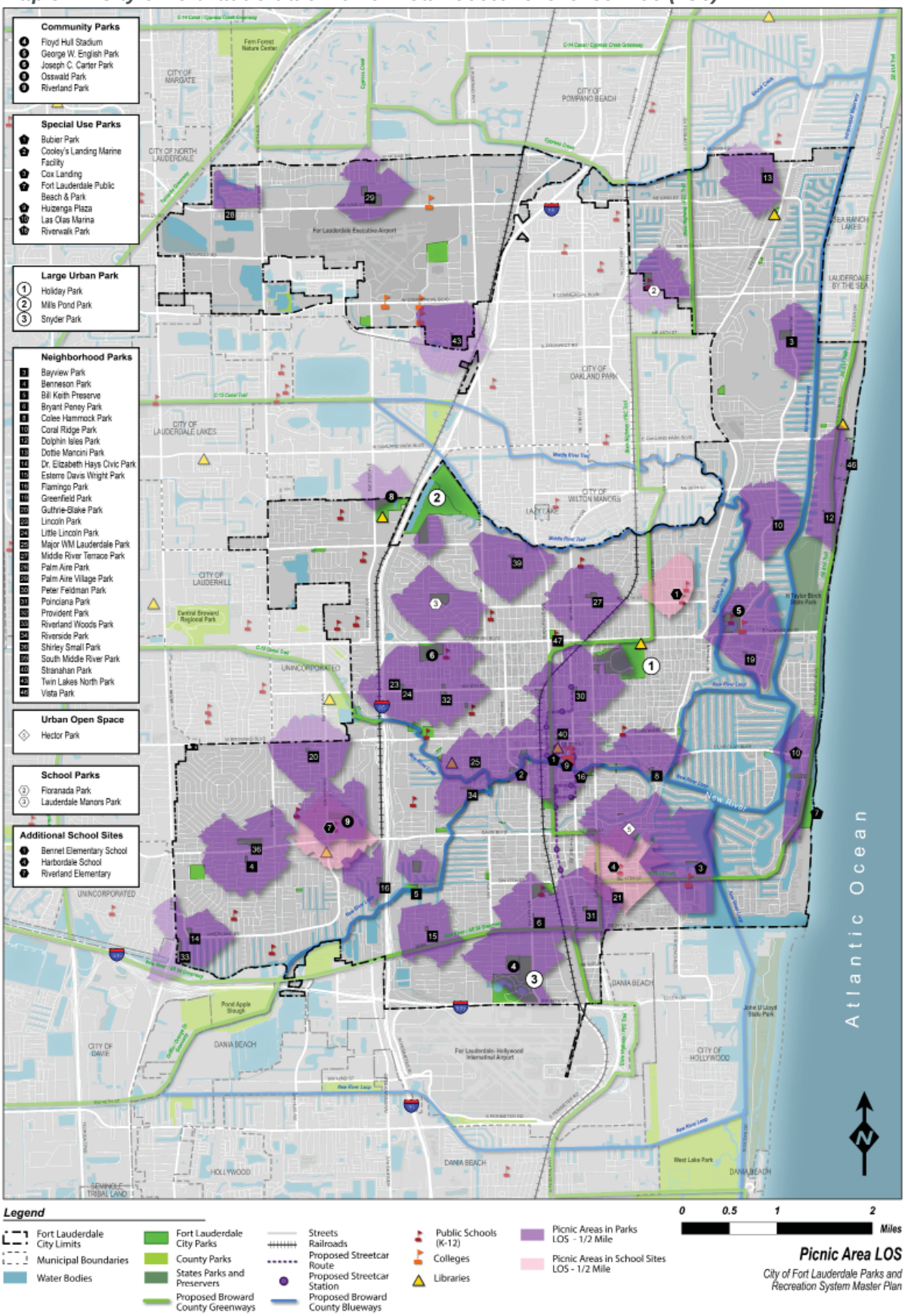
Map 3-15: City of Fort Lauderdale Basketball Court Access Level of Service (LOS)



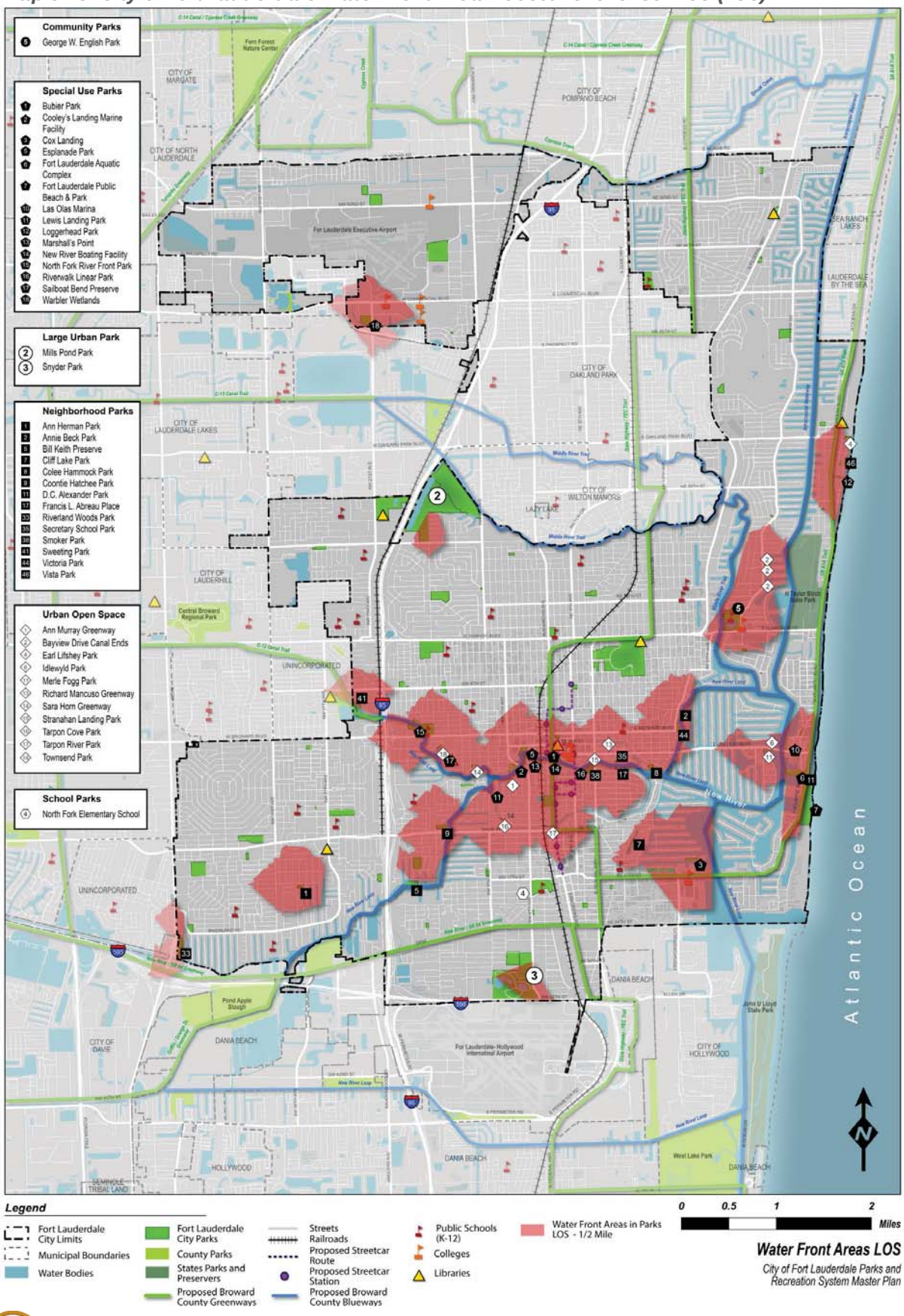
Map 3-16: City of Fort Lauderdale Volleyball Court Access Level of Service (LOS)



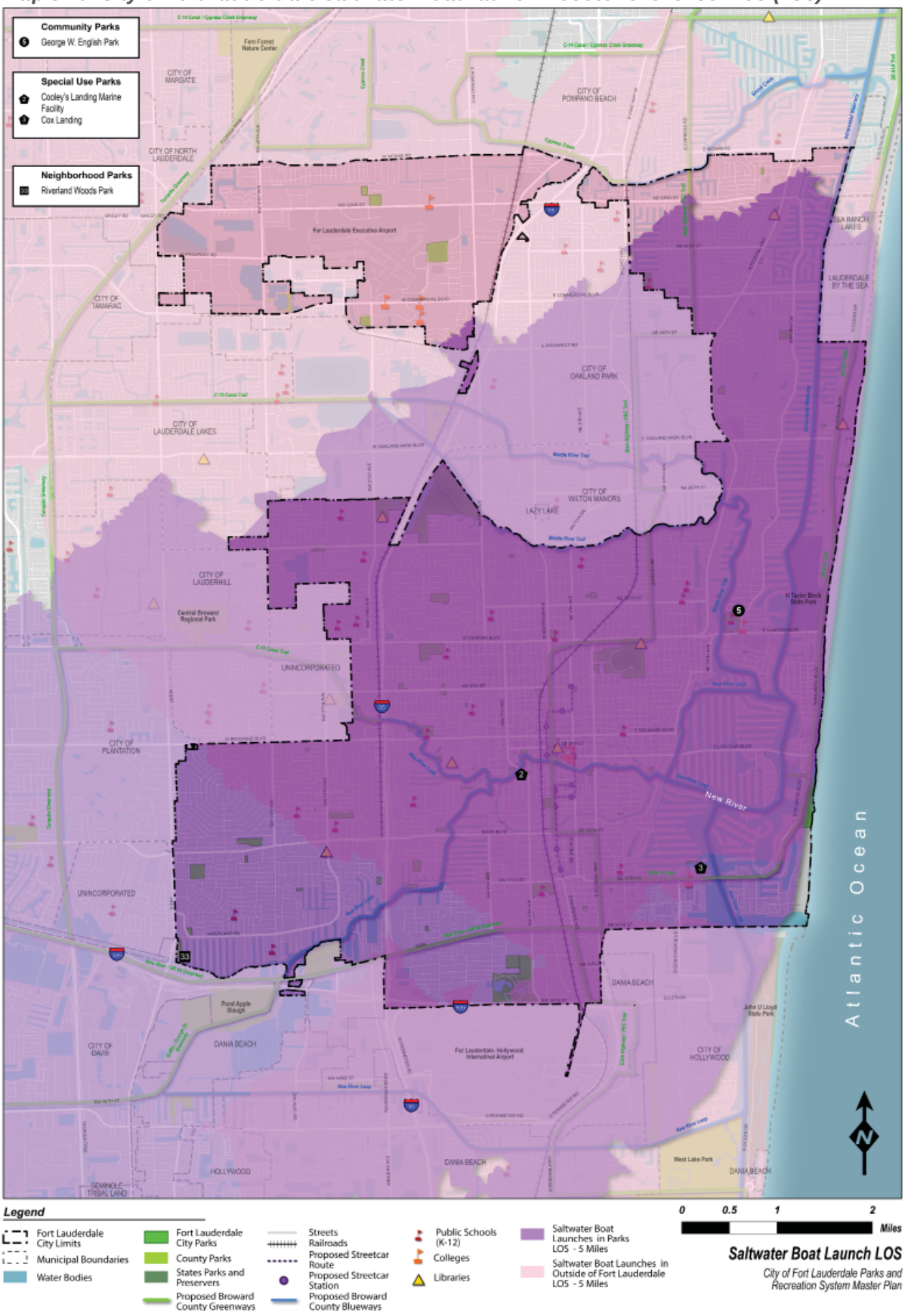
Map 3-17: City of Fort Lauderdale Picnic Area Access Level of Service (LOS)



Map 3-18: City of Fort Lauderdale Water Front Area Access Level of Service (LOS)



Map 3-19: City of Fort Lauderdale Saltwater Boat Launch Access Level of Service (LOS)



User-Oriented Facilities

Community serving facilities such as baseball/ softball and soccer fields have service areas that are generally accessible within two miles of most of the city. Tennis courts, analyzed at a two-mile service area, have gaps in the northwestern corner of the city, as well as the southeastern edge, while Volleyball Courts have caps in the northeast beaches and southwest corner. Swimming pools have significant coverage throughout Fort Lauderdale, with access provided within a five-mile radius to most residents.

Similar to the Park Synthesis analysis, school sites are also included in the user-oriented facilities analysis. School sites that contain the analyzed facilities are shown in each map, in order to show potential locations where access to each type of facility could potentially be improved. In the case of athletic fields and swimming pools, the inclusion of these facilities improves the already significant coverage for each facility. When school sites with tennis courts are included, coverage in the southwest corner of the city is slightly improved, however the majority of the gaps in other areas are unaffected.

Neighborhood-serving, walk-to facilities such as playgrounds, picnic areas and basketball courts are analyzed at 1/2-mile radius. Generally, playgrounds and picnic areas have adequate coverage in the central and southern areas of the city, with coverage becoming more sparse in the northern half. Basketball court access LOS is in need of improvement throughout the system, with coverage providing similar patterns to other walk-to facilities, but with much larger gaps. The inclusion of school sites with each of these facilities improves the access in the areas where coverage is greatest, but does not have a significant effect on the areas with the largest gaps.

Resource-Based Facilities

The primary resource-based facilities in Fort Lauderdale revolve around access to water front areas, and water-based recreation. Saltwater boat ramp access is sufficient throughout the city when analyzed at a 5-mile service areas radius. There is a gap, in the northwest corner of the city, but this can be attributed to the location of saltwater waterways and canals being primarily in the southern and eastern areas of Fort Lauderdale. With the addition of boat launch facilities that are outside the city limits, the LOS analysis indicates that all residents in Fort Lauderdale are within 5 miles of a saltwater boat ramp

Access to water fronts is also largely based on the locations of the water features within the city. Analyzed as walk-to facilities with a 1/2-mile service area, access to water frontage is generally adequate in the urban areas of the city on the New River and the southern beaches. However, the northern half of the city has very few opportunities for public water front access, despite the presence of waterways and canals in these areas.

Access LOS Takeaways

- Fort Lauderdale is currently providing **significant coverage** for **Community Parks, Special Use Facilities and Large Urban Parks**, with only small gaps existing on the fringes of the city.
- Analysis of **all parks with open spaces** at a **1/2-mile** service area indicates **gaps** in walking/biking access to open spaces in the **northern portion** of the city, as well as the **southwest and southeast edges**
- Access to **Regional and Community-serving facilities** is generally **sufficient throughout** Fort Lauderdale
- **Neighborhood-serving facilities** have service **gaps** in the **central and southern areas** of the city, with **basketball courts** needing system-wide **improvement**.
- The inclusion of school sites provide additional access, however they do not address areas where the gaps are greatest, and access to school sites may be limited.

3.5.5 LOS Summary

By utilizing a three-level approach to analyze the existing level of service (LOS) for park and recreation facilities, the consultant team identified a number of trends, which will be explored and refined further through the development of a Vision Plan and Implementation Plan. These preliminary findings included:

Acreage LOS - When compared to Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) recommended levels, this technique identifies LOS in park acreage below state recommendations when looking at the system as a whole. Much of this acreage is contained within Large Urban Parks and school sites, and continued growth in Fort Lauderdale will require the addition of 177 acres of park land by 2040 in order to maintain the city's current LOS levels.

Facilities LOS - This technique identifies a adequate supply in the number of athletic fields (baseball and soccer fields) as well as swimming pools, saltwater boat launches and historical and archaeological sites when compared to SCORP Southeast Region service figures. Based on SCORP figures, the city is experiencing a deficit in basketball and tennis courts. These conditions will continue as the city grows to 2040 population estimates, especially during the projected period of rapid growth during the next 15 years. School sites could potentially provide additional facilities to enhance system-wide levels of service, however access to these sites may be limited.

Access LOS - Overall, the Access LOS technique confirmed many findings the consultant team received during public involvement phase of the project. In general, historically fast-growing residential areas and urban areas with increasing density have identified gaps in service areas for existing park and recreation facilities, especially for smaller neighborhood parks and urban open space. The northern area of the city and the southern edges have been identified as the areas with the greatest amount of service area gaps for access to open spaces when analyzed at a 1/2-mile service area. The utilization of school sites, which was discussed by many public involvement participants, may need to be explored as a potential opportunity for additional park and open space.

Though independent in approach and findings, when these techniques are combined with others documented throughout this report, a more accurate snapshot of the city's needs and priorities becomes clearer.

Hortt Park

3.6 Needs and Priorities Assessment Summary

Through the compilation of findings from various research techniques, a number of parks and recreation needs and priorities emerged. The table below is an overview of the findings from each analysis technique, which were further refined based on additional public input and analysis.

Three types of research were utilized in a mixed methods, triangulated approach as part of the needs assessment process: observational; qualitative; and quantitative. Together these three types of research provided ten techniques to cross-check results and better determine an accurate understanding of Fort Lauderdale's needs and priorities for parks, recreation and cultural resource facilities. **Table 3-32** summarizes the synthesized findings of all 13 methods which included observational evaluations, community and stakeholder input, two community surveys, a recreation programs and services assessment, and a existing level of service analysis.

The top ten facilities and programs needs are highlighted in **Table 3-32**. These facilities and

Table 3-32: Needs Assessment Summary

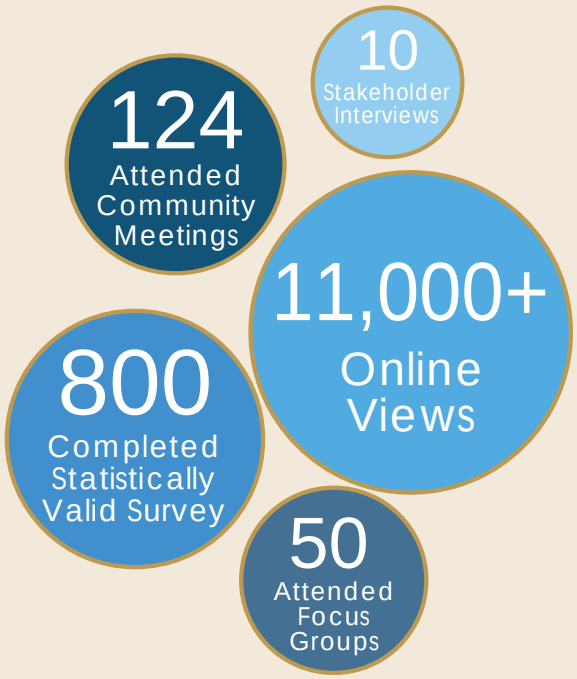
● = Indicates Highest Need
● = Indicates Need

		Needs Assessment Techniques									
		Community Inventory Assessment	Community Meetings	Focus Groups	Stakeholder Interviews	Comparables Analysis	On-line Public Opinion Survey	Citizen Opinion and Interest Survey	Acreage Level of Service Analysis	Facility Level of Service Analysis	Access Level of Service Analysis
Facilities	Small Neighborhood Parks	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	○	○	●
	Walking and Biking Trails	●	●	●	○	●	●	●			●
	Beach Parks	○	○		○	○	●	○		○	●
	Large Community Parks	○		●		●		○	●	○	○
	Nature Centers and Trails	○	●			○	●	●			●
	Outdoor Event Space	●	●	●		●		○			
	Water / Boat Access	●		○		○	○	●			
	Indoor Fitness & Exercise Facilities	●	○	○			○	○			
	Outdoor Swimming Pools / Water Parks		●				●	○			○
	Dog Parks	○	○		○			●			
Programs and Activities	Senior Adult Programs	●	●	●	●	○	○	●			
	Adult Fitness and Wellness	●	●	○	○	○	●	●			
	City-wide Special Events	●	●	○		●	●	○			
	Adult Sports Programs	●	○	●	●		●	○			
	Nature Programs	●				○	●	●			
	Adult Art, Dance, Performing Arts	○	●	○		○		●			
	Water Fitness Programs		●				○	●			
	Programs for Disabled	○	○	○			○	○			
	Boating Programs						●	●			
	Youth Art, Dance, Performing Arts	○		○		○		○			

activities are ones identified through these ten techniques to have the highest level of importance and largest unmet need by the community.

In addition to the identification of the top community-wide needs, from the public participation and survey techniques, overall priorities have emerged. Below is a summary of the top priority themes as identified by the following methods:

- **Community Meetings**
- **Focus Groups**
- **Stakeholder/ Elected Officials Interviews**
- **Online Engagement Website**
- **Online Public Opinion Survey**
- **Comparables Analysis**
- **Recreation Trends Analysis and Best Practices**
- **Citizen Opinion and Interest Survey**
- **Existing Level of Service Analysis**



Top 5 Priority Actions

- Maintain and **enhance existing parks and facilities**
- Improve **safety and security** in parks and nearby areas
- Provide new **walking and biking trails**
- Improve **communication** between the parks and recreation department and the community
- **Equitable access** to parks through **enhanced connectivity and walkability**

Additional Priority Facilities / Programs

- Provide **more diverse programs**, including: fitness and wellness; art, dance and performing arts; senior adult programs; city-wide special events; nature programs and adult sports programs
- Provide more **events** throughout the City, especially in the **Downtown area**
- Develop additional **off-leash dog parks**
- **Wayfinding** to highlight **destinations, health-related information and educational/ interpretative elements** and amenities such as benches
- Continue to provide **affordable and easily accessible** recreation programs
- More and **better specialized recreation classes** (i.e. art classes, fitness, dancing, safety, volunteering, practical living and health and fitness) to meet the **needs of a diverse population**;
- Create more opportunities for **art in the community**
- More **programs** and locations for **special populations through partnerships**
- Provide opportunities for **indoor fitness and exercise**
- Focus on programs and activities that can **grow participation for key age groups** and meet their needs