

# Memorandum

July 12, 2004

**To:** Kirk Hearin, John Rebar  
**Fm:** Dave Barth, Sarah Wilkinson  
**Re:** Interim Summary, Recommendations from Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment

## **NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

To date we have completed the following techniques to determine top priority parks and recreation needs for City of Homestead residents, in accordance with our Scope of Work:

- Level of Service (LOS) Analysis – Acreage
- LOS Analysis – Facilities
- LOS Analysis – Access (Service Area)
- Site Visits / Analysis
- Staff/ Steering Committee Workshop
- Interviews, Focus Groups
- Public Workshops
- Telephone Survey

Following is a brief summary of our key findings from each technique:

### **Level of Service (LOS) Analysis – Acreage**

The City's current Comprehensive Plan requires a Level of Service (LOS) of three (3) acres of park land per 1,000 residents. This is similar to many other small cities throughout Florida such as Deerfield Beach and Delray Beach, both of which are considered to have good parks systems, but are lacking land for expansion to meet the needs of their growing populations.

Using a current population of 32,046 residents, and an inventory of 144 acres of park land, the City currently enjoys an LOS of 4.5 acres/ 1,000, which exceeds the Comprehensive Plan LOS requirement. Using the projected 2010 population of 64,000 residents however, the LOS will drop to 2.25 acres/1,000 if no additional park land is acquired, resulting in a future deficiency of approximately 48 acres.

*Finding: There is a need for additional park land.*

## **Level of Service (LOS) – Facilities**

The State of Florida *State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (SCORP) contains facility standards showing the number of residents served by various types of recreation facilities, e.g. 1 tennis court /2,000 residents. We compared the City’s current inventory to the standards for both current and future populations, which showed a “deficiency” in nine (9) of the thirteen (13) facility types, including:

- Tennis courts
- Football/soccer fields
- Softball fields
- Picnic areas
- Basketball courts
- Nature trails
- Fishing piers
- Boat ramps
- Volleyball courts

*Finding: There is a need for a wide variety of additional recreational facilities.*

## **LOS Analysis – Access (Service Area)**

Service Areas determine the area served by each existing park, based on the criteria established by the City. In our Steering Committee workshop, for example, we determined that every resident of Homestead should be able to walk to a Neighborhood Green Space within ¼ mile of their home (a ½ mile service area for each green space); walk to a Neighborhood Park within 1 mile (service area of 2 miles); and bicycle or drive to a Community Park/ Community Center within 3 miles ( a 6 mile service area). Based on this criteria, we found that:

- Most residents do not have access to a Neighborhood Green Space within a ¼ mile walk, and that approximately one hundred (100) new green spaces would be required to meet this criteria
- Most residents have access to a public Neighborhood Park (west side of Homestead) or a private Neighborhood Park/ Amenity Area (east side of Homestead) within one mile of their homes. Exceptions are the neighborhoods on the far edges of the City limits
- Residents on the west side of town are well-served by Community Parks and Community centers, although both the parks and centers are smaller than our ideal criteria, so may soon be at capacity; Residents on the east side are lacking large, multi-purpose community parks and centers

*Finding: There is a need for 1 -2 new Community Parks and Centers, particularly on the east side of the City.*

## **Site Visits/Analysis**

Glatting Jackson visited the City’s existing parks with the Parks and Recreation Department staff, and recorded the following observations:

- The parks are relatively well-maintained
- Some neighborhood parks need to be upgraded and enhanced
- There appears to be a lack of traditional large, passive, multi-purpose community parks ; we understand that many have been “filled up” with athletic facilities
- There is a lack of natural areas and conservation lands (although there is an abundance of

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- natural areas at the two National Parks)
- Some parks lack parking
- There is not an interconnected system of sidewalks and bikeways to connect the parks to residential areas, schools, etc
- There is a lack of shade throughout the City
- There is poor way-finding/identification signage throughout the City

*Finding: There is a need to upgrade and enhance existing City parks to make them more attractive, functional and inviting for City residents. There also appears to be a need to expand the existing parks and/or purchase land for new parks to provide more passive, multi-purpose open space for a variety of recreational facilities and activities.*

### **Staff/ Steering Committee Workshop**

Glatting Jackson facilitated workshops with the City staff and the Project Steering Committee on February 26 and April 22, 2004. One exercise used at both workshops asked participants to list “Extreme Needs” for parks and recreation facilities within the City of Homestead. Top priorities listed by the group at the February 26 workshop included:

- Shade trees
- Interactive water parks
- Sidewalks, walking trails
- Picnic areas
- Freshwater beach access
- Youth centers
- Freshwater boat ramps
- Special event areas
- Dog parks
- Frisbee/open play areas
- Soccer fields
- Therapeutic recreation facilities
- Playgrounds/tot lots

Top priorities listed by the group at the April 22 workshop included:

- Fix up existing parks to the west
- Buy additional park land
- Bicycle paths/ trails
- Picnic areas/open space
- Soccer fields

*Findings: There is a need for the basic “Green Infrastructure” typically associated with great cities and a high quality of life: shaded sidewalks, safe bicycle paths, multi-purpose open space and passive parks, playgrounds, water access and a variety of recreational facilities.*

## Interviews, Focus Groups

On April 20-22, Glatting Jackson conducted interviews with twenty (20) community leaders, recreation providers and/or other key stakeholders in Homestead. In addition to discussing general needs, we asked each participant to list their top three (3) priorities for spending the City's Safe Neighborhoods Grant funds. Following are the responses; numbers in parentheses note that the number of times the same comment was recorded:

- Upgrade/expand existing parks, including neighborhood parks to east, Harris Field, J.D. Redd, Roby George Park, James Archer Smith, youth athletic fields (8)
- Expanded facilities, parks and recreation programming, teen programs, program supplies, programming staff, environmental education programs (6)
- Additional passive parks, big central park, picnic areas (7)
- Sidewalks, bike paths, jogging/walking paths, nature trails between and within parks (5)
- Build additional athletic fields (3), soccer fields (2), baseball field, softball fields
- Extreme sports facility, BMX track or other kid's facility (2)
- Expand Blakey Park existing track (2)
- Transportation for seniors, disabled to senior/community centers (2)
- Light the fields at Harris Field, existing fields (2)
- Banquet/performing arts facility
- Adult basketball gymnasium
- Develop Humpty Dumpty site
- Baseball fields within walking distance of neighborhoods
- Teen center
- Expand Losner Park
- Pave bike paths in the Villages
- Neighborhood green spaces
- Scholarship fund
- FCAT training, health education
- Change codes to require that future development conforms to good open space standards
- Environmental education programs
- Build new buildings
- Build pool complex on east side

*Findings: Top priority needs from the interviews include:*

- *Upgrading and expanding existing parks*
- *Expanding programs*
- *Purchasing land or large, passive parks*
- *Developing an interconnected system of sidewalks , bike paths and nature trails between and within parks*
- *Purchasing land and developing athletic fields*

## Public Workshops

Three public workshops were held to give residents an opportunity to provide input regarding the top priority needs in the City:

April 20 – Phicol Williams Center (8 participants)

April 21 – YMCA (15 participants)

April 22 – Musselwhite Park Senior Center (40 participants, only 12 of whom were City residents)

Residents were given a list of recreational facilities, and asked to “vote” regarding top priority needs. Facilities ranked as a priority need by 50% or more of the participants included:

April 20:

- Youth centers
- Performance arts center/ community centers
- Cultural centers/museums
- Sidewalks
- Recreational programs
- Recreation centers
- Interactive water parks
- Walking trails
- Shade trees on paths
- Freshwater beach access
- Environmental education centers
- Picnic areas
- Tennis courts
- Therapeutic recreation facilities

April 21:

- Shade trees on paths
- Equestrian trails
- Equestrian centers
- Rodeo grounds
- Youth programs
- Wellness programs
- Nature trails
- Transportation programs
- Picnic areas

April 22:

- Public parking in downtown
- Additional space, upgraded facilities at the Senior Center
- Improvements to existing parks
- Additional staff at the Senior Center
- Aquatics/exercise facility at the Senior Center

*Findings: A wide variety of needs were listed by participants. Top priority needs for the Equestrian groups are trails and an equestrian center; top priority needs for seniors are improvements to the Senior Center.*

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## Telephone Survey

Haysmar, Inc, a Research and Analysis firm hired by Glatting Jackson, conducted a telephone survey of 270 City of Homestead residents to determine their attitudes and opinions regarding the City's Parks and Recreation System. The final survey report has not yet been completed, but interim results indicate the following:

- Residents indicated a need for more of the following facilities (in order of priority; facilities "ranked" lower than 50% are not shown)
  1. Shade trees on sidewalks (75%)
  2. Camp sites (74%)
  3. Picnic areas (73%)
  4. Baseball fields (72%)
  5. Therapeutic recreation facilities (70%)
  6. Cultural centers (70%)
  7. Basketball courts (70%)
  8. Racquetball/handball courts (68%)
  9. Walking/jogging trails (67%)
  10. Beach access (66%)
  11. Bicycling paths or lanes (62%)
  12. Golf courses (62%)
  13. Skateboard park (61%)
  14. Canoeing and kayaking facilities (60%)
  15. Roller Hockey rink (59%)
  16. In line skating facilities (59%)
  17. Volleyball courts (56%)
  18. Swimming pools (55%)
  19. Boat ramps and docks (55%)
  20. Performance centers /auditoriums (54%)
  21. Aquatic centers/ pools (54%)
  22. Special events area/amphitheater (54%)
  23. Senior citizen centers (53%)
  24. Playgrounds or tot lots (52%)
  25. Shuffleboard courts ((51%)
  
- Residents did not rate the existing parks system very highly
- Residents indicated a willingness to tax themselves to improve the existing system

*Finding: Residents need a wide variety of parks and recreation facilities; are not very satisfied with the existing system; and may be willing to tax themselves to make improvements.*

## SUMMARY/ RECOMMENDATIONS

All of the Needs Assessment techniques outlined above indicate a need for a wide variety of parks and recreation facilities, as well as expanded programs and improved maintenance. Top priorities appear to include:

- Upgrading the City's existing parks, including purchasing land for expansion wherever possible
- Expanding programs
- Purchasing land for new community parks to provide a wide array of both active and passive recreational facilities including athletic fields, play courts, picnic areas, playgrounds, etc
- Developing an interconnected system of sidewalks, trails and bike paths

On July 8, Glatting Jackson facilitated an Implementation Workshop with the City to review the findings from the Needs Assessment techniques outlined above, and to build consensus regarding proposed priorities and actions. Following are the preliminary recommendations from that meeting, in order of priority, along with potential funding sources:

1. **Renovate, Enhance Existing Neighborhood Parks**  
(950,000 Safe Neighborhoods; 400,000 Grants)
2. **Develop New Phase One of "Humpty Dumpty" Community Park**  
(7,000,000 County Mitigation; 250,000 Assessment Fees; 400,000 Grants)
3. **Acquire Land for New, Expanded Community Parks**  
(2,000,000 Impact Fees; 6,000,000 FCT Grants)
4. **Develop One (1) Major Trail/Greenway**  
(General Fund, Impact Fees, Grants)
5. **Build Teen Center/ Extreme Sports Complex**  
(General Fund, Impact Fees, Grants)
6. **Renovate Remainder of Existing Parks**  
(General Fund, Impact Fees, Grants)
7. **Build New Community Park, Special Use Facilities**  
(General Fund, Impact Fees, Grants)
8. **Provide Additional Programs, Primarily Through Other Agencies**