

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LAKE WAILES PARK

Parks and Community Appearance Advisory Board



Presentation to City Commission May 2011

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The City Commission reactivated the Parks and Community Appearance Advisory Board in 2007 and charged it with preparing plans and recommendations for improving parks and public spaces, including a plan for maintaining and upgrading the park around Lake Wailes. The plan developed by the Board is a general plan to provide guidance for the future management and upgrading of the park. It focuses on the uplands and defers to the Lakes Advisory Commission on management of the lake itself.

First Step - General Plan

- Parks Board reactivated 2007
- Improve parks and public spaces
- Lake Wailes Park Plan
- First step – general plan for uplands
- Next
 - Systematic maintenance program
 - Parking improvement plan

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This plan is a first step, identifying issues and making general recommendations. More specific plans and projects will be proposed.

A systematic maintenance program is being developed with the assistance of Beverly Pennington, Parks Division Manager, and Dan Davis, a Board member with extensive experience in parks maintenance.

A parking improvement plan will propose the addition of unpaved parking areas for athletic events and festivals to reduce safety hazards and protect the resources of the park.

Lake Wailes Park - Centerpiece of City

- Centerpiece of city and park system
- High priority for upgrade and care



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Lake Wailes Park is the centerpiece of the city and the park system and a high priority for upgrade and care.

Tremendous asset

- Public access to 2/3 of lake frontage



- 2.5 - Mile pedestrian / bike trail

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The park is a tremendous asset. It provides unparalleled public access to 2/3 of the lake's frontage with a 2.5-mile pedestrian-bicycle trail.



Special events, biking, picnicking



Basketball, soccer



It is well used. There is a constant stream of people on the trail and many vehicles parked in shady areas at lunch or for breaks during the day. Parties at the picnic shelters, and soccer games take place almost daily in good weather. The boat ramp is a lively spot, and the fish pier is popular with strollers as well as fishermen.



The horseshoe area near the fish pier is the site for special events throughout the year, including the art show and Pioneer Days.



The new Barney's Dream playground at Kiwanis became an instant hit upon its completion.



A number of improvements have been accomplished in recent years

Urban Forestry grant – planted 30 trees along the trail across from Kiwanis Park

Tree inventory study - funded by tree replacement funds assessed over 550 trees in Lake Wailes, Crystal Lake, and North Lake Wailes Parks. Recommendations of the study are being carried out by Parks personnel. This year a federal grant of \$18,000 will be used to prune up to 50 trees in the park.



Boat ramp - improvements were completed in 2008 with a state grant, spearheaded by the Lakes Advisory Commission. Improvements included installation of a boat dock.

■ Trailway construction



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A Rails-to-Trails grant extended the Rail Trail from Kiwanis Park to Buck Moore Rd.

■ Skateboard Park



A skateboard park was added to Kiwanis Park in 2008, also with a state grant.



■ Barney's Dream

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Barney's Dream playground was completed by the Kiwanis Club in 2009 with funds from a Polk County Recreation grant and private donations with assistance from city crews.

Kiwanis Park improvement Plan



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A plan for improvements to Kiwanis Park, developed by the Parks Board, was approved by the City Commission and a grant application submitted to the state's FRDAP program.



Unfortunately, only a few projects have been funded in the past few years. The application is in line for funding if the program is funded in future years.

The plan calls for:

Expansion of the paved parking areas on each side of Lakeshore Blvd.

Reconfiguration of **Little League fields**

Security **gates for the restrooms**

Tree plantings to **shade play areas** and landscaping of parking areas

Pedestrian/bike **connections** between the Trailway and the Lake Wailes Trail.

The Board is working on ways to make some of the improvements in the absence of grant funding.

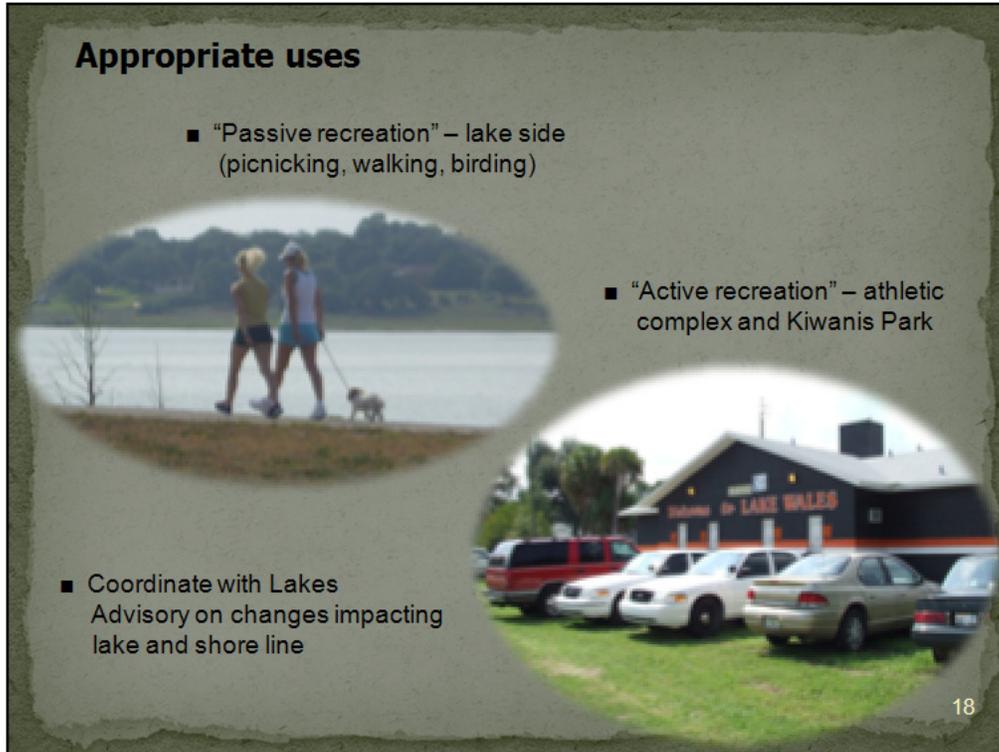
Recommendations

- Preserve and improve
- Protection what people love



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The Parks Board recognizes what a great asset the park is to the community and its recommendations are aimed at preserving and protecting what people love about the park.



Protect the character of the park – appropriate uses

Areas along the lake side of Lakeshore Blvd. should be reserved for “passive recreation” uses such as walking, biking, bird watching, fishing, and picnicking. Active recreation such as team sports facilities should be accommodated in already defined areas such as the athletic complex at 7th St. and Kiwanis Park north of Lakeshore Blvd.

There needs to be consultation and coordination with the Lakes Advisory Commission on improvements or changes that will impact Lake Wailes and its shoreline.



Landscaping

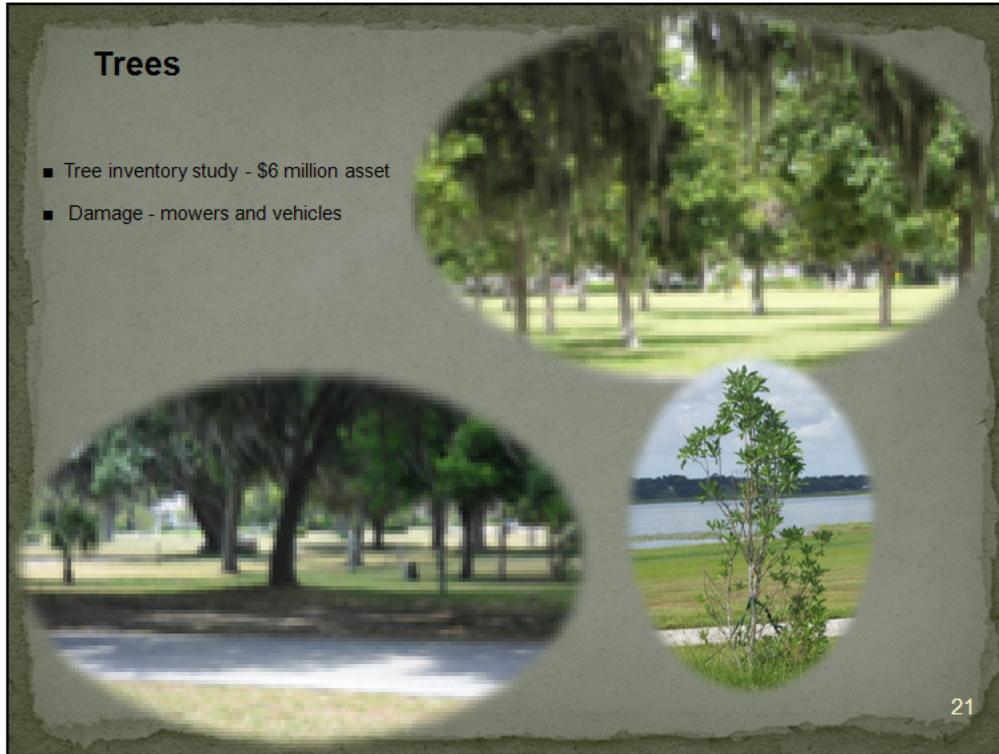
Preserve the park's open, flowing landscape, with grass and shade trees, following Olmsted's principles.

A low-maintenance plan for the landscape is recommended.

Formal plantings should be limited to key locations, such as the festival area at the fish pier.



Use plantings to camouflage facilities like lift stations and to define parking areas.



Tree protection

Carrying out the recommendations of the 2008 tree inventory study is a priority. The study assessed the condition of 570 trees in the Lake Wailes, Crystal Lake, and North Lake Wailes Parks.

The value of the trees in the Lake Wailes park system is estimated at \$6 million.

The study found that trees are being damaged by mowers and vehicles that park too close, compacting the soil and damaging delicate hair roots. Mulching and planting around the base of trees and defining appropriate parking areas are key to protecting the park's beautiful trees.

The Tree Replacement Fund, established with payments from developers who clear trees for development, has been a good source for grant matches and plantings.



An annual program of tree planting and maintenance is recommended by tree inventory study.

A successful program for park maintenance is difficult because of cut-backs in parks maintenance staff over the past few years.

The Tree Replacement Fund, established with payments from developers who clear trees for development, has been a good source for grant matches and plantings.

Festival Area and Special Events

- Community focal point – high priority
- Protect “spectacular” oaks




- Define and expand parking areas

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Festival area and special events

The “horseshoe” area near the fish pier is the focal point of the Lake Wailes Park and the entire community. This is where many special events take place and special attention needs to be paid to its appearance and management.

The tree inventory study said that the trees in this area “are spectacular with many more than 50 inches in diameter.” Protecting them is a high priority.

The number of vehicles parking off the pavement in the “horseshoe” area has been increasing. A dozen cars can be seen parked directly under trees at any given lunch hour.

Parking in undesignated areas is in violation of the City’s Code of Ordinances, but enforcement is difficult. The Parks Board is working on a plan with the Public Works Department to designate more shady spots for parking and to protect trees with plantings and barriers.



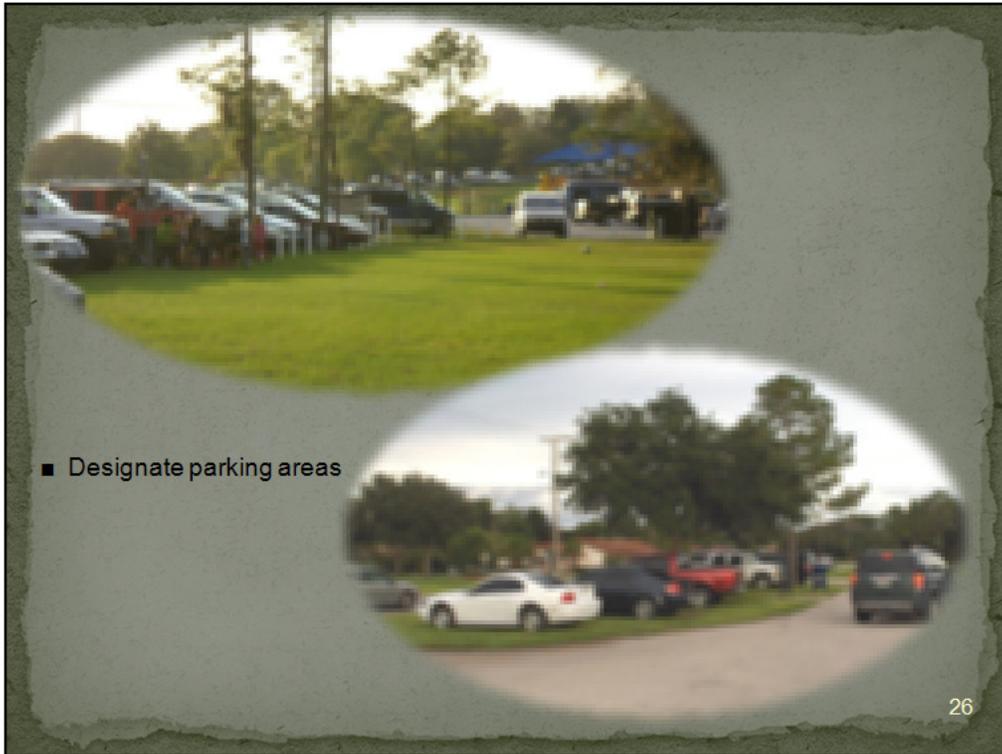
Guidelines based on the management of the annual Arts Festival at the Lake have been used to improve the management of other special events. Developing a better map for clear designation of parking areas is a priority.

Adding a simple structure for the staging of performances should be considered for the future.



Control of vehicles

Keeping vehicles from damaging trees, tearing up grass, and driving on the bike path are priorities.



Designating specific areas for parking, (move to next slide)



Protecting trees, (move to next slide)



and enforcing parking regulations are recommended methods.



Parking areas

A balance needs to be struck between providing adequate parking for people to access the park's facilities and protecting the resources of the park.

Paved areas at Kiwanis Park and possibly at the boatramp should be expanded to ease parking problems at these well-used areas. But for the most part, unpaved or pervious parking is recommended for new parking lots and overflow areas.

One issue is that isn't clear where it's legal to park and where it isn't. Clear designation of parking areas is recommended.



Addressing the parking needs at the park is a long-term process. The Board intends to develop a specific parking plan for improvements and overflow areas for special events. Parking needs and safety at the athletic facilities at 7th St. are difficult issues that should be studied and addressed.

Pedestrian/bike safety

- Safety – athletic complex 7th St.
- Pedestrian connections - Trailway and Lake Wailes Trail
- Maintenance of bike path



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Pedestrian/bike facilities and safety

Improving pedestrian safety at the athletic complex at 7th St. is a very important. Organization of parking areas and addition of pedestrian crosswalks need to be included in the parking plan for the complex.

Additional pedestrian connections between sidewalks in surrounding neighborhoods and the Lake Wailes Trail are needed. (Example: Bok Tower Blvd. has no sidewalk.)

Connecting the Lake Wailes Trail with the Trailway at Kiwanis Park is included in the Kiwanis Park improvement plan.

Regular maintenance of the bike path is recommended to keep this well-used facility safe and functional.



Signage

Signage should be very limited to avoid cluttering the landscape and overwhelming users with information.

- Attractive signs at trail heads



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Well designed park signs at trail entrances and other focal points should be limited to the name of the park or feature.



Barriers as suggested above to prevent vehicles from entering sensitive areas of the park are preferred over “NO PARKING” signs.

As suggested by the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Commission, rules should be posted in key places in the park. Marking the bike path pavement with “keep right” and other safety rules will help reduce sign clutter.

- Educational displays - encourage



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Educational signage, such wildlife information displays, should be installed as feasible.

Maintenance

- Systematic maintenance program
- Regular training
- Annual tree trimming and planting



- Low maintenance plants and facilities
- Inspection and repair/replacement
- Vandal resistant
- Enforcement

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Maintenance

The Board is working with the Parks Dept. to develop a systematic maintenance program for the lake park. Dan Davis, a Board member with extensive professional experience in parks management is volunteering his time on this project.

Regular training of parks personnel, annual tree trimming and plantings, and inspections of equipment will be part of the program.

Use of low-maintenance plants and facilities, and vandal-proof equipment are recommended, along with enforcement of park rules.

Funding

- Impact fees
- Tree and Sidewalk Replacement Funds
- Prepare projects for grant opportunities
- Engage service organizations
- Clean-up events
- Home improvement stores
- State contacts
- Memorial bench and tree programs
- Volunteer efforts
- User fees – evaluate
- Parks budget – staffing and repair



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Funding

Finding funding to maintain and improve the park system has become increasingly challenging with the economic downturn and the drying up of grant programs.

A number of options are available.

Recreation impact fees from new development can be used for capital projects in parks that serve the whole community such as the Lake Wailes Park.

The Tree Replacement and Sidewalk Replacement Funds can also be used.

Preparing specific plans for park improvements ahead of time, such as the Kiwanis Park improvement plan, ensures that we're ready when a grant opportunity presents itself.

Specific plans can also be used by service organizations who may be seeking projects to assist the community and for applications to home improvement stores that have community assistance programs.

Using state contracts for equipment and materials can also sometimes save money.

Volunteer efforts such as clean-up programs can be encouraged, and the institution of memorial tree and bench programs can be helpful.

Parks Board

Present and past board members who contributed to this report:

Heidi Gravel, Chairman
Jean Scott
Marshall Whidden
Jose Joglar-Gaya
Dan Davis

Charles Fairchild, past member
Elwood (Woody) Dupuis, past Chairman
Julie Seay, past Chairman

Nancy Furland, Liaison to Lakes Advisory Commission

Ex-Officio members:

Margaret Swanson, Director of Planning and Development
Teresa Allen, Public Services Director

Other participating staff members:

Beverly Pennington, Division Manager, Parks
Kathy Bangle, Assistant Director of Planning and Development
Patricia Johnson, Planning Department (photography)