



## Florida Recreation and Park Association

# 2012 Legislative Priorities



*Florida's public parks and recreation agencies provide services, programs, and open spaces that add value to Florida communities.*



That value can be measured in the achievement of our most precious natural resources – our youth; the cohesiveness of our communities; our ability to conserve open space; the economic development provided through tournaments, concerts and festivals; the physical health of our residents; the protection of those

places and spaces that preserve the heritage of our State; the protection of the natural environment that provides our outdoor classroom space for all to learn the appreciation of the out of doors; and most of all, our ability to all this to ensure Florida's future.

## PROVIDING FOR AND PROTECTING FLORIDA'S PARKS AND CONSERVATION LANDS

*Support full funding of the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program and the Florida Forever Program; and support measures that protect Florida's precious natural resources including open space and water resources.*

- Park development stimulates local economies by employing professional services and local contractors.
- Land acquisition programs allow for the strategic purchase of open space to provide for recreation, and the protection of critical water resources for future generations.
- Conservation land acquisition and development programs allow the public to enjoy and safely access public parks and environmental lands; and, to connect with nature.
- Parks and environmental lands provide a high return on investment by providing a natural framework that protects our environmental resources, support clean air, and reduce "Green House" gasses.
- Historical and cultural heritage sites require preservation and restoration assistance.
- Greenways and trails provide a close to home, easily accessible space for the public to exercise and live a healthy lifestyle.
- The ability to leverage local, state and federal funding mechanisms that provide for open space and clean water, assures that ample protection exists for wildlife to prosper and regenerate.



A 2001 survey by the National Association of Realtors (NAR) revealed that 57 percent of voters would choose a home close to parks and open space over one that was not. In addition, the NAR survey found that 50 percent of voters would be willing to pay 10 percent more for a house located near a park or protected open space.

*"How Cities Use Parks for Economic Development," American Planning Association, The City Parks Forum, 2002.*

## PUBLIC SAFETY AND WELLNESS

*Support safety and security of our communities, affording all citizens a safe environment in which to live, work and play.*

- Take available measures to protect youth from exposure to sexual predators and offenders. This would include supporting the funding of technology to make more affordable and accessible the fingerprinting and background screening of all volunteers and employees who work with youth.
- Support legislation that regulates through law, boundaries for drugs, alcohol and weapons in urban parks and where children regularly are present.



When adjacent to residential areas, green spaces have been shown to create neighborhoods with fewer violent and property crimes and where neighbors tend to support and protect one another. These are the findings of scientists at the Human-Environment Research Laboratory of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign who studied green space alongside public housing in Chicago. Other researchers who are conducting similar studies across the country are finding similar results.

*“How Cities Use Parks to Create Safer Neighborhoods,”* American Planning Association, The City Parks Forum, 2003.

*Florida will always be an attractive place to live, work and play. Continued population growth means people need places to connect and form new relationships, to learn about Florida’s heritage and its natural treasures – a place to become Floridians. Florida’s parks are the place where it all comes together – a sense of community, an appreciation of history, respect for nature. How do you weave strangers into citizens?*

**IT STARTS IN PARKS** – The Parks and Recreation industry builds and sustains healthy lifestyles, civic identity, cultural heritage and environmental preservation that are essential for community prosperity and Florida’s future.

*Parks Build...*

- *Community*
- *Health*
- *Prosperity*
- *Civic Identity*



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