

City of Sanibel

Planning Commission



Planning Department Agenda Memorandum

Steering Committee Meeting Date: January 21, 2026

To: Sanibel Plan Update Steering Committee

From: Paula McMichael, AICP, Planning Director

Date: January 14, 2026

Subject: Review of the Recreation and Open Space Element

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) reviewed the Recreation and Open Space Element at their meetings of November 20, 2025, and January 15, 2026. A copy of the meeting minutes from November 20th are attached for your reference. At the meeting of January 15, members voted unanimously to recommend the following changes to the table on p.138 'Standards for Recreation Facilities for the Residents of the City of Sanibel' as part of the Sanibel Plan Update: strike Skate Park; add 1 Dog Park; add 1 Community Green Space.

Staff's preliminary review of the element is provided for your reference, below, and includes comments from PRAC's review at their meeting of November 20th. Notes are grouped by the section of the element.

Florida Statutes requires that the Recreation and Open Space Element provide a comprehensive system of public and private sites for recreation and the maintenance of open space.

Background Discussion

- Include reference to Comprehensive Assessment, Analysis, and Evaluation Report – City of Sanibel Recreation Department (Berry Dunn study – 2023) – which evaluated recreation department operations and how it serves the needs of residents
- Reference the Shared Use Path Master Plan Update
- [PRAC] – include list of all recreation facilities (as complement to level of service table)
- [PRAC] – consider the balance between maintaining the carrying capacity of the beach vs increasing access to the beach
- [PRAC] – list where disability access is provided
- [PRAC] – p. 134 – reference any current park/recreation improvements included in the city's adopted capital improvements plan

Plan for Recreation and Open Space

- [PRAC] – p. 137 –#10 – more specific references/goals for disability access to recreation facilities

- p. 137 - #12 – update reference to senior center (Center 4 Life)
- [PRAC] - p. 137 - #14 & #15 – consider specifically a dog park

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

- [PRAC] – consider including a policy to update a new needs assessment every 5 years
- [PRAC] - consider policy to maintain naming rights policy as a potential funding mechanism
- Consider including a policy that allows recreation facilities to serve dual purpose as recreation as well as stormwater or storm surge facilities (i.e. designed to flood in a storm)
- p. 138 – table of Standards for Recreation Facilities – remove the skate area as no longer existing/desired
- [PRAC] – p. 138 – table of Standards for Recreation Facilities – consider dog park
- [PRAC] – p. 138 – table of Standards for Recreation Facilities – “outdoor tennis courts” – change to “outdoor courts” generally
- [PRAC] – p. 139 – Objective 3 – address e-bikes – golf carts
- update relevant maps

General Background

Each element of the Sanibel Plan begins with “background discussion.” This portion of the element is not regulatory language but a description of the subject, history, and existing (ca. 2012) conditions. Then there is a “plan” (or plans) with provisions followed by Goals, Objectives, and Policies (GOPs). These two portions—the plans and GOPs—constitute the regulatory language.

The tasks for the steering committee at each meeting will be to review the applicable sections of the Sanibel Plan and suggest additions or revisions to address council’s priorities and community concerns. A line-by-line, word-by-word rewrite is not needed, nor is an update of existing conditions, as this will be undertaken by the consultant. We are looking for community input on the topic at the “big picture” level as to what (if anything) should be added or what (if anything) is no longer relevant.

As you prepare for the steering committee meeting, please keep in mind the following framework:

- The Sanibel Plan is a long-range (10- and 20-year timeframes) policy document that serves as the city’s “constitution” or “blueprint” for development and the foundation for the land development code. It must be consistent with state law and internally consistent in order to be legally defensible.
- All proposed changes should be evaluated for consistency with the overarching Sanibel Vision Statement and its Hierarchy of Values of Sanctuary, Community, and Attraction. The Sanibel Vision Statement is incorporated into the Sanibel Plan as well as the city’s charter. It is included as an attachment to the agenda for your reference.

Related City Council Priorities

Infrastructure: Focus on infrastructure needs that sustain and protect the island's quality of life, including maintaining and improving roads, pathways, historical structures, bridges, sewer, and stormwater systems, and implementing coastal resiliency initiatives.

Quality of Life: Sustain the safety and well-being of residents, businesses, and visitors by ensuring resources are provided for law enforcement, disaster preparedness, and the delivery of on-island educational, historic, cultural, social, and recreation activities for a diverse multi-generational citizenry.