

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Valdosta-Lowndes County is known for sports. From nationally-recognized high school and college football programs to the their “crown jewel” Miracle Field Complex, the city and larger county area boast top-notch recreational opportunities, and residents relish it. Partially foundational to the area’s impressive parks and programming system was the creation of a Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) in 2013, steered by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Authority (VLPR). In the intervening years since the plan’s publication, many suggested improvements have been made, including the augmentation of programming and the revamping of tired facilities.

To ensure the continued success of the parks system, VLPR is now updating the 2013 plan to develop a new vision for the next 15 years. This Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan addresses numerous questions such as: Which parks and programs remain to be improved to better meet residents’ needs? Given population changes over time, how many new facilities are needed, where should they be located, and which amenities should they feature? How can VLPR operate more effectively and efficiently to accomplish these goals? And critically, yet more broadly, how can parks not only satisfy people’s recreational desires, but also help Valdosta-Lowndes County enjoy greater economic, environmental, and social prosperity?

Community-wide Issues

Parks and recreation systems can touch many aspects of people’s lives – from how they navigate their communities and their physical and mental well-being, to providing leisure and entertainment opportunities and a better quality of life, key not only for those already resident but also to employers hoping to draw talent to the area. A recent report by VisionFirst Advisors for One Valdosta-Lowndes,¹ an initiative led by community and business leaders such as the City

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¹ VisionFirst Advisors. “One Valdosta-Lowndes Economic & Community Development Strategic Plan Project Update,” June 6, 2018.