

## Health

- **Community health statistics for Lowndes County were generally poorer** than those reported for the state and the country, according to a county-wide health plan<sup>4</sup>:
  - 28% of adults were obese, which is roughly on par with the state (29%) but higher than the national rate (25%)
  - 19% of adults smoked, compared to 17% of Georgians and 14% nationally
  - 29% of the population was physically inactive, compared to 25% state-wide and 20% nationally
- The top three causes of death in Lowndes County were **cancer, heart disease, and stroke**.

## The PRMP Planning Process

VLPR's 2021 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) has the power to build on the area's rich assets and also create positive change relating to the community's livability, sustainability, and resiliency. Parks and the public realm (including streets, trails, conservation areas, civic spaces, and stormwater facilities) can help create jobs, increase revenues, protect natural resources, shape urban form and character, expand transportation access, improve health and education, and strengthen families. And, in light of worsening wealth inequality, climate change, and political exhaustion, parks and recreation systems can be an oasis, bringing people together, mitigating effects of storms and severe weather, and providing an outlet for stress relief and opportunities to improve overall wellness for community members. These benefits are summarized in **Figure 1.2**.

The PRMP has five primary aims:

- To evaluate the Authority's existing Parks and Recreation System;
- To identify residents' needs and priorities;
- To develop a long-range vision to meet needs and become more resilient and sustainable;
- To develop a feasible phasing, funding, and implementation strategy; and
- To help make Valdosta-Lowndes County more sustainable and resilient – economically, socially, and environmentally.

**FIGURE 1.2 - Community-wide Benefits Generated by Parks and Recreation Systems**

### ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

- Attracting tourists
- Attracting businesses
- Attracting retirees
- Enhancing real estate values
- Reducing taxes
- Stimulation of equipment sales

### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Protecting drinking water
- Controlling flooding
- Cleaning air
- Reducing traffic congestion
- Reducing energy costs
- Preserving biological diversity

### ALLEVIATING SOCIAL PROBLEMS

- Reducing environmental stress
- Community regeneration
- Cultural and historic preservation
- Facilitating healthy lifestyles
- Alleviating deviant youth behavior
- Raising levels of education attainment
- Alleviating unemployment distress

Source: John L. Crompton, Community Benefits and Repositioning: The Keys to Park and Recreation's Future Viability (Ashburn, VA: National Recreation and Park Association, 2007), 61.

<sup>4</sup> South Georgia Medical Center Community Health Needs Assessment & Implementation Plan, 2016.