

8. RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

The existing and proposed recreation/open space system will provide a green pedestrian framework around which future campus building development will be organized. The open space system will be an essential complement to the increased building density that will be necessary to accommodate campus growth. The recreation/open space fabric in the update, which is unchanged from the 1995 plan, is made up of three basic elements:

- The Central Lawn and the Pedestrian Concourse on the Seventh Avenue South alignment will be the principal “collegial” spaces that define and unify the campus academic core. The site improvements necessary for the creation of the Central Lawn and the Concourse are priority capital projects in the update. The space will reinforce the “traditional” collegiate atmosphere that will emerge with the growth of the full-time student population.
- The Bayboro Waterfront Park is a unique and significant amenity for the campus. The University has made open space improvements on the waterfront since 1995 that made Bayboro Harbor a more integral part of campus life.
- The recreation field at Fifth Avenue South functions not only for campus recreation purposes, but also as a “greensward” that announces the campus to visitors and the general public approaching on Fifth Avenue South and Third and Fourth Streets South. The field will become increasingly important to the University to serve the growing resident and full-time student population.

Context

Existing developed campus open space is currently limited to the bayfront and recreation field.

Plan Framework for Recreation and Open Space

The master plan framework for the St. Petersburg campus is structured around a system of interconnected formal and recreational open spaces corridors. The open space system is designed to strengthen and distinguish the campus as a part of the City of St. Petersburg's urban fabric by enhancing visual continuity between the campus, the waterfront, and the surrounding street grid. The open space system establishes a clear spatial order in which to locate future campus buildings. The plan proposes that the character of the campus open space reinforce the nature of the urban setting.

The overall landscape structure of the campus will be based on the establishment of regular rows of street trees to reinforce the city grid as it is extended into the campus, and to frame the major campus open spaces. Campus spaces should be clearly defined by consistent building edges. Each of the major internal and edge open spaces will contain either formal or informal groupings of trees as appropriate to accentuate the character of the space and to provide a diversity of landscape settings. (See Urban Design Element.)

The following open space and recreational amenities will be key in visually integrating the campus and in connecting the campus with its contextual setting:

- The principal organizing open space consists of the Central Lawn on the Second Street axis and the proposed east-west pedestrian promenade on the Seventh Avenue axis. The two axes extend visually toward the surrounding urban area, forming the link between off-campus institutions and the academic core functions arrayed on these two axes.
- The existing campus waterfront open space south of the Library will be strengthened by the addition of a pedestrian esplanade along the shore edge to make it more inviting, and through consistent treatment, more visually coherent and imageable identity. The esplanade should continue west to connect with the walkway in Poynter Park, making the entire open space frontage on Bayboro Harbor a singular amenity for the public and the campus.
- The tip of the peninsula will be strengthened as a campus landscape open space and identifiable campus feature as viewed from the water by the proposed removal of the interstitial parking and drop-off functions that are located within the existing lawn area and the introduction of high canopy planting at the edge of the lawn to provide shade, containment, and visibility.

(See Figure 8-a.)

Goal

The Recreation and Open Space goal of the St. Petersburg campus plan is to ensure the provision of adequate and accessible recreation facilities and open space to meet the future needs of the University.

Summary of Objectives and Policies

Objective 8.1. Provide recreational facilities and open space to meet campus community demand and provide increased facilities to serve on-campus needs through the coordinated use of public and private resources.

- Policy 8.1.1. USFSP shall establish a private donor program for the purpose of contributing to the development and maintenance of on-campus recreation and open space facilities and shall coordinate the distribution of these funds with other public University funding sources.
 - Policy 8.1.2. USFSP shall implement recreational facility improvements as identified in Element 8.
 - Policy 8.1.3. USFSP shall establish within the 10 year planning time frame a hierarchy of campus open spaces including; the Central Lawn , the East-West Promenade, peninsula open space, and Bayfront Esplanade as described herein, and on Figure 8-a. The timing and phasing requirements and priorities for these improvements are established in the Capital Improvements Element.
 - Policy 8.1.4. The principal open spaces, the Central Lawn and the East-West Promenade, shall be identified by USFSP as priority projects with phased implementation to be initiated within the first five years of the planning time frame.
- Objective 8.2. Provide increased opportunities for on-campus access to varied, high quality open spaces.
- Policy 8.2.1. USFSP shall require adherence to adopted build-to-lines as identified in the Architectural Design Guidelines Element and shall encourage building heights of three to four stories, except in situations where airport restrictions require reduced height, in order to maintain a consistent edge to the proposed open spaces in keeping with the urban setting and to establish and preserve a meaningful integrated system of contiguous campus open spaces.
 - Policy 8.2.2. USFSP shall affirm a belief that quality planted outdoor spaces are necessary to the well being of urban life and that the institution seeks continuity with the natural communities and processes that support human life.

Objective 8.3. Coordinate with the host communities to promote provision of adequate recreation and open space off-campus to serve the campus community living in the context area and to ensure continuity of campus open space resources within the larger regional open space system.

Policy 8.3.1. USFSP shall coordinate with the host community in the systematic implementation of on-campus recreation facilities and open space to ensure continuity of such facilities within the larger regional open space system. In particular, the University will coordinate with the City of St. Petersburg in the planning, design and implementation of the street corridor open spaces and the Bayfront Esplanade connection to Poynter Park and points north (See Intergovernmental Coordination Element).

Policy 8.3.2. USFSP shall meet with City and County officials on a periodic basis to review the status of recreation and open space facilities and to explore ways to facilitate coordination in the provision of those facilities. The University shall pursue interlocal agreements and memoranda of understanding as needed to provide for the joint use of recreation and open space facilities.

Policy 8.3.3. USFSP shall promote the development and improvement of community recreation facilities by the host community in the belief that these facilities will enrich the quality of life for those living within the University context area and campus residences. The University shall begin discussions with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) regarding the redevelopment of the FDEP site in order to extend the open space system onto the parcel of land on the northwestern corner of the peninsula, , and maintain communications with City regarding possible development.