

CHAPTER ONE - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In May 2010, the Military Growth Task Force executed a Memorandum of Agreement with the City of Jacksonville under which the Military Growth Task Force (MGTF) would fund this Addendum to the City's Comprehensive Recreation Master Plan. The purpose of this Cooperative Recreation Plan is to develop joint partnership opportunities in the area of parks and recreation services and facilities between the City of Jacksonville, Onslow County, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune and Marine Corps Air Station New River.

The MGTF completed an exhaustive and detailed Regional Growth Management Plan (RGMP) in late 2009. Among the eight functional areas assessed in this study was "Quality of Life" which includes Parks and Recreation. The findings detailed in the RGMP include the Jacksonville metro area's ranking of 330 out of 379 on "ambience factors" (Places Rated Almanac 2007). Even before the announcement of military growth in 2007, Onslow County had a need (according to state standards) for two baseball and 23 softball fields, 11 public swimming pools and seven community centers. The influx of approximately 41,000 additional Marines and family members has greatly exacerbated this shortage.

In the course of completing this Cooperative Recreation Plan, it became clear that the Marine Corps has sufficient program and staff funding, but not enough land to construct facilities adequate to meet their demand. Onslow County, on the other hand, has sufficient land but scarce program and staff dollars. The City of Jacksonville is stretched to the limit, in both land and program funds. Complicating this scenario is the scarcity of public funds on all fronts with which to address challenges such as these. A regional or "joint" approach to addressing the myriad recreation shortages has come of age.

BOTTOM LINE:

"Currently, all three aforementioned parties are in need of additional recreation land/amenities, but have limited resources with which to satisfy those needs. If all parties were willing to work together to develop a joint use site, a large portion of each party's needs could be met at a lower cost than developing individual facilities within each jurisdiction."

The goal of this plan is to address partnership opportunities to maximize efficiency, reduce duplication of efforts, and create shared capacity with regard to parks and recreation facilities, programs and staff among the City of Jacksonville, Onslow County, and the US Marine Corps bases at Camp Lejeune and New River. The MGTF deemed this an important step in promoting regionalism, and at the same time responding to a major need in the "quality of life" arena in Onslow County as a result of the Grow the Force Initiative.

The work performed by PROS Consulting included the following:

- A demographic analysis of Jacksonville and Onslow County which shows 77% of all base Marines live off the base
- Statistically valid survey for residents in the City of Jacksonville and Onslow County to identify unmet recreation needs for citizens including military families residing in the County

- An online survey of Marines based on information provided by MGTf staff on what Marines felt were the most important unmet recreation needs missing on the Base, in the City of Jacksonville and in the County to support their recreation needs
- An evaluation of Onslow County's park and recreation facilities and what level of capability they have to meet various recreation facility needs desired by Marines and their families
- An evaluation of the City of Jacksonville parks, recreation facilities and programs to determine their level of capability to meet the unmet needs of Marines and their families
- An evaluation of Base sports fields, sports courts, fitness centers, and recreation community centers as well as programs provided by the Military for Marines and their families on Base
- Development of GIS maps to determine the level of recreation access available for parks, recreation facilities and amenities in areas of the city, county and Marine Corps Base to determine underserved needs in the city and county
- Regional recommendations for facility and program types along with partnership and operational strategies best suited to meet the cumulative needs

1.1.1 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of this Cooperative Recreation Plan is to develop specific recommendations for joint (military/civilian) partnerships that can be agreed upon as acceptable to all parties at the staff levels and can be presented to elected officials and installation commanders for implementation. The following recommendations should be considered by the City of Jacksonville, Onslow County, and the local US Marine Corps Bases as potential means of addressing the area's recreation needs.

- Develop a Level of Service Committee between the City of Jacksonville Recreation and Parks Department, Onslow County Parks and Recreation Department and the Marine Corps Sports and Recreation Department, as well as local school districts to evaluate on an annual basis the needs of the region for sports, recreation, fitness, aquatics, arts, music, special events and outdoor adventure and how each agency can support the needs of the region as a regional partnership coalition
- Jointly develop a new youth and adult sports complex, large regional recreation center and outdoor aquatic center, jointly owned and/or managed, to serve the region. This would require the development of a Facility Authority to finance these sites, conclude Agreements and manage the life cycle of the facilities
- Develop facility standards for sports fields and courts that the City, County and Base will manage toward as it applies to program and maintenance standards. This should also include the development of consistent pricing standards for like type of services based on a cost recovery goal, so as to avoid competition with each other
- Develop a special event venue that can provide entertainment opportunities to serve the residents of Jacksonville, Onslow County and the Base Marines and their

families. The venue should include an amphitheater, special event grounds and parking

- Develop a regional trails network through the City, County and Military Base to connect major elements of the region for walking, bicycling, and running
- Develop an Outdoor Adventure Park in the Region that allows Marines and city and county residents to access water related activities for fishing, canoeing, kayaking, bouldering, mountain biking, sailing, zip-lining and other related adventure edge sports
- Jointly develop programs to serve the Military families that focus on meeting their needs while their Marine is deployed as well as programs targeted for the Single Marine
- Develop Joint Regional Recreation and Park Outcomes and Performance Indicators that demonstrate the value of the joint partnership approach and its effects on living in the region. The outcomes may include, reductions in crime and depression, enhancements in health, wellness and obesity issues, livability satisfaction, and equity of the value of sharing resources for the common good
- Jointly survey residents of the City, County and Military Base on how well the Regional Recreation and Park Level of Service Committee is doing in meeting their needs every three years and develop a three year work plan to work towards solving the issues involved as a team
- Track the economic impact of the Regional Park and Recreation Plan on the region as it applies to sports tourism, people attending events in the city and how these shared resources impacted the community in the value of living in the City and or the County

This MGT Addendum or Cooperative Recreation Plan demonstrates the value of and opportunity to work together with the City of Jacksonville, Onslow County and the Marine Corps Community Services Division to serve the needs of all residents. It shows where inequities exist in facilities and services. To truly serve the needs of residents and yield a more livable community, the creation of a Regional Parks and Recreation Level of Service Coalition is a logical next step in the ongoing Cooperative Planning Process in Onslow County. Such an entity would maximize the value of combining agency resources, promote further positive communications between the City, County and Military Bases, create endearing civilian/military partnerships, add military utility to the installations and elevate the quality of life for all area residents for years to come.

This opportunity is available and based on discussions with each agency there appears to be a strong willingness to work together. The addition of the school district to the partnership mix would yield an even stronger forum. No single agency has the resources necessary to meet the needs of the region for parks and recreation type of services. The leadership is in place from all agencies to implement the recommendations outlined in this Cooperative Recreation Plan.