

SEVEN: RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES



View from Bay Point Park of Boaters on Lyons Bay

Parks and Recreation

Existing County parks and recreation facilities in the Nokomis Center area include the Nokomis Community Park on Nippino Trail, the Laurel Community Park on Collins Road, Bay Point Park on Lyons Bay Road, Venetia Bay Park within the Venice city limits near the US 41 By-Pass, and the Loreto Court boat ramp. Park and recreation sites discussed in this chapter are illustrated on Figure 7-1, Recreation and Waterways Map. Loreto Court boat ramp is discussed under the Waterways Management and Boating Facilities section in this chapter.

Nokomis Community Park

The seventeen-acre Nokomis Community Park, once the site of the Nokomis Elementary School, has many recreation facilities including a community center, children's playground, tennis courts, picnic pavilion, covered stage area, and exercise trail. The eastern side of the park borders the Seminole Gulf Railway railroad corridor that the County is negotiating to purchase and develop as a recreational trail. The park will make a logical trailhead location offering parking and restroom facilities for trail users (see Rails to Trails discussion). Curry Creek, at the south end of the park, can provide canoe and kayak access. The County is pursuing developing a canoe and kayak access at this location, which will need a connecting pedestrian trail. A concession for canoe rental and/or storage also is being considered. Other recommendations for the Community Park include improving the pedestrian access on the north side from Osceola Road and providing internal handicap accessible walkways/trails to connect park uses to the parking areas. (See Project Sheet RC-4.)

Bay Point Park

Bay Point Neighborhood Park is a well-maintained passive park that offers beautiful views of Lyons Bay. Area residents want the one-acre park to be kept passive and quiet. The park is only accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists due to a lack of automobile parking. The park's border along Lyons Bay Road has an existing cable strung across wood pilings (to prevent parking) with no obvious pedestrian opening. The adjoining County-owned right-of-way includes a drainage ditch leading to Lyons Bay. Improvements are needed to provide an opening in the cable, a small wooden sign with the park name and, possibly, a bench near the water. (See Project Sheet RC-6.)

Venetia Bay Park

Venetia Bay Park is located within an existing office development, near the intersection of US 41 Business and US 41 By-Pass in the Venice city limits. The three-acre passive park includes parking, gazebo, restrooms and asphalt pedestrian trails connecting to the office development's sidewalks. The development's stormwater retention pond with fountain provides an interesting water feature. The proximity of Venetia Bay Park to the railroad corridor can provide a good access point to the proposed rails to trails. No improvements to the park are suggested.

Rails to Trails

The Seminole Gulf Railway railroad corridor traverses through the heart of the Nokomis Center connecting Venice to Sarasota. The County is in the process of negotiating the purchase of the railroad from south of Clark Road to Venice for the purpose of transforming the railroad corridor into a recreational trail. The first phase will be from Venice to the Nokomis Community Park. When designing the trail, several features will be considered, including access points (with automobile parking and for pedestrians only), wooden overlook areas on the creeks and road crossings. (See Project Sheet RC-8.) Proposed access points to the trail in the Nokomis Center are illustrated on Figure 7-1.



Railroad Trestle Over Curry Creek

Waterways Management and Boating Facilities

Nokomis area waterways, including Lyons Bay, Dona Bay, Shakett Creek, Roberts Bay, Curry Creek and numerous private canals, provide opportunities for boating, canoeing, kayaking and fishing. Boaters at workshops repeatedly expressed concerns over the shallow navigational waterways and limited access due to the low bridges on US 41 and at the railroad trestles. The navigational water concerns will be coordinated with the Sarasota County's Waterways Advisory Group, which was formed to develop a County-wide navigational dredging program. (See Project Sheet RC-1.) The County will investigate if channel markers are needed in some areas on the creeks and bays.

Canoe and Kayak Access

Despite the abundance of bays and creeks in the Nokomis area, public access has not been adequately developed. The lack of public access has resulted in boating conflicts in the few existing access areas between motor boats, jet skis, canoes and kayaks. One way to reduce conflicts is to define and develop separate use areas, especially for canoes and kayaks. Recommended areas that the County can develop for canoe/kayak access are illustrated on Figure 7-1. Besides creating canoe/kayak launching areas with parking, a canoe guide and other interpretive signs can inform users about the various recreational opportunities. (See Project Sheets RC-2, RC-5 and RC-7.)

Boat Ramps

The Loreto Court Boat Basin, located at the end of a narrow dead-end street, serves smaller draft boats and is the only public access boat ramp within the Nokomis Center. The Nokomis Beach boat ramp on Casey Key provides access to the Intracoastal Waterway for larger draft boats and will be renovated next year with a flex ramp system to improve public safety. Nokomis residents have requested that the County repair the Loreto Court boat basin ramp and seawall, adding a wood dock for easier access. Construction of a parking area and turn-around for vehicles and boat trailers will improve public access. Buffers are needed to protect existing residences from the boat ramp activity. (See Project Sheet RC-3.)

FIGURE 7-1

(see table of contents for link to document)

Community Services

Figure 7-2, Community Services Map, shows the location of community services in the Nokomis Center, including public schools, public libraries, law enforcement services, fire-rescue services, and hurricane evacuation routes. Park and recreation areas also are shown on the map.

Public Schools

The Laurel Nokomis Elementary and Middle Schools are located on the corner of Laurel Road and Old Albee Farm Road. The Laurel Nokomis Schools are relatively new - built in the early 1990s. Area high school students attend Venice High School near downtown Venice. Venice Elementary School is located north of the High School and serves elementary school students in the vicinity of the City of Venice. School bus stops for the Laurel Nokomis Schools and Venice High School and recommendations for new sidewalks are discussed in Chapter Six: Transportation and Mass Transit.

Public Libraries

The Venice Public Library and the Sarasota County Public Library Bookmobile serve Nokomis area residents. Bookmobile service was initiated at the Nokomis Community Park in October 2000 on Thursdays from 3-4 PM. This scheduled will be reviewed and revised, as needed. The Venice Public Library is located at 300 South Nokomis Avenue and meets current Sarasota County level of service (LOS) standards for public libraries (i.e., books per capita, square foot per capita, and staffing). In December 1998, the Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners approved the construction in Fiscal Year 2006 of a new mid-County library using infrastructure surtax funding. Design and site acquisition are scheduled for 2004. Library Services staff has not identified a specific location for the new mid-County library, but expects that the new library will be located conveniently to U.S. 41, between Sarasota Square Mall and the U.S. 41 By-Pass, north of Venice.

Law Enforcement Services

Law enforcement is provided by the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office and the Florida Highway Patrol. Nokomis residents are concerned about code enforcement, drugs and other crime related problems. Sheriff's Office Deputies at the Nokomis Laurel Community Policing Office offer a community-oriented crime enforcement program to address these problems. Code enforcement is coordinated with the Community Policing Office and is discussed in Chapter Two: Community Appearance. The Community Policing Office is located in the Palm Plaza on U.S. 41 and offers outreach programs to area organizations and schools. Nokomis and Laurel residents can volunteer in the office administration.

Fire-Rescue Services

Fire-rescue services include emergency medical and fire protection services provided to Nokomis area residents by Sarasota County Rescue Station #33 and the Nokomis Volunteer Fire Department. Station #33 has ambulance service only, but is built with fire suppression capabilities if service is ever consolidated in the future. Fire stations #35 and #37 have fire suppression capabilities and ambulance service for residents living within the City of Venice.

Rescue Station #33

Sarasota County Rescue Station # 33 is located at 1930 N. Tamiami Trail, just north of S.R. 681 and provides ambulance service to area residents south of Blackburn Point Road. Emergency medical services are available at Sarasota Memorial Hospital in Sarasota and Bon Secours Hospital in Venice.

Nokomis Volunteer Fire Department

The Nokomis Volunteer Fire Department, a special state legislated fire district, provides fire protection services to County residents south of Blackburn Point Road, north of the City of Venice and west of the Myakka River. The Nokomis Volunteer Fire Station is located at 111 Pavonia Road and has state of the art fire equipment and an on-site training facility. The station is staffed by professional volunteers and receives funding through resident dues and reimbursement fees for services from Sarasota County.

Hurricane Evacuation

Storm surge zones and hurricane evacuation routes are shown on Figure 7-2. A significant portion of the Nokomis Center is within the Tropical Storm and Storm Category 1 and 2 zones making hurricane evacuation routes vulnerable to storm and rainfall flooding. Hurricane shelters are located outside the Nokomis area and are noted on the map.

FIGURE 7-2

(see table of contents for link to document)