

MYAKKA RIVER PARK

MASTER PLAN | SITE ANALYSIS

CHARLOTTE COUNTY, FLORIDA
6 SEPTEMBER 2019





CANIN PROJECT #: 218096

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overall site analysis summary by the RWA Team (RWA Engineering, Canin Associates, and DexBender) specific to the Myakka River Park property as part of the team’s effort of developing a Master Plan for future park development. The analysis focused on the physical and natural attributes, governmental requirements, and any opportunities and constraints the team has identified to provide the foundation for moving

the project forward to the Master Planning phase. The Team developed the results of the analysis from site visits, formal preliminary environmental assessment, development suitability reporting, coordination with staff, documentation review, and overall professional knowledge and experience related to master planning and site development.

FIGURE 1 | SITE AERIAL

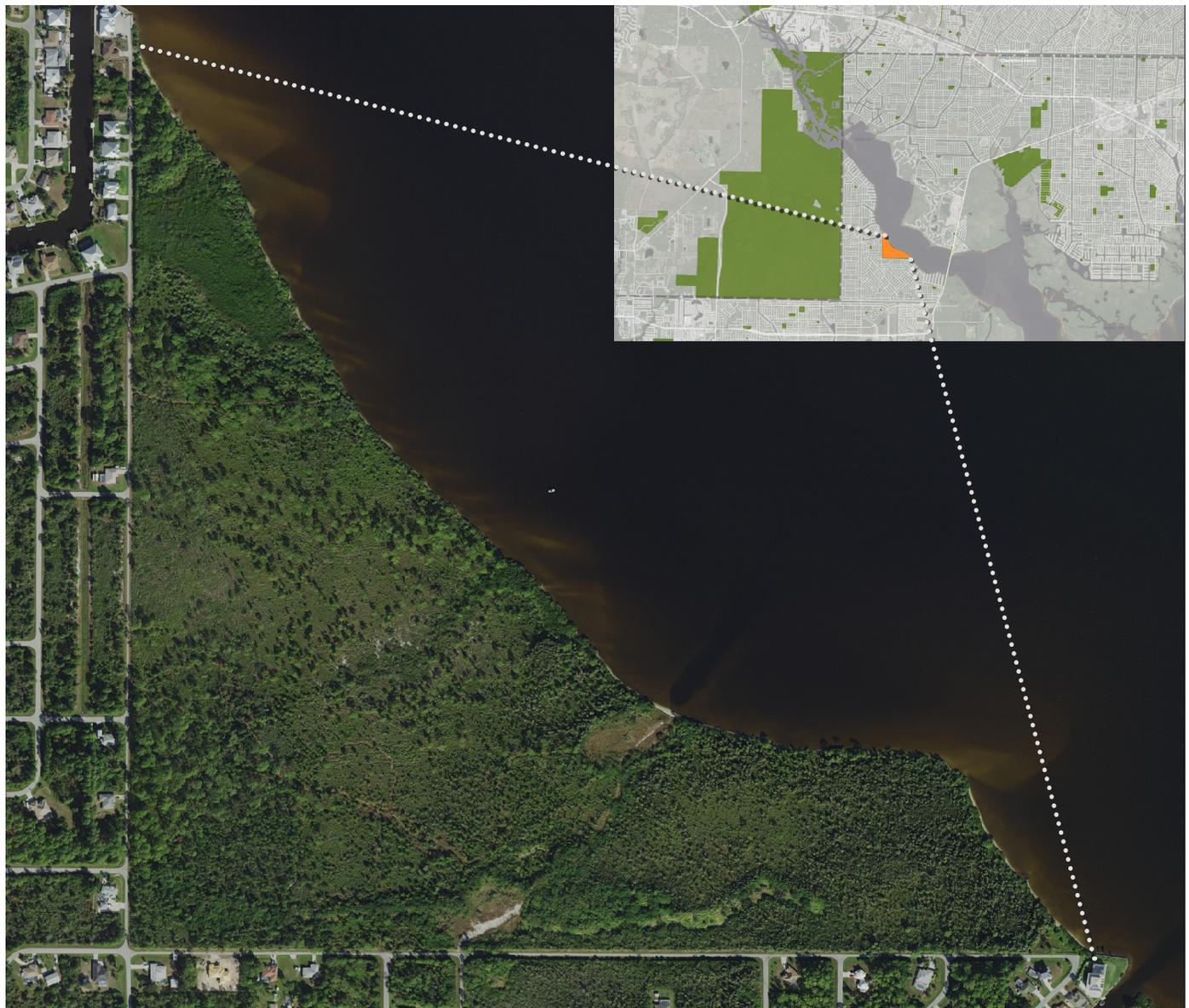


FIGURE 2 | REGIONAL CONTEXT MAP



LOCATION

The Myakka River Park property is approximately 129 acres in size and located within Section 29, Township 40 South, Range 21 East, of unincorporated Charlotte County, Florida. The park site is specifically located within the Gulf Shore neighborhood bounded to the west by Spire Street, the south by Gallagher Boulevard, and to the east by the Myakka River. Development surrounding the property consists of platted single-family residential lots and homes as part of the Port Charlotte Subdivision Plat.

The park is located in the northeast quadrant of Charlotte County, near the Sarasota County border. Situated in between the Myakka State Forest, Tippecanoe Environmental Park, and Charlotte Harbor State Park to the South - The Myakka River Park is identified as an environmental area. The site is located just north of the proposed expansion of the Sunbelt Trail and adjacent to the interconnected systems of blueways that run up and down the Myakka River.

FIGURE 3 | REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY



FIGURE 4 | RIVER CONNECTION



FIGURE 5 | ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOOD





SITE ANALYSIS

PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

The physical attributes of Myakka River Park are analyzed by topography, vegetation, and impacted areas. Below is a summary of the analysis findings.

Topography

The property was recently surveyed to determine the formal boundaries and overall general topography of the land. The site is generally flat with a gradual elevation decrease from a maximum elevation of 7 feet at the southwest portion of the property to below one foot at the shoreline to the Myakka River. Based on site observations in May and June, there was no indication of standing water with ground water levels around 24 inches below grade.

Impacted Areas

Overall, the property is undeveloped and unimproved. Historically, it is apparent the site has been undisturbed until approximately twenty years ago when the area was impacted by wildfires. Additionally, since the early 2000's the property has been a site for a temporary spoils containment and disposal area from permitted dredging activities in the river and canals.

Utilities

Potable water connections and electrical service are available to the property. No sanitary sewer connections are located nearby. According to the latest Sewer Master Plan Executive Summary draft (2017) for the Charlotte County Utilities Department, the subject property is located in the "Buildout" zone. This zone refers those areas of Charlotte County where no sanitary sewer infrastructure improvements are planned for within the next 15 years.

Exotic Vegetation and Listed Species

To summarize the natural attributes of the property, the predominant soils are non-hydric (upland) types and the associated vegetation is upland pine flatwoods and palmetto prairies with portions of those areas invaded by exotics.

FIGURE 6 | EXOTIC VEGETATION



FIGURE 7 | SPOIL LOCATION



FIGURE 8 | ROADWAY CONNECTIONS

FIGURE 9 | POTENTIAL HERITAGE TREE

Of the total site, approximately 114.42 acres are uplands; approximately 13.68 acres are potential jurisdictional wetlands; and the remainder is potential jurisdictional surface waters. The potential wetlands are mainly concentrated in the northern, central and southeastern areas of the property. Within the major upland tree stands located in the north/northcentral portions of the property, there are trees that likely meet the County’s criteria for being considered “Heritage Trees.” These trees, once confirmed to be “Heritage Trees,” will need to be preserved and incorporated into the park’s highlighted features.

Reviewing the latest Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) listed species database (June 2018), there are no indications of listed species per the FWC or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on the property. During site observations, there are indications of occupied gopher tortoise burrows. With the gopher habitat and other natural features of the property, there is also the potential for the eastern indigo snake, a listed threatened species by the FWC and FWS, to be present. Other species of interest that may be present on site are the Florida Scrub Jay, Wood Stork, Florida Coontie, and a variety of listed and non-listed wading birds.

SITE ANALYSIS

GOVERNMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

Existing improvements and future development to the Myakka River Park property are guided by select adopted plans, implementing regulations, and existing permitted activities. The following provides a summary review of the key findings associated with governmental requirements impacting the park’s master planning and future development.

Charlotte 2050 Comprehensive Plan:

The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) designation for the subject property is Parks and Recreation (PKR) according to Map #1: 2030 Future Land Use. The PKR FLUM designation guides the future development of this property towards either “active (facilities based) or passive (resource based) recreation uses” with various levels of facilities to support the specific desired park. The following standards provided for in the PKR FLUM designation would apply to any future structural development:

- ▶ The maximum FAR for all structures in a primarily active park is 0.7 and the maximum impervious surface coverage is 35 percent.
- ▶ The maximum FAR for all structures in a primarily passive park is 0.1 and the maximum impervious surface coverage is ten percent.

There are other Charlotte 2050 Comp Plan aspects we have determined necessary to focus upon as the master planning process and site development phases progress, which are briefly outlined as follows:

- ▶ The Myakka River Park is identified as being within the County’s designated Coastal Planning Area (Zone 2) based on the Future Land Use Series Map #13: Coastal Planning Area. According to the Coastal Planning Element’s Data and Analysis, this planning area is determined by “all tidal areas and adjacent lands below the most-recently delineated five-foot contour for Charlotte County” to ensure compliance with the Coastal Planning Element’s Goal 1: Coastal Resource Protection and the subsequent objectives and policies.

- ▶ The property is located within the County’s Coastal High Hazard Area (CHHA) and more specifically the Tropical Storm Surge Area according to Map #14: Coastal High Hazard Areas and Evacuation Routes. A key strategy identified in Policy 2.4.6 is the need to address limited development in the County’s CHHA. So future development potential on the park property consisting of “public facilities” is permissible if the need is determined to support the use. Any associated structures will be required to be built “at least eight feet above the base flood elevation.”
- ▶ According to Maps #15 and #17, the Myakka River Park property is within a portion of the County designated to be impacted by a 0.5-meter sea level rise by 2050 and within the 100-year floodplain. These key environmental site factors reiterate the need to focus appropriate master planning efforts and ultimate development opportunities toward passive recreational and ecological management.

FIGURE 10 | CHARLOTTE DOCUMENTS



Charlotte County Land Development Regulations (LDR's):

The LDC will provide the implementing regulatory standards to appropriately development the park property based on the adopted master plan. The zoning district associated with the Myakka River Park property to implement the Parks and Recreation (PKR) FLUM designation is Parks and Recreation (PKR). Section 3-9-29. – Parks and Recreation (PKR) of the current County's land development regulations portion of the County's Code of Law and Ordinances, provides the permitted, accessory, conditional, prohibited uses and structures, special exception uses, and development standards applicable to the future development of the Myakka River Park site.

Charlotte County Parks & Recreation Master Plan Update 2015-2050:

The Parks & Recreation Master Plan Update 2015-2050 (Master Plan) provides the foundation for guiding the County's future "investments and strategies" towards their parks and recreational services. The Myakka Park, RPA 1-West (Myakka River Park) is identified in the Master Plan as a "Mid-term (2022-2033)" park for implementation, which correlates to this Master Planning and Site Development effort. The Master Plan indicates the

park is an "environmental area" and potentially should be improved with passive recreational uses and support facilities, such as:

- ▶ Pervious surface small parking area;
- ▶ Nature trails with interpretive signage;
- ▶ Picnic tables;
- ▶ Small pavilion for shade and eating; and
- ▶ Water access for potential unmotorized watercraft and fishing pier/observation platform.

This foundational understanding provided by the Master Plan ensures solid guidance for the Team to engage the public to finalize the Myakka River Park Plan.

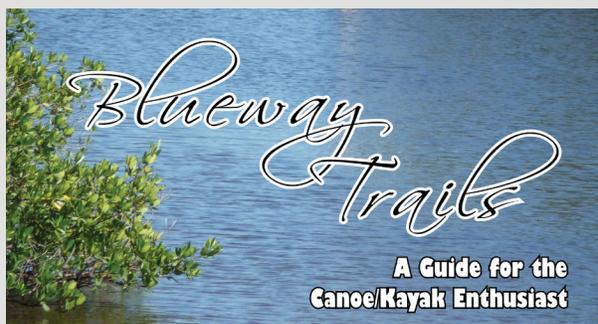


FIGURE 11 | EXISTING VEGETATION



Charlotte County Regional Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan and Charlotte County Blueways Trails System:

As with any component of a community’s park system, the integration with the surrounding transportation network is an important factor to assess and plan for in the future. The Myakka River Park as stated previously is located adjacent to two limited access streets to the west and south as well as the Myakka River to the east. There are no existing sidewalks or designated bicycle pathways within any of the surrounding public rights-of-way. The Charlotte County Regional Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan does indicate future sidewalk improvements along David Boulevard, which is approximately 1,000 feet south from the Myakka River Park site. The Bike/Ped Master Plan also indicates future connection to the Florida SUN Trail System along Gillot Boulevard. This component of the SUN Trail would be within approximately half a mile of the park property.

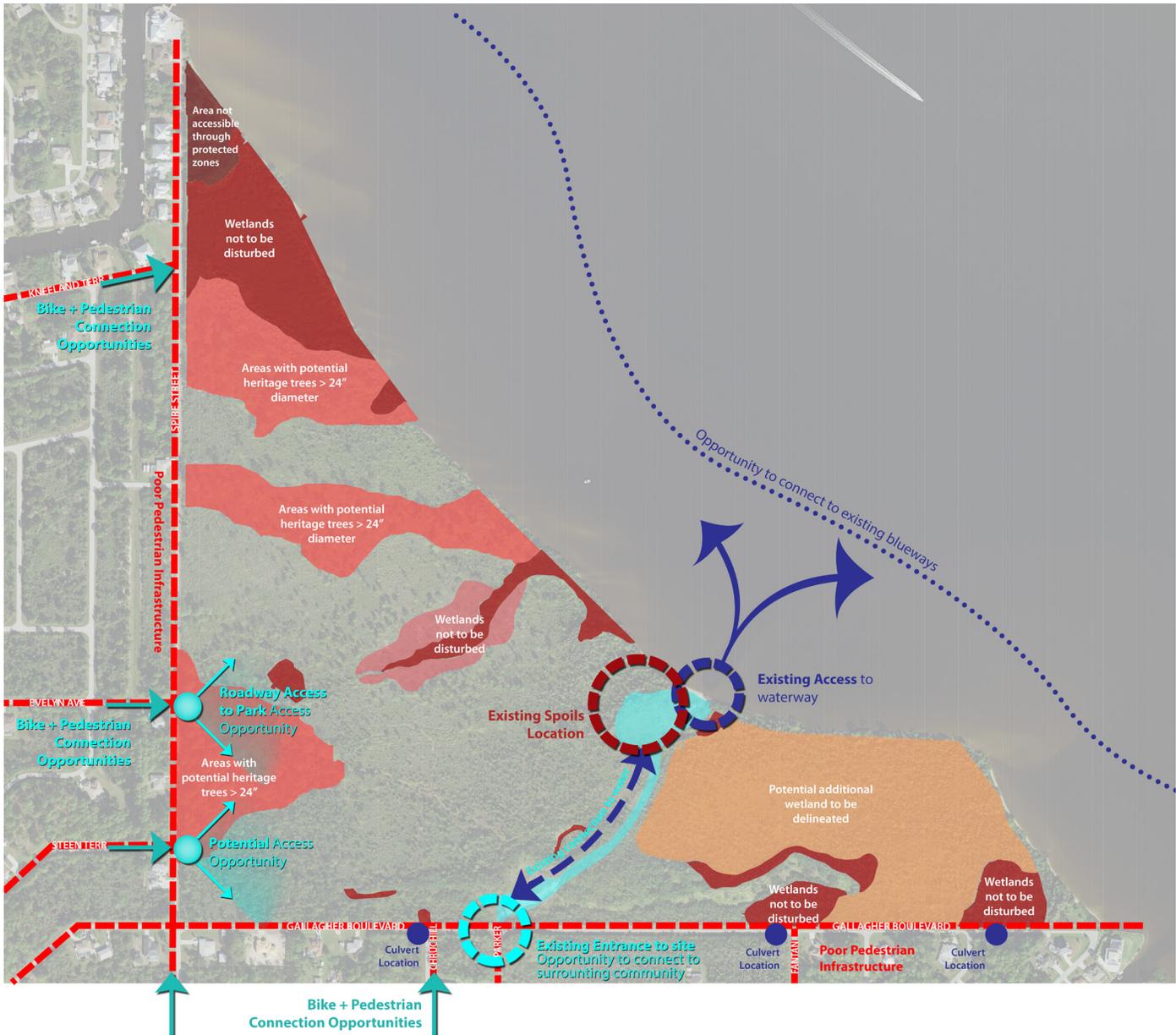
According to the Charlotte County Blueways Trail documentation, the Myakka River Park site is located within access to two designated Blueways Trails: the Myakka River Trail (Kayaking) and the Gulf Cove Trail (Kayaking).

Existing Development Permits:

As stated previously, much of the Myakka River Park property is not developed. However, a portion of the property is being used for permitted activities associated with a temporary spoils containment and disposal area from permitted dredging in the adjacent Myakka River and canals in the area. Permits have been issued by both the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) - Permit #SAJ-1996-01905 (SP-MMB) (Expiration March 23, 2027) and Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) – Permit #08-0336110-001 (Expiration October 26, 2020) that authorize the localized waterway dredging and utilization of the Myakka River Park property for upland temporary spoils storage and disposal off-site to the Charlotte County landfill.



FIGURE 12 | OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS MAP



OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

The Myakka River Park site has been identified as a passive recreation park. The existing condition provides a few opportunities for enhancement and presents a few constraints.

Regionally the park is significantly constrained for large general citizen gatherings due to the limiting nature of the roadway infrastructure. The park is surrounded by residential development with small two lane roads and no direct access path to larger regional vehicular routes.

The connectivity with the surrounding community is also limited with no sidewalks or trail connections to the park. However, the expansion of the Trail along Gillot Boulevard and sidewalk improvements along David Boulevard are planned which provide opportunities for park connectivity.

Based on the environmental analysis, the park has some identified wetlands and mangrove areas that are illustrated in red on figure 12 that should be avoided. The environmental analysis also showed a large area to the east of the site that will likely have to undergo further wetland delineation scrutiny if proposed for development. There are also areas of the site with large pine trees with a diameter at breast height of greater than 24". The potential areas where the trees are located are shown in figure 12. The large trees would be designated as heritage trees by the county and should be protected but their impact should not affect trails and passive recreation.

The environmental analysis has shown that major portions of the park has been disturbed through fires and the establishment of non-native plant species. Additionally, the park is significantly constrained in the potential to reestablish the native plant populations because regular burning is not an option due to the local residential population. Other mechanical restorative options are cost prohibitive. Therefore, there is limited environmental value for the park as a pristine example of a natural habitat. Additional environmental restrictions deal with the water, elevation, and high water table that provide significant constraints to development. While no significant structures are envisioned to be a part of the park development, a restroom would have to be above the 8' elevation mark and sewer connections would be difficult.

The park is identified in the Charlotte County Parks plan as a neighborhood park with local community amenities. Major opportunities identified for this park are walking trails, bike paths, general wildlife observation, picnic areas, and a kayak launch area. Additional opportunities to consider include a potential off road bike trail system, disc golf, fishing deck, observation platform and maybe other small recreational activities associated with the picnic area.

The park is disconnected from surrounding open spaces and activity centers but has amazing access to the Myakka River and thereby access to both Charlotte County's and Sarasota County's extensive Blueways

networks. The Myakka River Park site is also the only public access location for miles on the southern/western bank of the Myakka River. This represents a significant opportunity to build on the already extensive network of water recreation on the Myakka River.

The site has been previously used for the temporary housing of dredging spoils and the path to the river is clearly established. Vehicular access should be limited throughout the site and should utilize the exiting established pathways and entrances to minimize additional environmental disturbance. Pedestrian access however is feasible in multiple locations.

In all, Myakka River Park is ideal for passive recreation opportunities and needs some major access and connectivity improvements. The summary of opportunities and constraints are listed below.

Opportunities

- ▶ Existing entrances/circulation on site
- ▶ Close to proposed Sun Trail and sidewalks
- ▶ Existing entrances to site
- ▶ Existing river access
- ▶ Primary roadway entrances
- ▶ Connection to Myakka River Blueways

Constraints

- ▶ Limited vehicular access
- ▶ Limited adjacent pedestrian / bicycle infrastructure
- ▶ Wetland/Mangrove areas
- ▶ Invasive species and limited environmental value
- ▶ Low elevation - no structures below 8'
- ▶ Size/location restricts large recreation gatherings

