Wayfinding

If people are going to take advantage of the recreational opportunities that are available to them, they need to know what is available and where it is located. The community survey reflected that residents are not aware of where the parks are located or what types of recreational activities are available. In order to improve their knowledge, the County will investigate the installation of wayfinding signage. Additionally, the insert map included with this Plan is produced to help residents identify community resources.

Venetian Waterway Park

The Venetian Waterway Park is a unique partnership between the Venice Area Beautification, Inc., the Venice Area Chamber of Commerce, the City of Venice and Sarasota County Government. The Venetian Waterway Park, currently being developed on land owned by the West Coast Inland Navigation District, runs along both sides of the Intracoastal Waterway from Casperson Beach north to downtown Venice and then south to Shamrock Park. When completed, this 10 mile linear trail will provide a 10 foot wide paved trail which will accommodate bicyclists, joggers, rollerbladers and walkers. One of the goals of this plan is to make this linear park readily accessible to South Venice residents. This will be achieved by providing parking at Shamrock Park which will serve as a trailhead and rest area and by developing links to and from the community.

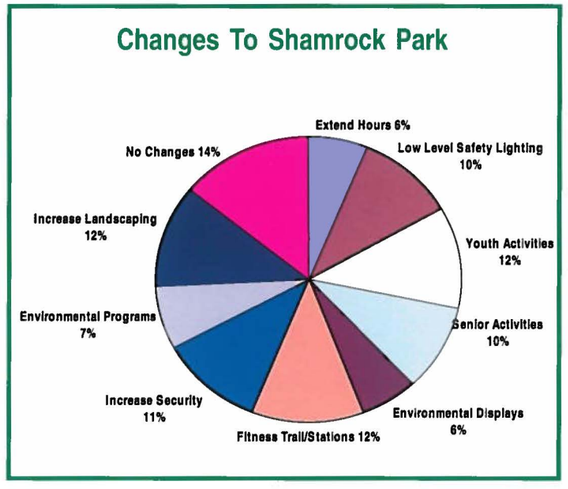
Venice Area Chamber of Commerce, 941.488.2236

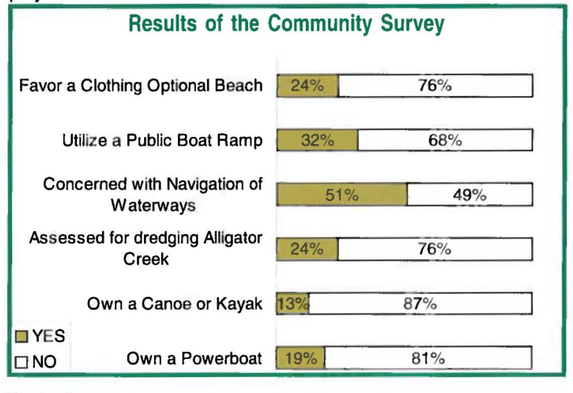
Shamrock Park

Shamrock Park is one of Sarasota County's only nature parks. At 82 acres it is one of the larger natural area parks in the County. The gateway sign at the entrance identifies the park as a "nature center". Although one can find community facilities, nature displays and trails, the park also offers tennis, basketball, picnic shelters, a tot-lot area and a play area.

Since Shamrock Park is a focal point in South Venice, the community asked a question related to the Park. This question is to see if improvements are desired. The community questionnaire asked, "What changes would you like to see at Shamrock Park?" Of those who responded, after the "no change" response, there was a virtual tie for increased landscaping, youth activities, and fitness/trail stations. The respondents also cited a need for increased security. Sarasota County Government will review the results and propose improvements. In order to address the request for increased security, Sarasota County Parks and Recreation is partnering with the Sheriff's Office to convert one of the offices at the Park into a Sheriff's substation. By providing a police presence, the park should achieve a higher level of safety and security. Also, in response to the survey, Parks and Recreation will review the request for low level safety lighting to enhance visibility in the parking lot. Given the natural state of the park, it is important that lighting be as unobtrusive as possible. Improvements to Shamrock Park was selected as a top ten priority by the South Venice Community.

Shamrock Park, 941.486.2706





Boat Launch

A boat launch exists adjacent to the South Venice Civic Association ferry dock. The water level around the boat launch is too shallow to permit boats with engines to launch successfully. This is due to the area becoming silted in over time. Should dredging take place, the launch could again be operating as was intended. With the large parking lot already in place, the recreational opportunities will be greatly increased. The community survey results indicate, however, a low desire for motorized and non-motorized boating. Therefore, this is not a primary concern.

PARKS AND RECREATION

- **Survey Says**
- **Parks and Recreational Facilities**
- **Connecting Facilities**
- **South Venice Community's Platted Parks**
- **The Ferry and The Beach**
- **Water Related Recreation**
- **Wayfinding**
- **Venetian Waterway Park**
- **Shamrock Park**
- **Boat Launch**

South Venice is fortunate to have numerous recreational and community facilities. Some of the recreational facilities are privately owned such as the South Venice Civic Association ferry and beach, the community center and the South Venice Yacht Club. Other facilities like Shamrock Park are County owned. In addition, there are non-profit agencies like the Senior Friendship Center which offers numerous programs for seniors.

Survey Says....

An interesting result in the community survey is the way respondents view the quality of green spaces. Although the South Venice Community has more green spaces and county parks than most communities in Sarasota County, only 45 percent of those who responded to the community survey rated green spaces as good or very good. In addition, when it came to the availability of recreational activities, over 40 percent rated it very bad, indifferent or didn't know. One of the goals of the Plan is to increase awareness of the parks and recreational resources available to the South Venice Community (refer to map). In order to further clarify the results of the survey the community was given an opportunity to develop a list of priorities. One of the top ten community priorities was improvements to Shamrock Park. Connecting recreational facilities was one of the top fifteen priorities.

Parks

Sarasota County Government owns numerous parks in the South Venice area. Three of the parks, Shamrock, Woodmere and Challenger Parks, are large, multi-use facilities. These parks offer the opportunity for a wide variety of activities ranging from tennis and basketball courts to community rooms and nature trails.

Active Parks

Woodmere Park
Challenger Park
Nightingale Park
Venetian Waterway Park

Passive/Nature Parks

Lemon Bay Preserve
Shamrock Park

Recreational and Community Amenities

South Venice Civic Association Ferry & Beach
South Venice Civic Association Community Building
37 Platted Pocket Parks and Ponds
South Venice Yacht Club
Senior Friendship Center

Lemon Bay Preserve

The Lemon Bay Preserve is located on the west side of South Venice and fronts on the Intracoastal Waterway. The Preserve is made up of 165 acres and is a nature preserve as well as a passive recreation area. The Preserve has been left, for the most part, in a natural state with as little disturbance as possible. Presently, this area offers an opportunity for residents to launch their kayaks or canoes and hike on nature trails.

Connecting Facilities

The South Venice Community and Sarasota County Government will explore the possibility of linking Shamrock Park to Woodmere Park. Residents recommend that these two facilities be linked by pedestrian, greenway or bicycle trails. The biggest obstacle in linking these two parks is U.S. 41. The linkage being explored runs along Alligator Creek. Sarasota County will look at the feasibility of constructing a trail along Alligator Creek under or over the bridge at U.S. 41. Another connection to be explored is from Shamrock Park to Lemon Bay Preserve. This could be accomplished by adding sidewalks or a bicycle route from Shamrock Drive to Lemon Bay Drive. A bicycle path already exists on Shamrock Drive and ends at the Alligator Creek bridge. This would link a multi-purpose park with a passive park.

PARK DEFINITIONS

- Active Parks are parks designed to encourage a great deal of use by offering a variety of activities and parking lots.
- Passive Parks are designed to encourage low impact uses such as nature trails and offer limited recreational opportunities.
- Pocket Parks are small green spaces designed for neighbohood use and are usually the size of a residential lot.

The Venetian Waterway Park constructed at Shamrock Park adds connections through South Venice. One can bicycle from the trailhead at Casperson Beach to Shamrock Park, a total of 10 miles. Once at Shamrock Park, a person could continue on to the Lemon Bay Preserve for a total of 12 miles. The inter-connected parks could offer rest areas, shade and water for the weary bicyclist. The Master Trails Program is another link that Sarasota County Government is developing. The intent is to link South Venice with an overall trail system from north to south county. However, this is a twenty year program.

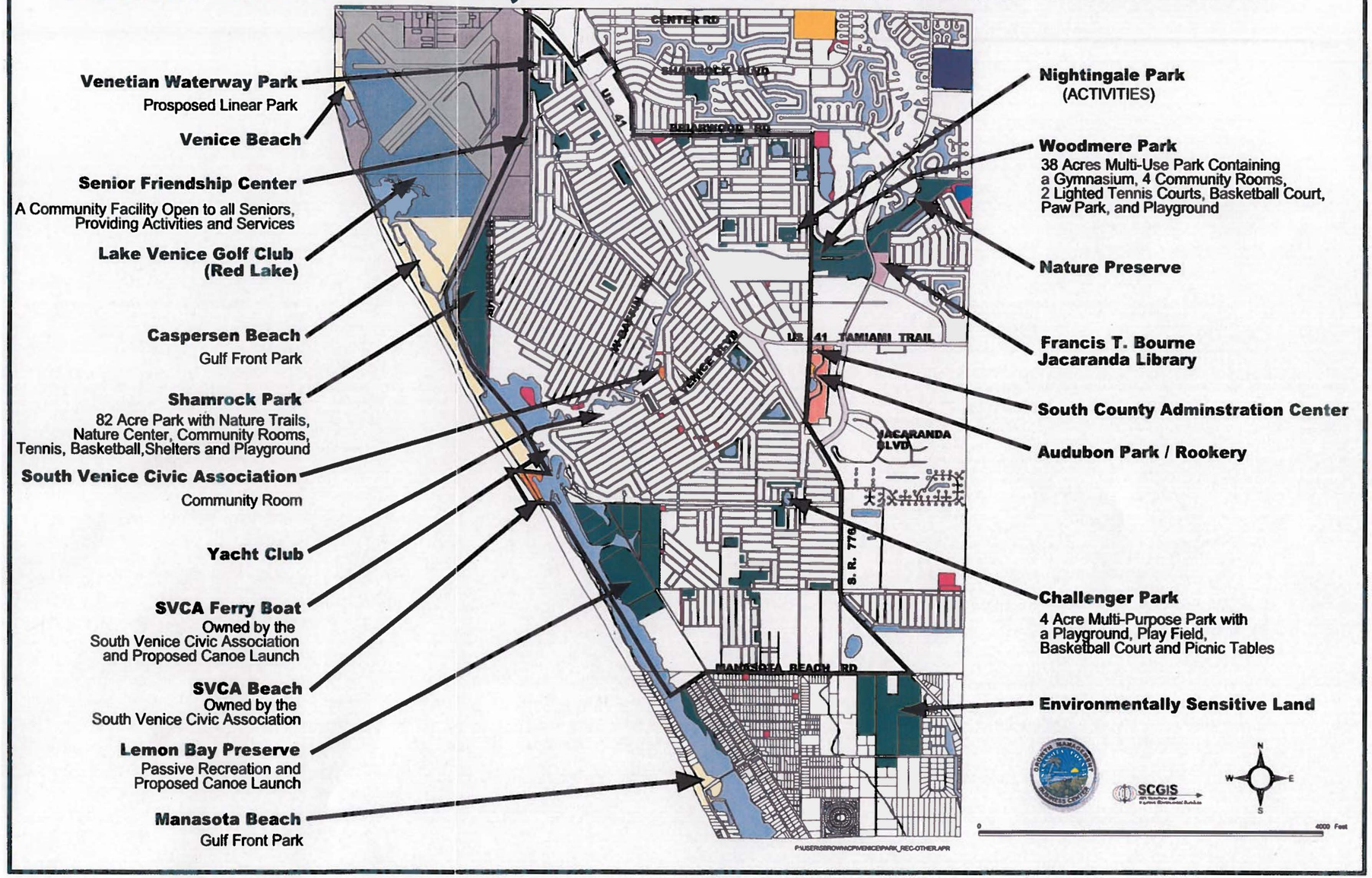
37 Platted Parks and Ponds

There are 37 platted parks and ponds scattered throughout the South Venice subdivision. Some of these parks and ponds are used for stormwater conveyance, while others have been partially cleared or left undisturbed. For the most part, they are the size of residential lots and are between existing houses making them difficult to find and access. In responding to the community survey, most residents felt that the parks should be used for conservation and preservation purposes. Some of the platted parks could be suitable as neighborhood or pocket parks. A recent study by Sarasota County found five sites that had the potential to be used as a park. The one with the most potential is an 11 acre site, situated on the north end of Scenic Drive, opposite the proposed Venetian Waterway Park. The County and the community will review the sites and identify which parks would be suitable for the requested uses.

The Ferry And The Beach

One of the things that makes South Venice unique is the private ferry. The ferry transports visitors from the South Venice Civic Association (SVCA) launch to the South Venice Beach. The ferry is owned and operated by SVCA, and is one of only a few remaining in Florida. The ferry began service in 1967 and has operated continuously since then. This is a popular amenity! It is estimated that over 25,000 individual trips were made by residents using the ferry in 2001.

Water Related Recreation

Given South Venice's relationship to the water, the community survey listed several questions about water related recreation. With regards to powerboats, 19 percent responded that someone in their household owned one. Only 13 percent said they owned a canoe or a kayak. Of the respondents who live on Alligator Creek, only 24 percent reponded that they would be willing to pay an assessment for dredging. Respondents were almost evenly divided when asked about the condition and navigation of the waterways . Regarding a public boat ramp, 68 percent said that they would not use it if it were provided. The most interesting question had to do with the proposal for a "clothing optional" beach. An overwhelming 76 percent of the respondents said "no", they did not agree to a clothing optional beach.

South Venice Parks, Recreation and Other Amenities