# ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT

# 2015-2016

## Timucuan Oaks Botanical Garden

## FCT Project 04-060-FF4

March, 2016


Town of Ponce Inlet

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# TIMUCUAN OAKS BOTANICAL GARDEN ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT
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### *Summary of Activity*

Upon review of the responses to the Town's Request for Proposals, the contract for the construction of the entrance facilities of the park was awarded to Saboungi Construction in June 2015 as a design-build project. Permits were issued in August 2015 and the project, which included a restroom building, covered picnic gazebo, pergola, fountain, pavered walkways and formal gardens, was completed in early January 2016.

### *Future Land Use*

The future land use designation of the property is "Parks and Open Space." The zoning designation of the upland portion of the project site is "Public/Institutional." The zoning designations on the wetland portion of the site are "Environmentally Limited Development" and "Conservation."

### *FCT Sign*

The permanent sign acknowledging the assistance of the Florida Communities Trust was installed in 2008.

### *Archaeological/Historical Resource Survey*

The Archaeological/Historical Resource Survey of the project site was completed in August of 2007. The survey determined that the site is "a significant archaeological site, with the potential to yield data which would address prehistoric occupation and resource exploitation." It is, therefore, eligible for the *National Register of Historic Places.*

The entrance facilities have been designed to comply with the recommendations made in the 2007 survey in order to eliminate disturbance to the cultural resources.

### *Physical Improvements*

The town's Public Works Division is maintaining approximately 300 feet of trails, the picnic area and parking area along Peninsula Drive as well as the raised marsh boardwalk and canoe launch. Construction on the entrance facilities began in August 2015 and was completed in January 2016. This represents the final phase of construction, and includes a restroom building, covered picnic gazebo, pergola, fountain, pavered walkways and formal gardens.

### *Natural Resource Protection*

During construction of the entrance facilities, the site was fenced and monitored for new gopher tortoise burrows and none were found. As mentioned in the 2013-14 report, the FDEP conditioned approval of the boardwalk construction by requiring the planting of mangrove seedlings in the areas of the marsh disturbed by construction. Those seedlings are showing growth, as evidenced in the attached photos.

### *Resource Restoration and Enhancement*

Also as a condition of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) approval of the permit for construction of the boardwalk, the project site is to remain 90% free of Brazilian peppers. This goal has been reached and removal of remaining Brazilian peppers,

invasive papayas and grape vines is an ongoing project for the Town's Public Works Division.

Removal of the invasive peppers and vines in the upland area was completed after the relocation of the gopher tortoises. Restoration and landscaping of the remaining areas of the park was completed as part of the final phase of development completed in January.

***Monitoring***

The site is monitored for invasive exotic plants and feral animals on a regular basis by the Town's Public Works Division as part of its regular maintenance at the site. No feral animals are present on the site, and invasive plants will continue to be removed when noticed.

***Educational Signs***

Educational signage identifying native plants and gopher tortoises has been placed along the trails, along with signage regarding mangroves in the gazebo on the boardwalk.

***Educational Programs***

Educational programs have not yet been developed for this site. The Town expects to begin those programs within the 2016-17 year reporting cycle and will coordinate them with the Ponce Preserve, another FCT acquisition, which is located one mile to the north.

***Easements, Concessions or Leases***

No new easements, concessions or leases have been considered over the last year.

***Revenues***

Donations in the amount of $9,400 were received this year from various groups and individuals. These funds were used for the purchase of the fountain, benches and landscaping in the entrance of the park.

***Security***

Ponce Inlet Public Works Division and Police Department personnel routinely patrol the project site.

***Priority Schedule/Timeline***

As shown in the following table, the following items are currently behind the schedule originally proposed in the Management Plan: playground, bocce court, educational signage and enhancement of native vegetation. The educational signage is in place in the upland portion of the park, and signs were installed on the boardwalk in 2015. The Town intends to add additional educational signage throughout the park as funds become available.

**Table 1 - Status Of Site Development And Key Management Activities Per The Approved Management Plan**

| ACTIVITY | CURRENT STATUS | BEHIND SCHEDULE | CONTINUING | COMPLETED |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Baseline environmental survey | Completed | No | No | Yes |
| Archaeological and historic resources survey | Completed | No | No | Yes |

| ACTIVITY | CURRENT STATUS | BEHIND SCHEDULE | CONTINUING | COMPLETED |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Remove exotic vegetation and animals | Currently underway | No | Yes | On-going as necessary |
| Enhance native vegetation | Completed | No | No | Yes |
| Nature trails | Completed | No | Yes | Yes |
| Picnic area | Completed | No | No | Yes |
| Playground/Bocce Court | Not begun | Yes | No | No |
| Boardwalk and Canoe launch | Completed | No | No | Yes |
| Off-street parking | Completed | No | No | Yes |
| Educational Signage | Currently underway | Yes | Yes | No |
| Educational programming | Not begun | No | No | No |
| Maintenance | Currently underway | No | Yes | On-going |
| Security | Currently underway | No | Yes | On-going |
| Public promotion | Currently underway | No | Yes | On-going |

### *Management Plan Changes*

The Town requested approval a revised timeline in last year's Stewardship Report, as shown below, including additional time in order to determine whether alternate user-oriented recreational facilities should be proposed for approval by the FCT.

The table below shows an accurate timeline of completion of all facilities, with the exception of the bocce court and playground. As mentioned previously, the educational programming is currently being development, with the intent being to coordinate programs with those at the Ponce Preserve, an FCT-acquired park one-mile to the north.

| | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Educational Signage | | | | | **** | **** | | | ** | |
| Nature Trails | *** | | | | | | | | | |
| Picnic Facilities | *** | | | | | | | | | |
| Playground | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bocce Court | | | | | | | | | | |
| Restoration and Landscaping | | | | | | | | | ** | |
| Off-street Parking | | *** | | | | | | | | |
| River Boardwalk | | | | | | | *** | | | |
| Canoe Launch | | | | | | | *** | | | |
| Educational Programs | | | | | | | | | | *→ |

Due to the topography and Indian midden on the project site, it is not practical to construct a bocce court and playground as originally planned. Therefore, the Town respectfully requests that the canoe/kayak launch and picnic pavilion be substituted for those facilities as the user-oriented facilities. Four resource-based facilities have been provided in addition to these two.

New mangroves next to elevated boardwalk

Nature trail leading to elevated boardwalk

Entrance to elevated boardwalk over the marsh

Gazebo/Wildlife observation area at center of boardwalk

Educational signage in gazebo

Boardwalk west of gazebo

Ramp to canoe/kayak launch and fishing dock

Restroom building and surrounding landscape

Picnic pavilion and surrounding landscaping

Rose garden, lawn, fountain, pergola and picnic pavilion

Walter's viburnum, Florida azalea, and bulbine in transition area between formal and natural areas of the park.

Landscaping to the west of the formal gardens

Pergola, fountain and benches in the entrance of the park