



Cedar Key

Pocket Park Design Guidelines

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Cedar Key

Pocket Park Design Guidelines

1. Introduction & Project Context

1.1. Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to establish a Cedar Key “Pocket Park Design Guide” that helps to inform small “pocket” park development across the City. The guidelines are an opportunity to establish a framework for design recommendations that meet the community’s needs and wishes, enhance local cultural and ecological identity, and create greater legibility and consistency throughout its small park areas. The guidelines have been applied and tested at (2) two specific pocket parks (at the terminus of 5th and 6th Streets, adjacent to G Street), however these are intended to provide a replicable design template that can be used throughout the City.

While small in scale, pocket parks provide an opportunity to enhance life for both long-time residents as well as visitors to Cedar Key. Through thoughtful schemes, these small spaces can have an outsized impact in connecting residents to the natural environment, providing a place for passive or active recreation, and creating experiences that enhances the community’s sense of place.

1.2 Project Context

The Pocket Park Design Guide was developed in the context of several planning initiatives, starting in the early 2000’s in the City’s Comprehensive Plan and Redevelopment Area Plan to more recent initiatives including the Cedar Key ShOREs project (2025).

Cedar Key Comprehensive Plan (1980, 2004)

The interest in pocket parks extends some decades through the City’s Comprehensive Plan¹ (established 1980, updated 2004). The Comprehensive Plan sets forth the City’s vision for the future and articulates the importance of pocket parks to the community and notes the desire to expand their use and development. With an aim to increase public interaction with the waterfront, the City explicitly “designates all street end shoreline locations as public open areas,” (Parks and Recreation Element, Objective 5-2). (See Figure 1.) Support for pocket parks is further included within the plan’s Conservation and Coastal Management Element, where the

¹ City of Cedar Key. (1980, as amended through 2022). *Comprehensive Plan* (Chapter Three, Code of Ordinances). Municode.
https://library.municode.com/fl/cedar_key/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CHTHREECOPLGOOBPO

City notes it would like to “increase public access through development of pocket parks at City-owned street end locations on the shoreline” (Objective 4-12).

Cedar Key Community Redevelopment Area Plan (2000, 2024)

The City’s initial 2000 Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) Plan² also makes reference to the need for park space and pocket parks in particular. In the CRA prioritized action items, it is noted to “make land available for creation of pocket parks” within the Action Items for Open Space and Street Layout. The “pocket parks at street ends” are also listed in the suggested Community Facilities to be supported with CRA funds. The 2005 CRA update mentions that some progress had been made in the implementation of these projects, including the “creation of several pocket parks overlooking the Gulf along G Street.” While not specifically referenced in the most recent 2024 CRA Update, the plan incorporates the 2005 plan by reference, and includes general support for dual-purpose, floodable green spaces.

Cedar Key ShORES (2023)

The Cedar Key ShORES³ (Shoreline Outreach Restoration and Elevation, specifically Phase II) project provides a community-supported green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) plan and interventions for the downtown area. Funded by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) Gulf Research Program (GRP), the project includes a specific streetscape plan for the vicinity of G Street/F Street and 2nd Street/4th Street, along with recommendations for GSI design techniques. These technical specifications were tested for community support and included pervious parking materials (like Stormcrete and Powerblock), retention areas with curb cuts, and tree boxes. While the ShORES workshops focused broadly on the streetscape infrastructure of the G Street catchment area, these results can be applied to pocket park designs when addressing technical challenges of stormwater runoff and nutrient load reduction.

Community Outreach for 5th Street and 6th Street Pocket Parks (June 2026)

Over the process of developing the 5th Street and 6th Street pocket parks, community members provided feedback at a June 3rd, 2026 public meeting. Additional feedback was informally collected over the subsequent weeks through communication with the City Commissioners and IFAS/Sea Grant agents who relayed residents’ concerns and suggestions to the project team. A summary of this community input is included in Appendix 1.

² Civic Design Associates, & Leigh Robinson Kerr & Associates. (2005). City of Cedar Key community redevelopment plan. Prepared for the Cedar Key Community Redevelopment Agency. City of Cedar Key. <https://cityofcedarkey.org/wp-content/uploads/2005-Civic-Design-Cedar-Key-Community-Redevelopment-Plan.pdf>

³ Klinker, M. (2025, November 3). Community voices and scientific insight build a more resilient Cedar Key. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. <https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/community-voices-and-scientific-insight-build-a-more-resilient-cedar-key>



Figure 1. Map of Cedar Key's roadways and the terminus of streets as potential locations for pocket park development.

1.3 Regulations + Design Implications

The pocket parks are subject to federal, state, and local regulations within relevant documents including the Americans with Disabilities Act, Florida Building Code, the City's Comprehensive Plan, and Land Development Code.

Americans with Disability Act + Florida Building Code

The most pertinent federal law affecting the development or redevelopment of pocket parks is the 1990 "Americans with Disabilities Act" (ADA), with which the City will need to be compliant. This is due to several factors including 1) the ADA regulations apply to any state and local governments in Florida and the parks they own and manage, 2) the parks will be altered after 1992, and, 3) the alterations fall under the broad definition of "usability" articulated by the U.S. Department of Justice and interpreted by courts.

Related, the Florida Building Code, Accessibility⁴ (FBC-A) is the State of Florida's codified version of the national ADA requirements. Florida passed the "Florida Americans with Disability Accessibility Implementation Act" (1993) to fold the federal ADA requirements into state law, while also preserving some more stringent Florida-specific provisions. The pocket park design guidelines should fulfill both the ADA and the FBC-A acts for accessibility considerations. Generally, this means that access routes and materials selected will need to allow wheelchairs to traverse the site. Specific design details include elements such as slope requirements and ground surface considerations. However, given the small lot size and limited activities

⁴ Florida Building Commission. (2023). *Florida building code, accessibility* (8th ed.). International Code Council. <https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/FLAC2023P1>

proposed in the pocket parks, providing ADA-compliant access is usually feasible. However, there may be certain instances where this is difficult to achieve for the entirety of a site.

Cedar Key Comprehensive Plan

In addition to the designation of all waterfront street ends as public open space noted above, the Comprehensive Plan describes a number of requirements related to native species, protected species, landscaping requirements, stormwater management, and open space/recreation design standards. For instance, the plan requires the use of native plant species when feasible, provides preference for low-impact stormwater management techniques through natural vegetation, and encourages visual access to the waterfront, which all inform the design of the pocket parks.

Cedar Key Land Development Code

Building on the intentions of the Comprehensive Plan, Cedar Key's Land Development Code (LDC)⁵ sets forth the enforceable regulations that affect how the pocket parks can be designed and built. Most pertinent are the LDC's established minimum standards and preferences for Resource Protection (Article V) and Development Design and Improvement (Article VI). In alignment with the Comprehensive Plan, the LDC includes requirements related native vegetation, low-impact site design, visual connections to the waterfront, and shoreline buffer protections.

1.4 Site Analysis

The pocket park design guide was also developed in the context of the lessons learned from the evaluation of 2 sites for redevelopment near the new City Hall / Cedar Key Community Center. The process began with a shoreline survey of Cedar Key's street-ends between 1st and 8th Streets along G Street and assessing their public access and shoreline walkability. This revealed that some street ends offer walkable shoreline but no formal public access (6th and 7th Streets), others provide access but an unwalkable shoreline (8th Street), and only G Street currently offers both accessible and walkable shoreline. This lack of consistent public waterfront access, which has long been established as a priority in the City's Comprehensive Plan and CRA Plan, then became the basis for selecting two sites for detailed design: 5th Street (~3,680 sq ft). and 6th Street (~4,800 sq ft).

⁵ City of Cedar Key. (n.d., as amended through March 21, 2024). *Land Development Code* (Chapter Four, Code of Ordinances). Municode.
https://library.municode.com/fl/cedar_key/codes/code_of_ordinances



Figure 2. Assessment of potential pocket park areas for accessibility and walkability along the shoreline.

Coastal Flood Hazards

Both 5th Street and 6th Street sites carry significant flood risk that directly shapes their design constraints. Tidal flooding analysis shows the seaward side of the existing bulkheads already experiences roughly 1.2 ft of flood depth during a 2-year extreme high tide event, a condition expected to intensify to a similar depth under intermediate-high 2040 sea level rise projections. Both sites fall within FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area Zone VE (base flood elevation 18–21 ft), and the 6th Street site additionally falls within an AO zone, indicating a 1% or greater annual chance of shallow sheet-flow flooding at depths of 1–3 feet. A rainwater runoff simulation further identified 6th Street as functioning as a natural drainage outfall for G Street and the adjacent City Hall block. Any design at this site also needs to accommodate substantial additional stormwater flow from these areas. Given the designation of public space for pocket parks at the juncture between roadway end-points and the shoreline, many other sites may face similar flood hazard and stormwater challenges.

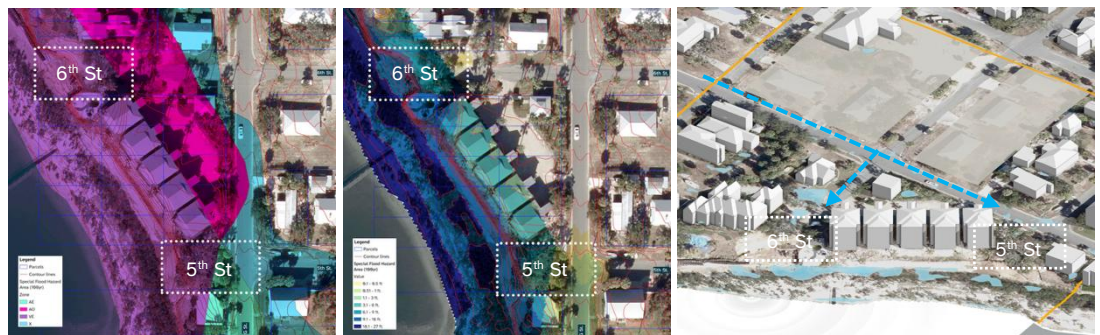


Figure 3. Assessment of flood hazard risk including FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area zone designations, 2) FEMA 100-year event flood depths, and 3) stormwater runoff simulations.

Environmental Conditions

Reflecting the mild, subtropical climate typical of Florida's Gulf Coast, Cedar Key lies within USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 9b (25°F to 20°F average annual minimum low). The area's native vegetation reflects a transition between upland pine-dominated communities and coastal

wetland habitats. Inland and upland sites are characterized by mesic flatwoods and scrub or scrubby flatwoods, where slash pine and sand live oak grow over a dense understory of saw palmetto, coontie, and other low-growing native shrubs and groundcovers adapted to well-drained, sandy soils. Slightly elevated, moisture-retentive sites support hydric hammock communities featuring cabbage palm, live oak, and red cedar.

Along the shoreline, where many of Cedar Key's proposed pocket parks could be sited, the landscape shifts to salt marsh and coastal strand vegetation, including smooth cordgrass, black needlerush, sea oats, and other salt-tolerant species suited to salt spray and tidal influence. This ecological range gives the pocket park design guidelines a natural basis for two complementary plant palettes: one based on the scrub and flatwoods communities of inland sites, and another from the salt marsh and coastal shoreline plant communities.



Figure 3. Photos of select areas within Cedar Key highlighting the local plant communities.

Community + Ecology + Public-Private Interface

Additionally, the site analysis explored the character of the public-private interface along the city's residential streetscapes. This found the prevalence of informal "green buffer" zones: low-maintenance, semi-wild vegetated strips between the street edge and private properties that supported biodiversity and assisted with stormwater management. These existing outdoor spaces were documented as a local precedent for the kind of informal, Florida-native, low-intervention landscape character the pocket parks aim to extend rather than introducing a more manicured park typology.

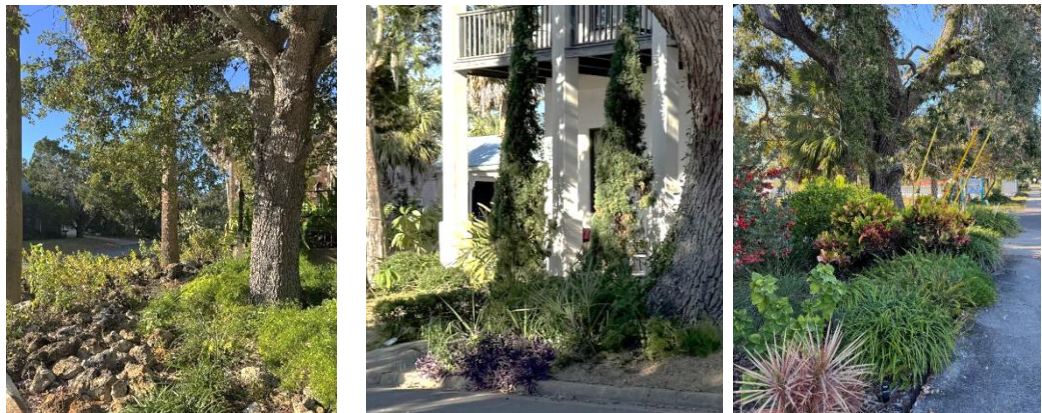


Figure 4. Photos of various residential streetscapes highlighting the naturalized, “semi-wild” aesthetic of the planted areas along the edge of residential properties. The spaces are low-maintenance while promoting ecological functions like stormwater management and nutrient absorption.

2. Design Principles

Based on the City’s planning documents, site analysis, and community input, the project team developed key design principles to guide the pocket park design. The four principles include:

1. Connect Residents to the Waterfront
2. Favor Simplicity + Low Maintenance
3. Promote Coastal Resilience + Nature-Based Stormwater Management
4. Support Wildlife, Biodiversity, + Sense of Place



Figure 2. Illustration of design principles shaping pocket park design approach.



Connect residents to the waterfront.

The parks should connect residents and visitors to the waterfront to provide a sense of relationship to the Gulf and its coastal flora and fauna. Connections can be achieved through unobstructed views to the ocean, as well as through physical means such as through increasing access points, adding new seating and gathering places, and implementing new boardwalks or pathways along shoreline. Parks can include both passive or active recreational opportunities as well.



Favor simplicity + low maintenance solutions.

Given the City’s long history as a small fishing community, life on Cedar Key is exemplified by a desire to live more simply and in close connection to nature. The City’s pocket parks should also embody this ethos and take on an unpretentious and minimalist approach to their various design elements. In this vein, the parks should include low-maintenance plantings and amenities that are cost-effective and are easy to manage by City staff, while also emphasizing a vernacular, coastal aesthetic.



Promote coastal resilience + nature-based stormwater management.

Given Cedar Key’s coastal location, any design should be developed in response to a wide range of flooding conditions, including stormwater run-off from typical rain events, occasional tidal inundation, and larger hurricane events. Given their modest scale, pocket parks will focus on management of stormwater through nature-based rain gardens and bioswales. However, park furnishings should be designed to withstand a range of stronger storm events either

through increased durability and sturdiness or, alternatively, mobility and ease of temporary relocation.



Support wildlife, biodiversity, + sense of place.

Where possible, pocket park design should integrate opportunities to interact with nature, promote biodiversity, and support other wildlife. For instance, parks can provide visitors with the enriched experiences for bird watching, as well as observing daily and seasonal changes in the plants, water, and atmosphere. Native plants can promote associated pollinator species, and other wildlife features such as bird boxes or bat houses can promote wildlife. Beyond ecological functions, these site elements can provide a unique sense of place and way to make the community's environmental values more legible.

3. Design Guidelines

Building on the above design principles, the design guidelines provide a template for what to do and how to do it at a range of possible park locations across the City. The recommendations were developed through the process of articulating 2 pocket parks (at 5th Street and 6th Street) but are intended for broader applicability. The pocket park design guidelines focus on 5 key elements including: 1) overall design, 2) planting strategies, 3) surface materials, 4) stormwater management, and 5) site furnishings and signage. Each guideline discusses recommended strategies, materials selection, and any pertinent implementation/maintenance suggestions for the particular topic.

3.1. Overall Design

To start the pocket park design process, it is important to undertake a holistic site analysis, as well as obtain community feedback. As noted above, Cedar Key's two candidate pocket park sites vary in size, topography, flood exposure, and surrounding context. The 5th Street site is a bit smaller (3,700 sq ft) and organized around an existing shade tree atop a slight hill; on the other hand, the 6th street site (4,800 sq ft) and experiences significant stormwater runoff from the surrounding areas. Any design decisions for other pocket parks should respond directly to their nuanced site-specific conditions.

Then, in their most basic function, all pocket parks should create a sense of welcome and safety. As the parks are located at the dead-ends of streets, it can be difficult for visitors to know when they are entering a park, and how the park's boundaries are delineated from adjacent private properties. Therefore, general guidelines focus on general site analysis, scale of design and organization of space, as well as the demarcation of the entrance and site boundaries.

1. Assess Specific Site Conditions for Opportunities and Constraints

- Conduct site analysis of property boundaries, topography, hydrology, soils, and existing vegetation to identify features to highlight and/or issues to resolve.
- Identify and preserve existing mature trees, especially specimen canopy trees, as anchoring design elements (see Section 3.2 Planting Strategies for protected species requirements).
- Pay particular attention to any evidence of stormwater management challenges including areas of erosion and soil washout or low points and possible ponding areas.
- Document any existing informal public use of the site and/or conduct community outreach to understand desired uses or concerns about the site.

2. Scale Design to Site Size and Organize Circulation/Use Zones

- Match the scale of park improvements to the site's physical size, its role within the surrounding neighborhood, and available budget. (The following Section 3.5 Site Furniture + Signage expands on typologies for the scale of design with “Minimalist” and “Enhanced” park amenities.)
- Establish a clear primary circulation route connecting the street to the water's edge, which should be designed to meet accessibility requirements (see following Section 3.3 Surface Materials + Public Accessibility).
- If needed, distinguish between primary and secondary circulation paths to allow more flexible uses of space without requiring the entire site to meet the same surfacing standard.
- Locate gathering and seating areas outside of primary circulation routes and drainage paths.

3. Create a Clear Park Entrance and Delineation

- Maintain clear sightlines into pocket parks from the street edge to enhance safety and visibility.
- Demarcate the park entrances through one or more elements such as welcome placards, informational signage, parking signage, distinctive plantings, and/or other public space markers to give the space a sense of invitation (see following Section 3.5 for more details about signage considerations).
- Create buffers between the parks and adjacent properties to both demarcate the site's boundaries and provide neighboring landowners more privacy through use of trees or other vegetative screening (see following Section 3.2 Planting Strategies for more detailed discussion).

4. Establish Cohesive Design Approach Across All Pocket Parks

Apply a consistent, recognizable design approach across all pocket park sites (including planting palette, surface materials, and furnishings) so that individual sites look like they are part of a coherent, intentionally-designed recreational/open space system.

Within the consistent design approach, allow for site-specific adaptation so that consistency does not come at the expense of responding to individual site conditions.

3.2 Planting Strategies

The design of the planting plan and the details of the plant selection plays an important role in the pocket parks' visual character. The careful integration of the canopy, mid-story, and ground plane plant layers can create a sense of an “outdoor room” and special place in the landscape. This intentional organization of plant layers and groupings communicate stewardship and community care for the space.

The planting strategies further reinforce the design principles by prioritizing connecting people to the waterfront, prioritizing native and low-maintenance species, integrating resilience considerations, and supporting biodiversity and wildlife.

1. View Preservation and Visual Connectivity

It is important for designs to maintain clear visual connections between the street and the Gulf shoreline.

Use vegetation with open growth habits and elevated canopies to maintain visual permeability.

Avoid placement of shrubs or other vegetation that exceed 24-36 inches in height within primary view corridors.

Concentrate taller and denser vegetation along pocket park edges rather than within central view axis.

Ensure mature plant sizes are considered during design to prevent future obstruction of views.

2. Native Species + Diverse Plant Selection

Cedar Key's inclusion of both upland scrub/flatwoods communities and coastal salt marsh and strand vegetation give the pocket parks a variety of native plants to draw from.

Protect specimen and native trees (including mangroves, southern red cedar, red bay, and larger palm trees) from removal.

Remove any nuisance species that may be present in the site, which includes species such as the Brazilian Pepper, Melaleuca, and Australian Pine.

Prioritize native species wherever feasible, as well as emphasize coastal, salt-tolerant species closer to the waterfront.

Prioritize "naturalistic" or "semi-wild" planting designs and avoid overly formal layouts to reinforce the desire for a more simple and rustic quality of the sites.

Diversify plant species, particularly palm plantings, to reduce vulnerability to disease outbreaks.

Develop contingency planting plans that can be implemented if Lethal Bronzing Disease significantly affects existing palm populations.

3. Canopy Layer and Shade Strategy

Canopy species typically can include trees as well as taller palm species with heights greater than 15-20 feet. It is important that the canopy layer provide shade and thermal comfort while maintaining unobstructed waterfront views and supporting coastal character.

Prioritize the protection and enhancement of existing tree species, which can serve as a focal area of the design approach.

Select several canopy species of palms, trees, or other taller screening plants that have a range of different mature heights to provide a greater sense of spatial depth and volume to the site.

Prioritize palms as one of the primary canopy species due to their vertical growth habit and minimal impact on sightlines.

Arrange the palms or tree species in clusters to provide better shade coverage and in coordination with key seating and gathering areas.

4. Ground Plane Vegetation

Ground plane vegetation includes native groundcovers, vines, wildflowers, and turfgrasses that are typically under 1-2 feet. Given the desire for overall simplicity, these species will likely play a more prominent role in the park design. The design approach should focus on creating an attractive, low-maintenance ground plane that does not compromise waterfront visibility.

Maintain ground vegetation within primary view corridors at heights below 12-24 inches.

Incorporate native groundcovers, grasses, and wildflowers in areas not required for active use.

While not native, turfgrasses with greater salt tolerance can be used in areas when ease of maintenance is the priority.

5. Use Mid-Story Plantings for Screening and Visual Interest

Mid-story plantings can include a wide range of coastal grasses, taller ground covers, and low shrubs. Mid-story plantings can be used to create additional visual interest, depth, screening functions, and enriched wildlife habitat.

Use mid-story plantings to better define park borders and to create buffers or screening from adjacent properties where needed.

Select native species that also provide visual interest through color, leaf texture, seasonal blooming patterns, or other features that enhance quality of the space.

6. Support Wildlife Habitat and Biodiversity

All planting layers should include native species, which will enhance the ecological value of parks by providing food, shelter, and habitat for local wildlife. Even small parks can contribute to larger habitat networks by serving as ecological stepping-stones within the community.

Design pocket parks as part of a broader network of green spaces that support wildlife movement and habitat connectivity.

Select native species that provide food, protection, or nesting opportunities for pollinators or local wildlife.

Emphasize plant diversity and layered vegetation structure to support ecological complexity and robustness.

Consider the restoration or enhancement of any adjacent wetland or shoreline/dune species in locations where this has been disturbed or degraded for additional habitat benefit.

(Note: planting design for green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) purposes are discussed in the 3.4 Section.)

For instance, recommended species include:

Low Groundcovers/Vines

- Railroad Vine (*Ipomoea pes-caprae*, <1 ft)
- Gopher Apple (*Geobalanus oblongifolius*, 1-2 ft)
- Beach Sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*, 1-2 ft)

Coastal Grass/Tall Ground Covers

- Saltmeadow Cordgrass (*Spartina patens*, 2-3 ft)
- Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*, 3-4 ft)
- Fakahatchee Grass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*, 4-6 ft)
- Seaside Goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*, 2-8 ft)

Palms/Shrubs

- Coontie (*Zamia integrifolia*, 2-3 ft)
- Scrub Palmetto (*Sabal etonia*, 2-8 ft tall)
- Dwarf Palmetto (*Sabal minor*, 4-6 ft tall)
- Saw Palmetto (*Serenoa repens*, 4-8 ft)
- Inkberry/Beach Naupaka (*Scaevola plumieri*, 2-4 ft)
- Indian Hawthorn (*Rhaphiolepis indica*, 4-6 ft)
- Wild Coffee (*Psychotria nervosa*, 4-10 ft)
- Necklace Pod (*Sophora tomentosa*, 4-15 ft)

Tall Palms/Small Trees

- Saw Palmetto (*Serenoa repens*, 4-15 ft)
- Yaupon Holly (*Ilex vomitoria*, 10-25 ft)
- Wax Myrtle (*Morella cerifera*, 15-40 ft)
- Sand Live Oak (*Quercus geminate*, 20-50 ft)
- **Red Bay*** (*Persea borbonia*, 20-70 ft)
- **Southern Red Cedar*** (*Juniperus silicola*, 40-50 ft)
- Cabbage Palm (*Sabal palmetto*, 40-90 ft)
-

* = protected tree species

Turf Grasses

- St. Augustine (*Stenotaphrum secundatum*) (more salt tolerant)
- Zoysiagrass (*Zoysia spp.*) (more salt tolerant)
- Bahia grass (*Paspalum notatum* Flügge)

3.3 Surface Materials + Public Accessibility

Surface materials should support accessibility, ease of maintenance, and align with stormwater management strategies while maintaining the informal character of Cedar Key's waterfront.

1. Prioritize Permeable Surfaces

First, prioritize use of native ground covers and planting beds (as described above) throughout pocket park space to promote stormwater infiltration, soil stabilization, and erosion control. Then, maximize the use of other permeable surface materials and sub-surface systems that allow infiltration and reduce runoff throughout pocket parks.

Limit any impervious paving to minor areas required for accessibility or site furnishings.

Specify permeable surfacing such as permeable pavers, open-graded aggregate, and/or Fibar engineered wood fiber where site grading, drainage conditions, and expected uses allow.

Per the CK LDC:

- Any mulch used **shall be** a minimum 2-inch depth
- Plastic surface covers **shall not** be used

2. Prioritize Accessible Walking and Seating Areas

To the extent practicable, accessible routes should connect park entrances, seating/viewing areas, and other key amenities.

Use ADA-compliant surfacing materials for primary pedestrian circulation routes and gathering spaces.

Specifically, walking surfaces must have *running slopes* not steeper than 1:20; the *cross slope* of walking surfaces shall not be steeper than 1:48 (see FBC-A 405 and 403).

Other components of accessible routes, such as ramps and curb ramps, are permitted to be more steeply sloped (see FBC-A 405 and 406).

Conduct ongoing maintenance to ensure walking surfaces should remain firm and stable throughout the year.

3. Parking and Service Areas

Use permeable aggregate materials that maintain infiltration capacity and reduce compaction for parking or other service areas.

Gravel surfaces are appropriate for these services where paved surfaces are not required.

Granite gravel is preferred over limestone screenings or limestone dust products where infiltration and permeability are priorities.

4. Coordinate Surface Design with Stormwater Management

Surface materials shall be coordinated with site grading and drainage design.

Surface and subsurface systems should be evaluated based on anticipated stormwater flow paths rather in addition to site boundaries and desired circulation pathways.

Stormwater runoff should be intercepted and redirected before reaching mulch or other loose-surface pedestrian areas.

Sites receiving substantial street runoff should include drainage infrastructure capable of protecting pedestrian surfaces from washout.

For instance, recommended surface materials include:

Fibar Engineered Wood Fiber (EWF). A specially manufactured wood-fiber surfacing material commonly used under playground equipment as a safety surface (and is already used in

the Cedar Key Lil Shark Park). It is made from wood that is processed into uniform fibers designed to interlock and create a stable, impact-absorbing surface.

Accessibility: When properly installed and maintained, it can meet ADA accessibility requirements and allows wheelchairs and strollers to navigate more easily than conventional mulch.

Drainage: Drains well after rain and generally dries faster than rubberized surfaces.

Appearance: Blends well with parks and naturalistic settings.

Open-Graded Aggregate. A permeable, angular stone material (typically ¾"-1") that allows rapid infiltration while remaining stable underfoot. Well suited to secondary or low-traffic circulation paths and flexible-use "flex space" areas identified in early park concepts.

Accessibility: Compacts reasonably well but is less firm than compacted limestone fines; best used outside primary ADA-required routes.

Drainage: Excellent infiltration; minimal standing water after rain events.

Appearance: Reads as informal, naturalistic hardscape consistent with Cedar Key's rustic character.

Permeable Pavers. Interlocking concrete or paver units with open joints or a porous surface that allow water to pass through to a stone base below.

Accessibility: Provides a firm, stable, ADA-compliant surface that is well suited to primary circulation routes, gathering areas, or parking.

Drainage: High infiltration capacity when properly maintained; joints may require periodic cleaning to prevent clogging.

Appearance: More formal/manufactured appearance than aggregate or EWF; use selectively where a firmer, more defined surface is needed (e.g., accessible route to a bench or picnic area) rather than throughout the park.

3.4 Stormwater Management

The location of the potential pocket parks at terminus of the city streets and the coastal waterfront often means that many of these areas are low-lying and may even serve as a natural outfall location for stormwater. (The site analysis conducted for the 6th Street site confirmed this directly where the rainwater runoff simulation identified the area to be functioning as an outfall for G Street and its adjacent blocks.) Thus, the park design should be mindful of the need to manage stormwater run-off not only generated within the park parcel but from a substantial area of inland roadway and adjacent property as well.

Pre-design site analysis work should evaluate the existing grading and drainage patterns including the extent of the relevant inland drainage area and sheet-flow depth and direction, before finalizing a park layout. Sites within a Special Flood Hazard Area (as many will likely be) should also be evaluated for base flood elevation and the compounding effects of tidal flooding and projected sea level rise on outfall capacity. Without this upstream context, a pocket park risks becoming either a retention basin during storm events or, alternately, a source of erosion and sediment transport into adjacent wetland and shoreline vegetation.

Therefore, smart stormwater management is both an important technical consideration as well as opportunity for green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) elements to serve as park amenities, which will enhance visual quality, support wildlife habitat, and reinforce the informal, native-vegetated character already found in Cedar Key's public-private green buffers. This approach is also consistent with the LDC's Low Impact Development (LID) provisions, which identify bioretention, rain gardens, grass swales, and permeable paving as preferred stormwater

strategies, and with the Comprehensive Plan's direction that natural vegetation serve as the primary means of stormwater filtration.

Key Design Guidelines should include:

1. Integration & Amenity Value

Design stormwater infrastructure as an amenity rather than treating the condition as a constraint to be minimized or a separate utility feature.

Locate bioswales adjacent to entrances, pathways, and gathering spaces where they can contribute to park character.

2. Managing Off-Site & Upstream Flows

Coordinate proposed grading with the City's broader drainage network rather than the immediate parcel alone, since these sites often sit at the low point of several contributing blocks.

Use swales, shallow drainage channels, or bioretention features to manage runoff generated by adjacent streets.

3. Grading & Erosion Control

Design grading to prevent erosion, sediment transport, and loss of surfacing materials during heavy rain events.

Maintain a minimum 2-inch mulch depth in planted stormwater features, keeping mulch pulled back from plant crowns to avoid fungal issues.

4. Planting for Stormwater Function

Select GSI plantings from the project's native, salt- and flood-tolerant palette rather than conventional ornamental stormwater plants;

Use the planting design to reinforce entrance areas while collecting runoff from the street and guiding the water flow to appropriate areas within the park site.

Favor plant groupings that read as intentional landscape design (massed rather than scattered) so that GSI features are legible as park amenities rather than incidental.

Specify species such as Muhly Grass, Fakahatchee Grass, Sand Cordgrass, Blue Flag Iris, Lizard's Tail, and Giant Leather Fern are well suited to bioswale and rain garden conditions and are already established as regionally appropriate.

3.5 Site Furnishings + Signage

While Cedar Key's pocket parks are intended to be simple and low maintenance, the park's furnishings and signage can have an outsized impact on the spaces and can showcase the community's unique identity. Outdoor furnishings such as modest but distinctive seating, birding and wildlife features, or simple coastal-themed signage can provide each pocket park a memorable character. Overall, outdoor furnishing can be classified into a few categories- 1) furniture, 2) utilities, 3) signage.

Furniture Types:

Benches

Picnic tables + seating

Swing benches or unique seating elements

Hammock poles/posts

Utility Types:

Trash receptacles
Transit- bike racks
Transit- golf cart parking
Lighting

Signage Types:

Welcome signage
Educational/interpretive signage
Parking identification signage
Wayfinding signage

Parks may vary in size and range of funding available for investment. Therefore, the guidelines include options for “amenity packages” that provide a scalable framework for park improvements based on available funding and site priorities. Below describe a range of approaches from a “minimalist” to an “enhanced” pocket park; however, there could be a range of options in between.

“Minimalist” Pocket Park: Designed to establish a welcoming public space with minimal maintenance requirements. The results is a simple neighborhood overlook or resting space emphasizing views and passive use.

Typical elements could include:
1-2 canopy trees or palms
Native groundcover or turf
One bench
Park name marker or placard
Hammock posts
Basic grading and surface improvements

“Enhanced” Pocket Park: Designed to support larger social gatherings, enhanced passive recreation activities, ecological education, and community identity. The results is a multifunctional community gathering space that combines recreation, education, and habitat enhancement.

Typical Elements:
6-8 canopy trees or palms
Groundcover and native planting areas
3-4 benches
Swing bench or specialty seating
Picnic table
Trash and recycling receptacles
Bicycle rack
Welcome signage
Educational or interpretive signage
Pollinator or bird habitat features
Integrated stormwater landscape elements

1. Simplicity and Maintainability

The pocket park furnishings should favor a limited palette of durable amenities that can be easily maintained and replaced by City staff.

Use a consistent family of site furnishings across all pocket parks to create a recognizable identity and simplify maintenance.

Take a minimalist approach to site furnishings by carefully balancing amenities with open space and view preservation.

Coordinate site furnishings so space is cohesive across seating, tables, signage/wayfinding, bike racks, or other infrastructure.

2. Coastal Resilience and Durability

All site furnishings should be capable of withstanding periodic flooding, salt exposure, and storm events.

Select furnishings with proven durability in coastal environments and resistance to corrosion, salt spray, flooding, and high winds.

Use marine-grade metals, recycled plastic lumber, concrete, or other corrosion-resistant materials.

Secure furnishings with anchoring systems designed for hurricane-force winds and storm surge conditions.

Alternatively, select furnishings that are lightweight and mobile, so these can be moved to a different location and safely stored during a hurricane event.

3. Comfort and Social Use

Provide comfortable places to rest, gather, and enjoy views of the Gulf.

Locate and orient seating to maximize views of the waterfront while also maximizing thermal comfort and access to shade.

Group seating to encourage conversation while also providing other opportunities for quiet observation and reflection.

Include picnic tables to take advantage of waterfront views, but where they do not interfere with primary circulation.

Consider incorporating hammock posts as a distinctive amenity reflecting Cedar Key's relaxed coastal character.

5. Enhance Ecological Awareness + Wildlife Interaction

Site furnishings should contribute to ecological awareness and support local wildlife. These can also provide a unique sense of place and offer more ways to engage with the environment.

Select habitat-supporting elements that are durable and require minimal maintenance.

Locate wildlife-support features to minimize conflicts with park users while maximizing ecological benefit.

Potential amenities could include:

Birdhouses or bat boxes

Nesting structures

Pollinator "hotels"

Interpretive markers, signs, or displays

6. Make Provisions for Other Basic Site Infrastructure

Trash receptacles: Select durable, wildlife-resistant trash and recycling receptacles and position them near high-use areas such as seating and entrances without obstructing views or circulation.

Bike racks: Install bicycle racks near park entrances to accommodate multi-modal transport options that can increase access and enjoyment by families of all ages.

Lighting: Generally avoid permanent site lighting to preserve dark-sky conditions for coastal wildlife (such as nesting shorebirds and sea turtles) and to limit maintenance and utility

costs. Where lighting is deemed necessary for safety, use low-level, shielded, dark-sky-compliant fixtures limited to primary entrances or pathways only.

7. Develop Clear and Consistent Signage

Signage should establish a clear park identity, communicate important information, and support community education.

- Provide a simple welcome marker or park identification sign at each pocket park.
- Clearly identify parking areas.
- Use consistent branding through signage materials and graphics throughout the park system.
- Include educational signage where appropriate to interpret local history, ecology, stormwater infrastructure, or other resilience strategies.
- Avoid excessive signage that detracts from the park's visual character.

8. Give Pocket Parks Unique and Fun Names

Lastly, and related to signage and identity, consider assigning the pocket parks with unique names through a community survey or other crowd-sourcing methods. The park names can contribute to its overall “branding” and emphasize unique history, culture, and ecology. Any number of names could convey the maritime history, local wildlife, or quirky culture of the area such as:

- Atsena Otie Park
- Clam Shell Corner Park
- Pelican Point Park
- Oysterman's Rest Park
- Pencil Mill Park
- Cedar Point Park
- Gopher Tortoise Grove Park
- Neighbor's Nook Park

There are likely many more options to consider!

4. Additional Pocket Park Development

There are a number of additional street-end sites across Cedar Key with the potential for future pocket park development. As documented in the initial shoreline survey (Section 1.4, Figure 2), several street ends between 1st and 8th Streets present varying combinations of public access and shoreline walkability. These constitute a pipeline of possible candidate sites for applying this design guide beyond the initial 5th and 6th Street parks. Outside of the downtown area focused upon here, there are likely other locations across the City that also have great potential for the creation of pocket parks.

Prioritization of future development of pocket parks should consider: (1) consistency with the Comprehensive Plan's designation of street-end/shoreline locations as public open space; (2) the extent of existing informal public use, which may indicate community demand; (3) flood risk and stormwater management challenges, which will affect both design approach and cost; and (4) opportunities to create a connected network of small waterfront spaces rather than isolated, disconnected parks. As with the 5th and 6th Street parks, future site selection and design should be informed by direct community engagement to ensure each park reflects the specific character and needs of its surrounding neighbors.

While perhaps modest in scale, pocket parks carry an outsized potential to enrich daily life in Cedar Key. These small, every-day spaces offer residents and visitors alike moments of respite

from work, a connection to the water, interaction with wildlife, and engagement with one another.

Appendix 1- Community Feedback

As part of the planning process, FIBER presented its conceptual designs for the 5th and 6th Street pocket parks along G Street at a CRA workshop following a CRA Board meeting on June 3rd, 2026. The workshop, intended to gain input into the design process, was attended by the CRA Board and 6-10 community members.

General Community and CRA Board Observations

There was overall support expressed at the workshop for redevelopment/enhancement of the 2 pocket parks. Some participants expressed concern over the loss of waterfront views in Cedar Key due to shoreline development and mangroves. There was general acknowledgement of the need to minimize maintenance requirements and maximize storm resiliency. The CRA Board expressed a consensus preference for Option 1 of the options for the 6th Street pocket park, which appeared to be shared by the community participants.

Vistas and shade. Participants preferred open views to the water, although maintaining or enhancing shade was also regarded favorably.

Plantings. There was a clear preference for low maintenance native vegetation. One participant emphasized the importance of selecting species to attract birds and pollinators. Concern over lethal bronzing for sabal palms was expressed. The importance of screening for neighboring properties was acknowledged.

Drainage and flooding. Participants acknowledged concerns about drainage and flooding at the 6th Street Park, where recent heavy rains demonstrated channelization, overtopping and potential scouring of the recently installed bulkhead.

Park furniture. No concerns were expressed about the installation or placement of picnic tables, benches and bike rack as indicated in the design drawings. There was discussion about relocation of park furniture in the event of a storm, as well as the prior use of a pocket park to store outdoor furniture from elsewhere in the City during storms.

Vehicle parking and paving. Parking was not considered a priority. There was no interest in hard paving. Concern was also expressed about the use of gravel/limerock for parking and walkways in terms of permeability and aesthetics.

Shoreline access. There appeared to be some interest in providing access to and along the publicly owned shoreline waterward of the bulkheads. One participant noted that the 6th Street pocket park had in the past been used as an informal launch point for kayaks.

Signage. One participant suggested including a wayfinding sign at the entrance to let visitors know each park is publicly accessible space.

Appendix 2- References to Pocket Parks and Street Ends in Cedar Key Comprehensive Plan and CRA Plan

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- Conservation and Coastal Management Element; Goal 4; Objective 4-12
- Recreation and Open Space Element; Goal 5; Objective 5-2
- No explicit mention in Land Development Regulations (though these may apply in the context of how pocket parks are developed - buffers, use intensity, etc.)

Topic	Element	Goal	Objective	Language
Pocket Parks / Street Ends	Conservation and Coastal Management	4	4-7 Water-Dependent and Water-Related Uses	Policy 4-7.2 Shoreline use outside of commercial areas shall be restricted to conservation, recreation, or low-density residential uses.
Pocket Parks / Street Ends	Conservation and Coastal Management	4	4-12	Public Access to Shoreline The City shall, without exception, retain existing shoreline access areas; promote public access to shoreline by prohibiting encroachment on public access areas; and increase public access through development of pocket parks at City-owned street end locations on the shoreline.
Pocket Parks	Recreation and Open Space Element	5	5-2	Open space shall be required and protected through standards that assure compatible land uses and visual access to the shoreline. The City hereby designates all street end shoreline locations as public open areas.

References to Pocket Parks and Street Ends in Cedar Key Community Redevelopment Plan

2024 Adaptation/Resiliency Plan

No specific mention of pocket parks. Some discussion of dual purpose floodable green space

2005 Plan (Incorporated into 2024 Plan)

Topic	Section	Page #	Language
Pocket Parks	Public Planning Process	III - 6	Parks: • Cemetery Point will be another park; • The pocket parks in Cedar Key are underutilized; • Parks should face west so people can watch sunsets; • Public restrooms are needed;
Pocket Parks	Public Planning Process	III - 14	Mentioned by 4 teams out of 12: ... Recreational amenities: pool, community center, pocket parks.
Pocket Parks	Redevelopment Master Plan	IV - 12	6. Opportunities for small greenspaces and pocket parks. Generally, these would serve to allow access between the street and the parking area at the interior of the block, although they would also provide a pleasant respite from the more urbanized street frontage. One or more of these could also include public restroom facilities, a need mentioned by several, especially near the SR24 intersection.

Pocket Parks	Implementation Plan	VI - 5	13. The plan identifies the need for a number of community facilities: ... Park Improvements include acquiring new land, constructing new improvements, as well as making improvements to existing parks. These costs can be phased, and are spread out over two bond issues.
Pocket Parks	Implementation Plan	VI - 5	14. Land acquisition will be needed for parks and other community facilities. Land acquisition is spread over several time periods.
Pocket Parks	CRA Programs	VII - 1	1. Action Plans for Open Space and Street Layout a. Improve quality of existing open space. b. Make land available for creation of "Pocket parks". c. Adopt new areas for recreational open space for residents and visitors.
Pocket Parks / Street Ends	CRA Programs	VII - 8	13. Community Facilities CRA funds can help to form a community facility such as a community center that is downtown, and welcoming to all age groups. Desired recreation facilities would include a community pool and playing fields. In addition, restrooms need to be a part of the recreational facilities. The Capital Program lists these improvements in Section B.13, as well as several others. These include . . . new park land acquisition and improvements, pocket parks at street ends . . .

Appendix 3- Planting Palette

Common Name	Species Name	Category	Salt Tolerance	Native	Sun Exposure	Soils	Height	Spread/Spacing	Wildlife	Link
Beach Sunflower	<i>Helianthus debilis</i>	Groundcover/ Flower	High	Wind & salt tolerant native groundcover	Full Sun	Sandy, acidic soils, tolerant of poor/dry soils	1'-2'	Spreads 3'-4' by runners	Birds, bees, butterflies	https:// www.gardenia.net/ plant/helianthus- debilis
Gaillardia (Firewheel)	<i>Gaillardia pulchella</i>	Groundcover/ Flower	High	Coastal wildflower drought & salt tolerant	Full Sun	Sandy, well- drained, dry soils	1'-2'	12"	Birds, bees, butterflies	https:// www.gardenia.net/ plant/gaillardia- pulchella
Seaside Goldenrod	<i>Solidago sempervirens</i>	Groundcover/ Flower	High	Native salt & wind tolerant	Full Sun	Sandy, well- drained, salt- tolerant	2'-8'	24"-36"	Birds, bees, butterflies	https:// www.gardenia.net/ plant/solidago- sempervirens
Gopher Apple	<i>Geobalanus oblongifolius</i>	Groundcover/ Flower	Moderate	Spreading native groundcover dune stabilizer	Full Sun to Part Sun	Dry, sandy, well- drained soils	0.5'-1' (rarely to 3')	Colonizes via rhizomes; space 2'-3'	Gopher tortoises, small mammals	https:// www.fnps.org/ plant/geobalanus- oblongifolius
Saltmeadow Cordgrass	<i>Spartina patens</i>	Grass	High	Native high salt tolerance	Full Sun	Sand, poorly drained, wet to moist soils	2'-3'	Forms colonies; space 12"-18"	Birds	https:// www.gardenia.net/ plant/spartina- patens
Muhly Grass	<i>Muhlenbergia capillaris</i>	Grass	Moderate	Native moderately salt tolerant	Full Sun	Sandy, rocky, well- drained soils	3'-4'	3'-4' (space 24"-36")	Birds, beneficial insects	https:// www.gardenia.net/ plant/ muhlenbergia- capillaris-pink- muhly-grass
Fakahatchee Grass	<i>Tripsacum dactyloides</i>	Grass	Moderate	Native handles wet/ dry cycles	Full Sun to Part Shade	Clay, loam, sand; tolerates wet to dry	4'-6'	2'-4'	Birds; larval host for skipper butterflies	https:// www.gardenia.net/ plant/tripsacum- dactyloides
Sea Oats	<i>Uniola paniculata</i>	Grass	High	Native excellent coastal stabilizer	Full Sun	Sandy, dry, well- drained soils	4'-6' (up to 8')	1'-2'	Birds, small mammals	https:// www.gardenia.net/ plant/uniola- paniculata
Wax Myrtle	<i>Morella cerifera</i>	Shrub	High	Native wet & salt tolerant great wildlife value	Full Sun to Part Shade	Wide range; tolerates poor, sandy, wet soils	15'-25' (to 40')	15'-20'; multi- trunked, suckers	Birds, pollinators	https:// www.gardenia.net/ plant/morella- cerifera
Firebush	<i>Hamelia patens</i>	Shrub	Moderate	Salt tolerant attracts pollinators & birds	Full Sun (tolerates part shade)	Sandy to fertile, moist, well-drained	10'-15' as shrub (2'-3' as annual)	5'-8'	Hummingbirds, butterflies, birds	https:// www.gardenia.net/ plant/hamelia- patens

Wild Coffee	<i>Psychotria nervosa</i>	Shrub	Moderate	Native unique coastal shrub	Part Shade to Full Shade (tolerates full sun)	Sandy, loamy, moderately dry to moist, well-drained	4'-10'	3'-6'	Birds, butterflies	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/psychotria-nervosa
Saltbush	<i>Baccharis halimifolia</i>	Shrub	High	Native highly salt tolerant	Full Sun	Sandy to loamy; tolerates wet, dry, clay, rocky soils	5'-12'	4'-7'	Bees, butterflies, birds (nesting cover)	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/baccharis-halimifolia
Coontie	<i>Zamia integrifolia</i>	Shrub	Moderate	Native salt tolerant host plant for atala butterfly	Full Sun to Part Shade	Dry, sandy, well-drained soils	2'-3'	2'-4'	Host plant for Atala butterfly; birds eat seeds	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/zamia-pumila
Indian Hawthorn	<i>Raphiolepis indica</i>	Shrub	Moderate	Salt tolerant flowering shrub	Full Sun (tolerates light shade)	Moist, well-drained soils	4'-6'	4'-6'	Birds, small mammals (berries); pollinators	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/raphiolepis-indica
Yaupon Holly	<i>Ilex vomitoria</i>	Shrub	High	Native salt tolerant excellent wildlife shrub	Full Sun to Shade	Wide range; clay to sand, well-drained	10'-20' (to 25')	8'-12'	Birds, pollinators	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/ilex-vomitoria
Live Oak	<i>Quercus virginiana</i>	Tree	High	High salt tolerance strong structural tree	Full Sun to Part Shade	Sandy to clay, well-drained; tolerates salt & brief flooding	40'-80'	60'-100'	Birds, squirrels; larval host for many butterflies/moths	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/quercus-virginiana
Southern Red Cedar	<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>	Tree	High	High salt tolerance native	Full Sun	Wide range; sandy, loamy, rocky, well-drained	40'-50'	8'-20'	Birds (berries); larval host for juniper hairstreak	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/juniperus-virginiana
Cabbage Palm	<i>Sabal palmetto</i>	Tree	High	Native highest salt tolerance among palms	Full Sun (tolerates part shade when young)	Moist, well-drained; wide tolerance incl. clay/loam/sand	40'-50' (to 90')	10'-15'	Birds; pollinators	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/sabal-palmetto
Saw Palmetto	<i>Serenoa repens</i>	Tree	High	Native very salt tolerant	Full Sun to Part Shade	Sandy, well-drained; tolerates poor soils	4'-8' (rarely to 15')	4'-6'	Birds, mammals, pollinators; larval host	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/serenoa-repens
Railroad Vine	<i>Ipomoea pes-caprae</i>	Groundcover/vine	High	Native high salt & sand tolerance dune stabilizer	Full Sun	Sandy, nutrient-poor, well-drained (tolerates moist/calcareous)	<1' trailing groundcover	Spreads 20'+; roots at nodes	Bees, butterflies	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/ipomoea-pes-caprae
Scrub Palmetto	<i>Sabal etonia</i>	Palm	High (maritime exposure tolerant)	Yes (FL endemic)	Full Sun (cannot grow in shade)	Sandy, well-drained, nutrient-poor soils	2'-4' (rarely to 6-8')	Slow-spreading clump; underground trunk	Birds, small mammals	https://pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Sabal+etonia
Dwarf Palmetto	<i>Sabal minor</i>	Palm	Moderate	Yes	Full Sun to Part Shade	Moist, moderately fertile soils; tolerates poor drainage	3'-6' (trunk usually underground)	Slow-spreading clump	Birds, small mammals	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/sabal-minor
Sand Live Oak	<i>Quercus geminata</i>	Tree	High (more salt tolerant than Live Oak)	Yes	Partial Shade to Full Sun	Sandy, well-drained; adaptable to loam/clay, tolerates alkaline	20'-50' (rarely to 95')	20'-50' (crown ~half height)	Deer, squirrels, birds (low-tannin acorns favored by Florida scrub-jay); larval host for several hairstreak butterflies	https://www.fnps.org/plant/quercus-geminata

Red Bay	<i>Persea borbonia</i>	Tree	High (tolerant of salty wind/spray)	Yes	Full Sun to Part Shade	Moist, well-drained, acidic; wide tolerance	20'-50' (to 70')	15'-30'	Birds (quail, turkey, songbirds); larval host for spicebush, Palamedes, and endangered Schaus swallowtail butterflies. NOTE: susceptible to laurel wilt disease.	https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=371920&isprofile=0&pt=14
Inkberry (Beach Naupaka)	<i>Scaevola plumieri</i>	Shrub	High (not harmed by salt spray)	Yes	Full Sun to Part Shade	Sand, alkaline to acidic, well-drained; high drought tolerance	2'-4'	36"-60" spacing; spreads/roots as stems touch ground	Birds (eat fruit); dune stabilizer	https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fp539 (CAUTION: rated USDA zones 10-11, borderline hardiness for Cedar Key's zone 9b)
Necklace Pod	<i>Sophora tomentosa</i>	Shrub	High (very tolerant of salt spray)	Yes	Full Sun to Part Shade	Neutral to slightly alkaline, sandy, well-drained; tolerates nutrient-poor soil	4'-10' (to 15')	4'-8'	Bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, warblers	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/sophora-tomentosa
Bay Cedar	<i>Suriana maritima</i>	Shrub	High (highly salt and wind tolerant)	Yes	Full Sun	Dry, sandy, well-drained; tolerant of brief inundation	5'-20' (commonly 6'-10')	5'-8'; can be trained as small tree or hedge (5-6' centers)	Birds, bees, larval host for Martial and Mallow Scrub-Hairstreak butterflies	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/suriana-maritima (CAUTION: native range is Central/South FL coastal counties; zone 9b-11, verify performance for Cedar Key)
Wild Sage (Buttonsage)	<i>Lantana involucrata</i>	Shrub	Moderate (salt-wind tolerant; low salt-water tolerance)	Yes	Full Sun	Well-drained; sandy, limestone, or organic soils	4'-8'	4'-8'	Butterflies, hummingbirds, other pollinators	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/lantana-involucrata
Blue-Eyed Grass	<i>Sisyrinchium angustifolium</i>	Groundcover/Flower	Low (salt spray intolerant per NC Extension)	Yes	Full Sun to Light Shade	Medium moisture, well-drained; consistently moist preferred	18"-24"	6"-12"; space 10'-12" on center	Sweet bees, bumble bees, bee flies, syrphid flies	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/sisyrinchium-angustifolium (NOTE: best sited away from direct salt spray/immediate shoreline)
Little Bluestem	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>	Groundcover/Grass	Moderate (tolerates coastal conditions; not immediate salt spray)	Yes	Full Sun (tolerates part shade w/ reduced color)	Poor soils, clay tolerant; does not persist in fertile/moist soils	2'-4'	1.5'-2'	Larval host for 9 skipper butterfly species; seeds attract songbirds; nesting cover for bumblebee queens	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/schizachyrium-scoparium
Black-Eyed Susan	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Groundcover/Flower	Moderate (salt resistant per NC Extension)	Yes	Full Sun to Partial Shade	Well-drained, average fertility; moist, well-drained clay/loam/sand	1'-4'	1'-2'; space 12"-18" apart	Bees, butterflies, songbirds (seed); larval host for Emerald and Silvery Checkerspot moths/butterflies	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/rudbeckia-hirta

Starry Rosinweed	<i>Silphium asteriscus</i>	Groundcover/ Flower	Not extensively documented; found in coastal pinelands	Yes	Full Sun to Partial Shade	Moderately dry to moist, well-drained; sandy, clay, or gravelly	2'-5' (to 6')	2' spread	Bees, butterflies, birds (seed)	https://www.flawildflowers.org/flower-friday-silphium-asteriscus/
Coral Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera sempervirens</i>	Vine	High (salt tolerant per NC Extension)	Yes	Full Sun to Light Shade	Well-drained; adapts to sandy, loamy, or clay soils	8'-15' (climbing)	3'-6' wide; trains onto trellis/fence/arbor	Hummingbirds, butterflies, songbirds (berries); non-invasive native alternative to exotic honeysuckles	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/lonicera-sempervirens
Sand Cordgrass	<i>Spartina bakeri</i>	Groundcover/Grass	High (highly salt tolerant)	Yes	Full Sun to Part Shade	Aquatic to semi-aquatic; beaches, wet to upland sites; tolerates flooding	4'-5'	Clumping, arching form; good for bioswale/erosion control	Birds; erosion control, wetland restoration	https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/FP554 (Best sited toward the water/downstream end of a bioswale where brackish influence is more likely)
Giant Leather Fern	<i>Acrostichum danaeifolium</i>	Groundcover/Fern	High (tolerates significant salty wind/spray)	Yes	Full Sun to Part Shade	Organically rich, moist to wet, poorly-drained soils; brackish or freshwater marsh	6'-12'	5'-10'	Confirmed hurricane-surge survivor (SCCF list); habitat/cover value in wet areas	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/acrostichum-danaeifolium (Best sited toward the water/downstream end of a bioswale where brackish influence is more likely)
Blue Flag Iris	<i>Iris virginica</i>	Groundcover/ Flower	Low-Moderate (native to fresh-to-mildly-brackish marsh only)	Yes	Full Sun to Part Shade	Acidic, wet, rich soils; tolerates up to 6" standing water	2'-3'	2'-3'; spreads by creeping rhizomes	Hummingbirds, butterflies, beneficial insects, birds	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/iris-virginica (CAUTION: freshwater specialist - site toward inland/freshest end of bioswale, not immediate shoreline)
Lizard's Tail	<i>Saururus cernuus</i>	Groundcover/ Flower	Low (NOT salt tolerant per multiple sources)	Yes	Full Sun to Part Shade (tolerates full shade)	Boggy, saturated, freshwater wetland soils; shallow standing water	1'-4'	1'-2'; spreads by rhizomes, forms colonies	Wood ducks, beavers; pollinating insects	https://www.gardenia.net/plant/saururus-cernuus (CAUTION: not salt tolerant - use only in inland/freshest portion of bioswale, well buffered from tidal/spray influence)

Appendix 4- ADA Memorandum

The Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”) Applicability to Cedar Key, FL, Pocket Park Redevelopment

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June 12, 2026

I. Introduction & Summary Conclusion

Proposals have been made for the redevelopment of two pocket parks in Cedar Key along G Street that were substantially damaged by the hurricanes of 2023 and 2024. This memorandum addresses whether alterations to these parks, including changes/additions to park furniture, plantings, and possibly parking will require compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Any significant recovery and redevelopment of the pocket parks will likely need to be ADA-compliant because (1) the ADA applies to state and local governments in Florida, (2) the parks will be altered after 1992 and (3) the alterations fall under the broad definition of “usability” articulated by the U.S. Department of Justice and interpreted by courts. It is possible that only one pocket park will need to be compliant if the G Street parks are considered as a coherent system of similar facilities.

II. The ADA and its application to state and local governments

In 1990, Congress passed Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which addresses the equal access of individuals with disabilities to public services.¹ Enacted as a civil rights statute under the 14th Amendment to the United States

¹ See *Tennessee v. Lane*, 541 U.S. 509, 530 (2004) (holding that Title II of the ADA validly enforced “the constitutional right of access to the courts” under the Due Process Clause and Section 5 of the Fourteenth Amendment).

Constitution,² the ADA applies to state and local governments, expressly providing that no State shall be immune from action in either federal or state court for a violation of its terms.³

III. Application of ADA to Cedar Key Pocket Park Redevelopment

Title II's implementing regulations—namely 28 C.F.R. pt. 35—apply to state and local government services.⁴ Courts have confirmed that such regulations apply to local government parks, including picnic areas.⁵ Cedar Key's pocket parks are characterized as parks under the Cedar Comprehensive Plan and Community Redevelopment Plan.

A. Whether the Cedar Key Pocket Park Redevelopment Counts as an Alteration

Under 28 C.F.R. § 35.150, all public facilities, whether classified as “existing facilities” that were built prior to 1992 or whether built after 1992, must comply with a minimum standard in which the program, activity, or service offered at that facility, “*when viewed in its entirety*, is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.”⁶ In practice, this means that individuals with disabilities cannot be completely barred from participating in programs, activities, and services offered at a facility due to their disability, although certain areas of the facility, such as some sections of seating, may be inaccessible to the individual.⁷

This may also mean that in some cases, if a city has multiple facilities of the same type which all offer the same service, program, or activity, the city need not

² *Id.*; U.S. Const. Amend. XIV.

³ 42 U.S.C. § 12202.

⁴ See *Furgess v. Pa. Dep't of Corr.*, 933 F.3d 285, 289 (3d Cir. 2019) (holding that anything a public entity does counts as a service, program, or activity under the ADA).

⁵ *Karantalis v. City of Mia. Springs, Fla.*, 17 F.4th 1316, 1322 (11th Cir. 2021).

⁶ (emphasis added).

⁷ *Ass'n for Disabled Ams. v. City of Orlando*, 153 F. Supp. 2d 1310, 1319 (M.D. Fla. 2001).

necessarily make every single one of these facilities accessible.⁸ The U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division has noted in its ADA primer for state and local governments that “if a city has multiple public swimming pools and limited resources, it can decide which pools to make accessible based on factors such as the geographic distribution of the sites, the availability of public transportation, the hours of operation, and the particular programs offered at each site so that the swimming program as a whole is accessible to and usable by people with disabilities.”⁹

Similarly, the Department of Justice’s archival website for the ADA notes that for “parks and facilities that were built or altered before the ADA Standards took effect, local governments usually must devise ways to make the programs and activities in those parks and facilities accessible to people with disabilities” but also writes that if “a local government decides to modify facilities to provide access to a recreation program or activity and has more than one facility available (such as when several ball fields are provided), only some of the facilities may need to be accessible.”¹⁰

If, however, an existing facility is altered after January 26, 1992, in a way that “affects or could affect the usability of the facility or part of the facility,” then that facility or part of the facility must be altered such that it is accessible and usable to individuals with disabilities “to the maximum extent feasible.”¹¹ Furthermore, an alteration that affects the usability of or access to an area that contains a “primary function” must ensure that individuals with disabilities have a path of travel to the

⁸ A public entity must “operate each service, program, or activity so that the service, program, or activity, when viewed in its entirety, is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.” *Shotz v. Cates*, 256 F.3d 1077, 1080 (11th Cir. 2001) (quoting 28 C.F.R. § 35.150).

⁹ U.S. Dep’t of Just. Civ. Rts. Div., *ADA Update: A Primer for State and Local Governments*, ADA.GOV (Feb. 28, 2020), <https://www.ada.gov/resources/title-ii-primer/> [https://perma.cc/XJ27-D68B].

¹⁰ U.S. Dep’t of Just. Civ. Rts. Div., *II. Enforcing the ADA Part 2: 5. Equal Access to Parks and Recreation*, ARCHIVE.ADA.GOV, https://archive.ada.gov/5yearadarpt/ii_enforcing_pt2.htm [https://perma.cc/KFM8-P6D6] (last visited Jun. 8, 2026, at 19:01 ET).

¹¹ 28 C.F.R. § 35.151(b)(1) (West 2026).

altered area and its associated restrooms, drinking fountains, and telephones.¹² A primary function is a “major activity for which the facility is intended” such as meeting rooms in a conference center, as opposed to a janitorial closet.¹³

Because the Cedar Key pocket park(s) will be altered after 1992, § 35.151 will apply if the changes affect the “usability” of the park or part of the park. “Usability” turns out to be widely applicable:

“Alterations include events such as remodeling, renovation, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and changes or rearrangement in structural parts, but typically do not include normal maintenance or painting. The DOJ has instructed that ‘ “usability” [is] to be read broadly to include any change that affects the usability of the facility, not simply changes that relate directly to access by individuals with disabilities.’ ”¹⁴

Note that § 35.151, which applies to public entities, does not list specific examples, whereas § 36.402, which applies to private entities, lists the specific examples (“remodeling, renovation, rehabilitation . . .”). Part 36, appendix C also provides commentary on how “usability” is to be interpreted while part 35 does not. However, given both parts are addressing disabilities and accessibility, and given that appendix C refers to “usability” in the broader context of the ADA, “usability” likely applies similarly to both part 35 and part 36.

Full compliance with § 35.151 may not be necessary if structural impracticability exists, in “rare circumstances when the unique characteristics of terrain prevent the incorporation of accessibility features.”¹⁵ Even in such a case, partial compliance with the section is still required to the fullest extent that it is practicable.¹⁶

¹² *Id.* § 35.151(b)(4).

¹³ *Id.* § 35.151(b)(4)(i).

¹⁴ *Bailey v. Bd. of Comm’rs of La. Stadium and Exposition Dist.*, 484 F. Supp. 3d 346, 380 (E.D. La. 2020) (citing 28 C.F.R. §§ 35.151, 36.402; *Id.* at pt. 36, app. C). *But see Ass’n for Disabled Ams.*, 153 F. Supp. 2d at 1319 (holding that the replacement and addition of seats in an arena did not trigger the more stringent requirements of the ADA despite arguably being an alteration that affected usability).

¹⁵ *Id.* § 35.151(a)(2).

¹⁶ *Id.*

B. Financial Exceptions to the Feasibility Requirement

Whether or not the redevelopment of the parks counts as an alteration, the ADA accounts for financial exceptions, although only to a limited extent.

If the redevelopment does not count as an alteration, and only the minimum requirements apply, a public entity is not required to take any action that would impose an “undue” financial burden.¹⁷ However, the public entity carries the burden to prove that compliance with § 35.150 would impose such financial strain.¹⁸ The head of the public entity (or his or her designee) must decide that there is an undue financial burden “after considering all resources available for use in the funding and operation of the service, program, or activity,” and such a decision “must be accompanied by a written statement of the reasons for reaching that conclusion.”¹⁹ The public entity must still take actions to ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to the benefits and services that the entity provides to the extent that such actions do not impose an undue financial burden.²⁰

When determining what constitutes an undue financial burden, a court is likely to look at the cost compared to the city’s budget as a whole.²¹ If the cost only makes up a small portion of the city’s overall expenditures, a court will not consider the burden to be undue.²²

On the other hand, if the redevelopment counts as an alteration, and full compliance is required, the federal regulations provide more concrete guidance on when financial exceptions apply. Namely, the path-of-travel requirement does not apply in cases in which the cost to provide accessible paths of travel “exceeds 20% of the cost of the alteration to the primary function area.”²³ However, even if the

¹⁷ *Id.* § 35.150(a)(3)

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Concerned Parents to Save Dreher Park Ctr. v. City of W. Palm Beach*, 846 F. Supp. 986, 993 n.15 (S.D. Fla. 1994).

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.* § 35.151(b)(4)(iii).

cost is disproportionate, the city retains a duty to make the relevant path of travel accessible “to the extent that it can be made accessible without incurring disproportionate costs.”²⁴ In deciding which changes to put limited funds towards, the federal regulations provide a list of highest-to-lowest priority alterations: (1) an accessible entrance; (2) an accessible route to the altered area; (3) at least one accessible restroom for each sex or a single unisex restroom; (4) accessible telephones; (5) accessible drinking fountains; and (6) when possible, additional accessible elements such as parking, storage, and alarms.²⁵

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, it appears that, should the CRA choose to redevelop the pocket parks along G Street, at least one of the parks will likely need to comply with the ADA requirements because they will have been altered after 1992 in such a way as to affect the usability of the facility, given that the Department of Justice interprets the term “usability” quite broadly. Furthermore, whether financial hardship will affect Cedar Key’s obligations under the ADA will depend on the proportionality of the cost of accessibility when compared to the cost of the entire project and the funds that the CRA has available to it; regardless, the city must still provide accommodations to the extent that the accommodations will not impose undue financial hardship.

Resources:

U.S. Dep’t of Just. Civ. Rts. Div., *ADA Update: A Primer for State and Local Governments*, ADA.GOV (Feb. 28, 2020), <https://www.ada.gov/resources/title-ii-primer/> [https://perma.cc/XJ27-D68B].

U.S. Dep’t of Just. Civ. Rts. Div., *II. Enforcing the ADA Part 2: 5. Equal Access to Parks and Recreation*, ARCHIVE.ADA.GOV, https://archive.ada.gov/5yearadarpt/ii_enforcing_pt2.htm [https://perma.cc/KFM8-P6D6] (last visited Jun. 8, 2026, at 19:01 ET).

²⁴ *Id.* § 35.151(b)(4)(iv)(A).

²⁵ *Id.* § 35.151(b)(4)(iv)(B).