

**Tab 4**

**Blackstone Park Expansion Project**

**Little League Ball Fields**

**Staff Report**  
**2112 14th Avenue West**  
**Blackstone Park Expansion**  
**Site Plan Approval**

**REQUEST**

Manatee County is proposing an expansion project on the north and east sides of the existing ball fields at Blackstone Park located at 2112 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue W. The expansion project abuts 23<sup>rd</sup> Street W and will include three new ball fields for little league with batting cages and a concession building at the SW corner of the site.

**BACKGROUND**

The facility is located within the City of Palmetto but the land is owned by Manatee County and the County will maintain the facility. The County will start with the construction of utilities in April or May of 2013 and the ball fields are scheduled to be opened in 2014. The County will bid out the earthwork, construction of the concession building and lighting.

The original Blackstone Park was annexed into the City of Palmetto on March 1, 1999. The subject property or expansion area was part of a 92 acre annexation into the City of Palmetto approved on February 2, 1998. As required by State law, a land use plan amendment from County RES-6 to City Public Use (PU) and a change of zoning from County A-1 to City Public (P) was approved so that the property can be developed in accordance with City regulations.

**ADDRESS/PARCEL ID/SIZE**

2112 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue W/2423300159/12.13 acres

Location: S of 23rd Street W and E of 14th Avenue W – N & E of exiting Blackstone Park  
Subject parcel has no assigned address but will use main park address: 2112 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue W

**PROPERTY OWNER**

Manatee County

**PLAN CATEGORY/ZONING DISTRICT/EXISTING LAND USE OF SUBJECT PARCEL**

Public Use/Public/vacant land

**PLAN CATEGORY/ZONING DISTRICT/EXISTING LAND USES OF SURROUNDING PROPERTIES**

North: PC/County A-1 (Agricultural)/vacant land

South: PF/P/Palmetto High School

East: GCOM/CG/vacant land

West: PC/PD-H/Terra Ceia

**HISTORY**

In 2009, the City sold the old little league ball fields as part of the development of the new Palmetto Elementary School complex, including a new elementary school, the new Boys and Girls Club, the Just for Girls facility, and County tennis courts. Although they were substandard, these ball fields were used by the North River Little League for years. The City, with the

cooperation of the County and the School Board, attempted to find a suitable location for new regulation fields and related facilities and the City committed the proceeds from the sale of the land towards this goal. North River American Little League in the meanwhile, used adult softball fields located at Blackstone Park improvising with a portable, elevated pitching mound.

The City, the County, the School Board and Manatee Fruit Company worked together for years on a site off 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue extension which required 23rd Street W to be relocated and reconstructed, and a series of comprehensive plan amendments, annexation of 8th Avenue, and street vacations were processed in preparation.

On August 11, 2011, the North American Little League Vice President, Derek Goforth attended the City Commission meeting and discussed the possibility of downsizing two adult fields to little league status at Blackstone Park, allowing for construction of two additional little league fields estimated at a cost \$700,000. At the City Commission meeting on Oct 3, 2011, a letter from County Administrator, Ed Hunzeker indicated that the County concurred with the Little League's request and would be willing to help with the land for the fields and the facility maintenance, but not for the construction. In the spring of 2012, the City Commission reinforced its commitment by passing a resolution agreeing to contribute up to \$800,000 to the design, engineering and construction of the ball field complex to be located at Blackstone Park.

A press release in August of 2012 confirmed the County's endorsement to build three new regulation Little League fields, a parking lot, a press box and concession building, bleachers, sidewalks, lighting and associated infrastructure at Blackstone Field at an estimated cost of \$3.3 million.

### **Infrastructure**

The facility will be served by County water coming in from the north and City reclaimed water and sewer, adding a lift station. Adequate water, wastewater and transportation facilities are in existence and the proposed park expansion will not negatively impact facilities or services.

### **ANALYSIS**

This request is being considered as a Site Plan Approval based upon the language in Section 4.1(e)1 of the City Code, which states that the intent of the Public (P) District is to identify and stabilize those geographic areas within the City of Palmetto that are appropriate for the development and maintenance of public and semipublic facilities. Such uses are to be individually reviewed and approved by City Council to ensure design and use compatibility with the surrounding area.

Sec. 4.2, Schedule of Permitted and Conditional Uses by District permits public use facility uses in the P zoning district and Code defines Public use facility as:

*The use of land, buildings, or structures by a municipal or other governmental agency to provide protective, administrative, social, and recreational services directly to the general public, including police and fire stations, municipal buildings, and any other public facility providing the above services, but not including public land or buildings devoted solely to the storage and maintenance of equipment and materials and not including public cultural facilities or public service facilities.*

The subject property as well as the existing Blackstone Park is bordered by 23<sup>rd</sup> Street W and vacant land owned by Manatee Fruit Company on the north and east, 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue W and Terra Ceia planned development to the west and Palmetto High School to the south. Future development to the north will require GDP/site plan approval by the Planning and Zoning Board and City Commission since under its Planned Community designation, PD zoning is required but future development to the east will not require a GDP/site plan under CG zoning.

This project was taken to a SDR meeting on November 20, 2012 where several site plan features were discussed including an 8' landscape buffer on the north side, a 15' buffer on the east (from CG zoning) and no buffer on the south although there is a 10' setback from the school site. The proposal incorporates pedestrian connectivity, 5' wide sidewalks throughout the parking lot areas, a 12' wide concrete sidewalk extending from the parking lot to the southern-most ball field, and a 10' by 10' dumpster pad.

### **Parking**

A total of 150 parking spaces (including six handicapped spaces) are proposed which exceeds Code requirements. Sec. 28-78 (c)(1) of the City's Code requires one parking space for each 3 seats provided for public assembly. The proposed project includes 6 bleachers, two for each ball field with a maximum capacity of 68 persons for each bleacher. Actual seating capacity could potentially be less pending the final selection of the bleachers.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The proposed site plan is for the expansion of an established use, Blackstone Park. The proposed expansion is located to the north and east of the existing park, abutting 23<sup>rd</sup> Street W to the north and CG zoned vacant land to the east. Based on staff analysis of surrounding land use, staff finds the proposal compatible with adjacent uses and recommends approval of the proposed expansion of park and recreational uses at Blackstone Park.

### **PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD RECOMMENDATION:**

The Planning and Zoning Board shall recommend **APPROVAL, APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS OR DENIAL** of the proposed site plan.

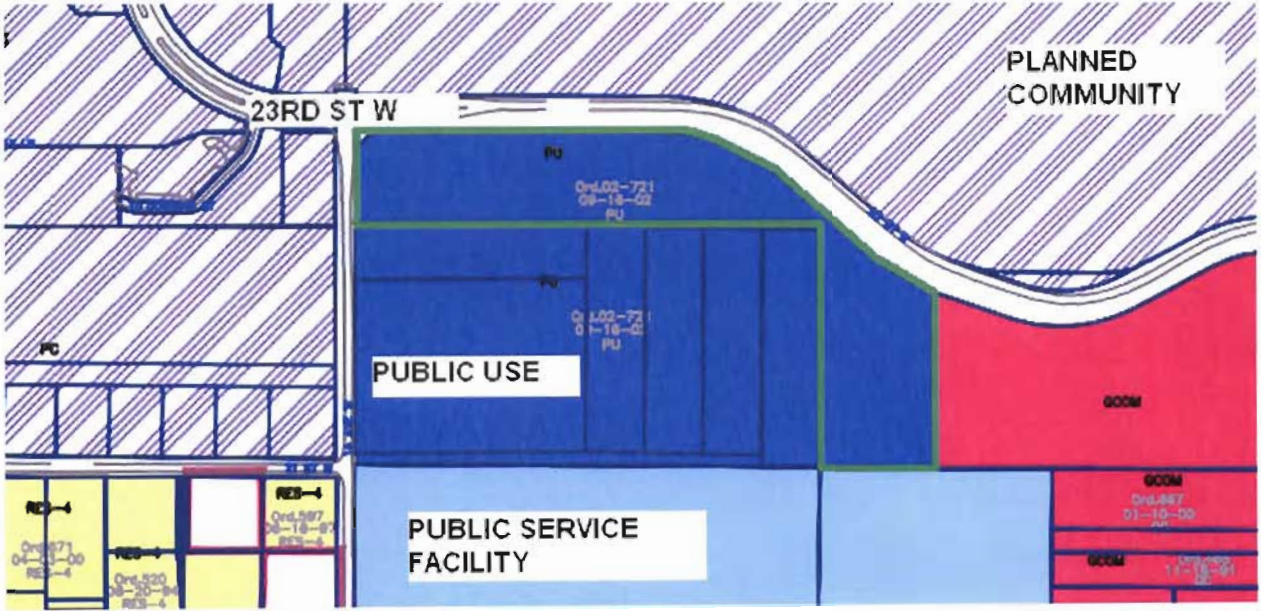
### **CITY COMMISSION**

The City Commission shall **APPROVE, APPROVE WITH CONDITION(S) or DENY** the proposed site plan.

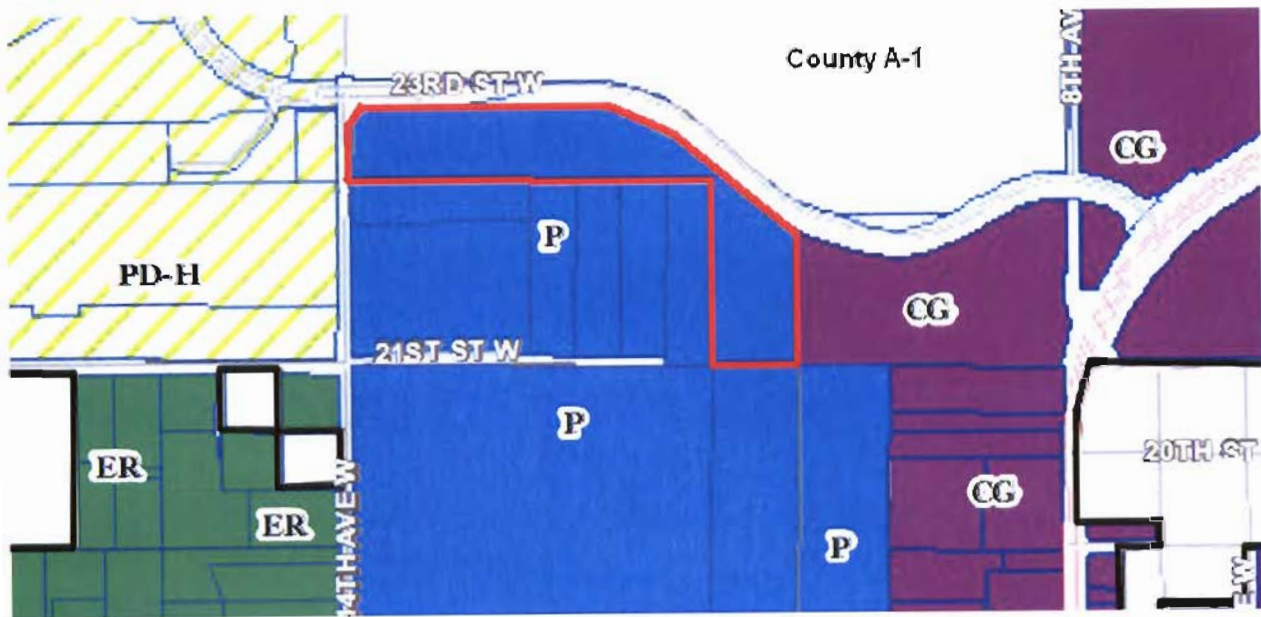
**AERIAL PHOTO**  
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**PLAN MAP**  
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**ZONING MAP**





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