

QUESTIONS

This Frequently Asked Questions page has been prepared because of strong public interest in a proposal by some City residents to relocate the existing Ocean Hammock Park beach access boardwalk from the south area of the Park to its center. The residents have offered to pay up to \$600,000 for the building of a new boardwalk and the demolition of the current one.

1. WHERE IS OCEAN HAMMOCK PARK LOCATED?

It is an 18-acre park located on the east side of A1A Beach Boulevard between the Bermuda Run subdivision on the north and the Sea Colony subdivision on the south. The City acquired the 18 acres over 10 years by means of a donation of two acres plus state grants and a dedicated millage approved by the City's voters that's equal to half a cent per each \$1,000 of a property's assessed value and that each year is on the property tax bill of every owner of private property in the City.

2. WHERE IS THE CURRENT BEACH ACCESS BOARDWALK LOCATED?

The 1700-plus foot long boardwalk is located along the south side of Ocean Hammock Park adjacent to its border with the Sea Colony subdivision.

3. WHY IS IT LOCATED THERE?

Because when a company proposed a residential development on what is now Ocean Hammock Park, the company donated to the City 2.2 acres to the City: an area of wetlands (1.5 acres) adjacent to A1A Beach Boulevard for conservation and that the developers didn't need, and the remainder, the strip adjacent to Sea Colony, for a public beach access boardwalk. That strip was the only land available at the time (2007) to provide public access to and from the beach in that part of the City. Also, the City did not know in 2007 that it eventually would acquire the remaining 16 acres of the property for a park.

4. WHY COULDN'T THE BOARDWALK HAVE BEEN LOCATED IN THE MIDDLE OF WHAT IS NOW OCEAN HAMMOCK PARK?

Because in 2007 the land in the middle of what became Ocean Hammock Park wasn't owned by the City. The development company that did own the land planned to build on it a gated subdivision of 72 condominium/townhouse units with access restricted to the subdivision's residents and their authorized visitors.

5. WHY DO SOME RESIDENTS WANT THE BOARDWALK TO BE RELOCATED?

Two reasons: for security and to provide a wide buffer similar to the buffer along the Park's north side adjacent to the Bermuda Run subdivision. The residents claim that there have been instances of persons leaving the boardwalk and trespassing into an adjacent residential subdivision. Also, the residents are concerned that new amenities in the Park, such as restrooms and a picnic pavilion, will attract more visitors to the Park and this could increase the number of persons trespassing onto private property outside the Park.

6. DO RECORDS OF THE CITY'S POLICE DEPARTMENT SHOW A PATTERN OF TRESPASSING FROM THE BOARDWALK INTO RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISIONS?

Between 2019 and 2022, there were 288 responses by the Department concerning activities in Ocean Hammock Park itself as well as the residential areas adjacent to it and A1A Beach Boulevard on the Park's west side. Examples of the complaints received are "Assist Citizen," "Suspicious Person," "Suspicious Vehicle" and "Disturbance." The records do not show a consistent and significant pattern of trespassers from the boardwalk into adjacent residential subdivisions.

7. WERE RESIDENTS INVOLVED IN DECISIONS CONCERNING THE CURRENT BOARDWALK?

Yes. Before the boardwalk was constructed in 2009, members from the Sea Colony Homeowners Association at that time met with City staff about the HOA's concerns regarding security and potential trespassing into the subdivision by boardwalk users. The outcome of those meetings was that the City agreed to pay for a fence between the Park and Sea Colony, to be built in accordance with specifications requested by the HOA. The City's taxpayers paid \$30,000 for the fence plus \$10,000 in additional costs for a gate and signs.

8. IF THE BOARDWALK WERE RELOCATED, WHERE WOULD THE NEW LOCATION BE?

In the center of the Park where a picnic pavilion/scenic overlook is proposed to be built.

9. AS THE STATE PROVIDED THE MONEY TO BUY THE PARK AND BUILD THE BOARDWALK AT ITS CURRENT LOCATION, HAS THE STATE APPROVED RELOCATING THE BOARDWALK?

No. According to the wording of a March 24, 2023, letter to the Public Works Director/City Engineer from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, relocating the boardwalk isn't feasible. A copy of that letter is on the City's website.

10. IS THE CITY PLANNING ANY FURTHER ACTION ON THE PROPOSAL TO RELOCATE THE BOARDWALK?

No, because of FDEP's March 24th letter.