



Marco Island Public Beach Access Improvements 2024

Introduction and overview:

The Beautification Advisory Committee has been tasked with addressing aesthetics, functionality, and educational features of the two City public beach access points. The City Council has requested a plan to address the overall appearance of the entrances, the function of the entrances to accommodate their growing use, and the opportunity to educate beachgoers about the unique ecology of the southwest Florida shoreline and the wildlife that lives here.

General description of the sites:

Maple Avenue access corridor

This access point is located between Madeira Condominium and Royal Seafarer Condominium at the intersection of South Collier Blvd. and Maple Avenue.

A paver walkway that is approximately 435 feet in length and 6 feet wide runs from the sidewalk to the boardwalk (205 feet) approach to the beach. The paver walkway is bordered on the north side by a fence lined with shrubs and on the south side by a fence, wall, and parking structure with windows. It sees moderate traffic with most users arriving at the walkway on foot or by bicycle.

Winterberry Drive access corridor

This access point is located between Marriott's Crystal Shores Vacation Club and the Hilton Marco Island Beach Resort and Spa at the intersection of South Collier Blvd. and Winterberry Drive.

A paver walkway extends approximately 530 feet in length and 8 feet wide. The boardwalk to the beach extends another 244 feet. The walkway is bordered on the north side by a fence with various planting types in an undulating border and on the south side by a concrete wall and fence that has similar border plantings. It sees substantial traffic as at least 21 public parking spaces are available near this walkway.

More complete detail of the existing paths is included as Appendix A and Appendix B. Appendix C shows examples of element improvements.

Elements to be included in the project plans:

Benches: There are several existing benches on each walkway. It is not expected that those will be moved or replaced.

Trash and recycling receptacles: The trash and recycling receptacles have been replaced recently and it is expected that these will not be moved or replaced. It is possible that an additional receptacle (possibly a solar compacting receptacle) with an art wrap would be included in the plan.

Beach access signs: Updated beach access signs should be included in the plan. Placement and style should be considered. Content will be provided by the City's environmental planner and Public Works.

Bike racks: The existing bike racks are often full. Sculptural bike racks with additional capacity should be included in the plans. Placement appropriate for adequate capacity as well as free movement around the racks should be considered.

Path lighting: The existing path lighting on the Winterberry drive access is broken. There is no path lighting on the Maple Avenue access path. Lighting on structures adjacent to each path (see Appendix A) provides some illumination but not enough for safety.

Landscaping/Plants: The vegetation along the Winterberry Drive access path requires replacement and updating. The Maple Avenue access path has standard vegetation along the length of the path. The plans should include appropriate plants as recommended by Naples Botanical Garden and/or IFAS Master Gardener.

Education/Coastal highlights signs: Each access point includes an educational sign about sea turtle nesting. In addition, the Winterberry Drive access path includes an educational sign about shore birds and the Maple Ave access path has a sign about shells. The plans should consider additional signs along the length of the path that would provide information highlighting shore ecology and engage beach visitors about wildlife protection.

Art/Murals: Inclusion of murals with the subject of shoreline ecology are being considered for placement along existing walls. Many cities use art and mural to attract visitors, educate visitors, and entertain youth.

Appendix A – Existing Winterberry Drive Corridor Elements

Winterberry Drive access path

The paver pathway is 530 ft long and 8 feet wide and ribbons through the access corridor. The width of the corridor from the fence on the north side of the path to the wall on the south side of the path is 18 feet with plantings alternating on either side along the path.

Photo 1: Entrance – street view



Path entry: The path entry has a bench, 3 trash and 1 recycling receptacle, and 1 bicycle rack.



Transition from paver path to boardwalk: The transition space had a bench, a life jacket station, a shower fixture, and trash receptacles. Poor shower station drainage results in sand piles and slippery algae growth.



Benches: There are three benches on the path: at the entrance, at the transition to the boardwalk, and midway along the path. All three benches are sturdy and in good condition. The benches will remain in current locations and be power washed when needed.

Photo: bench midway along the path



Beach access signs: Existing Beach Access signs.



Bicycle Rack:

The existing bicycle rack provides space for approximately 9 bicycles.



Path lighting:

Existing Path lighting consists of 24 low path lights, 11 of which are currently broken and inoperable. On the east half of the path, 4 lights are on the north side and spaced at 15'. The next 5 lights are on the south side of the path spaced at 15'. The remaining lights are staggered on either side of the path spaced 30' per side or 15' on the stagger.

Lights illuminating the south adjacent property driveway also casts light onto the corridor. There are 9 tall driveway lights spaced approximately 40' apart.

There are several lights illuminating the north adjacent parking lot. These lights cast light on the eastern 1/3 of the corridor.



Evening lighting photos





Landscaping/Plants: There are several varieties of existing hedge shrubs along the fence and wall.





There are also lower ground plantings along the path and under palm trees and a vine along the fence.



Palm trees: There are 35 medium-sized palm trees along the path providing intermittent shade.



Irrigation is installed but exposed along much of the path.



Educational/Coastal Highlight signs:

There are two large signs providing information on local shore birds and sea turtles.



Art/Murals:

The corridor does not currently include an art or mural element. There is a 35-foot stretch of wall along the east portion of the corridor belonging to the adjacent property to the south that currently has the two information signs shown in the photos above. There is an additional 8 feet of wall on the west side of the concrete pedestal and light post.



Appendix B: Existing Maple Avenue Corridor Elements

Maple Avenue access path

The paver path at the Maple Avenue access corridor stretches 435 feet and is 6 feet wide. The path is straight and the 14-foot-wide corridor is lined by a hedge and fence along the entire north side and by wall or fence along the entire south side. There is a substantial shade canopy the entire length of the path.

Street view photo of corridor entrance.



Path entry: The path entry includes 2 benches (one is hidden behind trash container on the left in the photo), a trash receptacle, and an information sign highlighting shells found in this region of the Gulf shore. Two bicycle racks are just past the entry area.



Transition from paver path to boardwalk: The transition area from the paver path to the boardwalk includes a life jacket station and a trash receptacle.

End of boardwalk area: A shower station and 3 trash receptacles are located at the beach end of the boardwalk.

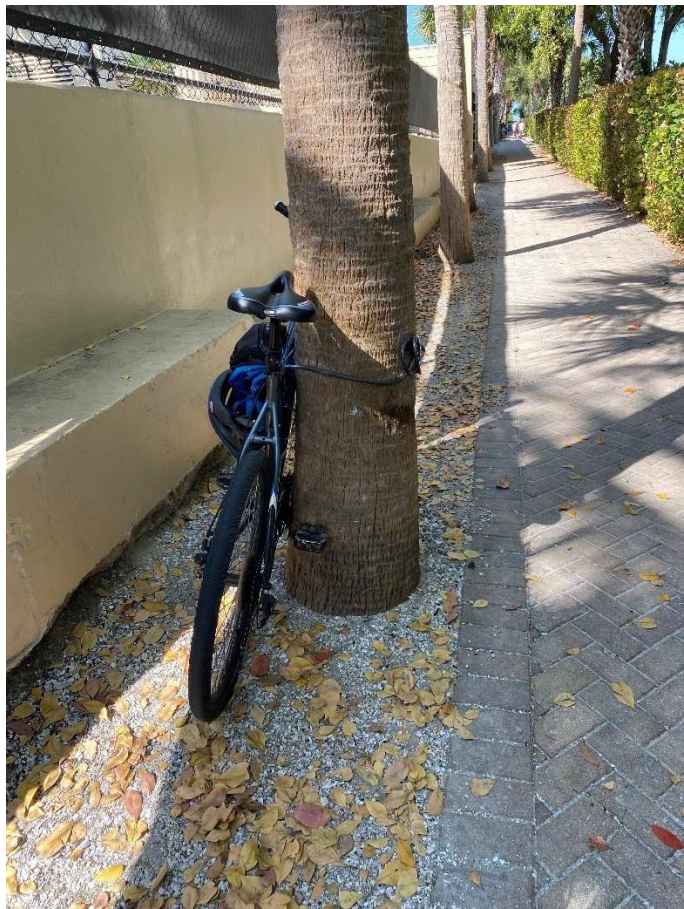
Benches: The two benches at the entrance are the only seating spaces along the path.

Trash and recycling receptacles: Trash receptacles are provided at the entrance and the transition to the boardwalk.

Beach access signs: The beach access sign is shown in the photo of the path entry. In addition, the sign posted by the Marco Island Police Department is shown in that photo.

Bicycle racks: There are two existing bike racks just inside the entrance to the corridor along the south wall. Each rack is 4 feet wide and has 6 feet of clearance on both sides for the bicycle frames. These are often full and bicycles are locked to the grids on the garage windows and palm trees further along the path. There is space for sculptural bicycle locking structures along the south side of much of the path.





Path lighting: There is no path lighting currently, however, the garage wall has 4 bright lights spaced 30 feet apart. These illuminate that portion of the path brightly at night and the remainder of the path is dark.

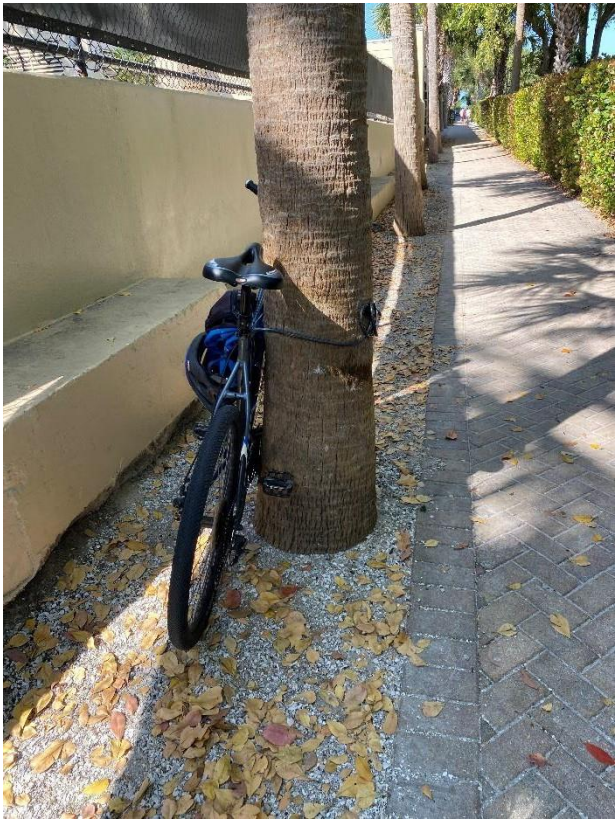


Landscaping/Plants: The fence along the north side of the corridor has a hedge the entire length of the path. There is no vegetation along the south side of the path. There are 42 palm trees along the length of the path providing a substantial shade canopy.



Education/Coastal highlights signs: A sign highlighting Gulf coast shells is installed at the entrance to the corridor and a sign providing information on sea turtles is posted by the boardwalk (see Appendix A for sea turtle sign)

Art/Murals: None currently. There is a 73-foot stretch of wall belonging to the adjacent property to the south and a 22-foot stretch of wall near the entrance behind the bicycle racks (also belonging to adjacent south property).



Appendix C: Examples of Desired Elements









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Florida Burrowing Owls

Your Feathered Neighbors

The Life of an Owl

Burrowing Owls live in open, grassy areas. They dig their own burrows, which can be up to 12 feet long underground. Some owls dig multiple burrows, like the owls in this park! Though there are at least four burrows here, they are all used by the same pair.

At the beginning of the nesting season in February, male owls collect objects from nearby and decorate their burrow with them as part of their courtship. They decorate with natural objects like grass and flowers and animal droppings, and with man-made objects like food wrappers and cigarette butts.

Burrowing Owls mate for life, and they return to the same burrow each year. The female lays up to seven eggs underground in the burrow, and she incubates them for five weeks. Chicks are old enough to start appearing outside the burrow at about two weeks old, and they are able to fly at six weeks of age. Both parents hunt for and feed their chicks and care for them for several months. At the end of the summer, the young owls leave their owl burrow and search for a new home.

Florida Burrowing Owls stay in Florida and do not migrate in the winter. Some owls dig their burrows year-round, but many take shelter in bushes and trees and drain pipes instead.



UF IFAS Extension

Visit burrowingowls.org for more information about Burrowing Owls

Under Threat

Historically, Burrowing Owls were found in the grasslands of Florida. As more humans moved to Florida, most of these grasslands were developed, and now Burrowing Owls can be found in human-modified grassy spaces. Though Burrowing Owls can survive in suburban environments like Marco Island, they are still threatened by habitat loss and disturbance by humans.

On Marco Island, volunteers are protecting Burrowing Owls by marking their burrows. PVC pipe and rope surround the burrow and prevent it from being accidentally collapsed by heavy lawnmowers or people.

Burrowing Owls and their burrows are protected by law, and it is illegal to harm or harass them. The presence of owls does not prevent development, but you do need a permit.

Research and Monitoring

Volunteers from Audubon of the Western Everglades Owl Watch monitor Marco Island's burrows throughout the nesting season. In 2010, volunteers found 193 pairs of owls nesting and counted a total of 418 chicks! This monitoring will help researchers learn how Marco Island's Burrowing Owl population changes over time.



Researchers from the University of Florida are color banding Burrowing Owls across the state. These bands allow researchers and volunteers to identify individual owls and follow their life cycle. If you're helping us learn more about these threatened birds, like how long they live, where they go after they leave their burrow, how far they travel, and how many young they produce in their lifetime...

...then we're especially interested. Take a picture and send it to us at: owls@audubonwewatch.com

Quick Facts:

- Florida Burrowing Owl, *Atotris vociferans holbrooki*
- Found in Main, Texas and Florida
- Digs burrows up to 12 feet long
- Does not migrate
- Eats insects, frogs, lizards
- Parent tolerance - high
- Can be found in open, grassy areas - like at this park!

How can you help?

- Adopt an Owl at www.AudubonWE.org
- Observe owls from a safe distance away
- It's owl season, back up!
- Keep kids away from burrows
- Limit your use of pesticides
- Volunteer with Owl Watch





Be a Better Boater



Reduce your speed, regulate your speed, and when you're near 100%.

As you sit on the water - sailing, fishing, boating, or tubing - you feel a wonderful escape from the usual of everyday life. You can help protect our fragile ecosystems and help take care of our aquatic resources with just a few simple actions:

Look under your boat, motor, and gear for signs of garbage. Use mesh strainers to catch anything that falls overboard. You can help your propeller, rudder, and outboard motor last longer.



Don't throw anything overboard. Plastics and fishing lures can be deadly to wildlife.

Dispose of your garbage. Don't eat, drink, or use alcohol.

Bring a mesh strainer to catch anything that falls overboard.



Know the depth of the water. Turning around can make the water cloudy, harming animals and plants.



Polarized sunglasses help you see the bottom, protecting groundings.



If you run aground, stop, fill your motor, and use pumps, or walk your boat to deeper water.

Check to make sure your boat engine is not leaking. Recycle your oil, and never dump it in a waterway.

Protect the Gentle Giant

Finally, the gentle giant, the West Indian manatee, is a threatened species. A significant number of these slow-moving mammals are killed or injured by motorboats each year, and most manatees carry scars from past collisions. Others are killed when caught in hogwashes and navigation locks, or when they eat or get entangled in discarded manatees' fishing line or hooks.



Loss of habitat is also a serious threat to the manatee's survival. Many grass beds have been destroyed by pollution or dredge spoil to provide improved navigation and human recreation growth. Many areas have experienced severe weather and the manatee's slow rate of reproduction has led to a decline in the future of this marine mammal.



Who Can Help?

- ✓ Use 2000 and newer, all manatee-safe, double-bubble horns.
- ✓ Use caution, or use a buddy system when near mangrove beds.
- ✓ Use caution and responsibility on any outboard motor and propeller.
- ✓ Stay in the shallow channels unless the water is shallow.
- ✓ Do not throw trash, especially alcohol and non-biodegradable fishing lures, in the water.
- ✓ Report dead manatees, dead birds, seals, or large fish - manatees feed on any life in the water.

SAVE A LIFE!

Report manatee and other wildlife sightings to the nearest FWC office or wildlife refuge and report any dead or injured manatees, or any large mammals, please call:

- ✓ 1-888-404-3022
- ✓ FWC on your mobile phone
- ✓ or use VHF channel 10

Observe and Follow All Regulatory Signs



COMMON BIRDS *of Ormond Beach*

ANDY ROMANO BEACHFRONT PARK

For hundreds of years, these were the 'right' whales to hunt. They were slow, lived in coastal waters, and their blubber-rich bodies floated after they were killed. By the 20th century, the population of North Atlantic right whales may have numbered only in the dozens. Today, this unique marine mammal remains in a struggle to escape extinction.









