

RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Alachua County Comprehensive Plan or is currently being updated and revised consistent with the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR). The Comprehensive Plan is updated every seven years and the process takes approximately 2 years to complete. Therefore, the next update begins five years from the last completion. The current Comprehensive Plan update is scheduled to be completed and sent to the Department of Community Affairs for approval by June, 2001. The Comprehensive Plan can also be amended twice a year.

The CAG has worked with the Alachua County Departments of Growth Management, Environmental Protection and Public Works to ensure the CMP's map, vision statement and related goals, objectives and strategies are included in the County's Comprehensive Plan update. The following policy language has been agreed upon by Alachua County Officials. It may be added either to the Conservation, Traffic or Economic Element(s).

Conservation Element, Traffic Element, or Economic Element

Policy xx.

The _____ map series shall depict the FDOT designation of a portion of SR 441 in Alachua County as the Scenic 441 Old Florida Heritage Highway.

Policy xx.

Alachua County shall participate in the preservation and protection of the historic heritage and scenic vistas of the Scenic 441 Old Florida Heritage Highway by considering the Scenic 441 Vision Statement and Map in its review of development proposals and related issues that affect the corridor, and by providing appropriate resources and support to the Corridor Management Council for implementation of the Corridor Management Plan.

In addition to the corridor map, vision, and related goals, objectives, and strategies, the County has the following draft additions and revisions to the Comprehensive Plan that will support the scenic highway designation in the future. The Elements to be modified include the Conservation Element, Transportation Element, Future Land Use, Solid Waste Element, Stormwater Element, Conservation/Aquifer Recharge and the New Recreation and Open Space Element.

The Land Development Code will also be modified consistent with the approved Alachua County Comprehensive Plan.

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**Draft Revisions to the Alachua County
Comprehensive Plan**

CONSERVATION ELEMENT

**3.4. HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES
(BUILT ENVIRONMENT)**

OBJECTIVE 3.4:

Provide a pleasant and aesthetically pleasing environment for living and working by regulating the design and appearance of development. [9J-5.006(3)(b)2,3,9].

Policy 3.4.5

Existing roads which exhibit unique scenic, historic, architectural, cultural, and/or aesthetic qualities due to tree canopy, substantial wooded fringes, lakes, ponds, streams, wetlands, rocky outcrops, **scenic vistas**, wildlife populations, wildflowers and/or other appropriate features shall be identified in the Conservation Element Map Series as provided in Policy 1.1.1. The **development regulations** shall provide standards, including setbacks, limitations on removal of existing vegetation, additional restrictions on erection of signs for development adjacent to adopted scenic roads, and improvements to scenic roads, to preserve their character and to enhance their future quality. [9J-5.006(3)(c)4 and 9J-5.013(2)(c)3]

Traffic Element

GOAL 2:

TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN A ROADWAY NETWORK THAT PROTECTS AND ENHANCES THE SOCIAL AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS WHILE MINIMIZING ANY EXISTING OR POTENTIAL NEGATIVE IMPACTS.

OBJECTIVE 2.1:

Negative impacts upon historic, cultural, and natural resources community should be avoided during the construction, operation, and maintenance of the roadway system.

Policy 2.1.1

Alachua County shall require the use of established agricultural and horticultural standards and criteria to ensure that aesthetics shall be a part of the design, construction, and maintenance of all roadways.

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Policy 2.1.2

Scenic roadways as defined in the Conservation Element shall be preserved and enhanced where possible during the construction or maintenance of roadways. Guidelines established by Ordinance 80-4 (Scenic Roads Ordinance) shall be applied to implement this policy until the land development regulations to implement this plan are adopted.

Policy 2.1.3

The amount of fill placed within surface water bodies or wetlands during the construction of new roadway facilities or the maintenance or improvement of existing facilities shall be minimized in accordance with water management district standards.

Draft Proposed Additions to the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan

Future Land Use Element

7.4. RURAL CLUSTERS

Policy 7.4.5

The county shall consider preparing sub-area plans to explore the nature and heritage tourism potential in rural clusters, including those with historic or natural resources which give them special attractiveness (e.g., rural clusters along the corridor created by the designation of US 441 as a scenic road from Williston Road to the northern Marion County boundary, Cross Creek, Lochloosa, or Melrose.)

Draft Design Language

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Create and Protect Special Places.

Policy 1.2.1

Alachua County shall identify and retain the desirable features of the community which contribute to its special character. Such features may include the natural (such as forests, springs, lakes, and prairies), as well as the social (including families, retirees, students), cultural (historical and archaeological resources), economic (horse farming, silviculture, agriculture, small business, family restaurants, skilled trade), and technological (research and design, medical, university).

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Policy 1.2.2

Alachua County shall require new development and redevelopment to complement and enhance the special character of the community.

OBJECTIVE 1.3

Scenic Resources

Policy 1.3.1

Alachua County shall identify and conserve scenic resources of the community.

Policy 1.3.2

Alachua County shall provide incentives for scenic conservation and good land stewardship.

Policy 1.3.4

Highways and community gateways shall be landscaped to incorporate native vegetation and to reflect themes of local history and culture, accomplished through a multi-tiered system including:

- ◆ the I-75 corridor in conjunction with the I-75 Corridor Council.
- ◆ scenic highways, such as the FDOT Florida Scenic Highway designation of a portion of SR 441.
- ◆ gateway streets in conjunction with the City of Gainesville.

Policy 1.3.5

All forms of outdoor advertising shall be designed and located to minimize adverse impacts on the visual quality of the built and natural environments.

Policy 1.3.6

Infrastructure and utility structures, such as cellular communication, multi-media, water and sewer, and energy generation technologies shall be designed and located to minimize adverse visual impacts on the landscape. Public utilities shall locate underground to the maximum extent possible.

Policy 1.3.7

Alachua County shall promote the link between business and tourism development and conservation of natural, cultural, recreational, heritage, and scenic resources.

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Policy 1.3.8

Alachua County shall set standards to protect, maintain, enhance, and improve the visual quality of the public realm, including civic space, roadways, non-motorized greenways, trails, and river corridors.

Policy 1.3.9

Ensure that site plans, comprehensive plans and other master planning efforts address preservation and enhancement of significant scenic resources.

Policy 1.3.10

Land development regulations shall require measurement of the impact of urban development on canopy overlay, trees, and contiguous significant uplands with the goal of first avoiding, then minimizing, then mitigating that impact. Draft Proposed New Element in the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan

Recreation & Open Space Element

To provide an interconnected recreation and open space system for Alachua County.

Develop and maintain an enhanced system of recreational facilities that consists of a broad range of developed and conserved sites, including passive, active and programmed recreation accessible by citizens of all ages, physical abilities, and socioeconomic backgrounds, integrated by service area throughout the County from the neighborhood to the community scale.

New Policy

By the end of the year 2001, the County shall complete a countywide Recreation Master Plan for meeting future recreation facility and program needs. The Master Plan shall be based on existing and projected demographic characteristics and geographic concentrations of population. The Master Plan shall include a financial component for both capital and maintenance/operations costs. Within twelve (12) months of completion and adoption of the Master Plan, the County shall pursue a comprehensive plan amendment to incorporate the findings of the Master Plan, including adoption of a new level of service standard and revision of Tables.

The County shall maintain and annually update the comprehensive inventory of public and private recreation sites and facilities provided by the Master Plan.

The County shall adopt and maintain, at a minimum, a level of service (LOS) standard for recreation of 3.00 acres of improved recreation sites per 1000 persons in the unincorporated area of Alachua County. The LOS standard shall be applied separately to activity-based and resource-based sites and facilities. The LOS standard shall consider the accessibility of the recreation sites based on the location of the site and the service areas for park types, as set forth in Table 1 of this Element, in relation to the location of population centers. The LOS standard shall be indexed to control for changes resulting from annexation.

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In the case of passive recreation, ARG sees a need for more than 3 acres of improved recreation sites per 1000 persons in the unincorporated areas. Also there should be an LOS for resource-based sites (natural areas). An impact fee for recreation should also be explored. Additionally, non-county maintained land should not be considered when determining LOS standards. Further, recreation sites mandated should be public access. Any private recreation sites in a development should not be counted toward the requirement. The LCAC recommendations and KBN study should be incorporated here.

No project proposed for development shall be issued a Final Development Order until it is demonstrated that the LOS standard for recreation facilities shall be maintained.

The acquisition and development of recreation sites shall be guided by the Master Plan and Table 1 of this Element which sets forth the range of park types, service areas, population served, typical size and typical facilities and site characteristics for different types of recreation sites.

Development of existing recreation sites and acquisition of new recreation sites shall be prioritized based on the Master Plan and shall be consistent with the process identified in the Capital Improvements Element.

Site plans for each recreation site shall be phased to provide improvements among sites in different areas of the County based on needs set forth in the Master Plan and as generally indicated in Tables 19, 20, 24, and 26 of this Element.

The County shall utilize recreation sites and funding mechanisms provided by the County, municipalities, State and Federal Governments, School Board of Alachua County, and private groups to expand the recreational opportunities of Alachua County citizens and to optimize the use of available recreation facilities adding a strategic planning component.

Funding should be somehow mandated, just as funding for law enforcement, etc. is mandated. Again, impact fees should be explored here.

Alachua County shall expand the availability of recreational opportunities by entering into agreements with all providers for the provision of facilities and programs to serve multi-jurisdictional areas based on the Master Plan. These agreements shall address issues that include provision of operations and maintenance, capital improvements and capital funding, liabilities and other appropriate issues.

The County shall create an economically feasible plan to fund provision of recreation facilities, maintenance and programs as part of the Master Plan.

The County shall coordinate efforts with the State and the municipalities to establish a network of recreational trails that would connect significant natural features of the County and provide educational and recreational value to Alachua County citizens. Such a network should be developed in a sustainable manner and include:

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1. Appropriate access to significant geological, archaeological, historical, environmental and recreational features.
2. Trail linkages such as creekside boardwalks, nature trails through hammocks and along prairies, and connections to nature centers, parks and exhibits.

Rail to trails for connective access between recreational sites and activity centers.

Rails to trails should also be for connections from municipality to municipality. The plan to connect natural features should include connections between neighborhoods, development nodes, etc. and should be incorporated with the Bicycle Master Plan currently being developed as part of the 2020 Transportation Plan.

The County shall provide, at a minimum, access via publicly-maintained roads to all County-owned improved recreation facilities. The access road shall be designed to minimize the impact on the ecology.

'Ecology' above should be changed to 'environment'.

The County shall limit or provide alternate routes for public access in environmentally sensitive areas.

The County shall acquire and develop resource-based recreation sites to expand the availability of natural resources for recreational use by Alachua County citizens.

The County shall provide for public use and recreation while maintaining the important features and functions of natural habitats of each site in a manner that minimizes impacts of development on sensitive natural systems.

The County shall promote provision of active and passive special use recreation facilities by the private sector that are available to the public by providing development incentives to be specified in the land development regulations. Such incentives may include residential density bonuses for provisions of recreation facilities and adequate assurance of availability, in perpetuity, to the community intended to be served.

Clarify what a density bonus is so this cannot be construed as promoting lower densities.

The County shall implement the most efficient and effective use of public funds to provide comprehensive recreation programs and opportunities to the public and shall improve the integration of recreational activities among residents of different socioeconomic backgrounds through community recreation programs, e.g. YMCA, Girls Club, Boys Club, etc. The County shall contract with semi-public, other public, and private organizations for such services where it has been demonstrated to be the most beneficial means for providing recreational programs.

Alachua County shall support and promote tourism activities for its residents and visitors which encourage environmental awareness, appreciation of the County's natural, historic and cultural resources, and responsible environmental stewardship.

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ARG suggests language such as ‘support sustainable tourism activities that do not harm the environment or damage habitats’ rather than the proposed ‘promote tourism’.

The County shall require public and private provision of open space to act as intermittent open space, land use separators and recreation areas in urban areas through requirements such as:

1. Open space buffers between different types of uses;
2. Setbacks between individual properties;
3. Provision of common open space, recreational areas and intermittent open space as part of developments and P.U.D.s; and
4. Other measures included in the land development regulations.

Natural barriers such as steeply sloping ridges, sinkhole areas, stream flood plains, and other unsuitable areas for urban development shall be retained as recreational or open space areas. If appropriate, these areas shall be developed for use as trails and where possible used to connect other recreation and open space areas and other developments. The County shall require the retention or establishment of native vegetation within open space buffers and intermittent open spaces as part of new development and redevelopment projects through provisions in the land development regulations.

‘Sinkhole areas’ should be defined as areas with geomorphologic characteristics conducive to sinkhole formation. Also include heritage trees and habitat when delineating areas unsuitable for development. In item number 1 above, a park should also be allowed, in fact even encouraged, as a buffer between different types of uses.

The County Shall develop a multi-modal transportation system to link open space and recreational areas and other recreational facilities within residential areas.

The language here should be changed to reflect what is meant by multi-modal. It is not always necessary to accommodate vehicles when linking open spaces or recreational facilities.

All development proposals in the unincorporated areas shall be evaluated and reviewed to assess their impacts on present or proposed recreational, open space and significant natural areas designated in the Master Plan, the Recreation and Open Space and Conservation Elements. The evaluation shall consider the impact that any new or proposed improvements to transportation corridors will have on the ecology.

All new development and re-development shall require a minimum of twenty percent (20%) landscaping, including areas for developed recreation facilities, park recreation, beautification, usable common open space, and intermittent open space containing native trees and vegetation. The County shall provide in its land development regulations, minimum recreation and open space standards for all new development and redevelopment.

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The 20% requirement should also apply to ROW on County roads, roadway medians and roundabout centers, and power lines and specify the use of native species to reduce the frequency of mowing. Low maintenance ground cover including wildflowers shall be favored over bahia grass. A variety of native trees shall be planted in these areas with the intent of achieving canopy closure over roads, bikeways, and sidewalks in order to create shade, slow traffic, and improve aesthetics of the corridor.

In the last paragraph above, the term ‘common open space’ is an overly-broad term and may be construed in many ways. ARG suggests stronger language to specify those uses that are not allowable under the 20% requirement. Utility corridors or retention ponds shall not be considered open space. Further, the proposed language, ‘all development proposals in the unincorporated areas shall be evaluated...’ does not address how the findings of such reviews shall be applied. Stronger language is needed to clarify that negative impacts on the environment shall result in a prohibition of the proposed work. Also, again change the word ‘ecology’ to environment.

Access to natural resource areas with recreational value shall be sought by the County through provisions for easements, public acquisition and design of recreation projects consistent with environmental integrity, private property rights and public safety.

The County shall develop criteria and methods as part of the land development regulations to restrict transportation corridors through environmentally sensitive lands and to establish and maintain natural open space buffers surrounding environmentally sensitive lands for protection from encroaching development.

In the paragraph above, change ‘restrict transportation corridors’ to ‘prohibit transportation corridors for motorized vehicles.’ There should be stricter requirements for scenic roads, i.e. Bellamy Road must not be compromised in any way.

Development adjacent to nature preserves, wildlife refuges, and recreation areas shall protect the natural character and public benefit of those areas, including scenic and environmental values for the benefit of future generations.

Provide for the establishment and protection of corridor open space areas and greenways to serve the environmental and recreational needs of Alachua County through implementation of Policies 2.3.1 through 2.3.6.

The County shall participate in the development of alternative transportation networks by promoting the appropriate use of corridor open space for recreational trails, e.g. abandoned railways including the Paynes Prairie Rail To Trail, major overhead transmission line right-of-ways, and appropriate drainage easements for bicycle, jogging and bridle paths.

Utility ROWs should be used for bike trails at the very least as they are very efficient and offer excellent connections between neighborhoods and natural areas.

Continue to regulate development along designated scenic roads so that the visual and environmental quality of the corridor is not damaged.

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The County shall seek available State and Federal funding to develop an acquisition program for undeveloped property that creates a system of intermittent open space areas for recreational, open space, and conservation purposes.

As part of the Master Plan, the County shall establish a funded acquisition program with established criteria for prioritizing properties for acquisition, purchase of development rights, or other cost effective means of preserving and protecting natural areas for open space and recreational uses.

Alachua County's land acquisition efforts shall include a commitment to linking open space areas, and creating a network of greenways and greenspaces, which can be managed to support the protection, enhancement and restoration of functional and connected natural systems while providing unique recreational opportunities, including nature-based experiences, for both residents and visitors. The network may include a mix of flow ways, areas subject to flooding, native habitats, recreational trails, and wildlife corridors.

The preceding paragraph is excellent and ARG supports its inclusion without alteration.

Alachua County shall continue to design and develop park and recreational facilities with a focus on the conservation, protection, and restoration of natural resources.

Alachua County shall develop park areas using a minimum of eighty percent (80%) native vegetation.

Alachua County shall continue to design and manage its parks to protect and restore, where possible, native vegetative communities and wildlife habitat.

Alachua County shall evaluate the wildlife and habitat value of each of its parks to determine whether there are critically significant habitat areas within the parks requiring a greater degree of protection than is currently being provided. Activities in the park that may negatively impact the function of these critical areas will be avoided.

Alachua County shall support educational efforts to promote landscape management practices consistent with the protection of wildlife and habitat and native vegetation within County parks and recreational areas.

Transportation Element

Negative impacts upon historic, cultural, and natural resources community shall be avoided during the construction, operation, and maintenance of the roadway system.

Land development regulations shall provide standards for the placement of transportation facilities that address, at a minimum, the impacts to air, surface water and groundwater quality, wildlife, vegetation, natural systems function, noise, and waste disposal.

Land development regulations shall discourage fragmentation of significant natural areas and wildlife and open space corridors.

Additional lanes and improvements for traffic volume shall not be considered in significant natural areas.

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All new travel corridors or travel corridor modifications shall review and include design standards necessary for the benefit of wildlife crossing. Design standards shall include, at a minimum, drainage design standards and Scenic Road standards related to environmental protection.

Enhance the value and beauty of bicycle and pedestrian routes in Alachua County by locating them to take advantage of significant viewpoints, scenic sites, and scenic corridors.

Multi-modal transportation systems should be mandated throughout the county in the interest of human health, energy conservation, and aesthetics. The speed and volume of automobile traffic shall be limited in favor of other modes in transportation corridors skirting or passing through natural areas.

Future Land Use Element

The County shall recognize unique land qualities and adopt specific planning objectives for special areas.

Ensure that master plans and other planning efforts include preservation and enhancement of significant scenic resources.

Land development regulations shall require measurement of the impact of urban development on canopy overlay, trees, and contiguous significant uplands with the goal of first avoiding, then minimizing, then mitigating that impact.

Solid Waste Element

No new truck routes shall cross significant natural uplands without critical review of impacts on contiguous habitat characteristics.

The County shall require the equipment used in collection and transportation of solid waste to contain the waste securely.

Incentives and charges and existing/emergent technologies shall be used to reduce solid waste input to landfills by 50% within 5 years. Savings due to reduced haulage costs, grants, and other revenue shall be used to reestablish composting operations, increase recycling, co-generation, and other means of reducing solid waste.

Stormwater Element

Conserve and enhance the use of drainageways where appropriate as wildlife corridors which allow the passage of wildlife between natural areas and throughout the County, as well as providing wildlife habitat characteristics including food, water, cover, breeding, nesting, resting, or wintering areas.

The permeability of the soil as well as the anticipated runoff shall be used in determining the volume of stormwater retention areas. The use of permeable surfaces for drives and parking shall be mandated and the volume of retention areas reduced accordingly.

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Conservation/Aquifer Recharge

Stormwater design criteria shall exceed County, State, and WMD design criteria for the 100year/24 hour event where contiguous habitat can be connected and wildlife mobility may be enhanced through oversized drainage culverts both in the flood zone and immediately above flood zone where roads are necessary for access to property or are included in the five (5) year schedule of capital improvements to provide alternative access when existing culverts are flooded. Retrofitting for stormwater quality treatment, consistent with the FDER, applicable WMD, and County stormwater rules, shall be required for existing stormwater discharge facilities when significant site plan modifications are proposed resulting in increases in density or intensity of use or pollution loading. The owner or developer of a new development or existing development that is being expanded shall be responsible for the monitoring and maintenance of the quality of the stormwater associated with that development unless the County formally assumes such responsibility. The owner or developer shall be responsible for the preparation and implementation of a monitoring and maintenance plan acceptable to the County.

Language must be added to address how the monitoring and maintenance plan will be handled once the original owner or developer is no longer involved.

As part of watershed management plans, connectivity of floodways, habitats, dependent wildlife and their mobility shall be accommodated when design criteria are applied consistent with policies regarding stormwater and drainage elements and policies.

The County hereby designates those lands within the County's jurisdiction lying within the one hundred (100)-year floodplain as an environmentally sensitive area. Within these areas, federal, state, and water management district regulations shall apply at a minimum and the following provisions shall also apply:

When public utilities and transportation routes are necessarily located in or near wetlands, environmentally sensitive lands or contiguous uplands, the design and construction shall be accomplished not only as to minimize adverse impact, but to mitigate impacts by enhancing floodway and habitat connectivity and wildlife mobility by adopting Scenic Road Ordinance standards and criteria and/or stormwater design criteria for the 100 year/24 hour storm event.

The mitigative management of threatened and endangered species, including relocations and the application of stormwater design and Scenic Road environmental standards for connectivity and species mobility, shall be permitted in Alachua County only if consistent with applicable regulations and recommendations of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, or other appropriate State or Federal agencies.

The function of natural areas in filtering runoff, recharging the aquifer, and absorbing shall be the focus of studies aimed at creating appropriate incentives for preservation similar to existing conservation easement incentives.