



Executive Summary

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Local governments are required by Florida Statute to periodically prepare an Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR), which addresses the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. The EAR is intended to serve as a summary audit of growth management decisions that a local government has undertaken, and identify changes that may be needed to address the local government's needs for the next planning horizon. The report is based on the County's analysis of major issues to further community goals consistent with statewide minimum standards.

Additionally, the EAR evaluates and assesses the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Plan in accomplishing its adopted objectives as they relate to the issues, and includes suggested modifications or amendments that may be needed to update the Plan and its Elements including reformulated objectives, policies and standards. Local governments are also required to address, as part of the EAR, School Planning, impacts to Coastal High Hazard Areas (CHHA), land use and water supply planning, and the financial feasibility of the Plan.

The contents of the proposed EAR reflect the Department of Planning, Zoning & Building's best interpretation of the major issues to be addressed, and the scope of work to be accomplished. All changes made as a result of public hearings are considered recommendations to be considered for adoption by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC).

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation included formal and informal scoping meetings with participation of numerous internal and external stakeholders; also, four public workshops of the Land Use Advisory Board (LUAB) and the BCC, and the required Transmittal and Adoption Public Hearings. Community input was instrumental for identifying the major issues to be addressed in the EAR, and has been requested for the preparation and review of the EAR report. Outreach and public participation have also been achieved through the use of a web site created for the County's EAR process. The site contains links to all EAR documents, public meetings and workshops, the County's EAR newsletter, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) EAR web site, the DCA's EAR web site, and other related web links.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Palm Beach County has consistently ranked within the top three counties for new job growth in Florida. The result is that over one-half million people are employed in the County, with the largest job gains in professional and business services. Many of these persons work in one of the County's three major billion-dollar industries: tourism, construction and agriculture. Cluster industries and other industries targeted for economic development include agriculture and food processing, communications and information technology, medical products, business and financial services, aerospace and engineering, tourism, recreation and entertainment, small business, and the marine industry. A new cluster industry, science and technology, is being added to the cluster industries to reflect the presence of The Scripps Research Institute (TSRI) in the County. In order to enhance these cluster industries, it is essential to maintain a base of industrial land use throughout the County to support economic developments.

POPULATION ANALYSIS

The University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) projected in 2003 that by 2025, another 526,000 people would be added to the County's population. By 2025, the projected population would be 1.7 million, which can be accommodated on developable lands under the current adopted Plan. However, the rate of growth will decline from the current 2.4% to about 1.5% after 2020 as the County approaches build-out within the Urban Service Area.

Housing stock increased by over 97,000 new housing units in eight years. The development market was very stable between 1995 and 2003, with an average addition of 10,000 units per year, until after 2000. Recent development activities have surged to nearly 15,000 permits being drawn in 2003. Housing costs increased by 66% for single-family homes, and 75% for multi-family homes during the eight-year period. As a result, affordable housing is becoming a rarity in Palm Beach County. The current population allocation model anticipates faster growth in the period of 2004-2010, then growth should taper off as the County approaches buildout in 2025.

LAND USE ANALYSIS

The County adopted the Managed Growth Tier System (MGTS) in 1999, to readdress the framework for managing growth to protect the future quality of life. The Tier System recognizes the County's diversity by delineating five distinct geographic tiers or regions, including: Urban/Suburban, Exurban, Rural, Agricultural Reserve, and the Glades. Each Tier has characteristics common to itself, such as development patterns, densities/intensities, and public service availability. The System protects natural resources, and guides land use planning and design decisions, by considering the community's physical and social needs. Strategies have been adopted to: 1) Protect and enhance each Tier's unique characteristics; 2) Prioritize and coordinate the delivery of public services for each Tier; 3) Protect and preserve open space and natural resources; and 4) Prevent suburban sprawl. Some modifications to the Tier System are being considered to address changed conditions (See Issues 1, 4, and the Future Land Use Element). Based on the Tier System and adopted future land uses, the County continues to have a significant supply of developable land east of the Glade's Agricultural Production (AP) area to locate projected growth.

ISSUE ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents an evaluation of six major issues identified by internal and external stakeholders and the public, and agreed upon by the County and the DCA.

ISSUE 1 – Deals with the ability of the Managed Growth Tier System (MGTS) and future land uses to accommodate future population and development activities.

The MGTS was developed to address the future of the County with tools to facilitate the incorporation of new situations, and to adapt to the needs and requirements of new opportunities or constraints. The general consensus is that the MGTS continues to be valid as a planning tool, even with the anticipated presence of The Scripps Research Institute (TSRI) in the County and the expected positive impacts and development pressures prompted by this event. Developable areas east of the Glades AP area can absorb projected population beyond the year 2025. Short-term solutions to recent challenges include the possible extension of the Urban/Suburban Tier and the Urban Service Area to the planned Biotechnology Research Park.

The main recommendations are thus to maintain the Tier System with adjustments to address changed conditions in diverse areas of the County; to further protect the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) from encroachment by urban and suburban development; and to continue monitoring the events currently evolving in the central western area of the County with the goal of providing a comprehensive approach to growth management in this critical region of the County.

ISSUE 2 – Deals with the effectiveness of the County’s infill development and redevelopment initiatives and comprehensive plan policies.

As the County approaches buildout, it must better utilize existing developable lands within the County. Infill development and redevelopment offer this opportunity. To date, many of the provisions in the Comprehensive Plan that support redevelopment have not been fully utilized. To better accomplish redevelopment and revitalization goals, the County recommends reorganizing the existing Redevelopment and Revitalization Overlay (RRO) to include the proposed Urban Redevelopment Area (URA) and all Countywide Community Revitalization Team (CCRT) areas only. The URA is a specific geographic area delineated in the County’s Comprehensive Plan for urban redevelopment. The URA must be within an Urban Service Area and contain no more than 40 percent developable vacant land. The Plan will also contain specific objectives and policies that specify actions and programs to promote urban redevelopment. This designation would also allow the County to consider adopting a Transportation Concurrency Exception Area (TCEA) for the URA.

ISSUE 3 - Deals with the effect of development trends and policies in the Plan on the availability of housing options for moderate, low and very low income families and the County’s workforce.

The rapid rise in land and housing prices in the County has a significant negative impact on the affordability and availability of housing for moderate and low-income families. To address this situation, the County’s affordable housing activities should continue to focus on directing programs and activities that ensure supply is provided to meet demand, maintain existing units through policies to eliminate substandard housing through code enforcement, and minimize displacement through relocation housing. The County is working on the establishment of the voluntary Workforce Housing Program, which will provide an opportunity for new residential developments to provide a percentage of housing units for low-to-moderate income households. The County should also continue to implement existing geographic dispersal policies to avoid the concentration of affordable housing in specific areas of the County, and the creation or preservation of adequate housing to meet special population needs.

ISSUE 4 - Deals with evaluating the impacts of development on natural resources, agricultural land and rural areas.

In order to sustain agricultural land and rural areas, and to evaluate the impacts of development on natural resources, the County should: 1) Continue support for the protection of agricultural uses in the AP area of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), and strengthen, where necessary, language to confirm the County’s desire to maintain agricultural production; 2) Consider performing an area-wide evaluation/needs analysis of the entire EAA as well as reviewing the appropriateness of this area to support Everglades restoration efforts; 3) Continue to promote, support and implement programs and activities throughout the entire County that

are associated with agriculture preservation; 4) Strengthen existing rural design measures and develop new mechanisms that will help maintain the rural character for development on rural lands; and, 5) Continue to provide protection to our natural resources and continue engaging in Everglades restoration initiatives.

ISSUE 5 - Deals with the assessment of transportation planning programs and comprehensive plan policies to address the impacts of urban growth.

This issue focuses on working towards encouraging land use patterns that will shorten or eliminate automobile trips. Recommendations include: 1) An evaluation to determine whether smaller mixed-use projects on transportation nodes shall be encouraged; 2) The County's support of municipal efforts to develop Transit Oriented Developments (TOD); 3) Modifying the policy on corridor master plans to provide for a more realistic time frame; 4) Amending policy to encourage appropriate densities and intensities in the URA and other appropriate areas; and 5) Committing to provide one or more TCEAs or other Level of Service (LOS) exceptions for the URA.

ISSUE 6 - Deals with improving intergovernmental coordination between the County and other local governments and governmental entities.

Due to the well-organized and existing channels of communication, there is no need for an additional entity to increase intergovernmental coordination in the County. However, in order to enhance existing programs, the following recommendations could be explored: 1) An Intergovernmental Plan Amendment Review Committee (IPARC) database, with the County providing technical support to the IPARC Clearinghouse regarding proposed plan amendments; 2) An IPARC Annexation Review; 3) An Ad-hoc Sub-Committee on Infill and Redevelopment; and 4) Future Annexation Area Refinement.

ELEMENT ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section includes analyses, conclusions and recommendations for anticipated revisions to the Comprehensive Plan's Elements.

Future Land Use

Revisions to this Element may be necessary to implement Issue recommendations addressing: 1) Tier boundary modifications; 2) The splitting of the Glades Tier into the Glades Communities Tier and the Glades Protection Tier; and 3) Recommendations in other Issues affecting provisions in this element.

Transportation Element

The Transportation Element is not completely consistent with new state requirements. These deficiencies will be addressed in amendment rounds subsequent to the EAR. The main recommendations to this Element are to correct all statutory deficiencies, to continue in the Corridor Master Planning effort, and to work towards creating a TCEA Points System. In general, the Transportation Element has been successful in the process of coordination between stakeholders, helping to address mass transit needs, and creating a framework for dealing with transportation issues and services; however, there are still concerns regarding congestion and capacity issues.

Housing Element

In spite of its accomplishments, housing affordability to target groups is still problematic. Lack of complete success in achieving some of the Element's policy initiatives can be attributed to: 1) The rapid rise in land and housing prices. If these trends continue, they will have a significant negative impact on the affordability and availability of housing for moderate and low-income families; 2) An emphasis on homeownership as opposed to the development of affordable rental units; 3) Limited funding resources; and 4) Limited staff resources.

Utility Element - Potable Water Sub-Element

In the recent past, the BCC decided not to provide potable water and wastewater services to the Rural Service Area (RSA) unless an existing or anticipated public health hazard was being prevented. The lack of County participation as a service provider in the RSA created a void in long-term utility planning, which resulted in inefficient service in the RSA, overlapping utility jurisdictions and absence of written agreements defining service area boundaries. The unintended consequence was that other service providers extended potable service lines to the unincorporated areas, in particular, to the western communities, serving individual non-residential projects. The County's steady growth in the unincorporated area, and in the central western communities, necessitates local utility service providers to clearly delineate their service area boundaries through written agreements. This element is being revised to resolve internal inconsistencies between policies in the Comprehensive Plan, and also to designate the County as the service provider for any unincorporated area in the County not served by other providers.

Utility Element - Solid Waste Sub-Element

Long-range planning for the Solid Waste Authority (SWA) is accomplished primarily through an annual evaluation of remaining disposal capacity at the existing landfill. The current year's analysis indicates that the existing site will provide disposal capacity for the County until approximately 2023, including the growth anticipated from the Biotechnology Research site. Beyond the capacity in the existing landfill, the SWA owns a 1600-acre parcel in the western portion of the County in the EAA that could serve as a disposal site when the existing landfill is depleted. The time horizon to initiate the development of plans for the western site is about ten years. Assuming the use of the EAA site, there is no long-range deficiency in disposal capacity for the County.

Utility Element - Stormwater Management Sub-Element

The County should attempt to determine if standards for new development should be upgraded to provide safer road conditions. The County also recognizes the need to retrofit stormwater management facilities within some existing developed areas, where such areas are precluded from meeting current regulatory standards. Since infill and redevelopment are critical to balancing the settlement pattern, and due to the cost and complexity of drainage layouts, a new approach is needed to provide for drainage on a larger scale, instead of the current piecemeal approach that has not yielded the appropriate LOS for problem drainage areas.

Recreation and Open Space Element

The Parks and Recreation Department has met the concurrency requirements, and expects to maintain their responsibility to provide sufficient parks and recreation activities for the citizens of Palm Beach County. The Department's future Capital Improvement Plan includes funding for over a thousand acres of additional regional park development, some of which should provide increased water access. However, the County must find a balance between the need for additional access to water facilities and the goal of protecting water and other natural resources from the impact of overuse.

Conservation Element

The County will continue to be committed to protecting environmentally sensitive lands, and to dedicate resources towards the acquisition and restoration of upland and wetland areas. Amendments to this element may be needed to implement the recommendations listed in Issues 1 and 4.

Coastal Management

In 2003, the Division of Emergency Management redefined the hurricane evacuation zones in the County due to the availability of enhanced land elevation data. This redefinition affects the boundaries of the CHHA and the hurricane vulnerability zone in the Comprehensive Plan. The definitions for Hurricane Evacuation Zones, Hurricane Vulnerability Zone, and CHHA are currently being added or modified. A redefinition, to include Hurricane Category Two to the CHHA, is also currently in process. A map update of the Coastal Planning Area, including land uses and resources, is still needed. (See the Special Topics section for an assessment of property rights impacts.)

Intergovernmental Coordination Element

The Intergovernmental Coordination Element (ICE) will be amended to include an objective that ensures the adoption of Interlocal agreements within one year of adoption of the amended ICE.

Capital Improvement Element

The Capital Improvement Element (CIE) works well to prioritize capital projects and maintain Levels of Service. No amendments or other revisions to this element are necessary.

Economic Element

As competing interests vie for available non-residential land, for industrial and agricultural uses, it is important to update the County's economic vision. In the past, the County has focused on strengthening certain industries. While some of these industries are growing and some are encountering constraints, broader issues remain, such as identifying which industries will continue to be economic priorities and how limited amounts of industrial land will be maintained and developed in the future. In order to refine the County's economic objectives and better address the long-term health of the County's economy, a visioning process may be useful.

Fire-Rescue Element

The main recommendations for this Element are: 1) In terms of structures, urban design features should address unique fire protection needs and access when promoting infill and redevelopment; 2) Any transportation management systems explored should include the needs of emergency responders; and 3) Due to confusing service areas, fire-rescue service delivery issues should be addressed in a more cohesive manner, with the cooperation of all municipal and county entities.

Public Schools Facilities Element

As the County pursues a policy of infill and redevelopment in its Core Area, a discussion may be needed to identify the provision of public school facilities within the urban area. Potential impacts on school concurrency, from the location of TSRI into the County and new developments in the Central Western Communities area, will have to be monitored.

Health and Human Services Element

This Element is optional, and no proposed corrective actions or amendments were identified.

Library Services Element

This element is also optional, and no amendments or other revisions to the Element are necessary.

Historic Preservation Element

No proposed corrective actions or amendments were identified for this optional Element. However, to update the support documentation for the Element, a new survey of historical structures should be considered, since the last survey was completed in 1990.

SPECIAL TOPICS

SCHOOL PLANNING AND COORDINATION

Local governments are required to comply with new school planning and coordination requirements. However, Palm Beach County, the School Board, and twenty-six municipalities are exempt, due to the implementation of school concurrency in the County in 2002. School concurrency is a growth management tool aimed at ensuring that construction of new schools keeps pace with the construction of new homes, and Palm Beach County is the first jurisdiction in the state to complete and successfully implement this process.

All issues related to concurrency appear to have been handled effectively, and the School District should reach the adopted LOS Countywide in the 2004-2005 school year. To meet the demand for educational facilities the School Board, through the Capital Facilities Plan, has built twenty-five new schools, twenty replacement schools and remodeled three schools, adding 35,000 seats since FY 1999. Also, processes are in place to coordinate efforts on population and student enrollment projections, and to coordinate and collaborate in the planning and siting of public school facilities.

COASTAL HIGH HAZARD AREAS

In May 2002, the Florida Legislature amended the Florida Statutes to require "If any of the jurisdiction of the local government is located within the CHHA, an evaluation of whether any past reduction in land use density impairs the property rights of current residents when redevelopment occurs." The County has policies in the Plan that address property rights of residents balanced with public safety considerations. An evaluation of past reduction in land use densities since the adoption of the 1989 Plan revealed that the property rights of the residents were not impaired.

LAND USE AND WATER SUPPLY PLANNING

Each local government that is responsible for its own water supply must now include in its comprehensive plan's potable water element a 10-year Work Plan for building water supply facilities necessary to serve existing and new development. Taking into consideration the regional water supply plan efforts of the water management districts, these Work Plans must project future water supply demands and identify the water supply sources available to meet those demands.

Palm Beach County was selected as one of five pilot communities in the state to implement this requirement. The final product addressed the County's 20-year water supply facility needs, consistent with its Water Use Permit, and the Planning Division is preparing amendments to incorporate the 20-Year Water Supply Work Plan into the Comprehensive Plan. The Work Plan identifies alternative water supply sources and provides reasonable assurance that the conditions of its 20-Year Water Use Permit are met for the duration of the plan, as documented in 5-year intervals. The County's Work Plan is being used as one of the models for similar-sized local governments in the state. Recently approved legislation moved the deadline to complete the Work Plan to December 2006.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY

For the EAR, an analysis was required of the financial feasibility of implementing the Comprehensive Plan and of providing needed infrastructure to achieve and maintain adopted LOS standards, and the ability to sustain concurrency management systems through the CIE. The Comprehensive Plan contains LOS for community infrastructure facilities that the County provides services for. Based on an annual analysis of LOS, the Office of Financial Management and Budget (OFMB) proposes any necessary amendments to the County's annual budget for public facilities, to maintain current LOS or to increase them where needed.

The financial feasibility analysis indicated that in the future, capital improvements will be funded both by a growing population and increasing property values. As the County approaches build-out, impact fee collections will likely be affected, but the need for new capital improvements funded from impact fees should decline substantially. All facilities have been found to be financially feasible, in the short and the long term, and with no infrastructure backlogs.

CONSISTENCY WITH STATE AND REGIONAL PLANS

The analysis of the consistency study of state and regional plans is included at the end of Chapter 4, Special Topics, and summarized on Table 4-7.

For additional information on the Palm Beach County EAR, please visit our web site at: <http://www.pbcgov.com/pzb/planning/ear/ear.htm>

To view, print or download the EAR Report, select the **EAR Report – New** icon on the EAR web site.