

THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA



**ADOPTED BY THE HERNANDO
COUNTY LOCAL PLANNING
AGENCY ON JUNE 12, 1995;
AMENDED NOVEMBER 13, 1995**

**HERNANDO COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
20 N. MAIN STREET, ROOM 262
BROOKSVILLE, FL 34601**

**352-754-4057
FAX 352-754-4420**

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE HERNANDO COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

To provide for and encourage public participation in the comprehensive planning process, the main purpose of this document is to set forth the procedures for ensuring substantial and effective public participation in the comprehensive planning process. The objectives of this document are:

- ◆ To establish public participation procedures that comply with all applicable statutory requirements;
- ◆ To ensure ample public participation in the evaluation and appraisal of the comprehensive plan; and,
- ◆ To provide an informational/procedural guide to let the public know how they may participate in the County's comprehensive planning process.

The process described in this document implements the procedures adopted in Chapter 23, Article II of the Hernando County Code of Ordinances. Further, the County's Comprehensive Plan contains procedures for monitoring and evaluation of the Plan. These monitoring and evaluation procedures will remain as part of the adopted Comprehensive Plan and will build upon the foundation provided by the Public Participation Process described in this document.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Relevant laws governing the public participation process in the development of the County's comprehensive plan and amendments are contained in Chapter 163, Part II, Florida Statutes (Local Government Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulation Act), and Chapter 9J-5, Florida Administrative Code (Minimum Criteria for Review of Local Government Comprehensive Plans and Determinations of Compliance).

It is the intent of the Legislature that the public participate in the comprehensive planning process to the fullest extent possible. Section 163.3181, F.S. requires local governments to adopt procedures designed in the course of providing effective public participation in the comprehensive planning process, and to provide real property owners with notice of all official actions that will regulate the use of their property. These procedures should provide for the broad dissemination of the proposals and alternatives, opportunity for written comments, public hearings, provisions for open discussion, communications programs, information services, and consideration of and

response to public comments. Chapter 163, F.S., is more specific in the requirements for public hearings; however, it gives the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) and Local Planning Agency (LPA) considerable latitude in establishing their public participation process.

Rule 9J-5.004, F.A.C, reiterates the above requirements in more detail, and directs that local government body and the local planning agency adopt procedures for public participation.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The strategies discussed below will be used to increase public knowledge and understanding of the County's comprehensive planning process. These strategies will also be instrumental in providing opportunities for the public to contribute in development of the planning program. One or more strategies will be employed throughout the process. Some of the strategies will be utilized more often at certain stages of the process.

Public workshops/Meetings

Public workshops/meetings will be used by the LPA and BCC to educate the public on the planning process, growth management and related issues, and land development regulations. It will also be used to receive public input and any comments regarding the need to revise the County's Comprehensive Plan. It also can serve to broaden the perceptions of participants, identify commonly perceived community needs and priorities, facilitate compromise, and contribute to increased interest in activities. Public workshops/meetings would be suited for providing public education as well as for receiving public input. This strategy will also provide the LPA and BCC members to respond to written and oral comments from the public.

Public Hearings

Chapter 163, F.S. and Chapter 9J-11, F.A.C. establish minimum public hearing requirements for the BCC and LPA when adopting or amending the Comprehensive Plan and EAR. The LPA and BCC will meet, and whenever necessary exceed, these minimum public hearing requirements. During consideration of amendments to the County's Comprehensive Plan and adoption of the EAR, real property owners will be put on notice through advertisement in a newspaper of general circulation in the area, pursuant to the applicable public notice provisions of Chapter 163, F.S. and Chapter 9J-11, F.A.C.

Further, public hearings will be used to receive public comments and the opportunity to respond to public's concerns and comments.

Local News Media

The news media will be kept informed of the comprehensive planning process. The planning Staff will send news releases to the local newspapers and local radio station to inform the public of future LPA and BCC public workshops/meetings and hearings.

Media publicity will offer an excellent method of reaching a large number of people and interested citizens are given the opportunity to participate.

Newsletters/Leaflets

The newsletters/leaflets are an excellent method of informing and educating the public about planning and related issues that citizens may find confusing or uninteresting when discussed in a technical document or at a public workshop/meeting or hearing. It also can provide public workshop/meeting and hearing dates, locations, times, and planning activities.

Written Comments

Chapter 163.3181, F.S., requires that the public participation procedure shall provide for an opportunity for written comments. The LPA and BCC shall announce at all meetings that written comments will be accepted throughout the planning process. Written comments will assist the LPA and BCC in identifying concerns and positions of various individuals and groups. Written comments received by the Planning Department will be compiled and made available to the LPA and BCC for their consideration. Further, a period of public comment will be scheduled for each LPA and BCC workshops/meetings and hearings.

Additional Information

Draft documents, newsletters/leaflets and other information may be available to the public at designated locations such as public offices and libraries. Additional information will be available from the Hernando County Planning Department.

PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

1. The Clerk of the Circuit Court or designated appropriate Planning Staff member shall be responsible for implementing the notice requirements of Section 163, Florida Statutes, as amended and Rules 9J-5 and 9J-11, Florida Administrative Code, as amended. Advertisement shall also advise that interested parties may appear at the meeting to be heard regarding the transmittal or adoption of proposed Comprehensive Plan, Plan Amendment, or Evaluation and Appraisal (EAR).
2. News releases will be sent to the local newspapers and local radio station to inform the public of LPA and BCC workshops/meetings and hearings on proposed comprehensive plan, plan amendments, or EAR. At a minimum the news release will include the time, date, place, subject, and location of where the packets could be reviewed by the public.
3. The Planning Department Staff will prepare a brief, written, informational leaflet on

proposed comprehensive plan, plan amendments, or EAR, which will be available to the public at designated locations such as public libraries and public offices, and will identify a source and telephone number for additional information. The Planning Department will maintain a mailing list and distribute the information to local agencies, community groups, civic associations, and interested individuals.

4. The Planning Staff will provide from time to time informational documents prior to workshops/meetings and hearings on planning issues to the public. These documents will be made available to the public.
5. The Planning Department Staff will provide copies of proposed comprehensive plan, plan amendments and EAR to public libraries, aside from copies available at the office of the Planning Department, for the public's review.
6. The Local Planning Agency (LPA) and the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) shall announce at all meetings that written comments will be accepted throughout the planning process. Written comments addressed to the LPA and BCC members may be sent to the following location:

Hernando County Planning Department
Re: Comprehensive Planning
Government Center/Administrative Building
20 North Main Street, Room 262
Brooksville, Florida 34601

Written comments received by the Planning Department will be included in the packets for the LPA and BCC's workshops/meetings and hearings.

7. A period of public comment will be scheduled for each LPA and BCC workshops/meetings and hearings.
8. The LPA and BCC will give priority to written comments previously received. These written comments will be entered into the record.
9. The LPA and BCC will monitor all written and verbal comments via the Planning Department. The Planning Staff will keep the LPA and BCC apprised of these comments at workshops/meetings and hearings. The LPA and BCC will encourage input at all meetings.
10. Prior to the LPA's recommendation of action on a proposed comprehensive plan, plan amendment, or EAR to the BCC, the LPA may, as deemed necessary by the LPA, hold workshop(s) on the issue. As part of the recommendation process for a proposed comprehensive plan, plan amendment, or EAR, the LPA shall hold at least one (1) public

hearing. When developing a new comprehensive plan, EAR, or amendments pursuant to an EAR, the LPA may elect to hold a joint workshop(s) with the Board of County Commissioners.¹

11. To the extent possible and feasible, within the guidelines of Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, as amended, the LPA and BCC, assisted by the Planning Staff, shall consider and provide response to all public comments.
12. The Planning Staff will prepare a newsletter periodically informing and educating the public of the comprehensive planning process, on-going planning efforts, future workshops, meetings, and hearings.

¹Amended by the Local Planning Agency on November 13, 1995.