

**Hernando County Draft 2040 Comprehensive Plan
October 3, 2017 Workshop Comments**

Commissioner Holcomb

QUESTION/COMMENT: Current distribution of Conservation (about 30%) and agriculture (about 24%) provides a good land use platform for the County.

Response: The Draft 2040 Plan as a whole, especially the Future Land Use Element and Future Land Use Map, retains the current pattern as the guide for overall land use character going forward.

QUESTION/COMMENT: This is a strategic plan format intended to be a guide at the general level.

Response: Agreed. The Plan is a guiding document that, taken as a whole, can be used to continue to provide direction for future growth and development.

QUESTION/COMMENT: Millennials may be looking for a different housing choice, smaller lots, and commuting options. With some regional transit-type options, Hernando County may be able to offer an affordable quality home choice for millennials working not just in the county, but in the region.

Response: The following strategies in the Draft 2040 Plan acknowledge the need to attract a workforce through quality-of-life amenities and also provide a framework of regional transportation that includes transit, park and ride, fixed guideway and other travel modes.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Strategy 3.01A(1): The convenient and efficient movement of workers to and from job sites should be prioritized through a multi-modal transportation network that includes transit and pedestrian/bicycle improvements and enhancements, and, an efficient roadway network.

Strategy 3.01A(2): The County will consider land use policies to attract and retain a balanced workforce through:

- a. provision of affordable housing choices;
- b. provision of quality-of-life amenities;
- c. provision of a multi-modal transportation network;
- d. investment in quality education and job training.

TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

- Strategy 5.01A(4):** The 2040 Transit Plan of the LRTP is coordinated with the Future Land Use Map in order to provide safe, convenient, aesthetic and functional transit connectivity on a local and regional basis.
- Strategy 5.01A(5):** The County’s long-term multi-modal transportation framework of roadway, transit, bicycle and pedestrian movement guided by the LRTP is designed to plan for multi-modal opportunities in existing infill areas, redevelopment areas, and Centers and Corridors described in the Future Land Use Element of this Plan, and, to promote economic development initiatives.
- Strategy 5.01A(6):** The County should seek opportunities to diversify, integrate and strengthen the multi-modal transportation system by considering multi-functional corridors on rights-of-way (road, rail, and utilities) and the accommodation of existing and future technology (e.g., charging stations) in the design of public spaces.
- Strategy 5.01F(3):** Transit system design standards should be implemented at appropriate locations as part of the development review process and transportation work program including such features as:
- a. ADA-compliant accommodations at all transit stops;
 - b. transit amenities accommodating multi-modal users;
 - c. incorporation of transit bulb-outs or pull-outs in street and development layouts;
 - d. sidewalk and street accommodations that facilitate pedestrian movements;
 - e. appropriate standards for transit connection points, including amenities and park and ride facilities.
- Strategy 5.01F(4):** Long-term transit system planning should be coordinated with land use and economic development, with special emphasis on fixed guideway, rail, and rapid bus transit station locations, and, on local and inter-county bus transfer stations in accordance with adopted regional plans and programs.
- Strategy 5.01F(7):** Planning for local transit service will be coordinated with regional plans developed by the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority (TBARTA) to capitalize on economic development opportunities for the County.

Commissioner Alloco

QUESTION/COMMENT: We appear to have adequate coastal protections but we could look into the “no discharge” idea if it is feasible. Is it regulated already?

Response: County ordinances designate as a “nuisance” any vessel discharge that is in violation of state or federal law and, as such, subjects the vessel owner to potential enforcement action (Art. V, Sec. 7-98). The discharge of untreated sewage from boats into the waters of the State is prohibited by both state law (F.S. 403.413) and federal law (Clean Water Act). The discharge of graywater (e.g., kitchen, bath/shower water) is not prohibited by state/federal law. County ordinances require any dock system in the Riverine Protection Area capable of supporting ten (10) or more vessels to have a sewage pump-out facility (Art. VI, Sec 23.208). There is sufficient language in the Coastal Management Element to support any environmental protections that the Board may wish to consider beyond those that already exist. In addition, the Draft 2040 Plan includes the following strategy:

COASTAL MANAGEMENT ELEMENT

Strategy 11.03A(3): Review of new and redeveloped marinas in the Coastal Zone will include assurance that they:

- a. are compatible with surrounding land uses;
- b. have a hurricane preparedness plan as part of their development approval;
- c. are located so as to provide continuous deep water access such that natural bottom damage is not caused by the proposed boat sizes and types;
- d. meet Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Clean Marina standards especially for water quality and spill response plans.

Commissioner Champion

QUESTION/COMMENT: Expressed support of the reduction of government mandates in the Plan since less governmental control is generally better.

Response: Staff has made an effort to scale down mandatory Plan statements. The Draft 2040 Plan has an approximate 36% reduction from the adopted Plan currently in effect.

QUESTION/COMMENT: Mining is a past, current and future economic and traditional industry in Hernando County and should continue to be allowable, with necessary environmental controls.

Response: Mining continues to be allowable in the draft Plan. Strategies addressing new mining areas have been updated in the Draft 2040 Plan (see later discussion).

QUESTION/COMMENT: The idea of regional transportation connection for the workforce is good but provide options for privatizing the service rather than having it all government-run.

Response: The above strategies addressing regional transportation anticipate a wide variety of options including those from the private sector, public sector and as public-private partnerships. In fact, the Economic Development Element includes a strategy that emphasizes a variety of mechanisms for planning infrastructure:

Strategy 3.02A(1): The County will prioritize areas for infrastructure placement and may offer incentive programs for business location to these areas in the form of favorable fee structures, public-private partnerships, job creation incentives, business-ready sites, grants and other mechanisms for providing water, sewer, drainage and transportation.

QUESTION/COMMENT: What strategies regarding the airport are included in our Economic Development Element, as mentioned in today's presentation?

Response: The following strategy in the Economic Development Element provides Draft 2040 Plan support of economic development at the airport. The strategy is broad enough to support a variety of business types, sizes, and initiatives.

Strategy 3.04A(7): Ensure that economic development strategies and initiatives include the promotion of opportunities at the Brooksville-Tampa Bay Regional Airport.

Public Input (Arranged by Topic)

GENERAL COMMENT: Support retention of Ecological Linkages Map and strategies and retention of wildlife corridors.

Response: Although the Ecological Linkages Map has been removed from the Draft 2040 Plan, the following strategies address wildlife habitat and corridors. The need to protect wildlife habitat and wildlife is required by Florida Statutes:

CONSERVATION ELEMENT

Objective 10.01A: Hernando County shall consider during the review of development permits the importance of wildlife corridor connections from the Green Swamp to the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge in accordance with recommendations from professionally accepted sources used for State planning purposes in order to protect the functional integrity of large habitat areas in public ownership and the movement of native and protected wildlife. Mechanisms to be utilized will be considered on a site

specific basis including the provision of open space, the mitigation of habitat loss, and the provision of conservation easements.

Strategy 10.01A(1): Mitigation shall be considered for significant loss or fragmentation of environmental and wildlife corridors identified during the review of a proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment. Mitigation shall compensate for disruptions that have the potential to significantly degrade wildlife movement within and adjacent to Hernando County.

Strategy 10.01A(3): Encourage appropriate agencies and private organizations to assist the County in conserving and preserving natural area linkages which may function as wildlife corridors and/or recreation areas. Mechanisms to be coordinated may include conservation of agricultural lands, preservation of rural development patterns, land acquisitions, conservation easements, the transfer or purchase of development rights, development incentives, and landowner agreements.

GENERAL COMMENT: Please support conservation of the Florida Black Bear population.

Response: The conservation of the Florida Black Bear as supported in the adopted Plan currently in effect, has been retained in the Conservation Element of the Draft 2040 Plan :

Strategy 10.01C(4): Support the retention of habitat of the Florida Black Bear population, especially in the Coastal Zone as defined in the Coastal Management Element of this Plan as a primary means of maintaining ecologically functional wildlife habitat in Hernando County.

GENERAL COMMENT: Please retain groundwater protections. Expressed objection to the removal of the following statement from Goal 10.02 of the first draft 2040 Plan Conservation Element: “The groundwater aquifer complex underlying Hernando County is recognized as an important natural resource.”

Response: This value statement was removed in the interest of providing a more compact and streamlined document. It was felt to be redundant to the ensuing statement which constitutes the current wording of Goal 10.02, “Hernando County places a high priority on protection of aquifer recharge structural and functional integrity and high-quality groundwater resources.”

GENERAL COMMENT: Aquifer recharge modeling as performed by the Southwest Florida Water Management District is flawed.

Response: Comments regarding modeling of aquifer recharge and water use should be directed to the Southwest Florida Water Management District since water use is completely under the purview of that body and cannot be usurped by Hernando County.

GENERAL COMMENT: Please reinstate the function and committee of the Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESL) program and task the committee with educating the public about the benefits of land conservation.

Response: The current the Draft 2040 Plan is consistent with adopted Board of County Commissioners policy direction regarding the ESL program and supports public education.

CONSERVATION ELEMENT

Strategy 10.01A(2): The Hernando County Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESL) Program shall provide public education on the benefits of natural areas protection and the conservation of locally significant resources.

Strategy 10.01C(1): The Hernando County Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESL) Program shall identify and carry out habitat protection and conservation projects and the continued maintenance/conservation of properties included in the ESL program pursuant to the ESL policy guidance adopted by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC).

Strategy 10.01C(2): Provide and support innovative public education to inform citizens of the existence and significance of wildlife habitats and unique natural communities.

In addition, Policy No. 38-01 provides that it is the objective and policy of the Board of County Commissioners to provide funding for the long term commitment of the management, maintenance and improvement of lands designed under the (ESL) program.

GENERAL COMMENT: We should adopt “no-discharge” zones for vessels and “Clean Marina” standards.

Response: See response to Commissioner Alloco’s question/comment on “no-discharge” zones.

GENERAL COMMENT: Please provide for energy efficiency and Green Building standards.

Response: The Draft 2040 Plan provides for energy efficiency and Green Building standards as follows:

FUTURE LAND USE

Strategy 1.10A(8): Hernando County may review and consider energy efficient standards such as United States Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy Design (LEED) program, or the Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC) program, the Green Building Initiative’s Green Globes program, or any

other nationally recognized green building and site development program of equal, or greater, standing approved by the County and the State Department of Management Services.

Strategy 1.10A(9): The County may allow flexible development standards for buildings proposing to exceed the minimum LEED standards, especially for buildings proposed on the tiered LEED levels of Silver or Gold, as defined by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Strategy 1.10A(10): Newly developed public buildings in the County should be designed and constructed to meet a nationally recognized sustainable building rating or national model green building code. Eligible rating systems include those established by the United States Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy Design (LEED) program, the Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC) program, the Green Building Initiative's Green Globes program, or any other nationally recognized green building and site development program of equal, or greater, standing approved by the County and recognized by the State of Florida.

Strategy 1.10D(6): Building construction standards may be considered for all new Planned Development Projects to reduce energy usage, landfill waste and emissions, create a healthy indoor environment, conserve building materials and resources, and promote water efficiency.

HOUSING ELEMENT

Strategy 4.02A(5): The County will utilize programs for the rehabilitation and remodeling of existing housing stock including the incorporation of energy-saving, water-saving and other "green" building features.

Strategy 4.03A(4): Hernando County should consider programs that promote convenience, low-maintenance and economic resilience, including, but not limited to energy-efficient "green" buildings, energy-saving building codes, architectural features, Florida-friendly landscaping features, and other features that lead to a modern housing stock.

GENERAL COMMENT: Please provide for a goal of 100% renewable energy.

Response: The Draft 2040 Plan provides strategies and initiatives supporting reduced energy consumption. In addition, technology and other changes that may affect Hernando County will also help us identify energy conservation opportunities going forward. An example of one such opportunity, identified in the Draft 2040 Plan Future Land Use Element is provided below:

Strategy 1.04I(15): In planning for the transition of Mining Category FLUM designations to other uses, the County may consider and encourage green or clean industry uses that take advantage of the large disturbed site acreages of these properties. Examples include wind/solar energy farms and “extreme” sports parks.

Setting a 100% renewable energy goal for Hernando County may be admirable, however it is not feasible within the 2040 planning horizon. The initiatives and strategies included in the Draft 2040 Plan move the County towards increased energy efficiency and conservation.

GENERAL COMMENT: In support of tourism as a major industry in Hernando County.

Response: The Draft 2040 Plan Economic Development Element recognizes and promotes tourism and the natural environment as major economic assets:

GOAL 3.03 – Tourism

The County should support and expand its tourism industry by capitalizing on its natural, environmental and recreational identity and assets.

Objective 3.03A: **The County will utilize a Tourism Department and advisory board charged with tourism development.**

Strategy 3.03A(1): The Tourism Department should identify, create, support and enhance activities, consistent with community assets and character, that increase visitation and economic impact for Hernando County.

Strategy 3.03A(2): Tourism development initiatives should be coordinated with other county departments such as Business Development, Parks and Recreation, and the Brooksville-Tampa Bay Regional Airport, to identify opportunities for collaboration.

Strategy 3.03A(3): The County should adopt and maintain a strategic plan for tourism development.

Objective 3.03B: **The County should take advantage of its natural environment to build and maintain high quality recreational, rural and wild lands amenities that will attract a balanced workforce, and promote compatible eco-tourism and agritourism.**

Strategy 3.03B(1): The County should explore opportunities for major recreational facilities as part of the parks system that capitalize on public-private partnerships and other opportunities.

- Strategy 3.03B(2):** Hernando County’s rural countryside and wild lands are important assets that support ecotourism. Land use standards should ensure that environmental assets are protected while accommodating tourism uses such as:
- a. recreational pursuits enhanced by the Brooksville Ridge topography such as endurance races, ultra-marathons, mud runs, mountain biking and street bike racing;
 - b. water-oriented recreation at coastal and appropriate lake locations including fishing, boating, and paddling sports;
 - c. promotion of existing golf-courses including conversion to and marketing of eco-friendly best management practices standards;
 - d. hunting, camping and trails networks afforded by wild lands connections within and outside the County;
 - e. festivals and events that promote local and unique recreation, wildlife, and agricultural products;
 - f. uses that promote agritourism, ecotourism and aquaculture in appropriate locations.

Strategy 3.03B(3): The County should support culture, history and the arts in the community.

Strategy 3.03B(4): Public amenities and spaces should include art and cultural aspects.

Strategy 3.03B(5): Land use decisions will be prioritized to support the County’s ecotourism goals and strategies.

GENERAL COMMENT: Environmental health was cited as an issue of concern. Some comments called for the phase-out of coal-burning facilities in the County.

Response: The County must address air quality and is evaluated regularly by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for air quality standards attainment. Air quality is addressed in the Conservation Element as outlined below. Regulation of coal-burning facilities beyond state standards is not warranted at this time. Any new facility of such a magnitude would undergo an extensive land use review.

Objective 10.06A: **The County shall protect its air quality through review and mitigation of potential air pollution sources.**

Strategy 10.06A(1): The County shall review the impact of development proposals and land use activities with the potential for chronic or temporary degradation of air quality including exhaust stacks and similar emissions sources, uses emanating noxious or toxic odors, and open burning activities.

GENERAL COMMENT: The County is encouraged to call for a state ban on fracking.

Response: The Board of County Commissioners may address the State of Florida on this issue at any time. A state ban is beyond the purview of the Draft 2040 Plan. The Conservation Element does include a statement calling for careful review of any fracking proposal in the County:

Strategy 10.02C(7): The County should require detailed analysis and carefully review any future proposals that use fracking for extraction of raw energy resource materials regarding impacts to the groundwater aquifer and sensitive karst features.

GENERAL COMMENT: Several commenters called for a prohibition on new mining in the County beyond what is currently permitted. Many commenters also cited a lack of environmental protections and land use compatibility measures for new mines and mining lands.

Response: The Draft 2040 Plan Future Land Use Element has been updated to expand environmental and land use review standards for new mining lands:

Strategy 1.04I(16): Proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments to the Mining Category shall be based on the demonstrated availability of significant deposits of target resources. The applicant shall identify the target resource and demonstrate the need for each target resource with respect to the following:

- a. the basis for the projected market for the resources in the planned market area and mining timeframe;
- b. an analysis of the need in the context of projected resource production of all other operations in Hernando County with active Master Mining Plan Approvals (MAMPAs) pursuant to their 25-year plans;
- c. the expected impact on job growth and wages.

Strategy 1.04I(17): Proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments to the Mining Category shall include a full environmental review of the property submitted by the applicant including a site inventory of habitat types including impacts to major conservation areas, significant natural communities, and strategic habitat areas as outlined in the Conservation Element of this Plan, potential cultural resources and records, review of soils and review of listed species and potential habitats. The review shall include a listing and analysis of all natural and cultural resources identified on site or having the potential to be on site. Data sources shall include applicable state and federal inventories and reports including those listed in the Conservation Element of this Plan, academic studies, and other sources deemed reliable by agency and scientific peers.

Strategy 1.04I(18): An inventory and analysis of the potential impacts of proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments to the Mining Category over the life of the proposed mining operation shall be submitted by the applicant and evaluated by the County. Approval of the proposed amendment may be predicated upon appropriate mitigation of these potential impacts (including appropriate land conservation or strategic habitat set-asides). Impacts of the proposed mining activities allowable under the Mining Category designation shall be considered including, but not limited to, the following:

- a. impacts on land uses within 500 feet of the property;
- b. impacts to groundwater;
- c. impacts to wetlands, karst and cultural resources;
- d. impacts to wildlife and habitat as identified through the environmental review;
- e. traffic and transport impacts to the transportation system and on surrounding land uses;
- f. impacts to historic and cultural resources;
- g. impacts to unique Hernando County resources such as policy-constrained corridors, scenic vistas and other resources outlined in this Plan or otherwise designated by the County;
- h. impacts to property values;
- i. economic impact based on an analysis using Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI) or similar regional economic model relevant to the proposed mining activity;
- j. impacts of mining and blasting;
- k. impacts specific to the proposed site identified by the County or by the applicant at the time of application.

Strategy 1.04I(19): For proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments to the Mining category, an analysis of how resource extraction plans will affect the efficiency, layout and quality of any proposed or potential post-mining use, shall be included. Plans for resource extraction and subsequent reclamation will be reviewed to ensure that any post-mining use can be accomplished without creation of new unmitigated issues especially with respect to transportation, utilities, groundwater, and ecological linkages.

Strategy 1.04I(20): Resource extraction shall not be allowed in natural water bodies, wetlands and floodplain areas, or, within the known nesting, resting or feeding habitat of state or federal listed species. Mining extraction shall be sufficiently separated from important archeological, cultural and historical features so as not to disturb or compromise the integrity of those features over time.

GENERAL COMMENT: Mitigation of potential impacts should not be allowed.

Response: Mitigation of land use and environmental impacts is an allowable and acceptable practice under current regulatory rules at the federal, local and state levels. Mitigation options can be identified at the land use review level as a means of addressing potential impacts. It is not practical or advisable for the County to deny development or land use proposals where potential negative impacts can be reasonably mitigated by modification of the land use scope/design under the review standards for the land use.

GENERAL COMMENT: Support was expressed for retention of “smart growth” principles in the Plan. Some commenters thought that the draft 2040 Plan does not adequately protect against urban sprawl.

Response: The Draft 2040 Plan includes initiatives and design standards that address development and redevelopment in the urbanized area. Infill, mixed use, multi-modal transportation and place-making amenities are addressed in several elements including the Future Land Use, Economic Development, Housing and Transportation Elements.

The Plan is required by Florida Statutes to address the prevention of urban sprawl. Several goals in the Future Land Use and Capital Improvements Element of the draft 2040 Plan address the prevention of urban sprawl. Strategy 1.11B(1), below, provides the standards by which development is evaluated for characteristics of urban sprawl:

FUTURE LAND USE ELEMENT

- Strategy 1.11B(1):** Review of developments and comprehensive plan amendments shall evaluate whether proposals have the following characteristics of urban sprawl development:
- a. substantial areas of low-intensity, low-density, or single use development;
 - b. significant amounts of urban development in rural areas at substantial distances from existing urban areas with intervening undeveloped lands that are available and suitable for development;
 - c. urban development of a radial, strip, isolated, or ribbon pattern generally emanating from existing urban development;
 - d. inadequate protection and conservation of natural resources, wetlands, waterbodies, floodplains, native vegetation, environmentally sensitive areas, or natural groundwater aquifer recharge areas;
 - e. inadequate protection of adjacent agricultural areas and activities;
 - f. inefficient use or underutilization of existing and future public facilities and services;

- g. land use patterns or timing which disproportionately increase the cost in time, money and energy of providing and maintaining facilities and services;
- h. lack of a clear separation between rural and urban uses;
- i. discouragement, hindrance or prevention of infill developments or redevelopments;
- j. lack of a functional mix of uses;
- k. poor accessibility among linked or related land uses;
- l. loss of significant amounts of functional open space.

GENERAL COMMENT: A commenter called for the removal of green building requirements from the Planned Development District (PDD) category and also for the removal of the Planned Development District Category from the plan.

Response: As outlined in past workshops and outreaches, the Planned Development District Category includes project- specific strategies that do not apply county-wide and that were negotiated with Hernando County by private landowners. These strategies cannot be removed from the Plan. The Planned Development District has provided an innovative mechanism for private property owners to plan large and unique projects with specific strategies. The Planned Development District Category is necessary to ensure the appropriate timing and cost-effectiveness of major infrastructure and for proactive mitigation of land use impacts from major projects. Removal of the PDD Category is not recommended, nor is it recommended that existing PDD strategies be removed from the Draft 2040 Plan.

GENERAL COMMENT: Add the word “commercial” to Strategy 11.01A(4) that currently reads, “Hernando County prohibits major withdrawals of water for consumptive use from springs and rivers in the Coastal Zone.”

Response: The commenter is referring to a prohibition on major withdrawals of water from Hernando County’s coastal springs and rivers. The strategy refers to “major” withdrawals and does not regulate the use of individual private wells for potable water or agriculture. The strategy will be clarified in this regard.