

**Hernando County Draft 2040 Comprehensive Plan
October 9, 2017 Workshop Comments**

Public Comments/Questions by Topic:

QUESTION/COMMENT: The Hernando County Business Alliance will be reviewing and commenting on the draft Plan, in particular, proposed changes to the Future Land Use Map.

Response: Retention of the current future land use pattern is being recommended in the Draft 2040 Comprehensive Plan with the exception of the deletion of the Education Category.

QUESTION/COMMENT: Expressed support of the reduction of government mandates in the Plan.

Response: Staff has made an effort to reduce the number of mandatory Plan statements. The Draft 2040 Comprehensive Plan has an approximate 36% reduction in mandatory statements from the current adopted Plan.

QUESTION/COMMENT: Expressed support of expansion of private property rights section.

Response: The Draft 2040 Comprehensive Plan includes a reference to the Bert J. Harris, Jr. Private Property Rights Protection Act.”

GENERAL COMMENT: Comments were expressed in support of both deletion and retention of Ecological Linkages Map and strategies in the Future Land Use Element.

Response: Although the Ecological Linkages Map has been removed from the Draft 2040 Comprehensive 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 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: 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: 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: 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: A commenter called for the removal of specific requirements from the Planned Development District (PDD) category.

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: A commenter called for providing community improvements in the South Brooksville neighborhood as a priority.

Response: The Hernando County Board of County Commissioners and the City of Brooksville City Council both adopted a “South Brooksville Planned Development District” into their respective comprehensive plans in 2010. The South Brooksville Planned Development District (PDD) strategies are being carried over to the draft 2040 Comprehensive Plan and are located under Objective 1.05G in the latest draft document. It should also be noted that since the formulation of the PDD, the County has completed several infrastructure projects in the South Brooksville area including a Sheriff’s community center, lighting, sidewalks, the Good Neighbor Trail and restrooms, upgrades to Kennedy Park, drainage rehabilitation, potable water and wastewater improvements, addition of fire hydrants, and housing assistance. These projects have been completed with assistance and funding from state and federal agencies.