



Florida's Local Comprehensive Planning Process

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State statutes require coordination between state and regional transportation planning and the provisions within the local comprehensive plans that each county and municipality in Florida is required to adopt. To provide some context, the proposed M-CORES corridors encompass at least 18 counties and numerous

municipalities, each with its own local comprehensive plan. This section provides a brief overview of the comprehensive planning process and its interface with regional and state planning in Florida and describes conservation planning strategies some communities use to protect special resources and resource areas.

Florida's Local Comprehensive Planning Process

Local Comprehensive Plans – Recognizing the impacts of population growth, Florida law requires each county and municipal government to adopt and maintain a local comprehensive plan consistent with state and regional plans. These plans are intended to:

- Guide and control future development,
- Overcome existing problems and deal effectively with future problems that may result from the use and development of land,
- Preserve, promote, protect, and improve the public health, safety, comfort and good order, and
- Protect human, environmental, social, and economic resources.

Elements – Local comprehensive plans include a series of required “elements” dealing with capital improvements, future land use, transportation, sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water and natural groundwater aquifer recharge, natural resource conservation, recreation and open space, housing, coastal management, and intergovernmental coordination. A series of goals, objectives, and specific policies outlines how the local government will accomplish the intent of the element. Each local comprehensive plan, in concept, becomes the local government’s “constitution” for controlling and directing the type and amount of development allowed or encouraged in that community.

Future Land Use Maps (FLUMs) – As part of its local comprehensive plan, each local government must adopt a Future Land Use Map (FLUM) that shows the “proposed distribution, location, and extent of the

various categories of land” that the community has included in its local comprehensive plan.

Amendments – The local comprehensive plan must be amended if the local government desires to change its patterns of future growth or to allow a proposed development that is inconsistent with the current plan. It may amend the plan at any time over the course of the year through a small-scale amendment process for parcels of land 10 acres and smaller or a large-scale amendment process for parcels greater than 10 acres. Most M-CORES amendments will go through the two-phase large-scale expedited state review process which provides for a 30-day turnaround and limited ability for state agencies to comment.

The proposed phase requires at least two public hearings on the proposed plan amendment, one by the Local



Comprehensive planning is an important tool to protect Florida's lands and waters and the life they sustain. Photo by Vivian Young

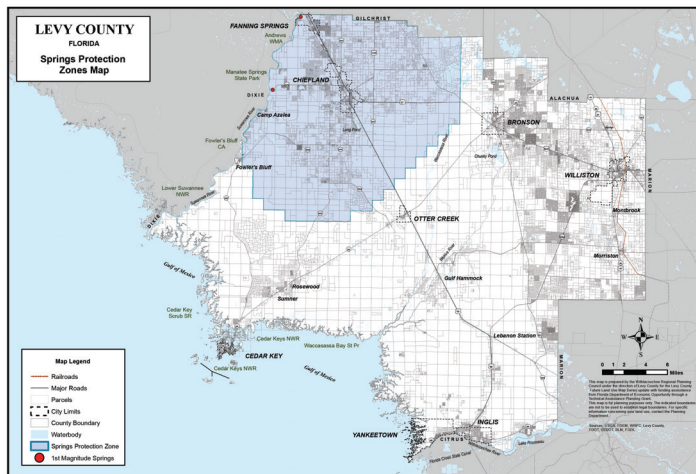
Planning Agency (LPA), and one by the governing body. The amendment is then transmitted to the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) which seeks input from other state agencies (including FDOT) for impacts on “important state facilities and resources” which, unfortunately, are not defined in the statute. DEO then may notify the governing body of any concerns.

During the adoption phase, the local government may

incorporate changes based on DEO and other agency input and hold at least one more local public hearing. It then sends the amendment to DEO for final review. DEO may either allow the amendment to go into effect or initiate a challenge through the Division of Administrative Hearings. *The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity* provides information on the process, timeline and public hearing process.

Conservation Planning Strategies in Local Comprehensive Plans

Local comprehensive plans may address conservation planning goals, objectives and policies through required elements including natural resource conservation, future land use, recreation and open space, potable water and natural groundwater aquifer recharge, recreation and open space, transportation and more. Additionally, some communities adopt optional elements to address special resources. Here are a few regional conservation planning strategies included in local comprehensive plans:



Map courtesy of Levy County Planning Department.

Levy County Springs Protection Element – Levy County has opted to include a Springs Protection Element in its local comprehensive plan with the goal of protecting “1st and 2nd magnitude springs and springshed areas as fragile resources necessary for sustaining the community’s quality of life.” Located in the northern part of the county, the associated Springs Protection Zone is included in the FLUM. Among other things, the Springs Protection Element calls for limiting “those land use activities that pose a significant threat to the springs,” and when avoidance is not feasible minimize the impacts through design, buffering and other design standards.

Particularly important for M-CORES, the Springs Protection Element also requires that amendments to the FLUM will:

- Demonstrate that the proposed land use category is the least intensive category that will meet the demonstrated need of the use; and
- Demonstrate that the proposed land use category will be developed consistent with conservation and clustering design techniques.

Marion County Protection Provisions – Marion County’s *Future Land Use Element Objective 7: Springs Protection Overlay Zone (SPOZ)* is intended “to provide an additional level of water quality protection for springs and groundwater throughout the county by reducing and managing potential groundwater contamination for water supplies.” The County has established a Primary and Secondary Springs Protection Zone (SPZ) in its FLUM.

Goal 9: Protection of Farmland in the Rural Area in the Future Land Use Element includes transfer of development rights (TDR) programs “designed to protect natural resources, especially those identified in the Conservation Element and locally important and prime farmlands within the County.” TDRs are a planning tool to transfer development rights from sensitive areas, including farmlands and springsheds, to urbanized areas appropriate for more intense development. Participating rural property owners are required to put their land under conservation easement to limit the type and intensity of future development.



Image courtesy of Marion County Planning Department.

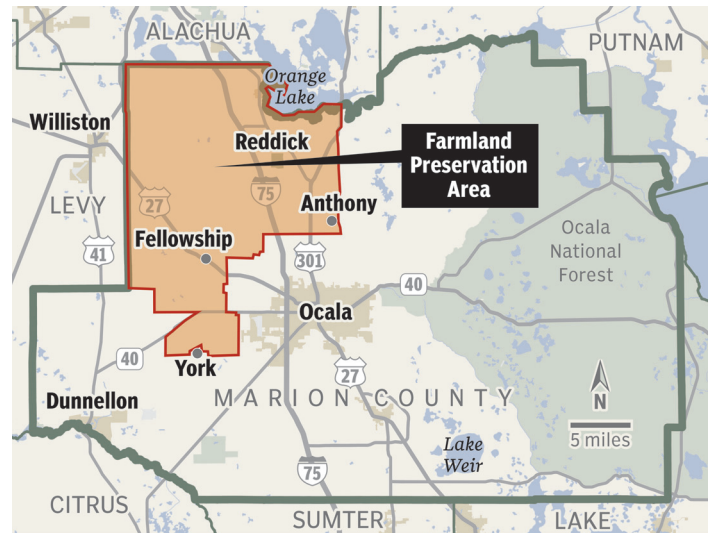
M-CORES-Related Comprehensive Plan Amendments

M-CORES will stimulate a series of county and municipal local comprehensive plan amendments within the three corridors.

Proactive amendments – Some plan amendments may be undertaken by local governments early in the M-CORES process to better define how the toll roads will interface with their communities. For example, Marion County adopted language related to the development of new roads in its Farmland Preservation Area:

Roadway design within the rural area shall be consistent within the principles of context sensitive design, which considers the relationship of land uses and all aspects of roadway design, including speed, travel lane width, access management, and landscaping. New transportation corridors intended to be used specifically for the construction of expressway or limited access roadways shall avoid the Farmland Preservation Area unless the Department of Transportation can demonstrate that there are no feasible corridor alignments outside of the Farmland Preservation Area, in which case the Department shall design and develop such roadway in such a way to minimize and mitigate negative impacts to vital farmlands, key environmental areas and valuable open space, including but not limited to provision of adequate screening and buffers between the roadway and such sensitive areas. The development of any such corridor shall be closely coordinated with the Board of County Commissioners and County Staff.

Interchange amendments – The M-CORES legislation specifically requires that by December 31, 2023 all



Sources: Marion County Growth Services; maps4news.com/©HERE

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affected local governments that have an interchange within their jurisdictions shall review the applicable task force report to determine whether their local comprehensive plan should be amended “to provide appropriate land uses and natural resources protections.”

Other required amendments – When the routes are selected for the three corridors, local comprehensive plans and FLUMs for impacted counties and municipalities will need to be amended to include the toll roads and associated land uses. To the extent possible, these will need to be consistent with FDOT, MPO, RPCs and other adopted plans and programs. Each of these processes will involve opportunities for input, including public hearings.

Regional Planning Councils (RPCs)

In addition to requirements for planning at the municipal and county levels, Florida statutes also require regional planning. Much as the MPOs discussed in the previous primer play a formal role in regional transportation planning, Florida’s 11 Regional Planning Councils (RPC) consider planning and development issues within their jurisdictions from a multi-county perspective.

RPCs are comprised of local elected and appointed officials and lay citizens who consider planning and development issues from a multi-county perspective. They review and comment on local comprehensive plan

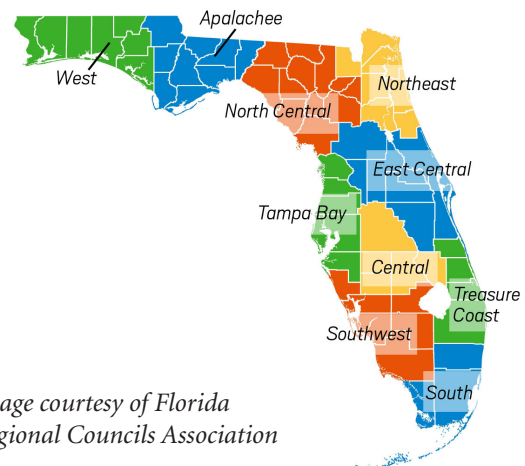


Image courtesy of Florida Regional Councils Association

amendments, develop Strategic Regional Policy Plans that include regional goals and policies for transportation, natural resources, and other issues. Through the M-CORES process, six of Florida's RPCs (Apalachee, North Central, East Central, Tampa Bay,

Central and Southwest) will be involved in reviewing local comprehensive plan amendments and likely will need to update their Strategic Regional Policy Plans including the RPCs.

Next Steps

Building on the work of the M-CORES task forces, all of the impacted county and municipal local comprehensive plans and Regional Strategic Policy plans will need to be updated to incorporate M-CORES provisions. This will prove a herculean undertaking for the agencies involved. It is important to remember that many of these processes include public hearings to give citizens the opportunity to provide input. **Here's what you can do:**

- **Encourage your county and municipal governments to adopt proactive amendments** into local comprehensive plans and FLUMs to protect special resource areas and avoid sprawling development patterns.
- **Encourage your local governments to amend local comprehensive plans** to provide guidance on appropriate land uses and natural resource protections for interchanges.

- **Provide spoken and written testimony at the required public hearings** as your county and municipal comprehensive plans and FLUMs are amended to incorporate M-CORES provisions, to ensure that the amendments include suitable protection for special resources and areas and avoid sprawling development patterns.

- **Provide input as your Regional Planning Council (RPC) Strategic Regional Policy Plan is amended** to incorporate M-CORES provisions.

As always, it is important to partner with others in your community. Additional information on the M-CORES process will be posted at www.1000fof.org/mcores when it is available.