

# Planning Tools to Protect the Florida Wildlife Corridor

## Rural Boundaries/Agricultural Overlays

These zoning tools protect and promote farming activities within a designated area, often layered over existing zoning regulations. They establish additional standards or incentives that prioritize agricultural uses, such as limiting non-farm development, preserving prime farmland, or supporting agritourism and local food production. By guiding land use in favor of long-term agricultural viability, agricultural overlays help prevent urban sprawl, maintain rural character, and support local economies dependent on farming.

## Rural Land Stewardship/Transferable Development Rights

Transferable Development Rights (TDR) programs allow property owners in designated "sending areas" (typically zones with environmental, historical, or agricultural value) to sell development rights to developers in "receiving areas" where higher-density development is encouraged. This market-based mechanism helps preserve open space, farmland, and other valued land uses by shifting development potential away from protected areas and toward urban or suburban zones better equipped for growth.

## Land Acquisition Programs

Local land acquisition programs are initiatives to purchase land or development rights. They are typically funded through local bonds, sales taxes, grants, or dedicated revenue streams and aim to protect natural resources, prevent sprawl, and enhance community quality of life. By securing key parcels—such as wetlands, forests, riparian corridors, or farmland—local governments can ensure long-term ecological health, provide public access to green spaces, and support planning goals aligned with environmental stewardship.

## Corridor Adjacent Buffer Requirements

Natural Landscape buffers between developed areas and natural environments, reduce negative impacts from urbanization while enhancing the aesthetic and environmental value of both natural and built environments. They can play a critical role in filtering pollutants from stormwater runoff, reducing noise and light pollution, and providing habitat and travel corridors for wildlife. They also help stabilize soil, prevent erosion, and maintain the ecological integrity of adjacent parcels.

## Conservation Subdivisions

Conservation subdivisions preserve natural areas by clustering development on a portion of the land, typically 50% or less, instead of spreading homes evenly across a site. The remaining area is permanently protected as open space, wildlife habitat, farmland, or recreational land. These developments are best suited along the "urban fringe." They minimize habitat fragmentation, reduce impervious surfaces, and maintain the rural character and ecological function of the landscape, often with the support of conservation easements or land trusts.

## Wildlife Crossings and Underpasses

Wildlife underpasses are built beneath roads, highways, or railways to provide safe crossing routes for animals, reducing the risk of vehicle collisions and allowing for uninterrupted movement between habitats. When paired with fencing that guides animals toward the underpasses, they become effective tools for mitigating habitat fragmentation, promoting genetic diversity, and supporting overall ecosystem health. Though typically associated with state projects, opportunities exist for local roadways.

## Parks and Trails Design Standards

When carefully planned with natural vegetation buffers, limited lighting, and minimal barriers, parks and trails can facilitate safe movement for animals between parks, forests, wetlands, and other natural areas. By avoiding high-traffic roads and incorporating wildlife-friendly features—such as underpasses, overpasses, or signage to limit human disturbance—trails can enhance landscape connectivity and reduce habitat fragmentation.

## Low Impact Development

Low Impact Development (LID) aims to mimic natural hydrological processes to reduce environmental impacts of development. It emphasizes techniques such as native vegetation, permeable pavements, rain gardens, green roofs, and bioswales to manage runoff close to its source, promoting infiltration, evapotranspiration, and reuse of rainwater. LID helps protect water quality, reduce flooding, and maintain the ecological integrity of urban and suburban areas by integrating sustainable design into development projects.



## Voluntary and Incentive-Based Programs

With any new policy or policy change, how it is implemented is key. Each jurisdiction has its own set of circumstances, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to adopting policies that protect the Corridor. We must be willing to work with all stakeholders to identify and define innovative programs to incentivize development that reduces sprawl and increases opportunities to preserve our special places.

The Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation has developed two signature programs to incentivize development patterns that complement the Corridor: Corridor Compatible Communities and Corridor Compatible Solar. You can find information about these programs at: <https://floridawildlifecorridor.org/partners-3/>



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### Examples of Counties or Organizations Implementing Highlighted Policies

Not an exhaustive list

**Urban Service Districts**– Martin, Citrus  
Rural Boundary/Agricultural Overlay– Marion, Orange, Seminole

**Rural Land Stewardship/Transferable Development Rights**– Collier

**Land Acquisition Programs**– Polk, Lake, Osceola

**Corridor Adjacent Buffer Requirements**– Marion (Marjorie Harris Carr Greenway)

**Conservation Subdivision**– Alachua, Nassau, Bay

**Wildlife Crossings and Underpasses**– See FDOT Office of Environmental Management

**Low Impact Development**– Orange, Volusia,  
[https://ecfrpc.org/resources/low\\_impact\\_development.php](https://ecfrpc.org/resources/low_impact_development.php)

## Planning To Protect the Florida Wildlife Corridor

Effective urban policy is crucial for safeguarding Florida's rural and natural landscapes. A more compact urban footprint allows for greater preservation of land for nature, agriculture and public enjoyment. Various planning strategies can be employed to curtail sprawl and protect wildlife habitats through:

- Comprehensive plans
- Land development regulations
- Development incentives
- Capital project planning

Below and within, you will find a selection of policies that local governments can adopt to promote connectivity for the Florida Wildlife Corridor, enhance and preserve our farms and food security, increase public recreational opportunities, and protect environmentally sensitive areas, ultimately boosting resilience and adding to our quality of life in the Sunshine State.

### Urban Service Areas or Districts

Urban service areas are boundaries within which counties or municipalities have available public services such as water, sewer, transportation, and emergency response, or will have services available over the planning horizon of their comprehensive plan. These areas help direct growth by concentrating infrastructure investment in regions planned for urban development, while discouraging sprawl into rural or environmentally sensitive lands outside the boundary. Policies that effectively prohibit expansion of public facilities outside of the urban service area help to protect rural areas from sprawl.