

**Impacts of Proposed 2025 Tallahassee-Leon County Comprehensive Plan Updates
On Lake Jackson and Meridian Road
October 15, 2025**

This page is intended to give an introduction and brief history to the development of the Leon County Comprehensive Plan, as well as information regarding changes to the Urban Service Area (USA) around the Lake Jackson Aquatic Basin.

The Basics:

A community's Comprehensive Plan is a document that outlines the Goals, Objectives, and Policies that will guide a community's growth and development far into the future. The comprehensive plan also includes a Future Land Use Map (FLUM), showing the location, distribution, and extent of various categories of land, and in some communities, an Urban Service Area (USA), which shows areas most appropriate for intense residential and commercial development. The City of Tallahassee and Leon County are currently in the process of updating their Plan and their FLUM, creating policies and land use choices that will carry our community through 2050.

What is being proposed:

On Tuesday, May 13th, 2025, the Leon County Board of County Commissioners voted to transmit the draft comprehensive plan to the State Land Planning Agency for review. Included among the many policy and map changes was an expansion of the Urban Services Area by approximately 1,000 acres near **Lake Jackson**. At the time, what would be **the second biggest change to the Urban Services Area in 28 years** (second to the Welaunee development), slipped through the cracks with little to no public input, education, or awareness.

The proposed changes to this area are two-fold. First, expansion of the Urban Service Area to include approximately 1,000 acres along Lake Jackson's Eastern shoreline, west of Meridian road and northward past the Orchard Pond Parkway. Inclusion within the Urban Service Area (USA) means that land is intended to be developed at much higher urban densities and serviced by urban amenities such as new roads, central water and sewer, transit, etc. Click here ([Link to May 13 USA map](#)) to see the map.

Second, the transmitted plan included a change to the Future Land Use category from Rural to Lake Protection. Under its current Rural land use designation, property in this area can only be developed at 1 residential dwelling unit for every 10 acres of land. The comprehensive plan update transmitted to the state by Leon County on May 13, 2025 would change the +/- 1,000 acres of land to the Lake Protection future land use category, which allows a much greater amount of residential and commercial development near Lake Jackson. Although it would allow for even more development -- a realistic scenario could see development in the ballpark of 2,000 residential units and hundreds of thousands of square feet of shopping centers, businesses, and offices.

Key Concerns:

Potential Impact to the Lake Jackson Aquatic Preserve

The Lake Jackson system, made up of Lake Jackson, Carr Lake, and Mallard Pond, is one of the state's most unique and ecologically valuable surface water systems. The Lake Jackson system is the **only** freshwater lake in Florida to be designated as an [Aquatic Preserve](#)), and is also a designated Outstanding Florida Water. A majority of the development within the Lake Jackson system is concentrated on the south side, primarily in the form of residential and commercial development.

The density and intensity of uses along the south end of the lake contribute heavily to the degraded water quality of the aquatic preserve, and is balanced only by the health and quality of water in the northern end of the lake system. In fact, the Lake Jackson Aquatic Preserve Management Plan specifically states that water quality along the north end of the lake is considered good, but “...if development increases at the same density seen in the south end of the Lake Jackson watershed, water quality is likely to be negatively impacted.” For this reason, it is vital that changes significantly increasing residential and commercial development near the Lake be fully evaluated and stakeholders and the public provided ample opportunity to weigh in on any proposed changes.

Traffic impacts to Meridian Road

Meridian Road has long been one of Leon County's most iconic Canopy Roads, highlighted by its place on the National Register of Historic Places. The beautiful locale, proximity to the lake, and distance from Tallahassee's more developed downtown has drawn many to live and recreate in the area, which has had considerable impacts on traffic. For many, the greatest worry about a new development of 1,000 acres or more along Lake Jackson and Meridian Road is the flood of new cars that will take to the road, adding to the already congested traffic at rush hour.

This is particularly worrisome at key segments, such as from Ox Bottom Road to Bannerman Road, the segment that will see the greatest impacts from thousands of new residential units and hundreds of thousands of square feet of commercial development. In fact, traffic counts along Meridian Road show that the segment from Ox Bottom to Bannerman is already near capacity. Additional residential units and commercial development in this area will add more cars to the road and cause this segment of Meridian Road to operate far over its design capacity. While traffic impacts of specific developments and steps to address it are part of the development approval process, it has not been taken into consideration during this comprehensive plan process. Once again, this highlights the need for a major proposal of this scale to go through the established comprehensive plan amendment process.

No demonstrated need for large-scale development

The cornerstone of any comprehensive planning process is the need to strategically plan for issues that will affect your community for decades to come. A key part of this strategic planning is projection of, and accommodation for, the future housing needs of your community. Throughout the comprehensive planning process, City and County planning staff have shared that our community will need to add approximately 23,000 new residential units to accommodate our growing population by the year 2050. Development throughout our community has been steady in recent years and as of 2025, the majority of these 23,000 units are currently underway either through application, staff review, approval, or are under

construction. [Data on major development projects within Tallahassee and Leon County](#) show that to date, 21,610 residential units are in one phase of development or another.

While not all of these projects will come to fruition, it shows that our community is already a long way towards reaching our need for 23,000 residential units by 2050. With this in mind, any major changes to the Urban Services Area and underlying Land Use in this area should be carefully considered, backed up by meaningful data and analysis, shared with the public through a robust public engagement process, and should not jeopardize vital natural resources and community assets like Lake Jackson and Meridian Canopy Road.

Inappropriate process for a major change to the Urban Services Area

According to resources available on the comprehensive plan update website, the nearly 1,000 acre proposed change to the Urban Service Area (USA) along Meridian Road would be the **second largest** change to the USA boundary since 1997. In fact, the only larger change in that time frame has been Welaunee, a development whose review was given the full time, consideration, and scrutiny it warranted due to its potential impacts to our community. The review and general update of the comprehensive plan is not the appropriate mechanism for a change of this magnitude.

There is an annual application process for major amendments to the comprehensive plan, such as this proposal. This annual comprehensive plan amendment cycle provides time for planners to evaluate the potential impacts of a large-scale project and the opportunity for the public and stakeholders to engage at multiple public meetings. It is imperative that changes of this scale go through the correct process and receive the consideration and discussion they deserve.

What can I do?

If you have concerns about this proposal, we suggest reaching out and voicing your concerns to **each member** of the Leon County Commission. The Leon County Commission will receive an update on the comprehensive plan and decide on next steps in the process on **Tuesday, November 18th**. The central pillar of comprehensive planning is the public making their voices heard. Those who would like to share their thoughts or concerns on these proposed changes should attend this meeting and add their voice to the conversation.

District 1- [Commissioner Bill Proctor](#)

District 5- [Commissioner David T. O'Keefe](#)

District 2- [Commissioner Christian Caban](#), Vice-Chairman

At-Large- [Commissioner Carolyn D. Cummings](#)

District 3- [Commissioner Rick Minor](#)

At-Large- [Commissioner Nick Maddox](#)

District 4 - [Commissioner Brian Welch](#), Chairman