

2025-2026 ANNUAL REPORT

1000
FRIENDS
of FLORIDA

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As 1000 Friends of Florida approaches our 40th anniversary, our beloved state faces a confluence of challenges. The population growth that has been Florida's trademark for decades is now accompanied by intensifying climate pressures, tightened restrictions on local planning and disruptive economic and demographic trends.

These forces, if not confronted, threaten our environment, quality of life and economy. They strain resources and

infrastructure, while increasing long-term costs for homeowners and businesses. More than ever, Floridians need wise planning for growth to protect our state's precious lands and waters, increase climate resilience, preserve community character, and sustain prosperity.

To maintain our leadership in meeting these challenges, 1000 Friends set out to create a new strategic plan [see "Charting the Next Three Years" on page 3]. After months of work guided by an experienced adviser, along with extensive input from board members, staff, planning professionals, conservation partners, and supporters across Florida, the strategy we completed this past year sharpens our ability to respond to emerging issues, seize new opportunities, and build lasting support for responsible planning and conservation.

Our strategy focuses on three priorities: empowering Floridians with more information to shape the future of their communities, ensuring planning processes remain transparent and accessible, and advancing policies and public investments that create prosperous, healthy, resilient, and well-designed places. With the continuing

loyal support of our donors, we will accomplish these priorities with investments in our organization's people, systems, partnerships, and long-term financial sustainability.

Underlying every aspect of our new strategy is a core conviction for us: informed, engaged citizens can shape planning for growth in ways that work for everyone. Through education, research, coalition building, and effective advocacy, 1000 Friends of Florida will continue

advancing policies that strengthen communities, improve government efficiency, conserve the state's irreplaceable natural resources, support vibrant local economies, and leave future generations with a more prosperous and resilient Florida.

We believe our new strategy positions our organization to meet current and future challenges while building the broad public support needed to ensure that Florida's growth creates lasting benefits for people, communities, and the environment. We look forward to pursuing these goals, with gratitude for

the indispensable support of our most vital partners — our generous and committed friends throughout Florida.



Paul Owens
President



Logan McDonald photography





2025-2026 MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES

- **Defending Community Planning** — During the 2026 legislative session, spearheaded successful opposition to the “Blue Ribbon Projects” bill, which would have fast-tracked approval for massive developments, bypassing local limits and public hearings
- **Upholding Growth Boundaries** — Helped defeat efforts to dismantle the community-driven tools that help protect Florida’s farms, forests and rural landscapes from sprawling development
- **Working to Fix SB 180** — Lobbied for Senate Bill 840 to scale back the 2025 law restricting local governments’ ability to keep up with growth and protect their communities after hurricanes; the bill earned unanimous Senate approval before stalling in the House
- **Challenging SB 180 in Court** — Filed a lawsuit with member Rachel Hildebrand in Leon County Circuit Court in October 2025 arguing the law is unconstitutional, joining a consolidated case with 29 local governments that continues to move forward
- **Building the Case Against SB 180** — Organized a coalition letter signed by more than 60 organizations and launched a “Communities Under Fire” online reporting tool to document the law’s harmful local impacts in cities and counties across Florida
- **Mobilizing Grassroots Advocates** — Generated more than 176,000 emails to legislators from 4,556 advocates across 60 of Florida’s 67 counties, promoting responsible planning and conservation and reaching every Senate and House district during the 2026 session
- **Guiding Miami-Dade’s Growth** — Serving on a task force advising county leaders on updating their comprehensive plan, President Paul Owens won adoption for a slate of 1000 Friends recommendations — including a first-of-its-kind zoning category for data centers, higher affordable-housing standards, and stronger wetland and sea-level-rise protections
- **Defending Leon County’s Rural Lands** — Successfully organized citizens in opposition to expanding the Urban Services Area (USA) by close to 4,000 acres, including a major parcel of land along the historic Meridian canopy road and Lake Jackson, and another major parcel along the historic old St. Augustine canopy road, without required data and analysis on the need for or impacts of such major expansions
- **Improving Water Quality** — Supported new laws restricting the use of firefighting foam with PFAS “forever chemicals” and increased monitoring for PFAS in wastewater effluent

Charting The Next Three Years

This year 1000 Friends adopted a new three-year strategic framework, co-created with our network, to advance our longstanding mission of helping Florida plan, protect, and prosper — and to sharpen our effectiveness through challenging times. It is built upon three main goals:

- **Transform the planning narrative** — Build a statewide movement of Floridians who can speak to the benefits of good planning and the real costs of poor planning, from traffic impacts and polluted water, to higher insurance costs and storm risks
- **Fortify public support and power** — Unite informed, well-prepared residents into a stronger voice to engage in community planning
- **Restore and enhance planning and conservation** — Defend and strengthen Florida's planning and conservation laws and unite communities to push back against sprawl-inducing decisions

SAVING SPECIAL PLACES

- **Increasing conservation transparency** — Supported successful passage of a bill requiring greater public notice before proposed sale or swap of conservation lands
- **Fighting for the Ocklawaha River** — Pushed forward the effort to restore this ecologically vital waterway, which passed the House 107-3 before falling short in the Senate, and continued advocacy through the Reunite the Rivers coalition
- **Pressing for conservation investments** — Supported robust funding provided for Everglades restoration, and rallied support for protecting natural land through Florida Forever
- **Boosting rural land protection** — Helped maintain robust funding for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program (RFLPP) to keep working farms and ranches in conservation
- **Protecting Walton County's environment** — Assisted the South Walton Community Council in successfully opposing a development that would have violated the county's comprehensive plan and destroyed ecologically sensitive areas
- **Celebrating a Martin County milestone** — Joined the community in marking more than 2,000 acres of natural and agricultural land protected in just over a year through Martin County Forever, the voter-approved half-cent sales tax program we championed
- **Maintaining development limits** — Turned back proposal for fast-track administrative approval of infill proposals
- **Appealing to the highest court** — Filed a friend-of-the-court brief with the U.S. Supreme Court defending the authority of local governments to offer transferable development rights in exchange for protections on environmentally sensitive properties
- **Holding the Line in Miami-Dade** — Continued leadership on the Hold the Line Coalition to maintain the Urban Development Boundary that protects the county's water supply, agriculture, the Everglades and Biscayne Bay
- **Uniting for Florida's environment** — Advanced shared conservation goals through the Everglades Coalition, the Florida Springs Council, the Florida Coastal and Ocean Coalition, the ROGO Coalition and the Guardians of Martin County
- **Strengthening Florida's coastline** — Helped draft and enact SB 302, the Coastal Resiliency Act, directing the state to expand nature-based "green" solutions that defend communities from storms and rising seas more affordably and effectively than conventional "gray" infrastructure, as well as adding higher protections against port and dredging projects in Terra Ceia Aquatic Preserve in Manatee County
- **Protecting the Florida Wildlife Corridor** — Continued webinar series on planning to preserve high-priority connected natural lands — in partnership with the University of Florida's Center for Landscape Conservation Planning, Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation, Live Wildly and other collaborators

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH PLANNING

- **Empowering citizens and professionals** — Presented thousands of attendees with free information and continuing education credits through the 2025-2026 Dr. John M. DeGrove Webinar Series
- **Informing data center decisions** — Released a new Special Report, Potential Impacts of Data Center Development on Florida Communities, to help local officials and communities critically evaluate proposals
- **Focusing on the future** — Released Spotlight on Florida's Future with the University of Florida Center for Landscape Conservation Planning, projecting the impacts of sea-level rise, population growth and development patterns on land, water and agriculture through 2070
- **Strengthening the case for conservation** — Released The Economics of Land Conservation, a white paper demonstrating the taxpayer advantages of conserving natural and agricultural land compared with rural sprawl
- **Modeling great planning** — Published a community visioning report featuring case studies of four Florida communities that exemplify strong public engagement and science-based planning
- **Addressing Florida's next generation of leaders** — President Paul Owens delivered the keynote address at the Future of Florida Summit, hosted by the Bob Graham Center for Public Service at the University of Florida
- **Informing Conservation Planning Efforts Nationwide** — Hosted webinar focused on expanding reach of 2025 Mind the Gaps Curriculum, and presented conservation policy tools at National American Planning Association Online Conference alongside Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation and Polk County Parks and Natural Resources
- **Earning national recognition** — Special Projects Director Vivian Young was elected to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Certified Planners (FAICP), the profession's highest honor
- **Strengthening the team** — Welcomed Logan McDonald as Special Projects Director and Susan Carr to the Board of Directors



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~THANK YOU~

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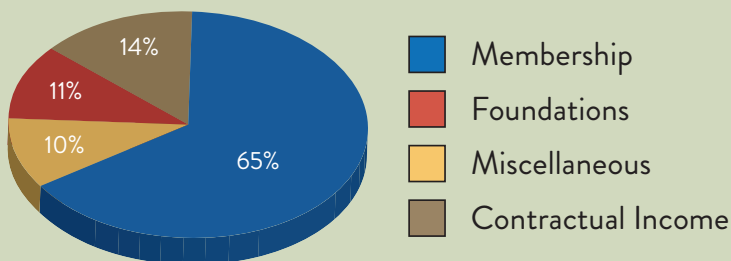
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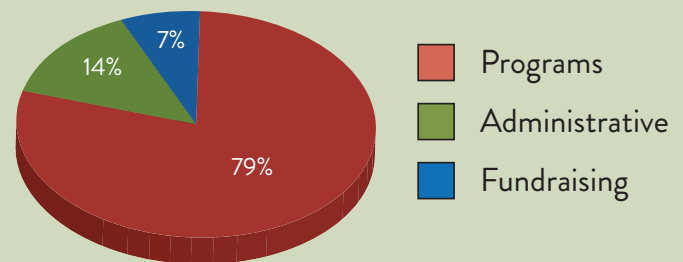
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