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ULI Report

Western Nassau County

Technical Assistance Panel
November 7 - 8, 2017 | Yulee, Florida



Preface

About ULI

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) is a nonprofit education and research institute supported by its members. Its mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. Established in 1936, ULI has more than 40,000 members worldwide representing all aspects of land use and development disciplines. The North Florida District Council was formed in 2005 and has more than 500 members in 34 counties, including the cities of Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Gainesville, Tallahassee, Panama City and Pensacola.

What are Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)?

Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) are one- to two-day panels convened by the local ULI District Council at the behest of a community, public entity or private enterprise (Sponsor) facing real estate or land-use issues. The District Council assembles a panel composed of highly qualified professionals chosen for their knowledge of the issues facing the Sponsor. The interdisciplinary team of seasoned real estate professionals may include land planners, architects, financiers, developers, appraisers, attorneys and brokers who are well qualified to provide unbiased, pragmatic advice on complex real estate issues. Panel members are not compensated for their time, but they are reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses, such as overnight lodging and transportation to attend the TAP. To ensure objectivity, panel members cannot be involved in matters pending before the Sponsor, currently work for the Sponsor or solicit work from the Sponsor during the six months following the TAP program.

How do TAPs work?

Charged with moving specific projects forward, TAPS provide expert, multidisciplinary advice to local governments, private companies, public agencies and nonprofits facing complex land-use and real estate issues. Drawing from our professional membership base, we leverage the collective expertise of our members to provide a unique, market-based perspective on a broad range of issues including:

- The re-use potential of existing properties
- Revitalization of corridors or specific properties
- Key economic and other issues relating to public/private land-use situations
- Specific development and land proposals or issues
- Market feasibility, financial structuring, and more

The Program

During the two-day program, ULI North Florida assembles a panel comprised of six to 10 senior-level members representing the specific land-use disciplines needed for each assignment. Panel members may include developers and owners, investors, designers, engineers, attorneys and executives from the greater North Florida region. Panelists tour the study area, interview stakeholders, and work collaboratively to produce preliminary findings and recommendations which are presented after the TAP workshop in either a private or public forum. A complete report follows within about a month with detailed recommendations.

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Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Urban Land Institute, the TAP Committee Chairs and TAP panelists wish to thank the following members and sponsors for their contributions:

Genesis Group, Jacksonville

England-Thims & Miller, Jacksonville

TAP Scope

Nassau County engaged the ULI North Florida District Council to convene a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) for the purpose of studying how to effectively manage the growth expected to flow into the rural western part of the County. The TAP study covers the area bordered by I-95 to the east, the St. Mary's River to the north and west, and Duval County to the south.

Of particular concern to the community is the effect of expected growth on the area's character, resources and quality of life that the residents of western Nassau value. The County is seeking advice on best practices that can be implemented to prepare the area for growth while maintaining community character and lifestyle.

The goals of the TAP were to:

1. Identify methods, incentives and policies by which the rural lifestyle/ambiance of western Nassau can be preserved while simultaneously providing community services, amenities and economic opportunities.
2. Identify methods, incentives and policies to promote fiscally responsible development patterns with a people-first agenda.
3. Identify methods, incentives and policies that place a priority on creating a sense of place and community, and discourages sprawling, unsustainable automobile-oriented development patterns.
4. Identify methods, incentives and policies to direct development away from prime agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive areas.
5. Identify methods, incentives and policies to promote high-wage job creation, economic development and supporting services in balance with preserving the rural nature of the area.
6. Identify methods, incentives and policies that promote an efficient multimodal transportation network in western Nassau which supports more sustainable development patterns.

Panel Process

The ULI North Florida District Council assembled a group of accomplished ULI members who have expertise in land planning, economic development and creative place making for an intensive two-day workshop to address the challenges facing western Nassau County.

Prior to convening, TAP members received information on western Nassau County demographics and economic data; public projects, programs and plans in place or planned for the study area; school data; maps; other background information and information on area stakeholders.

Orientation on day one included an introductory presentation by **Taco Pope**, Director, Nassau County Department of Planning & Economic Opportunity, and interviews with community leaders, including Commissioner **Justin Taylor**, District 5; **Daveda Newsome**, Greater Nassau County Chamber of Commerce; **Laura DiBella**, Nassau County Economic Development Board; **Mayor Cris McConnell**, Hilliard, Florida; **Commissioner George Spicer**, District 4; **Mayor Robert Rau**, Callahan, Florida; and **Dr. Kathy Burns**, Superintendent of Nassau County School District. **Justin Stankiewicz**, Nassau County OMB and Assistant County Manager, and Public Works Director **Scott Herring** were helpful in answering panelists' questions regarding the County's financial constraints and utilities, respectively. ULI was specifically asked not to interview any landowners in the County for this exercise.

On day two, the panelists discussed potential solutions to the issues to be addressed, formalized their observations and made recommendations based on input from the stakeholders and the information provided to them by the Sponsor. At the day's end, their recommendations were presented at a public meeting that included members of the Nassau County Board of County Commissioners, city mayors, and many Nassau County citizens interested in learning about the recommendations firsthand.

Executive Summary

“ I want to see controlled growth so that we can provide work for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren without having to drive to Jacksonville, Yulee or Fernandina Beach.”

—Cris McConnell, Mayor, Hilliard

The rural, bucolic area of western Nassau County is feeling the pressure of encroaching development. The eastern portion of the County has seen unprecedented growth in the last decade, as development has moved from the Jacksonville metro area north. Many residents in western Nassau view the development that has taken place negatively. They are particularly concerned with the effect growth will have on western Nassau’s character and resources and the quality of life that they value. Nevertheless, as other areas are being built out, developers are eyeing western Nassau for future growth.

Despite an antigrowth sentiment in western Nassau, residents there are also seeking high-paying jobs. Most residents of Nassau County commute to Jacksonville for employment, creating “bedroom” communities. The County is seeking to attract industrial development, in particular to the Crawford Diamond Industrial Park, which is ideally situated at two Class I rail lines. Such development, however, is expected to bring the need for housing and services.

Nassau County is also facing a financial crunch. Its low-tax, anti-debt and low-density zoning policies combined with a lack of a large industrial/commercial tax base have made it increasingly difficult to provide public works, needed improvements and other services residents want, such as new and improved recreational areas.

ULI North Florida was asked to form a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to review the issues facing western Nassau with an eye toward how to prepare the area for growth while maintaining a rural character and lifestyle.

The panel recommended that the County first identify the areas that it wants to preserve as rural and/or natural, such as agricultural lands, wetlands and floodplains. Secondly, the County should direct development where it is appropriate — close to existing and future job centers, near major transportation assets, and where infrastructure is already in place or can be extended. The members identified three areas expected to become employment centers (East Nassau Community Planning Area, Crawford Diamond Industrial Park and ICI Industrial Park) around which development should occur, with US 301/SR 200 as the area most likely to become the hub of development.

Focusing growth with sufficient density and where adequate utilities can be provided is cost-effective. Adopting mixed-use zoning for “Main Street” commercial areas and designing requirements for complete, connected streets to it with buffers for land-use transitions can provide economic vitality and impede commercial sprawl. Each of the areas where development is directed should reflect local character and what best suits residents’ needs — whether that be an activity center, planned community, village center, rural hamlet or civic/community place. Regulations and design standards should be created in keeping with the community vision to grow while maintaining its character and lifestyle.

The panel noted that capital improvements and spending strategies for the preferred growth areas must be addressed to ensure adequate infrastructure either through new facilities or through relationships with existing providers, as well as transportation, recreational and public safety needs.

To accomplish the above, the County will need to revise its zoning to increase densities and allow mixed-use development where appropriate. Various options are available to not only create boundaries for development but also preserve and conserve rural and agricultural lands. These include an urban service area or urban growth boundary, updating the 2030 Comprehensive Plan Land Development Codes, creating overlay districts, designating rural settlement areas, establishing conservation easements, participating in the Florida Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, and purchasing or transferring development rights.

Several Florida counties, including Sarasota, Pasco, Osceola and Orange counties, have implemented programs designed to stop urban sprawl and protect rural and agricultural lands as well as natural resources. Nassau County should study these programs and determine what successful policies would best serve County residents, since every locale has its own unique needs and circumstances.

A successful growth plan will require a unified vision for western Nassau. Therefore, it is important that the County engage the community to solicit broad input. Collaboration between the County, town governments and utilities is also important to ensure there is a consensus on how to grow. Developing joint planning agreements facilitates better outcomes.



Finally, TAP members suggested the County use ULI's guiding principles while planning for growth, specifically:

- Preserve and protect natural systems.
- Be prepared for the growth that is coming.
- Recognize the economic value.
- Embrace unique character.
- Use market-based incentives.
- Engage everyone.
- Create and sustain beautiful places.
- Put people first.

The panel agreed that the time is now to start planning before growth occurs. Without plans in place, the area will be ripe for unbridled growth and urban sprawl.



Background

Tucked in the northeast corner of Florida, Nassau County is the eastern gateway to the Sunshine State. The County is home to sandy beaches, abundant natural resources and exclusive resorts. It also hosts White Oak Conservation Center, one of the world's premiere wildlife conservation facilities for imperiled species. White Oak is located on the banks of the St. Marys River and encompasses more than 13,000 acres.

Nassau County's schools are "A" rated and among the best in Florida, ranking seventh in the state. However, growth is putting pressure on the school district's capacity to accommodate students in the eastern portion of the County. The newly opened (August 2017) Wildlight Elementary School in Yulee is at capacity, despite the fact that there are no homes built in the Wildlight development yet.

More than 91 percent of businesses in Nassau County have fewer than 20 employees. Jobs are concentrated in the eastern portion of the County. The largest employers are the Nassau County School District and Nassau County government followed by the Omni Amelia Island Plantation. Rayonier, Inc., a timberland real estate investment trust and the County's largest landowner with 125,000 acres, also is a major employer.

Median household income is \$55,373. Due to a lack of job opportunities, most employed residents (60 percent) work outside the County. The City of Jacksonville is a major employment hub, such that 50.2 percent are employed in Duval County.

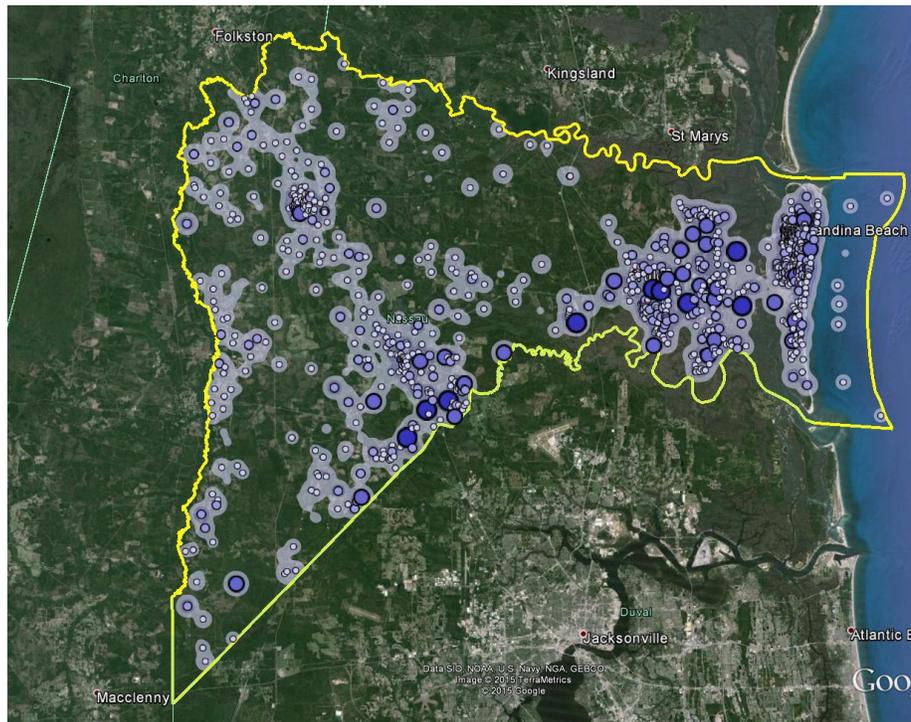


Ten Largest Employers in Nassau County

Major Employers	Sector	Number of Employees
Nassau County School Board	Education	1500
Nassau County	Government	670
Omni Amelia Island	Resort/Hospitality	630
Ritz Carlton	Resort/Hospitality	560
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)	Aviation	461
RockTenn	Manufacturing	440
Baptist Medical Center Nassau	Healthcare	410
Wal-Mart	Retail	410
Rayonier	Manufacturing	280
Care Centers of Nassau	Healthcare	250

Source: Nassau County Economic Development Board, Oct. 2012; AIFBY Chamber of Commerce, 2014; Nassau County Comprehensive Plan

Where Workers Live in Nassau County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics program; Google Earth.

Map Legend

Job Density [Jobs/Sq. Mile]

- 5 - 53
- 54 - 199
- 200 - 443
- 444 - 784

Job Count [Jobs/Census Block]

- 1 - 4
- 5 - 30
- 31 - 100
- 101 - 236



The County is financially constrained but debt- and tax-averse. The millage rate, 6.5670, has not gone up since a one-mill increase in 2014, which was the first in seven years. Nassau’s millage rate is in the bottom third of surrounding counties. A lack of commercial ratables has put an overreliance on residential ad valorem taxes to fund needed government services. As a result, there is much deferred maintenance. Ten million dollars generated from an extra 1-cent sales tax that was passed to fund capital projects is now being used to support operations. In July 2017, the Board of County Commissioners, by a vote of 3-2, failed to pass a 5-cent gas tax increase that would have generated an estimated \$1.6 million a year for road infrastructure, including paving and new road construction.

The Great Divide

I-95, the east coast’s main north-south interstate highway, dissects Nassau County into eastern and western sectors. The Eastern sector is home to the beaches, resorts and a higher concentration of the County’s more affluent residents, along with most of the commercial and residential activity. Western Nassau, on the other hand, is rural, with open expanses, many dirt roads and little major residential or industrial development.

Western Nassau comprises about 80 percent of the County’s 649 square miles but only 37 percent of the County’s population and 14 percent of the County’s residential taxable value. About 33 percent of the land is wetlands. Of the area’s 9,222 households (3.26 persons per household), 78 percent are owner occupied.

Hilliard is an agricultural area and the second most populated municipality in the County. The town is home to the Federal Aviation Administration’s Jacksonville Air Route Traffic Control Center, which is Hilliard’s largest employer. Land dedicated to silviculture is generally located in the northwest portion of Nassau County and to the southwest in the Bryceville area. The town of Callahan is located at the crossroads of SR 200 and US 301 between Hilliard to the north and Bryceville to the south.

The County’s current density policies are designed to prevent growth. Lots in minor developments and rural subdivisions on engineered dirt roads in open rural zoned areas must be a minimum of five acres and cannot be further subdivided. Residential density in uplands range from one dwelling per acre to a maximum of 10 per acre.

Jacksonville Electric Authority (JEA) is the utility that services Nassau County with the exception of Amelia Island. The rural nature of the area makes it costly to provide sewer service. Most properties in western Nassau are on septic systems.

Many western Nassau residents complain that the recreational areas serving them are at capacity. The August 2016 Nassau County Recreation Master Plan recommended developing the Westside Regional Park (Mizell Tract), but there is a question as to whether there are sufficient funds to implement the plan.

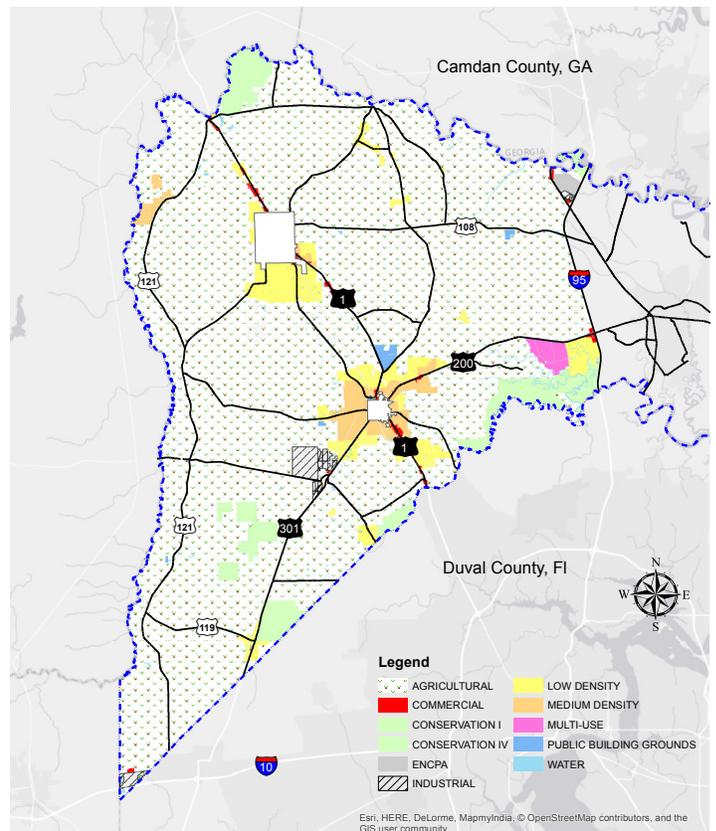


Development is Coming

While the people residing in western Nassau value their small town, rural lifestyle with its lack of congested roads, low crime and large tracts of land, all that is about to change. Ready or not, western Nassau is in the crosshairs for development. By 2045, Nassau County's population is expected to increase by 60 percent from 80,456 to 128,750. Pressure is already extending from eastern Nassau County and

Residential Density Standards		
Category	Minimum*	Maximum*
Agriculture (AGR)*	0.0 du/a	1.0 du/a
Low Density Residential (LDR)	0.0 du/a	2.0 du/a
Medium Density Residential (MDR)	0.0 du/a	3.0 du/a
High Density Residential (HDR)	3.0 du/a	10.0 du/a

**Dwelling unit per gross acre*



Western Nassau County
ULI TAP Study Area - Future Land Use



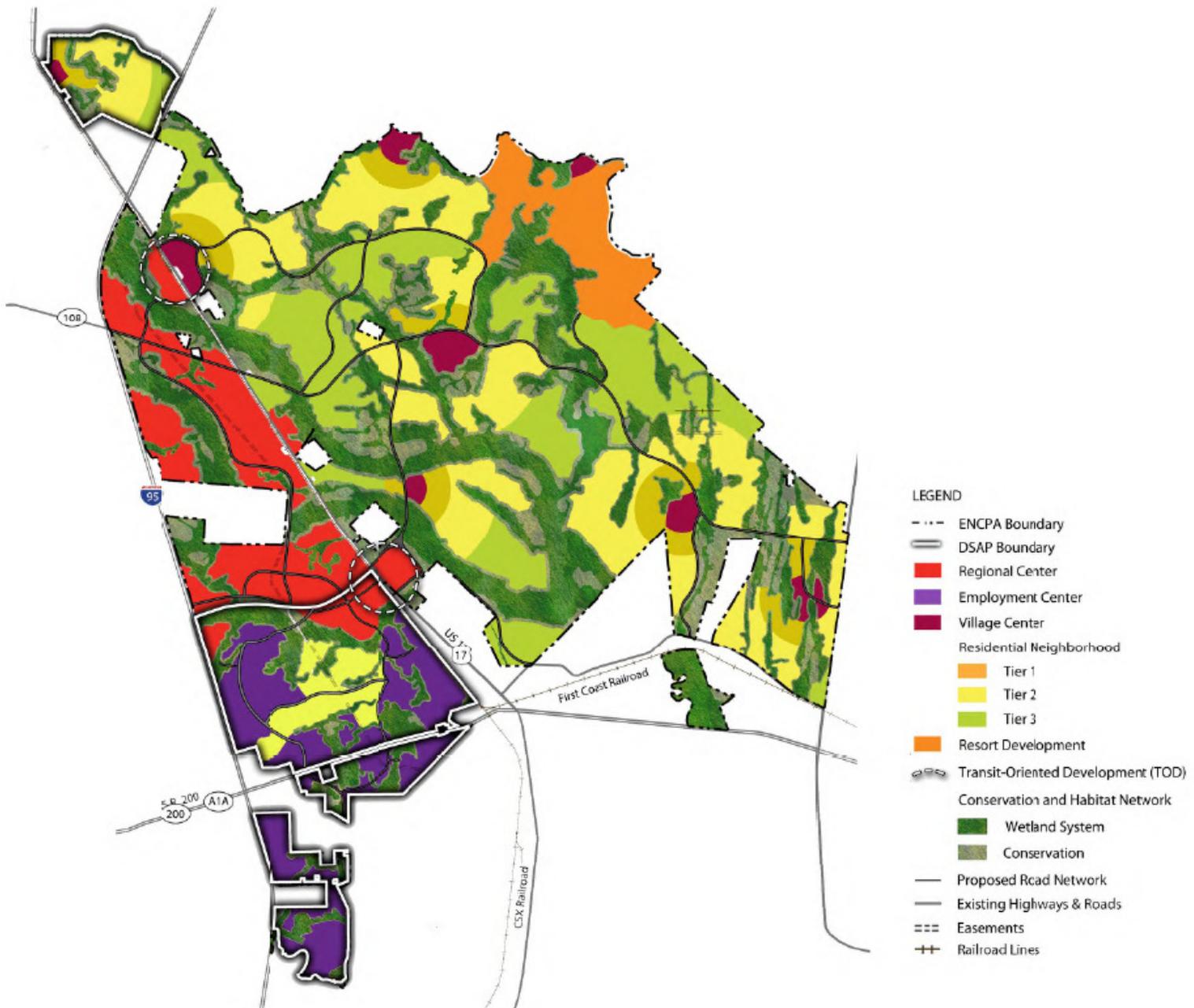
western Duval County. To the south of Jacksonville, the northern portion of St. Johns County has seen tremendous growth and is expected to be built out within 10 years.

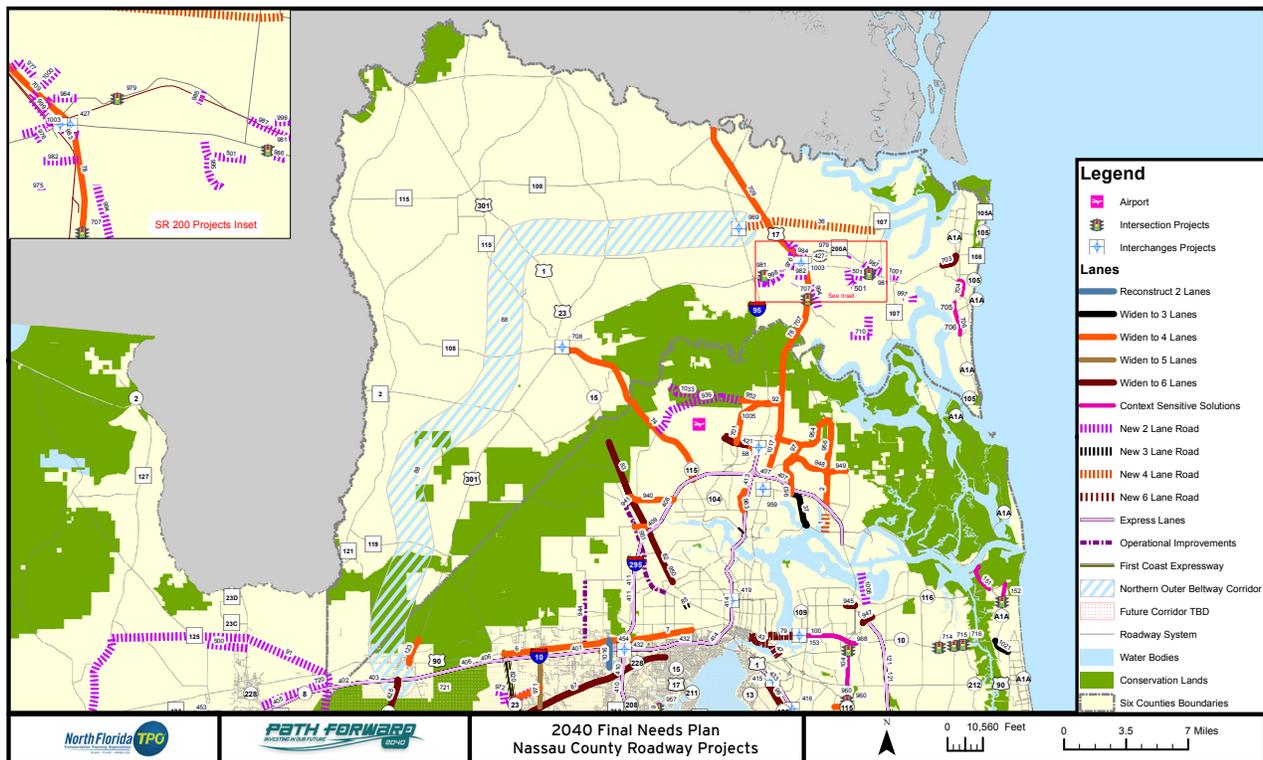
A key initiative of the County's 2030 Comprehensive Plan is to provide non-residential sites for industrial and business use in order to attract high-paying jobs and bring a balance to the residential and commercial tax base.

The East Nassau Community Planning Area (ENCPA) is a state-approved sector plan that includes approximately 24,000+ acres located along the intersection corridors of State Road 200/A1A, Interstate 95 and U.S. Highway 17. ENCPA was established as a Stewardship District in June 2017. The master-planned site, owned by Rayonier's real estate services company TerraPointe Services, is expected to provide a significant amount of future office, commercial, industrial and residential development. Phase I includes Wildlight, which covers 2,900 acres and is approved for seven million square feet of office, commercial, medical, industrial and

residential uses. It will include 3,200 residential units. All ENCPA development must comply with a series of Detailed Specific Area Plans (DSAPs) that provide for the protection of natural resources, provision of adequate public facilities, and the interrelationship of land uses.

ENCPA has broad implications for transportation and roadways in the northern portion of Nassau County. A future interchange is planned on I-95 to accommodate the additional traffic into the new development and alleviate congestion at A1A/I-95. In addition, there





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are plans to extend CR 108. A Northern Outer Beltway Corridor from I-95 west toward Hilliard and paralleling US 301 south to connect with I-10 in Baldwin has been proposed in the *2040 Final Needs Plan* of the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization. If constructed, the beltway will have a major impact on western Nassau, bringing additional economic and residential development to the area.

In western Nassau, a high priority is being given to the development of the Crawford Diamond Industrial Park, an 1800+ acre site off US 301 and five miles from Callahan. The multimodal industrial park is uniquely situated at the intersection of two Class 1 rail lines — CSX and Norfolk Southern — within 30 miles of two ports and close to I-95 and I-10. Crawford Diamond is megasite-certified, only the second in the state, making it a prime location for big industrial operations. The site is approved for up to 10.5 million square feet of industrial land use and includes 309 acres of wetlands that are to be preserved. Expedited permitting procedures mean that companies can get a permit within 30 days with no concurrency. The industrial development could attract 6,500 needed jobs to the area. Due to its close proximity, Callahan is the area most likely to be affected by Crawford Diamond and surrounding development.

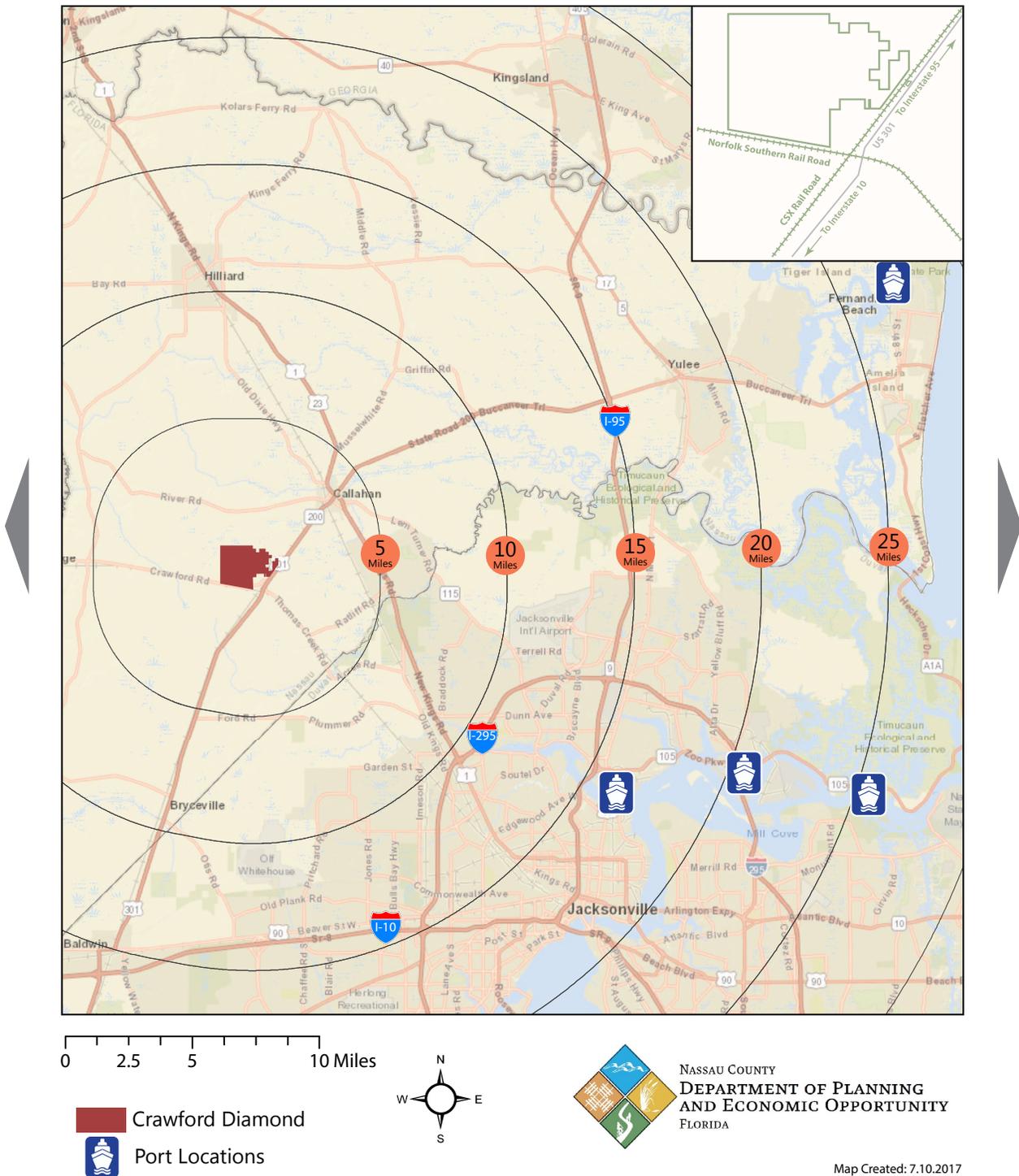
Other nearby industrial complexes that are expected to change the dynamic include the growing Jacksonville International Airport area and the planned ICI Industrial Park off 301 between US 90 and I-10. The latter is a 487-acre site limited to 2.35 million square feet of industrial uses and 40,000 enclosed square feet for commercial purposes.

NIMBY

The citizens of western Nassau are seeking high wage jobs, better services and more amenities. They complain of fire stations that have been closed, flooding issues that are not addressed, and recreational facilities that are at their maximum capacity. But they do not want unbridled development. Many distrust government, are anti-regulation and view “smart growth” negatively. They look at the congestion and lack of design criteria along SR A1A with its commercial strip malls and fear that the same will occur on US 301. Cluster development is antithetical to their rural way of life. They believe urbanization will overcrowd their roads, schools and hospitals, bring increased crime and cause higher taxes, among other things. They do not want their countryside to become unrecognizable, following the fate of so many other rural communities across Florida, where any remnants of character and uniqueness have been altered or changed by overdevelopment.

“ Crawford Diamond is uniquely situated at the intersection of two Class 1 rail lines -- CSX and Norfolk Southern -- within 30 miles of two ports and close to I-95 and I-10.”

Crawford Diamond



Map Created: 7.10.2017

Analysis

TAP members came away from the community leader interviews with a clear understanding of the desires of western Nassau residents to keep their rural lifestyle. There is a need to protect wetlands, floodplains and agricultural land. While local residents favor bringing in quality jobs, they want to ensure that their communities are not overrun with urban sprawl.

The County's need for high-paying jobs and commercial tax revenue is evident. It cannot fiscally sustain the services and amenities citizens expect with the current imbalance in its residential and commercial tax base. An influx of industry will increase tax revenue and can help maintain low residential property taxes — a goal shared by the Board of County Commissioners and citizens alike.

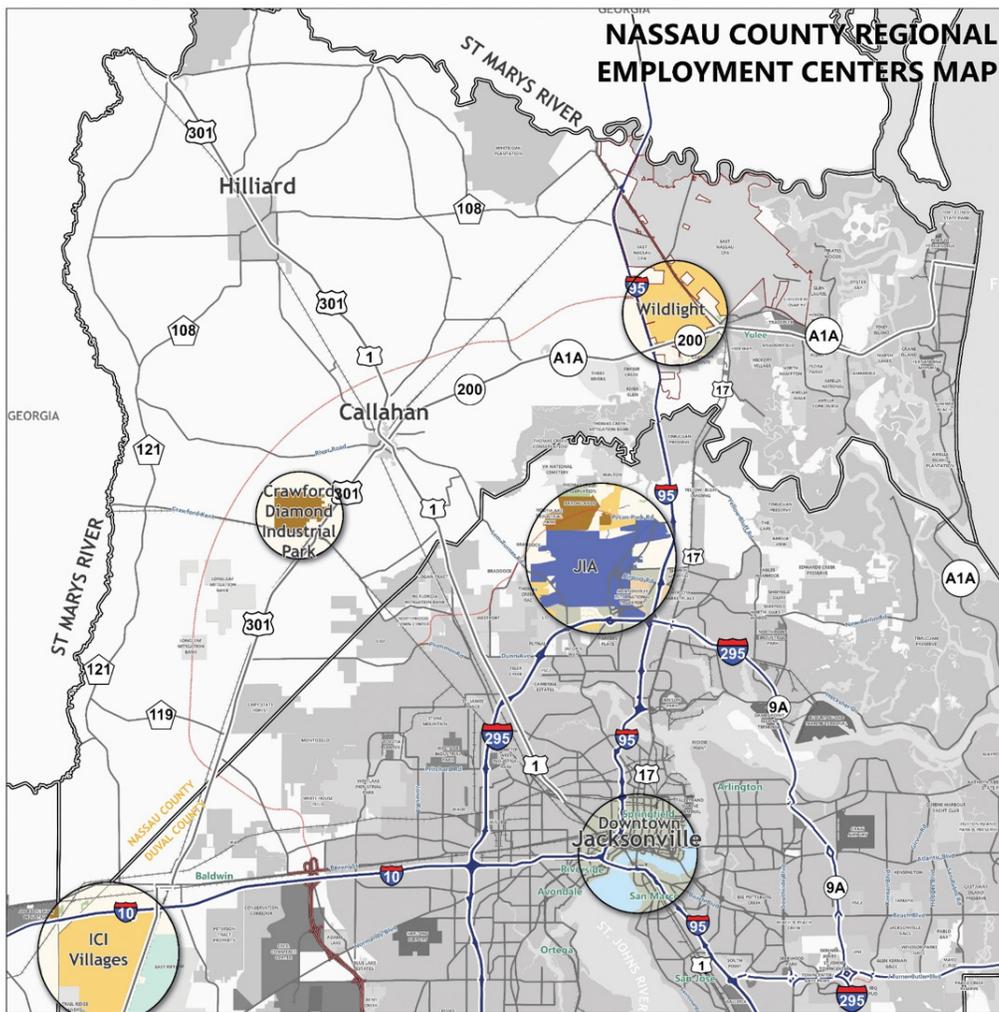
Given the County's push for high-wage manufacturing and industrial jobs, it can be expected that emerging job centers will create demand for housing and services, as evidenced in Jacksonville over the past several decades. As jobs moved south from downtown to Southpoint and the Butler Boulevard corridor, residential development moved to southeast Jacksonville and northern St. Johns County.

Future and growing job centers in and around Nassau County are ENCPA, ICI Villages Industrial Park, Jacksonville International Airport and Crawford Diamond. ENCPA is in its infancy; any large-scale job generation is a long-term prospect. ICI Villages is another long-term prospect; currently nothing is under construction.

Crawford Diamond, the major entitled site in western Nassau for heavy industrial development, has been available for a decade. It is uniquely situated along two rail lines and in close proximity to major roads and ports. However, drawing large industrial enterprises to the area appears to be hampered by several issues:

- **The site is raw.** The lack of water and sewer hampers development at Crawford Diamond. Toxic effluent from the industrial site will need to be treated. Currently, a line would have to be built to run the 19 miles to the closest JEA facility. JEA will allow another utility to service the industrial park, according to Scott Herring, Nassau County public works director. He noted, "If the County had control of water and sewer, we would have better ability to control development." Callahan can provide water and sewer, but the town's mayor has indicated that they are not prepared to do so at this time. Callahan does not want to add debt services or obligate its citizens to pay for something that is outside their town.
- **A lack of residential and retail development.** Large companies increasingly are interested in sites where their employees can live, work and play. Development is needed where the expected influx of workers and their families will reside and shop.
- **Lots of competition.** There are other sites that are well suited, including the area in North Jacksonville around Jacksonville International Airport, Jacksonville's Westside Industrial Park and Cecil Commerce Center.

Lack of
Recreational Facilities
Fiscally Challenged No Orange Park
Traffic Higher Paying Jobs
Preservation Agriculture
of Lifestyle Affordability
Good Schools Poor Infrastructure
Crawford Diamond Unique Growth



Conventional wisdom among the community leaders interviewed is that a major industrial entity will sign on to Crawford Diamond soon and that ancillary users are waiting in the wings for “a big gorilla” to bring in the infrastructure. The County should consider working with JEA on a new wastewater treatment facility or creating a Nassau County utility.

Three primary factors play a role in determining the “right” location for development: proximity of jobs, infrastructure, and the potential for transportation options, both existing and long term. Based on the location of potential employment centers, the SR 200/US 301 corridor appears to be the area that will be the hub of development. Areas dominated by very-low-density housing are expensive in terms of public works and other services. Concentrating development into a compact area not only restricts encroachment into rural areas but enables the County to provide public services more efficiently and cost-effectively.

The County can establish an urban service boundary around a job center or create a rural overlay district that preserves farmland, natural areas and small-scale rural communities from development. The overlay district is a way to define how the future development will occur with respect to roads, lot sizes, commercial uses and open spaces. In addition, while developers can be required to include recreational parks and open spaces in their plans, the County should prioritize areas that can be set aside for regional recreational purposes.

In August 2017, the Nassau County Board of County Commissioners approved the adoption of the William Burgess Mixed Use Overlay District, which lies south and east of the A1A/I-95 intersection. To create a sense of place, the District will reflect a Vintage Florida Railroad theme, incorporating old styles with a new feeling. The overlay is designed as a transect plan, which creates zones that transition from high density at the Village Core and decreases density moving out toward the Village Center (moderate density) and to the

“ People in Callahan don’t want strip malls. They don’t want to see what is happening along A1A. You can’t tell where one town ends and another starts.” — Robert Rau, Mayor, Callahan

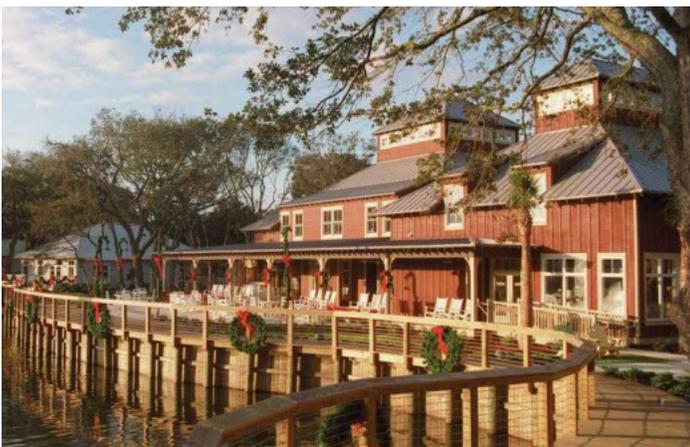
Village Edge (low density), the latter accommodating limited neighborhood-scale commercial uses. The plan includes recreational and open spaces in each zone. It is a possible model for development nodes in western Nassau.

The County also needs to consider purchasing land for expanding recreational purposes and developing the Westside Regional Park (Mizell Tract) as recommended in the August 2016 Nassau County Recreation Master Plan.

Nassau County is not alone in its efforts to deal with encroachment. Other counties in Florida face similar issues. Some like Sarasota, Pasco, Osceola and

Orange have established policies to contain growth and maintain rural aspects of their counties using various methods that can be adapted by Nassau. In every effort, however, there is a need for coordination between the different levels of government (town/city/county) to ensure that all voices are heard.

The greatest barrier to success is, first and foremost, inertia. There must be a sense of urgency to address the influx of development facing western Nassau County, along with strong leadership and governance to bring needed improvements to the area. Other threats include a lack of funding due to current tax base and infighting among stakeholders, some of whom see any development as antithetical to their way of life.



Recommendations

1 Identify the places you want to protect from potential negative impacts of future development.

Western Nassau County is rich in natural resources. The County’s natural systems like wetlands and floodplains provide constraints on development. By mapping areas that should be preserved or remain rural, western Nassau can direct development to locations that can better support growth. Land-use policies can be developed to ensure the natural landscapes and agricultural lands that define the area’s rural character are protected.

2 Identify where you want to focus growth.

Direct development where it is appropriate — close to existing and future job centers, near major transportation assets, and where infrastructure is already in place or can be extended. Focusing growth with sufficient density and where adequate utilities can be provided is cost-effective.

The goal should be to create a vibrant downtown, with a walkable “Main Street” or two, and compact neighborhoods surrounding it. Adopting mixed-use zoning for Main Street commercial areas and designing requirements for complete, connected streets to it with buffers for land-use transitions can provide economic vitality and impede commercial scrawl. Update current land-use codes as needed.

For western Nassau, development is most likely to occur along the SR 200/US 301 corridor and include the area west of ENCPA, around Callahan to the north of Crawford Diamond and around Bryceville to the south.

3 Determine the ideal character of the places where growth is directed.

The process of defining growth in a rural community is challenging. One size does not fit all. Each of the areas where development is directed should reflect local character and what best suits residents’ needs — whether that be an activity center, planned community, village center, rural hamlet or civic/community place. Regulations and design standards should be created in keeping with the community vision.

Places	
Activity Center	A mixed-use development where jobs, shopping and services aggregate.
Planned Community	A community planned from its inception that is typically constructed in a previously undeveloped area.
Village Center	A pedestrian-oriented district that can support a variety of residential, retail, commercial and entertainment uses.
Rural Hamlet	A small, walkable town center within the larger rural community.
Civic/Community Place	A public gathering space that serves as the center of a rural community.

4 Plan for future schools and other public facilities.

Capital improvements and spending strategies for the preferred growth areas must be addressed to ensure adequate infrastructure, such as future municipal water and sewer either through new facilities or through relationships with existing providers, as well as transportation and public safety needs. Mitigation measures can address fiscal impacts, such as requiring a residential developer to donate land for a school. In addition, by developing a comprehensive public lands acquisition strategy, the County can create a plan to maximize the utilization of open spaces and natural resources through public access, parks and recreation; areas for boating and water sports; and walking, hiking and biking trail networks.

5 Consider various options for controlling growth and preserving open spaces.

Urban Service Area or Urban Growth Boundary

Urban service areas (USAs) focus new growth and public investments where services like roads, water, sewers, schools, parks, etc. are available, or will be most needed, and beyond which no public infrastructure will be extended. Urban growth boundaries (UGBs) delineate urban growth areas from those zoned for rural and agricultural uses. The size of the areas should include sufficient land to provide for population needs for a period of time, such as 20 years.

Comprehensive Plan/Land Development Code Revisions

The 2030 Comprehensive Plan provides very low densities for most of western Nassau. Much of the area is designated Agricultural, with one unit per acre for single ownership parcels under 320 acres. To accommodate future industrial, commercial and residential growth, the County should review its land-use designations and densities to provide greater opportunities for industry and mixed-use development with employment centers.

Overlay Districts

An Overlay District creates a special zone placed over an existing zone and attaches special regulations or incentives to protect specific resources or guide development within the area. The zoning tool can be used to manage development in environmentally sensitive areas, like floodplains. It also can guide design elements for developments, such as setbacks and landscaping requirements, or to protect historic areas.

Rural Settlement Areas

Rural Settlement Areas (RSAs) can be designated to include a limited mix of land uses serving primarily the local community and offering opportunities to live and work in the community. RSAs generally rely on private wells and septic tanks and are areas for limited growth.

Conservation Easements

Development in rural or environmentally sensitive areas can be eliminated through conservation easements. An easement, either donated or sold to a land trust or the County, provides for the perpetual conservation of land, while leaving the property in the hands of the owner.

Florida Rural and Family Lands Protection Program

This program is designed to protect important agricultural lands in the path of development through the acquisition of permanent agricultural land conservation easements. It ensures "sustainable agricultural practices and reasonable protection of the environment without interfering with agricultural operations in such a way that could put the continued economic viability of these operations at risk."

Purchase or Transfer of Development Rights

Development rights are part of property ownership. The Purchase (PDR) or Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a zoning tool that enables development rights to be sold or transferred from one property to another without buying or selling the land to which it is associated. In areas designated for limited or no development, a land trust or other agency can purchase development rights from a landowner. A permanent restriction is placed on the land with respect to the activities that can take place on it, ensuring no development will take place. With a TDR, the County or a developer purchases the rights from a landowner (sending area) and transfers the rights to another (receiving area), enabling the latter to use the rights for more intense (dense) development.

6 Study places that are doing this well and determine best practices.

Sarasota, Pasco, Osceola and Orange counties have all implemented programs designed to stop urban sprawl and protect rural and agricultural lands as well as natural resources. It is important to determine what successful policies would best serve Nassau County residents, since every locale has its own unique needs and circumstances.

7 Engage the community to solicit broad input for reaching a unified vision.

Maximize opportunities for residents to participate in where and how growth should be managed in western Nassau. Develop a communications plan to provide information about proposed plans and hold public meetings in Callahan, Hilliard and Bryceville to enable residents to offer their ideas.

8 Develop Joint Planning Agreements to facilitate better outcomes.

Cooperation between town and county governments as well as utilities is key to ensuring that there is consensus on how to plan for new development and how western Nassau will grow. Regional collaboration makes the region more efficient, economically competitive and attractive.

9 Plan for growth using ULI's Guiding Principles.

Preserve and protect natural systems.

By identifying where development should go and what resources should be protected, both developers and residents can be more certain of the process and the project-by-project battles over open space and environment between can be checked.

Be prepared for the growth that is coming.

By all measures, development is coming to western Nassau County. Now is the time to determine what future development will look like by making necessary changes to land-use policies, developing joint planning agreements and engaging the public. Doing nothing assures urban sprawl.

Recognize the economic value.

Economically sustainable rural communities enjoy a strong commercial base. Concentrating mixed-use development in existing towns expands the tax base supporting community services.

Embrace unique character.

Developing local businesses that enhance the cultural heritage of an area can help differentiate a community and drive economic development. In addition, adopting design standards can help ensure that new development corresponds with the town's rural character.

Use market-based incentives.

Tools such as the Transfer of Development Rights can not only preserve natural and environmentally sensitive areas but encourage development where it is most appropriate.

Engage everyone.

Change is difficult. It is important that all stakeholders — residents, landowners, business owners, developers, environmental groups and elected officials — have an understanding of the long-term effects of decisions made.

Create and sustain beautiful places.

Parks and natural features bring economic, ecological and social benefits, making neighborhoods more attractive and vibrant places to live, work, and play. Investing in existing parks can make them destinations, drawing residents and visitors alike to help the towns around them thrive.

Put people first.

Putting people first is about designing around people's needs. Creating greater connectivity and providing an attractive and safe environment are basic tenets.

Conclusion

While development is knocking at Western Nassau's door, there is time to get ahead of the curve and follow a plan that contains development to appropriate areas, while maintaining the rural character in others. Doing nothing, however, will assure that development comes without restraint.

About the Panelists



Scott Sheridan, RLA, Locust Branch, LLC, Wesley Chapel, TAP Chair

Scott Sheridan is the chief operating officer of Locust Branch, a development company for Wiregrass Ranch in Pasco County. Prior to joining Locust Branch, Sheridan was senior vice president at King Engineering Associates, Inc., in Tampa, where he led the Land Planning Department and was a member of the board of directors for the past 14 years. Through his various roles at King Engineering, Sheridan has been involved in the Wiregrass Ranch project from its inception. Since 2004, he managed the planning, entitlement, engineering, permitting and development activities for the Wiregrass Ranch DRI with the Porter Family and its partners.

As a Florida Registered Landscape Architect and an active member of the Urban Land Institute, Sheridan contributes his expertise to the ULI statewide Urban Development and Mixed Use Council. In 2014, he was a gubernatorial appointee, designated by Governor Rick Scott, to the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council for Hillsborough County.

Sheridan holds a bachelor of science degree from Rutgers University, Cook College in Urban and Regional Planning.



Kathy Hattaway, AICP, Poulos & Bennett, Orlando

Kathy Hattaway is planning group leader for Poulos & Bennett, a land planning and engineering firm. She has more than 25 years of experience as a strategic planning expert, specializing in streamlining the process of pre-development applications such as comprehensive plan amendments, planned developments, developments of regional impact and sector plans. She also is experienced in the drafting of Development Agreements and Development Orders.

As a recognized expert within the complex world of land planning, Hattaway has managed numerous high profile development and consulting teams, earning a trusted reputation with clients on the local and national stages. She is a founding member of the Central Florida ULI's Women's Leadership Initiative and serves on the ULI Florida Community Development Product Council. Additionally, Hattaway chairs the City of Maitland Planning & Zoning Commission, serves on the Greater Orlando Builders Association Developers Council, and is a member of the American Planning Association. She previously served on the Osceola County Planning Commission and the Osceola County Board of Adjustment and is a graduate of Leadership Central Florida, Leadership Orlando, and Leadership Osceola.

Hattaway holds a bachelor of science degree in political science from the University of Florida and an MBA in real estate, finance and development from Nova University. She is a licensed Florida realtor.



Gregg Logan, RCLCO, Orlando

Gregg Logan is a managing director of RCLCO, real estate advisors in development, management, investment and corporate strategy issues. Over the past 30 years he has worked with leading real estate developers, land owners, investors, builders and public sector entities, helping them make the best development, investment and/or planning decisions for their real estate. Logan’s advisory work has included market evaluations and strategies for residential, commercial, and mixed-use developments; town centers and suburban business districts; and economic development studies for cities, counties, and community improvement districts. He

has conducted and supervised real estate consulting assignments in the U.S. and abroad.

Logan participated as a market specialist to help create ULI’s Ten Principles for Developing Successful Town Centers. He also has published articles and/or been quoted as an industry expert in The New York Times, San Francisco Examiner, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, Real Estate Today, Urban Land, The Atlanta Constitution, Atlanta Business Chronicle, and Builder, with regard to a variety of land-use and development-related issues. Logan has been a speaker for national and regional groups, including ULI and the National Association of Home Builders. He is a graduate of UCLA.



Hugh Mathews, PE, England-Thims & Miller, Jacksonville

Hugh Mathews is chief executive officer and president of civil engineering firm ETM. His project involvement includes bringing focus and oversight on creating quality environments and places of interest. Mathews’ vision and experience with land development and urban renewal in top-tier communities makes him a valuable leader to project teams. High profile projects in his portfolio include St. Johns Town Center, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, Nocatee, Brooklyn Redevelopment, Flagler Center, Celebration Pointe, Tamaya, Vistakon and the Outlet Mall of Georgia.

Mathews is a graduate of the University of Alabama and is a licensed professional engineer in the states of Florida and Alabama. He sits on the College of Engineering Leadership Board, the Board of Advisors to the Civil Engineering Department at the University of Alabama, and is a member of the Dean’s Leadership Council to the College of Computing, Engineering and Construction at the University of North Florida.

In addition to his participation in a host of professional organizations, Mathews serves on the JAX Chamber Board of Governors and the Baptist Medical Center South Development Council. He has served as a member of the board of directors for Lifeline Children’s Services and is past chairman of the board of directors of Seamark Ranch, both of which are Christian children’s non-profit organizations.



Greg Witherspoon, AICP, RLA, Canin Associates, Orlando

Greg Witherspoon is a principal at Canin Associates, an urban planning, landscape architecture, and architecture firm based in Orlando. For more than 20 years, he has focused on creating sustainable communities through the practice of community planning, design and creative placemaking.

Witherspoon has an extensive background in the planning and design of many new communities throughout the United States, including the award-winning Rancho Viejo in New Mexico and communities in Montana, Indiana, Texas and Florida. His international experience includes Panama Pacifico, a new 50,000-person city adjacent to Ciudad de Panamá. Other experience includes regional and comprehensive planning efforts for the Los Alamos National Laboratory and Metroplan Orlando, as well as a number of landscape architecture projects for large-scale resorts.

In his practice, Witherspoon has focused on the physical transformation of spaces and creating great people places in all aspects of planning and design. He has participated in ULI in a variety of roles and has been an active volunteer since 2008. Currently, Witherspoon is the chair of the Florida District Council and the chair of the Community and Housing Development Product Council for the State of Florida. His past roles at ULI Central Florida include chair of the Membership Committee and chair of Programs.

Witherspoon received a master's degree in regional and city planning, landscape architecture, from the University of Oklahoma.

Appendix

Sarasota County

Sarasota County established an Urban Service Boundary (USB) more than 35 years ago. Essentially, development to the west of the line is recognized as urban-scaled development, while land to the east of the line is considered to be rural. In 2000 the County adopted a Resource Management Area (RMA) overlay, which established the direction for future development east of the USB.

The RMAs are designed to balance growth in a way that protects unique environmental characteristics and minimizes the overall impact of development upon residents. There are six RMAs:

- Agricultural Reserve
- Rural Heritage/Estate
- Greenway
- Village/Open Space
- Economic Development
- Urban/Suburban

The Agricultural Reserve RMA provides for the maintenance of large portions of the County's agriculture. Principles of the RMA are to maintain agricultural character, preserve and conserve agricultural lands, protect natural resources, and manage the Agricultural Reserve in a way that protects adjacent public conservation/preservation lands.

The Rural Heritage/Estate RMA recognizes and supports the existing pattern of large-lot estate development, agriculture, and equestrian activities outside the Urban Service Boundary. It consists primarily of existing and platted large-lot development and small farms. Parcels are predominantly two to 30 acres in size. The RMA is designed to preserve the individual characteristics of traditional rural development and deed-restricted planned development. Rural Heritage/Estate areas connect to open space, trails and infrastructure corridors where appropriate and are separated from villages by open space, greenways or other types of buffers. Open Space lands located within 500 feet of the Rural Heritage/Estate RMA shall not include golf courses, public parks, potable water storage facilities, regional stormwater facilities, or new agricultural uses other than Low-Intensity Agriculture. The intent of this policy is to avoid the conversion of significant native habitat. The County allows existing development rights on parcels within the Rural Heritage/Estate RMA to be transferred to eligible receiving zones.

The Greenway RMA designates a network of riverine systems, floodplains, native habitats, storm surge areas and uplands as priority resources for Sarasota County. It is intended to protect environmental systems, reduce flood hazards, protect water supply, link existing preserve areas, and buffer development. Public access is allowed where consistent with resource protection goals. Additional lands can be added to the Greenway through public acquisition, conservation easements, and as part of the creation of villages. Lands in the Greenway RMA are protected in perpetuity.

The Villages/Open Space RMA is designed to replace what has become known as suburban sprawl. This RMA encourages the creation of compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly villages, set within large areas of permanent open space. Within the Village/Open Space, development is limited to three forms: Settlement Area, Village or Hamlet. The Settlement Area and Village urban forms are essentially the same except for their respective geographical locations adjacent to the USB. Hamlets are a transitional form of development intended to blend toward the more rural eastern area of the county.

Villages are designed to have definite boundaries based on pedestrian travel distances, and to contain most of the needs of daily life. Development is planned through a master plan process that integrates villages, open space, greenway and infrastructure corridors. It includes a variety of housing types integrated with commercial, office, and civic uses. Villages are designed to support employment opportunities and alternate means of transportation, such as pedestrian and bicycle. The open space component requires the designation of permanent open space according to a hierarchy of uses. A minimum 500-foot greenbelt is required around the perimeter of the developed area that preserves native habitats, supplements natural vegetation and protects wildlife within the area.

A hamlet consists of rural homes clustered around a crossroads or small civic or commercial area (e.g., a church or neighborhood store) and surrounded by a protected greenbelt. Each hamlet is required to have a public/civic focal point, such as a public park. Commercial development is limited to a nominal amount of small-scale neighborhood stores.

The Village/Open Space RMA includes design standards covering architecture, street design, landscaping, lighting, parking lots, parks and recreational space, and facility requirements that exceed county standards. The RMA also covers conservation measures to address water conservation, non-potable water usage, etc.

The Economic Development RMA recognizes the Comprehensive Plan's designated Major Employment Areas as the geographic focal points of Sarasota County's economic development efforts. It is designed to attract, expand and retain desirable business and industry to provide employment opportunities for County residents. Major non-retail employment generators are located in mixed-use developments that include multi-family residential and supportive commercial uses in order to reduce auto traffic.

The Urban/Suburban RMA lies within the County's Urban Service Boundary (USB) and is where most of the county's population lives, works, shops and plays. The focus is to build and maintain value in existing communities and encourage appropriate revitalization and infill. The RMA also seeks to create multi-use civic spaces, standards for compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly developments to improve neighborhoods.

Pasco County

Pasco County has identified specific Market Areas, each with specific characteristics:

- Harbors (West Market Area)
- Gateway Crossing (South Market Area)
- Midlands (Central Market Area)
- Highlands (East Market Area)
- Countryside (North Market Area)

The Harbors includes coastal and inland areas stretching north and south. The market area plan addresses massive redevelopment challenges for the densest and oldest area of Pasco County where 40 percent of county residents live. The focus is largely on promoting coastal opportunities, transforming U.S. 19 into a livable roadway and establishing an infill community structure.

Gateway Crossing runs primarily east and west, serving as a gateway to and from Pasco County. The South Market Area is part of the county's urban service area.

Midlands comprises much of the central portions of the county. It primarily supports suburban development. The county established a stewardship district to implement a Pasadena Hills Area Plan overlay. The overlay provides a logical extension of urban uses that successfully transitions to existing patterns of rural development. The plan is designed to reduce auto trip lengths, provide infrastructure cost-effectively and provide a variety of land uses and lifestyles. At the same time, it protects rural development and preserves environmental systems and open spaces. Three new mixed-use land use classifications (Villages) and one land-use overlay (core reserve, e.g., wetlands, floodplains and naturally vegetated uplands) were created. Each is designed to avoid the negative impacts of urban sprawl by minimizing infrastructure costs, traffic congestion and environmental degradation. It directs incompatible uses away from core reserves and allows for transfer of development rights from core reserves to the villages.

A ridgeline west and south of Lake Pasadena functions as a physical and visual barrier between the rural development and character that dominates the lands to the east (Countryside area) and more urban development opportunities that are emerging to the west. A Countryside line delineates the eastern most boundary of village land-use. Specific standards have been established for rural scenic roads in Pasco County that will assist in the protection of the existing rural development pattern of the area, as well as standards for the village street network that provide multimodal capabilities.

The majority of housing in the villages are within a walking distance, or one-quarter-mile radius, of a village or neighborhood center (e.g., park, school or civic uses) with the higher densities closer to the center. Village centers include sufficient nonresidential uses to provide for the daily and weekly needs of village residents in a Traditional Neighborhood Design.

Highlands covers the eastern portion of the county, running north and south along US 301. It encompasses the cities of Dade City and Zephyrhills and is envisioned as an area that preserves a small-town lifestyle with a sustainable development pattern protecting its natural resources and creating a rural to suburban character.

Countryside is a predominantly rural area with agricultural lands and natural resources that is facing development pressures from Tampa to the south and Hernando County to the north. In 2016 Pasco County implemented the Northeast Pasco

Rural Protection Overlay District. Its purpose is to protect the character of the rural landscape, preserve scenic views and vistas, and ensure that on-site development is compatible with the character of the surrounding area. The overlay governs residential development and restricts mining operations or other developments that could negatively impact the land. Street design within new residential developments must support the rural character. The overlay requires building buffers, preserving tree canopies and residential building setbacks from scenic roadways.

Osceola County

The northwest portion of Osceola County is part of the Orlando Metropolitan area. It also has been pressured by Walt Disney World, as commercial development west of Kissimmee has continued to increase. The 2025 Osceola County Comprehensive Plan established an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) which identified the area targeted for urban development with the remainder of the County outside of that boundary to remain as rural agricultural use.

The Board of County Commissioners adopted the Osceola County Environmental Lands Conservation Program. The 20-year program authorizes up to \$60 million to purchase and manage environmentally significant lands and green space to protect the county's habitats, water resources, wetlands and surface water resources to ensure the delivery of clean and plentiful water supplies and provide flood control, and to buffer the county's primary urban service areas from the effects of growth. A .25 mill ad valorem tax was authorized through a 2004 referendum to fund the program and secure the payment of bonds issued to acquire the lands. Approval of another referendum will be needed to re-authorize the program for an additional 20 years.

Orange County

The Orange County 2030 Comprehensive Plan stipulates that urban development will occur only in the Urban Service Area and the established boundary for Horizon West Special Area Plan (SAP) and the Innovation Way Overlay in addition to any future expansion of the service area.

Horizon West SAP has been designed to address the leap-frog pattern in western Orange County. The plan replaces the piecemeal, project-by-project basis for development with a long-range vision to allow the transition of this portion of Orange County from rural to urban use. It incorporates a Village concept with complete and integrated neighborhoods containing housing, shops, workplaces, schools, parks and

civic facilities essential to the daily life of Village residents. A greenbelt averaging 500 feet wide must be provided around each Village to discourage sprawl, create a definable Village and provide a permanent undeveloped edge.

Orange County's comprehensive plan also includes a Rural Settlements designation, protection of some Rural Settlements included in Joint Planning Area Agreements with municipalities, and creation of Preservation Districts.

Innovation Way, located in east Orange County, is envisioned as an economic development corridor that promotes high tech business and job growth along with quality housing, new schools, parks, trails and natural spaces. Innovation Way Activity Centers (IWAC) are to serve as a series of urban centers connected to each other by way of a multi-modal transit corridor. The Activity Centers include a mix of land uses — residential, commercial, office, light industrial, personal and household service establishments, institutional, public facilities, parks, playgrounds, and other uses designed to meet the daily needs of its residents and employees. Orange County has adopted an Environmental Land Stewardship Program for Innovation Way to ensure environmentally sensitive lands are sustained during and after development of approved sites within the area. Once established, land within an environmental land stewardship area may not be removed through a plan amendment.

The Rural Service Area includes any portion of the county outside the Urban Service Area. Cluster zoning is not permitted except where required for protection of significant environmental features. Rural Settlements within the Rural Service Area provide for a rural residential lifestyle. Only those commercial and office uses that will support existing residential uses, i.e., neighborhood commercial, are permitted in Rural Settlements.

The Orange County Board of County Commissioners is studying a proposal by the Planning Commission to designate four areas located within the Urban Service Area, where infill and redevelopment are actively encouraged, as "rural residential enclaves." Two are seven miles east of downtown Orlando, the others are along the Seminole County border and north of Walt Disney World. The plan is designed to preserve the rural character of each area and create a transitional zone between urban and rural zones. Community outreach is underway, and a decision is expected by July 2018.



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