INTRODUCTION

The Tallahassee-Leon County Comprehensive Plan was adopted on July 16, 1990. The Comprehensive Plan contains three volumes. Volumes II and III contain the data and analysis on which the Goals, Objectives, and Policies within Volume I are based. Volume I provides guidance in evaluating individual development proposals within a defined growth management strategy. The Goals, Objectives and Policies within Volume I also provide the basis for the individual development regulation formulated to implement this Plan.

The plan horizon for the Tallahassee-Leon County Comprehensive Plan is 2050. The Comprehensive Plan is a dynamic document, amended annually. This volume contains effective amendments through January 23, 2026. As other amendments come into effect, this volume will be updated accordingly. Information concerning the amendment process is available at the Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department. The Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department is located at the Renaissance Center, 435 N. Macomb Street or can be reached by telephone at (850) 891-6400.

VISION STATEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

(REV. EFF. 7/26/06; REV. EFF. 1/7/10; REV. EFF. 8/5/23)

In the early 1820s, Florida government alternated business between St. Augustine and Pensacola. At that time, travel between the cities was hazardous and the journey long. In 1823, the site of Tallahassee was chosen as the seat of government for the Territory of Florida because of its central location and abundance of natural resources. It was noted then, "A more beautiful country can scarcely be imagined; it is high, rolling, and well watered." In the new capital, commerce expanded and a new school of higher learning was founded. From these historic roots, Tallahassee and Leon County is now the center of Florida's government and respected worldwide for its schools of higher education.

We are fortunate to have retained the natural beauty that inspired the sitting of Florida's state capital. The community relies upon the comprehensive plan to protect the natural resources and scenic beauty while encouraging the responsible, healthy growth of Tallahassee and Leon County. The comprehensive plan seeks to balance the management of growth with environmental protection but gives precedence to environmental protection.

Evolving land use patterns within the County have exhibited sprawl characteristics. Sprawl is, perhaps, the most inefficient pattern of land use. Costs associated with the provision of both capital and social infrastructure are higher than more compact patterns. This must be taken into consideration when local government is faced with limited fiscal resources and increasing demand for services.

Sprawl encourages degradation of the County's natural resources by prematurely committing vast areas to the impact of urbanization. Phased, orderly growth mitigates this situation by comprehensively addressing development impacts to our natural systems. Leap frog development associated with sprawl is piecemeal in nature and is detrimental to any type of comprehensive framework.

Another aspect of urban sprawl is the tendency toward strip commercial development, i.e., the commercialization along major streets which occurs as infill between sprawled developments. This strip development negatively affects traffic safety and flow, as well as creating aesthetic problems associated

with advertising signs. While many of the negative effects of strip development can be controlled to some extent by regulatory means, a more positive approach is to prevent its spread by means of land use policies.

The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to preserve, protect and enhance the quality of life for all citizens. The plan encourages and supports economically sound residential, educational, employment, cultural, recreational, commercial and industrial opportunities for the citizens. This is facilitated by systematically planning for growth, development and redevelopment.

The natural environment is one of the many criteria which, when combined, form the community's perceived quality of life. The natural environment is a major component in the quality of life equation for Leon County. As such, it must be protected. Development and the ancillary activities associated with it must be channeled into locations that protect the natural and aesthetic environment. Unwise land use decisions which ultimately require expensive environmental retrofitting, paid for by the general populace, must be eliminated. In order to achieve this, it is the intent of this Plan to include strong environmental objectives and policies within the Land Use Element and other applicable portions of the Plan.

The residential environment is also one of many criteria which form the community's perceived quality of life and must be protected. An economic base of stable public employment has fostered development of stable residential neighborhoods. Citizens identify with and value their neighborhoods in all parts of the community and at all income levels. Containing sprawl will necessarily increase density and intensity in the existing urban area. Unwise land use decisions and premature non-residential development in established residential areas can seriously and permanently alter the character of a neighborhood. Not only actual changes, but also the perception of a constant assault on a neighborhood undermines an otherwise desirable residential environment. Development and its ancillary activities should be channeled into locations that offer the greater opportunity for the higher density and mixture of uses that a policy of urban containment encourages. It is the intent of the plan to maintain the integrity of existing neighborhoods while encouraging new residential developments to incorporate a wider range of non-residential uses.

Essential for planning are objectives and policies that protect and enhance the natural environment, water resources, the canopy roads, and residential neighborhoods. To this end, regulatory tools such as concurrency management, urban service area designation, planned unit developments and special protection zones are used to foster the community's vision. An underlying premise is the linkage between land use and infrastructure. The plan is based on the principle that development should pay for itself and this vision is implemented, in part, through the accomplishment of several strategies described below.

Traditional values within Leon County prohibit the strict implementation of an urban containment strategy. Urban service area demarcations must be located to allow for some degree of large lot, single family subdivisions. In addition, some urban areas located away from the core, such as Chaires, Fort Braden, and Miccosukee, must be provided for. Overall, however, it is the intent of this comprehensive plan to concentrate development in the Tallahassee urban area plus provide for a minimum number of designated areas of urban development.

It is the responsibility of every citizen of Leon County to pay his or her fair share first to achieve and then to maintain the community wide adopted levels of service (LOS) for capital infrastructure and urban services. However, it is not a current resident's responsibility to pay for new developments' fair share

costs through subsidization. Thus, in a sense, future development must be self-sufficient.

Existing and new residents should not be bound by minimum level of service standards adopted community wide. The ability to enhance these minimums should be provided for as long as the end user pays for the incurred costs. User fees, special assessments or MSTUs are instruments, which can be used to accomplish this. Furthermore, it should be recognized that congestion can actually be a sign of a healthy urban area, and that automobile congestion can lead to individuals making a modal switch to transit, provided the transit system provides access to common destinations with convenient frequency.

The plan encourages projects and activities that provide significant additional value to the community. This includes supporting development in strategic areas such as the Downtown Overlay, Multimodal Transportation District and Southside Action Plan Areas.

The Downtown Overlay consists primarily of the urban core of the City of Tallahassee and is intended to clearly distinguish the City's Downtown Boundary. This overlay district primarily comprises the Capital Center area, Gaines Street Corridor, and parts of the Southside Action Plan area. The intent of this overlay district is to encourage high density and quality redevelopment as well as remove barriers to achieving the allowable densities within this area.

In order to ensure the long-term viability of our entire community as well as the efficiency of our public and private investments, it is important to protect the housing resources, neighborhoods, and business and commercial districts that make up the Multimodal Transportation District and the Downtown Overlay by adopting strategies which promote neighborhood revitalization, urban infill, homeownership, and redevelopment.

The plan also supports diversification of our local economy, utilizing our highly educated workforce, our two local universities, community college and various technical schools and state government. With approximately 38% of all employment in Tallahassee-Leon County based in the government sector, this community is a reflection of its role as the State Capital and as a center for higher education. This employment structure has long provided a stable and predictable economic base.

This plan recognizes the likely continuation of growth in the State government and university segments of the local economy. A major strength of this aspect of our community is the opportunity that it provides for selective diversification. With a strong economic base, the focus for the future can be to actively seek desirable industries that will have a synergy with existing economic resources, such as job training and research and development activities associated with the universities and other educational entities.

This Plan is based on maintaining the historical growth rate of Leon County. Specifically, Tallahassee-Leon County should continue to grow with an emphasis on selected growth that pays for itself through the provision of well-paid jobs and economic leverage factors which enhance the quality of life of the community. The universities and state government, which have been our traditional economic strengths, should be built upon and encouraged to expand. Thus, selected recruitment and continued expansion of the universities and state government should form the nucleus for the continued growth of Leon County.

Our comprehensive plan is a living document, used every day in decisions made by local governments. It is regularly reviewed and amended to ensure that it remains current and consistent with our community vision.