

Envision Seminole

VISION PLAN



NOVEMBER 1, 2022



DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES,
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

THE CITIZENS OF SEMINOLE COUNTY

and

Seminole County Community Relations
Seminole County Department of Environmental Services
Seminole County Facilities Management
Seminole County Department of Leisure Services
Seminole County Department of Public Works

and

OUR PUBLIC MEETING HOSTS:

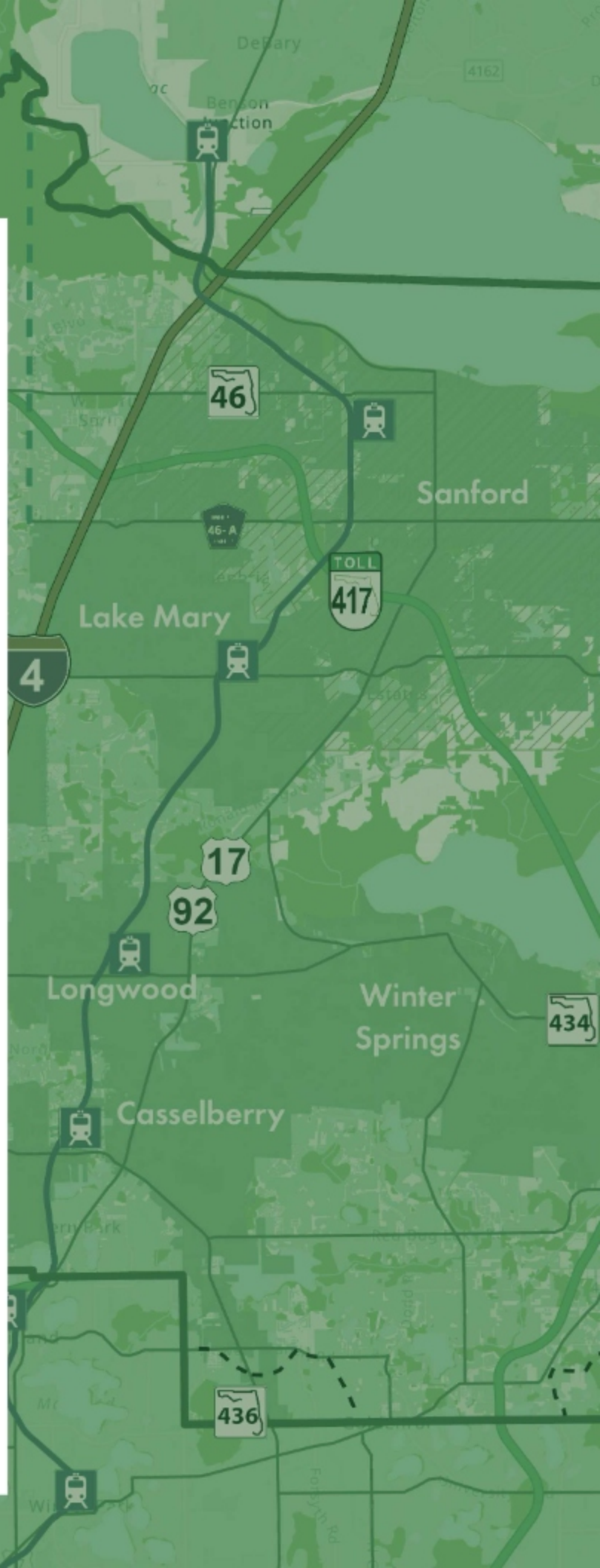
Geneva Elementary School
Neighborhood Alliance Church
Seminole County Public Library
Seminole County Softball Complex
UF/IFAS Extension Seminole County

CONSULTANT TEAM:

CMIN ASSOCIATES

Hurley-Franks & Associates

Laura Turner Planning Services



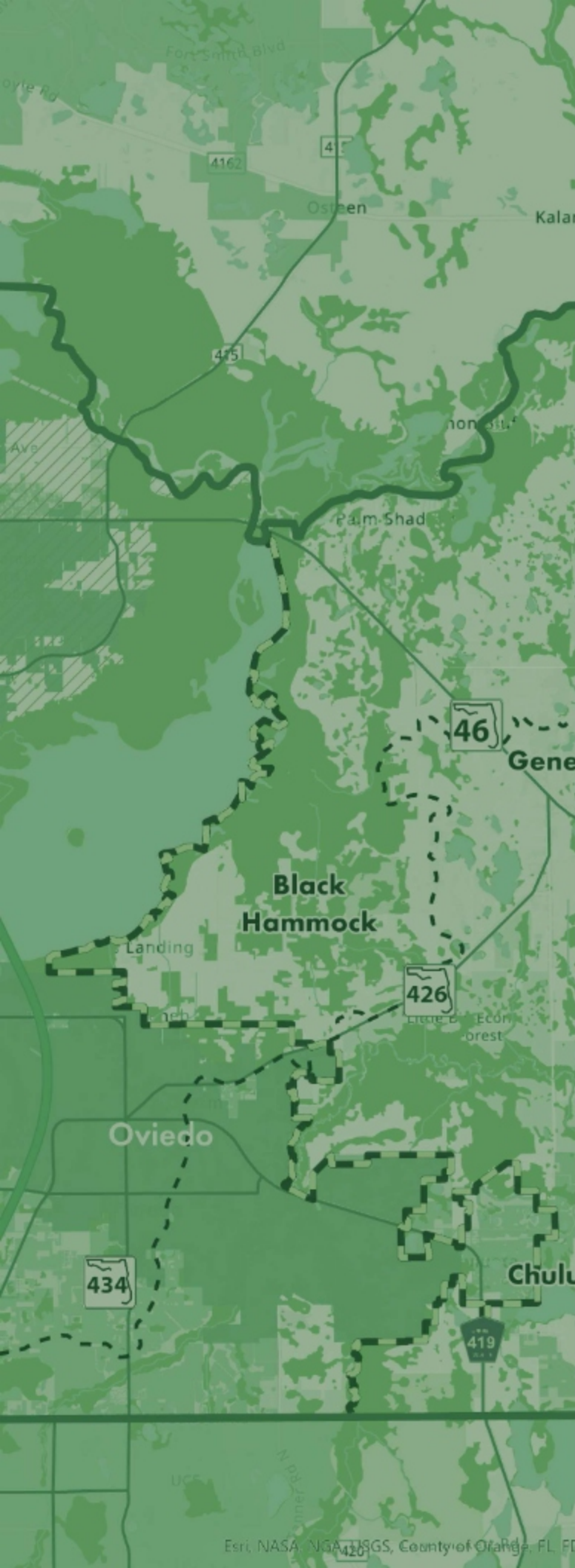


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Executive Summary

By 2045, Seminole County is anticipated to grow by approximately 90,000 residents. Envision Seminole provides goals and strategies to welcome new households while improving quality of life and conserving natural habitats and resources. Based on analysis of the Future Land Use Map, new residences can be accommodated within areas already planned for growth.

The table on the following page shows the goals and strategies to achieve this vision which are described in more detail in the following chapters.



VISION GOAL

Protect Wildlife

WILDLIFE STRATEGY 1: IDENTIFY AND PRESERVE CRITICAL WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

WILDLIFE STRATEGY 2: PROTECT WATER QUALITY IN LAKES, RIVERS, AND STREAMS

WILDLIFE STRATEGY 3: MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE HABITATS WITH WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY PRACTICES



VISION GOAL

Maintain Rural Places

RURAL STRATEGY 1: MAINTAIN THE RURAL BOUNDARY

RURAL STRATEGY 2: ENHANCE DESIGN GUIDELINES TO MAINTAIN RURAL CHARACTER

RURAL STRATEGY 3: PRESERVE RURAL ENCLAVES

RURAL STRATEGY 4: SUPPORT THE CONTINUING SUCCESS OF RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL USES IN RURAL AREAS



VISION GOAL

Grow Walkable Communities

WALKABLE STRATEGY 1: CREATE MIXED-USE, WALKABLE PLACES

WALKABLE STRATEGY 2: ENCOURAGE A VARIETY OF TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

WALKABLE STRATEGY 3: SPUR REDEVELOPMENT IN CENTERS AND CORRIDORS

WALKABLE STRATEGY 4: ALLOW FOR A VARIETY OF HOUSING OPTIONS



VISION GOAL

Support Active Lifestyles

ACTIVE STRATEGY 1: CONNECT AND EXPAND THE TRAIL NETWORK

ACTIVE STRATEGY 2: MAINTAIN AND EXPAND ACCESS TO PARKS AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

ACTIVE STRATEGY 3: INCREASE ACCESS TO WATER BODIES



VISION GOAL

Be Green

GREEN STRATEGY 1: PRESERVE AND PLANT MORE TREES

GREEN STRATEGY 2: CREATE MORE SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES AND STREETSCAPES

GREEN STRATEGY 3: MANAGE WATER RESPONSIBLY

GREEN STRATEGY 4: EXPAND GREEN BUILDING PRACTICES

OPPORTUNITIES

Preserve
Green space

Keep Green Rural

Opportunities

Increase citizen awareness
of many government
participation opportunities

Limited development

0
The ability to expand
preserved natural
lands.

Opportunities
Seminole County is trying
to keep the area from being
lost while balancing the needs of
the current residents.

To allow better use
of public land, by
more ~~big~~ operation
to help maintain the things

Building along waterfront
Businesses - New

Opportunities:

Be a leader in the
State for
RURAL PRESERVATION

1) SANFORD AIRPORT

2) SPACE COAST
INDUSTRY

3) HIGHLY EDUCATED
POPULATION
"BRAIN TRUST!"

Stronger
Protection of
Waterways

Purchase Natural
Lands

Opportunities
- Park lands
- Limit growth in
Rural well water area
- More parks, trails

Seminole County
has many business
opportunities, keep
it on the west
side

More Recreation
opportunities

Opportunities
To Grow Responsibly
Housing w/o Habitat
Destruction

Opportunity to be a
beacon of conservation
and sustainability success
in central Florida -
where natural resources
are being depleted

PROTECT WATER
(WATER QUALITY)

- Buy more public lands
- create more water
- more public parks in
rural areas

Rural Boundary to be
Kept

Opportunities
KEEP THE RURAL
BOUNDARY

Maintain the
Rural Boundary
with no more
Developments

Opportunity
Bringing in Russia

GREEN AFFORDABLE
HOUSING.
Housing on already
developed property

VISION PLAN INTRODUCTION

OPPORTUNITIES —
LAND MANAGEMENT
WITH WILDLIFE
CORRIDORS

Opportunities
1) Buy more land for
conservation. Green
space seems like a lot
but falls in relationship
to the mass increase in
population within our
county.

opportunities are
clean help and
earth
with
Carter!

Opportunity
Use more native plants
For county landscaping
to encourage their use
& For environment.

OPPORTUNITIES
ARE AROUND ABOUTS
THE ANSWER

Develop a park and
fishing down at
Lake Horney

Bring River Quality
back to good

OPPORTUNITIES
IN THE
CITY

Opportunities:
Green Affordable
housing

Opp. to
keep green
space
green.

0
Sales Tax
to Save
public /
open space

①
Redevelop
ment
along
corridors.

OPP-
improve "green"
business

Opportunities
Faster communication
between neighbors.

Opportunity
Fund to pay for space
& water

Opportunity
Trap and release program
for cats

Create code OPP.
for
Protection
of Geneva
Bubble

0
Increase Fr. Friendly & Home-Plus
landscaping projects in county-owned
lands and common areas in public.

0
Roadside wildflower
management with
flexible mowing schedule.

0
Habitat salvage efforts prior
to development within environmentally
sensitive areas.

Clear inclusion of
Florida Friendly and native
Florida adoption objectives
in the EAR and Vision

Change in Political
governance to facilitate
citizen participation
& consultation

Opportunity
Keep the developers out
Do not release rural properties

Vision Goals:



PROTECT WILDLIFE



MAINTAIN RURAL PLACES



GROW WALKABLE COMMUNITIES



GET ACTIVE



BE GREEN

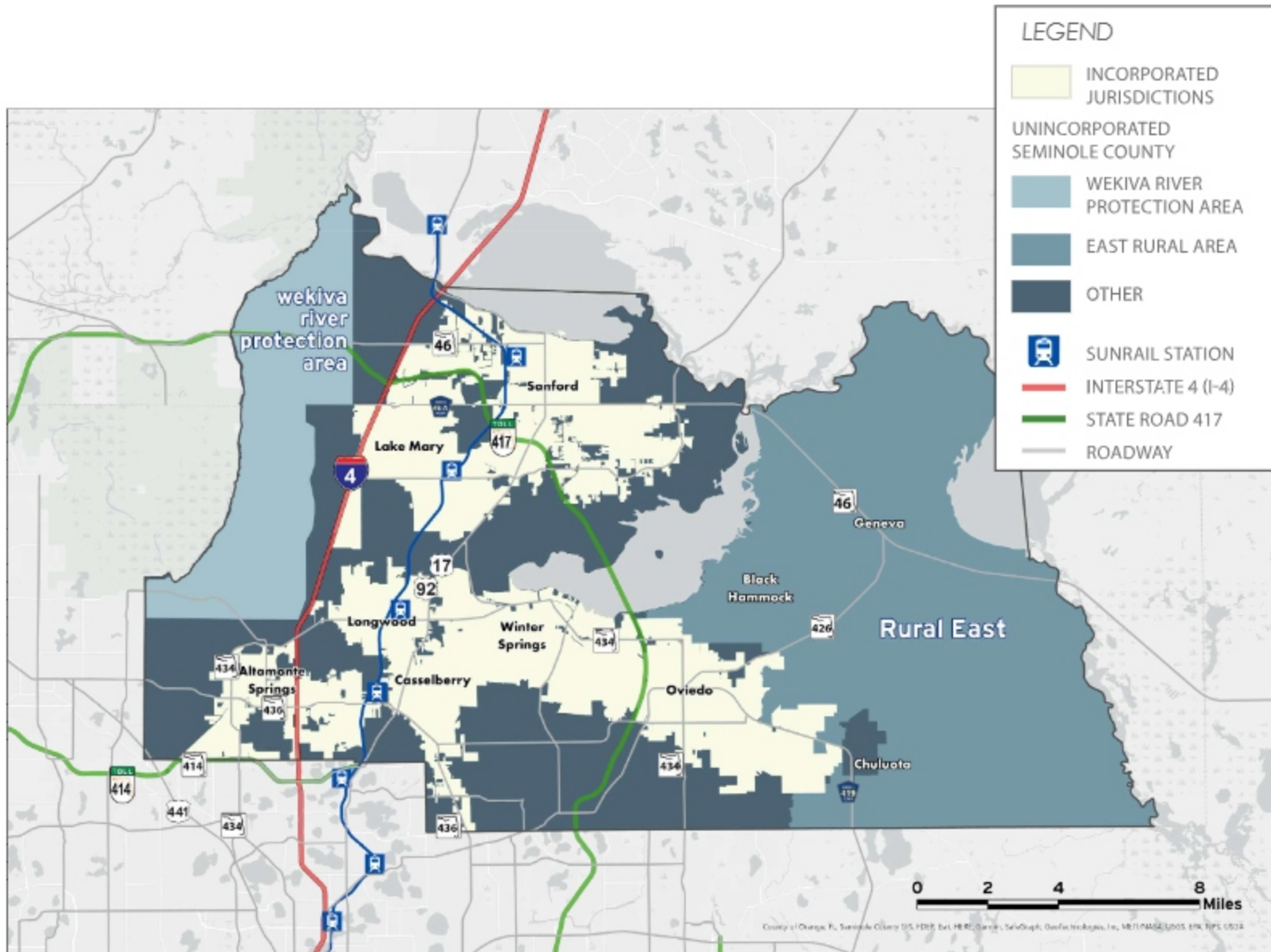
Envision Seminole 2045 is setting the vision for the next 20 years of growth, change, and conservation in Seminole County.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Envision Seminole 2045 is to create a vision for the future of Seminole County that meets the needs and desires of current and future residents between now and 2045. Over a six-month period in 2022, Seminole County and the consultant team engaged with citizens, stakeholders and experts to envision the next 20 years of growth, change, and conservation in unincorporated Seminole County and for county-wide facilities. The result is a vision for protecting and enhancing the County's natural assets that:

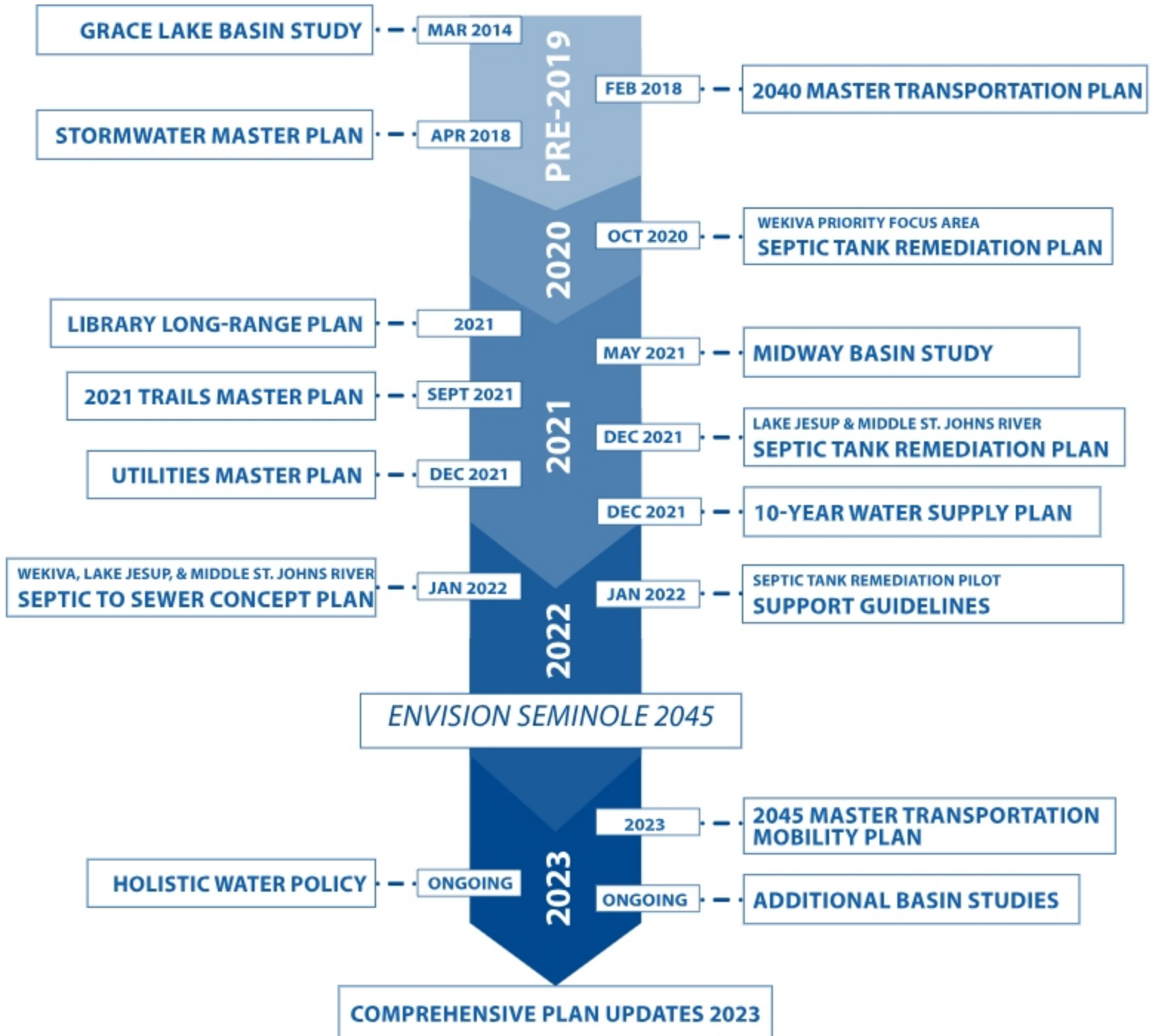
- Supports diverse wildlife,
- Maintains rural character in the right places,
- Accommodates new growth through walkable communities in targeted locations,
- Continues the County's investment in physical activity through parks, trails, and sports, and
- Showcases sustainable practices.

All these efforts validate and expand upon the County's identity as "Florida's Natural Choice." The Vision will inform the next update of the Comprehensive Plan as well as other Seminole County initiatives.



Map of incorporated jurisdictions and unincorporated Seminole County

RECENT OR CURRENT SEMINOLE COUNTY PLANNING EFFORTS



BACKGROUND

Seminole County is in Central Florida and has a population of approximately 470,000 residents¹ with the county seat located in the City of Sanford. Of Florida's 67 counties, Seminole County is the fourth smallest by land area but the 13th highest in population. This makes Seminole County the fourth densest County in the state. Seminole County has accomplished this density while maintaining a third of its land area within the low density East Rural Area. The Rural Boundary was established by the Seminole County Board of County Commissioners in 1991. A voter referendum in 2004 affirmed the Rural Boundary and extended its application to areas that may be annexed by cities ensuring continuity of policy across jurisdictional boundaries. The last major County visioning effort was Vision 2020 which resulted in an updated Comprehensive Plan adopted on May 8, 2001. The County also participated in the "How Shall We Grow?" Central Florida Regional Growth Vision which informed updates to the Comprehensive Plan circa 2011.

Between 2000 and 2020 Seminole County's population grew by approximately 29% or 105,000 residents². By the year 2045, Seminole County is projected to grow at a slightly slower pace adding approximately 90,000 residents (BEBR Medium)³ representing additional growth of 18%. This growth includes both unincorporated Seminole County and the incorporated cities. The County commissioned more localized projections which estimated an increase of approximately 40,000 residents⁴ in the unincorporated areas. This is little less than half of the anticipated growth and is equivalent to approximately 16,000 housing units.

The County commissioned a Land Use Analysis⁵ to determine whether the projected county-wide growth could be accommodated under the combined Future Land Use Map and policy framework of the County and its cities. The overall conclusion was that the current Future Land Use designations can accommodate the growth projected through 2045. This projection is based on several key assumptions. It assumes that all vacant land designated for residential development is developed at 80% or more of the maximum adopted Future Land Use density. This would require rezoning many properties to allow for implementation of the maximum densities permitted in the Comprehensive Plan. The projection also does not account for redevelopment opportunities. On this basis, other scenarios can be projected to accommodate the anticipated growth by reducing development in some areas and increasing it in others. For instance, an increased focus on redevelopment could be coupled with developing vacant land at lower densities or leaving some vacant land undeveloped. The actual outcome will likely be a combination of these scenarios.

Envision Seminole 2045 will work in cooperation with other plans recently developed or currently being developed by the County. The diagram on the following page lists these plans and their relationship to Envision Seminole 2045.

¹ ACS 2021: 470,073 population; 2020 Decennial Census: 470,856 population


² 2000 Decennial Census: 365,196 population

³ Bureau of Economic and Business Research (UFL), 2022 Projections of Florida Population by County, 2025–2050, with Estimates for 2021

⁴ Final Report: Population Projections by Jurisdiction, Traffic Analysis Zone, and Utility Service Area, The Balmoral Group, June 26, 2020.

⁵ Land Use Analysis 2022, GAI Consultants



A lush green forest scene with a wooden railing in the foreground and a person's hands resting on it. The image is heavily saturated with green, creating a vibrant, monochromatic effect. The background is filled with dense foliage, including various types of leaves and ferns. In the foreground, a wooden railing runs diagonally across the frame, and a person's hands are visible resting on it. The overall mood is serene and natural.

VISION GOAL 1

PROTECT WILDLIFE

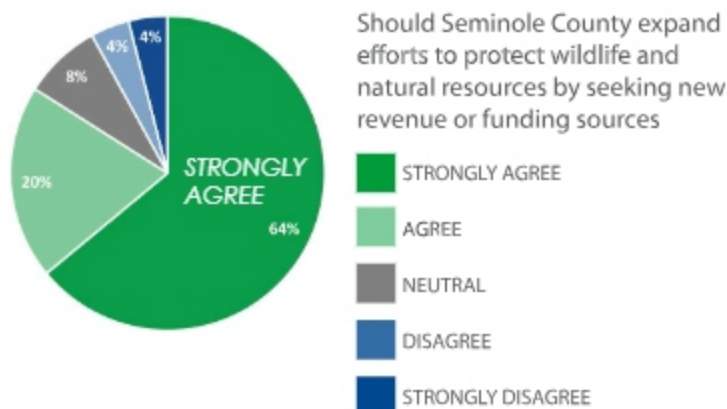
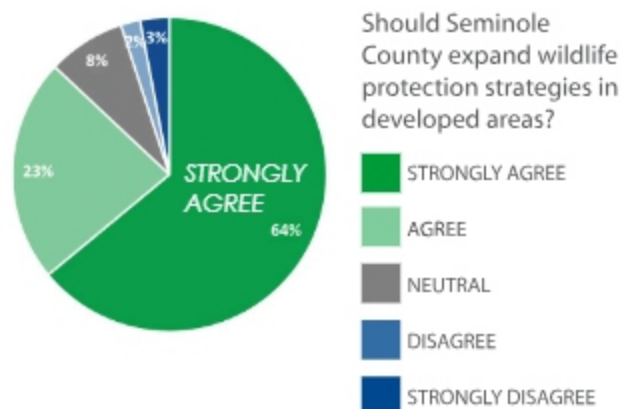
VISION GOAL:



Protect Wildlife

Seminole County has a proud tradition of protecting its natural resources for the enjoyment of residents and visitors and for the health of its ecosystems. In 1990, the Natural Lands Program was established by a voter approved referendum. The revenue was used to purchase environmentally significant lands for the purposes of preservation, recreation, and education. Seminole County's Natural Lands now consist of over 6,600 acres of preserved areas. The County also operates an urban bear management program to minimize human-wildlife conflicts.

During the public outreach for Envision Seminole 2045, participants overwhelmingly reasserted their commitment to protecting wildlife through land preservation and by incorporating wildlife protection strategies into infrastructure and development.





The Florida Wildlife Corridor map vision is the Florida Ecological Greenways Network Priorities 1-3 (2021) developed and maintained by the University of Florida Center for Landscape Conservation Planning; Conserved Lands, Florida Natural Areas Inventory, May 2021. Map by Archbold Biological Station, A. Meeks.

Clustering of new development can also provide opportunities for expanding and connecting wildlife areas. In order to effectively support wildlife habitats, clustered developments must have an appropriate legal framework and a reliable, long-term management plan for conserved areas. To be considered “conservation subdivisions,” clustered developments should be designed to minimize fragmentation of conservation areas and preserve a diverse set of natural habitats. UF/IFAS provides guidance for design, construction, and ongoing management of conservation subdivisions.¹ The UF/IFAS documentation can be used as tool to review and update the County’s current clustering standards and policies to maximize environmental benefits.

¹ UF-IFAS Conservation Subdivisions Series, https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/entity/topic/series_conservation_subdivisions (Accessed: 9/29/2022)

WILDLIFE STRATEGY 2:

PROTECT WATER QUALITY IN LAKES, RIVERS, AND STREAMS

Seminole County is home to abundant natural lakes, springs, and streams that support aquatic wildlife. The Comprehensive Plan establishes protection areas for the Wekiva River and the Econlockhatchee River. Water quality in Florida's natural water bodies is impacted by excess nutrients from septic tanks (on-site sewage treatment and disposal systems/OSTDS) and fertilizer, runoff of herbicides and pesticides, and unmanaged stormwater. Seminole County collaborates with St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) on Basin Management Plans to address impaired water bodies¹, including Lake Jesup and the Wekiva River Basin. The County partners with UF/IFAS to educate citizens on the value of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ and native landscaping in reducing irrigation, fertilizer, and pesticide use. UF/IFAS also supports agricultural users with education on sustainable agriculture. Finally, the County is in the process of developing a holistic water policy to address water quality and supply across multiple departments and programs.

In 2021 Seminole County completed the Wekiwa Springs and Rock Springs Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP). The BMAP estimated that conventional septic systems contribute 29% of the total nitrogen loading to the groundwater per year which impacts nearby springs. The action plan aims for a 100% reduction in nitrogen loading within the Priority Focus Area over a 20-year period with 5-year milestones. There are two approaches to remediate pollution from OSTDS. The most effective remediation approach is connection to sewer systems; however, this may be cost-prohibitive in some locations and inappropriate where very low residential densities are to be maintained. The second approach is replacement of aging systems with advanced septic systems which minimize the release of nitrogen into the ground. State law requires that residents be allowed to install new OSTDS when homes are built in areas lacking sewer access, so it is important to consider strategies for when new systems are installed.

STRATEGIES FOR PROTECTING WATER QUALITY:

STRATEGIES TO CONTINUE	NEW STRATEGIES TO EXPLORE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with SJRWMD to implement Basin Management Plans • Implement Septic Tank Remediation Plans • Support UF/IFAS education on Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ and Native Plants • Educate residents and businesses about fertilizer ordinance • Update Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code based on National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under what conditions can advanced septic systems be required of new construction that relies on OSTDS? • Explore opportunities for constructed wetlands² to improve treatment of stormwater and wastewater for large lot homes and at utility-scale treatment facilities. • Encourage clustering of new development where appropriate to reduce paved areas per unit. • Strengthen sewer connection policies for new construction.

¹ Impaired water bodies: Impaired Waters, TMDLs, and Basin Management Action Plans Interactive Map <https://floridadep.gov/dear/water-quality-restoration/content/impaired-waters-tmdls-and-basin-management-action-plans>

² Constructed wetlands: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/FR419>

WILDLIFE STRATEGY 3:

MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE HABITATS WITH WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY PRACTICES

Wildlife-friendly practices can safely and productively interweave viable ecological communities with human communities and infrastructure. Seminole County is a leader in Florida at incorporating wildlife friendly practices. This includes strategies to minimize negative interaction with wildlife such as the Urban Bear Management Program to connect wildlife systems across urban infrastructure such as wildlife crossings incorporated into the Wekiva Parkway. Wildlife crossings serve to connect conservation areas and reduce habitat fragmentation. Crossings are not suitable for all locations and require study as to the types of habitats and animals being served ranging from large mammals to small reptiles and amphibians.¹ Wildlife crossings can also provide connectivity for natural surface recreational trails serving hikers, bicyclists, and/or equestrians.



*Prefabricated concrete box culvert along SR 46 in Seminole County, Florida.
(Source: Wildlife Crossing Handbook Randy S. Kautz, Stephen R. Bittner, and Tom H. Logan)*

Seminole County can also take an active role in creating habitat for smaller wildlife like pollinators and birds through the establishment of native landscapes in urban areas. The County provides education on value of native plants through the UF/IFAS Extension program. Demonstration projects at County buildings and parks provide a leadership and education role as well as providing small areas of habitat. An even larger opportunity is County-maintained roadways and trails which provide the opportunity for connected corridors of habitat through the introduction of native trees and wildflowers. Trees species that are suitable for streetscaping and native to Central Florida include live oak, bluff oak, longleaf pine, bald cypress, winged elm, and dahoon holly. A diversity of plantings provides the greatest habitat value.

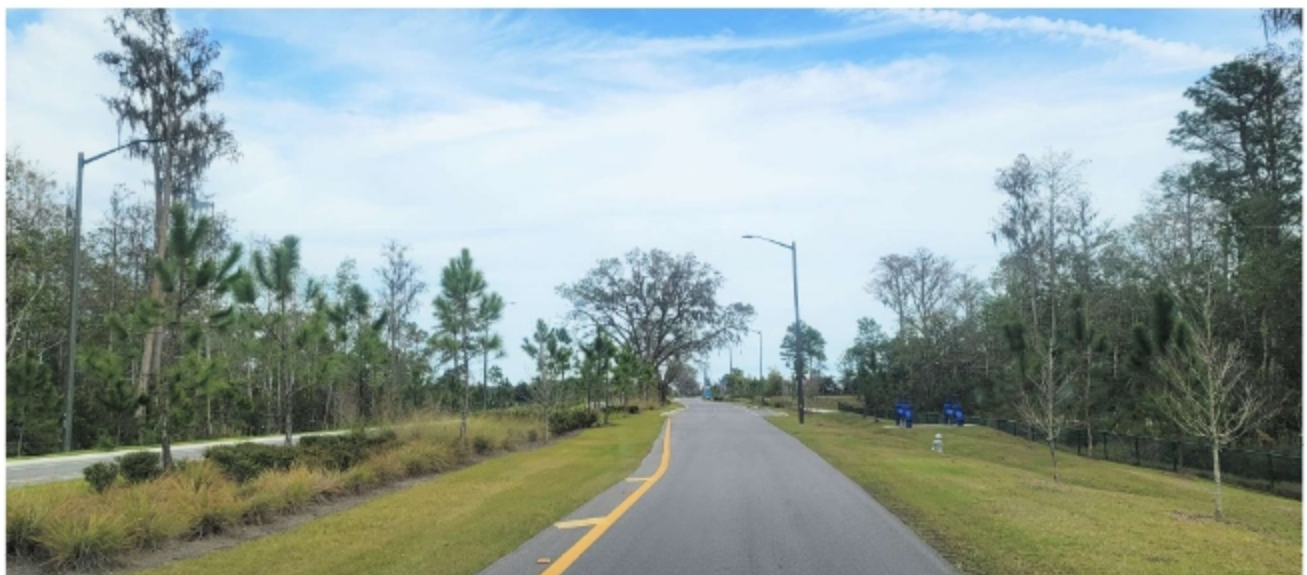
¹ Kautz et al. *Wildlife Crossing Handbook*, Breedlove, Dennis & Associates, Inc., March 2010.

CONTINUED WILDLIFE STRATEGY 3...

The County is currently updating its land development code to require the use of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™. This includes but does not require the incorporation of native plantings. The appropriateness of native plantings is context-specific and must include a commitment to appropriate maintenance. An emphasis on native plantings in common areas can be incorporated in development negotiations on larger projects.

Seminole County and the state of Florida already have significant regulations intended to limit the environmental impact of new development including regulations related to wetlands, river protection, and stormwater. Certain voluntary and mandatory development practices can further mitigate the impact of new construction on wildlife. Wildlife-friendly fencing can accommodate the movement of smaller species in areas near existing habitats. Lighting is another issue important to both human and animal habitats. Like humans, animals have circadian rhythms guided by daily changes in lighting. Artificial lighting can disrupt these signals. The use of “Dark Sky”-friendly lighting solutions reduces light trespass and skyglow. These tools improve ecological quality while also improving human environments by reducing glare on adjacent properties and preserving star-gazing. The County can implement Dark Sky approaches both through County investment in facilities and roadways and through development regulations. A smart approach to dark skies can even improve nighttime visibility which benefits more from consistent lighting rather than bright but uneven or over-designed lighting plans. The County has incorporated Dark Sky standards into its land development code. The comprehensive plan should be updated to reflect the purpose and desires outcomes of these standards and to direct continuing updates as technology and best practices evolve. There may also be opportunities retrofit fixtures put in places before Dark Sky standards were adopted or based on new technology. The increase in usage of LED lighting provides opportunities for more creative approaches to lighting; it also creates a need to consider color temperature in lighting ordinances.

As the state of practice continues to advance, the County will look for new ways to incorporate wildlife-friendly strategies into public infrastructure and private development.



Native landscape approach for streetscape landscaping



An aerial photograph of a rural landscape, heavily tinted with a green color. In the background, a large body of water stretches across the horizon under a cloudy sky. The middle ground is dominated by a vast expanse of green fields and forests, with some areas showing distinct patterns of crops or land use. In the lower right corner, a small cluster of buildings and a road are visible, providing a sense of scale and human presence in the rural setting.

VISION GOAL 2

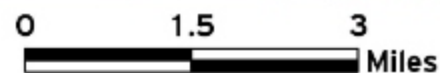
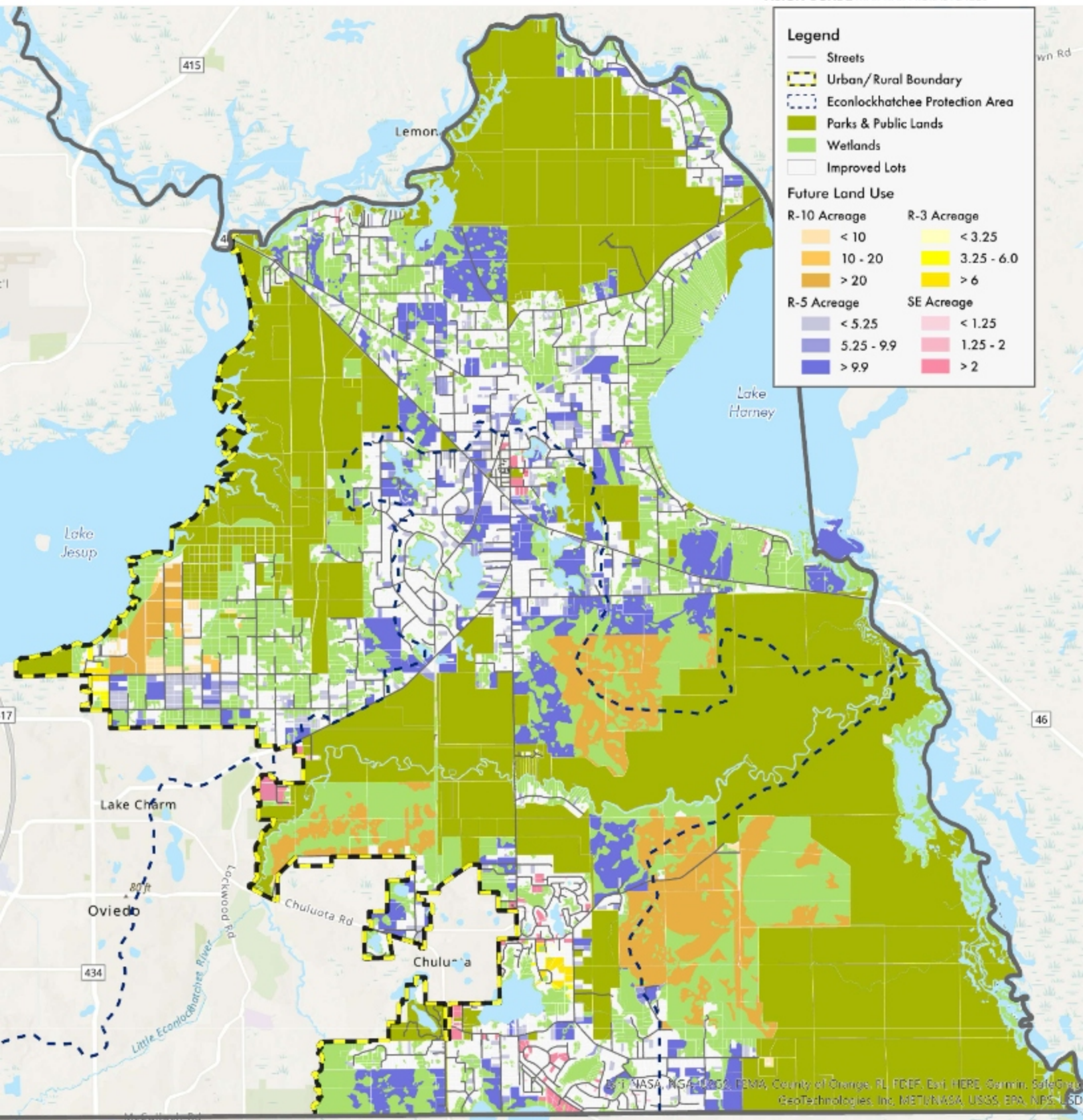
MAINTAIN RURAL PLACES

VISION GOAL:



Maintain Rural Places

Seminole County takes pride in its rural heritage and the continuing presence of rural character. A third of the County is in the East Rural Area with associated restrictions on development. Significant additional areas are in agricultural use or large lot development within the Wekiva River Protection Area and other areas of the urban service area. Rural communities include Geneva, Black Hammock, and Chuluota.



Remaining Development Allowed under Current Future Land Use Designations in the East Rural Area

RURAL STRATEGY 1:

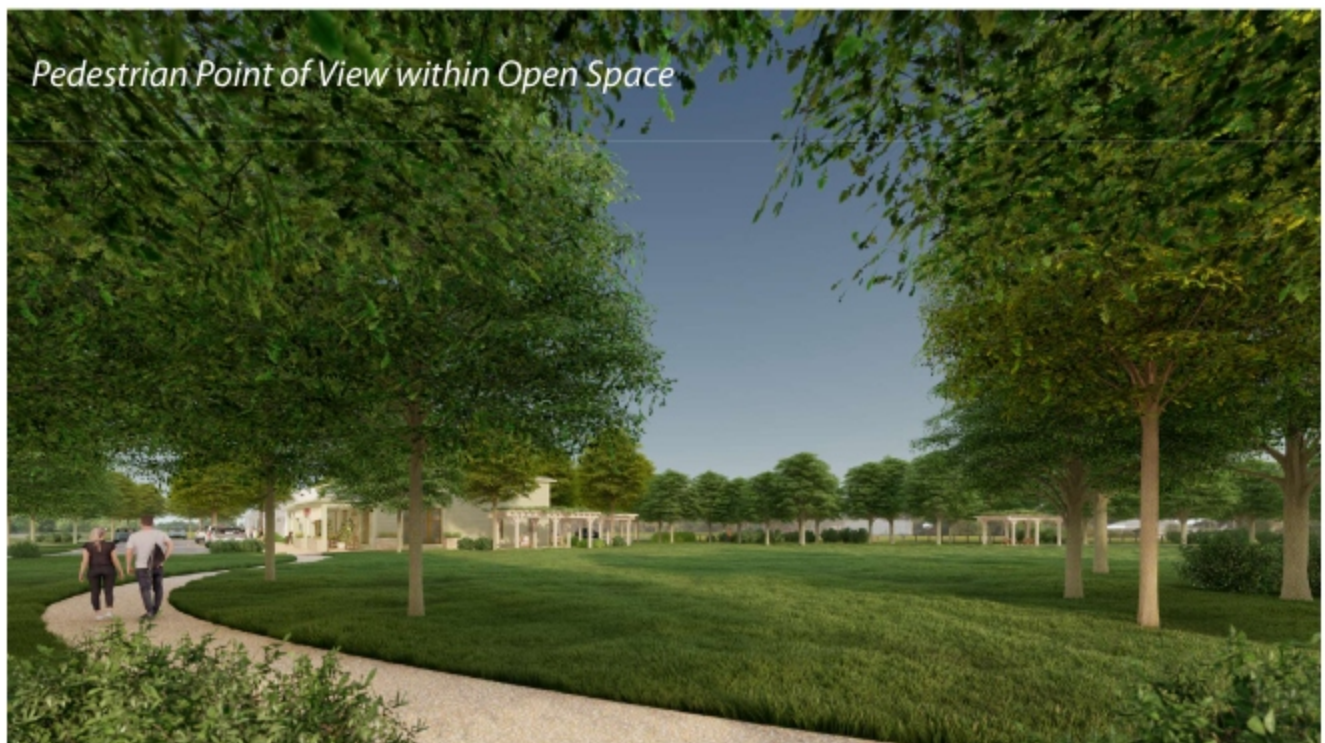
MAINTAIN THE RURAL BOUNDARY

The Rural Boundary recognizes East Seminole County as an area with specific rural character, rather than an area anticipated to be urbanized. The East Rural Area includes areas roughly east of Lake Jesup and east of Oviedo. The Future Land Use Map in this area is limited primarily to low density (1 unit per 5 or 10 acres) and agriculture uses. There are also a small number of properties with existing commercial zoning. There is a strong consensus among stakeholders about maintaining the County's Rural Boundary and policies restricting new development.



Rural commercial and gathering place (conceptual illustration)

RURAL COMMERCIAL AND GATHERING PLACE (CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATION)



RURAL STRATEGY 2:

ENHANCE DESIGN GUIDELINES TO MAINTAIN RURAL CHARACTER

Limits on density are often associated with rural character; however, the design of landscape, signage, buildings, and other built infrastructure also expresses character and, in some cases, has functional impacts on the rural environment.

One design element that has both functional and aesthetic impacts is walls and fencing. Masonry walls are typically associated with urban character and are not compatible with rural character areas. In addition, solid walls have the potential to alter drainage patterns and interrupt wildlife movement patterns. Commercial and residential community signage can be designed in ways consistent with rural character featuring natural or rustic materials and simple designs. The County is currently updating design guidelines for nonresidential development in the rural area. Design for structures can be supplemented with landscaping guidelines. Rural landscapes incorporate a mix of open vistas, heavily treed areas, and clustered, informal, and low-maintenance landscaping. The incorporation of less formal landscaping plans using native species can reinforce a natural or rural aesthetic.

Some strategies for wildlife protection, discussed under Goal 1, can also contribute to rural character such as the use of Dark Sky-friendly lighting, maintaining native landscapes, and conservation subdivisions.

Minimal new development is permitted in the East Rural Area; however, where new development occurs, the use of design guidelines can help to maintain the existing character. It may be valuable to identify additional areas within the urban service area that do not have similar limits on density but would benefit from design guidelines to maintain a transition as growth approaches the rural area. Clustering and vegetative buffering of new development from roadways would help to maintain existing character in those areas where suburban development is permitted.



Examples of rural signage

RURAL STRATEGY 3:

PRESERVE RURAL ENCLAVES

The discussion of rural character is often centered in the East Rural Area, however there are also areas of existing rural character in the urban service area that residents value and would like to see preserved. Based on the Land Use Analysis projections, these areas are expected to densify to accommodate population growth by 2045. If more growth is directed towards urban centers, this creates an opportunity to maintain additional areas of rural character where it is desirable for current residents and beneficial to the County as a whole. Rural enclaves should be considered an exception to the urban service area in which they are located and should not affect the policy approach to properties outside the enclave. Rural enclaves may be located within larger areas appropriate for transitional design standards as discussed in Rural Strategy 2.

To establish a Rural Enclaves program, it is important to (1) identify the purpose of the program, (2) establish criteria for identification of eligible areas, and (3) establish standards for approved rural enclaves. Once these parameters are established, then small area studies can be conducted to identify and apply rural enclave status to specific communities. The following outlines initial recommendation for these parameters.

1. Purpose: There are three reasons to consider rural enclaves within the County. The first is to maintain a lifestyle preference for residents currently living in designated communities. The second reason is to slow or limit the need for expansion of urban services. The final reason is to create a transition or buffer to existing natural conservation areas.
2. Criteria: Areas appropriate for designation as rural enclaves would meet several of the following criteria:
 - a. Large residential lots with agricultural zoning within the Urban Service Area.
 - b. Contiguous, identifiable community.
 - c. Majority of properties are owner-occupied.
 - d. Majority of property owners are in favor of rural enclave designation.
 - e. Lack of public infrastructure such as paved roads or sewer access.
 - f. Borders a conservation area.
3. Standards: In developing standards for rural enclaves, it will be important to meet the stated purposes for each rural enclave. The purposes may vary for different enclaves. Different approaches may be appropriate for transitional rural enclaves that provide buffering to permanent natural conservation areas versus enclaves that are mainly driven by resident preferences which may change over time. Three factors that can be addressed by overlay standards are density, design, and infrastructure. Density standards should provide for efficient use of public infrastructure and minimize environmental impact by creating an orderly pattern of development or reduce densities adjacent to sensitive environmental resources. Design Strategies as discussed in Rural Strategy 2 may be used to reinforce rural character and buffer existing homes from the visual impact of new development. As one of the criteria for identifying a rural enclave is limitation in public infrastructure, rural enclave standards should address limitations on extension of infrastructure consistent with that purpose and an orderly process for removal from the enclave to access infrastructure improvements. The removal process could include certain design standards to mitigate impact on remaining rural enclave properties.

RURAL STRATEGY 4:

SUPPORT THE CONTINUING SUCCESS OF RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL USES IN RURAL AREAS

The continuing viability of rural businesses helps to maintain large-scale property ownership and uses associated with rural character. This means support for the success of existing businesses and industries and identifying new rural uses when existing businesses are no longer viable.

Typical rural business uses include farming, ranching, native plant nurseries, equestrian activities, and businesses that support access to natural resources such as nature guides, canoeing, camping, off-road cycling, and hiking. Support uses might include veterinary uses, bait and tackle, and feed stores. Seminole County's rural places already include many creative rural uses including a parrot rescue facility and goat yoga.

UF/IFAS Extension Seminole County is a partnership between Seminole County Government and the University of Florida which provides educational programs related to Food and Agricultural Sciences to help existing agricultural businesses be successful and educate new practitioners. Their programs include support for 4-H and Seminole County Young Farmers and Ranchers which help network and educate future leaders in agriculture in Seminole County.

In 2018, the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council produced a Food Production Market Analysis for Seminole County which can inform agricultural investments. One of the challenges of increasing the use of native plants in landscaping is limited supply. The expansion of nurseries supplying native plants would help support the County's goal of increasing habitat in urban areas. There is also private funding available at the national level for tree preservation and planting that can provide an alternative incomes source for landowners to help preserve and/or restore natural lands.



Native plant test garden at a plant nursery

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VISION GOAL 3

GROW WALKABLE COMMUNITIES

VISION GOAL:

Grow Walkable Communities

There are many ways that communities can grow. The way a place is designed shapes how residents and workers travel, recreate, and the lifestyles they enjoy. As Seminole County continues to add new residents between now and 2045, participants expressed a desire to see a greater focus on redeveloping previously developed sites in central locations in order to minimize environmental impact, to ensure a variety of housing types that are attainable to a wide range of potential residents, and to see communities built in a way that encourages walking, bicycling, and public transit as alternatives to driving.

Consistent with the County's current policies, the majority of this activity would be within the County's designated Urban Centers & Corridors Overlay. This is where significant redevelopment and infill is desired and anticipated. There may also be opportunities to use these principles, such as integrating multi-modal transportation or mixing uses on a single parcel, at a smaller scale elsewhere in the County.

WALKABLE STRATEGY 1:

CREATE MIXED-USE, WALKABLE PLACES

Walking is the original mode of transportation. Whether getting out of a car, off a bus, or off a bicycle, everyone walks (or rolls in the case of wheelchair users) at the beginning and end of each journey. Designing walkable communities starts with creating a place that gives people options when they arrive. Walkable places have three key elements:

- 1. Somewhere to walk within a reasonable distance:** Walkable communities allow people the option to live within a five- to ten-minute walk of interesting and useful destinations whether an office or an ice cream shop. This means walkable neighborhoods or centers have a mix of different uses, including residential, workplaces, shopping, civic uses, and recreation.
- 2. A safe path to get there:** Walkable (and bikeable) communities provide safe, connected, and direct pathways between many different destinations. This means sidewalks, crosswalks, and bikeways that are designed to accommodate travelers of all ages and abilities. Active transportation routes are designed with the best practices for safety including minimizing conflicts with motor vehicles.
- 3. An interesting and comfortable experience along the way:** A walkable community is not only about connected sidewalks. For people to choose to walk on a regular basis, the journey must be comfortable and attractive. In Florida, this means shade from trees, awnings, and buildings is essential. Building entrances are located close to the sidewalk with windows to see and be seen. Parks and small green spaces provide breaks in the built landscape for people to relax or play.

As properties develop or redevelop, particularly in central locations, policies and standards should require compatible development that contributes to the creation of walkable communities. Standards should ensure that pathways connect, that mixed-use development is permitted and encouraged, and that the design of buildings and sites is oriented around the comfort and enjoyment of people outside the buildings as well as inside the buildings.



Conceptual Illustration of a Walkable Redevelopment with Small Park

WALKABLE STRATEGY 2:

ENCOURAGE A VARIETY OF TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Walkable communities function best when they are connected by and integrate a variety of transportation options. For all modes of transportation safety must be the top priority. Streets designed to operate at low speeds create a safer and more enjoyable environment, especially for people outside cars.

For people driving, walkable communities operate on a “park once” strategy. Once you arrive, you are encouraged to leave your car behind as you travel between work and lunch, from dinner to a performance, or go window shopping. Shared parking reduces the amount of land occupied by empty parking spaces, freeing that land for other uses like green space or affordable housing.

Walkable communities are essential for successful public transportation (buses and trains). Through compact design, walkable communities put more people closer to each stop or station increasing the feasibility for transit. Walkable communities ensure that once people get off the bus or train, they have a convenient, safe, and comfortable route to their destination. For people taking transit to work or trying to go car-free, it is desirable to be able to walk to destinations throughout the day such as a deli or pharmacy. The most effective public transportation systems are those that connect to and are supported by walkable places.

Micro-mobility, including bicycles, e-bikes, and e-scooters thrive in walkable communities and extend the range of personal transportation connecting walkable centers to nearby neighborhoods. To incorporate micro-mobility safely into communities the transportation system must be enhanced by extending trails, widening sidewalks, and slowing the speeds on local streets. The Comprehensive Plan currently sets a level of service requiring bikeways on most arterials and collector roadways controlled by the County (Policy TRA 2.1.1.1). The FHWA Bikeway Selection Guide (2019) provides guidance on a variety of different bikeway facilities appropriate along roadways of different speeds and volumes.¹

Seminole County’s 2040 Master Transportation Plan (2018) identified Safety, Economic Vitality, and Multi-modal options as key priorities. It also recommended adoption of a complete streets policy, dedicated funding for enhanced transit, and the use of FDOT Context Classifications for roadways. Another important concept used in the Master Transportation Plan is Quality Level of Service (QLOS) for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure; usage of multi-modal infrastructure is more sensitive to the quality of facilities rather than the capacity. All of these strategies are consistent with the goal of growing walkable communities. The Transportation Plan is currently being updated as part of a regular 5-year cycle and updates will incorporate the results of this visioning effort.

¹ <https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/2022-07/fhwasa18077.pdf>

WALKABLE REDEVELOPMENT ALONG A CORRIDOR (CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATION)

Driver Point of View



Pedestrian Point of View



WALKABLE STRATEGY 3:

SPUR REDEVELOPMENT IN CENTERS AND CORRIDORS

The greatest opportunity for implementation of complete, walkable communities is in the locations where major infill and redevelopment is both desirable and marketable. The County's current policies encourage a compact, walkable land development pattern within the Urban Centers and Corridors Overlay. These policies have been in place since 2012, however, development of this type has been slow to materialize. In order to realize the types of development envisioned by the community, it is important to identify strategies to accelerate desirable modes of development.

Tactics for spurring redevelopment in desirable locations include:

1. Re-evaluate policies for the Urban Centers & Corridors Overlay and Mixed-Use Development:

There are currently separate policies for the Urban Centers & Corridors and Mixed-Use Development. Each set of policies includes a relatively complex set of bonuses and criteria. Streamlining and updating these policies would remove potential barriers to investment.

2. Develop area-specific redevelopment master plans: The County has already developed area-specific plans for the Oxford Road area, and East Lake Mary Boulevard. Additional work of this kind can help to identify infrastructure needs, build community support, provide confidence to potential investors, and produce location-specific standards to ensure new development complements existing communities.

3. Establish clear standards for mixed use development: The County is considering standards for mixed-use zoning which would provide a clear path for mixed-use developments. These standards can be further enhanced through area-specific redevelopment master plans.

4. Coordinate infrastructure investments: Prioritize and coordinate investments in infrastructure where redevelopment is expected and desirable. Investment in multi-modal infrastructure should be prioritized in areas targeted for walkable development. Other types of infrastructure can also be coordinated with redevelopment planning. For instance, master stormwater systems can be a significant catalyst for redevelopment and can be integrated with public parks and open space. Septic to sewer projects could be prioritized over septic tank replacement in areas where "missing middle" housing would be appropriate.

5. Rethink density: Permitted densities in areas targeted for walkable redevelopment should be evaluated to ensure they are sufficient to support multi-modal transportation and are consistent with market-supported construction types in the region. In a drivable suburban context, keeping densities low is intended to minimize traffic impacts. In contrast, multi-modal transportation requires a minimum level of density to be viable. For multi-family and office uses, a primary consequence in the built environment of keeping densities low is the use of surface parking rather than structured parking. This separates land uses, which is a deterrent to walking, and increases the impervious surface created for each parking space. The use of shared parking or parking reductions associated with multi-modal infrastructure can help further shift the balance of land use towards habitable spaces rather than car storage.

LARGE SCALE REDEVELOPMENT AS A WALKABLE COMMUNITY (CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATION)

Driver Point of View



Pedestrian Point of View



WALKABLE STRATEGY 4:

ALLOW FOR A VARIETY OF HOUSING OPTIONS

Seminole County and Central Florida are in the midst of a housing shortage and many families and individuals struggle to find housing that is within their means and located within a reasonable distance of employment opportunities. Walkable places use a variety of strategies to increase and diversify housing options within areas with better transportation access. Transit-oriented or walkable centers rely on larger-scale apartments and mixed-use buildings to provide a hub of activity. These centers should be supported by and serve surrounding neighborhoods or connecting corridors of lower intensity. “Missing Middle” housing refers to a range of housing types that are smaller than modern apartment complexes but larger than single-family homes. These housing types were common in early 20th Century American neighborhoods but have become “missing” in post-1950s construction.

Enabling Missing Middle Housing within the Urban Centers and Corridors will help create walkable, multi-modal communities along the County’s major corridors. The County is already taking steps to enable “Missing Middle” Housing through proposed updates to its Land Development Code and the recent adoption of an Accessory Dwelling Unit ordinance.



Missing Middle Housing graphic (Source: Parolek, Daniel (2020). Missing Middle Housing: Thinking Big and Building Small to Respond to Today's Housing Crisis.)



Sample photos from Central Florida used during public engagement



A person is riding a bicycle on a paved path that runs alongside a large body of water. The person is wearing a light-colored tank top and dark shorts. A small child is seated in a child seat attached to the back of the bicycle. A blue helmet is also visible in the child seat. To the right of the path, there is a young tree. The background shows a calm body of water and a distant shoreline under a clear sky. The entire image has a green color overlay.

VISION GOAL 4

SUPPORT ACTIVE LIFESTYLES

VISION GOAL:



Support Active Lifestyles

Seminole County is known for its great sports and outdoor activities including a premiere trail system, the Boombah Sports Complex, the Seminole County Softball complex, other County parks, wilderness trails, and private and public sport facilities. County residents value these assets and want to see continuation and expansion of these opportunities.

ACTIVE STRATEGY 1:

CONNECT AND EXPAND THE TRAIL NETWORK

Bicycles are both a form of transportation and recreation. Urban trail networks serve both purposes. The use of bicycles and other micro-mobility for transportation is also addressed in Walkable Strategies #1 and #2. The County has an impressive existing backbone of “Signature Trails” which are wide, regional trails that provide the opportunity for long-distance cycling in a system separated from roadways. Many of these trails were “rail to trail” conversions.

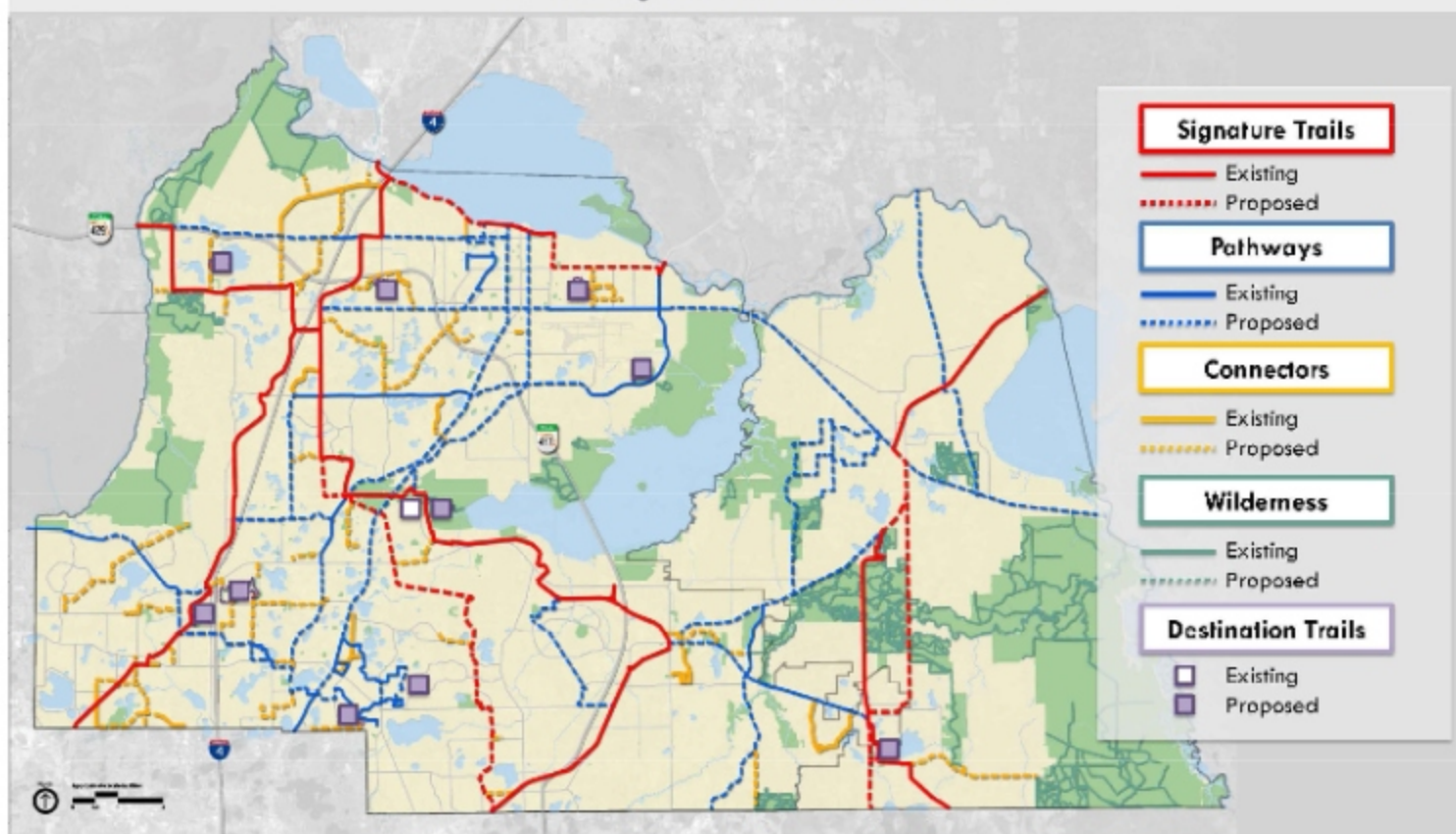
The County’s 2021 Trails Master Plan creates a new classification of trails and identifies a variety of opportunities to expand the network. A major focus is on adding “Pathways” and “Connectors” which can reach heavily urbanized areas of the County and connect neighborhoods and destinations to the existing trail network. Many of these proposed trails are within existing road rights-of-way. They greatly expand opportunities for active transportation and make it easier for residents to cycle recreationally from their homes. In addition, the plan proposes 10 new “Destination” trails geared toward providing recreational opportunities in a closed park-like setting. Participants in the visioning process expressed an interest in unpaved trails for mountain biking. Destination trails in the plan include the proposed Upsala Mountain Bike Trail near Sanford and the existing Soldier’s Creek Mountain Bike Trail near Winter Springs. These are in addition to “Wilderness” trails accessible to pedestrians, mountain bicycles, and equestrians from 12 trailheads throughout the county. Wilderness trails are primarily located in the East Rural Area, in the Wekiva River Protection Area, and within preserved lands adjacent to Lake Jesup.

Other important tactics for expanding the trail network are identifying funding to implement the trails plan, coordinating with municipalities to ensure connectivity between trails, and ensuring the trails system balances opportunities for different types of users (e.g. transportation, recreation, paved, and unpaved).



Entrance to a trail in Seminole County

Trails System Master Plan



2021 Trails Master Plan map

ACTIVE STRATEGY 2:

MAINTAIN AND EXPAND ACCESS TO PARKS AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Participants expressed interest in maintaining and expanding existing parks and recreation facilities. Seminole County Leisure Services has a robust portfolio of facilities and programs for both adult and youth recreation. The Seminole County Comprehensive Plan currently identifies the goal of a community park within a 10- to 20-minute drive of every County resident. The Leisure Services Master Plan provides further details describing distinct service area distances for rural and urban/suburban contexts. The Comprehensive Plan does not specify a level of service standard for neighborhood parks. In the Vision Concepts Survey, 72% of respondents expressed a desire to devote more resources to parks and trail connections near residences.

As central areas of the County become more developed at higher densities, the need for publicly accessible park space at more frequent intervals increases, as does the tax base necessary to support such facilities. Similarly, as portions of the County shift towards more multimodal transportation, it may be appropriate to classify the need for parks within walking or bicycling distance of residents in highly urbanized portions of the County rather than based on driving distance. Such a goal can acknowledge proximity to public parks not operated by the County and operate in tandem with open space requirements for new developments which may provide private recreation opportunities for residents. Several neighboring jurisdictions have Parks or Open Space Impact Fees which can both create funding for capital investment in new and existing parks and provide an incentive to new development to build public parks within their boundaries.

The last update to the Leisure Services Master Plan occurred in 2018, which includes the Parks and Recreation Division. The 2018 plan was an incremental update and relied primarily on public outreach from the 2013 plan. The final recommendation of the 2018 Master Plan Update was that the County begin a new comprehensive Master Planning Process for the Parks and Trails System by 2025 in collaboration with the seven municipalities and Seminole County Public Schools.



Seminole County Softball Complex

ACTIVE STRATEGY 3:

INCREASE ACCESS TO WATER BODIES

Central Florida has abundant natural water bodies. In Wildlife Strategy 2, the Vision Plan addressed the need to preserve and improve water quality to support wildlife and natural resources. These natural resources are also a valuable recreational resource. Recreational experiences of lakes, rivers, and streams are valuable for the physical and mental health of residents, and they build support among participants for protection of these natural resources.

Participants in the visioning process expressed an interest in more opportunities to access the water. Water access can include fishing piers, boardwalks, boat ramps, and canoe/kayak facilities. The 2018 Leisure Services Master Plan proposed 4 new canoe/kayak facilities and 4 new fishing piers. In addition, the plan identified the need to replace several boardwalks and piers. Future updates to park planning can address additional opportunities to provide water access through existing County-owned land. It would also be valuable to evaluate the geographic distribution of access to water-based activities to determine whether any areas of the County are in greater need of water access.



Pier accessing a lake in Seminole County

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VISION GOAL 5

BE GREEN

*UF/IFAS Seminole County Extension Image,
Photo by Tyler Jones*

VISION GOAL:**Be Green**

Part of being “Florida’s Natural Choice” is conserving, enhancing, and responsibly managing environmental resources throughout the County’s urban, suburban, and rural areas. This can include a variety of initiatives from solar energy to landscaping. Being “green” or sustainability also includes planning for the future to be resilient to changes and fluctuations in the environment such as storms and flooding. There is overlap between the strategies for the five vision goals as the same strategy can support multiple goals. For example, increasing multi-modal transportation conserves energy and planting sustainable landscapes can support wildlife.

GREEN STRATEGY 1:

PRESERVE AND PLANT MORE TREES

Trees provide value in many ways. Trees beautify neighborhoods and street trees provide a unifying design element to corridors. As discussed in Wildlife Strategy 3, native trees provide habitat for small wildlife such as caterpillars and birds. Trees with large canopies provide shade for people walking, biking, waiting for transit, or recreating in parks. Large areas of tree canopy can even reduce localized temperatures creating a more comfortable micro-climate over large areas and mitigate “heat island” effects. In addition to providing shade, trees cool the local environment through evaporation of moisture functioning as natural air conditioning. In winter, those same trees slow wind speeds reducing the wind chill during cooler weather. Studies have also shown that trees have a positive influence on property values.^{1,2}

Seminole County is currently considering updates to the Arbor Regulations to more predictably conserve existing trees and collect funds for tree-planting. Proposed updates to the subdivision regulations require trees be planted throughout new residential subdivisions.

The County has the opportunity to plant trees within lands it manages, particularly rights of way for streets and trails. Many cities in Central Florida manage Arbor Day programs which provide free trees to homeowners. The details of these programs vary. Some jurisdictions install the trees on behalf of residents and other programs require residents to transport and plant trees. Some programs require trees be planted in the right of way, in front yards, and/or close to the public rights-of-way to ensure they contribute to neighborhood beautification and shade sidewalks. Most programs provide education to recipients on establishing and maintaining tree health including watering schedules and (if applicable) installation instructions.

1 Anderson and Cordell. 1988 *Influence of Trees on Residential Property Values in Athens, Georgia (U.S.A.) : A Survey based on Actual Sales Prices*. *Landscape and Urban Planning*. 15: 153-163.

2 Donovan, Geoffrey H.; Butry, David T. 2011. *The effect of urban trees on the rental price of single-family homes in Portland, Oregon*. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*. 10: 163-168.



Mature trees in a Seminole County neighborhood

GREEN STRATEGY 2:

CREATE MORE SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES AND STREETSCAPES

Creating more sustainable landscapes can conserve water, reduce maintenance, minimize fertilizer pollution, and support pollinators. Sustainable landscapes include both native plants which support wildlife and habitat creation and other Florida-Friendly Plants that can reduce water usage and maintenance needs when planted in the appropriate context. The fundamental concept of “right plant, right place” is the first principle of Florida-Friendly Landscaping meaning that the appropriate landscape response varies by context. Florida-Friendly Landscaping also includes principles for wise maintenance of landscapes to conserve water and minimize fertilizer waste and run-off. UF/IFAS, including the Seminole County Extension, helps educate homeowners and landscape professionals about how to design and manage landscapes in Florida most effectively and responsibly. The County is also currently reviewing proposed updates to the Land Development Code which would increase the emphasis on Florida-Friendly Landscaping.

The County currently maintains several demonstration gardens as County facilities. As discussed in Wildlife Strategy 3, County-controlled lands and rights of way provide an expansive palette for creating and demonstrating sustainable landscapes. Larger scale installations would put the County in a strong leadership position and create significant direct environmental benefits.



Example of landscaping with native plants

GREEN STRATEGY 3:

MANAGE WATER RESPONSIBLY

In addition to managing water for wildlife, it is also important to manage water for human use and safety. This means ensuring enough water to support the population and managing stormwater to protect lives and property.

The County is engaged in ongoing efforts to manage water. In 2018, the County commissioned a Stormwater Master Plan to evaluate the current state of the County's stormwater infrastructure including flood hazards. Some water quality and drainage improvements have already been constructed based on the plan recommendations including baffle boxes, bioretention, and drainage improvements, rehabilitation, and retrofits at several locations throughout the County. A major recommendation of the master plan was a comprehensive update of the County's Drainage Basin Studies to assess level of service in basins with County stormwater infrastructure where existing studies were outdated or where studies had not previously been commissioned. As of this writing, studies of two basins have been completed, six are in progress, and five are planned. The studies update floodplain maps and identify and prioritize infrastructure projects to reduce flooding and improve levels of service for the County's stormwater infrastructure.

In 2021, the County developed an updated Utilities Master Plan and 10-Year Water Supply Plan. The plan proactively anticipates potential changes in Consumptive Use Permits (CUP) for water, which are managed by the State of Florida, and differences in readiness across service areas. Overall, combined potable water demand for the four water service areas is not projected to exceed the total CUP allocation through 2040 (assuming 2029 allocations are retained) though some service areas are under- or oversupplied. Identified tactics to ensure availability include interconnecting service areas, continuing and adding water conservation programs, increasing the availability of re-use water for irrigation, and investigating alternative water supply and recharge options. The plan also addresses ongoing system renewal.

It is estimated that more than half the water used by homeowners is for irrigating landscapes. Use of alternative water sources can be a major source of water conservation. Since 2010 the County's Residential Reclaimed Retrofit Program has connected many existing residents to reclaimed water reserving more potable water for indoor use. Still many older subdivisions in the County do not have access reclaimed water. Investigating other alternative water sources, such as recycling stormwater, may provide additional opportunities to conserve potable water. Alternative irrigation sources should be used in parallel with Florida-Friendly practices to reduce overall irrigation needs as discussed in Green Strategy 2. As reclaimed water use increases, it is also important to educate users that nitrogen fertilizers are not needed due to existing nitrogen levels in reclaimed water irrigation. Excess application of nitrogen damages water quality as discussed in Wildlife Strategy 2.

Finally, the County has recently launched an effort to create a holistic water policy which will unify planning for water across disciplines and departments to take advantage of the latest approaches to managing water quality and quantity.

GREEN STRATEGY 4:

EXPAND GREEN BUILDING PRACTICES

Seminole County's Comprehensive Plan currently includes policies that encourage energy conservation and green building practices. This includes incentives for projects that are certified by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC). Green building practices cover a wide variety of development and construction practices that conserve and protect natural resources. The County can gauge the effectiveness of the incentives by evaluating how many projects have been completed under these programs and, if necessary, alter incentives and ensure they align with other planning objectives. For instance, density incentives may be effective in areas where developers are seeking density increases but ineffective in areas where the County wants to incentivize higher intensity, walkable development that may be less familiar to market actors. There are also other incentive approaches that are currently used by other jurisdictions in the region such as property tax rebates for certified green buildings.

Targeted green building practices can also be expanded through regulation or education related to specific strategies. As part of current updates to the Land Development Code, the County is considering standards related to solar energy facilities, electric vehicle parking, shared parking, and bicycle parking. The first role of regulation is to ensure that regulations do not discourage green energy practices by creating pathways for strategies like "Low Impact Development" stormwater techniques. Education of citizens and the development community around the benefits of green building practices can also help to build a market for green building practices regardless of incentives or certifications. Wildlife-friendly strategies discussed under Wildlife Strategy 3 are also part of building green communities.



Solar panels on the rooftop of a commercial building

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A photograph of a school cafeteria with a green tint. In the foreground, there are rows of empty metal tables and chairs. In the middle ground, a person stands at a podium with a microphone, facing a large projection screen. The screen displays a presentation slide with the text 'VISION PLAN' and some images. The background shows a long hallway with bookshelves and a blue door.

VISION PLAN

COORDINATION & CONCLUSION

VISION PLAN

Conclusion

COORDINATION

As part of the Envision Seminole 2045 process, the County hosted a half-day public “Visioning Conference” engaging multiple County departments to discuss a range of current plans, programs, and strategies that impact the County’s future. This conference garnered positive feedback from both citizens and staff. Holding a similar interdepartmental event annually or every other year would help both citizens and County to better understand the many initiatives in which the County is engaged that address citizen concerns and help shape the County’s infrastructure, environment, and growth.

The Envision Seminole 2045 process included several opportunities for planners from different jurisdictions to meet and collaborate. Seminole County and Sanford have a close working relationship enabled through an active Joint Planning Agreement. A regular convening of planners from all of the jurisdictions within Seminole County would help to ensure ongoing collaboration between jurisdictions. The County would be the appropriate entity to convene such a meeting.

CONCLUSION

Envision Seminole 2045 builds on Seminole County's longstanding identity as Florida's Natural Choice. The public outreach for this vision confirmed that residents and stakeholders are still invested in that identity placing a strong emphasis on environmentally sound conservation and growth. The Vision Plan recognizes prior and ongoing efforts consistent with the vision and identifies strategies for continuing and enhancing how Seminole County lives its values. Seminole County residents and leaders take great pride in their community and have a strong consensus over long-term investments and policies that support their values. This Vision Plan has strong continuity with prior efforts, but it also creates the opportunity for a renewed focus on implementation and integration of the newest innovations and best practices to put these values into practice.



SEMINOLE COUNTY
FLORIDA'S NATURAL CHOICE

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