



ALACHUA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: 2011-2030 EVALUATION AND APPRAISAL ISSUE SUMMARY

April 3, 2018

ISSUE STATEMENT

Issue Area:

This issue paper covers the following topics: The sufficiency of policies addressing tree clearcutting, mitigation, vegetation management

DATA AND ANALYSIS RELATING TO ISSUE

There are some concerns of protecting trees within residential lots of proposed subdivisions due to the required utility instillation, small lot size and large relative house size. These situations have been handled by staff on a case by case basis due to the varying site conditions and size and density of proposed lots. On relatively intense Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) projects the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) allows for 95% vegetation removal which in many cases appears to most as a clear cutting. In many of these situations, mitigation planting of trees has not been able to be accommodated completely on site and has resulted in fee in lieu of planting payment into the County's tree bank fund.

The ULDC also addresses when regulated natural and historic resources have been cleared after May 2, 2005 and within three (3) years prior to the submittal of a development plan, rezoning or land use change application in ULDC section 406.07. It states that the property owner shall be required to restore or mitigate that portion of the parcel that would have otherwise required protection in accordance with the standards of this chapter if clearing has occurred prior to any of the above mentioned activities

STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING ISSUE

Most of the enforceable policies relating to tree and vegetation retention can be found within the ULDC. As can be seen in the Comprehensive Plan policies below, there is more of a vision laid out for the ULDC to be written than hard and fast policy to enforce. The ULDC currently requires 20% canopy retention of a proposed development site's existing canopy and a requirement to mitigate for the trees that were removed. Mitigation many times is accommodated within the ULDC's requirement for 30% of the project's property to be canopies in 20 years and that 50% of the paved

ground surface area (parking lot and drive isles) to be canopied in 20 years.

Since most of the specifics of the enforceable requirements are found in the ULDC, any changes strengthen or weakening would better accomplished within the ULDC than within the Comprehensive Plan.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES RELATING TO ISSUE

The following are most if not all of the comprehensive plan policies relating to the above stated issue.

Policy 4.2.2 of the Conservation & Open Space Element

All development shall occur such that land clearing is phased with construction activity and includes measures to minimize removal of native and non-invasive trees and vegetation.

Policy 5.4.2 of the Conservation & Open Space Element

New developments shall conserve existing trees and native vegetation by use of sound arboricultural practices that provide for the protection and long-term survival of the vegetation, as part of an overall strategy to achieve landscape, habitat preservation, and open space requirements. Conservation may entail grading restrictions, vegetation clustering, protective buffers, and density and intensity limitations, consideration of alternative layouts of permitted uses, and similar techniques that provide for the long-term survival of vegetation

Policy 5.4.3 of the Conservation & Open Space Element

The County shall protect trees according to a species specific hierarchy. Trees shall receive priority for protection based on species, in conjunction with other features including size, age, condition, historic association, and uniqueness. Removal or damage of champion trees shall be prohibited, and removal or damage of designated specimen trees shall be avoided, or mitigated if removal or damage cannot be avoided. Specific protections shall be provided in the land development regulations

Policy 5.4.1-1. of the Conservation & Open Space Element

Landscaping shall be compatible with the natural environment. Existing on-site vegetation shall be incorporated into landscape plans to the maximum extent practicable, according to the following priorities:

(a) First, keep and enhance existing native vegetation onsite and intact as elements of the landscape design.

(b) If priority #1 is not practicable, onsite native species shall be transplanted to another location onsite.

(c) If priority #2 is not practicable, plant native species to simulate lost native habitat.

(d) if priority #3 is not practicable, then the new landscape design shall incorporate the use of plants that have similar texture, form, and growth habits as the surrounding native vegetation.

Policy 1.6.1 of the Transportation Mobility Element

Transportation facilities shall be designed to result in a pleasing environment enhances by trees and landscaping that will present an attractive community appearance, calm traffic, enhance safety, reduce heat island effects, and provide shade for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit uses. Where possible, the existing natural landscape shall be retained or appropriately replicated in roadway design so as to maintain the sense of place and environmental heritage of Alachua County.