



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

April 17, 2018

STATEMENT OF ISSUE

Review and update Fire Service Level of Service Guidelines in Capital Improvements Element

INTRODUCTION

The Fire Service Level of Service Guidelines in the Capital Improvements Element of the Comprehensive Plan were originally adopted in the 2001-2010 version of the Plan. They are divided into service level areas: Urban Service Area, Urban Cluster and Rural with corresponding response times and ISO (Insurance Service Office) ratings. The response times correspond to National Fire Protection Association standards. The ISO rating is a risk based rating for insurance.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES RELATING TO ISSUE

Policy 1.2.5 Alachua County shall adopt LOS guidelines for Category "C" public facilities, and include those facilities in the CIP. These LOS guidelines are to be used for analysis and identification of Capital Improvement Project needs for these facilities to be included in the Capital Improvement Program. These level of service guidelines shall be for advisory purposes only. The LOS guidelines for Category "C" public facilities are the following:

(a) Fire LOS guidelines are as follows:

- (1) In the Urban Service Area, initial unit response LOS guideline is within 4 minutes for 80% of all emergency responses within a 12 month period. Fire suppression/ protection service level for all properties in the Urban Service Area shall be at the ISO (Insurance Service Office) Class Protection 4 or better. Land development regulations shall require that 100% of development shall provide water supply served by hydrants.
- (2) In the Urban Cluster, initial unit response LOS guideline is within 6 minutes for 80% of all emergency responses within a 12 month period. Fire suppression /protection service level for all properties in the Urban Cluster shall be at the ISO (Insurance Service Office) Class Protection 6 or better. Land development regulations shall

require that 100% of development shall provide water supply served by hydrants.

- (3) In the rural area, initial unit response LOS guideline is within 12 minutes for 80% of all emergency responses within a 12 month period. Fire suppression/protection service level for all properties in the Rural Area shall be at the ISO (Insurance Service Office) Class Protection of <10. Development will provide adequate water supply for fire suppression and protection, and fire service compliant fire connections, required through land development regulations.
- (4) The County shall update the Fire Service Master Plan and evaluate capital and related operational needs to meet these LOS guidelines. This update shall include identification of funding sources that could be established as part of a financially feasible plan to meet these guidelines. This update and adoption of a financially feasible plan shall serve as a basis for consideration of an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to establish level of service standards for Fire Rescue services as part of the County's concurrency management requirements.

DATA AND ANALYSIS RELATING TO ISSUE

The Level of Service guidelines were not updated with the 2011-2030 update of the Comprehensive Plan. The Urban Service Area is included in both Comprehensive Plans with a 4 minute response time. Originally the Urban Service Area line on the map corresponded to the extent of water and sewer lines in the Urban Cluster. This, however, included most of the Urban Cluster, especially to the west, which had a separate response time of 6 minutes. These times are taken from the NFPA and the *Urban* level response time of 4 minutes was intended to be the more urban areas like downtown City of Gainesville, not the County's Urban Service Area. In 2011 the Urban Service Area line was changed on the County's Comp Plan map and no longer corresponded with provision of water and sewer but was more aligned with density of housing. While population density is a relevant factor in fire protection planning, this 4 minute response time in the Urban Service Area does not correspond to anything either in the County's Fire Service Master Plan or NFPA Guidelines.

The Fire Service Master plan was most recently updated in 2012. The need for Fire Stations is based on both geography and response time – a Fire station within 5 miles of its entire service area does not necessarily allow the department to maintain the 6 minute response time in the Urban Cluster for 80% of all emergency responses within a 12 month period. The five mile reference is the limiting factor for fire suppression /protection service level for all properties in the Urban Cluster to be at the ISO (Insurance Service Office) Class Protection 6 or better. To maintain the 12 minutes in the rural sections of the county fire stations can be spaced much further apart and can still meet the 12 minute response time for 80% of all emergency responses within a 12

month period. Fire suppression/protection service level for all properties in the Rural Area shall be at the ISO (Insurance Service Office) Class Protection of <10. Another factor not largely considered in the planning is the population density in specific areas of the County, especially within the Urban Cluster.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING ISSUE

Staff recommends deleting Policy 1.2.5(a)(1) which is the Urban Service Area response time guidelines. The Urban Cluster and Rural policies are still relevant and contain appropriate measures. Fire station location analysis should be based on factors such as distance to service area, type of land use and population density. In Alachua County land use type and population densities do not necessarily correspond to the future land use designation on the map (e.g. low density residential or commercial) with the addition of Transit Oriented and Traditional Neighborhood Mixed Use developments. While building out the Fire Services Master Plan would ensure for now that the guidelines in the above policies are met within the Urban Cluster and Rural areas of the County. As population increases and development becomes more dense and mixed, the County should consider studying the effect of population density and mix of uses on response time. This largely corresponds to the number of staff, engines and other equipment needed within each station and is used to some extent in the personnel and equipment planning of the Fire Services Master Plan.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Alachua County Fire Services Master Plan
National Fire Protection Association