

The City of Wauchula has adopted codes and plans governing development throughout the community in accordance with the applicable Florida Statutes, including those properties within the CRA. These include the Unified Land Development Code, Code of Ordinances, the City of Wauchula Comprehensive Plan as well as the 1997 Community Redevelopment Plan – Wauchula Community Redevelopment Agency. The City of Wauchula Community Development department is responsible for the development, maintenance and interpretation of adopted and applicable codes and ordinances, including the Land Development Code. The Department is also responsible for the update and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. The City has also recently completed the review of the Comprehensive Plan as part of the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) and will begin the EAR-based amendment process in FY 2010-11. These documents provide the foundation for development and redevelopment efforts throughout the community including those properties contained within the CRA.

For the purposes of this section, the current Land Development Code and adopted Comprehensive Plan were analyzed for elements supporting or hindering development and redevelopment activities. In addition, the City's EAR was reviewed to determine if recommended amendments would further support or hinder activities. The following sections discuss existing zoning and development patterns, including the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) and the Comprehensive Plan, including the Evaluation and Appraisal Report. Generalized recommendations are provided at the end of this section.

### *Comprehensive Plan*

The Comprehensive Plan was adopted May 21, 1991 and updated February 18, 2004. The City completed the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) in 2009-2010; the City's EAR-based amendment process is scheduled for 2010-2011 to incorporate the findings of the EAR assessment and this Plan. The City's current Comprehensive Plan includes multiple Elements with respective goals, objectives and policies that can be applied towards the CRA and/or its efforts for development and redevelopment. These include the Future Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Infrastructure, Conservation, Recreation and Open Space elements and the Capital Improvements Element. For the purposes of this analysis, a summary of the applicable goals, objectives and policies are provided. In general, the City's current Comprehensive Plan supports the development and redevelopment efforts by the City and CRA. The Comprehensive Plan does provide specific guidance within the Future Land Use Element regarding redevelopment (Objective 2); however, it is oriented towards the downtown area of the City.

The Future Land Use Element Goal notes,

*“The City of Wauchula shall develop the City in a manner that ensure the compatibility between: (1) land use activities and natural resources; (2) the provision of essential public facilities and services for proposed land development; (3) the social and economic needs of the community and an appropriate mix of land uses that provides for orderly growth and development that enhances the quality of life of all residents.”*

Properties within the CRA currently include eight of the nine land use designations including Single Family Residential, Low Density Residential, Medium Density Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Public Buildings, Recreation and Conservation; only the Agricultural land use designation is not found within the CRA. The residential designations range in allowable density from a low of up to four units per acre (4 du/ac) to a high of twelve units per acre (12 du/ac). The Commercial designation also permits residential land use as well as retail, wholesaling, light manufacturing and office uses. The non-residential floor-area-ratio cannot exceed 3.0. Industrial land use is oriented to manufacturing, wholesaling, or processing activities with floor area ratios not exceeding 1.0.

Objective 2 of the Future Land Use Element serves to further the goals of the CRA process by focusing on Redevelopment and Renewal of Blighted Areas; Downtown Revitalization. Specifically, the Objective states, “The City shall protect the quality of its neighborhoods through continued code enforcement, site plan reviews and the Community Development Block Grant program for the renewal and redevelopment of blighted areas.”

The City adopted six policies addressing this objective that specifically support the CRA and redevelopment goals and activities. These include the development of strategies to rehabilitate targeted areas through increased code enforcement activities, removal of dilapidated structures and coordination of infrastructure improvements with rehabilitation activities. The policies also include language that the City will look to protect its investment and the investment in the downtown through maintaining a schedule of routine maintenance, enforcement of the City's property maintenance codes. The City will also continue revitalization of the urban core through enforcement of the sign ordinance, beautification projects, and incentive programs for revitalization of the downtown area.

Additional supporting objectives and policies found within the Future Land Use Element include Objective 3 (Elimination of Incompatible Uses), Objective 4 (Protection of Historic Resources), and Objective 6 (Land Development Regulation and Urban Growth).

The Transportation Element, as previously discussed within the Transportation and Mobility section, promotes the availability of safe, and convenient and efficient multi-modal transportation systems, both motorized and non-motorized, throughout the City. The Comprehensive Plan promotes necessary improvements in coordination with the Future Land Use Map as well as future plans by Hardee County and FDOT. The City, in addition has provided policies regarding bicycle and pedestrian opportunities both in new developments as well as redevelopment projects.

Throughout the various elements of the Comprehensive Plan, the City promotes the preservation and protection of existing properties, especially those within the Historic Downtown District. This area is consistent with the boundaries of the Downtown Core sub-district identified.

### *Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR)*

The City of Wauchula adopted the EAR evaluation of the Comprehensive Plan in 2010. The City identified one major issue (Issue 3 – Downtown Redevelopment/Economic Development) directly related to the CRA and/or redevelopment interests and one additional issue (Issue 1 - Transportation) that affect the City as well as the CRA.

#### ISSUE 3: DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Plan in promoting economic development, recognizing that the City of Wauchula is located within the designated South Central Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern.

#### ISSUE 1: TRANSPORTATION

- Assess strategies in Comprehensive Plan to address the need for improvements to roads, sidewalks, and street lighting. Evaluate the Traffic Circulation Element for effective coordination with Hardee County and the Florida Department of Transportation, especially regarding the widening of US 17 south of Wauchula.

The EAR included the following recommendations as they relate to the noted issues and the CRA:

#### **Issue 3: Downtown Redevelopment/Economic Development**

- Amend the Future Land Use Element to include objectives that promote the City working and partnering with the Community Redevelopment Agency to create incentives that will support business expansion and economic development.
- New objectives and policies will need to be added to address Florida Statute 163.31776 (aj), related to energy efficiency and energy conservation to include

standards, plans, and principles to be followed in energy efficiency in the design and construction of new housing and in the use of renewable energy resources, Ch. 20081191, LOF. The City shall also amend the Land Development Code to address energy efficiency and energy conservation.

- Amend the Comprehensive Plan to provide policies to promote infill development and redevelopment as an important tool to encourage affordable housing by maintaining the existing land use map, which clearly identifies vacant parcels.

#### Issue 1: Transportation

- Consider amending the Traffic Circulation Element to include an objective to institute a program for local street improvements. Consider policies that establish how street conditions will be assessed and how street improvements will be prioritized and scheduled. Consider whether sidewalks, lighting, and landscaping will be included with local street improvements.

Additional recommendations that may impact, directly or indirectly, the CRA and the Plan include:

#### Housing

- Amend the Comprehensive Plan to provide policies to promote infill development and redevelopment as an important tool to encourage affordable housing by maintaining the existing land use map, which clearly identifies vacant parcels.
- Amend the Comprehensive Plan to provide policies to promote the future development of a mix of housing types, densities, and affordable housing.

#### General

- Add policies and objectives to the Future Land Use, Housing, Transportation, and Conservation Elements regarding energy use reduction strategies, and transportation strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector and to address factors that affect energy conservation (as detailed in Chapter 163, F.S.).

#### Unified Land Development Code

The Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) is the implementing mechanism for the Comprehensive Plan and includes specific standards for use (zoning), building massing standards (setbacks, height), parking requirements, signage and landscape/buffers. The ULDC also sets out the process and procedures for the property maintenance code and code enforcement activities; however, property maintenance codes are separate from the ULDC.

The City of Wauchula Unified Land Development Code, as adopted through 2009 establishes the specific regulations governing land use through specific

zoning districts, bulk and area regulations, signage, parking, loading, landscape and buffering standards. The ULDC includes fourteen (14) zoning districts including agriculture, residential, professional/neighborhood commercial, commercial, historic downtown commercial, public/semi-public, industrial, and conservation. Based on the established boundaries, the CRA includes properties in all of the adopted zoning districts. Projects developed and/or funded by the CRA have been focused on the commercial areas of the City, primarily the historic downtown commercial zoning district. This area generally includes properties one block north and south of Main Street, extending east from Florida Avenue to approximately 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East.

The City exhibits a zoning pattern providing for the more intensive uses centered on Main Street and U.S. Highway 17 and then transitioning out to the City limits with lower intensive districts and uses. Main Street and U.S. Highway 17 serve as the primary retail/commercial corridors with a secondary retail/commercial (heavier commercial) located along N. Florida Avenue. The Florida Hospital and related services are primarily located in the southwest quadrant of the City along Carlton Street and S. Florida Avenue. The majority of the remaining lands are identified as residential use (single family and multi-family) are located in all quadrants of the City, including the downtown area. The Peace River/Peace River Park provides the primary eastern boundary of the City (note: the City of Wauchula annexed and owns property east of the Peace River formerly used as the City Airport).

Based on the number of zoning districts included within the CRA, the regulations vary to a great degree and increase the overall complexity of CRA activities as compared to other types of development activities. While the established zoning districts regulate the use and bulk standards for development, the ULDC provides an overall approach to development standards with only minimal variations, primarily for those properties within the HC-1 Historic Downtown Commercial area.

Due to the size and number of zoning districts encompassed within the CRA, specific regulations for development and redevelopment have not been included. Specific recommendations regarding development and redevelopment standards are provided in the Recommendations section of this Plan.

Specific uses allowed as a permitted use, accessory use and those allowed by special exception are noted in Table 2.05.01(A) of the ULDC; additional use allowances and or restrictions are included within the respective zoning district. Upon review of the allowable uses within the individual zoning districts as noted in the table, it is recommended the City undertake a detailed review of the Code to ensure consistency between the Comprehensive Plan and also with the existing and potential uses within the various areas. For example, a civic center/auditorium

or college university is not permitted within the HC-1 Historic Downtown Commercial or the C-1 Commercial zoning district but are permitted with the C-2 Highway Commercial/Light Manufacturing and P/SP Public/Semi-Public zoning districts. Currently, the Civic Auditorium is situated on property zoned P/SP based on its ownership (City of Wauchula); however, a college extension office that could be proposed for the downtown area would not be permitted due to a conflict with the ordinance. Similarly, hospitals are limited to the C-2 and I Industrial zoning districts as a Conditional Use which requires both Planning Board and City Council action.

The ULDC does allow as a permitted use 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor residential uses above retail in the HC-1, C-1 and P-1 Professional & Neighborhood Commercial and C-2 zoning districts; however, no density standard is noted within the ordinance. While this type of use is supportive of the intent of providing a horizontal and vertical mix of uses, the height standards listed in Table 2.05.01(B) for these districts is limited to two-stories.

Table 2.05.01(B) Table of Development Standards includes the specific density and intensity standards, including bulk regulations including Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and maximum building height. However, there is a potential conflict in development standards located within the HC-1 Historic Downtown Commercial zoning district. The HC-1 zoning district includes the majority of properties centered on Main Street, extending north to Palmetto Street and south to Orange Street; between Florida Avenue and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue. This table references the specific section of the ULDC (2.05.02.09) for specific design standards for HC-1 properties excluding all standards except for setbacks. However, Section 2.05.02.09 includes reference to the Table of Land Uses in Table 2.05.01(A) and notes specific development standards are included in the Table 2.05.01(B). The only other reference to a specific development standard includes the requirement that vacant lots within this district are to be developed with the same setbacks as the adjacent structures.

Additional items that may impact the development and redevelopment activities including recommendations received during the public meetings including signage, parking, landscaping and code enforcement

#### Signage

The City's current sign code is based on a general set of standards based on use and street frontage rather than district specific standards. The code does make limited provision for height and sign type (i.e., billboards) within the P-1, C-1 and HC-1; however, there are no other differentiating standards for signs within the individual zoning districts, excluding residential signs. In addition, the current sign code does not allow for flexibility in design and overall approach based on

a particular location within the City and/or CRA. The sign code allows for window advertising and canopy signs which are conducive to Main Street and a downtown/ pedestrian setting. The code does limit the number and type of sign permitted based on street frontage; properties with less than 75 feet of street frontage are limited to one (1) sign mounted to the building. Based on a strict interpretation, this would prohibit the placement or use of a canopy sign for most properties along Main Street or secondary thoroughfares due to their reduced street frontage.

Properties within the HC-1 Zoning District are limited to sign heights not to exceed 5'. In addition, the City has included language that prohibits signs with motion or moveable text except for time and temperature.

This Plan includes a recommendation to allow for storefront advertising by the CRA on a temporary or short-term basis for buildings that are currently vacant. The storefront advertising could include upcoming events or "showcase" community vendors and/or their products. An amendment to the ULDC may be required to

permit this type of signage and/or advertising and also clarify this would not count as an "off-premise" sign. This Plan also includes a recommendation to amend the current sign code to permit increased height and digital message boards for publicly owned and operated signs designed to incorporate changeable messages.



SFGLA.

The ULDC requires the provision of parking spaces for each individual use and does not provide for mixed use projects or buildings which would allow for peak hour/use parking standards based on the proposed uses. For example, a vertically integrated mixed use building containing both residential and professional office



uses would be required to provide parking spaces for both uses combined instead of allowing a blended rate or allowances for one use (i.e., office use) which will have different peak parking times than the residential uses. Also, the ULDC does not allow for reduction in parking standards if public parking facilities, either on- or off-street parking, are available within a certain, prescribed distance but does allow provision for a waiver in the HC-1 district. Generally, this type of allowance is permitted, especially within downtown areas. As previously noted, the City should review the current parking standards for allowances that would encourage redevelopment activities by allowing for peak hour parking calculations and/or allowing parking standards to be met by off-site parking facilities, on-street parking spaces or similar opportunities.

### *Parking Standards*

The ULDC Section 3.03.00 provides standards for the provision of off-street parking requirements for specific uses including the provision of bicycle parking areas. The parking standards range from 2.0 spaces per duplex or multi-family unit, 2.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet gross leasable area (SFGLA) for banks without a drive-through facility to 4.0 spaces SFGLA for general retail sales, shopping centers; medical clinic and professional offices require 4.5 spaces