070037

Evaluation of Urban Village Land Use Scenarios

DRAFT REPORT for:

Urban Village Focus Group Meeting, April 30, 2007
And
Urban Village Subcommittee Meeting May 2, 2007

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April 24, 2007

Executive Summary

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization (MTPO) has directed Alachua County, the City of Gainesville, and the University of Florida staff to develop proposals and action items to implement the Urban Village: SW 20th Avenue Transportation Design Proposal, a planning document which was accepted by the MTPO on May 2, 2006.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate four generalized land use scenarios for the "Urban Village"/SW 20th Avenue study area, which would implement the Urban Village: SW 20th Avenue Transportation Design Proposal. At the February 28, 2007 Urban Village Subcommittee Meeting, the Subcommittee asked staff to provide factual information about the various impacts of the proposed land use scenarios to assist them in recommending a preferred land use scenario for the study area. Upon recommendation by the Subcommittee of a preferred land use scenario, staff will begin to develop more detailed planning strategies to implement the generalized concept of land use and density that is recommended by the Subcommittee.

DESCRIPTION OF LAND USE SCENARIOS

The four land use scenarios identified in this report address generalized issues of land use and density for the Urban Village. The four scenarios that are evaluated in this report are: the No-Change Scenario (adopted land use), Core Park Plan, Activity Node Plan, and Density Maximization Plan. These scenarios are described in detail in Section III. The Table below highlights the buildout conditions for each of the scenarios.

Summary of Buildout Conditions for Land Use Scenarios

Scenario	Dwelling Units	Average Residential Density	Population	Non-Residential Floor Area	Employment
No-Change (adopted land use)	5,577	18 du/ac	11,154	272,500	600
Core Park	5,686	20 du/ac	11,371	437,205	963
Activity Node	15,310	50 du/ac	30,619	1,172,410	2,578
Density Maximization	30,625	100 du/ac	61,250	1,172,410	2,578

IMPACTS OF LAND USE SCENARIOS

- The land use scenarios described in this report would have a planning horizon of 2050. The population of Alachua County is estimated to grow by about 131,000 people by the Year 2050 (see Section IV). Two of the scenarios being considered, the Activity Node and Density Maximization Plans, would provide for a significantly higher population in the Urban Village area than is currently anticipated under existing City and County Comprehensive Plans. The Activity Node and Density Maximization Plans would therefore absorb a much greater percentage of the County's future population growth in the Urban Village area than the No Change Scenario (adopted land use) or the Core Park Plan. A key issue in the evaluation of the four land use scenarios is what percentage of the County's future growth can be reasonably expected or is desired to occur in the Urban Village area (see page 23).

- It is uncertain whether the Urban Village concept would result in a re-allocation of future population growth from other areas of the County to the Urban Village, or if it would result in new residents being attracted to Alachua County from outside the County. The establishment of a unique Urban Village has the potential to attract new residents to Alachua County, which may increase the expected rate of future population growth. At the same time, the establishment of this Urban Village also has the potential to re-allocate some percentage of the County's future population growth into the study area, and possibly away from other locations within the County. The degree to which either of these scenarios will occur is uncertain without the benefit of a more detailed scientific analysis of the population dynamics of the four land use scenarios.

- Automobile traffic congestion is a critical issue for the Urban Village area. All of the scenarios will result in roads which fall below adopted level of service standards. Higher population and density will add more automobile trips to the roadway network and reduce travel speeds on the roads. In order to implement a higher density land use scenario for the study area, alternative solutions to transportation concurrency will be necessary.

- A key finding in the transportation analysis is that the percentage of automobile trips (as a percentage of total trips of all travel modes) on the roadway network decreases while the percentage of transit and bicycle/pedestrian trips increases, when residential density and land use diversity are increased. This "mode share" for transit and bicycle/pedestrian modes increases in a higher density mixed use environment. The mode share percentages, however, remain constant when residential density reaches an average of 60 units per acre. Despite the increase in transit and bicycle/pedestrian mode share that result from higher density and land use diversity, the total number of automobile trips on the roadway network still increases as the population and density of the scenarios increase.

- The Urban Village contains significant natural resources. Hogtown Creek forms the north and west boundaries of the study area, and the wetlands surrounding the creek comprise about 139 acres of the total study area. Hogtown Creek is an "Impaired" water body as designated by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), and as such it has a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) which limits the maximum amount of a pollutant that a water body can assimilate without causing further degradation of water quality. Special planning consideration will need to be given to the design standards used in development adjacent to or near Hogtown Creek. For example, Low Impact Development (LID) stormwater practices should be considered for higher density sites near the creek (see Section XII).

- The Urban Village Study Area also contains small portions of the 1,782-acre Hogtown Prairie-Sugarfoot site identified in the *Alachua County Ecological Inventory Project* (KBN Study) (KBN 1996). The KBN study ranks this site 3rd out of 47 projects evaluated in the county, and categorizes is ecological value as high. This site runs along the north and west edges of the Urban Village study area. The Hogtown Prairie-Sugarfoot site is designated as a Strategic Ecosystem in the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan, which requires the County to preserve, conserve, enhance, and manage the ecological integrity of Strategic Ecosystems, as determined through ground-truthing using the KBN report as a guide. A special area plan is required to establish specific guidelines for Strategic Ecosystems prior to approval of land use changes, zoning changes, or development approvals within these areas

- Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU) has indicated that they do not anticipate any deficiencies in the provision of potable water and sanitary sewer service resulting from any of the proposed land use scenarios through the planning horizon of 2050. The levels of service adopted in the City and County Comprehensive Plans should continue to be met under each scenario.

- According to current public school capacity and enrollment figures provided by the School Board of Alachua County, there may be deficiencies in public school capacity resulting from all of the proposed land use scenarios (including the adopted land use). The assigned elementary and high schools for the study area are currently above the permanent student capacity, while the assigned middle school is currently at 85% of the permanent student capacity. There are proposed new school facilities and sites identified in the Tentative Facilities Work Program for the School District. These new sites may relieve capacity issues to some degree, although these planned facilities do not take into account the significant population increase that would result from the Activity Node or Density Maximization Plans. If either of these plans is recommended by the Subcommittee, there will need to be extensive coordination with the School Board regarding school capacity issues.

- Recreation levels of service will be impacted by the proposed land use scenarios. Alachua County currently meets its adopted level of service standards for recreation. The County, however, may fall below its adopted standard for improved resource based and activity-based recreation in the near future, based on currently anticipated population growth. The additional population growth resulting from the Activity Node and Density Maximization Plans could magnify the future level of service deficiencies. The addition of certain lands that have been acquired by Alachua County through the Alachua County Forever land conservation initiative are expected to be made publicly accessible and may be counted toward the resource-based level of service. It is unsure at this time how many acres of Alachua County Forever lands may be counted toward the improved resource-based recreation total, but these additional lands, in part, are anticipated to serve the recreation needs of future population growth in the area.

- The City of Gainesville currently meets its minimum level of service standards for recreation. The City would, however, fall below the adopted levels of service for several recreational facilities and park acreage under the Activity Node and Density Maximization Plans. New recreational facilities may need to be added to the system to serve the new population resulting from these two scenarios.

- Public safety levels of service are expected to continue to be met under all land use scenarios, however, the Activity Node Plan and Density Maximization Plan could result in taller buildings than are currently found in most parts of Alachua County. Fire equipment needs may need to be further evaluated in the next stages of this process in order to ensure that the fire rescue service needs can be met for the preferred land use scenario.

- The Activity Node and Density Maximization Plans could result in the development of unique housing options in the Urban Village area. The maximum residential densities proposed under the No-Change Scenario (1 to 24 units/acre) and Core Park Plan (also 1 to 24 units/acre) would likely result in a mix of multi-family and single-family attached housing unit types. The maximum residential densities proposed under the Activity Node Plan (40 to 75 units/acre) and Density Maximization Plan (80 to 150 units/acre) would result in predominantly vertical multi-family housing unit types. Higher density development can potentially be more affordable than lower density development because more dwelling units are placed on a parcel of land, although after a point, higher density housing can become more costly to build due to greater construction and engineering requirements.

SUMMARY

Of the four proposed land use scenarios, two of them, the No-Change Scenario and Core Park Plan, are not significantly different than the existing condition. The No-Change Scenario and Core Park Plan feature suburban-type residential densities, which are characteristic of existing development in the area. The Activity Node Plan and Density Maximization Plan provide for significantly higher residential density and population

than the other two scenarios. Regardless of which scenario is recommended by the Subcommittee, there will be implementation challenges, particularly in the area of transportation concurrency. The development of a concurrency solution for the area will be one of the major implementation tasks for any of the scenarios. The Activity Node Plan and Density Maximization Plan will also present additional challenges in terms of maintaining the adopted levels of service for various City and County services and infrastructure. The Activity Node Plan and Density Maximization Plan will also require the development of a unique set of development design standards that are oriented more toward a higher density urban area.