

MEMORANDUM

October 6, 2020

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Commissioners

VIA: James Slaton, Interim City Manager

FROM: Mark J. Bennett, Development Services Director
Autumn Cochella, Development Services Manager

RE: City of Lake Wales 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update
1st Reading: Ordinance D2020-04
Public Hearing: Notice requirements have been met

Recommendation: Approval of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan on first reading, following a public hearing.

At a regular meeting on September 29, 2020, the Planning and Zoning Board made a recommendation to City Commission to adopt the proposed City of Lake Wales 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Background: The City of Lake Wales Comprehensive Plan guides future development of the City and presents a future vision. The Plan includes the following elements: Future Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Utilities, Conservation, Recreation and Open Space, Intergovernmental Coordination, Capital Improvements, Historic Preservation, Economic Development, and School Concurrency.

At least every seven years, local governments must determine whether or not amendments are needed to the Comprehensive Plan. If changes are not needed, the state land planning agency is notified with a letter of determination from the City. If amendments are needed, they are to be transmitted within one year of such determination. Failure to transmit amendments or a notification letter within one year results in the inability to amend our comprehensive plan until we are in compliance. The City's last update was completed in 2012. The current plan had a horizon of 2015, which means our plan is critically out of date.

Keeping the City's Plan up-to-date is crucial, as it is the centerpiece of local planning efforts and creates a healthy framework which guides development. It gives guidance to landowners and developers and establishes long-range goals for the City.

S&ME is the consulting firm that assisted the City with this effort. The City and S&ME hosted a public workshop on Wednesday, July 8th of this year via Zoom, where the public was able to contribute to the conversation, discussing long-term visions and priorities for the City's growth.

The following questions were discussed in the form of "breakout sessions":

- What are our opportunities?
- What is Lake Wales' future?
- Where should we be in 10 to 20 years?
- How do we get there?

Key Updates and changes:

Residential maximum densities have been adjusted throughout the Future Land Use element by category in the following ways:

- Mixed-Use development in the RAC Regional Activity Center shall not exceed ~~6~~ 12 units per acre.
- Multi-family and mixed commercial/residential use of structures is permitted in the DD Downtown District up to ~~42~~ 25 dwelling units per gross acre. Residential densities of up to 75 dwelling units are permitted with special approval.
- Residential uses in the NAC Neighborhood Activity Center district permitted up to ~~6~~ 12 units per acre.
- Residential uses in the RO Residential Office district permitted up to ~~6~~ 12 units per acre.
- LDR Low Density Residential: ~~3~~ 5 units per acre.
- MDR Medium Density Residential: ~~6~~ 12 units per acre.
- HDR High Density Residential: ~~42~~ 25 units per acre.

These changes are proposed to restore the original densities that were in the Comprehensive Plan from its initial adoption in 1990-91 to when significant changes occurred in 2005-06. By increasing potential residential densities, the intent is to promote more intensive development that is appropriate for a municipality.

Other significant changes include the following:

- Lake Wales Connected – Policies have been included to support the implementation of this Plan.
- Future Extraterritorial Planning - Policies are proposed to promote future planning area studies to establish future land use patterns, transportation, utilities and economic development issues, plus explore the possibility of a Joint Planning Agreement with Polk County.

- Information Technology – A policy is proposed to explore the feasibility placing fiber optics and similar infrastructure throughout the City.
- Several Policies related to the recognition of property rights.
- Elimination of Transportation Concurrency in the CRA – this is intended to further promote redevelopment in the Core Area by eliminating a potential barrier.
- Future Bike/Pedestrian Planning – policies to promote the future planning and development of these other modes of transportation are included.

Staff wishes to thank Kevin Kieft of the Lake Wales Chamber/Economic Development Council for his feedback regarding the Economic Development Element. Additionally, staff also wishes to acknowledge Megan McLaughlin, AICP, (a prominent historic preservation planner and new resident of Lake Wales) for volunteering to review and comment on the draft Historic Preservation Element.

If approved by the City Commission on First Reading, the 2040 Plan will then be sent to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity and other state agencies. The City will then receive an Objections, Recommendations, and Comments (ORC) Report. The Second Reading and adoption would then occur within the next 3-4 months.

Attachments:

City of Lake Wales 2040 Comprehensive Plan
Ordinance D2020-04