

Nassau County Comprehensive Plan 2010-2030



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Executive Summary

Introduction

Nassau County is a coastal county located in the far northeastern corner of Florida. It is part of the Census-designated Jacksonville Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) which includes Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns counties. The County is bordered to the north by Camden County, Georgia, the south by Duval County (i.e. the City of Jacksonville); the west by Charlton County, Georgia and Baker County; and to the east by the Atlantic Ocean. There are three incorporated municipalities within the county. The City of Fernandina Beach, the official county seat, is the largest. It is located on the northern end of Amelia Island. The towns of Hilliard and Callahan are small municipalities located in the northwest and southwest areas of the county respectively.

A substantial amount of development has occurred in eastern Nassau County since 2000. While there are opportunities for infill development in the City of Fernandina Beach and the unincorporated areas of Amelia Island, the island's land development patterns are largely settled. The Yulee area, roughly defined as the eastern portion of the County between the Amelia River and I-95, is where the greatest amount of new development has taken place in the past decade. This trend is likely to continue due to the area's proximity to major transportation corridors and existing and planned regional water and wastewater infrastructure. The areas of the County west of I-95 remains mostly rural, but new development planned within the County and in the surrounding jurisdictions of Jacksonville, Baker County and Camden County, Georgia indicate that certain areas in the western part of the county may be increasingly subject to urban development pressures in the future. Modest residential and non-residential development has occurred in the immediate areas surrounding the smaller municipalities of Callahan and Hilliard in the western area of the county, and scattered residential development on large (1 acre +) lots can be found throughout the rural areas of the County.

While the consolidated City of Jacksonville (i.e. Duval County) remains the center of population in the region, Nassau and the other surrounding counties are growing relatively faster. Population growth in Clay, St. Johns and Nassau Counties is predicted to outpace the traditional regional center of Jacksonville between 2010 and 2030.

The rapid growth of the County over the past 20 years has significantly changed the economy, community fabric and the built environment. Despite the 2007-08 downturn in the economy that has temporarily slowed this growth, the County recognizes that continued growth is inevitable in the next 20 years due to its abundance of land, natural resources, and the external pressures of development in the northeast Florida and southeast Georgia regions.

Vision 2032

In May 2007, Nassau County, in partnership with the Amelia Island/Fernandina Beach/Yulee (AIFBY) Chamber of Commerce, hired consultants MGT of America, Inc. to begin a long-term planning and consensus building process and develop a 25- year (i.e. 2007-2032) vision for the county.

Public input for the 2032 Vision Plan was received from stakeholder groups and residents of Nassau County through public involvement opportunities including eight (8) public meetings throughout the County to gather the ideas, thoughts, and suggestions of Nassau County residents on their vision of how the County should look in the year 2032. A web site (nassauvisioning2032.mgtofamerica.com) was also established to provide information and encourage residents' participation in the vision process. Comments were collected on a series of topics that included cultural opportunities, recreation and open space, the environment, education and school facilities, infrastructure, growth management, the economy and workforce, tourism, governance, public safety, healthcare, and social services.

The recommended strategies of Vision 2032 informed the creation of the goals, objectives, and policies of each element of the Nassau County 2030 Comprehensive Plan and reflect the community priorities identified in the visioning process. A summary of the identified issues goals and strategies is included in the technical appendix to this plan as Appendix A.

2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR)

In order to meet the challenges of managing growth in the next 20 years, the County identified ten major local issues addressed in the 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR). The issues that emerged represent common themes and concerns heard from a variety of stakeholders:

- Issue 1: Update the future land use plan
- Issue 2: Strengthen long-range transportation planning efforts
- Issue 3: Promote economic development
- Issue 4: Protect and expand land designated for job generating land uses
- Issue 5: Preserve rural lifestyle choices
- Issue 6: Preserve environmental resources
- Issue 7: Promote a greater diversity of housing types and prices
- Issue 8: Enhance intergovernmental coordination
- Issue 9: Create a financially sustainable community
- Issue 10: Create a first-class parks and recreation system

In analyzing each of the ten major issues, it was apparent that the issues and their solutions were interconnected on many levels. The analysis of the ten major issues yielded six “essential outcomes” that the County needed to achieve in order to manage growth effectively in the next 20 years:

- 1: A Future Land Use Map that is a useful tool for managing growth
- 2: Land Development Code that creates more efficient development patterns
- 3: A coordinated economic development program
- 4: A land acquisition/management program for recreation and conservation
- 5: A Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- 6: An active role in the Northeast Florida region

The 2030 Comprehensive Plan was created to ultimately achieve these six essential outcomes through the implementation of its goals, objectives and policies. A brief summary of how the Plan intends to achieve each outcome is described below.

1: A Future Land Use Map that is a Useful Tool for Managing Growth

The 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report revealed that the previous (2010) Comprehensive Plan and its adopted Future Land Use Map (FLUM) did not provide an overall direction as to where and how communities will develop. It provided little direction for the location and form of new developments, development occurs in a random fashion that may result in a leapfrog pattern where development is often uncoordinated with the planned expansion of utilities or roadways. It offered few incentives or strategies for road networks, extension of services or a coordinated network of conservation and recreation sites. It created an abundance of land that permitted low-density residential development which encouraged land consumption and conversion of timber growing and grazing land into residential uses.

If left unchecked, the development trends encouraged by the previous Plan will simply result in a continuation of unsustainable urban sprawl. The critical issue that must be addressed is that while standard methods would indicate that sufficient residential capacity is available on the 2010 FLUM through the planning period, the pattern of development would not be sustainable for Nassau County or the region. The County simply does not have the financial means to provide services to such a development pattern.

Because existing development rights cannot easily be retracted, Nassau County has proposed planning policies and incentives to encourage and redirect future development to more appropriate areas. Such development will include jobs and housing in close proximity to one another, and through a strategy of compact, mixed use development, will effectively retrofit the current pattern of urban sprawl.

Development and Preservation Framework

The Development and Preservation Framework, which is described in the background data and analysis submitted for the Future Land Use Element and shown on Map FL-6, attempts to lay a foundation for land development decision-making by offering incentives for a more sustainable development pattern and discouraging urban sprawl. The Framework is a core strategy, based in part on the Vision 2032 process that will guide the legally binding goals, objectives and policies and FLUM designations. It is the “30,000 foot perspective” for assisting the Local Planning Agency with future FLUM decisions.

The Nassau County Development and Preservation Framework will seek to direct a majority of future development to an identified Urban Development Area (UDA) and adjacent Economic Development Opportunity Areas (EDOAs), and away from the County’s Coastal Development Area (CDA) and Rural Areas. These areas are located primarily between Interstate 95 and the Level III Hurricane Evacuation Zone that serves as the western boundary of the designated CDA. The County’s Development and Preservation Framework seeks to direct and encourage development to more appropriate and accessible locations in the UDA and adjacent EDOAs, where adequate public facilities and services will be provided and where an appropriate jobs-to-housing balance can be achieved. West of Interstate 95, the Framework encourages continuation and expansion of sustainable agriculture, and urban transitional areas around the Towns of Callahan and Hilliard in concentrated rural communities with supporting open space and community facilities.

East Nassau Community Planning Area

The East Nassau Community Planning Area (ENCPA) includes approximately 24,000+ acres under common ownership which lies directly inside the designated Urban Development Area (UDA), as defined in the Future Land Use Element (see Map FLUMS-6). It offers a unique opportunity to master plan for future growth in an area of the County most suited for new urban development. As a proposed Multi-Use Community Planning Area (MU-CPA), all development within the ENCPA must be processed as part of a Development of Regional Impact (DRI) and will recognize the inherent, integral relationship between transportation, land use and urban design and the degree that these elements affect one another and shall provide high value regional employment and economic development opportunities through the promotion of compatible and financially sustainable land use patterns.

2: A Land Development Code that Creates More Efficient Development Patterns

Encouraging denser, more compact and more concentrated development with the right mix of uses in certain locations creates better scale economies and reduces delivery costs for public and

private goods and services. A variety of methods to guide growth into these patterns can be found throughout the goals, objectives and policies of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan. Options that may be considered include: identifying areas where FLUM designations might be changed to increase maximum and add minimum densities; using methods to redirect growth to areas that can support the impacts of growth with adequate public facilities; and planning for a more mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented development.

The County's Development and Preservation Framework, described above seeks to direct and encourage development to more appropriate and accessible locations in the areas where adequate public facilities and services will be provided and where an appropriate jobs-to-housing balance can be achieved.

Recognizing the relationship between transportation and land use is essential to understanding the problems of traffic congestion. The Transportation and Future Land Use Element contain coordinated policies to enhance land use planning decisions that will positively affect the transportation network. These policies include the encouragement of master planning and design concepts that encourage internal capture of generated trips, pedestrian-friendly streets with on-street parking, and support potential transit opportunities. Other objectives and policies reinforce strategies to address long range transportation issues through regional cooperation and the creation of long range regional which promote an interconnected roadway network serving a variety of complementary uses.

Policies promoting mixed-use projects and incorporating effective traditional neighborhood development (TND) and "village center" design concepts throughout the elements of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan will lead to more sustainable and cost-effective development for the County as a whole. Such development practices can significantly reduce the costs of infrastructure. In the long term, encouraging mixed use and transit-oriented developments preserves valuable open space, expands housing choices, and improves the County's jobs/housing balance.

3: A Coordinated Economic Development Program

Economic development is a high priority issue in Nassau County that is linked with several of the other key issues explored in this Plan. While participants in the Vision 2032 process frequently cited "quality of life" as a benefit of living in Nassau County, they also cited shortcomings such as long commute times and traffic congestion, both of which are directly related to a lack of high-paying jobs within the County. The need for specific incentives and policies that support economic development was repeatedly asserted by community stakeholders throughout the Vision 2032 and EAR processes.

Economic development efforts are a community responsibility, and communities that succeed are those which develop and adopt a shared vision. The key to any effective economic development program will be a formal evaluation of tools that could benefit the county and effective interagency coordination. The Regional Coordination Element contains policies which recommend that the County adopt an Economic Development Element into the Comprehensive Plan. Such an element is optional, but has the advantage of providing a central policy statement for economic development in the County.

One of the major issues identified in the Nassau County Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) was protecting and expanding land designated for job-generating land uses, especially industrial and business park-type uses that typically provide higher wages. A key initiative of the County is to provide additional non-residential sites that will attract or retain targeted industries and businesses. The goals, objectives and policies of the Future Land Use Element reflect the County's strategy to establishing a stronger presence in the region by designating adequate land for economic growth and diversification and significantly improving the countywide jobs-to-housing balance. A significant amount of future non-residential development will be concentrated

within the ENCPA, which contains the largest Economic Development Opportunity Areas (EDOA) identified on the Development and Preservation Framework, specifically in the area located along the adjacent corridors of Interstate 95, U.S. Highway 17 and the existing CSX railroad (see Map FL-6 and FLUMS-6).

Other policies are included in several elements that encourage increased public-private partnership activities with the County's local and regional economic development organizations, business organizations and major landowners.

4: A Land Acquisition/Management Program for Recreation and Conservation

Nassau County has an extensive network of waterways, wetlands and unique natural features. Protection of these unique natural features is seen as critical for maintaining the vitality and unique character of the county, and the Northeast Florida region.

As the County grows, additional pressure will be placed upon vacant and undeveloped lands which are in close proximity to natural and environmental resources. The County's vacant and undeveloped lands accommodate a variety of residential lifestyles, commercial, industrial, and recreation needs to accommodate a growing population. Due to the needs of an expanding community, the unincorporated areas of the County are receiving the majority of development. While significant resources have been protected throughout the county, the preservation of natural resources demands its own focus in order for these areas to remain important to the long-term environmental and economic viability of the community.

Just as growing communities need to upgrade and expand their transportation and utilities infrastructure, they also need to upgrade and expand their "green infrastructure" -- the network of open space, woodlands, wildlife habitat, parks and other natural areas, which sustain clean air, water, and natural resources and enrich their citizens' quality of life.

The goals, objectives and policies of the Conservation, Recreation and Open Space, and Future Land Use Elements encourage the development of long-range, financially feasible plans for the identification and management of environmental resources. The strategies include: an inventory of countywide environmental resources; a priority ranking and criteria of areas for public acquisition, placement in conservation easements, or other conservation techniques; investigating methods of funding land acquisition, including coordination and partnership with public and non-governmental organizations; and coordinating conservation efforts with the goals of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan as described below.

5: A Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Parks and recreation facilities not only enrich the lives of those in the community, but also can improve the aesthetics of neighborhoods, increase property values, generate tourism, and enhance the overall image of the County. The County acknowledges the need to phase in parks and recreation facilities in order to keep pace with its population growth. The goals, objectives and policies of the Recreation and Open Space Element require the County to prepare, in cooperation with appropriate agencies, a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to guide the development and maintenance of County parks and recreation facilities. This plan is to be completed by January 2013.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will analyze level of service standards and inventory the County's current parks system. It will recommend guidelines for the size, timing and phasing of parks in the County by using population trends and projections. It will also consider what types of parks and recreation facilities are most appropriate in individual communities based on public input.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan should be the basis for a long-range financially feasible plan for the identification and acquisition of land for recreational purposes. The plan will include criteria for, and priority ranking of, lands for acquisition and development. It will consider existing and potential funding sources as well as programs for implementation and capital improvements for future parks and recreation facilities.

6: An Active Role in the Northeast Florida Region

As mentioned previously, population growth in Clay, St. Johns and Nassau Counties is predicted to outpace the traditional regional center of Jacksonville in the next 20 years. As population shifts to these areas, greater consensus and cooperation are essential at all levels of government in order to implement regional policies and practices that will support economic vitality and livability of the Northeast Florida region. The County needs to define itself within the Northeast Florida region and take an active role in regional planning efforts. This will ensure that while the County and the region continue to grow, the quality of life that stimulates this growth will be sustained.

Many of the issues facing Nassau County today and in the foreseeable future will require a higher level of coordination with public agencies and also non-governmental agencies at every level. The County's rate of growth and development places a great deal of pressure on the delivery of core public services and infrastructure to residents. Effective intergovernmental coordination plays a crucial role in the County's overall approach to meeting existing and future challenges.

Long-Range Transportation Planning

The goals, objectives and policies of the Regional Coordination and Transportation Elements require the County to coordinate long-range transportation planning with its municipalities, the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization the Florida Department of Transportation, the Jacksonville Transportation Authority and other transportation providers. This includes the review of routes and appropriate land uses for potential public transit corridors, and coordination with adjacent jurisdictions to develop strategies which will promote future mass transit services for the region.

Coordination with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are increasingly important in shaping the economy, environment and quality of life in a community. They include a diverse group of organizations that represent a wide range interests including business, economic development, environmental and social services, academia, professional and trade organizations, neighborhood and civic groups, and nonprofit and philanthropic organizations. It is important to recognize the role such organizations play in the community and the opportunities for partnership with the public sector. The goals, objectives and policies of the Regional Coordination Element and other elements support and encourage the creation of appropriate public-private partnerships as a model for structuring, funding and operating certain public facilities as well as the identification and acquisition of environmental resources.

Regional Visioning

The Northeast Florida Regional Council, through the non-profit Regional Community Institute of Northeast Florida, Inc., has embarked on the creation of a regional vision for the future of the seven-county Northeast Florida region. Beginning with the ULI's "Reality Check" exercises in 2009, The First Coast Vision will culminate in 2012 with the update to the Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) to which local comprehensive plans are required to conform.

The goals, objectives and policies of the Regional Coordination Element actively support and encourage County residents to participate in efforts undertaken by the Northeast Florida Regional Council and the Northeast Florida Regional Community Institute to develop a regional vision for northeast Florida. The County shall cooperate with the Northeast Florida Regional Council, adjacent local governments and other public and/or private agencies to find the most appropriate and feasible strategies for implementing the guiding principles of the regional vision.

Organization of the Plan

The Goals, Objectives and Policies of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan are organized into three major parts:

Part 1 includes the elements which set the level of service (LOS) standards and associated goals, objectives and policies for the seven public services subject to concurrency under Ch. 163, Florida Statutes (i.e.: transportation, potable water, sanitary sewer, solid waste disposal, stormwater drainage, parks and recreation, and public school facilities). This includes the Recreation and Open Space Element (ROS); the Transportation Element (T); the Public School Facilities Element (PSF); and the Public Facilities Element, which is divided into five sub-elements: Potable Water (WAT), Sanitary Sewer (SEW), Solid Waste Disposal (SOL), Stormwater Management (STM), and Natural Groundwater Recharge Areas (RCH).

Part 2 includes a number of elements which and address a wide variety of economic, social and environmental concerns. While these elements and their associated goals, objectives and policies are required by law and essential to the overall plan, they do not set level of service (LOS) standards for public facilities. This includes the Housing Element (H); the Conservation Element (CS); the Coastal Management Element, which is divided into three sub-elements: Coastal Environment (CEV), Coastal Hazard Mitigation (CHZ), and Water-Dependent Uses (WDU); and the Regional Coordination Element (RC).

Part 3 described the future land use plan for the County. This includes the goals, objectives and policies of the Future Land Use Element (FL) and the Capital Improvements Element (CI). It also includes the Future Land Use Map Series (FLUMS) and the adopted Schedule of Capital Improvements (SCI).

Although they are associated with elements in Part 1, the Future Transportation Map Series (FTMS) and Future Public School Facilities Map Series (FPSF) are grouped at the end of the plan with the Future Land Use Map Series for convenience.

List of Commonly-Used Acronyms and Abbreviations

AADF	Annual Average Daily Flow
AADT	Annual Average Daily Traffic
ADF	Average Daily Flow
AGR	Agriculture (Land Use category)
AHAC	Affordable Housing Advisory Committee
AHCA	(Florida) Agency for Health Care Administration
AIWW	Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway
ALF	Assisted Living Facility
AMI	Area Median Income
AQI	Air Quality Index
BCC	Board of County Commissioners (variant)
BEBR	Bureau of Economic and Business Research
BFE	Base Flood Elevation
BMP	Best Management Practices
BOCC	Board of County Commissioners
C&DD	Construction and Demolition Debris
CDD	Community Development District
CEMP	Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan
CESQG	Categorically Exempt Small Quantity Generators (of hazardous waste)
CGRDC	Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center
CHHA	Coastal High Hazard Area
CHN	Conservation Habitat Network (Land Use category)
CIP	Capital Improvements Plan
COE	(U.S Army) Corps of Engineers (variant)
COFTE	Capital Outlay Full Time Equivalent (schools)
COM	Commercial (Land Use category)
CR	County Road

CSA	Concurrency Service Area (schools)
CSV	Conservation (Land Use category)
CUP	Consumptive Use Permit
CUVB	Conditional Use and Variance Board
DACS	(Florida) Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services
DCA	(Florida) Dept. of Community Affairs
DCF	(Florida) Dept. of Children and Families
DEM	(Florida) Division of Emergency Management
DEP	(Florida) Dept. of Environmental Protection
DOE	(Florida) Dept. of Education
DOH	(Florida) Dept. of Health
DOS	(Florida) Dept. of State
DRI	Development of Regional Impact
DWSA	District Water Supply Assessment
DWSP	District Water Supply Plan
EAR	Evaluation and Appraisal Report
ENCPA	East Nassau Community Planning Area
EPA	(U.S.) Environmental Protection Agency
ERP	Environmental Resource Permit
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FAC	Florida Administrative Code
FAR	Floor Area Ratio
FDOT	Florida Dept. of Transportation
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FHFC	Florida Housing Finance Corporation
FHP	Florida Highway Patrol
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FIHS	Florida Intrastate Highway System
FIND	Florida Inland Navigation District

FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
FISH	Florida Inventory of School Houses
FLUM	Future Land Use Map
FMSF	Florida Master Site File
FNAI	Florida Natural Areas Inventory
FQD	Florida Quality Development
FS	Florida Statutes
FSCJ	Florida State College at Jacksonville
FWC	Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
FY	Fiscal Year
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
GIS	Geographic Information System
GOPs	Goals, Objectives and Policies
HDR	High Density Residential (Land Use category)
HES	Hurricane Evacuation Study
HUD	(U.S. Dept. of) Housing and Urban Development
HVZ	Hurricane Vulnerability Zone
HW	Hazardous Waste
IND	Industrial (Land Use category)
ISR	Impervious Surface Ratio
ITE	Institute of Transportation Engineers
JAA	Jacksonville Aviation Authority
JTA	Jacksonville Transportation Authority
LDC	Land Development Code
LDR	Low Density Residential (Land Use category)
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
LHAP	Local Housing Assistance Plan
LID	Low Impact Development
LMS	Local Mitigation Strategy

LOS	Level of Service
LPA	Local Planning Agency
LQG	Large Quantity Generators (of hazardous waste)
MDR	Medium Density Residential (Land Use category)
MGD	Million Gallons per Day
MMTD	Multi-Modal Transportation District
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MSA	Metropolitan Statistical Area
MSW	Municipal Solid Waste
MU	Multi-Use (former Land Use category)
MU-CPA	Multi-Use Community Planning Area (Land Use category)
NAU	Nassau Amelia Utilities
NCEDB	Nassau County Economic Development Board
NCSB	Nassau County School Board
NCSD	Nassau County School District
NEFRC	Northeast Florida Regional Council
NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NPS	National Park Service
NPS	Non-Point Source (of pollution)
NRPA	National Recreation and Parks Association
ORC	Objections, Recommendations and Comments
OSTDS	On-Site Treatment and Disposal System
P&Z	Planning & Zoning (Board)
PBF	Public Buildings and Facilities (Land Use category)
PD&E	Project Development and Environmental
PDRP	Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plan
PHT	Peak-Hour Trips

PUD	Planned Unit Development
PWRCA	Priority Water Resource Caution Area
RAC	Regional Activity Center
REC	Recreation (Land Use category)
SAISSA	South Amelia Island Shore Stabilization Association
SCI	Schedule of Capital Improvements
SCORP	State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
SHIP	State Housing Initiatives Program
SIS	Strategic Intermodal System
SJRWMD	St. Johns River Water Management District
SMRMC	St. Mary's River Management Committee
SQG	Small Quantity Generators (of hazardous waste)
SR	State Road
SRESP	Statewide Regional Evacuation Study Program
SRPP	Strategic Regional Policy Plan
TAZ	Traffic Analysis Zone
TCEA	Transportation Concurrency Exemption Area
TCMA	Transportation Concurrency Management Area
TDSP	Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
TND	Traditional Neighborhood Development
TOD	Transit-Oriented Development
TPL	Trust for Public Land
TPO	Transportation Planning Organization
TSD	Treatment, Storage and Disposal (of hazardous waste)
ULI	Urban Land Institute
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey

VMT	Vehicle Miles Traveled
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
WRF	Water Reclamation Facility
WTP	Water Treatment Plant
WWTP	Wastewater Treatment Plant

List of Maps

FUTURE LAND USE MAP SERIES (FLUMS)

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