

Preserve open space, recreational areas, farmland, water resources and regionally significant natural areas

Preserving and enjoying our natural resources is what matters most to our citizens. This is the foundation of our shared regional vision – the principle that above all we must follow if our region is to become the place where our children and grandchildren would want to live in 2050.

1. **Identify the “must save” lands.** The centerpiece of the regional vision is a “greenprint,” which is a plan for an inter-connected network of conservation lands, open space, and recreational areas. The greenprint will include the “seven jewels” already identified through the Naturally Central Florida initiative, other habitats for threatened and endangered species, key recreational areas, and the corridors that connect these lands.
2. **Invest in preserving these critical lands.** Dedicated public funding will be one way to purchase lands for this “greenprint.” However, conservation also can occur through private investment. Incentives can encourage landowners to conserve greenprint lands and other open space, and to set aside lands for preservation as part of major development projects.
3. **Ensure that residents can easily access recreational areas.** It is not enough to conserve lands; we also must make sure we can access and enjoy nature. Communities will be designed so that the vast majority of Central Floridians are within a short walk or bike ride from a green space. Appropriate transportation access also will be needed to recreational areas located outside of the urban areas.
4. **Develop in a sensitive manner.** The environment will be a critical factor in future decisions about public and private investment in our region. Development should focus in existing centers and other areas that do not pose significant risk to environmental

- resources and that reduce the overall land required to support future growth. Transportation corridors should impact sensitive lands only when absolutely necessary to connect centers, and then only when access to these corridors can be restricted to avoid drawing even more growth into the area. The design of buildings and infrastructure also should help reduce the region’s water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and other “footprints” on the environment.
5. **Encourage sustainable agriculture.** Agriculture should remain a viable option for our land to provide part of our food supply and to serve export markets. Local governments, land owners, and farmers should work together to promote the importance of agriculture, to retain suitable lands in agriculture, and to ensure that farming remains economically and environmentally viable.
 6. **Plan for future water needs.** The region also should develop strategies for providing sufficient water and ensuring that water supply is in place to support new development. A regional water resources plan should include strategies for reducing consumption, sharing available water sources, and developing alternative water sources.

The “Seven Jewels” of Central Florida

1. St. Johns Mosaic and Econlockhatchee
2. Indian River Lagoon
3. Greater Kissimmee Prairie
4. Volusia Conservation Corridor
5. Green Swamp
6. Wekiva-Ocala Greenway
7. Lake Wales Ridge

Source: *Naturally Central Florida*

WORKING TOGETHER: A REGIONAL GREENPRINT

Voters in six of the seven counties in Central Florida have enacted some form of environmental acquisition program. The seventh county (Orange) has set aside money for environmental land purchases. All seven counties are now working together to develop criteria and policies for defining a regional “greenprint” that will include the most critical lands and waters in the region, particularly those whose impacts spill across county lines.

WHAT ARE OTHER REGIONS DOING?

- Austin, Texas initiated in 1990 the first major urban-regional multi-species habitat preservation plan in the United States, a coordinated system of preserves to support a threatened ecosystem.
- Florida’s Rural Lands Stewardship program – pioneered with Babcock Ranch in Southwest Florida – preserves rural lands while also providing opportunities for development.
- California’s climate change program includes an initiative to reduce on-road emissions through community planning, increasing transit ridership, and increasing vehicle occupancy.

Excerpt; How Shall We Grow?

Provide a variety of transportation choices

Transportation is the key factor that will shape urban and rural development around the greenprint. The region's transportation investments will support the shared regional vision by providing:

1. **Connectivity between centers and to other regions.** Existing or new corridors will connect the major city centers within Central Florida. Where possible, the preference should be to enhance existing corridors, but new corridors may be needed where there are "gaps" in this system. It also will be important to work with the state to enhance the corridors that connect Central Florida to other parts of Florida, other states, and other nations, using a mix of road, rail, water, and air. These corridors should reinforce the "mega-region" linking Central Florida to Tampa Bay, Southeast Florida, and Northeast Florida.
2. **Congestion relief.** Central Florida's residents desire to spend less time traveling, and our businesses are looking for ways to reduce the cost and improve the reliability of moving goods. Our regional transportation strategy will include ways to reduce traffic delays, such as eliminating bottlenecks and creating more travel options.

WORKING TOGETHER: CENTRAL FLORIDA MPO ALLIANCE

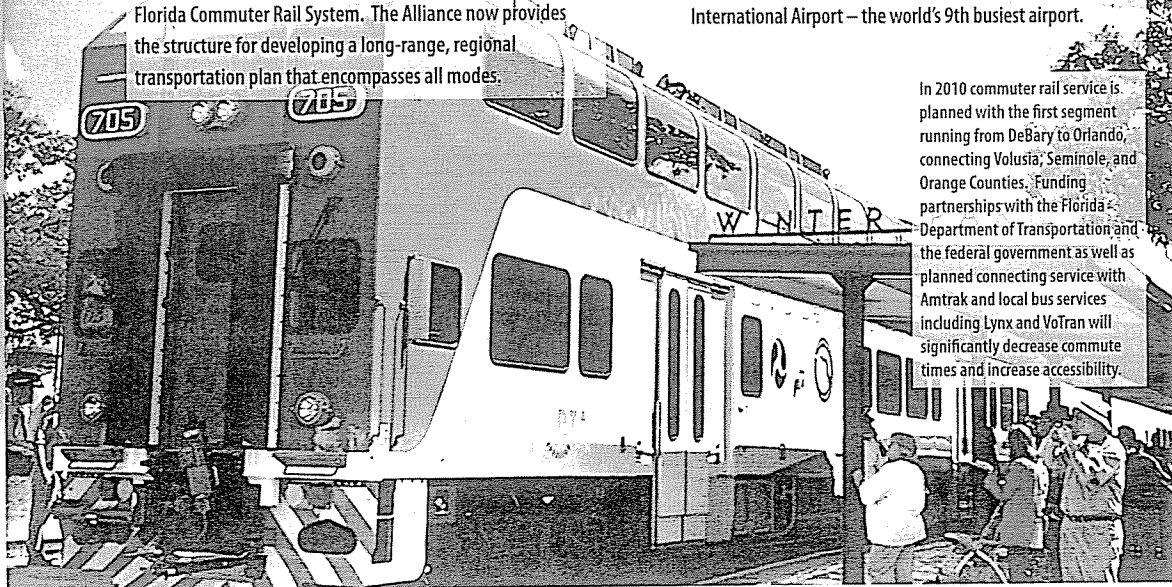
In the late 1990s, METROPLAN ORLANDO, the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) responsible for Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties, and the Volusia County MPO began meeting regularly to discuss transportation issues that crossed jurisdictional boundaries. Today, six MPOs representing 10 counties coordinate plans as part of the Central Florida MPO Alliance. The Alliance has been critical to progress on key regional priorities such as the new St. John's River bridge, Interstate 4 widening, and the planned Central Florida Commuter Rail System. The Alliance now provides the structure for developing a long-range, regional transportation plan that encompasses all modes.

3. **Choices for moving people and goods.** Central Florida residents envision a regional transit system that connects existing and future urban centers in all parts of the region. They also envision local light rail, street car, or bus rapid transit systems that connect neighborhoods with the regional transit service. They seek to expand the use of freight rail, high-speed passenger rail, and coastal shipping to move people and freight between Central Florida and other regions. They also desire a system of greenways and trails for walking or bicycling. A regional transportation plan should identify where these choices are most feasible, and set priorities to implement these investments.
4. **Concurrency with new development.** Local governments should work with developers to implement needed roads and transit systems in parallel with anticipated growth. This balancing of growth and infrastructure should occur at both local and regional levels to better address impacts of growth that spill over city or county lines. Regional standards can help ensure that development in one county or municipality does not adversely impact other counties or municipalities.

WHAT ARE OTHER REGIONS DOING?

- Denver's MetroVision led to implementation of FasTracks, an ambitious regional transit expansion that is coordinated with land use planning.
- Chicago's Metropolis 2020 vision led to a stronger linkage between transportation and land use planning, including a merger of the agencies responsible for these two functions.
- The Netherlands' Rastad region is driving growth through strategic investments in and marketing of the Port of Rotterdam – the world's largest seaport – and Schiphol International Airport – the world's 9th busiest airport.

In 2010 commuter rail service is planned with the first segment running from DeBary to Orlando, connecting Volusia, Seminole, and Orange Counties. Funding partnerships with the Florida Department of Transportation and the federal government as well as planned connecting service with Amtrak and local bus services including Lynx and VoTran will significantly decrease commute times and increase accessibility.



Foster distinctive, attractive and safe places to live

Centers ranging from villages to towns to cities will be the region's focal point for future development. Our region already offers many choices for where and how we live. How can we expand these options and create new ones in the future?

1. **Enhance existing communities.** Each community should develop according to the size and character envisioned by its residents, consistent with the shared regional vision. Some communities may choose to create compact developments that can accommodate more residents; others may redevelop and redesign downtowns and central business districts to be more inviting; still others may remain much the same as they are today, whether they are rural communities or urban centers.
2. **Create new centers.** A small number of new centers may be created at locations that are suitable for compact development. These locations should reflect market demand, avoid critical environmental lands, and be connected to existing or planned transportation corridors.

3. **Encourage creativity.** The development of our cities, towns, and other centers should reflect the diversity of our people and our economy. Incentives could be provided for creative design practices; developing mixed-use, more compact centers located close to regional transit stations and expressway interchanges; and implementing "green" community designs that support a reduced urban and environmental footprint.
4. **Meet the unique needs of key population groups.** The region should develop centers that appeal to people of all ages and walks of life. Some centers may be family friendly with good schools and child care; other may appeal to active retiree populations by providing accessible health care and recreational and cultural amenities.
5. **Provide peace of mind.** From the smallest neighborhood to the largest city, residents of each community seek to feel safe and secure. The public and private sectors will consider public safety, public health, and emergency evacuation needs in community design decisions.

WORKING TOGETHER: COMMUNITY VISIONING AND LONG-RANGE PLANNING

While Central Florida is working to create a shared vision for all 7 counties and 86 cities, individual areas are trying to gain an understanding of what impact growth will have on their specific community. All counties and many cities in the region are involved in some type of long-range planning and visioning. From Orange and Osceola counties to the City of Tavares, local governments are committing to use the How Shall We Grow? principles as a guidepost for future visioning, planning, and land use decisions.

WHAT ARE OTHER REGIONS DOING?

- Denver area cities and counties have signed onto a voluntary agreement, the "Mile High Compact," to direct growth according to the principles outlined in the region's long-range Metro Vision.
- The Sacramento Region's 2050 Blueprint promotes compact, mixed-use development, more transit choices, and design standards to influence the attractiveness of the living environment.
- Melbourne, Australia's 2030 plan seeks to protect the region's livability by concentrating future growth in strategic redevelopment sites such as activity centers and underdeveloped land.

The city of Tavares has used the concepts from the Central Florida Regional Growth Vision to help envision their future.

Encourage a diverse, globally competitive economy

Central Florida is positioned to be one of the Western Hemisphere's leading economic regions over the next 50 years. The region's economic vision focuses on building an innovative economy and creating higher-wage jobs to complement its historic strengths in tourism, agriculture, construction, and defense.

The region's built environment will support this economic vision through efforts to:

1. **Develop centers that will function as hubs of economic activity.** Jobs and housing can be spread throughout the region, enabling people to live close to their jobs. Our plans will ensure that sufficient land is designated for economic centers with appropriate transportation and other infrastructure already in place.
2. **Provide connectivity to global markets.** The regional transportation plan should set priorities for investing in the highway, rail, water, aviation, and communication systems that link Central Florida businesses to customers in other states and nations.
3. **Ensure access to key economics assets.** The regional transportation plan also should identify needs for efficient transportation access to key economic assets such as:
 - International gateways for commerce and visitors, including the Orlando International Airport and other commercial service airports, Port Canaveral, and the Cape Canaveral Spaceport;
 - "Idea factories" that generate new research and products, including the University of Central Florida and other public and private universities, federal and private research laboratories, and major high-tech employers; and
 - Key gathering places for business people and creative leaders, from the small executive retreat centers to the massive Orlando-Orange County Convention Center.
4. **Develop creative communities.** Our communities should provide a stimulating mix of educational, cultural, and environmental resources that will attract and retain highly skilled workers.

WORKING TOGETHER: FLORIDA'S HIGH TECH CORRIDOR

Florida's High Tech Corridor Council was created in 1996 to attract, retain, and grow high-tech industry within Central Florida. The Council now includes the University of Central Florida, the University of South Florida, the University of Florida, 20 economic development organizations, 14 community colleges, and numerous other partners in a region that runs from the Space Coast west to St. Petersburg and north to Gainesville. The High Tech Corridor Council and its partners have played critical roles in attracting new technology investment to the region, including the region's successes with the new UCF medical school, the Burnham Institute for Medical Research, and the final assembly of the new Orion space vehicle.

WHAT ARE OTHER REGIONS DOING?

- San Diego is emerging as one of the world's leading biotechnology centers through growth in existing and new companies, supported by coordinated investments in research, training, and infrastructure.
- Seattle's "Prosperity Partnership" is creating a unified, four-county economic agenda to target growth in five industries: aerospace, green technology, information technology, life sciences, and trade/logistics.
- Toronto, Ontario's economic development strategy includes investment in infrastructure and communities to help attract knowledge workers and new firms to the region.

The Central Florida Research Park is a campus-like environment for business, located adjacent to the University of Central Florida and with easy access to the regional expressway system and Orlando International Airport. Businesses can purchase land in the Research Park on which to construct a facility or can lease space for office, laboratory or light manufacturing uses.



Create a range of obtainable housing opportunities and choices

The region's housing stock is becoming less affordable due to rapid price increases and limited wage gains. The median sales price of a single-family home is now seven times the average wage in the region. Housing is increasingly out of reach not just for the working poor, but also for the teachers, nurses, police, firefighters, and other public servants who are so essential to our communities.

Obtainable housing for residents from every walk of life is integral to Central Florida's future. We will work together to:

1. Set regional goals for how to make housing more obtainable in the region for both owners and renters and how to maintain this affordability over time.
2. Educate citizens about obtainable housing. Better understanding about affordable housing will help debunk

myths, relieve fears, and otherwise reduce opposition to placing more obtainable housing in communities.

3. Balance the geographic distribution of obtainable housing. All types of communities, not just urban centers, should provide an appropriate share of the region's obtainable housing. Where possible, the design of obtainable housing should be integrated with market-rate housing in the communities in which it is located. Without a diverse array of suitable housing locations, workers will be forced to live further from their jobs.
4. Provide incentives for obtainable housing. Dedicated public funding will continue to be one source of investment in obtainable housing. Creative solutions can help leverage public funding, such as community land trusts, developer incentives, and co-location of housing for essential service workers on school properties and other public lands.

WORKING TOGETHER: WORKFORCE HOUSING INITIATIVES

Many counties and cities in Central Florida are grappling with the challenge of how to provide high-quality housing that is within the price range of essential workers like teachers, nurses, police, firefighters, and hospitality workers. From Brevard to Orange to Polk counties, public agencies and private companies are collaborating on summits, studies, and other efforts to better understand this issue and potential solutions. These local initiatives are now providing best practices, pilot projects, and new tools that can be shared across the region.

WHAT ARE OTHER REGIONS DOING?

- Greater Louisville's downtown housing fund has helped to produce 1,400 new housing units.
- Los Angeles' Gateway Cities Partnership is converting formerly abandoned homes into affordable housing.
- Montgomery County, Maryland's "moderately priced dwelling unit" ordinance provides a density bonus to builders in exchange for the provision of affordable housing.
- The Santa Clara County, California school district and community college have provided land to a developer to build obtainable rental units for teachers.

Through financing by the Orange County Housing Finance Authority and a municipal tax-increment rebate from the City of Orlando, GDC Properties plans to launch a 484-unit pair of 36-story apartment towers. Sixty percent of units will be set aside for low-income and essential service workers in the middle of the downtown urban core.



Build communities with educational, health care, and cultural amenities

Central Florida's people are its most significant asset. Today's society is the most mobile in history, and education, health care, and cultural amenities all play a critical role in attracting and retaining workers, retirees, and visitors. In implementing the shared regional vision, Central Florida will strive to:

1. Encourage development standards that promote walkable neighborhoods.
2. Coordinate the location of school sites with the location of new residential development, as well as the location of

parks, recreational areas, and transportation services. Create safe routes for students to walk and ride bicycles to schools.

3. Provide access to healthcare, social services, child care, elder care, and other family support services at locations throughout the region.
4. Create, preserve, and provide access to museums, performing arts, public art, historic properties, and other cultural amenities at locations throughout the region.

WORKING TOGETHER: CENTRAL FLORIDA PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS COALITION

The seven Central Florida counties, together with Hillsborough, Manatee, and Marion Counties – established the Central Florida Public School Boards Coalition to provide a forum for coordination on educational issues. Initial work has targeted science and math education. The Coalition works together to address many other issues including funding, legislation, and growth.

WHAT ARE OTHER REGIONS DOING?

- From South Beach to Ybor City, from Old Naples to Pensacola's Seville Square, Florida cities are rediscovering the potential for historic neighborhoods to attract residents, visitors, and entrepreneurs.
- Barcelona, Spain is developing a system of urban squares and designating "creative areas" that combine museums, education, leisure, hospitality, and retail activities.

As a new community in Osceola County, Harmony has integrated several neighborhood-scale amenities including recreational facilities, pedestrian trails, a vibrant town center, and most importantly, a K-8 elementary school and nearby high school. Harmony plans to expand with community-friendly retail development in the near future.

