

The Physical Framework

Great Neighborhoods, Vibrant Downtowns, Respected Historic Assets, Valued Natural Resources and Connected Public Venues

VISION.

The character town is envisioned to be an interesting, pleasant and prosperous place to live.

STRATEGY.

The overall strategy is to leverage all economic, social and physical forces and assets of the town to create and maintain prosperity and pleasantness without sacrificing affordability.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES.

The city's physical development strategy relies on specific Strategic Objectives:

1. To humanize the town by promoting pleasantness with physical assets, economic prosperity and civic attitudes that create a civil society with substantial social capital.
2. To entrepreneurialize the town and to create prosperity by building a pleasant and productive place for employers to live, grow their business, retain and recruit talent.
3. To materialize the town with a physical framework of great neighborhoods, a vibrant downtown, respected historic assets, valued natural resources and connected community amenities that create a pleasant living environment.
4. To build community pride with authentic civic values.

ACTION PLAN ELEMENTS OF THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK.

1. **Action plans.** The city's action plans are directed by its vision-driven strategy. The action plans consist of studies, plans, programs, regulations and budgets to create a nice place to live by:
 - **Building strong neighborhoods.** The places where people live form the foundation of the community. Neighborhoods throughout the city must have a good mix of housing types and prices with safe and convenient access to jobs, neighborhood shopping, schools and parks.
 - **Focusing on education.** Quality schools in every neighborhood are the starting point. Libraries, museums, galleries and recreation areas are important adjuncts to the town's educational base.
 - **Protecting and enhancing mixed-use centers of activity, "main streets" and village centers.** Successful downtowns and activity centers have a healthy mix of uses with residences, a good commercial building stock with two to four story buildings, multi-modes of mobility and amenities that facilitate community gatherings. A strong downtown is important to the city's finance model.
 - **Energizing multi-use development corridors.** Development corridors, blighted or not, are economic engines that create tax and fee revenues for the city, as well as, private jobs and incomes.
 - € Maximize their economic productivity by helping commercial strips transform themselves into vibrant urban corridors. Entitle intensification with master parking and stormwater systems that enable higher density and intensity of new infill and redevelopment projects.

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- € Rely on development standards and design guidelines rather than land use designations to convert corridors into productive city assets. Like downtowns, community redevelopment agencies and incentives can produce results for corridors when driven by stakeholders.
 - **Solidifying, modernizing and maintaining urban infrastructure.** Infrastructure includes the systems that support residential and economic life in the city including physical improvements, social services and economic development as essential infrastructure. Exploit technological advances. Services like utilities, access, stormwater, law enforcement, health care, social services, education and recreation are necessary to make collective living in an urban environment work. Comprehensive long-range financial planning is the process to best direct the sources and uses of development-oriented funds.
 - **Systematizing and integrating the city's open spaces.** Organize and connect upland and wetland preservation areas, school grounds, parks, stormwater ponds, waterways, lakefronts, streets and parking lots with trails and pathways. Every piece of urban open space should be an active or passive recreation area, a visual amenity and a functional piece of the city's natural resource system.
 - **Simplifying the entitlement system** by giving developers more latitude with general land use while demanding more of them through development standards and design guidelines. Development standards and design guidelines can make almost any land use acceptable to its neighbor by controlling height, setbacks, buffers and access.
 - € Zoning designates the uses permitted on the land.
 - The uses in neighborhoods need only two or three categories for single family and low density multiple housing.
 - Downtowns and other centers of activity have a wide mix of acceptable uses.
 - Development corridor properties have a wide mix of acceptable uses with attention given to properties adjacent to single family neighborhoods.
 - Industrial uses with obnoxious traits have specific locational criteria.
 - € Development Standards provide density, intensity, buffer, setback, parking and stormwater standards sensitive to on-site functions and the impacts on adjacent properties.
 - € Design Guidelines reflect the city's values regarding acceptable aesthetics, tastes and styles in development.
2. **The other elements** previously discussed are:
- **To institutionalize a system for transparently measuring performance** by evaluating and measuring performance against vision-driven strategic objectives. Use performance measures to learn, improve and innovate.
 - **To diversify all aspects of community life.**
 - **To respect historic and natural resources.**
 - **To pursue an economic path that connects local businesses and entrepreneurs with state, national and global markets.**

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Physical Attributes of a Character Town

GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS including:

- A diversity of housing:** A wide variety of housing types, prices and styles.
- Ubiquitous access and pedestrian connections:** An interconnected system of walkable streets, sidewalks and trails that connect the places people use as they go about their daily activities.
- Accessible daily need uses:** Accessible shops, schools, parks, theaters, offices and civic buildings.
- Participatory organizations:** A neighborhood organization with identifiable boundaries that protects the neighborhood from obnoxious intrusions and facilitates participation with local government.

VIBRANT DOWNTOWNS: The main thing is to keep “Main Street” the main street with:

- Buildings** of two to four stories with active and accessible ground floor retail, restaurants and other uses alive beyond nine-to-five weekdays.
- Streets** that are inviting, not foreboding, with two travel lanes, wide sidewalks, on-street and off-street parking with about 100’ building face to building face separation across the street, bus stops, crosswalks, street trees, street lights and business friendly signs; plus local ownership of the street.
- Active storefront uses** such as restaurants, shops, farmers’ markets with regional foods, convenience shopping for drugs, groceries, books, gifts, clothing, hardware and ice cream.
- Personal and business services** such as laundries, dry cleaners, barber shops, car care shops, plus tech support and business services like banks, full service copy centers and business incubators.
- Hotels** and other types of visitor accommodations to support “small town” tourism.
- Venues for community entertainment and personal gatherings** including theaters for live performances, local history museums, religious gatherings and weddings.
- Programmed activities** such as book fairs, parades, festivals, car shows and community celebrations.
- Visitor information centers**, physical and virtual, for residents, business and visitors with guides to local places and activities, notice of non-recurring events and tickets to local activities.

RESPECTED HISTORIC AND NATURAL RESOURCES: Amenities that engender hometown pride through the preservation, display, use and celebration of natural resources and historic places and buildings, parks, lakes or waterfronts.

CONNECTED COMMUNITY VENUES: A system of walkable streets, sidewalks and trails that connect close-in neighborhoods with schools, parks, shopping, libraries, museums, theaters, downtown businesses and civic buildings like city hall, the post office and the civic auditorium.

COMMUNITY PRIDE BUILT ON AUTHENTICITY using an iconic place or traditional event, unique to the town, with Florida examples such as:

- The West Orange Trail in Winter Garden, Ocoee and Apopka; Central Park in Winter Park;
- Haslam’s Book Store in St. Petersburg; S. F. Travis Hardware in Cocoa Village; The Lakeside Inn in Mount Dora; or the lakefront parks in Clermont, Eustis, Kissimmee, Sanford and Tavares;
- The downtown colleges, theaters, art galleries, festivals and local history museums in DeLand, Eustis, Winter Garden, and Winter Park; Carriage rides in Fernandina Beach’s historic neighborhoods; and
- The Mount Dora Crafts Festival, the Kissimmee ESPN Bass Tournament and the Sanford Airshow.