

# **STAFF SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF EVALUATION & APPRAISAL-BASED AMENDMENTS TO THE ALACHUA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This report provides a summary and analysis of the proposed Evaluation & Appraisal- based amendments to the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan. The report is organized by Element and topic areas, and includes policy number references where applicable. This report is intended to cover significant policy revisions to the Plan but does not cover every language clarification and technical update that is included in the amendment package.

In addition to this report, the enclosed matrix titled, “Alachua County Comprehensive Plan Evaluation and Update 2025-2026: Issues Matrix” includes a listing of all issues that were considered as part of the Evaluation & Appraisal of the Comprehensive Plan, the applicable policy numbers and an indication of whether proposed amendments to address that issue have been included in the current batch of amendments.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION BY PLANNING COMMISSION**

That the Planning Commission, serving as the County’s Local Planning Agency, recommend that the Board of County Commissioners **approve transmittal of the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments to the State land planning agency for State Coordinated Review** in accordance with Section 163.3184(4), Florida Statutes.

## **BACKGROUND**

The State’s Community Planning Act requires that local governments periodically review their comprehensive plans, and update them as necessary to be consistent with state planning statutes. Best practices for comprehensive planning also suggest that local comprehensive plans should be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure that they remain current and relevant, and that they continue to effectively address local issues and concerns.

Florida Statutes Section 163.3191 requires that:

*At least once every 7 years, each local government shall evaluate its comprehensive plan to determine if plan amendments are necessary to reflect a minimum planning period of at least 10 years as provided in s. 163.3177(5) or to reflect changes in state requirements in this part since the last update of the comprehensive plan, and notify the state land planning agency as to its determination.*

The State established a deadline of April 1, 2025 for the County to evaluate the Comprehensive Plan and make its determination as to whether any amendments were needed to reflect changes in state planning requirements. The process for evaluating the Comprehensive Plan began in late 2024. In staff's review of the Plan, it was determined that several amendments were necessary to ensure that the Plan remained in compliance with recent updates in state planning requirements. On March 28, 2025, the Board of County Commissioners approved the transmittal of the required determination letter to the Florida Department of Commerce indicating that updates to the Plan were needed.

Pursuant to the statute, any required amendments to the County's Comprehensive Plan must be transmitted for state agency review within 1 year of the State's receipt of the County's determination letter. The County's determination letter was received by the Florida Department of Commerce on March 31, 2025, therefore the County's deadline to transmit any Evaluation & Appraisal-based amendments is **March 31, 2026**.

The only consequence of not meeting this deadline is that the County would be prohibited from transmitting any other amendments to its Comprehensive Plan for state review until the Evaluation & Appraisal-based amendments have been transmitted. This prohibition only applies to County-initiated amendments and does not apply to privately-initiated amendments.

The County conducted an issue scoping process in March through November of 2025 to identify the issues that needed to be addressed as part of any updates to the Comprehensive Plan. This process included:

- Board of County Commissioners public workshops (4) focused on individual Plan elements.
- Internal staff review of Comprehensive Plan Elements with County departments and divisions.
- Presentations and issue-specific discussions with advisory committees including the Planning Commission, Rural Concerns Advisory Committee, Affordable Housing Advisory Committee, Environmental Protection Advisory Committee, Equity Advisory Board, and Health Care Advisory Board.
- Development of a project web page with meeting schedules and other information.
- Review of other County Plans that influence the Comprehensive Plan such as the Climate Action Plan, Parks and Open Space Master Plan, Inclusionary Housing Study, Mobility Fee Technical Report, Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan, Safe Streets and Roads for All Plan, and the Community Health Improvement Plan.

The attached spreadsheet titled, "Alachua County Comprehensive Plan Evaluation and Update 2025-2026: Issues Matrix" lists all the issues that were identified and considered in the evaluation and update of the Plan, and indicates whether revisions to the Plan have been included in the current batch of amendments to address that issue. Many of the issues that were identified through the issue-scoping process have been addressed in the current batch of proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. For those issues that were not addressed in the current batch of amendments, there will be follow-up amendments proposed

after the completion of the Evaluation & Appraisal process. Some issues will require additional analysis and vetting, and in some instances, the particular issue is more appropriately addressed in the land development regulations.

It is also noted that in some instances staff has not brought forward amendments to address certain issues at this time because those amendments would likely be deemed by the State land planning agency to be “more restrictive or burdensome” in violation of the provisions of Florida Senate Bill 180 (2025). Inclusion of proposed amendments that are “more restrictive or burdensome” would potentially render the County’s proposed amendments to be null and void. Staff has made an effort to avoid the inclusion of any amendments that would potentially violate these SB 180 provisions as part of the current batch of amendments.

## **SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED PLAN AMENDMENTS**

### **Future Land Use Element**

**General Strategies:** Two new sub-parts are proposed to be added under General Strategy 1. The first is a general statement that calls for the land development regulations to encourage and incentivize new residential and mixed-use development and redevelopment within the Urban Cluster to maximize allowable density. The second calls for the County to implement strategies through the land development regulations to maximize the preservation of existing native vegetation and minimize site disturbance on individual development sites. Both of these general strategies reflect longstanding land use policy concepts within the Future Land Use and Conservation and Open Space Elements.

**Blending of Residential Density:** A policy has been added (numbered as new 1.3.5) to allow for the blending of the total allowable residential density across the entire development site for development sites that include more than one future land use designation within the Urban Cluster. This will allow for greater flexibility in the design of residential and mixed use developments where more than one future land use designation applies to the site.

**Agricultural Zoning in Low Density Residential Areas:** Deletes the adopted Policy 1.3.5 which specifies conditions under which Agricultural zoning may be maintained in areas that have a Low Density Residential Future Land Use designation. Staff does not believe this policy is necessary. This is a legacy policy dating back to an early iteration of the County's comprehensive plan when much of the land within the Urban Cluster had a Low Density Residential future land use designation but also still had Agricultural zoning. Currently, there are relatively few such areas remaining in the County. There is nothing in the State's planning statutes that would prohibit the owners of such properties from keeping the Agricultural zoning, or that would compel the owner to rezone the property to be consistent with the Low Density Residential future land use designation. If the owner wanted to rezone their property to be consistent with the Low Density Residential future land use designation, they could apply to do so.

**Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU):** The ADU policy language (1.3.6) for areas within the Urban Cluster has been revised to eliminate current requirements that the owner of a property wishing to build an ADU must provide proof of homestead exemption and permanent residency on the property. This change would only apply to ADUs within the Urban Cluster; within Rural/Agricultural areas and Rural Clusters, the homestead and permanent residency requirements would remain in place (per BoCC direction). In addition, policy language about the provision of water & sewer and well & septic for ADUs has been clarified. These changes are intended to promote the use of ADUs as an affordable housing option within the Urban Cluster by removing regulatory burdens that are not generally the standard practice for ADUs. This amendment was a recommendation of Alachua County's Affordable Housing Advisory Committee. In addition, the Florida Legislature, in Sec. 163.31771 Florida Statutes, has found that it serves an important public purpose to encourage the permitting of accessory dwelling units in single-family residential areas in order to increase the availability of affordable housing.

**Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Design Policies:** There are several miscellaneous updates to the adopted policies under Objective 1.6 to clarify development design standards for TNDs. These include providing flexibility on the existing 15-acre minimum acreage for TNDs; reducing detail about minimum percentages of residential and non-residential mix; adding language about standards for uses with drive-thru lanes and automobile-oriented uses to be detailed in the land development regulations; removing language requiring architectural design review and specific building design details that are in the LDRs; and adding language encouraging master planning of all recycling and trash collection facilities for the entire development where feasible. These changes are intended to provide more flexibility and clarity for the design standards that apply to TNDs.

**Activity Centers General Policies:** There are several amendments proposed to the general development design policies for Activity Centers under Objective 2.1 and Policies 2.1.1 through 2.1.11. These changes would eliminate several existing policies provide detailed development design requirements that are, in some instances, duplicative or in conflict with the Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) design standards with regard to site and building design, transportation network, and parking. Under current Policy 7.1.34, all development within the Urban Cluster (which includes Activity Centers) is required to be designed in accordance with the TND design standards for site & building design, transportation network, and parking under Objective 1.6, with limited exceptions. The general Activity Center policies also have development design standards under Objective 2.1, which in many instances, can either conflict or cause confusion about which set of standards apply to a particular development. The TND design standards are more current than the Activity Center design standards, many of which date back to the early 2000s.

The proposed amendments would eliminate conflicting or redundant design policies in the Activity Center section, and instead, simply reiterate that development within Activity Centers is required to meet the TND design standards for site and building design, transportation network, and parking as provided under Objective 1.6. These changes will reduce conflicts between the TND design standards and the Activity Center design standards, resulting in more clarity about which policies apply within Activity Centers.

**Eastside Activity Center Policies:** Several amendments are proposed to the specific policies that apply to the Eastside Activity Center under Policy 2.2.8. The Eastside Activity Center is the area generally located north of the intersection of Hawthorne Road and SE 43<sup>rd</sup> Street and surrounding Eastside High School. The Eastside Activity Center has been designated as an Activity Center in the Comprehensive Plan since 1994. It is intended as an area for higher density and intensity mixed use development in unincorporated East Gainesville. The Activity Center has not developed as intended for a variety of reasons, including market factors, environmental constraints, and lack of infrastructure such as internal roads and water & sewer lines. Additionally, some of the land use policies for the Activity Center are overly prescriptive and detailed in terms of allowable land uses, and they lack flexibility to accommodate types of development that might otherwise be consistent with the general intent of the Activity Center.

The proposed amendments reduce some of the prescriptive detail about allowable land uses within the future land use categories which will remove unnecessary regulatory barriers to development of the Activity

Center. In addition, the proposed amendments eliminate some of the urban design policies for the Activity Center that either conflict with other generally applicable design policies or are addressed in other areas of the Comprehensive Plan and LDRs.

Longer term, there will be an overall re-evaluation of the Eastside Activity Center policies in coordination with landowners and community stakeholders focusing in more detail on the currently applicable Future Land Use Map designations for property within the Activity Center as well as infrastructure needs and plans for roads, water, and sewer.

**Commercial Land Use Policies:** Proposed amendments to Objectives 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8 revise and clarify outdated descriptions of Regional Commercial Centers, Community Commercial Centers, Neighborhood Commercial Centers, and Neighborhood Convenience Centers. Revisions include eliminating unnecessary detail regarding typical site area, minimum population needed, market area, number of stores, leading tenants and other tenants, as these details are out of date and do not take into account more recent policies promoting commercial uses as part of mixed-use development types. This detail has been replaced by more generalized descriptions of commercial land uses and their allowable locations, including within mixed use developments.

**Tourist/Entertainment Commercial Policies:** Proposed amendments to the policies for the Tourist/Entertainment future land use category under Objective 3.10 clarify the purpose of this land use category and provide detail about potential locations for the Tourist/Entertainment land use category. The Tourist/Entertainment land use category accommodates commercial uses that provide services for short term visitors to the County, such as lodging, gas stations, restaurants, and entertainment facilities.

The proposed amendments add detail about where this land use category may be located, including areas adjacent to major tourist destinations or publicly-accessible natural, historic, or cultural resource areas. In addition, general locational standards are proposed to distinguish between Tourist/Entertainment uses within the Urban Cluster and those outside the Urban Cluster. The amendments also require that potential Tourist/Entertainment land uses that are adjacent to publicly-accessible natural, historic, or cultural resource areas such as rivers, lakes, springs, and natural, historic, or cultural resource-based parks must be located within one-quarter mile of a public entrance or public access point for such areas; this is intended to ensure that the Tourist/Entertainment land use category is not used to allow for proliferation of general commercial land uses throughout rural areas of the County.

**Bicycle Parking in New Developments:** The proposed amendment highlights requirements for bicycle parking within certain types of new development. Specifically, this would add references to bicycle parking within the Urban Residential 1.5.2(c), Activity Centers 2.1.7(l), and Commercial 3.3.2(c) land use sections of the Element. There is existing policy language regarding bicycle parking requirements for Neighborhood, Community, and Regional Commercial Centers in Policy 3.2.4 of the Future Land Use Element, and in Policy 1.6.4 of the Transportation Mobility Element. The County's adopted land development regulations, in [Sec. 407.15](#), provide bicycle parking requirements for new multi-family residential and non-residential

development, where the number of required bicycle parking spaces is based on the number of required vehicular parking spaces within the development.

**Rural Commercial Agriculture Policies** - Policy 3.1.11, which calls for the future land use map to be re-evaluated to consider reclassification of areas designated for “Rural Commercial-Agriculture” as “Agriculture” as part of an area-based Community and Neighborhood Planning program, is proposed for deletion. This is a legacy policy and there are no plans for re-evaluation of any existing areas designated “Rural Commercial Agriculture” at this time.

**Industrial Land Use Policies (County Fairgrounds):** The proposed amendments revise Objective 4.1 (Industrial land use policies) to eliminate language regarding a deed restriction for the use of a fairground on certain County-owned tax parcels located north of the Leveda Brown Environmental Park. Prior to the fairgrounds being relocated to Newberry, these parcels were being considered as a potential location for the fairgrounds. The deed restriction - which restricted the use of those parcels to a fairground - has now been removed. The language in Objective 4.1 about the deed restriction is no longer relevant.

**Urban Agriculture:** Policy 6.1.5.1 clarifies the general areas where farmers markets are potentially permitted. Policy 6.1.5.3, regarding the keeping of poultry in residential areas, has been clarified to be consistent with recently adopted changes to the land development regulations. A new Policy 6.1.5.5 has been added which states that the County, through its land development regulations and other County programs, shall encourage the small-scale cultivation of fruits, vegetables, plants, flowers, and herbs in residential areas within the Urban Cluster for both personal consumption and local direct-to-consumer sale. These changes support the County’s larger efforts to promote local food systems for community health and economic development purposes.

**Construction & Demolition Debris (C&D) Landfills :** Policy 6.1.7, regarding the permitting of C&D landfills in the Rural/Agriculture area, has been revised to add language that would require environmental justice, equity, and community, historical, and neighborhood character to be taken into account when the County considers locating such landfills. This proposed new policy language is similar to existing language in Policy 5.2.2, which deals with Institutional land uses in general.

**Rural Clusters Policies:** There are several proposed amendments revising or clarifying the land use policies that apply to Rural Clusters. Rural Cluster is a future land use category that applies to small historic settlements located outside of the Urban Cluster. There are 13 Rural Clusters designated in the Comprehensive Plan including Cross Creek, Evinston, Campville, Grove Park, Rochelle, Windsor, Lochloosa, Island Grove, Orange Heights, Melrose, Earleton, Hague, and Santa Fe.

Most Rural Clusters are identified on the future land use map as a generalized circle. There are detailed policies which are then used to determine the precise boundaries for the Rural Cluster future land use designation. In the cases of Melrose and Evinston, the precise boundaries have been designated on the future land use map. For those Rural Clusters where the precise boundaries are not designated on the future land use map, the criteria in Policy 6.4.1 are used to determine the precise boundaries.

Proposed amendments to the Rural Clusters section include revising Policy 6.4.1 to clarify that, for those Rural Clusters for which precise boundaries have not been designated on the future land use map, the criteria in (a) through (e) of that policy shall be applied on a case-by-case basis to determine the precise boundaries for the Rural Cluster future land use designation. Amendments also include eliminating Policy 6.4.6, which currently prohibits the subdivision of land within a Rural Cluster until such time as the precise boundary for the Rural Cluster has been delineated on the future land use map. This limitation creates confusion and an unnecessary procedural barrier, as any proposed subdivision would either need to meet the standards for Rural Clusters or for Rural/Agriculture based on the Rural Cluster criteria in Policy 6.4.1.

**County Growth Management Area:** A new Policy 7.1.38, which acknowledges the County Growth Management Area (GMA) as provided in the Alachua County Home Rule Charter, is proposed to be added into the comprehensive plan. In 2020, Alachua County voters approved the establishment of the “County Growth Management Area” as part of the Alachua County Home Rule Charter. [Section 1.5 of the Charter](#) provides for the establishment of a County Growth Management Area, initially consisting of those lands so designated on the map titled "County Growth Management Area Map" dated June 12, 2020 (this map is on file in the official records of the Clerk of the County Commission). The Charter language provides that the comprehensive plan and land development regulations of Alachua County shall exclusively govern the development of lands lying within the GMA, regardless of whether the lands lying within that Area are located within or subsequently annexed into a municipality. The proposed amendment simply acknowledges the GMA provisions of the Charter in the Comprehensive Plan.

**Buffer Requirements.** The proposed amendment deletes the Buffer Group Matrix from the Comprehensive Plan. This matrix details the types of buffers that are required to be provided as part of any development site. This level of regulatory detail is more appropriately addressed in the land development regulations. Detailed buffering requirements can be found in [Sec. 407.43.1](#) of the land development regulations.

**Special Area Plans (generally):** Proposed amendments revise Policy 7.1.28 and add a new policy 7.1.29 regarding the purpose and use of geographically-focused Special Area Plans.

Revisions to Policy 7.1.28 clarify the purposes of special area plans, require that such plans must be generally consistent with other goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan, and identifies examples of areas where special area plans may be appropriate including, neighborhoods, corridors, Urban Activity Centers, Rural Clusters, historically underserved areas, areas with protected conservation resources, and within urban or rural areas.

A proposed new Policy 7.1.29 addresses potential scenarios where community or neighborhood organizations could request that the County initiate a special area plan for a specific geographic area. The policy generally acknowledges and promotes the possibility of grassroots, community-initiated planning efforts; it also provides broad guidelines for the consideration of such requests including the need for special planning policies to address unique circumstances that are not addressed in generally-applicable policies, as well as the potential costs and benefits of conducting the special area plan.

**Idylwild/Serenola Special Area Study Density Policy:** Policy 8.4.3.2(c), which currently limits the allowable residential density on lands adjacent to existing residentially-zoned neighborhoods to no more than a 2 dwelling unit per acre increase above the density of adjacent properties, is proposed to be revised. The intent of this policy is to ensure that future residential development within the Idylwild Serenola Special Area Study area is compatible with the density of existing neighborhoods. It is not common practice to assign density to a property based solely on the density of adjacent areas. This policy raises implementation issues because, (1) in many instances, there may not be a land use category available which provides for *only* a 2 dwelling unit per acre increase, and (2) in some instances, County policies provide for bonus density for certain development types which makes it difficult to accurately calculate a 2 dwelling unit per acre increase above the base density for a property.

The 2 dwelling unit per acre increase limitation is proposed to be eliminated and replaced with more general language that calls for the County to specifically take into consideration the density and character of existing adjacent residential development within the Special Area Study Area. Policy language has also been added stating that measures may be implemented at the land use or development review stage to ensure that the proposed land uses and density are generally compatible with existing adjacent residential development.

**EV Charging Station Requirements:** References to requirements for EV charging stations to be installed in new development have been revised or deleted in Policies 1.6.5.14. The regulation of EV charging stations is preempted to the State pursuant to Sec. 366.94, F.S. (SB 1084, 2024). This change is required for consistency with Florida Statutes. **This revision is required for consistency with state statutes.**

**Future Land Use Map:** The Future Land Use Map image in the comprehensive plan has been updated to reflect the 2045 planning horizon for the Comprehensive Plan. There are no other changes to the Map.

**Activity Center Future Land Use Maps:** The proposed amendments would delete several maps which depict future land use designations and boundaries for Urban Activity Centers as well as the boundaries for certain Special Area Study areas. The information depicted on these maps are part of the County's adopted Future Land Use Map, therefore, these individual area maps are not necessary. In addition, this information is now available digitally online through the County's web site.

**Parking Reduction for Development:** A new Policy 7.1.37 is proposed which speaks generally to the idea of encouraging new development to minimize the amount of area dedicated to off-street vehicular parking. The policy states that strategies shall be included in the land development regulations such as reducing or eliminating minimum off-street surface parking requirements, establishing maximum off-street surface parking requirements, and providing for shared parking, on-street parking, and access to multimodal street networks that interconnect the development with surrounding areas. These strategies are already included in the LDRs; the proposed policy confirms what the existing regulations provide in regard to parking requirements.

## **Transportation Mobility Element**

**Mobility Fee-Related Updates:** Alachua County updated its Mobility Fee ordinance in 2024. While that update did not fundamentally change the County’s adopted Mobility Plan framework as described in the Comprehensive Plan, it did include several technical changes to fee amounts and Mobility Fee Districts, as well as the establishment of separate east and west Mobility Fee Assessment Areas. Various updates are proposed to the Transportation Mobility Element in Objectives 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3, and their subsequent policies, to reflect the recent update of the Mobility Fee Ordinance. The following specific revisions are included:

- Objective 1.1 now includes an overall statement of purpose of the Mobility Plan which summarizes the general intent of the policies that follow the objective.
- References to “Mobility Districts” have been revised to “Mobility Fee Benefit Districts” throughout the Element, and an updated map of the districts is included as Map 10.
- New language and a new Map 9 have been included to recognize the establishment of separate East and West Mobility Fee Assessment Areas.
- Revised maps of Express Transit Corridors and Rapid Transit Corridors have been included.
- General restructuring and renumbering of existing policies under Objective 1.1.

For additional information about the County’s recent Mobility Fee updates, see [Mobility Fee Technical Report](#), August 2023.

**EV Charging Stations:** References to requirements for EV charging stations to be installed in new multi-family development, TND, and TOD have been deleted in Policy 1.4.1. The regulation of EV charging stations is preempted to the State pursuant to Sec. 366.94, F.S. (SB 1084, 2024). This change is required for consistency with Florida Statutes. **This revision is required for consistency with state statutes.**

**Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan:** The County is in the process of completing a countywide Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan. Proposed updates to the Element include adding references to the Bike-Ped Plan in existing policies 1.5.3, 1.5.10, and 1.6.1(c). Upon final completion of the Bike-Ped Plan, additional amendments to this Element will be necessary at a later date.

**Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A):** The County is in the process of completing a “Safe Streets and Roads For All” Plan to identify measures for reducing fatal and serious crashes for all transportation modes, including vehicles, motorcycles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Proposed updates to the Element include adding a new Policy 1.7.2 to generally recognize the SS4A Plan in the Comprehensive Plan, and to add a new Policy 1.7.2.1 which provides policy direction to prioritize the planning and programming of safety improvement projects that will contribute to reductions in fatal and serious injury crashes based on the SS4A Plan. Upon final completion of the SS4A Plan, additional amendments to this Element will be necessary at a later date.

**Transportation Disadvantaged:** Existing policies relating to Transportation Disadvantaged and Paratransit under Objective 2.2 have been relocated under Objective 2.1 (Transit). Policy language has also been included in Policy 2.1.5 which calls for Alachua County to coordinate with the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization and the Florida Department of Transportation to ensure that specialized transit services for the transportation disadvantaged continue to be provided within unincorporated Alachua County.

**Rural Area Transit Needs:** A new Policy 2.1.7 has been added which calls for Alachua County to explore and promote innovative solutions and partnerships with municipalities and the University of Florida to address transit needs within rural areas. Such solutions may include but are not limited to ridesharing programs, mobility on demand programs, volunteer models, and mobility management models

**Other Transportation Map Series Updates:** Proposed amendments would add, remove or update several maps within the Transportation Mobility Element Map Series. Maps that are proposed to be updated include Express Transit Corridors (Map 5), Rapid Transit Corridors (Map 6), Gainesville Regional Transit System Bus Routes (Map 7), and Transportation Mobility Districts (now Transportation Mobility Fee Benefit Districts) (Map 10), and Air Facilities Locator Map (now Airport Facilities in Alachua County) (Map 11). New maps proposed to be added include Mobility Fee Assessment Areas (new Map 9). Maps proposed to be removed include Existing and Projected Major Trip Generators (former Map 9) and Attractors and Gainesville Regional Airport Ingress/Egress (Map 12).

## **Housing Element**

**Workforce Housing References:** The proposed amendments would add several references to Workforce Housing throughout the Housing Element. Florida Statutes Section 163.3177(6)(f) requires that the Housing Element must provide for areas for future housing, including affordable workforce housing as defined in Section s. 380.0651(1)(h). Affordable Workforce Housing is defined in Florida Statutes as housing that is affordable to a person who earns less than 120% of the area median income (AMI). The currently adopted Housing Element addresses affordable housing generally, including housing for moderate-income ( $\leq 120\%$  AMI), low-income ( $\leq 80\%$  AMI), very-low-income ( $\leq 50\%$  AMI), and extremely-low-income ( $\leq 30\%$  AMI) households. Workforce housing is not explicitly addressed in the Housing Element, but it is addressed indirectly because the AMI level for workforce housing falls within the other four income level categories of affordable housing mentioned above. In an effort to ensure that workforce housing is explicitly called out and addressed in the Housing Element, references have been added in Objective 1.1, and Policies 1.1.1, 1.1.6, 1.1.8, and 1.2.2; in addition, a definition of workforce housing, which corresponds to the definition in Florida Statutes, has been added to the Housing Element definitions. **This revision is required for consistency with state statutes.**

**Inclusionary Housing References:** The proposed amendments would add references in Housing Element Objective 1.1 and Policies 1.1.5 and 1.2.2 to the recent inclusionary housing incentives and requirements that were adopted by the County in 2025.

**Potential Incentives for Affordable Housing Development:** Proposed amendments to Policy 1.2.2 would add reduced parking, regulatory flexibility for redevelopment, and providing permit-ready building plans as potential incentives the County could consider to encourage the development of affordable housing. It is noted that each of these incentives would need to be implemented through additional policy or regulatory actions by the County.

**Streamline and Update Manufactured Housing Policies:** Proposed amendments to Policies 1.1.11 through 1.1.15 update some out-of-date language and streamlines existing policies on manufactured housing. Additionally, these policies have been updated to reflect current allowances for the use of tiny houses on wheels and recreational vehicles for residential use, as these housing types can potentially provide an affordable housing option. The current land development regulations provide for tiny houses on wheels and recreational vehicles as a limited use on an individual lot in the A (Agricultural), A-RB (Agricultural Rural Business) and RM (Manufactured/Mobile Home Park) zoning districts.

**Accessory Dwelling Units:** A proposed policy is added which encourages the use of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) as potential source of affordable housing. This policy relates to the Future Land Use Element which addresses ADUs in more detail in Policy 1.3.6.

**Alachua County Affordable Housing Trust Fund:** A new Policy 1.4.12 is proposed which calls for the County to utilize funds from the voter-approved Alachua County Affordable Housing Trust Fund to create and sustain affordable housing throughout the County for renters and homeowners, and to increase workforce housing opportunities. In November 2020, County voters approved the Affordable Housing Trust Fund for the purpose of providing or leveraging necessary funding to create and preserve affordable housing units in Alachua County. The BoCC adopted Ordinance 2021-06 on May 25, 2021 establishing the Affordable Housing Trust Fund and creating [Section 39.5.10 of the Alachua County Code](#) which details how the Trust Fund will be funded and how those funds may be used. The proposed new Comprehensive Plan Policy 1.4.12 is intended to acknowledge the Affordable Housing Trust Fund as an affordable housing funding source for the County.

**Infrastructure Surtax Fund for Affordable Housing:** A new Policy 1.4.13 is proposed which calls for the County to utilize funds from the voter-approved “Wild Spaces Public Places” infrastructure sales tax for land acquisition for affordable housing and workforce housing through the year 2032. Alachua County established a 1% local government infrastructure sales tax starting January 1, 2023 and continuing through December 31, 2032; the sales tax, pursuant to its implementing [Ordinance 2022-08](#), is designed to fund a combination of infrastructure such as roads, fire stations, and parks, as well as conservation lands and land acquisition for workforce housing. The sales tax is expected to generate significant new funds for affordable and workforce housing through the year 2032. The proposed new comprehensive plan Policy 1.4.13 is intended to acknowledge this sales tax as a new affordable housing funding source for the County.

**Motel Conversions for Affordable Housing:** A new policy 2.3.11 is proposed which calls for the County, through its Housing Programs, to proactively seek opportunities for the acquisition and adaptive reuse of motels with redevelopment potential in order to provide permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing for unhoused persons. To date, the County has completed or is nearing completion of the conversion of three former motels into permanent supportive housing for unhoused persons (Budget Inn – 36 units; Scottish Inn – 31 units; and Sunrise Residence Inn – 35 units). Rapid rehousing is permanent housing that provides short-term (up to three months) and medium-term (four to 24 months) tenant-based rental assistance and supportive services to households experiencing homelessness. Permanent Supportive Housing is permanent housing in which housing assistance (such as long-term leasing or rental assistance) and supportive services are provided to assist households with at least one member with a disability in achieving housing stability.

The acquisition and rehabilitation of older motel properties is one recent innovative solution that can be implemented in conjunction with other housing programs to help address the County’s affordable housing needs. It is expected that the County will continue to pursue this strategy as opportunities arise.

**Special Needs Housing Policy Updates:** The proposed amendments include various revisions to policies under Objectives 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3, regarding housing for homeless and special needs populations. These revisions include updating terminology and agency names, and adding new policies which call for the County to promote housing strategies that facilitate aging-in-place (3.1.11), support housing intervention programs for high-need populations (Policy 3.1.10), and consider potential options for offering proactive home accessibility and safety assessments (Policy 3.1.12). In addition, existing Policy 3.2.1, regarding farmworker housing, has been updated to be consistent with recent changes to Section 163.3162(5), F.S. (see similar change and explanation in Future Land Use Element).

Additional Information: See [Alachua County Housing Plan, August 2024](#).

## **Potable Water & Sanitary Sewer Element**

**Groundwater and Surface Water Protection in Goal:** The proposed amendment adds protection of groundwater and surface water as part of the overall Goal of the Element (Goal 1). Many of the existing objectives and policies within this Element, such as those dealing with septic systems and the requirements for connection to centralized water and sewer systems, address groundwater and surface water protection directly or indirectly.

### **Enhanced Nutrient Reducing Septic Requirements:**

- 1) A new Policy 2.1.3.2 is proposed to address a Florida House Bill 1379 (2023) requirement for the use of enhanced nutrient reducing septic systems within Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) areas. HB 1379, effective July 1, 2023, amended [Section 373.811, Florida Statutes](#), to

require that new septic systems on lots of one acre or less located within a designated BMAP area, where connection to a publicly owned or investor-owned sewerage system is not available, must be Enhanced Nutrient-Reducing (ENR) Onsite Sewage Treatment and Disposal Systems that achieve at least 65% nitrogen reduction. Much of Alachua County is located within three BMAP areas which have been designated by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection: Orange Creek, Santa Fe River, and Silver Springs. The proposed new Policy 2.1.3.2 is needed to recognize this new requirement of Florida Statutes. **This revision is required for consistency with state statutes.**

- 2) Policy 2.1.7 addresses certain situations where there has been evidence of septic system failure or well water contamination within municipal service areas (where centralized water and sewer systems are available). For these situations, the existing policy requires the replacement of existing individual wells or septic systems by connection to existing municipal systems provided there is no other alternative technological remedy that provides for correction of the problem. The proposed amendment to the policy would add the use of enhanced nitrogen reducing septic systems as a potential remedy in situations where there is evidence of septic failure; in most cases, this is a less costly remedy than connecting to municipal water and sewer service and also provides a viable option when such services are not available.

**Composting as Alternative to Land Application of Biosolids:** Existing Policy 6.1.2 generally states that biosolids from wastewater treatment facilities shall be disposed through means such as land application. Biosolids are a nutrient-rich organic by-product of treating domestic sewage, and land application involves spreading or spraying those materials onto soil to act as a fertilizer or soil conditioner. Biosolids are often sprayed on agricultural land. The proposed amendment to Policy 6.1.2 would add the creation of compost or similar processes as another potential disposal method for biosolids generated from wastewater treatment facilities. Composting is the biological degradation of organic materials under controlled aerobic conditions. It is used to stabilize wastewater solids prior to their use as a soil amendment or mulch in landscaping and agriculture. It is generally considered to be a better alternative than standard land application in terms of environmental protection and odor reduction.

**Definition Updates:** There is a proposed amendment to update the existing definition of Public Water Supply System; the proposed definition is consistent with the definition provided in 403.852, Florida Statutes. There are also minor clarifications to the existing definition of Package Treatment Plant.

## **Solid Waste Element**

**Goal to Reduce Solid Waste Generation:** There is a proposed amendment to Goal 1 of the Solid Waste Element to add language stating that the reduction of solid waste generation is a priority in the County’s management of solid waste. This ties in with the concept of promoting a “circular economy” which is addressed in amendments to other objectives and policies in this Element (see below).

**Compatibility of Solid Waste Facilities with Surrounding Areas:** Existing Policy 1.2.6 calls for solid waste management facilities to be adequately buffered from incompatible land uses, especially residential areas. This policy is proposed to be amended to speak more broadly to the idea that new solid waste management facilities should avoid locations adjacent to residential or active agricultural areas without providing adequate buffering or integrating design and business practices to minimize or eliminate adverse impacts on surrounding areas. In addition, language has been added which calls for the County to consider environmental justice, equity, and community, historical, and neighborhood character when considering the location of new solid waste management facilities; this addition is consistent with existing Policy 5.2.2 of the Future Land Use Element, where similar language has been adopted for Institutional land uses in general (which include solid waste management facilities). This amendment ensures that the broad impacts of such facilities on the community will be considered in the decision-making process.

**Circular Economy:** There are several proposed amendments to the Solid Waste Element to incorporate the concept of the “Circular Economy” into the Element. Circular Economy is generally a system where materials never become waste and nature is regenerated. In a circular economy, products and materials are kept in circulation through processes like maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacture, recycling, and composting. One of the key strategies for waste management identified in [Alachua County’s Strategic Guide, effective October 1, 2025](#) is to advance the County’s circular economy goals by identifying and implementing key milestones, increasing solid waste diversion rates, and reducing reliance on landfills. The general concept of the circular economy is proposed to be included in Policy 1.4.2, Objective 1.5, and Policies 1.5.7 and 1.5.12, and the Definitions section of the Solid Waste Element. Circular Economy concepts have also been included in proposed amendments to the Economic and Energy Elements.

**Leveda Brown Environmental Park and Eco Loop:** The proposed amendments update Objective 1.4 and add new Policies 1.4.1 and 1.4.2 regarding the Leveda Brown Environmental Park, which is the County’s centralized location for solid waste management. Language has been added in Objective 1.4, and a new Policy 1.4.2 has been added referring in general terms to the County’s “Eco Loop” project, which is a County-owned industrial park intended to attract businesses and employers in the recycling or materials recovery and reuse industry. The Eco Loop project is one component of the County’s overall circular economy strategy for solid waste management discussed above.

Additionally, new Policy 1.4.1 has been added, which calls for the County to continually monitor the capacity and function of the Leveda Brown Environmental Park, and where needed, expand its capacity and functions to meet changing needs for managing and processing solid waste.

**2020 State-Mandated Recycling Goals:** Existing Policy 1.5.2 addresses the State mandated 75% solid waste recycling goal for the year 2020 and interim year goals that were established by Florida Statute in 2008, through House Bill 7135. The proposed amendment would delete existing Policy 1.5.2 in its entirety, which refers to the state-mandated overall 75% recycling goal for the Year 2020, as well as the interim goals. The horizon years for the state-mandated recycling goals have passed, therefore, these policies are no longer relevant and do not need to be included in the Plan.

## **Stormwater Element**

**Stormwater Design in Development:** Proposed amendments revise Policy 5.1.8, regarding the design of stormwater management facilities within development, to clarify that the design of stormwater management facilities shall be in accordance with the stormwater management standards, landscaping standards, and all applicable supplemental stormwater management standards, identified in the County’s land development regulations. Additional clarifications include reference to the land development regulations, which currently require that stormwater management facilities be designed as an integral part of the development, as a physical or visual amenity that provides an aesthetic focal point, or a feature that resembles a natural area; for stormwater basins that resemble geometric shapes, they shall provide human scale design features that break up large volumes, provide usable space, and stimulate pedestrian activity.

**Definitions:** The currently adopted definitions of “One-Stop Permitting” and “Stormwater Utility” are proposed for deletion from the Definitions section of the Element, as these terms are not used in the Comprehensive Plan.

## **Conservation And Open Space Element**

**Countywide Natural Resource Protection Standards:** A new Policy 1.1.2 has been added to acknowledge the countywide natural resource protection ordinances for wetlands, significant habitat, listed species habitat, strategic ecosystems, and significant geologic features. These existing ordinances are applicable countywide as provided in [Chapter 77, Article II](#) and [Chapter 78](#) of the Alachua County Code of Ordinances. The Countywide applicability of these natural resource protection ordinances is authorized by the Alachua County Home Rule Charter Section 1.4.

**Resource Areas Planning:** The proposed amendments would delete Objective 2.3 and Policies 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 regarding “Resource Areas Planning”. This policy group addresses “Resource Areas Planning”. It calls for the County to implement a geographic area-based approach to environmental planning programs, involving the formation of task forces to create conservation plans for areas; and to address conservation issues, including provisions for regional habitat corridors, watersheds and greenways, through a “Community and Neighborhood Planning Program”. The task forces and the Community and Neighborhood Planning program that are

contemplated in this group of policies have not been implemented for the purpose of natural resources area planning. It is noted that existing Policy 7.1.29 (to be amended and renumbered as 7.1.28) of the Future Land Use Element provides for the possibility of special area plans for sub-areas of the County to be conducted for a variety of areas including those with protected conservation resources.

**Listing of Areas Designated as “Preservation”:** Proposed amendments include the deletion of the listing of individual areas that have a Future Land Use map designation of “Preservation” in Policy 3.2.2. This policy provides a general standard for what qualifies for the Preservation future land use category; it includes property that is acquired in fee or less than fee simple for preservation by federal, state, and local agencies, Water Management Districts, local municipalities, non-profits, or Alachua County for use as natural reserves or managed conservation lands for the preservation of natural resources in perpetuity. Given the general standard, there is no need to list each individual Preservation area in this Comprehensive Plan policy. Additionally, new preservation areas are constantly being acquired, so this list is always changing.

**Adoption of Development Regulations:** Proposed amendments would delete Objective 3.5 and Policies 3.5.1 through 3.5.3 in their entirety. This is a legacy policy dating back to the early 2000s update of the Comprehensive Plan. The existing Objective and policies call for the adoption of new, or revisions to, the land development regulations based on the policies in the Conservation and Open Space Element. Land development regulations to implement this Element have been adopted, therefore the policy is no longer applicable or needed.

**Enhanced Nutrient Reducing Septic System Requirements:** Policies 3.6.5(d), 3.6.11, 4.6.11, and 4.6.15(h) are proposed to be updated to include language saying that the County will consider amendments to its land development regulations and other ordinances to require the use of Enhanced Nutrient Reducing Septic Systems. This is intended as a potential strategy to help the County achieve water quality restoration and pollutant load reduction requirements identified in Basin Management Action Plans (BMAP) and to minimize impacts to water resources. This new policy language alone does not impose any new requirement; it identifies ENR septic system requirements as a potential strategy that the County will consider going forward. It is noted that, pursuant to current state statute (see [Section 373.811, Florida Statutes](#)), new septic systems on lots of one acre or less located within a designated BMAP area, where connection to a publicly owned or investor-owned sewerage system is not available, must be ENR systems that achieve at least 65% nitrogen reduction. Much of Alachua County is located within three BMAP areas which have been designated by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, so ENR systems are already required by state statute in many instances within the County.

**Water Conservation Strategies:** Existing Policy 4.5.21 identifies several strategies for promoting water conservation techniques and programs in the County.

- Proposed new language would be added in sub item (a) which calls for the County to identify strategies to reduce the overall footprint of new development to minimize site disturbance and maximize the protection of existing vegetation. Many such strategies are already included throughout the Comprehensive Plan and land development regulations; this new policy language would encourage the County to focus continual efforts on identifying additional ways to accomplish this.
- Proposed new language in sub item (f) calls for the County to review homeowner association (HOA) documents during the development review process for language that potentially conflicts with County water conservation policies and goals; it also calls for the County to partner with HOAs to provide educational materials and programs to promote water conservation. The County current works with HOAs to the extent possible through its Water Resources program to provide educational materials about water quality and irrigation ordinances, but this policy calls for more focused and proactive review of HOA documents and providing feedback on the front end of the development process.

**Administrative Review for Smaller Wetland Impacts:** Policy 4.7.7 would be revised to allow for administrative review and approval for proposed wetland impacts of  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre or less for a single-family home. The current policy requires that any development activity or alteration within an onsite, or affecting an offsite, surface water or wetland or associated buffers that is expected to result in significant adverse impacts to be reviewed and approved by the Board of County Commissioners. The proposed change would reduce procedural burdens and potentially expedite permitting for single family homes that have very small wetland impacts. The existing Comprehensive Plan policies and land development regulations governing the protection of such wetlands would still apply; this policy revision only impacts procedures.

**Setbacks for Structures Adjacent to Floodplains:** Policy 4.8.2, which addresses watershed planning and the protection of floodplains, would be revised by adding a sub policy (g), which calls for the County to develop special setback requirements for structures located adjacent to floodplains that support sensitive or large watersheds. Such requirements would be intended to protect designated floodplain areas and would need to be considered as part of an amendment to the land development regulations.

**“Dark Sky” Policies:** Proposed amendments include changes to Policy 5.3.7, which addresses lighting standards, minimizing impacts of outdoor lighting, and the protection of the quality of the

nighttime sky. The proposed revisions to this policy specifically call for the County's land development regulations for outdoor lighting to be based on certain general principles as advocated by organizations such as Dark Sky International and the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America. These organizations are considered to be authoritative professional sources for guidance on outdoor lighting and protection of the night sky. The general principles identified in the proposed policy language include, (1) directing lighting so it falls only where it is needed, in order to minimize offsite lighting impacts and reduce glare, light trespass, and light pollution; (2) Using lighting only where and when it is needed and at the lowest level necessary to ensure light is not overused or impacting areas where it is not intended; (3) using warmer-color lights where possible; and (4) maximizing energy and cost efficiency. This comprehensive plan revision is generally supported by the County's Environmental Protection Advisory Committee (EPAC). An amendment to the land development regulations would be necessary to implement these policy revisions; such amendments would need to consider how these "Dark Sky" principles would be implemented in practice and where they would apply (e.g., Urban Cluster or rural areas).

**Land Conservation Program Policies:** There are various revisions proposed in Section 6.0, which address the County's land conservation program. These revisions include adding reference to the County's recently adopted agricultural lands acquisition strategy which now operates as part of the Alachua County Forever program; adding reference to the Wild Spaces and Public Places local government infrastructure surtax funding source which was approved by voters in 2022; and identifying community cat management as a focus area in the management of County-owned preservation lands. The proposed revisions also include general updates to agency names, program names, statutory references, as well as various editorial amendments.

### **Recreation Element**

**Recreation Master Plan:** There are various proposed amendments to this Element to incorporate references to recent Parks and Open Space Master Plan. The County completed a new Parks and Open Space Master Plan in 2023, which provides a plan for the future of the County's parks system. The Master Plan was guided by the Recreation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. It included an evaluation of current park facilities, and recommendations on priorities for the improvement and expansion of existing park facilities, priorities for future land acquisition and new park facility construction; how the County might partner with other agencies to maximize its park and open space resources, and safe bicycle and pedestrian connections between park properties.

There are various amendments proposed throughout the Recreation Element to incorporate the recommendations and other information from the Parks and Open Space Master Plan into the Comprehensive Plan including the following:

- Adding specific references to the Parks and Open Space Master Plan that was completed in February 2023 as a guiding vision for the County’s parks system. In many instances, these new references replaced existing references to the “Recreation Master Plan”, which were referring to the County’s previous Master Plan that was completed in two phases, with the second phase being completed in 2005.
- Adding language about the general purposes of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan as they relate to the Recreation Element of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Adding policy language referring to key significant unserved areas, as identified in the Parks and Open Space Master Plan, as a priority for acquisition and development of new or expanded park facilities.
- Revising Policy 1.1.9 about the need and timing for future updates to the Parks and Open Space Master Plan.
- Updating Table 1, the Recreation Site Classification for Alachua County, to reflect the park types, service area, and facility characteristics identified in the Master Plan.

**Public Charging Stations at County Parks:** A new Policy 1.3.1(d) is proposed to be added, which calls for the County to consider the inclusion of public charging stations for e-bikes and mobile phones at County parks, where feasible and practical.

**Volunteer Groups for Park Maintenance:** A new Policy 1.5.5 is proposed to be added, which calls for the County to explore innovative options for ongoing maintenance of parks and recreation sites, including but not limited to, establishing maintenance agreements and programs with local volunteer organizations. Existing Policy 1.2.6 also addresses the use of volunteer organizations for park maintenance.

**Promotion of Eco-Tourism:** A new Policy 1.4.11 is proposed to be added, which calls for the County to seek opportunities to highlight the County’s resource-based parks and recreational areas as part of its efforts to promote Alachua County as an eco-tourism destination. This policy is consistent with existing policies on the promotion of eco-tourism in the Economic Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Community Engagement for New or Expanded Parks:** Proposed amendments to Policy 1.6.1 would delete outdated references to the “Growth Management Public Meeting Process (GMPMP) and add general language stating that the County shall conduct community engagement in areas where new or expanded park facilities are planned. This policy is consistent with existing practice and general direction from the County Commission on community engagement.

## **Intergovernmental Coordination Element**

**Various Technical Updates:** The proposed amendments to this Element include a variety of technical revisions such as revising agency names, deleting references to agencies and committees that no longer exist, deleting or revising policies that are outdated, and generally revising policies where needed to reflect current coordination mechanisms that are in place. These changes are necessary to ensure the Element continues to accurately reflect the current inter-agency relationships and guidelines that are used in coordinating the County's comprehensive plan with the plans of other agencies.

## **Capital Improvements Element**

**Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) Capital Projects:** This proposed amendment would add a new Table 4 to the Element which shows the capital improvement project schedule for those water pollutant load reduction projects associated with Basin Management Action Plans (BMAP) that are attributable to Alachua County. House Bill 1379, which became effective on July 1, 2023, amended Section 163.3177(3)(a), Florida Statutes to require that the comprehensive plan capital improvements element include projects necessary to achieve the pollutant load reductions attributable to the County, as established in a Basin Management Action Plan established pursuant to Section 403.067(7), Florida Statutes.

In addition to the statutory requirement, a new Policy 1.9.5 of the CIE was adopted in January 2025 which provides direction to the County to include BMAP capital projects in the Capital Improvements Element.

**Policy 1.9.5.** *The County shall propose for inclusion in the Capital Improvements Element a list of capital improvement projects necessary to achieve the pollutant load reductions attributable to Alachua County to meet the Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) as established in adopted Basin Management Action Plans for the Santa Fe River, Orange Creek, and Silver Springs basins pursuant to s. 403.067(7), Florida Statutes. This shall be completed initially as part of the Evaluation and Appraisal of the Comprehensive Plan in 2025, and subsequently reviewed annually and updated as necessary.*

The projects that are listed in the new Table 4 are those that the County has submitted to the FDEP Business Portal as of January 2026 in support of the Basin Management Action Plans published by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for the Orange Creek, Santa Fe River, and Silver Springs basins.

**This revision is required for consistency with state statutes.**

## **Economic Element**

**General Note on Economic Element:** Pursuant to BoCC direction, County staff are working on an overall reorganization and rewrite of the entire Economic Element. This effort is still in progress and a draft version of the revised Element has been completed, however, given the extent of the proposed changes associated with this effort, additional vetting and stakeholder engagement is necessary before the reorganized/rewritten Element is ready to be considered for adoption. There are a few proposed amendments to the Economic Element that are included in this Evaluation & Appraisal amendment package to address some focused issues or statutory requirements, however, it is anticipated that a full rewrite of the Economic Element will be brought forward later in 2026 as a separate amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.

**References to 2018 BEBR Inequities Report:** The proposed amendments to the Economic Element would delete several references to the 2018 report, “Understanding Racial Inequity In Alachua County” that was prepared by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR). This report presented data on racial, economic, and geographic disparities within Alachua County. There are several existing policies which call for the County to pursue efforts toward eliminating the economic disparities that were identified in that report, and to use the report as a baseline for measuring progress on eliminating those disparities. The data in that report is now out of date, therefore references to it have been removed from the Element; the general policy language about the County seeking to eliminate existing economic disparities that exist in Alachua County would remain in place.

**Targeted Industries:** Policy 1.1.1, which calls for the County to promote the recruitment and expansion of certain targeted industries, is proposed to be revised to add agriculture, local food, and solid waste recycling, reuse, reprocessing, and remanufacturing in the list of targeted industries for Alachua County. This is consistent with other existing and proposed policies in the Economic and Solid Waste Elements. Additionally, clarification is proposed that “distribution” is only a targeted industry in areas that have rail access.

**Home-Based Business Statutory Update:** The proposed amendments would revise and update Policy 1.1.8, which addresses home based businesses, to be consistent with recent changes in Florida Statutes. [Section 559.955, Florida Statutes](#) addresses home based businesses and local government restrictions on the regulation of home based businesses. In 2021, [House Bill 403](#) was passed which amended the home based business statute to prohibit local governments from enacting or enforce any ordinance, regulation, or policy or take any action to license or regulate a home-based business in violation of the statute. The statute provides that a home-based business that operates from a residential property may operate in an area zoned for residential use, and may not be prohibited, restricted, regulated, or licensed in a manner that is different from other businesses in the local government's jurisdiction. The existing Policy 1.1.8 of the Economic Element is not consistent with this statute, and has been revised to reflect the current statutory requirements. **This revision is required for consistency with state statutes.**

**Forward Focus/Eastern Alachua County:** The proposed amendments would add a new Policy 1.5.12, which recognizes the County’s Forward Focus/Eastern Alachua County planning efforts. This is a resident-initiated planning effort in which the County is seeking to identify community service needs and economic development opportunities for the communities in the eastern third of Alachua County through ongoing community engagement. This is a three-year planning process which began in late 2024 and will continue through 2027. The desired outcome of this initiative is for the County to position itself to attract grant funding and inform future County initiatives to address the most critical community service and economic development needs in the eastern part of the County. It is often considered favorable when applying for grants if the local Comprehensive Plan supports the intended use of the grant funding.

**Urban Agriculture:** There is a proposed revision to Objective 1.9 to add the promotion of urban agriculture as part of the objective. A new Policy 1.9.6 under this objective is proposed to be added which calls for the County to encourage urban agriculture, such as small scale cultivation of fruits, vegetables, plants, flowers, and herbs within the Urban Cluster for both personal consumption or for local direct-to-consumer sale through its land development regulations and other County programs. There will be a more focused policy emphasis on food systems in the Economic Element as part of the follow-up rewrite/reorganization of the Economic Element.

**Circular Economy and County “Eco Loop” Project:** Proposed amendments add a new Policy 1.3.4, which calls for the County, through its economic development programs, to promote businesses that contribute to a circular economy in which products and materials never become waste and are kept in circulation through processes like maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacture, recycling, and composting. A new Policy 1.3.4.1 is also proposed to be added, which calls for the County to recruit businesses and industries to the Leveda Brown Environmental Park which contribute to the circular economy by recovering material from the waste stream or using recovered material to create value-added products and services. This policy is in reference to the County’s Eco Loop industrial park project. Both of these policy amendments are related and similar to proposed new policies included in the Solid Waste Element. For further explanation, see Solid Waste Element section.

**Live-Work Units:** Proposed amendments to Policy 1.6.3 would add new language regarding the County’s desire to promote live-work units within the Urban Cluster. A live-work unit combines residential living space with a dedicated, integrated workspace in a single unit or building; the residence is typically occupied by the business operator. Live-work units offer a reduced- or no-commute lifestyle. Amendments to the land development regulations will be needed to in order to define live-work units, where they may be permitted, and the standards that will apply to them in order to effectively provide for this type of development in the County.

## **Community Health Element**

**Social Determinants of Health:** The proposed amendments would add language on social determinants of health as a focus in the overall Goal of the Element and in Objective 1.1. A new Policy 1.1.9 is also proposed to be added which directs the County to support programs and work with partner agencies and non-profit organizations that seek to address and improve social determinants of health for vulnerable populations in the community. Social determinants of health generally include factors such as economic stability, education access and quality, health care access and quality, neighborhood and built environment conditions, and social and community context factors.

**Gun Violence as Public Health Crisis:** A new Policy 1.1.10 is proposed which recognizes that the County has declared gun violence as a public health crisis. The language included in the policy reflects the language that was included in the County Commission's resolution on this matter.

**Aging-in-Place:** A proposed new Policy 1.2.5 would be added which calls for the County to explore potential ways, through grant programs and other sources, to assist residents in making necessary safety upgrades to their homes that would help to promote aging-in-place. Aging-in-place is a term that refers to the ability to live in one's home and community safely, independently, and comfortably as one ages. It allows elderly people to maintain autonomy and familiarity, but in many cases, it requires home modifications and safety upgrades to the home. The idea of promoting aging-in-place is addressed in other Community Health Element policies as well as Housing Element policies.

**Food Systems and Healthy Food Access:** Proposed amendments would add new language about food systems and healthy food access within the Element. Access to healthy food is a focus area within the existing Community Health Element, and the proposed amendments would build on and clarify that focus. The overall Goal of the Element would be revised to add promotion of access to fresh and healthy food as part of the goal. In Policy 1.2.3, the County's Jail is added as a potential partner agency for the County in its efforts to encourage access to health-promoting foods in the community. A new Policy 1.3.1.6 would be added, which calls for the County to support the development and expansion of food system infrastructure, including food hubs, aggregation facilities, processing, storage, and farmers markets, to strengthen market access for local producers. These amendments generally reflect the work the County is doing as part of its food system programs, and are also consistent with related food systems policies in the Economic Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

**2009 Hunger Abatement Plan:** A proposed amendment to Policy 1.3.2.4 would remove an existing reference to the County's 2009 Hunger Abatement Plan. This Plan is no longer timely and is not actively being implemented. Policy 1.3.2.4 speaks generally to a goal to eliminate food insecurity in Alachua County by 2050; the policy language about this goal would remain in place which the specific reference to the 2009 Plan would be removed.

**Tobacco Retail Licensing:** Policy 1.6.6, which calls for the County to create a tobacco retail licensing policy that earmarks a portion of the license fee for compliance checks. The County did create a tobacco licensing program in 2019 (“Tobacco 21”) which was implemented for a period of time. However, changes in Florida Statute have since preempted the regulation of tobacco retail businesses to the State. Senate Bill 1080 (2021) amended [Section 569.315, Florida Statutes](#), to prevent any local ordinances from regulating, taxing, or licensing tobacco retailers, and invalidating any existing local efforts.

**Alachua County Central Receiving Facility:** A proposed new Policy 1.7.4 would be added, which recognizes the County's Central Receiving Facility; the policy calls for the County to work with its local partner agencies to continue to provide support for individuals experiencing mental health and substance abuse crisis through the Central Receiving Facility. This facility provides a single point of access for individuals in need of emergency evaluation, stabilization, and intervention. The facility and the policy further the existing objectives and policies in the Community Health Element that address increasing equitable access to mental health services (Objective 1.7) and reducing the prevalence and incidence of substance abuse (Objective 1.6).

## **Energy Element**

**Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goal:** The proposed amendment revises Objective 1.1 to delete the adopted greenhouse gas reduction goal for the Year 2020. The long term goal of 80% reduction from 2009 baseline emissions by 2050 and the 5% annual reduction goal would remain in place. The County’s recent Climate Action Plan identified a need to develop more reliable baseline data for measuring community GHG emissions going forward and to re-evaluate these goals. It is anticipated that future updates to the Comprehensive Plan will include additional revisions and clarifications to these goals in connection with Climate Action Plan implementation.

**Water Conservation Goal:** The proposed amendment deletes the existing language in Policy 1.1.3, which identifies a community-wide water conservation reduction goal of 10% from 2010 levels by 2020. In addition to the goal year being in the past, staff has identified challenges in acquiring reliable data to accurately measure community-wide water consumption for purposes of monitoring progress toward this goal. Additional research and evaluation is needed to determine how this metric will be measured. Therefore, the existing Policy 1.1.3 would be replaced with a policy calling for the County to develop metrics for measuring and monitoring of overall water consumption in Alachua County using available data on consumptive use permits, water usage information available from local water supply utilities, and other available data sources. The revised policy calls for these metrics to be used to measure the effectiveness of the County’s water conservation programs and policies. Future updates to the Comprehensive Plan will likely include revised water conservation goals in connection with implementation of the Climate Action Plan.

**Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Per Capita and Non-Automobile Mode Share Goals:** The proposed amendment revises existing Policies 4.2.1, which identifies goals to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per

capita within the Urban Cluster by 10% from 2010 levels by the year 2020. Similar to the water conservation goal discussed above, staff has identified challenges in acquiring reliable data to accurately measure and monitor progress toward this VMT goal. The horizon year for this goal has passed, so the existing language would be deleted, and would be replaced with language calling for the County to develop metrics for measuring monitoring of community-wide fossil fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions associated with automobile usage using available data sources. Future updates to the Comprehensive Plan may include revised transportation-related GHG reduction goals in connection with implementation of the Climate Action Plan.

The proposed amendment also revises Policy 4.2.2, which identifies a goal to increase non-automobile transportation mode share to 5% in the Urban Cluster by 2020 and to 10% by 2030, is revised to remove the 2020 goal because the goal year has passed.

**PACE Program References:** Proposed amendments revise Policy 6.1.2 by removing references to the PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) program, and deleting the definition of the PACE program in the Energy Element Definitions section. PACE is a state program that is based on a federal program that provides homeowners with financing options for energy-efficiency-related home improvements. The State PACE program oversees local program administrators who work with homeowners to finance home improvement projects through long-term, fixed-rate assessments added to their property tax bills. Alachua County entered into interlocal agreements with PACE providers in 2016 to operate the program locally, but those agreements expired in 2021 and were not renewed by the County; this effectively ended the use of the PACE program in Alachua County.

**State-Mandated Solid Waste Recycling Goals:** Policies 7.1.1 and 7.1.2 address the State’s 75% solid waste recycling goal for the year 2020 and interim year goals that were established by Florida Statute in 2008 through House Bill 7135. The proposed amendments would delete existing Policy 7.1.1, which refers to state-mandated overall 75% recycling goal for the Year 2020, as well as the interim year goals in Policy 7.1.2. The horizon years for the state-mandated goals have passed, therefore, these policies no longer need to be included in the Plan.

**Circular Economy:** A new Policy 7.1.1 is proposed to be added, which calls for the County to promote solid waste strategies to create and grow a “circular economy”. A similar policy is proposed for inclusion in the Solid Waste Element. The definition of Circular Economy (proposed to be added to the Solid Waste Element) is “a system where materials never become waste and nature is regenerated. In a circular economy, products and materials are kept in circulation through processes like maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacture, recycling, and composting. The circular economy addresses climate change and other global challenges, like biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution, by decoupling economic activity from the consumption of finite resources.” The new policy calls for the County to pursue circular economy strategies such as waste prevention, source reduction, reuse, recycling, the purchase of goods made from recycled materials, composting and pollution prevention as part of the County’s solid waste operations and public education programs.

## REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

[Alachua County Climate Action Plan, November 2025](#)

[Alachua County Climate Action Plan Summary Pages](#)

[Alachua County Inclusionary Housing Study, Framing the Need and Context](#)

[Alachua County Parks and Open Space Master Plan, February 2023](#)

[Alachua County Housing Plan, August 4, 2025](#)

[Alachua County Mobility Fee Technical Report, August 2023](#)

[Gainesville Regional Utilities Small-Area Population Projection Methods and Results, University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research, November 28, 2023.](#)