MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members
From: Staff
Date: April 18, 2008 Council Meeting
Subject: Local Government Comprehensive Plan Review
Draft Amendments to the City of Greenacres Comprehensive Plan
DCA Reference No. 08-1ER

Introduction

The Local Government Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulation Act, Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, requires that Council review local government comprehensive plan amendments prior to their adoption. Under the provisions of this law, the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) prepares an Objections, Recommendations, and Comments (ORC) Report on a proposed amendment only if requested to do so by the local government, the regional planning council, an affected person, or if an ORC Report is otherwise deemed necessary by the DCA. If an ORC Report is to be prepared, then Council must provide DCA with its findings of consistency or inconsistency with the Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP), and provide any comments and recommendations for modification on the proposed amendments within 30 days of its receipt.

Background

The City of Greenacres has proposed text amendments to all elements of the City Comprehensive Plan. The amendments are pursuant to an Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) that was adopted by the City on May 15, 2006 and found sufficient by DCA on July 31, 2006. The City has requested a formal review of the amendments.

The City of Greenacres, founded by L.C. Swain in 1923, was officially incorporated in 1926. The City is located in the central portion of urbanized Palm Beach County, approximately 5 miles inland. The City has a population of approximately 32,000 and is the 10th largest of the 38 municipalities in Palm Beach County. The City has a significant mix of residential and non-residential uses (see existing land use map EXHIBIT 2).
Evaluation

In preparing an EAR, each local government is required to identify major issues. The EAR is then to be based on the analysis of major issues to further the community goals. The City of Greenacres identified the following major issues (by comprehensive plan element):

1. Transportation Element
   - Redevelopment and the impact of traffic concurrency as a constraint on redevelopment.
   - Pedestrian system improvements, including improvement of access to schools and transit.

2. Recreation and Open Space Element
   - Consider moving adopted Level of Service (LOS) from “policy” LOS of 1.4 acres per 1,000 residents to the “target” LOS of 3 acres per 1,000 residents.

3. Future Land Use Element
   - Poor compatibility of “pure residential” along Lake Worth Road with this commercial corridor.
   - Consider new mixed-use development scenarios along Lake Worth Road and in the primary spheres of activity, including consideration of pedestrian connections to transit.

4. Capital Improvement Element
   - Adequacy of the City’s current impact fees to fund the cost associated with new development, especially in light of the declining buying power of money due to inflation.

5. Annexation Element
   - The ultimate City boundary as contemplated in 1989.
   - Impact of existing laws and policies dealing with annexation on accomplishing the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.
   - The annexation study that the City and County are currently working on together, including how it might facilitate incorporation of enclaves and prioritization of annexation areas.
Text Amendments

The proposed revisions are to all elements of the comprehensive plan. Some of the most significant amendments are summarized by element in the following.

1) Future Land Use Element

- Establishment of a new Future Land Use Map (FLUM) designation called Study Area Zone for recently annexed parcels that have not yet received a City FLUM designation.
- New Policy 2c commits the City to promote redevelopment in the Lake Worth Road Corridor, and new Policy 2d restricts FLUM designations in the corridor to commercial or mixed use.
- Revised Policy 7 encourages mixed use development.
- Revised Policy 8c establishes a table for FLUM and zoning district compatibility.
- Revised Policy 10e indicates the City will use the Advisory Future Land Use Map as a basis for assigning FLUM designations in the Future Annexation Area.

2) Housing Element

- Revised Policy 3c moves the commitment to have the City Planning Commission assess the status of affordable housing needs and recommends programs to implement the goals, objectives, and policies of the comprehensive plan from 2000 to 2013.
- Revised Policy 3e indicates the City will establish incentives for developers to locate affordable housing near City spheres of activity.
- New Policy 3i indicates the City will cooperate with others in studying the affordable housing issue.

3) Transportation Element

- Revised Policy 1.1.e indicates City support for development that provides a mix of uses at appropriate densities and intensities.
- New Policy 2.1.c adopts a series of new transportation strategies to enhance the pedestrian environment, including those addressing the sidewalk system, pedestrian connections between new development and transit shelters.

4) Annexation Element

- Revised Policy 2.c addresses how the City will determine the FLUM designation for all parcels of land.
• New Policy 2.d commits the City to pursue an Interlocal Service Boundary Agreement with Palm Beach County to facilitate and coordinate annexation.

Extrajurisdictional Impacts

The City submitted the proposed amendments to the Palm Beach County Intergovernmental Plan Amendment Review Committee (IPARC) and the amendments were circulated on February 8, 2008. According to the IPARC Clearinghouse Coordinator, no objections have been received.

Effects on Significant Regional Resources or Facilities

Analysis of the proposed amendments indicates that they would not have adverse effects on significant regional resources or facilities.

Analysis of Consistency with Strategic Regional Policy Plan

In 2006, as part of the review of the City’s EAR, Council pointed out that the City did not identify affordable housing for the workforce as a major issue. Council recommended that the City carefully review its affordable housing policies during the EAR amendment process, given the critical nature of this issue throughout Palm Beach County and the Region. Council further pointed out that only a very comprehensive program will lead to the development and maintenance of the range of housing types and affordabilities that can make a difference. Each local government should utilize an appropriate set of regulations, incentives, and programs; fine-tuned to local conditions.

The affordable housing problem in Palm Beach County has been well-studied and documented. While housing prices have gone down in recent months, current reports indicate that 86 percent of households in Palm Beach County cannot afford to buy a median-priced home. A recent report also documents a decline in the number of rental units.

Historically, the City’s housing stock has included a large proportion of smaller, less expensive, multi-family units. In fact, City policy has focused on promoting the development of more single-family units to provide a better balance to the housing stock. City staff indicates that the market price of units has fallen significantly in recent months, a characteristic that is common throughout the region. However, there is also some recent evidence that indicates that medium housing values in the City are only slightly lower than the County as a whole, and that there is an affordability gap between what residents can afford and the median value of existing units. City staff indicates they intend to use 2010 Census data for a housing assessment/needs analysis because they expect some significant changes from 2000 Census data, including data regarding average age and household size.
Although existing and proposed revisions to City policy address an assessment of affordable housing needs and recommended implementation programs (by the year 2013), incentives for developers to locate affordable housing near City spheres of activity, and cooperation with other entities that study the affordable housing issue, the Housing Element lacks specificity regarding the incentives, programs, and procedures to be carried out by the City to address affordable housing for the workforce. The affordable housing problem in Palm Beach County has been well studied and documented. The comprehensive plan needs to include clear policy language that indicates what actions the City will take to address the issue.

Comments/Recommendations

It is expected that each local government will adopt a program to address the affordable housing problem, utilizing the “tools” necessary to best address local conditions. As soon as possible, the City should clearly indicate, in policy, what programs will be implemented, what incentives will be offered and what tools will be utilized to ensure that at least a proportion of all new housing will be affordable to the workforce, and how existing affordable housing shortages will be addressed.

Consistency with Strategic Regional Policy Plan

The contract agreement between the DCA and the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council requires Council to include a determination of consistency with the SRPP as part of the written report to be submitted to the DCA. Council finds the proposed amendments to be CONSISTENT with the SRPP. Council recommends that the City adopt additional policies in the Housing Element to clearly indicate the steps that will be taken to address the issue of affordable housing for the workforce.

Recommendation

Council should adopt the above comments and instruct staff to transmit the report to the Department of Community Affairs.

Attachments
List of Exhibits

Exhibit
1  General Location Map
2  Existing Land Use Map
3  Future Neighborhood Planning Areas
4  Establishment of Activity Centers
5  Future Annexation Area
6  Functional Classification Map
7  Future Number of Lanes
Exhibit 3
Future Neighborhood Planning Areas
Exhibit 4
Establishment of Activity Centers

[Map showing primary and secondary activity centers with a legend indicating different symbols and a scale in feet.]
Exhibit 5
Future Annexation Area
Exhibit 6
Functional Classification Map
Exhibit 7
Future Number of Lanes