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 amendment within 30 days of its receipt.

Background

The City of Fort Pierce has proposed one amendment to the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) of the City Comprehensive Plan. The City has requested that the DCA carry out a formal review of the amendment.

Evaluation

The proposed FLUM amendment is for a 27.9 acre property located just east of the I-95 interchange at Okeechobee Road (SR 70) in the extreme western area of the City. The property, known as “Jenkins Field”, is located just northwest of Jenkins and Edwards Roads (see attached maps).

The property is presently vacant and was formerly used for agricultural purposes (pasture). The proposed use is for a retail commercial development. The present FLUM designation is Low Density Residential (RL), which would allow a maximum density of
6.5 dwelling units per acre. The proposed FLUM designation is Commercial General (Cg), which allows a broad variety of commercial uses as well as multi-family residential. The existing land use on surrounding properties includes vacant land (under development for big box retail uses) to the north, residential single-family development to the south, Jenkins Road, with vacant land beyond to the east, and I-95, with vacant land beyond to the west. The FLUM designations on surrounding properties are Cg to the north and west, Residential Urban (RU), a County designation, to the south and Medium Residential (Rme) to the east.

Table 1
Proposed Amendments to the Future Land Use Map
City of Fort Pierce Comprehensive Plan
DCA Reference No. 08-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amendment Number/Name</th>
<th>Approx. Acreage</th>
<th>Current FLUM Designation</th>
<th>Proposed FLUM Designation</th>
<th>Approximate Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jenkins Field</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>RI</td>
<td>Cg</td>
<td>Just east of I-95 interchange at Okeechobee Road in the extreme western area of the City.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key to FLUM Designations

City Designations

- RI Low Density Residential, maximum 6.5 dwelling units per acre
- Rme Medium Residential, maximum 15.0 dwelling units per acre
- Cg Commercial General

County Designations

- RU Residential Urban, maximum 5 dwelling units per acre

The City indicates that the amendment is consistent with the City Plan, as it promotes the City vision of a balance between commercial and residential uses. It is also considered consistent with surrounding commercial properties.

The application considered by the City indicates that the maximum development potential under the existing FLUM designation is 181 residential dwelling units; while the proposed FLUM would allow approximately 1.5 million square feet of commercial development. However, the applicant indicates that the amount of development is not realistic given site planning considerations and has submitted a preliminary site plan calling for 190,800 square feet of retail development. The applicant used a maximum development potential of 250,000 square feet as the basis to calculate traffic, water, sewer and solid waste impacts. The applicant indicates that all other parcels around the I-95/SR 70 interchange have Commercial General designations, and that the “increasing demand for commercial development in the area is evidenced by the existing and proposed commercial developments around the site”. This market potential for commercial land use is supported by surrounding residential development according to the applicant. The
projected increase in average daily traffic for Jenkins Road is 9,650 trips; based on 250,000 square feet of residential use.

Extrajurisdictional Impacts

Under an informal agreement facilitated by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC), local governments in the northern three counties of the region are to provide copies of amendment materials to other local governments that have expressed an interest in receiving such materials. However, the City elected to limit distribution of the amendment materials to only those organizations required by law. TCRPC staff provided copies of the amendment materials to the City of Port St. Lucie, Town of St. Lucie Village and the St. Lucie Transportation Planning Organization, and requested comments regarding the proposed amendment from those jurisdictions/agencies and the County. As of the date of the preparation of this report, no comments have been received.

Effects on Significant Regional Resources or Facilities

Analysis of the proposed amendment indicates that it may have adverse effects on the regional roadway network.

Analysis of Consistency with Strategic Regional Policy Plan

This property is located in an area that until recently has been characterized primarily by agricultural and low density residential uses. As the City has annexed property in this area, new City FLUM designations have been assigned to replace the County designations. When annexed in 2004, this property was assigned a designation of Residential Low Density by the City.

As cities annex property in areas that have previously been rural and agricultural in nature, it is important to develop a well conceived plan for the area. The SRPP indicates that all areas should include a balanced, well-planned compatible mix of land uses appropriately located (Policy 6.1.1.1) and that new neighborhoods and districts should include a variety of uses and building types, including residential (Policy 4.1.4.1). It is important that accommodations be made for traffic and transit use, as well as making accommodations for bicycle and pedestrian traffic (Goal 10.1). An integrated and interconnected street system is also very important.

The City proposes to redesignate this property to a FLUM designation of Cg. According to the amendment materials, this designation could allow nearly 1.5 million square feet of commercial use. The City supports the proposed amendment by indicating that it is consistent with the City vision for a balance between commercial and residential uses; and that it is compatible with the designation of surrounding commercial properties. The landowner indicates that commercial development is appropriate due to the increasing commercial development in the area and the need to serve surrounding residential development. Nor further analysis is provided.
The City has not prepared and adopted a neighborhood or district plan for the area; nor has the City provided an analysis of the need for additional commercial land use by taking into account existing land use and vacant land already designated for commercial use. Table 1-4 of the City’s Future Land Use Element reports 765 acres of vacant land designated as General Commercial; far more vacant land then for any other category. The City’s existing land use table shows a total of 1,929 acres designated as General Commercial, approximately 18 percent of the City land area.

A field review of the area and an examination of the existing and future land use maps for the City and surrounding unincorporated area indicate that there is a large amount of land developed and/or designated in the immediate area for commercial development. The area is characterized by a large number of tourist and travel-related commercial uses, especially in the area to the west of the subject property between I-95 and the Florida Turnpike interchange at Okeechobee Road (SR 70). More recently, a number of big box retail uses (including Home Depot, Wal-Mart) have been developed on large parcels of land in the immediate vicinity, north of SR 70. The property to the immediate north has reportedly been approved for additional big box development.

Since the City has no overall plan for this area and has provided no detailed analysis of its existing commercial land use, need for additional commercial/retail use and existing population to be served by the proposed commercial use, it is not possible to determine if the proposed use is consistent with the goals and policies of the regional plan.

**Comments/Recommendations**

1. Prior to considering the adoption of this amendment, the City should prepare, or require to be prepared, an assessment of the need for additional commercial land use in the area. This analysis should consider existing commercial development, vacant land already designated or under development for commercial use, and the optimum amount of commercial development to be permitted in the area based on the existing and projected population.

2. Although the proposed General Commercial designation would allow nearly 1.5 million square feet of commercial use, the analysis of service needs and concurrency assessment including traffic was based on a maximum development potential of 250,000 square feet. The analysis needs to be based on the maximum development potential of the property.

3. A preliminary site plan submitted with the application calls for 190,800 square feet of commercial development. If this is to be the case, perhaps a smaller amount of the property should be designated for commercial use. The remainder of the property could be redesignated for medium or high density residential development. This residential development could offer a transition of use and buffer for the existing residential development to the south, and provide affordable housing for the workforce employed in the many retail establishments that already exist in the area.
4. The application materials suggest this property might be developed for community or neighborhood commercial uses, including a bank. If that is the case and the City determines that such uses are absent from the mix of uses in the area, perhaps a Commercial Neighborhood designation under the City Plan is more appropriate.

5. The changing land use in this area indicates that an area plan, perhaps focusing on the Jenkins Road/Edwards Road Corridor would be appropriate. It is important to “get ahead of the curve” in such areas by first determining what the vision for the area is to be; then adopting the appropriate comprehensive plan policies and land development regulations to implement that vision. Before considering any more FLUM amendments in this area, the City should consider an area or corridor plan. This should be prepared in cooperation with the County, since much of the land in the area is located outside of present City boundaries.

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. As proposed, the amendment cannot be considered consistent with the SRPP. If the City prepares a careful assessment of existing and proposed commercial development in the area, and the assessment concludes that additional Cg land is needed, the amendment could be considered consistent with the SRPP. However, Council strongly recommends that the City not adopt this or other amendments in the immediate area until a fine-grained plan for the area is prepared in cooperation with the County, the City updates its land development regulations, and the City provides a transitional FLUM or zoning designation between the land to be designated General Commercial and the residential development to the immediate south of the amendment site. The plan to be prepared in cooperation with the County should include a network of streets.

Recommendation

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

Attachments
# List of Exhibits

<table>
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<th>Exhibit</th>
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<td>General Location Map</td>
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<td>Amendment Location Map</td>
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<td>Existing Land Use Map - City</td>
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<td>Existing Land Use Map - Surrounding Area</td>
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<td>Existing Land Use Map - Immediate Area</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Conceptual Site Plan</td>
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Exhibit 1
General Location Map
City of Fort Pierce

Indian River County

City of Fort Pierce

Martin County
Exhibit 2
Amendment Location Map
Exhibit 6
Site Location Map
Exhibit 7
Existing Land Use Map – Immediate Area
Exhibit 8
Conceptual Site Plan