MEMORANDUM

To: Regional Planning Council Members
From: Staff
Date: June 19, 2009 Regional Planning Council Meeting
Subject: Local Government Comprehensive Plan Review
Draft Amendment to the City of Palm Beach Gardens Comprehensive Plan
DCA Reference No. 09-1

Introduction

The Local Government Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulation Act, Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, requires that the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC) 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 the TCRPC 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 Palm Beach Gardens is proposing one text amendment to the Future Land Use Element. The City has requested a formal review of the amendment by DCA.

Evaluation

Section 380.0651(d)(2), Florida Statutes, authorizes local governments in a county with a population greater than 500,000 to designate geographic areas which are highly suitable for increased office development, with a corresponding increase in the Development of Regional Impact (DRI) threshold. The proposed text amendment to the Future Land Use Element adds a policy defining five criteria for designating areas in the City as “highly suitable”, including location within the Bioscience Research Protection Overlay (BRPO)
(Exhibit 2). The proposed policy will increase the DRI threshold from 300,000 square feet to 600,000 square feet of office use in specific locations.

**Analysis of Consistency with Strategic Regional Policy Plan**

Proposed new Policy 1.3.4.5 establishes a series of suitability criteria that must be met in order for a parcel to qualify for the increased DRI threshold for office intensity. These criteria include location of the property, existing Future Land Use designation; adequacy of supporting public facilities, access to roadway and mass transit facilities and sufficiency of parcel size. Raising the DRI threshold will in effect streamline the approval process for projects up to 600,000 square feet. SRPP Policies 3.4.2.2 and 3.6.1.7 call for simplifying and shortening the review process for infill, redevelopment and preferred forms of development. SRPP Policy 3.6.1.3 calls for identifying locations for economic clusters in the region to diversify the economic health of the region. While the locations within the BRPO do not limit the increased DRI threshold exclusively to bioscience use (the increased threshold will be available to office uses as well), the overall intent to encourage diversification of the City tax base is consistent with this policy. As such, the general strategy in the amendments, including raising the DRI threshold, is supported by some policies of the SRPP.

If approved, projects up to 600,000 square feet will be processed more quickly with reduced application fees; however, the regional and state review process will be eliminated. Therefore, it is important for the City’s Comprehensive Plan to include policies ensuring the development pattern of these large projects will be consistent with the established goals for the city, region, and state.

The proposed policy is supportive of Future Land Use Goal 1.3 of the City of Palm Beach Gardens Comprehensive Plan which states:

“Continue to plan for future needs to promote livable communities, including, but not limited to economic development for bioscience users, transit oriented development, and other efforts to support sustainable growth.”

The proposed policy establishes five criteria for eligibility to increase the DRI threshold:

1. Location within the BRPO. This overlay identifies areas in which the City intends to promote the location of bioscience uses and to deter conversion to commercial or residential uses.
2. A Future Land Use Map designation of Commercial, Industrial, Mixed Use, or Professional/Office.
3. Availability of adequate public facilities.
4. Location east of the Urban Growth Boundary and adjacent to I-95, with access to an arterial and within ½ mile of a mass transit facility;
5. Be of sufficient size to accommodate intense office development, consistent with the intensity and density requirements in the Comprehensive Plan.
These criteria are basic, relying on various future land use categories to guide intensity and development. These designations (with the exception of the City’s Mixed Use Development category) regulate intensity by a percentage of lot coverage and height limitations. However, lot coverage and height regulations alone are insufficient to deliver a predictable built environment. On the contrary, the combination of large sites with low lot coverage ratios and building heights may inadvertently encourage surface parking solutions, yielding a suburban office park pattern of development instead of the transit-supportive, sustainable form stated in the City’s Goal.

The goals, objectives, and policies of the SRPP also describe a healthy, sustainable pattern of growth. Policy 9.1.1.1 states a healthy pattern of growth should reduce dependency of the automobile and encourage and accommodate public transit. SRPP Policy 7.1.2.3 supports increasing density around transit stations and along public transportation corridors. Policies 7.1.3.1 and 5.1.1.3 reference the role the pattern and form of development plays in maximizing transportation alternatives and reducing vehicle miles traveled in the region, a key component in establishing a sustainable region. In addition, the SRPP contains numerous policies specifying the components of a multi-modal, sustainable built environment, including the following:

Policy 5.1.1.3 Encourage development around transit stations. Proposals should:

a. Develop intense mixed-use projects within a quarter mile radius of the station.

b. Include a fine-grained network of streets detailed to optimize the comfort and safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.

c. Include high density residential areas, to enhance the feasibility of transit.

Policy 7.1.3.3 Require new development to provide interconnections for pedestrians and public transportation within employment centers.

Policy 7.1.3.5 Orient buildings toward the streets to create better pedestrian environments.

Policy 7.1.3.6 Locate buildings so they are convenient and accessible to public transportation facilities and sidewalks as they are to auto parking.

Policy 7.1.3.7 Locate parking to the sides and backs of buildings so that pedestrian access and access from public transportation does not require walking through large parking lots to reach building entrances.

Policy 7.1.3.9 Design and locate parking lots and garages to enhance pedestrianism and the character and attractiveness of the area and encourage use of alternate modes of transportation.
Policy 7.2.1.1 Encourage patterns and forms of development and redevelopment and street design that will improve mobility opportunities for the transit-dependent.

In addition to local and regional goals, recent statewide “green” initiatives recognize the importance of local comprehensive planning. Legislation directs comprehensive planning to use energy-efficient land use patterns and greenhouse gas reduction strategies. Maximizing the viability of transit by ensuring the adjacent development pattern is a pedestrian-friendly, multi-modal environment is critical to the success of this goal.

The City recently participated in a week-long public charrette that included areas along the PGA corridor affected by this amendment. This planning effort was held as a multi-agency effort as part of the SF ECC study to re-establish passenger transit service on the FEC rail corridor. As part of the charrette, an analysis was conducted to demonstrate different ways in which a specified development program can be arranged on a site yielding different outcomes: one form creates an auto-dominated environment inconsistent with the city, region, and state’s sustainability goals (Exhibit 3) while the other form, using the same development program, establishes a transit-supportive, pedestrian-friendly environment (Exhibit 4).

Comments/Recommendations for Modification

In order to ensure projects utilizing the increased DRI threshold are consistent with the sustainable pattern called for in the goals of the City, SRPP, and state, Council recommends the City add the following criteria to Policy 1.3.4.5:

F. Parcels must have a site plan design that establishes a transit-supportive, sustainable development pattern by employing the following strategies:
   1. Promote the optimum use of transit nodes by establishing an interconnected transportation network that effectively links transit station(s), bike paths, sidewalks, buildings and open spaces;
   2. Create a “park once” environment by providing a mix of uses within a pedestrian-friendly environment to create a self-sufficient district;
   3. Accommodate the incidental shopping needs of workers and transit riders, and;
   4. Establish a pedestrian-friendly environment with the following characteristics:
      a. Incorporates a continuous, inter-connected network of narrow streets with shaded sidewalks, appropriate landscaping and street details, and traffic calming measures such as on-street parking;
      b. Maintains a system of primary and secondary streets, whereby building entrances are oriented along primary streets and service functions are oriented along secondary streets;
      c. Locates off-street parking to the sides and rear of buildings so pedestrian access does not require walking through parking lots to reach building entrances;
d. Prohibits large expanses of surface parking areas;

e. Lines parking lots and structures with other active uses along primary pedestrian routes;

f. Provides public open space in the form of a civic park, plaza, or green;

Extrajurisdictional Impacts

The City provided a notice of the proposed amendment to the Palm Beach County Intergovernmental Plan Amendment Review Committee (IPARC). This notice was distributed by IPARC on January 29, 2007. Council is not aware of any objections to the proposed amendment.

Effects on Significant Regional Resources or Facilities

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

Consistency with Strategic Regional Policy Plan

The contract agreement with the DCA requires the TCRPC to include a determination of consistency with the SRPP as part of the written report to be submitted to the DCA. The TCRPC finds the proposed amendment to be INCONSISTENT with the SRPP Policy 9.1.1.1, which encourages patterns of development and programs which reduce dependency on the automobile, encourage and accommodate public transit, and reduce the overall use of fossil fuels. If proposed Policy 1.3.4.5 was modified to include the additional criteria recommended above, the proposed amendment would be considered consistent with the SRPP.

Recommendation

The Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council should adopt the above comments and instruct staff to transmit the report to the Department of Community Affairs.

Attachments
List of Exhibits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibit</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>General Location Map</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parcels within the Bioscience Research Protection Overlay</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Auto-Dominated Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Multi-Modal Environment</td>
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Exhibit 1
General Location Map
City of Palm Beach Gardens
Exhibit 2
Parcels within the Bioscience Research Protection Overlay

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<th>#</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Briger Tract</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Legends of the Gardens</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Parcel 31.04</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>The Pointe</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>PGA Corporate Center (5A)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>PGA Design Center (5B)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>NorthCorp</td>
<td>102.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Gardens Station</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>PGA National Commerce Park</td>
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Exhibit 3
Auto-Dominated Environment

Source: Palm Beach Gardens TOD Charrette
Exhibit 4
Multi-Modal Environment

Source: Palm Beach Gardens TOD Charrette