MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members  

From: Staff  

Date: March 15, 2013 Council Meeting  

Subject: Council Education, Marketing, and Updating the Strategic Regional Policy Plan 

Introduction  

At its December 12, 2012 Council meeting, the Budget and Personnel Committee provided Council its recommendations on the Executive Director’s performance. One of the recommendations was to encourage the Executive Director along with Council to develop and implement a work program to better educate board members and members of the public and private sector about the functions and values of Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council. This report includes an outline of the proposed work program to implement this task.

Also, the Budget and Personnel Committee discussed updating the Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) and the importance of this effort to the continuing success of the Council and the Treasure Coast Region as a whole. The SRPP serves as Council’s business plan, forming the basis for much of Council action. It also contains Council’s vision for putting the Region on a course toward a more healthy and sustainable future. It includes measurable goals along with strategies and policies designed to achieve that vision. This report also provides recommendations for the process of updating the SRPP.

Orientation and Education  

Council member understanding of Council’s purpose, work program, budget, and its roles and responsibilities is important to the organization’s success. Ample opportunities should be provided for member education in this regard. The following items are recommended to enhance Council member orientation and education:

- update the Orientation Handbook;
- schedule once-a-year orientation session at Council offices, especially for new members (January/February);
- establish a once-a-year Board update to discuss Council’s current and future work program at a regularly scheduled Council meeting (September);
- offer to meet individually with Council members at any time during the year to provide more in depth information about Council’s operation and work program; and
- as time permits during Council meetings, present work products completed by staff that are especially relevant and important to member local governments.
The offerings listed above should provide Council members with good educational and orientation opportunities throughout the year. Any additional suggestions to improve the Orientation Handbook and how to provide educational opportunities are welcome.

Marketing and Outreach

Marketing the Council’s functions, values, and services to its member local governments and beyond is also important to its long-term success. With the elimination of state funding, increased elected official turnover due to term limits, and the need to find ways to do more with fewer resources, it is important to increase local, state, and federal awareness of Council’s ability to efficiently and economically assist in strategic planning and economic development needs.

Regional planning councils were created by and for local governments, in part, to provide planning and technical assistance services and support local and statewide initiatives. Functioning like an adjunct service department for local government, Council operates a number of planning and economic development programs and services designed to satisfy the needs of its public sector customers. Unfortunately, many local governments do not perceive Council in this way or are unaware of Council’s service programs and ability to provide assistance. An enhanced marketing and outreach program could be developed to improve the perception and understanding of what Council has to offer to state, federal, and local governments.

Regional planning councils throughout the state and nation have had to become more entrepreneurial and visible over time. Council is a good example of an organization that has done just that. However, there is always room for improvement. The following efforts are recommended to enhance public awareness of Council assistance programs and accomplishments:

- website redesign;
- brochure redesign (see attached);
- enhanced media outreach via press releases highlighting Council-sponsored events and the initiation and completion of significant pieces of work;
- create an informational piece about Council for release on local government television channels; and
- develop an informational piece/PowerPoint about the function and value of the Council for presentation to the Treasure Coast Council of Governments, the Palm Beach County League of Cities, county and municipal commissions, water management districts, economic development councils, business development boards, chambers of commerce, legislative delegation, etc.

Any suggestions on how to improve the brochure or public awareness/marketing program outlined above are welcome.

Updating the SRPP

Adopted by Council in 1995, the SRPP is the very essence of regional planning in the Treasure Coast Region. Not only does it provide the basis for Council’s statutory and contract review responsibilities, but it contains the “vision” for the future of the Treasure Coast Region and is the basis for the majority of Council action (see attached Executive Summary of the SRPP). As it
stands today, the SRPP also fulfills a mandated purpose for regional plans -- “to provide long range policy guidance for the physical, economic and social development of a region” (Rule 27E-5003(2) FAC).

The SRPP is not intended to be a stagnant document. Over time, Council may amend the plan to: 1) improve implementation at the local level; and 2) address emerging trends and meaningful regional guidance found in new legislation and recent findings and recommendations of current regional planning activities and efforts. Council has the flexibility under the law to amend and make improvements to the SRPP at any time.

Since 1995, Council performed two evaluations of its SRPP (2000 and 2011). The purpose of these evaluations was to appraise and assess the progress of local implementation within the Region. Both of these evaluations suggest there has been good implementation progress made. For example, a majority of local governments have amended their local plans to contain land use, transportation, redevelopment, and economic development strategies that further the “vision” of the SRPP. At the same time, there are several significant regional, state, and national planning activities and efforts that provide good impetus for updating the plan:

- 2010 US Census;
- State Plan amendments to Land Use, Energy, Air Quality, Education, Downtown Revitalization, and Public Safety goal areas;
- Department of Economic Opportunity’s 2012 Five-Year Strategic Plan;
- Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan;
- House Bill 7207, adopting significant changes to Florida’s growth management laws;
- Council’s 2012 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update; and
- The Seven50 Southeast Florida Prosperity Plan (Seven50).

The Seven50 Plan is perhaps the most important planning effort to consider in updating the SRPP. The Seven50 Plan is scheduled to be completed by February 2014. The plan will include a compilation and analysis of the latest planning data, identify emerging trends and opportunities, and establish a preferred land use scenario and public policy guidance to put the Region on a course toward a more competitive and sustainable future. With its completion early next year, it will form the basis for updating the SRPP. Work on updating Council’s SRPP should commence with the completion of the Seven50 Plan.

**Conclusion**

This report lays out recommendations for carrying out Council orientation, education, and marketing efforts for the year. Staff intends to make these efforts a significant part of the work program this year. Staff welcomes any suggestions related to these efforts and will keep the Council aware of progress in implementing the work program. Upon completion of the Seven50 Plan, staff will propose a public process for updating Council’s SRPP.

**Recommendation**

For information and discussion purposes only.

**Attachments**
Mission Statement

To encourage and enable local units of government and the citizenry to assemble and cooperate with one another and with representatives of major economic interests, to promote health, safety, and general welfare of the citizenry, and to plan for future development of the Region that will keep it competitive and afford a high quality of life.

Regional planning councils are recognized as Florida's only multipurpose regional entity in a position to plan for and coordinate intergovernmental solutions to growth-related problems on greater-than-local issues, provide technical assistance to local governments, and meet other needs of its communities.

Chapter (186.502 (4) Florida Statutes)

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Visit our Website
www.terpc.org
WHAT IS TCRPC...

It is Treasure Coast's only regional forum where elected and appointed leaders regularly come together to discuss complex regional issues; develop strategic regional responses for resolving them; and build consensus for setting and accomplishing regional goals.

Council operates a number of programs and services for regional planning and economic development designed to satisfy the needs of its public and private sector customers and foster the healthy and orderly growth of the Region.

WHO IT SERVES ...

A not-for-profit organization created by and for local governments to provide planning and technical assistance services and assist in carrying out Florida's growth management programs. It was established in 1976 through an interlocal agreement between Indian River, St. Lucie, Martin, and Palm Beach counties. Participating membership includes all four counties and their 49 municipalities.

WHY TCRPC...

It works quickly and efficiently in bringing communities together to:

- provide a forum and mechanism by which local governments can avoid and resolve interjurisdictional conflicts in a positive manner

- allow for cost sharing and savings between local governments and minimize the need for duplicative efforts

- assure that state and federal goals and objectives are carried out with respect for local and regional desires and conditions

- establish a local government think tank for early identification of opportunities

- respond to local government requests for assistance. Council responds to over 1000 requests annually for planning assistance.

TCRPC IS BY, OF, AND FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT ...

It provides the necessary leadership to develop coherent policy and strategies by which different agencies and levels of government can act cooperatively. It provides both state and local policy makers with information they need to solve problems and build a better future for their residents. It is a strong advocate for local governments in issues where federal and state involvement and interest are a concern.

TCRPC IS EFFECTIVE...

It works exactly as it was intended, and it does its job well. It is a nationally recognized leader in grassroots community involvement, education and urban design programs aimed at revitalizing communities and keeping the Region competitive.

This regional council of governments is not afraid to raise new issues and has the unique ability to address them. It is difficult to influence except by facts and logic. It represents the conscience of its local jurisdictions.
STRATEGIC REGIONAL POLICY PLAN
FOR THE TREASURE COAST REGION

Executive Summary

Prepared by Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council

December 20, 1995
FOREWORD

According to Chapter 186, Florida Statutes, and Chapter 27E-5, Florida Administrative Code, the Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) for the Treasure Coast Region shall be a long range guide for the physical, economic, and social development of the Region which identifies regional goals and policies. The SRPP is not merely a plan for the regional planning council, it is a plan for the Region and all those who are active participants in shaping its future.

The SRPP is intended to be a direction-setting document. Its goals and policies will be implemented only to the extent that financial resources are available from local revenue sources, legislative appropriations, grants or appropriations of any other public or private entities. The plan does not create regulatory authority or authorize the adoption of agency rules, criteria, or standards not otherwise authorized by law.

The goals and policies contained in the SRPP shall be reasonably applied where they are economically and environmentally feasible, shall not be contrary to the public interest, and shall be consistent with the protection of private property rights. The plan shall be construed and applied as a whole, and no specific goal or policy in the plan shall be construed or applied in isolation from the other goals and policies in the plan.

The SRPP is not intended to be a mandate or dictum to local governments, special districts and citizens in the Region. It is an instruction manual to be used for guidance in building a more healthy and sustainable Region.

The SRPP is not intended to be a stagnant document. The regional planning process and development of the Plan should continue after adoption. Over time the Council may want to amend the Plan to incorporate meaningful regional guidance found in new legislation and in the findings and recommendations of other regional planning activities and programs currently in progress (e.g., revisions to the State Comprehensive Plan, long range MPO plans, the Sustainable South Florida effort, the Florida Greenways program, etc.). The initiative to amend the Plan may come from the Council itself or from citizens who come before Council with their aspirations and ideas to improve the Plan. Regional planning councils are not limited to a twice-a-year window for plan amendments and can revise the Plan at any time.

As it pertains to the development of local government comprehensive plans, land development regulations, and local development orders subject to regional planning council consistency review, it is recognized that some ideas suggested in the SRPP are applicable and can be furthered in varying degrees in certain areas of the Region and some cannot. When applying the Plan, this is a determination that must be continually made by the consortium of local government representatives and citizens appointed by the Governor which make up the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council.
The SRPP acknowledges and the Council recognizes that the Region is large and diverse and that thoughtful consideration of local differences need to be fully considered when making policy decisions. It is also recognized because of local differences and preferences that there may be other approaches for implementing and furthering regional goals and policies other than those specifically suggested in the Plan. The SRPP will require the Council to use good judgment in applying the Plan and to maintain a receptiveness to new or different ideas which may not be specifically suggested in the Plan, but which will keep the Region on course towards a healthier and sustainable future.

Lastly, all goals, policies, and strategies that utilize directive verbs such as should, shall, and will should not be interpreted to override the decision-making and fiscal prerogatives of local government. All references to the “Region” in goals, policies, strategies and background analyses should be taken to mean the Region as a whole. It is implicit that all regional goals, strategies, and policies suggesting shortened review processes, preapproval, concurrency relief, or other incentives suggested to encourage preferred forms and patterns of development will be carried out within the limits of State law.
PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC REGIONAL POLICY PLAN

Pursuant to Rule 27E-5.003, Florida Administrative Code, the purposes of the strategic regional policy plan include:

1. To implement and further the goals and policies of the State Comprehensive Plan with regard to the strategic regional subject areas and other components addressed in the plan.

2. To provide long range policy guidance for the physical, economic, and social development of a region.

3. To establish public policy for the resolution of disputes over regional problems, needs, or opportunities through the establishment of regional goals and policies and to provide a regional basis and perspective for the coordination of governmental activities and the resolution of problems, needs, and opportunities that are of regional concern or scope.

4. To establish goals and policies, in addition to other criteria established by law, that provide a basis for the review of developments of regional impact, regional review of federally assisted projects, and other activities of the regional planning council. In addition, the plan may recommend specific locations or activities in which a project, that due to its character or location, should be a development of regional impact within the region. Standards included in strategic regional policy plans shall be used for planning purposes only and not for permitting or regulatory purposes. A regional planning council shall not adopt a planning standard that differs materially from a planning standard adopted by rule by a state or regional agency, when such rule expressly states the planning standard is intended to preempt action by the regional planning council.

5. To establish goals and policies to assist the state and the council in the determination of consistency of local comprehensive plans with strategic regional policy plans and the state comprehensive plan. Strategic regional policy plans shall serve as a basis to review the resources and facilities found in local government comprehensive plans.

6. To establish land development and transportation goals and policies in a manner that fosters region-wide transportation systems.

7. To serve as a basis for decisions by the regional planning council.

8. To guide the administration of federal, state, regional, and local agency programs and activities in a region to the extent provided for by law.
9. To identify significant regional resources and facilities, infrastructure needs, or other problems, needs, or opportunities of importance to the region.

10. To identify natural resources of regional significance and promote the protection of those resources.

11. To set forth economic development goals and policies that promote regional economic growth and improvement.

12. To set forth goals and policies that address the affordable housing and emergency preparedness problems and needs of the region.

The State Comprehensive Plan and the Strategic Regional Policy Plan do not create regulatory authority or authorize the adoption of agency rules, criteria or standards not otherwise authorized by law.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

The Treasure Coast Region is a region of abundant resources and a highly desirable quality life. Located on the southeast coast of Florida, the Region includes 49 municipalities contained within the four counties of Indian River, Martin, Palm Beach and St. Lucie. The Region is blessed with a growing economy. Many of its urban centers such as the cities of Delray Beach, Lake Worth and West Palm Beach are staging an economic comeback after periods of decline. The Region is also well positioned to share in the benefits of national growth and prosperity.

The Region has a population of nearly 1.4 million residents and has experienced explosive growth over the last three decades. The Region’s resources and quality of life are sensitive to the impacts of unplanned growth and development, however, and there are increasing signs that those resources and quality of life are at risk. There is evidence in many parts of the Region of a deterioration in the quality of life: traffic congestion, loss of agricultural lands, polluted waterways, loss of wetlands and forests, deteriorating urban centers, fiscal stress and other impacts of unplanned growth. Since the 1960’s hundreds of square miles of native and agricultural lands have been converted to suburban development, a pattern of development that does not allow the efficient provision of public facilities and services, and is devoid of the sense of place that once defined the character of the Region.

In terms of the stage and extent of development, the four counties of the Region are quite different. Palm Beach County is largely suburbanized across a broad area and is larger in land area than Indian River, Martin, and St. Lucie counties combined. However, all four share a similar pattern of development and adopted land use planning strategies. While this is not cause for immediate concern, it is pointed out in recognition that: 1) the potential for the continuation of sprawling patterns of development in the three northern counties is high; and 2) there are several good opportunities to address this potential, unlike in southern and central Palm Beach County, where most of these opportunities have been foreclosed.

While the four counties of the Region are different in some respects, they have a number of similarities. Historically each of the four counties which make up the Region had an economy based primarily on agriculture and secondarily on tourism. Today, although agriculture remains an important industry, the Region has taken on far more urban characteristics. In each county, urban growth occurred in coastal areas and expanded westward. In each county, urban expansion has displaced former agricultural lands. Agricultural activities have moved to the west, often into ecologically sensitive wetland habitats which dominate areas west of the coastal ridge.
Geographically, each county is located adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean and, therefore, all counties have problems and opportunities related to their coastal orientation. Common problems include: the threat of hurricanes, beach erosion, pressure to develop high hazard coastal areas, saltwater intrusion, potable water supply limitations, and rapid urbanization of coastal areas. Common opportunities include: the attractive power of beaches, estuaries and rivers for recreational fishing and boating, seaports for commerce, and a long-term potential for growth.

Environmentally the problems faced by each county within the Region are very similar. Demographic characteristics are similar, but not exact. In all counties within the Region, the seasonal aspects of tourism and agriculture create problems. In all of the counties, provision of services to a rapidly growing elderly population is a concern.

The Treasure Coast Region is expected to experience continued growth in population into the next century. Currently the Region’s population is growing by 100 new permanent residents per day. Many of these individuals and families moving into the Region come for employment reasons; others intend for the Region to be their home during retirement years.

The attractive power of Florida and the Treasure Coast Region provides residents an opportunity to achieve and maintain a higher quality of life than could occur in the absence of growth potential. The Region also has a need and opportunity to address growth management problems and thereby realize the high quality of life that can come with well-planned growth. Whether the opportunity is realized or put to good advantage, however, depends upon how and to what extent growth leads to sustainable patterns and forms of development and diverse neighborhoods and communities.

**The Plan**

The Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) for the Treasure Coast Region provides a long range guide for the physical, economic, and social development of the Region. Unlike the regional plan it is intended to replace, the SRPP is proposed not as a regulatory tool, but as a direction-setting document. Its focus is on comprehensively dealing with the large scale components or systems which make up the Region. Its goal is to keep the Region on course towards a more healthy and sustainable future. The SRPP is not merely a plan for the regional planning council, it is a plan for the Region and all those who are active participants in shaping its future.

The SRPP contains the following seven elements:

- Future of the Region (Vision)
- Affordable Housing
- Economic Development
- Education
- Emergency Preparedness
Natural Resources of Regional Significance
• Regional Transportation

Another major component of the SRPP is maps which depict natural resources of regional significance. There are six maps in all which provide an excellent overview of the Region’s network of remaining natural systems as they relate to developing urban and agricultural areas.

Future of the Region

The Future of the Region or “vision” element of the Plan comprehensively deals with improving the large-scale structure or pattern of the Region’s physical, economic and social environment: the growth and formation of towns, cities, and villages, the maintenance of the natural environment and countryside, the layout of regional roads, the relationship between work and households, the formation of suitable public institutions for a neighborhood and community, and the kinds of public space required to support these institutions. The Future of the Region element describes preferred forms and patterns of development that are considered the most effective means for fulfilling the “vision”.

The Future of the Region element contains several illustrations depicting examples of preferred forms and patterns of development. The inclusion of graphic examples are both necessary and beneficial to articulate the “vision” and to provide examples of what is meant by certain terms and policies expressed in the Plan. The examples are intended to be illustrative and informative. They are not intended to be site specific. The illustrations are meant to show instructive examples of concepts which may be effective in addressing current problems and fulfilling the “vision”. They are not meant to be inclusive of all examples which represent good planning.

Briefly stated the SRPP describes the “vision” for the future of the Region as follows:

Future growth should follow a preferred development form or pattern. Preferred development should address the following regional issues:

1. Preservation of the natural environment and countryside.
2. Revitalization of existing urban areas.
3. The creation of new towns.

Future development should not sprawl because it is expensive and it degrades the Region’s quality of life.
Preferred development concepts will be implemented by regional strategies which:

1. state the preferred form of development.
2. suggest incentives to encourage and foster preferred forms of development.

In addition, implementation will depend on county and municipal strategies which:

1. delineate where new development should or should not occur.
2. apply and expand the preferred form of development concepts.
3. encourage redevelopment and revitalization.
4. devise public investment programs favoring development of preferred forms and patterns of development.
5. send constructive economic signals to investors.

The Future of the Region element criticizes recent forms and patterns of development for being too homogeneous and disconnected to support the organization of larger more efficient and sustainable patterns of development (i.e., towns, cities, and villages). At the same time the Plan recognizes that these larger development patterns are not homogeneous and will continue to evolve in response to market forces prevailing in the Treasure Coast Region. To increase the chances for acceptance and implementation, the Plan is designed to recognize this need for diversity and, at the same time, respond to current market forces.

For example, a mixture of densities, architectural styles, building types, and lifestyle choices can and are anticipated in the Plan, no different from those mixes and choices which can be found in long-standing, established towns in the Region and across the country. More specifically, an enclave or district within a town could include more specialized or less diverse areas (e.g. workplaces, “high-rent” resort and country club districts, etc.) that may not fit well within the fabric or boundary of a traditional neighborhood. The Plan as written anticipates that such “districts” will develop. At the same time the Plan recognizes an overabundance of such districts, isolated and poorly connected to each other and to existing neighborhoods, creates a negative pattern of development which is defined by State law and the Plan as “sprawl”.

The Plan proposes the “vision” to address the nature of sprawl and its side effects by advancing ways to: 1) increase the diversity and self-containment of neighborhoods; 2) strengthen the connections and ties between districts and neighborhoods, and then; 3) link them together to establish more efficient larger patterns of development (i.e., towns, cities, and villages).

The “vision” as stated also reflects the particular challenges and opportunities the Region must respond to and exploit in order to accommodate high levels of growth while maintaining a high quality of life. The “vision” suggests as the Region matures, planning efforts should focus on: 1) expanding successful development ideas; 2) portraying a preferred form of development which should include the fundamental concepts that set
the course towards excellence in development; and 3) establishing a framework of planning and fiscal incentives to make it easier for beneficial and preferred forms of development to happen.

The Plan recognizes that the “vision” can never be implemented or built overnight. It will take patient piecemeal growth, designed in such a way that every planning decision sanctioned by local government is always helping to create or generate preferred patterns and forms of development on a small and large scale. This should, slowly and surely over the years, result in a Region that contains preferred patterns of development. The end result is intended to achieve a more sustainable future for the Treasure Coast Region.

The remaining six elements of the SRPP are intended to focus specifically on the individual pieces or “building blocks” of the regional structure that when applied together will make a Region that conforms to the “vision”. In developing the other six elements of the SRPP, several key trends and goals emerged:

**Affordable Housing**

The owner and rental housing stock is not as affordable as it used to be. The market price of housing, especially rental housing, is generally rising faster than incomes. On the growth management and planning side, sprawling low density patterns of development and excessive regulations have contributed to increased housing prices. Government land use, transportation and regulatory policy affects the market price of housing and the ability of households to afford housing. The percentage of household income devoted to housing is rising steadily. Farmworker and other special needs housing issues need to be better addressed. Each of the four counties, and several cities, now have programs to help address affordable housing issues.

**Fundamental Regional Housing Goals and Strategies**

- Create a planning/regulatory climate conducive to the production of affordable housing.
- Provide a range of housing types and affordabilities in proximity to employment and services.
- Stabilize and revitalize existing neighborhoods.
- Encourage development and redevelopment which results in the creation of towns, cities, and villages and not isolated patterns of development.
- Provide adequate housing opportunities for agricultural workers and others with special needs.

**Economic Development**

In-migration and tourism remain key components of the Region’s economy. Fueled by the tourism and retiree population, the retail trade and service sectors continue to represent the largest economic sectors of the Region’s economy. Tourism is primarily
seasonal in nature, therefore, much of the Region’s employment is seasonal, resulting in high seasonal unemployment rates. Because of its reliance on agriculture, construction and service industries for jobs, unemployment in the Region is generally higher than the State and nation during periods of recession. An over-dependence on construction and a weak industrial base often prolongs the effects of recession, as was experienced in the 1970s and the early 1990s.

A more diversified employment base is needed to support the Region’s large labor force and to stabilize the job market and the Region’s economy. A diversified economy is better able to withstand recession, provide a steady increase in the number and types of jobs available and increase personal income. It also lessens the seasonality and spatial clustering of economic activity, lowers and stabilizes the unemployment rate, and provides for a stabilized tax base.

Opportunities for bringing more diversity to the Region’s economy are expanding globally and competition for these opportunities is increasing. There is recognition that just as misdirected growth management policy has the potential to retard economic development and encourage inefficient patterns of development, growth management done properly has the potential to increase development efficiencies and expand economic development opportunities.

**Fundamental Regional Economic Development Goals and Strategies**

- Redevelop and revitalize the Region’s distressed economic centers and communities.
- Extend and expand the Region’s agricultural and tourist season.
- Promote patterns of development which allow public services to be provided more cost effectively.
- Improve transportation and education linkages throughout the Region.
- Diversify the year-round economy and establish an economic climate that will allow the Region to compete effectively in the global economy.

**Education**

There is a vital link between education and the economy. The students of today are the human capital of tomorrow. The Region’s educational system and student performance can be improved.

The siting of school facilities has a powerful effect on patterns of development. The coordination, planning, and decision-making process between local governments and school districts affecting school siting can be improved. The bridge between the concurrent provision of schools and development needs to be gapped.

Neighborhood as well as quality schools are both key components of a successful educational system. Neighborhood schools play a key role in local governments efforts to stabilize areas and promote a sense of community. Low-density, sprawling patterns of
development are reducing opportunities for establishing neighborhood schools, increasing the length and frequency of student bus trips, increasing the costs of providing schools and student transportation, and reducing the school systems ability to maintain desegregation in student assignment.

Fundamental Regional Education Goals and Strategies

- Increased student performance and educational programs that respond to the needs of the Region.
- Improved planning, coordination and cooperation between local governments and school districts.
- Increased development and redevelopment of neighborhood schools.
- Encourage patterns of development that will create new towns and neighborhoods and foster redevelopment of existing urban areas.

Emergency Preparedness

The Region is becoming increasingly vulnerable to the effects of hurricane and tropical storm events and man-made disasters. Coastal population is increasing. New developments are currently approved for areas most vulnerable to the effects of major storm events. Growth management policy is spreading development further into the countryside reducing the ability of the land to store stormwater.

Development is currently approved without sufficient mitigation of impacts on existing infrastructure and emergency preparedness planning. Emergency management planning is not fully integrated into the community planning process. Current patterns of development unnecessarily increase the difficulty of post disaster recovery efforts.

Adequate emergency shelter capacity for the Region’s vulnerable population has not been attained. Post-disaster recovery and pre-disaster mitigation strategies have not been fully developed within the Region. Local emergency preparedness agencies are underfunded and their effectiveness is often impacted by multiple or redundant levels of organizational control.

Fundamental Regional Emergency Preparedness Goals and Strategies

- Direct development away from areas most vulnerable to the effects of natural and manmade disasters.
- Better utilize land use, transportation and community planning processes to address vulnerability issues.
- Provide sufficient shelter space for residents of areas susceptible to dangerous flooding and wind affects of hurricanes and other storms.
- Improve the integration of community planning between local governments and emergency management agencies.
• Improve the ability of emergency preparedness entities to achieve rapid post disaster recovery efforts.

Natural Resources of Regional Significance

The quality of life enjoyed in the Region depends on the conservation of the natural environment and the countryside. While much of the Region’s countryside is still recognizable as such, as much as 80 percent of the Region’s natural environment has been altered or lost. The main threat to remaining natural systems and the countryside is not growth, but sprawling suburban growth which due to its inefficient development form has required ever-increasing acreage to deliver an acceptable quality of life. Therefore, the solution to environmental problems is found in part in the form of development.

The rapid destruction of natural lands and the countryside inspired many regulations. Unfortunately, they tended to address individual parcels instead of complete systems. Efforts are suggested in the SRPP and are currently occurring throughout the State to encourage a more systemwide approach to protect complete natural systems and to address the inadequacies of existing land use planning and development strategies to protect complete natural systems.

The quality of life and the Region’s environment and economy also depends on the proper and prudent management of its water resources. Sectors competing for limited water resources within the Region include: 1) natural systems; 2) agriculture; and 3) domestic, municipal, and industrial users. Future increases in needs of these users will cause competition to increase between all sectors for existing water supplies, and will create a need for more efficient use of water.

The stakes involved in water management are huge: Florida Bay, the Everglades, Lake Okeechobee, the Region’s estuaries and wildlife, and the health of the Region’s economy. Efforts are ongoing at the local, regional, state and national level to address water management options for the Region. The SRPP suggests several goals and strategies to support these efforts intended to overcome the Region’s water management and resource problems.

Fundamental Regional Natural Resources Goals and Strategies

• Preserve and manage complete natural systems as a network of greenways and wildlife corridors connecting natural preserves.
• Manage the Region’s water resources to provide for all recognized needs on a sustainable basis.
• Promote patterns of development which do not sprawl and are compatible with the protection and maintenance of natural systems and nature preserves.
• Preserve and manage native ecosystems in order to maintain viable populations of remaining native plant and animal species.
Regional Transportation

The Region’s current transportation system is almost exclusively geared towards providing mobility via the private automobile. On several counts this is a very expensive strategy to sustain, pollutes the environment, prematurely limits growth, is increasingly dangerous, and ignores mobility needs for a large segment of the population who are classified as transportation disadvantaged.

The Region’s transportation system should be one that integrates alternate modes of travel into one balanced system that supports community goals, enhances urban life, increases mobility and provides for the safe and efficient movement of goods and people. Any approach to achieve these multiple objectives must include an analysis of the way we use our land, the manner in which we choose to travel, and the institutional and financial arrangements we have developed to meet our travel needs. In short, these objectives can only be achieved through a better integration of transportation and land use planning.

The trend of decreasing densities, rapidly expanding urban land area, and increased settlement in the undeveloped countryside away from coastal cities is likely to continue the increase in private automobile use in the future. These following trends and conditions also point to increased traffic congestion, energy use, air pollution, and automobile dependency in the future, with all the negative costs and impacts.

The Region’s transportation problem in the long run cannot be solved solely by supplying more and more roadway capacity by building more and bigger roads. This approach will only aggravate the problem and is unaffordable as a solution. The SRPP suggests transportation problems must be addressed from the demand side. This will require a greater reliance on, and an understanding of, the relationship between land use and transportation planning as well as a reversal of personal behavior and travel trends and conditions that are at the root of the problem.

**Fundamental Regional Transportation Goals and Strategies**

- Develop a balanced and integrated transportation system.
- Encourage patterns and forms of development that maximize public transportation alternatives, minimize the use of the Region’s collector and arterial roadway network, and reduce the total amount of private vehicle miles traveled.
- Increased mobility for the transportation disadvantaged.
- Develop a complete and coordinated transportation/land use planning process.
Mapping of Natural Resources of Regional Significance

The SRPP contains several maps in an attempt to map what are considered to be “natural resources of regional significance”. The State (Rule 27E-5.001(7) FAC) defines these as follows:

A resource or facility that due to its uniqueness, function, benefit, service delivery area, or importance is identified as being of regional concern.

A resource or facility that requires the participation or involvement of two or more governmental entities to ensure proper and efficient management.

A resource or facility that meets either criteria above and is defined to be of state or regional concern or importance in state or federal laws or rules of state or regional agencies adopted pursuant to Chapter 120, Florida Statutes.

The Rule goes on to require that natural resources identified as regionally significant in the Plan must be mapped.

In response to this charge, six maps have been created for the Plan. These include maps depicting:

- Planning and Resource Management Areas
- Natural Systems
- Surface Water Resources
- Upland Natural Communities
- Endangered and Potentially Endangered Species
- Coastal and Marine Resources

These maps provide an excellent regional planning tool and identify regional opportunities for better land use planning. These maps are to be used for regional planning purposes only. These maps are to be used only in conjunction with the SRPP.

Information regarding specifics on how they will be used and implemented are addressed in the Forward, Purpose of the Plan, and Implementation of the Plan sections which precede this section. Additional detail on implementation and the process for development of the Plan is contained in Appendix A, Coordination Outline.

Lastly, the SRPP is not intended to be a stagnant document. The regional planning process and development of the Plan should continue after adoption. Over time the Council may want to amend the Plan to incorporate meaningful regional guidance found in new legislation and in the findings and recommendations of other regional planning activities and programs currently in progress (e.g., revisions to the State Comprehensive Plan, long range MPO plans, the Sustainable South Florida effort, the Florida Greenways program, etc.). The initiative to amend the Plan may come from the Council itself or
from citizens who come before Council with their aspirations and ideas to improve the Plan. Regional planning councils are not limited to a twice-a-year window for plan amendments and can revise the Plan at any time.
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC REGIONAL POLICY PLAN

Unlike local government comprehensive plans, the Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) is not implemented through a set of land development regulations and accompanied by a capital improvements program in order to meet the objectives established in the Plan. Instead the Regional Plan must be implemented as a result of Council’s program activities and through the consensus of local governments in the Region.

Although regional planning councils are primarily advisory in nature, the successful implementation of the Regional Plan can occur in a number of ways. Perhaps most importantly, the SRPP will be implemented as a result of successful implementation of local government comprehensive plans, which by Statute (Chapter 163) must be consistent with the Regional Plan. The Regional Plan is also implemented as a result of Council’s program activities, some of which are listed below. A more detailed summary is provided in Appendix A, the Coordination Outline.

- Development of Regional Impact (DRI) review process
- intergovernmental coordination and review process (ICR)
- dispute resolution process
- economic development planning
- preparation of special planning and development studies
- serving on task forces and committees involved in regional planning issues
- emergency preparedness planning
- regional transportation planning

Finally, the Plan is implemented through the activities of other organizations and agencies, both public and private, if they consider the Regional Plan to present good solutions to identified problems.

The most significant element of the SRPP is the Future of the Region or “vision” section. The key to how successful the Region is in implementing the goals, policies, and strategies, and addressing regional issues contained in the six other elements of the Plan, is directly related to the extent local governments are willing and able to implement the concepts suggested by the “vision”.

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Briefly stated, the “vision” for the future of the Region is as follows:

*Future growth should follow a preferred development form or pattern. Preferred development should address the following regional issues:*

1. Preservation of the natural environment and countryside
2. Revitalization of existing urban areas.
3. The creation of new towns.

The “vision” as stated reflects the particular challenges and opportunities the Region must respond to and exploit in order to accommodate high levels of growth while maintaining a high quality of life. The “vision” suggests that the principal focus of planning efforts should be on the form and location of future growth. The “vision” reflects the notion that: 1) as the Region matures planning efforts should start to differentiate between acceptable and excellent; and 2) the Region is ready to set standards that reach beyond the mere provision of basic services and propose the creation of complete and sustainable communities. Finally, the “vision” fulfills a mandated purpose for regional plans—“to provide long range policy guidance for the physical, economic, and social development of a region” (Rule 27E-5003(2) F.A.C.).

The Future of the Region element contains several illustrations depicting examples of preferred forms and patterns of development. The inclusion of graphic examples are both necessary and beneficial to articulate the “vision” and to provide examples of what is meant by certain terms and policies expressed in the Plan. The examples are intended to be illustrative and informative. They are not intended to be site specific. The illustrations are meant to show instructive examples of concepts which may be the most effective means to address current problems and fulfill the “vision”. They are not meant to be inclusive of all examples which represent good planning.

The Future of the Region element criticizes recent forms and patterns of development for being too homogeneous and disconnected to support the organization of larger, more efficient and sustainable patterns of development (i.e., towns, cities, and villages). At the same time the Plan recognizes that these larger development patterns are not homogeneous and will continue to evolve in response to market forces prevailing in the Treasure Coast Region. To increase the chances for acceptance and implementation, the Plan is designed to recognize this need for diversity and, at the same time, respond to current market forces.

For example, a mixture of densities, architectural styles, building types, and lifestyle choices can and are allowed to occur under the Plan, no different from those mixes and choices which can be found in long-standing, established towns in the Region and across the country. More specifically, an enclave or district within a town certainly could include more specialized or less diverse areas (e.g. workplaces, “high-rent” resort and country club districts, etc.) that may not fit well within the fabric or boundary of a traditional neighborhood. The Plan as written anticipates such “districts” will develop.
At the same time the Plan recognizes an overabundance of such districts, isolated and poorly connected to each other and to existing neighborhoods, creates a negative pattern of development which is defined by State law and the Plan as “sprawl”.

The Plan proposes the “vision” to address the nature of sprawl and its side effects by advancing ways to: 1) increase the diversity and self-containment of neighborhoods; 2) strengthen the connections and ties between districts and neighborhoods, and then; 3) link them together to establish more efficient larger patterns of development (i.e., towns, cities, and villages). The end result is intended to achieve a more sustainable future for the Treasure Coast Region.

The Plan recognizes that the “vision” can never be implemented or built overnight. It will take patient piecemeal growth, designed in such a way that every planning decision sanctioned by local government is always helping to create or generate preferred patterns and forms of development on a small and large scale. This should, slowly and surely over the years, result in a Region that contains preferred patterns of development.

The SRPP goes on to chart general strategies that, if deemed desirable by individual counties and municipalities, will be implemented at the local level. Implementation may require changes in local development regulations and some amendments to comprehensive plans, depending on the specific conditions and needs of each local government. Most often, such changes will be minor, as many of the ideas included in the Plan are found in local planning documents.

Perhaps the two most powerful changes in policy direction that local and State government can make to help implement the “vision” are: 1) amend development regulations to allow and encourage preferred forms of development occur; and 2) direct and focus public infrastructure projects and dollars to encourage, assist, and support efforts to plan and construct preferred forms of development. Unless positive changes are made in these areas the “vision” will not be implemented. Some possible changes along these lines could be:

1. **Consolidation and simplification of land development regulations.** Current regulations tend to be extremely lengthy and their combined effect is difficult to predict. Such characteristics make development a cumbersome and expensive process. Certain land development regulations prohibit building in ways necessary to accomplish preferred development forms. The key regulations address street hierarchy and width, setbacks, mixing of different land uses, ancillary uses, parking quantity and locational requirements, and maximum building lot sizes. Currently the regulations invariably favor and encourage sprawling patterns of development and discourage the creation of new towns, cities, and villages. In some instances, current subdivision regulations can even interfere with getting conventional forms of financing for building compact, mixed-use projects. Future regulations should be positive and constructive. Instead of detailing each prohibited activity, they should
explain in simple terms what types and form of development are preferable and encouraged.

2. **Revision of future land use maps to better reflect each municipal “vision” of the future, within the context of the regional goals.** The future land use map should become the principal planning tool, because it provides the most direct and understandable method to portray the future form of a municipality.

3. **Encouraging a constructive and proactive site plan and building review process.** The review of projects has the most direct impact on the form of development. Municipalities should make planning and design suggestions that can help implement the preferred form of development at the scale of each parcel.

4. **Preparation of infrastructure plans that support preferred forms of development.** Unless infrastructure is focused towards appropriate locations and is designed to support and facilitate preferred development forms, it will be difficult to carry out many of the concepts included in the SRPP. Therefore, local governments should make plans to locate roads, water and sewer lines, public buildings and the like in places that encourage the formation of cities, towns and villages composed of neighborhoods and districts.

5. **Local governments should prepare and adopt their own visions.** Local governments should determine particular areas of emphasis and prepare their own “visions” of the future but should always address planning problems in a comprehensive way. For example, if the rapid growth is a principal issue, a new approach toward the preservation of the countryside based on natural systems must be complemented by clear policies about the preferred form of development. If urban form and infrastructure are given inadequate emphasis in the development process, little advantage would be gained from the application of desirable countryside policies. When plans shift from a regulatory mode to a proactive approach, their successful implementation depends on a complete application of the “vision.”

6. **Local governments should identify areas and opportunities for the implementation of preferred forms of development.** This should be done as part of the articulation of a vision for the local government. At a minimum, these areas and/or opportunities should include: (1) areas in need of redevelopment such as the historic downtown or central business districts or communities; (2) property or areas which because of their location, character or magnitude are of sufficient size and/or proximity to existing development that the preferred form of development would avoid the continuation of a sprawl pattern of development; and (3) areas in suburban locations that would benefit by inserting or retrofitting with preferred development forms or concepts. The SRPP includes goals, policies and strategies encouraging local governments to identify areas or opportunities appropriate for the implementation of the preferred form of development.
If these changes in planning and growth management ideals are to be implemented at the local level the regional planning council recognizes it must help. It will provide technical assistance. If municipalities do not have appropriate staff or budget resources to prepare the planning tools needed to implement the “vision,” they may choose to request assistance from Council staff. Every effort will be made to accommodate such requests.

The SRPP and the Council recognize the Region is large and diverse and that local differences need to be thoughtfully considered when making policy decisions. It is also recognized that there may be other approaches for implementing and furthering regional goals and policies other than those specifically suggested in the Plan because of local differences and preferences. Successful implementation of the SRPP will require the Council to use good judgment in applying the Plan and to maintain a receptiveness to new or different ideas, that while not specifically suggested in the Plan, will keep the Region on course towards the “vision” and a healthy and sustainable future.