



Strategic Plan Town of Loxahatchee Groves

Draft 3.0
May 31, 2008

Vision for the Future of the Community

Loxahatchee Groves will protect its natural environment and rural character in the midst of an urbanizing region. It will continue to be a rural residential and agricultural community that has great respect for lifestyle choices balanced with historical community needs. This is reflected in a cost effective, minimal government structure that strives to protect the environment and our quality of traditional lifestyles.

Positioning Loxahatchee Groves to Achieve the Vision

Loxahatchee Groves is a unique community in the South Florida region. The core vision for its future is preservation of those features that make it a distinctive place to live, work, and play. How can the essence of the Groves be preserved as the surrounding areas change and as residents change?

For distinctive communities that do not want to be like the surrounding areas, what can it mean to suggest that the vision is to “preserve” the community? There are three possible overlapping definitions.

1. Definition 1: “Preserve” means keeping it just as it is. Colonial Williamsburg or other historical sites where the goal is to maintain the physical structures and lifestyles at a period in history best exemplify preservation in this sense. In this case to “preserve” is to keep something we have and to intentionally disallow substantive change.
2. Definition 2: “Preserve” means keeping certain distinctive community assets or uses as the community changes. This approach is shown by communities that have historic districts, waterfronts, or other features or uses that the community seeks to keep. Preserve in this sense also means keeping social features of a community such as community



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events that draw the community together or exhibit a special heritage or maintaining the sense of personalness and friendliness that are equated to a “small town” character.

3. Definition 3: “Preserve” means maintaining quality of experience. These often include safety, recreation, education, economic opportunity, and social interchange. Preserve in this case requires continuous change and improvement because quality is a changing standard. In this case in order to keep something we have to change.

All three definitions are applicable to Loxahatchee Groves. To preserve it in the future the basic land uses and density must be preserved as it is today as stated in definition one. To keep and improve the quality of experience, new features such as trails or nature preserves may need to be added so change will be required as stated in definition three. Finally as stated in definition two, some changes in past practice may be needed. This will include community-appropriate enforcement of environmental protection measures in order to maintain the natural setting everyone values.

The residents of Loxahatchee Groves clearly want to preserve the Groves as a rural residential/agricultural community in a beautiful natural setting. Such a community offers residents the freedom and privacy to pursue their business and personal interests while still having ready access to the economic and recreational opportunities of the greater region. By positioning itself as a rural oasis, the Groves is able to have the best of both worlds – a small town rural lifestyle with ready access to urban and regional amenities when desired.



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Values

The Town seeks to practice these values in its policy decisions and operational practices.

- Limited government.
Town government will be limited in terms of costs and services to the taxpayer while protecting individual rights.
- Cooperation and respect for each other.
By working together and seeking to avoid undue intrusion into each other's lives, we aim to keep the distinctive nature of the Groves.
- Respect for history.
Understanding the history of the Groves and the features which that has drawn residents to the community will help continue its distinctive character into the future.
- Respect for nature.
By understanding the native ecosystem and how our actions can either protect or degrade it, we can work together to maintain and enhance our native landscapes.
- Citizen involvement and volunteerism.
To keep the above values, citizens must continue to be involved in the life of the community and volunteer to do the work that will keep and enhance the community.



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Goals

This plan seeks to achieve the following goals.

- Preserve historical features and rural nature
 - It is the intent of this plan that the rural residential nature of the Groves be preserved into the future by retaining Ag/Res zoning, current homestead lot sizes and the other features of the community that make it distinctive from the suburban development pattern common to South Florida.
- Protect individual freedoms
 - Historically Loxahatchee Groves has attracted persons desiring to pursue their interests and lifestyle. It is the intent of this plan to protect this tradition by balancing individual rights with respect for the rights of others through minimal governmental intervention.
- Encourage citizenship and personal accountability.
 - This plan recognizes that the distinctive nature of Loxahatchee Groves can only be maintained through the efforts of its citizens. Involving citizens in all phases of the Town's work will be a characteristic of the Town's government.
- Preserve and enhance natural environment.
 - The Groves has been able to maintain a tree canopy and other natural ecosystems that have been lost in other communities. It is the intent of this plan to promote the preservation, restoration and conservation of this ecosystem.
- Deflect and minimize pass through traffic.
 - The intent of this plan is to minimize pass through traffic by supporting the development of transportation corridors on the peripheries of the Groves and other communities so that no community is harmed by disruptive traffic.
- Practice cost effective, minimal government
 - It is the intent of this plan that Town government remains minimal, operating in a cost effective manner so as to prevent excessive growth of both ad valorem and non-advalorem taxes.



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- Provide greater outdoor recreational opportunities
 - This Plan recognizes that many residents value the outdoors and want to be able to move about the community as equestrians, bi-cyclists or hikers. Therefore this plan will seek to provide residents with greater opportunities to engage in outdoor recreation and enjoy linked Greenways.
- Allow for limited non-residential development along Southern Boulevard.
 - To minimize traffic impacts, non-residential uses will be encouraged and supported south of Collecting Canal from C Road to the Eastern Boundary of the Town.

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Strategies

To achieve the above goals, the Town will use the following strategies.

- **Traffic control and diversion.**

To enable residents to move safely about the community, the Town shall work with other entities as needed, will

 - Utilize a variety of traffic control and diversion actions such as lower speed limits and greater traffic enforcement,
 - Make access to Okeechobee and other major roads easier and safer,
 - Discourage cut-through traffic.
- **Environmental protection and preservation.**

To protect the natural ecosystems of the community, the Town will engage in a variety of incentive and protection actions as well as creative public-private partnerships to permanently protect the overall environment.
- **Allow non-residential South of Collecting Canal with buffer.**

Recognizing the value of property along Southern Boulevard for non-residential uses, the Town plans to allow non-residential properties to lands south of Collecting Canal in ways that will be consistent with the character of Loxahatchee Groves.
- **Lifestyle protection.**

A prime goal and strategy of this plan is to protect the distinctive lifestyle that drew and continues to draw residents to Loxahatchee Groves.
- **Communication, regional cooperation and leadership.**

The Town recognizes that achieving the goals of this plan will require communicating and working cooperatively with its residents and other stakeholders who can influence the success of the plan.



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- Cost Effective, minimal Government.
It is the intent of this plan to achieve these goals through a minimal government operated in a highly cost effective manner. The core policies to fulfill this strategy are low taxes, reliance on cost recovery for services or for additional public amenities, contracted services and use of county agencies instead of building a Town work force. Another key element of this strategy is fostering a cooperative, cost-effective working relationship with other government entities.

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Principles that Define the Loxahatchee Groves' Lifestyle

Operating principles are guidelines for future decisions of the Town and provide a framework for action.

Principles

1. The Town's basic approach to code enforcement will be driven by complaints and not actively seek violations.
2. The first step of response to a code violation will be educational.
3. The Town will ensure there is a buffer between the non-residential uses and Collecting Canal.
4. The Town should seek to minimize traffic impacts on interior roads that are created by non-residential development (high priority).
5. The Town should design transitional zoning from greater to lesser residential density from Southern Boulevard to Collecting Canal.
6. Applicants for commercial uses will be encouraged to locate in areas South of the Collecting Canal buffer and between C Road and the eastern boundary of the Town except for any already approved uses.
7. Non-residential uses on Southern Boulevard should have connectivity between the uses where feasible.
8. The Town should orient new non-residential uses along the north and south sides of an interior business road such as Tangerine Dr.
9. The Town will encourage establishment of riding trail within the buffer area along the southern side of Collecting Canal.
10. Rural Vista standards establish the Town's commercial architectural guidelines.
11. Manage the cost of government in order to keep ad valorem and non-ad valorem taxes low and limit the role of government (high priority).
12. Proposed additional services are to be provided on a fee basis.
13. Maintain the practice of providing services through contracted management as long as financially advantageous to the Town.



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To implement the strategic plan, the Town will develop an implementation schedule for the specific actions and will adhere to stated principles as delineated below.

Strategic Focus Area: Land Uses, Codes and Code Enforcement

Actions

The Town will:

1. Review Agriculture/Residential category during the creation of the Unified Land Development Code to further define accessory uses while recognizing the protections provided in the Right to Farm Act and minimize adverse impacts on neighboring properties including the use of Best Management Practices where available.
2. Protect native ecosystems.
3. Use codes and regulations to prevent clear cutting of native canopy trees.
4. Use codes and regulations to protect water quality and address point pollution sources.
5. Modify and then adopt existing codes and polices from Palm Beach County's Department of Environmental Resource Management.
6. Develop codes to reduce or prevent photic (light) pollution.
7. Develop codes to control impacts from and prevent the proliferation of cell towers.
8. Create codes allowing diverse low impact home-based businesses.
9. Establish codes to regulate uses that create large scale places of assembly.
10. Develop land development codes that define, regulate and/or offset expenses associated with "industrial agriculture".
11. Update codes to address signage.



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Strategic Focus Area: Roadways

Actions

The Town will:

1. Actively support the development of traffic corridors such as Southern Boulevard; Seminole/Pratt–Whitney Road, Northlake Boulevard and Roebuck Road that would divert traffic from the Okeechobee Boulevard;
2. Formulate a master transportation plan that would offer some form of traffic control on Okeechobee Boulevard;
3. Seek a lower speed limit and arrange for reasonable enforcement on Okeechobee Boulevard;
4. In collaboration with the Loxahatchee Groves Water Control District, develop a master plan for all town road improvements that would analyze impacts of paving\OGEM stabilization before other roads are completed;
5. Lower the speed limits on alphabet roads to 25 mph;
6. Arrange for stronger enforcement of speed limits on all roads within the Town;
7. Investigate additional mechanisms to limit cut–through traffic;
8. Take all necessary steps to remove the extension of Okeechobee Blvd to “Twenty–Mile Bend” on Southern Boulevard from the Palm Beach County Thoroughfare Identification Map.



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Strategic Focus Area: Development South of Collecting Canal

Actions

The Town will:

1. Examine a special taxing district for non-residential uses south of Collecting Canal;
2. Design transitional zoning moving from greater to lesser residential density from Southern Boulevard to Collecting Canal;
3. Endorse a substantial equestrian facility along the Southern Boulevard Corridor;
4. Consider extension of Tangerine from the equivalent of 161st to E Road.

Strategic Focus Area: Community design and look

Actions

The Town will:

1. Require substantive landscaping in non-residential areas appropriate to the locale;
2. Support development of a volunteer cleanup effort.



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Strategic Focus Area: Protecting the natural environment

Actions

The Town will:

1. Investigate a land use category to recognize land dedicated to conservation and provide a tax valuation appropriate to that use;
2. Encourage use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) where available;
3. Encourage buffering mechanisms to promote and enhance the rural natural environment;
4. Coordinate with private sector leadership for the creation of a conservation land trust that benefits the public;
5. Create mechanisms to assist property owners in environmental pollution education, prevention and, if needed, mechanisms to assist with clean up;
6. Assist with the creation of a tree planting/reforestation program;
7. Examine feasibility of tree planting programs along canals in accordance with Transportation Master Plan to be developed;
8. Institute a policy directing environmental mitigation to benefit the Town with a preference for on-site restoration.

Strategic Focus Areas: Developing community amenities

Actions

The Town will:

1. Produce a plan for greenways.(high priority);
2. Support development of public and private equestrian facilities.



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Strategic Focus Area: Governmental functions

Actions

The Town will:

1. Hold joint workshop(s) no later July 31st, 2008 with the Loxahatchee Groves Water Control District to discuss and clarify roles and authorities, how to work collaboratively on projects and how to minimize costs to the citizens;
2. Determine if a fee can be placed on heavy trucks for use of roadways;
3. Work with the Loxahatchee Groves Water Control District on developing a storm water management strategy.