

Bradfordville Sector Plan

Leon County, Florida

Appendix 2:

Needs, Issues, and Opportunities Report/Summary of Stakeholder Interviews

March 3, 2000

1. Overview

The 1990 Tallahassee-Leon County Comprehensive Plan characterizes the Bradfordville Study Area (BSA) as an area of unique rural heritage and scenic natural features. Concerned by accelerating urbanization and associated threats to the desired community character and other impacts of development, the Board of County Commissioners adopted a set of goals, objectives and policies pursuant to the recommendations of a Board-appointed Bradfordville Area Citizens Task Force. The goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan address, among other things, the preservation and enhancement of existing natural and cultural resources; stormwater quantity and water quality issues; the provision of adequate transportation and community facilities; the compatibility of expected growth with existing development; and the preservation of the area's character.

Allegations that the County has failed to adhere to the goals and policies in allowing the development of the BSA have translated into a series of legal actions –some initiated by local residents, some by commercial development interests– that underscore the need for a long-term vision and strategic planning for the Bradfordville Study Area.

As a result, Leon County has undertaken to develop and adopt a sector plan for the Bradfordville Study Area, as well as pertinent amendments to the Land Development Regulations, consistent with the policies of the Comprehensive Plan. The planning process will include input from key stakeholders and from the community at large, and consideration of the recommendations provided by a series of Working Groups created pursuant to the terms of the BSA Interim Settlement Agreement, and the December 15, 1998 and January 13, 1999 Injunctive Orders.

This paper sums up the preliminary results of the first phase of the planning process. It provides an overview of the key issues of the project, as perceived based on a series of initial interviews with stakeholders and meetings with the Working Groups, as well as on the review of the best available data pertaining to existing land uses, natural and cultural resources, public facilities, stormwater drainage, infrastructure and utilities, demographics, and zoning/ regulations.

Bradfordville Sector Plan

Leon County, Florida

2. Stakeholder Perceptions

As a first step in gaining an understanding of the range of issues and concerns of community, a sequence of interviews was held with key stakeholders on February 10 and 11. The interviews, an informal format for a candid exchange, enable the varied interests to express their perceptions, concerns and "positions" on the challenges faced in planning the future of the Bradfordville Sector.

This section summarizes input received from a number of Bradfordville Study Area stakeholders including property owners, neighborhood association representatives, and citizens/residents (plaintiffs). The following individuals, groups and organizations were interviewed:

Representing:	Name:
<i>Commercial Property Interests</i> -H.L. Laird property -Carter Property -Lauder Property -Serpico Property -Capital City Bank Property -Middlebrook Property -Bradfordville-Phipps Property	Bill and Charlotte Godfrey Jim and Kristin Godfrey Karen & Peter Hanson Wilma B. Lauder Keith McNeill Joe Serpico Mitch Englert Jack Buford (Tallahassee Land Co.) Ben Wilkerson, Jr. (Tallahassee Land Co.) Marshall Conrad (Attorney)
	Harry Middlebrook Matt Cohen
	Carl Pennington and Bill Giudice (accompanied by: Jack Buford, Ben Wilkerson, Jr., Marshall Conrad)
<i>Neighborhood Associations:</i> -North Hampton -McLean Hills -Kilearn Acres Homeowners Association -Killearn Lakes Homeowners Association -Centerville Rural Community Association	Tom Holder Teresa Baker Lynn Redmond and John Shannon Tom Birschbach, Lydia Busch, Janet Ouillette (sp.) Pamela Hall

Bradfordville Sector Plan

Leon County, Florida

Representing:	Name:
<i>Citizens (Plaintiffs)</i>	Randie Denker (Attorney) Jack Conrad Tom Birschbach Patrick Rose Larry Block Jim Stolz Larry Block Skip Livingston

At the outset of each meeting, stakeholders were encouraged to identify their specific interests and perceptions regarding challenges currently faced by the Bradfordville area, and to describe any potential opportunities for resolution. Their responses have been summarized and categorized, without duplication, into the following broad issue categories:

- Problems and Challenges
- Assets and Opportunities
- Land Use Issues
- Community Character Issues
- Other Issues

Although the stakeholders generally represent somewhat divergent positions, it is of interest that on many issues there exists a considerable degree of consensus. For those issues on which contrasting views were expressed, both positions are identified below. This section concludes with a summary of the areas where common ground was identified, and of areas which generated a wide range of opinions.

(a) Representative Interview Comments

- ***Problems and Challenges:***
 - The Comprehensive Plan policies for the area have not been applied and acted upon.
 - Existing legal instruments concerning development approvals have not been respected.
 - Existing development approvals and agreements are considered “invalid” because they do not comply with Comp Plan policies and associated development standards.
 - Existing development approvals and agreements should entitle owners/developers to proceed with their plans.
 - Parties are in disagreement regarding the interpretation of terms and concepts expressed, but not defined in the Comp Plan (e.g., “single commercial center,” “rural character,” “neighborhood needs,” etc.).
 - Policies in the Comp Plan, particularly those that reference “rural character,” are not consistent with existing, largely suburban, development patterns.

Bradfordville Sector Plan

Leon County, Florida

- The plan needs to be a consensus document.
- The nature of real estate market demand for the area is regional (due to the influence of regional traffic on Thomasville Road).
- Increasing traffic and proposed widening of Thomasville Road and other improvements alters the quality of life and is likely to compromise the rural quality of the area.

- **Assets and Opportunities:**

- Encourage mixed uses with a neighborhood orientation.
- Quality multifamily housing may be acceptable.
- Consider designating excess commercial property for other uses and reconfigure roadways as necessary to make the commercial area “work”.
- Alternative land uses might be acceptable for the Bradfordville commercial property.
- Land assembly for purposes of developing a true “town center” has been considered and is a possibility.
- “Village center” type of development similar to Mizner Park in Boca Raton would be highly desirable.
- Although much of the area is no longer “rural” in use and levels of activity, a rural community character is still cherished by most residents.
- The Cohen property was offered (and may still be available) to the County for a park, natural area or other public use.
- Center lanes of Thomasville Road should be left unpaved and used to create a landscaped median that will mitigate stormwater problems and enhance corridor aesthetics.
- Protect remaining rural/agricultural area and historic plantations through conservation easements or other appropriate means.
- Consider land use tiering/zoning, gradually transitioning from suburban to rural character to rural/agricultural use.
- Provide incentives/credits for agricultural and rural land preservation and development clustering in outlying low density areas beyond the USA.
- Protect “canopy” and other rural roads which define the area’s rural character.
- Consider land swaps, transfer of development rights (TDR) or purchase of development rights (PDR) with commercial property owners, for parkland natural areas or other public uses.

- **Land Use Issues**

- The real estate market for the area is regional highway auto-related and could continue to absorb commercial uses well beyond that required to meet neighborhood needs.
- Prior “mixed use” designations have been applied primarily as commercial (retail) auto oriented uses, with little attention to office or higher density residential.
- USA boundary line has been too easily adjusted in the past to suit development interests.
- Bradfordville commercial properties themselves were zoned Urban Fringe only a few years ago – rezonings were tailored to development interests, contrary to plan policies and resident desires.
- Residents do not want to be part of the urban area.

Bradfordville Sector Plan

Leon County, Florida

- Character (density) of new residential development (subdivisions) is often incompatible with existing neighborhoods.
- It is perceived that high density results in decreased development quality.
- Homeowners adjacent to Bradfordville Corners property have rejected multifamily housing.
- "Mixed-Use A" zoning is not true mixed use, only a justification for commercial.
- Present allowed uses are considered the "highest and best" for the property within the Bradfordville commercial area.
- "Big Box" uses are not feasible in any of the Bradfordville commercial area properties because of site and development standards.
- Some property in the Bradfordville commercial area has split zoning, and some of the land is probably inappropriately zoned.
- "Single Bradfordville center" means Publix site.
- "Single Bradfordville center" is not defined in the Comp Plan and could mean the entire commercial area.
- The County does not have a TDR system in place. The complexity of such a system may not be warranted to address the relatively few commercial properties.
- As an alternative to TDR or "downzoning", County should consider appropriate property acquisition or purchase of development rights (PDR) to reduce the intensity or the extent of commercial in the commercial area, particularly where such development expectations are evidenced.

- **Environmental Issues**

- Principal concern is over environmental/stormwater management impacts of future development. Technical questions exist regarding which stormwater standards should apply and which were applied in the stormwater designs for the Bradfordville Corners and the Lauder property
- Downstream conveyance problems cannot be observed until a normal rain pattern returns.
- Current engineering of stormwater holding ponds is inadequate for water quality purposes, and may be responsible for degraded water quality among the area's lakes.
- Lake McBride remains the only lake in relatively pristine condition, and it needs to be protected.
- There is disagreement over whether Ponds No. 4 and No. 6 meet County's interim stormwater management standards.
- Engineering solutions are unlikely to be viable/sufficient for retrofitting existing ponds, and will only address flooding.
- Retrofitting of existing retention facilities may be economically infeasible.
- There is a perception of County non-compliance with its own policies and standards.
- Interim standards currently in use do not adequately address water quality issues.
- Stormwater study will be flawed due to the absence of actual empirical data in the construction of stormwater modeling (due to current drought conditions) and due to the fact that only a few lakes are being studied—each lake has a unique set of problems.
- Six-laning of Thomasville Road creates serious drainage and water quality concerns regarding the Lake McBride Basin that have not been addressed by FDOT in a satisfactory manner.

Bradfordville Sector Plan

Leon County, Florida

- Proper land management, adherence to strict development standards and long-range planning are the solution to future stormwater management problems.
- Some existing canopy roads are not currently designated as such, and there are no other scenic corridor protections or rural road standards in place.

- **Community Character Issues**

- There is frustration over the erosion of rural character and community identity.
- There are insufficient parks, recreation areas, and other community facilities in the BSA.
- Main concern of most residents is over the character of what is being developed (e.g., Bull Run development).
- Although the “clock” can’t be turned back there is still an opportunity to improve the character of development which may be inevitable.
- The appropriateness of commercial development for a regional highway like Thomasville Road can not be denied.
- Rural characteristics can be retained and encouraged through design and development standards.
- Design standards for commercial uses that were acceptable to developers had been proposed, but were voted down at the BOCC level.
- Previously proposed standards were not sufficiently stringent.
- County has adopted a scaled-down, but adequate, set of standards.
- Existing historic resources are not sufficiently protected, and many will be destroyed if development is allowed to proceed as approved today.
- Character of Bradfordville changed a long time ago –much of it is no longer rural, but suburban.

- **Other Comments:**

- Roadways/Traffic

- FDOT was allowed to make assumptions about how much commercial would develop in the area and to design Thomasville Road improvements accordingly; assumptions which are not consistent with Comp Plan policies.
- Widening of Thomasville Road is inconsistent with rural character of the area and unnecessary.
- The Comp Plan shows that Bannerman and Bradfordville Roads are slated for future widening to 4 lanes.
- There are plans for extending Velda Dairy Rd. to a connection with Thomasville through the Lang property. This could destroy the historic Bradford Family Cemetery.

- Legal/Administrative

- Work Groups believe the Sector Plan timeframe is unrealistic and unreasonable.
- Plaintiffs believe that Sector Plan is premature – Work Groups need to finish their work first.
- IDO violates the settlement agreement.
- Some commercial properties in the Bradfordville commercial area are alleged to be vested and because of this, options may be limited.
- The injunction suggests that none of the commercial properties are vested.
- Development rights of property owners would be taken away by downzoning.

Bradfordville Sector Plan

Leon County, Florida

- Development rights of property owners are not protected if expectations are based on “illegal” approvals.
- The “overall Bradfordville moratorium” issue is perceived as a pretense to stop the development of the Bradfordville commercial properties only.
- Focus of the dispute is the Bradfordville commercial area because of the perceived imminent threat of development to community character and to water quality.

Planning Process/Procedural and Implementation Issues

- Bradfordville should be looked at as “tabula rasa” for planning purposes.
- Bradfordville’s character has already been altered, and the reality of what is already there cannot be denied.
- There was a “sector plan” effort a few years ago (mid 1990’s) that was pushed by citizens and was environmentally driven, but was dismissed by the BOCC based on implementation costs.
- There is mistrust of and resistance to the sector planning process and products, on both sides.
- This planning process has occurred many times before and the products have never been followed.
- There is a perception (on both sides) that many times the public has been left out of the planning process.
- County’s notification process is deficient.
- Development review process is full of uncertainty/unknowns.

Bradfordville Sector Plan

Leon County, Florida

(b) Summary of Stakeholder Input and Conclusions

Although stakeholders expressed a wide variety of issues and concerns, a significant degree of consensus was noted among all parties in the following areas:

- 1) Regret over the loss of rural character of the Bradfordville area and desire to protect remaining rural characteristics, including agricultural uses, open space and significant natural resources, low densities, etc., where appropriate, particularly outside the USA.
- 2) Need to better define an “identity” for the community’s commercial center: focus not only on the amount of future development, but also on the type, scale and aesthetic quality of it, establishing standards that set a consistent and distinct image.
- 3) Need to address water quality issues as well as flooding issues in dealing with stormwater.

While the above issues generated sympathy among many parties, differences of opinion, often strong, were expressed in terms of how and where these problems can and need to be resolved. For example, most were open to the concept of mixed uses within the commercial core to decrease the potential impact of development, but at the same time some expressed apprehension at the idea of higher density and/or multi-family housing. Similarly, most of the interviewees, including development interests, agree that more specific design and development standards may be appropriate, but they differed as to which aspects such standards should mandate.

While most stakeholders acknowledge the loss of “rural character”, there appears to be a wide divergence of positions regarding what this means, whether it is inevitable, and whether it is necessary, possible or equitable to alter the trend. Most of the discussions focused on or near that area of Bradfordville which, for a variety of factors, can no longer be considered “rural,” although it still may exhibit some rural characteristics. Surprisingly, few among those interviewed expressed concern over the potential loss of the true rural land that remains in the area well beyond the USA. Rather, the focus has been mostly on the suburban/commercial areas because of what is considered as the “imminent threat” of development, or the “imminent threat” to property rights.

Finally, most of the parties interviewed seemed to agree that the County’s current processes and procedures create uncertainty in the planning and development review processes, feeding into a history of distrust and skepticism. This stems in part from the fact that the Bradfordville-specific Comprehensive Plan policies (to which the plaintiffs seem to adhere literally) may present some challenges in interpretation and internal consistency.

Bradfordville Sector Plan

Leon County, Florida

3. Status of Working Group Studies (as of 2/10-11/00)

As part of the initial set of interviews, the consultants also met with the Bradfordville Working Groups, established in 1999 pursuant to the directives of the Interim Settlement Agreement (ISA), to discuss the status of their work in each of the areas defined for study, and how (and when) the results would be available for incorporation, as appropriate, into the sector planning process. This section presents a summary of the substance of the meetings, held on February 10th and 11th, 2000, with the following groups:

Working Group	Members*
Historic Preservation	Jack Conrad Dan Penton Beth J. LaCivita Gary Johnson (Staff)
Bradfordville Corners	Pamela Hall Tom Ballentine (Staff) Patrick Rose Gary Johnson (Staff)
Commercial Computations	Enid Ehrbar (Staff) Rick Fausone (Staff) David McDevitt (Staff) Pamela Hall Jim Stolz Gary Johnson (Staff)
Conservation & Preservation	Kevin Pope (Staff) Enid Ehrbar (Staff) Jack Conrad Randie Denker (Attorney) H.E. Grant Gary Johnson (Staff)
Lake McBride	Jack Conrad Randie Denker (Attorney) Kevin Pope Skip Livingston Leanne Jowers Gary Johnson (Staff)

* Individuals listed do not represent the entire membership of each group, but merely those in attendance at the meetings.

Bradfordville Sector Plan

Leon County, Florida

(a) Historic Preservation Working Group

This group has completed its task and drafted a report of its recommendations for presentation to the BOCC. The group met a total of five times over a period of five months to discuss mechanisms to achieve compliance with Policy 8.5.2 of the Comprehensive Plan. This policy addresses the identification, preservation, and enhancement of significant historic resources located within the Bradfordville area.

As reflected in the discussion, the work of the Historic Preservation group has been oriented toward procedural/regulatory compliance. Their report outlines recommended additions and changes to the County's Growth and Environmental Management and Development Review processes, intended to preserve designated historic resources from demolition and construction activity. Overall, it is expected that the results of this working group will not significantly impact the sector planning process pertaining to land use designations. The only item with a potential for affecting land use actions is a recommendation for a 1-year stay on demolition, but the effect will probably be only on the procedural side and not directly on the underlying land use designations.

(b) Bradfordville Corners Working Group

Considering that most of the stakeholder issues and concerns focused on the pending commercial development of Bradfordville Corners, this group was to focus on a set of highly charged, site-specific issues. Unfortunately, the group has met only twice, and has yet to define its mission and the specific parameters and schedule for the performance of its work. Stormwater drainage issues pertaining to the realignment of Bradfordville Road, the construction of a County retention facility, maximum impervious coverage from potential development, and downstream conveyance are among the group's concerns. However, at the meeting, the group made it clear that they feel more time is needed to receive and review relevant information, before recommendations can be made.

(c) Commercial Computations Working Group

This group has met approximately eight times and was, at the time of the interview, very close to the completion of their task, which is defined as determining the future demand for land zoned as commercial based on projected population and other relevant factors.

Given that the necessary amount of future neighborhood-serving commercial development is a major focus of the ongoing legal dispute, the result of this study was of great interest to the planning process. However, the group was not able to agree on an estimated net square footage of commercial for the year 2020, nor have they determined how their different resulting figures should translate into an appropriate quantity of commercially-zoned land or resolved what the array of specific appropriate commercial uses should be. Further, while it was stated that qualitative issues were specifically excluded from the group's original mission, some committee members felt that their work should address the structure of the "single commercial center" concept referenced by the Comprehensive Plan, as well as the character of commercial development. The issues of "community identity" and "sense of place" were raised repeatedly by members of this group. Consequently, this group may also consider qualitative elements,

Bradfordville Sector Plan

Leon County, Florida

including types and locations of allowable commercial uses, and factor them into their calculations before making a final recommendation for incorporation into the Sector Plan.

(d) Conservation and Preservation Working Group

The focus of the outcome of this group is compliance with Policy 8.3.1 of the Comprehensive Plan, which requires expanding the land development code to “include conservation and preservation districts... which have more stringent requirements for development within or adjacent to those districts”. Because the Comprehensive Plan already defines a series of conservation and preservation areas/districts, there is some confusion as to whether the policy refers to identification of additional areas or to the creation of more onerous regulations. However, the interpretation among some group members seems to focus on most stringent regulations and more effective enforcement.

This group has met a few times, but, according to citizen members, without necessary professional expertise until their last meeting. At that time, however, it was decided that the nature of the work to be completed did not require additional group meetings until the County's Environmental Management staff could review and evaluate EMA standards for sufficiency. During the meeting, it was evident that this arrangement was the source of misunderstandings and frustration on the part of some group members, who emphasized their need to have more face-to-face meetings and more time to be educated in the areas related to their charge. Many went on to point out that while existing regulations are often adequately stringent, enforcement is the real problem.

It is unknown what the timeline for completion of this study is. However, unless the group decides to consider alternatives to regulatory constraints (e.g., conservation development, tax incentives, etc.), at this point it seems likely that the outcome will be procedural/regulatory in nature, and may not directly affect land use allocations.

(e) Lake McBride Working Group

The work of this group is focused on establishing a Lake McBride Special Development Zone (SDZ). The group has met a couple of times, the first one to discuss the overall Stormwater Study (see below). County staff has completed a draft proposal of SDZ standards that would be incorporated into the Land Development Code, and has submitted the draft for review by the members of this working group. From the discussion, it appears that the main issue with potential impacts on land use decisions derives from the fact that the Lauder property, which is affected by a development agreement, is also located within the proposed Lake McBride SDZ. Additional information regarding the status of this agreement is necessary to determine the implications of this potential overlap.

(f) Stormwater Study Peer Review Working Group

The work for this group is being performed by an independent consultant. It is expected to be completed and available for peer review in March of 2000. The consultants did not meet with either the consultant or the peer review group, and are not aware of the status of their work. For this reason, it is unclear how the work will impact the Sector Plan in terms of land use decisions. It is believed that persistent drought conditions in the area have made the task of this group extremely difficult. Some of the parties interviewed expressed doubts about the validity

Bradfordville Sector Plan

Leon County, Florida

of results that may have to be based on data derived from a literature search rather than empirical data derived from observations in the study area.

(g) Summary of Working Group Status and Conclusions

At the time of the meetings, only one of the working groups had completed its report. The recommendations of this group are not likely to affect the Sector Plan significantly. This is also the case of other groups that may be producing regulatory recommendations, such as the Conservation and Preservation group. However, the input of the other four groups, which have not concluded (and in some cases scarcely begun) their work, may have some potentially significant impacts on land use policies in the Sector Plan, particularly those involving the development of the Bradfordville commercial core. In most cases, it is unknown when these groups will have their recommendations available for review*.

*Since the completion of this paper, the Commercial Computations Group has presented two sets of recommendations, reflecting divergent methodological and policy positions between County staff and the Home Owner Associations (plaintiffs). Consultant review of the results and recommendations of these two parties is ongoing.

Bradfordville Sector Plan

Leon County, Florida

4. Key Issues

In the next step of the planning process, the consultants –working with staff and the community– will use the best available data and the overarching ideas solicited from the stakeholders to develop alternative scenarios that illustrate concepts for the achievable future development of the Bradfordville Study Area which are consistent with Comprehensive Plan policies.

Although a clear vision has yet to be articulated as to what the Bradfordville area should be or look like in the future, the following are key considerations for the development of the alternative scenarios, based upon the stakeholder interviews and Working Group meetings:

- ***Potential reconfiguration/re-examination of development within the Bradfordville commercial center:***
 - “Village Center” concept
 - Land assembly potential
 - PDR or outright land acquisition
 - Mix of land uses and diversity of housing types
 - Public spaces
 - Street connectivity
- ***Consideration of additional/different development and/or design standards***
 - Architectural design
 - Site development
 - Street and streetscape design
 - Location of buildings and relationship between buildings
 - Landscape design
- ***Potential reassessment of rural land use designations:***
 - Rural / Suburban land use hierarchy or tiers
 - Conservation Development Subdivision (clustering) concept
 - Greenway system/habitat protection mechanisms
- ***Consideration of roadway typologies***
 - Rural standards
 - Suburban standards
 - Scenic standards
- ***Revision of Comprehensive Plan policies for consistency and clarity***
 - Internal consistency and consistency with other sections of Comp Plan
 - Updated conditions
 - Definition of terms