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When I was first running for office, I identified five key issues that I believed would serve as a foundation to grow and enhance our city. These issues remain valid today and are; (1) increasing transparency, (2) improving public services, (3) instilling fiscal responsibility, (4) the use of smart growth principles to guide city development, and (5) to make Groveland a city that other small cities could use as model.

This newsletter focuses on the city’s efforts in creating a suite of master plans as well as its efforts to employ the principles of Smart Growth to guide the future development of the city. Both of these actions directly impact across all five of the issues I identified above.

Smart Growth

Smart growth is an alignment of planning and development that seeks to make the most efficient use of the land and creating transportation patterns to support those uses. The three foundational elements are; supporting businesses, worker development and quality of life.

Smart growth starts with a strong vision and strategic blueprint for the future of the city. In addition to the strategic vision there needs to be a tactical element that identifies short-term focus, activities and investments. Additionally, the tactical elements will work to address barriers and challenges to the longer-term strategic goals and visions.

As Joseph Blakeman of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee observed, “Smart growth encourages and fosters the small-town structure of close-knit, pedestrian friendly towns, with bustling town centers. Smart growth discourages ever expanding towns with excessive driving, emptying downtowns, and increased taxes to pay for additional infrastructure”.

Future Land Use – Comprehensive Plan

The City of Groveland recently submitted its revised Future Land Use Component of its Comprehensive Plan to the Department of Economic Opportunity Under the State of Florida for review. This plan lays out the vision for the future of Groveland, which embraces its agriculture history

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and desires to be a unique and charming destination. The plan calls for nearly 60% of the total land mass to remain as open space or agriculture, celebrating its natural beauty and fostering an environmentally sensitive approach to development.

## Community Development Code

The City is creating a Community Development Code that is focused on a relationship with nature and people through transect based zoning. A transect is a section, or zone, within an area that has its own set of rules. All zones embody one of the most fundamental principles of nature, which is diversity.

In the city's proposed code, Groveland's transect zones will include the following key elements:

- Walkable blocks and complete streets
- Parks, trails, and open space
- Diverse housing
- Mixed Use (retail, office, schools, residential)

Details on the concepts of the new code, including examples, graphics and pictures can be found on the city website at: <https://www.groveland-fl.gov/506/Community-Development-Code-Update>

### Walkable Blocks and Complete Streets

Whether it's a Town, Village, or Hamlet, walkability will be an essential aspect of all new communities developed in Groveland. Here is how the City of Groveland is taking big steps toward making our communities more walkable through our new Community Development Code. First, each new community will be planned around a **five-minute** walking range or, as we call it a "**walk shed**". This means all residential lots are to be an easy five-minute walk away from their community's mixed-use core.

Second, within each walk shed, streets will be interconnected by using smaller blocks to increase connectivity. This is important because it provides several routes to get from point A to B. We're also introducing mid-block pedestrian pathways that further increase safe and comfortable routes for walking.

Third is that each new street will achieve the ideal **building height to street width ratio**. Fourth, the new code will include an illustrated glossary of **thoroughfare types** with specific design standards for main streets, residential streets, and alleys.

Lastly, our new **transect zoning standards** will require buildings on main streets to be built closer to wide sidewalks and include awnings, large store-front windows and entrances, sidewalk cafes, and pedestrian scale signs. This creates an engaging, welcoming place for people rather than vehicles. On our residential streets, buildings are to be setback a bit more to make way for landscaped yards and large front porches which encourage neighborly interactions. More information on this element of the code can be found at: <https://www.groveland-fl.gov/517/Taking-Steps-Toward-Walkability>

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## Parks Trails and Open Spaces

Groveland's new Community Development Code drastically improves how we approach parks and trails in two very important ways. First, we are increasing the percentage of land to be allocated toward open space to: **15% in the Town, 30% in the Village, and 50% in the Hamlet**. Not only are the percentages much higher than they currently are, but developers will no longer be able to use water bodies and wetlands as open space credit.

The second way we are improving parks and trails in the code is by defining a diversity of Open Space Types, including: **Greens, Squares, Plazas, Pocket Parks, Mid-block Passages, and Greenway Trails**. Each of these types will include their own standards to include; size, dimensions, and fixtures (such as canopy trees, benches, walk paths, and decorative lighting). More importantly, it all serves a variety of purposes, such as going for a bicycle ride, walking your dog, playing with the kids, watching a movie in the park, or sipping coffee and relaxing. New communities will include a mix of these Open Space Types, all within walking distance.

In addition to the improved code standards, we are also preparing a city-wide Parks and Trails Master Plan and rolling out a new Community Greenspace Grant program to help residents enhance open space in existing neighborhoods. More information on this element of the code can be found at: <https://www.groveland-fl.gov/511/The-Value-of-parks-and-Trails>

## Diverse Housing

There is not a "one size fits all" approach to housing. Unfortunately in most communities today, options are limited to single family home subdivisions or large-scale apartment complexes. This lack of diversity has left a gap in the housing market referred to as **Missing Middle Housing**. Missing Middle Housing is a spectrum of different housing types that can be nestled into communities designed with traditional neighborhood principles. Commonly built prior to World War II, Missing Middle Housing types can include **single family detached houses with accessory dwelling units (ADUs), duplexes, triplexes, four-plexes, garden apartments, townhomes, and live/work townhomes**.

In effort to ensure residents have a variety of housing options to choose from, Groveland's new **Form Based Code** will allow for a greater flexibility of housing types, all typically at the scale of a "house". For example, the code will continue to permit single family detached homes, but will also allow for duplexes, triplexes or four-plexes as long as they are built to the size and scale of a single-family detached house. It will also give residents the option to have an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) (i.e. garage apartment, granny flat) in the back. In the Downtown's Center zone, the options increase further. Here the city will allow lots to be split into smaller lots that can house bungalows, townhomes, or garden apartments.

However, if downtown living isn't for you, that's also OK. Groveland is also setting aside plenty of land for larger five acre lots ideal for country living and farming. Overall, Groveland will offer plenty of housing types throughout the transect. More on this element of the code can be found at: <https://www.groveland-fl.gov/522/Missing-Middle-Housing>.

## Mixed Use/Traditional Neighborhood

New Urbanism, which started in the 1980s, promotes environmentally friendly habitats by creating walkable neighborhoods with a diversity of housing and job types. This practice was very common before the rise of the automobile, prior to World War II. How ironic that decades later we're seeing urbanistic charm in new communities all over America, including the City of Groveland.

The heartbeat of New Urbanism encompasses 10 major principles. These principles are: (1) Walkability, (2) Connectivity, (3) Mixed Use and Diversity, (4) Mixed Housing, (5) Quality Architecture and Urban Design, (6) Traditional Neighborhood Structure, (7) Increased Density, (8) Green Transportation, (9) Sustainability, and (10) Quality of Life. However, the focus here is the principle of "Traditional Neighborhood".

To examine the principles and concepts of a Traditional Neighborhood, it is very important to start with understanding Urban Sprawl. Urban Sprawl is the expansion of human population away from central urban areas into low density areas. This is accomplished by creating a separation of uses that includes housing subdivisions, shopping centers, office parks, civic institutions, and roadways. So, how did we go from the old walkable neighborhood to the urban sprawl of today?

Traditional neighborhoods are the complete opposite of urban sprawl. Traditional neighborhoods are like one big bowl of gumbo, everything comes together perfectly for one delicious taste. Traditional neighborhoods create a compact mix of uses, which provides walkability, a healthier lifestyle, preservation of open spaces, reduction of vehicle congestion, and most importantly bringing life back to communities through live, work, and play in the neighborhood.

There are six (6) fundamental rules for Traditional Neighborhood Development that distinguishes it from Urban Sprawl.

- **The Center-** A neighborhood that includes a variety of mixed uses such as residential, commercial, parks and public institutions.
- **The Five-Minute Walk-** More conducive to pedestrian daily life needs of living, working, and shopping, instead of automobile transit commuting.
- **The Street Network-** Multiple access street connections which will allow a driver if needed to alter their route to avoid heavy traffic.
- **Narrow, Versatile Streets-** Allow traffic to slow down and allow for parallel on street parking that will enhance wider sidewalks, shade trees, and buildings close to the street.
- **Mixed Use-** The mix of allowed uses and building sizes within walking distance.
- **Special Sites for Special Buildings-** Structures that represent the collective identity and aspirations of the community, such as schools, civic buildings, and places of worship all located near each other.

While I have focused on Traditional Housing, it is important to keep all 10 principles in mind as together they seek to improve our quality of life and preserve our environment. Many of us

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have chosen Groveland because of its natural beauty and open spaces. More information on this element can be found at: <https://www.groveland-fl.gov/529/New-Urbanism>.

## Master Plans

Developing a master plan requires the participation of a large variety of stakeholders and provide the citizens of the city a chance to help forge the future development of the city. A master plan is long-range in its view, providing a comprehensive understanding of a specific element of the city such as parks or transportation. It is a statement of public policy as it defines the city's vision for the scope and type of services that will be provided within that sector of the city. The plan also serves as a guide to future decision making in areas such as budget, capital improvements and future development to name a few. In short, a master plan helps to guide a city and all its stakeholders as the city seeks to move from what it presently is to what it would like to be in the future. The key to a master plan is that it needs to be living document that not only serves as a blueprint for the future, but provides a roadmap to achieve that future.

### Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The city entered into an agreement with Barth Associates in May to prepare a Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Master Plan. This plan will serve as a guide for the development and management of parks and recreation, open space, public services and facilities in the City of Groveland. The development of this plan will include input from the public, so watch for announcements. You are also invited to attend the meetings of the city's Recreational Advisory Committee. It is expected that the first public workshop on this effort will be in the next few months.

In developing this plan, the Barth Associates and the city will:

- Review the Groveland Comprehensive Plan and other documents as needed to provide background information on parks, trails, demographics, priorities, vision, connectivity goals and other related elements
- Solicit public participation
- Evaluate and identify short and long-range vision
- Develop an inventory of existing parks and recreation facilities, and analysis of parks and facilities
- Identify current and future needs and recreation trends
- Identify potential for improved utilization of existing parks
- Evaluate potential future park and open space acquisitions
- Evaluate open space and conservation lands (public and private)
- Evaluate the need for level of service standards
- Evaluate recreation planning standards
- Evaluate the need for neighborhood parks
- Review plans by, and in coordination with other entities including the State of Florida, Lake County Parks, Lake County School District, and St. Johns River Water Management District
- Identify potential funding sources and strategies

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- Draft a Master Plan and recommendations

## **Water/Wastewater Master Plan**

One of the issues the City of Groveland faced in its utility department was a tendency to manage reactively. Much effort was spent doing fixes rather than ensuring the system could meet the current demands. Additionally, actions often were taken to solve a problem of the present, such as how to pipe water to a new community. These actions often did not examine potential future needs, which has resulted in duplicating supply lines to get adequate service for the expanded number of users. Furthermore, there was also a tendency to treat different aspects of utility work separately. The result of this approach was that many times it led to duplicate work, inefficiencies, and sub-optimal capital investment.

In February of 2020, the city contracted with Woodard & Curran, Inc., to develop a Utility Master Plan (UMP). Under this contract, they are to address the immediate, short-term, and long-term needs for capital projects and maintenance and operations of all City of Groveland drinking water, wastewater, and reclaimed water assets and systems. The data-driven strategic planning effort is expected to result in the production of an UMP and associated documentation to substantiate a Capital Improvements Program (CIP). The UMP will also include funding strategies for and professional assistance in applying for, securing, and administering funds from various agencies and sources.

The creation of the UMP will allow the city to be more proactive than reactive in providing vital services to the residents and businesses of the city. Through a well-crafted CIP, the city will be able to ensure the level of service meets the level of need. It will also allow the city to properly budget for future improvements, find outside funding for those improvements and minimize rate increases for those services.

## **Storm Water Master Plan**

A stormwater master plan was recently completed and presented to the city. This plan builds upon the 2006 Stormwater Master Plan, focusing on the downtown area that lays within the city's Community Redevelopment Area (CRA). The plan identifies the improvements and conveyance systems, and associated capital costs, to prepare off-site stormwater storage for parcels located within the downtown CRA.

Identified improvements in the plan include potential expansion of the proposed Florida Department of Transportation ponds associated with the SR-50 realignment project, additional storm water vaults and conveyance systems and the potential use of pervious paving systems replacing asphalt.

## **Transportation Master Plan**

A Transportation Master Plan (TMP) will provide a long-term multi-modal transportation vision

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for the City of Groveland. It is a planning tool that will assist the city in determining its long term transportation needs. The TMP, when adopted, will function as a reliable 5-7 year road map for future transportation investments throughout the City.

The overall purpose of the TMP is to equitably address the transportation challenges facing the City in a strategic manner within the fiscal constraints of the City's budget and limited state and federal funding. The TMP will be coordinated with regional plans and investments, striking a balance between community livability and mobility. When adopted, it will provide stakeholders with an understanding of the city's transportation patterns and vision so they can better plan for the placement of industry, retail/commercial establishments and housing.

As the city moves forward, there is a desire to make the community more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. The TMP will help us achieve this vision by identifying a system of street bike routes, multi-use trails and side paths located along streets. It will also serve to inform the federal, state and regional transportation planning authorities of the goals and visions of the city and how they align with the objectives of those other organizations. The TMP represents a multi-level partnership between local, state, and federal policy-makers and the citizens, business owners, and stakeholders who are most impacted by transportation decisions

## Upcoming Events

Below are some events the city is planning for the coming months. However, with the current limitations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, some of these events may not occur or their dates may change.

|                      |                                          |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Aug 1 <sup>st</sup>  | Back to School Backpack Day              |
| Sept 5 <sup>th</sup> | Labor Day celebration and Chili cook-off |
| Oct 24 <sup>th</sup> | Halloween costume contest                |
| Nov 2 <sup>nd</sup>  | Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)     |
| Nov 11 <sup>th</sup> | Veterans Day Celebration                 |
| Dec 12 <sup>th</sup> | Annual Christmas Parade                  |

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Thank you for your interest in the city.

**Mike Smith**

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