

Martin County Past Western Lands Studies

Project/ Study Name	Year of Study	Project/ Study Abbreviation	Prepared by	Description of Study	Summary Status of Study
The 2020 Vision For a Sustainable Martin County	1999		Glatting Jackson	<p>On November 4, 1997 Martin County was designated a Sustainable Community by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) in a Sustainable Communities Demonstration Project. DCA awarded funds to Martin County to create a Vision Plan for the entire County. The objective of the Vision Plan was to bring together a wide range of business, civic, educational, environmental, governmental and human service representatives, along with interested citizens, to reach consensus on the goals and strategies that would result in a sustainable Martin County by the year 2020. A broad based committee was convened as part of the Vision Plan process. The Vision Plan was kicked off with a workshop on December 1 and 2, 1998. A total of seven community workshops were held across the County in January and February 1999. Approximately, 700 participants attended one of more of the workshops. A survey was administered to obtain public opinion on the guiding principles of sustainability. In addition to formulating and adopting a Vision Plan on July 13, 2000 the County identified sustainability "indicators" and sought to develop ways to measure progress toward reaching those goals or indicators.</p>	<p>Martin County has made progress toward realizing the goals of the 2020 Vision Plan, particularly through environmental land acquisition, CRA planning in seven distinct areas, and the development of commercial design standards. Efforts like the Sustainable Martin Alliance and the Martin 101 education program reflect strong commitments to civic engagement and environmental stewardship. However, critical components of the Vision Plan remain uncodified, including the sustainability indicators and several key planning mechanisms. From 2003–2009, the County attempted to track indicators through budget reports, but some metrics—like the number of “uninsurable residences”—proved too vague or dependent on inaccessible private data. As a result, monitoring progress has been inconsistent and lacks measurable benchmarks. The absence of a unified Countywide Master Plan, incomplete integration of DCA’s Best Development Practices, and the lack of a dedicated urban designer continue to hinder full realization of the Vision’s guiding principles. To strengthen implementation, the County should prioritize codifying the Vision Plan, updating and clarifying measurable indicators, and formalizing interagency coordination through sustainable governance structures. Additionally, expanding the use of civic tools (e.g., public workshops, indicators review) and design standards across all community sectors will enhance both accountability and design quality.</p>
Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan	2000	CERP	U.S. Congress	<p>The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) is the single largest restoration program underway in the South Florida Ecosystem. The CERP, authorized by the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2000, is implemented by a federal-state partnership to restore, protect, and preserve the region’s water resources by addressing the quantity, quality, timing, and distribution (QQTD) of water. CERP projects are categorized by “generation” reflecting their year of authorization. The State of Florida and the South Florida Water Management District have so far invested approximately \$2.3 billion in CERP-related land acquisition, project design and construction.</p>	<p>As of 2025, significant progress has been made on several key environmental restoration projects in Martin County and surrounding areas under the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). Two major projects—the Allapattah Flats Wetland Restoration and the C-44 Reservoir and Stormwater Treatment Area (STA)—have been fully completed and are operational, providing substantial water quality improvements, flood mitigation, and habitat restoration benefits. Meanwhile, the C-23/C-24 STA and Atlantic Ridge projects are partially completed. Land acquisition and initial construction are underway for these sites, but full hydrologic restoration and infrastructure components, such as the North Reservoir, remain under development. The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project and the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project are still in the planning and early implementation phases, with construction either just beginning or awaiting further design approvals.</p> <p>To ensure continued progress, strategies should include accelerating land acquisition efforts, securing sustained federal and state funding, streamlining interagency coordination, and prioritizing shovel-ready components that can deliver early environmental benefits. Public-private partnerships and local stakeholder engagement can also play a key role in advancing long-term ecosystem restoration goals across the region.</p>
Martin-St. Lucie Regional Land-Use Study	2002		Renaissance Planning Group & TCRPC	<p>The Regional Land Use Study is intended to address some of the major regional growth management issues facing the St. Lucie County and Martin County study area, identify possible courses of action, and set a regional framework for improved coordination of land use and transportation decisions. Phase I of the study was completed in January 2002 and recommended an integrated land use and transportation vision that clusters study area development into transit-oriented and pedestrian friendly Community Centers. Transit stops are the focal point of the centers, with the pedestrian friendly design extending at least a quarter mile from the station. Phase II of the study was completed in May of 2003 and focused on how Community Centers can be developed in the study area. The implementation tools developed during Phase II are intended to be helpful guides that localities can adapt and use to implement the Community Centers envisioned by the Phase I analysis.</p>	<p>The Regional Land Use Study, developed in two phases, proposes the creation of Community Centers—compact, mixed-use, transit-oriented areas—to improve mobility, guide land use, and preserve environmental resources across St. Lucie and Martin Counties. Phase I established the vision and engaged the public, while Phase II offered tools for local implementation, including policy templates and planning strategies. The overarching goals include reducing automobile dependence through multimodal corridors like US 1, enhancing regional connectivity, and concentrating development to limit sprawl. This vision aligns closely with Martin County’s objectives for its Western Lands, which are characterized by agriculture, rural communities, and environmentally sensitive areas meant to remain largely undeveloped or developed in a low-impact, sustainable manner. By directing growth into designated centers, the Community Centers concept supports the County’s Urban Service Boundary policy, helping preserve the rural character and natural assets of the west.</p> <p>Several strategies have already been partially implemented, such as the identification of Community Centers in CRA and Comprehensive Plans, improved transit and pedestrian infrastructure, and redevelopment initiatives like the Village Green Master Plan. New developments like Newfield (fka Pineland Prairie) located near the western edge of urban development, exemplify how Community Centers can buffer against sprawl while supporting walkable, multimodal communities. However, the overall vision remains only partially realized. Many essential components—such as formal Multimodal Transportation District (MMTD) designations, countywide design standards, specific land use policy amendments, and codified Community Center classifications by scale—are still missing or underdeveloped. The implementation of density and intensity standards, connectivity and internal circulation requirements, and performance zoning/fiscal incentives remains largely unaddressed.</p>
Rural and Agricultural Lands Inventory	2003	RALI	Eckbo, Dean, Austin, and Williams (EDAW)	<p>The Rural and Agricultural Lands Study provides an assessment of the land use pattern of the rural and agricultural lands lying outside the Primary Urban Service District and provides policy options for preserving the character of these areas. This study was prepared for Martin County by EDAW, a planning consultant with experience in rural and agricultural land preservation issues.</p>	<p>Martin County has made partial progress implementing recommendations from its Rural and Agricultural Lands Study. Tasks 1 and 2—the land inventory and agricultural economic impact analysis—have been fully completed and accepted. However, Tasks 3 and 4, which addressed cost-benefit analysis and alternative conservation strategies, were received but not formally endorsed by the County Commission. While Martin County has implemented several conservation tools—such as wetland and upland habitat preservation policies, right-to-farm protections, and discretionary agricultural easements—key tools remain underutilized or unimplemented, including a formal Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program, cluster zoning overlay outside urban service boundaries, and a comprehensive agricultural zoning framework aligned with conservation goals. Additionally, although the County has access to state and federal conservation programs (e.g., ACEP, CRP, CREP), it doesn’t have any locally driven tax credit or incentive programs.</p> <p>To strengthen rural land conservation and smart growth, it is recommended that Martin County explore formal adoption of a TDR program, develop countywide cluster zoning policies with clear standards, and enhance agricultural zoning codes to include sliding-scale density or area-based allowances.</p>
Rural Lands Symposium	2003	RLS	Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC)	<p>The Rural Lands Symposium was an oral presentation panel discussion in 2003 on New Land Development Measures to Include Agriculture.</p>	<p>Martin County has made partial progress in addressing agricultural preservation and sprawl-related goals. However, agriculture is not fully integrated as a central force in community planning, and there is no formal mechanism for early farmer engagement in the planning process. While state and federal incentive programs are utilized, local incentives to help farmers retain agricultural land are limited, and no significant density increases have been adopted to help balance affordable housing and land conservation. To strengthen outcomes, the County should institutionalize farmer participation in early planning stages, develop local financial incentives for agricultural land retention, and revisit residential density policies to better align with affordable housing and conservation goals. A more holistic, data-informed planning process—one that bridges agricultural, residential, and environmental interests—will be essential for preserving the rural landscape and ensuring agriculture remains a valued and viable part of Martin County’s future.</p>

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Sustainable Treasure Coast	2005		Committee for a Sustainable Treasure Coast	On March 30, 2004, Governor Bush signed Executive Order No. 04-61 creating the Committee for a Sustainable Treasure Coast. At the request of Senator Ken Pruitt, the Governor asked a panel of citizens from Martin, St. Lucie and Indian River Counties to study the challenges and opportunities facing their region and to recommend actions and tools that could be used to maintain a sustainable quality of life within the region.	Progress has been made toward preserving rural lands and supporting sustainable agriculture through a combination of land use planning, environmental restoration efforts, and partnerships with UF/IFAS. Tools like clustering, Rural Lifestyle designations, and wetland buffers are in place, and major milestones—such as the C-44 Reservoir and protection of over 71,000 acres in the Florida Wildlife Corridor have been achieved. There is an absence of a comprehensive Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program, no formal countywide rural preservation targets, limited cross-community engagement, and a lack of structured Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) or service exchange models. Additionally, there is no unified, long-term agricultural strategy, despite strong institutional support. To close these gaps, the County should prioritize finalizing the TDR program, reestablishing a formal stakeholder or stewardship body, setting countywide acreage goals, formalizing PES mechanisms, and developing a comprehensive agricultural viability plan in collaboration with public and private partners. These steps would help create a more resilient, equitable, and ecologically integrated rural landscape. Also, the plan recommends a not for profit organization be created to support the implementation of the Principles described. It recommended Florida Atlantic University and Indian River Community College create an institute that would provide data and research needed to implement the Principles. No information available on whether these actions have occurred or not.
Development Patterns Study	2007	DPS	Glatting Jackson	In 2005, Martin County contracted with Glatting Jackson to conduct a Development Patterns Study of Martin County. It was designed to study alternative development patterns that might be appropriate for consideration in Martin County.	Significant gaps remain in the implementation of land use reforms aimed at discouraging inefficient rural sprawl. Key recommendations such as regulating the 20-acre and 5-acre development patterns, adopting a countywide TDR program, incentivizing cluster and urban settlement patterns, and updating planning horizons have not been enacted. Additionally, critical mechanisms like conservation easements tied to development, long-term management funding, and comprehensive mapping for strategic acquisitions are outdated or lacking. To close these gaps, the County should prioritize: (1) establishing a formal TDR program with clear incentives and conservation requirements; (2) updating and consolidating land acquisition maps; (3) revising the Land Development Code to support compact rural and urban settlement patterns; and (4) reintroducing community planning processes like Special Area Plans to balance development with public benefit. These strategies will better align land use with environmental and community goals, ensuring long-term rural preservation and smarter growth.
Land Protection Incentives Amendment (Valliere Amendment)	2008	LPIA	Created by the Martin County Board of County Commissioners Reviewed by the Florida Department of Community Affairs	In 2007, the Martin County Commission passed two ordinances (Ordinance 777 and Ordinance 781) amending the Martin County Comprehensive Growth Management Plan. The first amendment, known as the Land Protection Incentives Amendment (Land Protection Amendment), was submitted to create opportunities for permanent preservation of contiguous open space, environmentally sensitive land, and agricultural land use while maintaining residential capacity. The Land Protection Amendment created an optional development design for parcels of 500 acres or more (located "outside" the boundaries of the county's Primary Urban Services District and Secondary Urban Services District), by authorizing clusters of residential units on smaller lots than the current minimum (20 acres), while maintaining the density status quo, and permanently setting aside at least 50% of the parcel for preservation, continued agricultural use, or surface water management projects.	The Land Protection Amendment, while adopted in 2007 with the intent of incentivizing permanent preservation of sensitive lands through clustered development, has not been utilized due to its complexity, lack of density incentives, and the requirement for concurrent PUD and Comprehensive Plan amendments. To increase effectiveness, the County should simplify the amendment process, introduce meaningful density or procedural incentives, and provide clearer guidance on public benefit criteria. Streamlining requirements and making the program more predictable and appealing could unlock its potential as a key tool for balancing growth with long-term land conservation.
St. Lucie Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP)	2013	BMAP	St. Lucie River and Estuary Basin stakeholders, identified below, with participation from affected local, regional, and state governmental interests; elected officials and citizens; and private interests Organized by Florida Department of Environmental Protection.	The St. Lucie River and Estuary Basin is located in southeast Florida in Martin, St. Lucie, and Okeechobee Counties. The St. Lucie Estuary is a major tributary to the Southern Indian River Lagoon (IRL-S). The basin is an economically important area where water quality is affected by freshwater runoff from agricultural and urban sources in the watershed and Lake Okeechobee (South Florida Water Management District [SFWMD] 2012a). To address the nutrient impacts in this important basin, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection adopted Total Maximum Daily Loads to reduce the watershed nutrient inputs to the river and estuary. This Basin Management Action Plan represents the joint efforts of multiple stakeholders to prepare a blueprint for water quality restoration for the St. Lucie River and Estuary to work towards achieving the adopted TMDLs to restore the waterbodies in the basin. The BMAP includes projects to reduce watershed nutrient loading and a monitoring plan to guide effective long-term restoration efforts. The BMAP was developed as part of Florida's TMDL Program. Stakeholder involvement is critical to the success of the TMDL Program.	Significant progress has been made in Martin County's western lands toward meeting the nutrient reduction and water storage goals of the St. Lucie River and Estuary Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP). Multiple regional and dispersed water storage projects—such as Caulkins, Scott, and Bluefield Grove Water Farms—have been constructed on agricultural lands in western Martin County, collectively providing tens of thousands of acre-feet in annual storage and nutrient attenuation. These projects are instrumental in reducing harmful freshwater discharges to the estuary and achieving TMDL targets. Despite this progress, nutrient loading from agricultural and rural stormwater runoff remains a challenge. Gaps persist in fully implementing source control measures and enrolling all eligible lands in Best Management Practices (BMPs), with only 62% agricultural BMP adoption as of 2022. To address these gaps, continued expansion of cost-share programs, full implementation of regulatory source control via the amendment of Chapter 40E-61, and improved performance tracking are recommended. The western lands of Martin County represent a critical landscape for restoration, storage, and long-term water quality improvements, and continued investment in these areas is essential to the success of the BMAP and the protection of the St. Lucie Estuary.
Rural Lifestyle Land Use Presentation	2022	RLPUD	Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC)	The Rural Lifestyle future land use designation permits communities with a minimum 1,000 acres contiguous to a Primary, Secondary or Freestanding urban service district. Or, it permits communities with a minimum 3,000 acres within 6,000 feet of a Primary or Freestanding urban service district. Each Rural Lifestyle community must be developed pursuant to a Planned unit Development (PUD) agreement approved by the Board of County Commissioners.	The Rural Lifestyle future land use designation, a text amendment, was adopted by Ordinance 1185 on September 13, 2022 and amended by Ordinance 1222 on April 30, 2024. The Rural Lifestyle text was further modified by Ordinance 1232 on October 22, 2024 to change the number of bedrooms permitted with each golf cottage. December 10, 2024: The Martin County Board of County Commissioners discussed a text amendment to the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan revising the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation. Work on additional changes to the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation ceased with the adoption of Senate Bill 180 (2025) which prohibits new development restrictions for 3 years.

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Martin 2040: The Western Lands Study	2024	Martin 2040	1000 Friends of Florida, Guardians of Martin County, & University of Florida's Center for Landscape Conservation Planning	<p>Under the sponsorship of the Guardians of Martin County, and utilizing research conducted by the University of Florida's Center for Landscape Conservation Planning (CLCP), 1000 Friends of Florida hosted a workshop in Stuart on December 11 to share a presentation projecting the impacts on land use, the environment and the local economy by the year 2040 if Martin County continues to follow its current patterns for growth and development as it absorbs a projected population increase for the period.</p> <p>1000FOF reviewed how the county can aim for a more prosperous, resilient future, and maintain its high quality of life and largely undeveloped western lands, through prudent urban planning, directing growth within its urban services districts and preserving environmentally valuable natural and agricultural lands. Two land development projections for 2040 — one following current patterns of growth, and one directing growth toward urban services districts while preserving undeveloped western lands — were developed by CLCP researchers with additional input from the Guardians and Martin County staff.</p>	<p>Martin County has made progress under the Martin 2040 Plan in preserving its natural and agricultural western lands, leveraging local sales tax revenue through the Martin County Forever program to protect critical conservation areas and buffer waterbodies from development. Land use policies discouraging development in areas lacking water and sewer infrastructure are helping to curb sprawl, while initiatives such as septic-to-sewer conversions and advanced wastewater treatment grants are gradually addressing long-term water quality concerns. Collaboration with land trusts and state programs should be expanded to maximize conservation outcomes. As climate change and population pressures intensify, proactive planning—including resilience strategies and targeted infill development—will be essential to preserving the rural character and environmental integrity of Martin County's western lands. The Martin 2040 study did not make detailed recommendations about density increases would be necessary inside the Urban Service Districts to accommodate projected population growth.</p>

Key Contacts/ Departments/ Agencies

Topics	Department/Agencies	Contact Name	Email	Additional Contact Information
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Relevant Project Inquiries
2020 Vision for Sustainable M.C. (VSMC-19)
2020 Vision for Sustainable M.C. (VSMC-22)
2020 Vision for Sustainable M.C. (VSMC-30)
2020 Vision for Sustainable M.C. (VSMC-30)

2020 Vision for a Sustainable Martin County - 1999

Relevant Links: <https://www.ordinancewatch.com/files/localgovernment/localgovernment15608.pdf>

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
Overall Vision ↓					
VSMC-01	Vision	Preserve Wetlands, Critical Uplands			
VSMC-02	Vision	Preserve, Strengthen Agriculture			
VSMC-03	Vision	Contain Development through the Urban Services Boundary (USB)			
VSMC-04	Vision	<p>Create Livable Communities (within the USB)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vibrant city, town, village centers that serve surrounding neighborhoods, with a max. 4 story building height • Strong Neighborhoods • Extensive system of local streets, sidewalks, and bikeways • Strategically located, high quality schools, libraries, post offices and other public buildings • Functional, attractive infrastructure • Extensive system of parks, greenways and open spaces • Strong development standards re: density, height, aesthetics 		<p>These vision statements have been partially implemented through established Community Redevelopment Areas, septic to sewer projects and continued implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.</p>	
Guiding Principles/ Indicators ↓					
VSMC-05	Conserve & Recycle Precious Community Resources	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratio between recycled vs. landfilled material Ratio between renewable/ non-renewable energy use % Urban Services Area dedicated to parks and open space 	Environmental	<p>Partially tracked</p> <p>The 2020 FDEP Report mentions: 300,048 landfilled tons and 253,524 recycled tons https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/Martin_2020_0.pdf</p>	Utilities, Growth Management, Parks and Recreation, and Solid Waste Department
VSMC-06	Use Resources Efficiently	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in agricultural water consumption Gross/ per capita energy use Gross/ per capita water use 	Environmental	Partially tracked	Utilities and FPL
VSMC-07	Protect & Enhance Natural Resources Land & Wetlands	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of environmental lands managed % of protected land/ conservation area, public park # of acres of restored wetlands # of septic tanks in critical areas Water: Water quality index measured at specific sites # of diseased fish reported Air: Air quality index measured at specific sites 	Environmental	<p>Partially tracked</p> <p>Environmental lands managed: 35,000 Total conservation lands: 70,000-100,000 acres Acres of restored wetlands: 6,700 acres (Allapattah Flats) + 4,000 acres (Culpepper Ranch in progress) Septic tanks in critical areas: 3,500 converted, 4,000 ongoing, 3,000+ planned. Water quality, diseased fish, and air quality tracked by FWC and FDEP.</p>	Environment
VSMC-08	Foster community belonging, unique sense of community identity	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of gateways/ entrance signs # of homeowner/ neighborhood associations 	Land Use	Gateway signs have been established for each of the Community Redevelopment Areas.	CRA and Property Appraiser
VSMC-09	Encourage compact, mixed-use, residential, commercial, institutional pedestrian-oriented development	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of mixed-use land use in CRA's (single family, multifamily, commercial) Increase in areas developed in mixed-use Distance to neighborhood store(s) 	Land Use		CRA
VSMC-10	Encourage redevelopment & infill development within the USB	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of building permits in established neighborhoods- new & renovation Increased tax value within CRA's 	Land Use		Building Department and CRA

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VSMC-11	Protect & enhance existing neighborhoods	Indicators: Increased taxable value in established neighborhoods # of building permits in established neighborhoods- new and renovation Membership in neighborhood associations # of code enforcement complaints	Land Use		Building Department, Property Appraiser, and Code Enforcement
VSMC-12	Emphasize quality design, aesthetic of built environment	Indicators: Linear feet of streetscaped roads Design standards adapted	Transportation		MPO
VSMC-13	Create walkable neighborhoods, including existing, with amenities	Indicators: # of street miles with sidewalks/ bike lanes # of bike lane intersections	Transportation	Tracked SRTS Grant funded sidewalks around schools. There are 362 Street miles w/ sidewalks, 130 street mi w/ bike lanes, and 98 miles of multimodal pathways/trails.	MPO
VSMC-14	Maintain an open space network with linkages to neighborhood parks, recreation areas, and natural areas	Indicators: Distance from home to neighborhood parks # of park acres per 1,000 people	Land Use	Distance from home to neighborhood parks, not tracked	Growth Management
VSMC-15	Integrate open spaces, conservation areas, multi-modal transportation into neighborhoods	Indicators: # residences within 3/4 mile of a conservation area # acres public open space accessible for recreation	Land Use	Residences within 3/4 mile of conservation area, not tracked.	Environment
VSMC-16	Protect & celebrate community heritage & historically significant facilities	Indicators: # of facilities on National Historic Register # of historically/ architecturally significant buildings # of attendees at museums, cultural sites, performances & events	Land Use	Tracked	Tourism and Historical Society
VSMC-17	Encourage traditional communities, integrate gated communities	Indicators: % of residents in gated communities % of gated communities with more than one entrance	Land Use		Growth Management
VSMC-18	Preserve & promote agricultural areas	Indicators: Acres of agricultural land % Acres of agricultural land (by use category)	Land Use	Partially tracked UF/IFAS pulls down information from Property Appraiser.	Property Appraiser and UF/IFAS
VSMC-19	Utilize advanced production systems	Indicators: \$ Value of annual production Amount of key agricultural index (product vs. acres in production)	Land Use	Partially tracked	Property Appraiser and UF/IFAS
VSMC-20	Maintain a clearly defined edge between urban & rural areas	Indicators: # Miles of USB frontage acquired/ controlled by County/ other public agencies	Land Use		Growth Management
VSMC-21	Recognize and plan for potential natural disasters	Indicators: # of people, businesses at risk in case of natural disaster # of uninsurable residences, businesses	Land Use	Not tracked	BDB and Emergency Management

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VSMC-22	Provide a highly connected street network compromised of small narrow roads & redesign existing arterials, design new collectors to be grand public spaces	Indicators: # of parallel corridors for each collector/ arterial % of commercial destinations that arrives via local street % of miles of planted medians	Transportation	Not tracked Parallel corridors has fallen off as a priority. The MPO is unsure about commercial destinations or planted medians.	MPO
VSMC-23	Provide multi-modal transportation alternatives/ choices including transit, trails, bikeways & sidewalks	Indicators: # Miles of new bike/ trail/ sidewalks # of bicycle parking areas in CRAs/ # of bike spaces being used Annual transit ridership Population within 1/4 mile of public transit	Transportation	Partially tracked 2023 Annual Transit Ridership: 92,669	MPO
VSMC-24	Utilize advanced transportation systems	Indicators: # of advanced transportation vehicle registration (i.e., buses, taxis, etc.) Aggregate \$/ resident for transportation \$ Spent on "intelligent" systems, e.g., timed intersections	Transportation	Partially tracked Martin County's traffic signals along arterial roadways are coordinated and timed, most are interconnected with fiber and monitored from a central location. Advanced vehicle registration is not tracked so progress is unknown.	MPO
Key Actions ↴					
VSMC- 25	Codify the Vision	Review the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations for conflicts with the Countywide Vision Plan and Guiding Principles, and revise as necessary.		Never codified	Growth Management
VSMC- 25.1		Develop a County-wide Master Plan that shows natural systems to be preserved, including creeks, streams, rivers, greenways, parks forests and conservation lands; the boundaries of existing and proposed cities, towns, villages and neighborhoods; the proposed transportation network; and areas to be preserved for agriculture.		No single master plan but separate maps via Comprehensive plan elements	Growth Management
VSMC- 25.2		Utilize the Master Plan and Guiding Principles to develop detailed, long range, Vision Plans (Small Area Plans) for Hobe Sound, Rio, Jensen Beach, Palm City, Port Salerno and Indiantown to guide development and address local issues.		CRA Plans	Growth Management
VSMC- 25.3		Develop high quality design standards for each of these towns and villages, as well as the unincorporated areas in between them, in order to define both desirable and undesirable site planning and design practices in accordance with the Guiding Principles.		CRA Architectural Design Standards Adopted (2025)	Growth Management
VSMC- 25.4		Incorporate intensity and density provisions in mixed use zoning classifications.		Martin County currently incorporates intensity and density provisions primarily through Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) and designated Urban Service Districts, allowing flexible development standards based on location and infrastructure. However, the county does not yet have standardized mixed-use zoning classifications with clearly defined density and intensity metrics applied uniformly across the jurisdiction.	Growth Management
VSMC- 25.5		Revise the PUD Zoning District to incorporate best development practices.		Project-specific rather than part of a comprehensive overhaul of the PUD zoning district.	Growth Management

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VSMC- 25.6		<p>EAR Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perform land use analysis based on recommendations of the Hazard Mitigation Report - Develop standards to discourage urban sprawl - Revise the COR zoning for TND and Mixed Use - Evaluate techniques (e.g. overlay zoning) to limit development on coastal lands that are environmentally sensitive - Conduct a study to reduce the USD area, as well as the Agricultural Ranchette and Estate Density residential designated areas - Study techniques to encourage redevelopment of existing shopping centers - Create design guidelines - Complete LDRs 		<p>1. Perform land use analysis based on recommendations of the Hazard Mitigation Report Status: Ongoing. Martin County integrates hazard mitigation considerations into its Comprehensive Plan updates, especially regarding flood zones and sea-level rise. Land use analysis continues to reflect updated hazard data to guide growth away from vulnerable areas.</p> <p>2. Develop standards to discourage urban sprawl Status: Partially implemented. The County uses Urban Service District boundaries and large minimum lot sizes in rural areas to limit sprawl. However, comprehensive anti-sprawl zoning standards remain a work in progress.</p> <p>3. Revise the COR zoning for Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) and Mixed Use Status: Under review. Some zoning revisions for mixed-use and TND elements have been proposed but a full revision of COR zoning standards has not been formally adopted yet.</p> <p>4. Evaluate techniques (e.g., overlay zoning) to limit development on environmentally sensitive coastal lands Status: Implemented. Martin County has adopted coastal management overlays and environmental protection zones limiting development intensity and type in sensitive coastal and wetland areas.</p> <p>5. Conduct a study to reduce the Urban Service District (USD) area, as well as the Agricultural Ranchette and Estate Density residential designated areas Status: Study phase or recommended. Reductions and refinements to USD boundaries and low-density residential designations have been discussed but no major changes have been formally adopted.</p> <p>6. Study techniques to encourage redevelopment of existing shopping centers Status: Limited progress. Redevelopment incentives exist, but a countywide study or policy package focused exclusively on shopping center revitalization has not been completed.</p> <p>7. Create design guidelines Status: Partially complete. Martin County has design guidelines in place for some sectors and developments but lacks comprehensive design standards that cover all community centers and mixed-use areas.</p> <p>8. Complete Land Development Regulations (LDRs) Status: Ongoing. Updates to LDRs continue regularly; however, some zoning and development code amendments are still pending to fully align with Comprehensive Plan policies.</p>	Growth Management
VSMC- 25.7		Incorporate DCA's Best Development Practices into Small Area Plans, Comprehensive Plan, LDRs and other planning/design tools.		While DCA's Best Development Practices have influenced county policies and plans, full and formal integration into all Small Area Plans, the Comprehensive Plan, and LDRs remains a work in progress. The DCA no longer exists. Through restructuring and legislative changes the DCA has a reduced regulatory authority.	Growth Management
VSMC- 25.8		Analyze alternative techniques for maintaining the Urban Services Boundary edge in the future, including the acquisition of land/development rights; zoning overlay with development restrictions; special land development requirements, and others. Conduct a Board of County Commission workshop to discuss alternative techniques and to select preferred alternatives for implementation.		A combination of land acquisition, zoning overlays, and development standards to manage the Urban Service Boundary	Growth Management
VSMC- 25.9		Develop and adopt a detailed, multi-modal 2025 Transportation Plan - including roadways, bridges, bike lanes/paths, trails, greenways and transit in accordance with the Guiding Principals - in conjunction with the Small Area Planning efforts.		In progress	Growth Management
VSMC- 25.10		Develop local thoroughfare plan to define locations of future roadways within each community via "small area plan" studies (CRA's).		No	Growth Management
VSMC- 25.11		Develop graphic Roadway Design Standards for typical roadway sections, including local streets, collectors and arterials. Include roadway land widths, bike lanes, curbs, sidewalks, drainage, and street trees. Include connection requirements, spacing, traffic calming measures, design/enforcement speeds, etc. Work with FDOT, the MPO and local municipalities to adopt the same standards throughout the County. Incorporate DCA's Best Development Practices into Small Area Plans, Comprehensive Plan, LDRs and other planning/design tools.		While Martin County has engineering-oriented roadway standards through its Road and Site Construction Standards document, it does not yet have a comprehensive, illustrated roadway design framework for multimodal planning at the community design level.	Growth Management
VSMC- 25.12		Complete ordinance for protection, restoration of historically/architecturally/culturally significant resources throughout the County.		Historic Preservation Ordinance, established in 2003	Growth Management
VSMC- 26	Focus on design and Implementation	Develop annual, neighborhood - based Capital Improvement Programs (CIP) with the Neighborhood Advisory Boards to determine top priorities for implementation.		10 year CIP adopted annually by the Board of County Commissioners. NACs provide localized input on redevelopment priorities.	Growth Management
VSMC- 26.1		Hire an Urban Designer to participate in the Development Review process and to negotiate site and building design with site developers. Allow flexibility in the Land Development Regulations - through the existing PUD Ordinance or other means - to negotiate design regulations and standards on a project by project basis.		No formal Urban Designer title on staff but leverages flexible design review through the PUD zoning framework	Growth Management, Office of Community Redevelopment
VSMC- 26.2		Establish the Sustainable Martin County Partners Alliance to review all proposed public and private projects - especially the siting of public buildings - for consistency with the 20 principles of Sustainability.		No partners alliance but sustainability principles are integrated into county governance and planning practices through resilience initiatives, CRA redevelopment, green certification, and community outreach.	Growth Management
VSMC- 27	Protect and Promote the Environment	Establish a countywide habitat management plan that includes countywide objectives; roles of both public and private landowners; private landowner initiatives; land acquisition; reforestation; restoration and other habitat management techniques/practices.		No plan but has an Ecosystem Restoration and Management Division.	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.1		Establish a system of greenways within and around the Urban Services Boundary, based on existing natural systems and drainage patterns, to define and separate towns and villages; to discourage urban sprawl within the USB; to accommodate storm drainage, wildlife habitat areas and recreation; and to define/maintain the edge of the USB.		Martin County has elements of greenway infrastructure—but no comprehensive, land-based strategy focused on defining the USB edge while honoring ecological and stormwater systems.	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.2		Establish a long range phased Implementation Plan for acquisition and/or protection of top priority environmental lands and/or greenways.		Martin County Forever that is governed by the Environmental Lands Oversight Committee	Growth Management

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
VSMC- 27.3		Develop a Management Plan for each conservation parcel, outlining permitted uses and recommended resource management techniques.		No	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.4		Designate a permanent funding source for natural lands management.		Martin County Forever	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.5		Work with other agencies to establish a water quality monitoring program, including the collection of baseline data and the establishment of monitoring stations.		Florida Department of Health water sampling	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.6		Work with other agencies to establish an air quality monitoring program, including the collection of baseline data and the establishment of monitoring stations.		Florida Department of Environmental Protection has an air monitoring station in Stuart	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.7		Participate in NPDES and identify sources of water pollution and develop mitigation strategies.		Yes	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.8		Expand county-wide recycling program.		Single stream curbside recycling	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.9		Work with other agencies to develop a county-wide plan to retrofit existing stormwater drainage systems to control flooding and to maintain high water quality in the St. Lucie and Loxahatchee Rivers, the Indian River Lagoon and Estuary, and Lake Okeechobee (&WO).		In progress	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.10		Continue implementation of the stormwater program to fund stormwater capital improvements.		In progress	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.11		Implement Land for Healthy Rivers and Natural Resources Protection One Percent Infrastructure Sales Tax Program.		Martin County Forever	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.12		Establish County Environmental Land Management Program (currently being implemented).		Yes	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.13		Establish Wetlands LDR (currently being implemented).		Yes	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.14		Continue to apply for FCT grants, other state/federal acquisition funding programs.		Yes	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.15		Complete the acquisition of the Pal Mar parcel(s).		In progress	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.16		Implement the uplands LDR.		Yes	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.17		Work with SFWMD to minimize draw down impacts from wellfields; implement recommendations from the Upper East Coast Water Supply Plan.		In progress	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.18		Implement St. Lucie Inlet Management Plan and develop a beach management program.		In progress	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.19		Incorporate DCA's Best Development Practices into Small Area Plans, Comprehensive Plan, LDRs and other planning/design tools.		In progress	Growth Management
VSMC- 27.20		Inventory and monitor environmentally significant resources throughout the county and develop an action plan for protection, restoration and management.		Environmental Lands Oversight Committee	Growth Management
VSMC- 28	Invest in urban centers, neighborhoods, schools and parks	Develop a County Wide Parks and Open Space System Master Plan, including Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, Regional Parks and Urban Open Space.		Martin County previously developed a Parks & Recreation System Master Plan, spanning from November 2014 to January 2016, which included a public input process, service inventory, and strategic goal-setting. This plan serves as the guiding framework through 2026.	Growth Management
VSMC- 28.1		Continue to use impact fees, other funding mechanisms to pay for proposed land acquisition/capital improvement projects.		Active and ongoing. Impact fee schedule and Land Development Regulation updated in 2024.	Growth Management

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
VSMC- 28.2		Hire a full time grant writer/funding coordinator.		No dedicated grant writer but other roles carry partial grant writing and coordination duties	Growth Management
VSMC- 28.3		Work with the Martin County School Board to wisely locate and acquire school sites in community population centers		Ongoing through a state-mandated Interlocal Agreement for Public School Facility Planning	Growth Management
VSMC- 28.4		Work with the state university system to provide educational opportunities throughout the County.		UF/IFAS Extension and IRSC	Growth Management
VSMC- 28.5		Implement "quick victory" improvements in the CRA areas as soon as possible; publicize the County's implementation efforts.		In progress - signs in downtown Stuart and Mapp Road Town Center	Growth Management
VSMC- 28.6		Establish incentives to encourage infill development in existing neighborhoods, commercial areas.		In progress - impact fee exemptions	Growth Management
VSMC- 28.7		Implement identified Hazard Mitigation projects.		In progress and Martin County is currently updating its Local Mitigation Strategy Plan	Growth Management
VSMC- 28.8		Apply for a "Front Porch Community" designation for one of the CRA areas.		Front Porch Community is no longer funded by the state but continues to operate independently.	Growth Management
VSMC- 29	Promote Civic Involvement and inter-agency coordination	Strengthen intergovernmental coordination efforts with the City of Stuart and the Martin County School Board, as well as other Counties and Cities. Use a third party facilitator to discuss/resolve issues at regularly scheduled (semi-monthly, quarterly) meetings.		Ongoing	Growth Management
VSMC- 29.1		Research comparable coastal communities (e.g. Marin County, California; Nantucket, Massachusetts) to identify models for Martin County growth patterns and management tools. Coordinate site visits with Commissioners to exchange ideas with other elected officials, staff and community leaders.		No	Growth Management
VSMC- 29.2		Build the Martin County Sustainability Resource Center to demonstrate sustainability concepts, and to serve as the site for continuing civic involvement.		Florida Oceanographic Center and the Environmental Studies Center - no dedicated Sustainability Resource Center by County	Growth Management
VSMC- 29.3		Designate a Neighborhoods Coordinator (through Community Development) to work with Neighborhood/Homeowners Associations to organize, develop grassroots programs (e.g., District F Coordinator).		Supports neighborhood engagement through NACs and CRA roles, but lacks a dedicated staff position focused exclusively on grassroots coordination.	Growth Management
VSMC- 29.4		Create subcommittees of the Sustainable Martin County Partners Alliance to focus on various aspects of the vision, including an Environmental and Recreation Lands Advisory Committee; Agriculture Lands Advisory Committee; Hazard Mitigation Committee; and others.		No formal alliance or subcommittee network but other forums exist like the Rivers Coalition and the Environmental Lands Oversight Committee	Growth Management
VSMC- 30	Measure and Monitor Involvement	Establish an Indicators Review process that includes annual public meetings - similar to the Visioning Workshops - conducted in each community.		No	Growth Management
VSMC- 30.1		Evaluate adequacy of Martin County's LOS criteria (Tindale Oliver Study) annually.		No existing practice that specifically conducts an annual evaluation of LOS criteria themselves	Growth Management
M.C. Comprehensive Plan Goals ↓					
VSMC-31	Intergovernmental Coordination	Establish processes to accomplish coordination of the adopted Comprehensive Growth Management Plan with the Comprehensive Plans for the incorporated municipalities, adjacent counties, the Regional Planning Council and the State; and with the plans of the Martin County School Board and other units of local government providing services but not having regulatory authority over the use of land.	Intergovernmental Coordination	Implemented	Growth Management
VSMC-32	Fiscal Efficiency and Quality of Life	Martin County shall manage growth and development in a fiscally efficient manner which is consistent with the capabilities of the natural and man-made systems and maintains quality of life standards acceptable to its citizens.	Future Land Use	Implemented	Growth Management
VSMC-33	Redevelopment and Renewal	Martin County shall alleviate the negative impacts of inadequate public facilities and services, and substandard structures for affected areas in the County.	Future Land Use	Implemented Ex. CRAs	Growth Management

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
VSMC-34	Traditional Neighborhoods	Martin County shall provide opportunities for a diversification and integration of residential, retail, professional and business office uses and coordinated systems of recreation and conservation open spaces to be located in close proximity to each other in mixed arrangements to meet the needs of the population, provide residents with a variety of choices in lifestyle arrangements and experiences, and reduce infrastructure impacts, while protecting residential neighborhoods from adverse impacts of non-residential uses.	Future Land Use	Implemented Ex. Newfield and CRAs	Growth Management
VSMC-35	Eliminate Inconsistent Uses	Martin County shall eliminate or reduce uses of land within the County which are inconsistent with community character or desired future land uses.	Future Land Use	Pending and ongoing Ex. Category "C" Land Zoning	Growth Management
VSMC-36	Natural Resource Protection	Martin County shall protect all natural resource systems of the County from the adverse impacts of development, provide for continued growth in population and economy and recognize the interrelationship between the maintenance of urban support infrastructure in waste management, air and water quality, and the coastal zone environmental quality.	Future Land Use	Implemented	Growth Management
VSMC-37	Historic Resource Protection	Martin County shall protect historical resources in the County from the adverse impacts of development	Future Land Use	Ongoing Relevant Ordinances: Ordinance # 2356-2017	Growth Management
VSMC-38	Encourage Urban Development in Urban Service Areas	Martin County shall regulate urban sprawl and leap-frog development which are counter the County policy for planned urban development, tendencies by directing growth in a timely and efficient manner to those areas where urban public facilities and services are available or are programmed to be available, at the levels of service adopted in this Comprehensive Growth Management Plan.	Future Land Use	Yes Ex. Rural Lifestyle and Newfield	Growth Management
VSMC-39	Energy Efficient	Martin County shall encourage energy conservation and promote energy efficient land use and development.	Future Land Use	Ongoing Ex. PACE and SELF programs available and 80% ad valorem property tax exemption for qualifying renewable energy systems installed on real property.	Growth Management
VSMC-40	Residential Land Use	Martin County shall provide for appropriate and adequate lands for residential land uses to meet the housing needs of the anticipated population and provide residents with a variety of choices in housing types and living arrangements throughout the County.	Future Land Use	Implemented Ex. Port Salerno and other CRA plans	Growth Management
VSMC-41	Commercial Land Use	Martin County shall provide for adequate and appropriate lands for the location of commercial land uses to serve the needs of the anticipated residents and visitors of the County.	Future Land Use	Implemented Ex. GMP Chapter 4	Growth Management
VSMC-42	Industrial Land Use	Martin County shall provide for adequate and appropriate lands for the location of industrial land uses to support the role of industry in the County's economy.	Future Land Use	Implemented Ex. GMP Chapter 4	Growth Management
VSMC-43	Agricultural Lands	Martin County shall fairly and equitably preserve agricultural lands by enhancing and protecting appropriate and productive lands for agricultural areas.	Future Land Use	Implemented Ex. Mapping and GMP Chapter 4.13	Growth Management
VSMC-44	Allocations of Land Use	Martin County shall allocate land use indicated on the Year 2005 Land Use Map in order to provide for compatibility with existing development, consistency with the Capital Improvements Element, protection of natural resources and implementation of the Adopted Level of Service Standards.	Future Land Use	Implemented	Growth Management
VSMC-45		The County shall develop and implement a traffic circulation system that is coordinated and consistent with municipal, county, state, federal, regional planning programs and other jurisdictions.	Transportation	Ongoing Growth Management is updating their Transportation Element within their comp plan- and that may be a good location to reference standards that continue being important.	Transportation

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
VSMC-46		The County shall develop, operate and maintain an efficient and cost effective roadway network that provides for ease of mobility and meets the adopted Level of Service standards.	Transportation	Ongoing	Transportation
VSMC-47		The County shall establish an integrated transportation system consistent with future development plans.	Transportation	Ongoing There is a shuttle/bus service that runs on the weekends since Marty does not run in Indiantown on the weekend.	Transportation
VSMC-48		The County shall develop a safe bicycle and pedestrian transportation system which is accessible to all major public and private facilities.	Transportation	Ongoing Vision Zero Adoption- Mapp Road ... Consider Safe Routes to School Grants (Indiantown and Salerno Rd) Also worthy to consider TAP grants.	Transportation

Summary

Martin County has made progress toward realizing the goals of the 2020 Vision Plan, particularly through environmental land acquisition, CRA planning in seven distinct areas, and the development of commercial design standards. Efforts like the Sustainable Martin Alliance and the Martin 101 education program reflect strong commitments to civic engagement and environmental stewardship. However, critical components of the Vision Plan remain uncodified, including the sustainability indicators and several key planning mechanisms. From 2003–2009, the County attempted to track indicators through budget reports, but some metrics—like the number of “uninsurable residences”—proved too vague or dependent on inaccessible private data. As a result, monitoring progress has been inconsistent and lacks measurable benchmarks. The absence of a unified Countywide Master Plan, incomplete integration of DCA’s Best Development Practices, and the lack of a dedicated urban designer continue to hinder full realization of the Vision’s guiding principles. To strengthen implementation, the County should prioritize codifying the Vision Plan, updating and clarifying measurable indicators, and formalizing interagency coordination through sustainable governance structures. Additionally, expanding the use of civic tools (e.g., public workshops, indicators review) and design standards across all community sectors will enhance both accountability and design quality.

Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) - 2000

Relevant Links: <https://www.nps.gov/ever/learn/nature/cerp.htm>

<https://www.sfwmd.gov/our-work/cerp-project-planning>

<https://theguardiansofmartincounty.com/allapattah-flats-wetlands-restored-in-martin-county/>

<https://www.martin.fl.us/land-acquisition>

<https://www.floridatrend.com/article/36706/another-milestone-achieved-in-ambitious-plan-to-create-permanent-wildlife-corridor-protect-hobe-sound-character/>

https://www.sfwmd.gov/sites/default/files/documents/lass_portfolio_eastcoast_sfork_atlridge.pdf

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
CERP-01	Allapattah Flats	A part of the Indian River Lagoon – South Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan project, Allapattah Flats Complex is a Natural Storage and Water Quality project in western Martin County. This project was completed in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and is comprised of approx. 13,000 acres of natural lands. It includes approx. 6,700 acres of restored wetlands, which provide average storage retention of 13,300 acre-feet per year. This project improves water quality, decreases runoff and curtails ecologically harmful freshwater flows to the St. Lucie Estuary. Restoring the vast wetland area also returns valued habitat for threatened and endangered species. The restoration to the property has stopped harmful drainage flows, kept water on the lands, and restored historical conditions to support native flora and fauna.	Environmental	Completed and Operational The Allapattah Flats wetland restoration project can clean and store approximately 3.7 billion gallons of water annually, according to the South Florida Water Management District.	Public Works
CERP-02	(IRL-S)C-44 Land Acquisition	In 2019 Gov. Ron DeSantis identified the C-44 Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) as a priority Everglades restoration project to help improve regional water quality. Located on approximately 12,000 acres on the north side of the St. Lucie Canal (C-44 Canal) in western Martin County, the C-44 Reservoir and STA project will capture Lake Okeechobee releases and local basin runoff and provide water quality treatment to reduce harmful nutrients. Benefits of the C-44 Reservoir and Stormwater Treatment Area: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduces harmful nutrients reaching the St. Lucie Estuary – the treatment are alone can treat 46 billion gallons of water each year,Stores 50,600 acre-feet, or 16 billion gallons at an average depth of about 15 feet in the reservoir componentCaptures 65 percent of the average annual C-44 basin stormwater runoff Status of ProjectThe C-44 STA is substantially complete, and all six treatment cells are flooded with waterThe reservoir is planned to be completed in 2021 by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers	Environmental	Completed in 2021 at a project cost of \$526 million.	Public Works

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
CERP-03	Atlantic Ridge	<p>The District purchased parcels within the floodplain of the South Fork of the St. Lucie River, and between the South Fork and the Atlantic Ridge, through the Save Our Rivers program. These lands were later included in a Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) restoration component. The CERP plan calls for hydrologic improvements to enhance the natural landscape. This area lies 1 to 1.5 miles to the east of the larger Atlantic Ridge Property. The area contains a broad area of lowlands, primarily over-drained wet prairie, on the western side, and higher scrubby pine flatwoods on the eastern side where the land elevation begins to climb, as it is situated on the landward slope of the Atlantic Ridge. Unlike the rest of the Atlantic Ridge area, water leaving this property flows south into the North Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Since the area lies along the upland/wetland transition of a sandy slope with significant urban development, the site provides substantial water quality benefits by reducing direct urban runoff into the Loxahatchee River.</p>	Environmental	<p>Partially Completed</p> <p>Currently in Planning/Land Acquisition Phase</p> <p>Area within planning boundary footprint ~ 12,352 acres</p> <p>District fee-simple ownership ~ 6,077 acres</p> <p>Other public fee-simple ownership ~ 126 acres</p> <p>Area under other protective restriction (conservation easement, platted preserve area, etc.) ~ 0 acres</p> <p>Martin County has acquired 6,228 out of 14,403 acres so far, leaving around 8,175 acres still pending acquisition. Hydrologic restoration construction, such as reservoir systems and water flow modifications, remains in the planning or early stages.</p> <p>https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/FLDEP_DSL_OES_FF_2025_AtlanticRidgeEcosystem.pdf</p>	Public Works
CERP-04	C-23/24	<p>The C23/24 Stormwater Treatment Area, or STA, is designed to treat water from the Canal-23 and Canal-24 Basins. It encompasses more than 2,500 acres which is almost equivalent to the approximately 3,000 acres protected under the North Fork St. Lucie River Aquatic Preserve. Its purpose is to reduce the sediment, phosphorus, and nitrogen going to the St. Lucie River Estuary and the southern portion of the Indian River Lagoon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture local run-off from the C-23 and C-24 basins, reducing the nutrients flowing to the St. Lucie River Estuary and the southern portion of the Indian River Lagoon • Provide valuable open water, wetland, and upland habitat • Include thousands of acre-feet of new water storage, and • Divert excess water from the basin, helping to rehydrate the floodplain of the north fork of the St. Lucie River and to moderate flows to the estuary and improving salinities. <p>The C-23/24 Basin Stormwater Treatment Area includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,568 Acres with 4,750 acre-feet of storage • A total of 43,900 feet of perimeter levee and 13,200 feet of interior levee • 1 two-barrel ungated culvert under CR-613 to connect the western and eastern STA cells • 1 three-barrel gated culvert under CR-609 for discharge from the STA • 19 individual culverts within the STA • A temporary pump station to flow to maintain vegetation prior to the completion of the future North Reservoir An intake structure for the North Reservoir that will run under Sneed Road. 	Environmental	<p>Partially Completed</p> <p>Under Construction: The C-23/C-24 Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) spans over 2,500 acres and is designed to treat runoff from the C-23 and C-24 Canal Basins—reducing sediment, phosphorus, and nitrogen entering the St. Lucie River Estuary and the southern Indian River Lagoon.</p> <p>Construction of the STA began in September 2021 and is expected to be completed by Fall 2025.</p> <p>The North Reservoir construction contract is scheduled for award in 2024, with additional contracts following in 2025.</p> <p>IRL-S C-23/C-24 (All Features): \$1.2 Billion</p> <p>IRL-S C-23/C-24 STA: \$137 Million</p> <p>https://www.saj.usace.army.mil/IRLSC23C24</p>	Public Works
CERP-05	Lake Okeechobee Watershed: Restoration Project	<p>Beginning in July 2016, the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project will identify opportunities to improve the quantity, timing and distribution of flows into the 730-square-mile lake. The project area, where placement of features are being considered, covers a large portion of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed north of the lake. Goals and objectives for the project include increasing water storage capacity in the watershed, improving the quantity and timing of discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries, restoring wetlands and improving existing and future water supply</p>	Environmental	<p>In planning and early implementation stages</p> <p>In February 2023, the South Florida Water Management District communicated their intent to take the lead on the reformulation of aboveground storage features under the provisions of Section 203. Work was completed under the Lake Okeechobee Component A Reservoir (LOCAR) study and authorized in WRDA 2024. The implementation plan for design and construction is under development.</p> <p>https://www.saj.usace.army.mil/About/Congressional-Fact-Sheets-2025/CERP-Lake-Okeechobee-Watershed-C/</p>	Public Works

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
CERP-06	Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project	The Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project (LRWRP), formerly known as the North Palm Beach County–Part 1 feasibility study, was authorized by Section 601(b)(1)(A) of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 2000. The project includes approximately 750 square miles located within both Martin and Palm Beach Counties. The Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project (LRWRP) will restore and sustain the overall quantity, quality, timing, and distribution of fresh waters to the federally designated “National Wild and Scenic” Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. The project seeks to restore, sustain, and reconnect the area’s wetlands that form the historic headwaters for the river and northeastern Everglades	Environmental	In planning and early implementation stages LRWRP was authorized in the Water Resources Development Act of 2020 Section 401 as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. As of May 2025, construction activities are underway.	Public Works

Summary

As of 2025, significant progress has been made on several key environmental restoration projects in Martin County and surrounding areas under the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). Two major projects—the Allapattah Flats Wetland Restoration and the C-44 Reservoir and Stormwater Treatment Area (STA)—have been fully completed and are operational, providing substantial water quality improvements, flood mitigation, and habitat restoration benefits. Meanwhile, the C-23/C-24 STA and Atlantic Ridge projects are partially completed. Land acquisition and initial construction are underway for these sites, but full hydrologic restoration and infrastructure components, such as the North Reservoir, remain under development. The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project and the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project are still in the planning and early implementation phases, with construction either just beginning or awaiting further design approvals.

To ensure continued progress, strategies should include accelerating land acquisition efforts, securing sustained federal and state funding, streamlining interagency coordination, and prioritizing shovel-ready components that can deliver early environmental benefits. Public-private partnerships and local stakeholder engagement can also play a key role in advancing long-term ecosystem restoration goals across the region.

Martin- St. Lucie Regional Land-Use Study - 2002

Relevant

Links:

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
	Phase 1	Recommends the creation of Community Centers to improve mobility by promoting transit, pedestrian, and bicycle travel. These centers are mixed-use, moderate to high-density places that focus intense uses around transit stations and that encourage internal travel by walking and bicycle, rather than automobiles. In addition, Phase I of the study was structured around an active public participation program that included accessible public workshops, newsletters, displays, presentations, a web site and other means of involving citizens and interest groups in the process.	Land Use and Transportation	The first phase was funded with state and local revenues and recommended an integrated land use and transportation vision for the study area.	
	Phase 2	Phase II of the Regional Land Use Study focuses on the implementation of the Community Center concept. It provides a number of tools localities can use to designate and regulate Community Centers, including this set of Comprehensive Plan goals, objectives and policies and the comprehensive planning methods documented in subsequent Technical Memoranda. These goals, objectives, and policies are intended as a template for localities to adapt and refine to suit local conditions. In this manner, an appropriate policy context can be established for planning, land regulation and development review in Community Centers.	Land Use and Transportation	The second phase was funded through a federal grant, and focuses on the strategies needed to implement the recommended vision.	
Vision Statement ↓					
		Establish geographically dispersed compact, mixed-use community centers that provide for better jobs-housing balance through complementary land uses in closer proximity to residential areas. The intent of creating such activity centers is to preserve environmentally sensitive areas and agricultural resources, and reduce the number and length of intercounty automobile trips through expanded travel choices for residents and employees. In support of these activity centers, the region will:	Growth Management	Comprehensive Plan supports mixed use, compact development, preserving rural and environmentally sensitive lands, limiting urban sprawl by through Urban Service Districts	Growth Management
		Develop US 1 as a multi-modal transportation corridor through quality redevelopment and new development that features transit-supportive and pedestrian-friendly site design and infrastructure;	Transportation	In progress, for example, US 1 near downtown Stuart	Transportation
		Define the scale and develop design guidelines for mixed-use centers that reflect market demand and local character;	Growth Management	Defined in CRA plans and FLU	Growth Management
		Invest in public transportation strategies that reduce dependence on automobile travel between activity centers in St. Lucie and Martin Counties by providing accessible and convenient premium transit service linking key origins and destinations;	Transportation	Treasure Coast Regional Long Range Transportation Plan to connect 3 counties; Martin County is now being serviced by the Senior Resource Association based out of Indian River County	Transportation
		Create an integrated network of roadways, greenways and bicycle/pedestrian facilities that improve connectivity and accessibility throughout the region, and	Transportation	In progress but there are still gaps in regional and inter-county integration	Transportation
		Monitor land use and transportation trends to track the effectiveness of the Community Centers vision in meeting the area's livability and mobility objectives.	Future Land Use	In progress - land use changes tracked via permits and zoning changes, traffic volumes tracked by Martin MPO and FDOT, MARTY transit ridership reported, sidewalks/bike lane expansion tracked through capital improvement updates and CRA development actives tracked through CRA annual reports.	Growth Management
Implementation Steps ↓					
		Define and classify appropriate locations for community centers through the Comprehensive Plans. This step is necessary to begin the process of planning for the community centers. Community centers should be identified as regional, community or neighborhood in scale and orientation, reflecting available land and the market demand from surrounding areas. A different set of design guidelines and public facility needs relate to each type of community center according to its size and area of influence.		Identified and classified locations for community centers through Comprehensive Plan and CRA Plans but no formal adopted framework of centers categorized by scale and design and infrastructure requirements.	

		Establish a Multi-modal Transportation District for the US 1 corridor, and/or selected regional and community activity centers, as appropriate. As described previously, a multi-modal transportation district is allowed by state law to increase flexibility and promote development of the multi-modal transportation system through the concurrency management process. Once centers are defined and classified, local governments should identify which ones merit consideration as multi-modal transportation districts and then establish a new level of service standard. A capital improvement program must be defined to achieve the standard. Given the focus on US 1 for this study, it is recommended that the length of US 1 through the study area be designated as a single multi-modal transportation district. The existing Transportation Concurrency Exception Area in Stuart could be incorporated into the multi-modal district without much difficulty.		No formal MMTD designation but defined in Comprehensive Plan and CRA Plans.	
		Prepare design guidelines and standards for redevelopment of existing centers and creation of new centers. As stated previously, design standards must accompany the identification of community centers, including street layout, typical sections and connections, building orientation, parking design and location, and definition of the community center edge.		Design guidelines and standards exist for centers within CRAs. No comprehensive countywide set of design standards in place for existing and future centers.	
		Prioritize transportation and other capital investments (e.g., utilities, stormwater/sewer, etc.) to serve existing and planned community centers. The Real Estate Roundtable group convened for this study identified the most important development incentive to influence the private market is construction of capital facilities and projects. For each designated community center, affected local governments should identify the infrastructure needs, including roads, stormwater facilities, sewer and water lines, through their five year Capital Improvement Programs to accommodate the projected development intensity of the center(s).		Ongoing	
		Revise local ordinances and development policies to encourage private sector participation in the creation of the Community Centers vision. This task relates to the land development regulations of each jurisdiction and what incentives or disincentives are used to guide the type and scale of development.		Ongoing	
		Amend the MPO Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs). Each of the two MPOs in the area has an adopted long-range transportation plan that is financially feasible through the year 2025 based on a projection of available revenue sources. The LRTP guides the selection of transportation project priorities each year, as well as the preparation of the five-year Transportation Improvement Program. Amending the LRTP can occur at any time, and is subject to the review of the Florida Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration. As described elsewhere in this report, if the region chooses to follow the recommended Community Centers vision, the LRTPs should be amended to set priorities for funding the transportation projects outlined. Specific recommendations are described in a subsequent section of this chapter.		2050 LRTP currently being developed with priorities like multimodal but no explicit community centers formalized	
	Land Use Policies ↓				
		Future Land Use Elements of local government comprehensive plans should be amended, where necessary, to establish mixed-use overlay areas in locations where community or town centers make sense. Both map and text amendments should delineate the boundaries of the mixed-use areas, consistent with designated regional or community activity centers. Criteria for mixed-uses should be clearly articulated.		In Martin County, the CRAs had mixed-use overlay areas. Those have been replaced through Future Land Use Map Amendments with new future land use designations, CRA Center and CRA Neighborhood. Chapter 18 of the Comprehensive Plan was created to be specifically applicable to the CRAs.	
	Overall Goals ↓				
MSL-01	Intent and Designation	Community Centers shall be established to increase transportation options, enhance accessibility, preserve capacity on the roadway network, and ensure the comfort and safety of all users of the transportation system, especially pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit passengers. Community Centers shall be organized around an existing or potential major transit stop, with highest intensities within an eighth-mile of the stop and transit-compatible development within a quarter-mile of the stop.		Newer Developments like Newfield and Terra Lago in Indiantown are proposed communities that would focus on creating walkable and bikeable community centers.	

MSL-02	Mix of Land Uses	Community Centers shall be comprised of a mix of land uses, including residential, commercial, office, educational, recreational, cultural, and civic uses, to provide a range of employment, shopping, service, leisure, and housing opportunities within walking distance of residences and transit stops.	Land Use	Newfield and Terra Lago	
MSL-02.1		In Community Centers, diverse land uses will concentrate housing, employment, shopping, services, and other community activities and facilities around the transit station to promote local travel.		No policies against	
MSL-03	Density and Intensity	[Local government] shall ensure land uses designated along major transportation corridors and intersections and at transit stops support public transit with appropriate land use densities and intensities within walking distance of transit stops, defined as one quarter mile.		Planning framework emphasizes multimodal infrastructure, but it hasn't formally tied land use patterns and zoning to proximity from transit.	
MSL-03.1		The designation and development of land uses in Community Centers shall promote the concentration of diverse land uses at intensities that support non-automobile travel.		N/A	
MSL-03.2		In Community Centers, development and redevelopment projects shall establish transit-supportive residential densities and provide a range of housing types, including affordable housing.		N/A	
MSL-04	Interconnectivity and Internal Circulation	Community Centers shall feature an interconnected network of streets, sidewalks, and bikeways to encourage walking, bicycling, and access to transit.		N/A	
MSL-04.1		Connectivity between Community Centers and between the land uses in individual Community Centers shall be a focus of planning and capital investment in a Community Center.		N/A	
MSL-04.2		Infrastructure development in Community Centers shall enhance the interconnectivity of the Community Center.		N/A	
MSL-04.3		In a Community Center, the Comprehensive Plan, zoning districts, Land Development Code, and other plans and policies shall focus on accommodating a spectrum of transportation modes that support the movement of people and goods, with a priority on the safety and mobility of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.		N/A	
MSL-05	Open Space and Stormwater Retention	Community Centers shall feature public uses, streets, and squares that are safe, comfortable, and attractive for pedestrians, with adjoining buildings open to the street and designed for interaction.	Environmental	N/A	
MSL-05.1		Open space standards for Community Centers shall be adopted to support an integrated, multimodal transportation system and to encourage pedestrian activity.		N/A	
MSL-05.2		Stormwater facilities and infrastructure in Community Centers shall be designed in a manner that contributes to connectivity, pedestrian orientation, and appropriate site design.		N/A	
MSL-06	Parking	Parking supply, location, and orientation in Community Centers shall be supportive of pedestrian, transit, automobile, and truck travel modes.	Transportation	N/A	
MSL-06.1		Parking supply, location, and orientation in Community Centers shall support pedestrian safety and mobility.		N/A	
MSL-06.2		Transit modes shall be supported in Community Centers by the design and orientation of parking facilities.		N/A	
MSL-06.3		Travel by automobile shall be supported in Community Centers by the district's parking supply and its location and orientation.		N/A	
MSL-06.4		Parking facilities in Community Centers shall support truck travel and freight movements in the supply, location, and orientation of parking.		N/A	
MSL-07	Incentives and Implementation	[Local government] shall provide appropriate fiscal, regulatory, and technical assistance incentives to promote public-private partnerships for implementation of Community Centers.		N/A	
MSL-07.1		[Local government] shall provide for master planning in each Community Center to address the functions of the district and to note opportunities for incentives.		N/A	

MSL-07.2		To support the implementation of Community Centers, [local government] may designate the Center as a Multimodal Transportation District and establish multimodal level of service standards within the district that primarily rely on modes of transportation other than vehicles.		N/A	
MSL-07.3		To the extent feasible, [local government] shall provide fiscal incentives to leverage public and private infrastructure funds and as a development and redevelopment incentive.		N/A	
MSL-07.4		In Community Centers, [local government] shall provide various regulatory and technical assistance incentives to promote transit-oriented development and redevelopment.		N/A	
MSL-07.5		As a regulatory incentive in Community Centers, performance zoning and flexible zoning shall be implemented to regulate development by impacts and building type, rather than by type of use.		N/A	
MSL-07.6		Community Centers shall be implemented using capital improvements and capital improvements planning as an incentive for development and redevelopment.		N/A	
MSL-07.7		In Community Centers, [local government] shall identify and implement financial incentives to facilitate infill development and redevelopment in targeted areas, such as brownfields, grayfields, and around existing or planned transit stops.		N/A	
Tools ↓					
	Village Green Master Plan	The Village Green Master Plan is a demonstration project requested by the Martin and St. Lucie County Regional Land Use Plan steering committee to illustrate the transformation of a suburban development pattern to the more compact, mixed-use, and transit friendly pattern of the Community Center concept detailed in Phase I of the study. The Master Plan is for a site in the Village Green Community Redevelopment Area of Port St. Lucie that the city and developer envision as a downtown area, with the same development patterns and features proposed for Community Centers. The Master Plan effectively demonstrated how a site could be redeveloped into a transit and pedestrian-oriented Community Center. It also demonstrated how the planning process can be done quickly and cost effectively.	Development		
	Village Green Existing Multimodal Transportation	This memorandum presents the results of the existing conditions analysis for the Village Green CRA. The evaluations address the auto, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities along the area's major roadways, as well as the accessibility, and connectivity of those facilities. It also evaluates the urban design characteristics of the CRA. LOS (level of service) for transit, bicycles and pedestrian travel modes is based on the availability of facilities and services. Based on the ART-PLAN analysis and the adjustments, the existing LOS for in the Village Green CRA is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C for bicyclists (moderate) • D for pedestrians (moderate to poor) and • E for transit (poor) 	Transportation		
	Village Green Future Multimodal Transportation	The future conditions analysis of the Multimodal Transportation District (MTD) proposed for the Village Green Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) in Port St. Lucie identified how development pattern changes and roadway, transit, bicycle and pedestrian improvements in the CRA affect the existing levels of service (LOS) documented in the Existing Conditions Analysis for the Village Green Multimodal Transportation District. The future conditions analysis found that ARTPLAN in combination with the QOS adjustments do respond correctly and reasonably to changes in development patterns and multimodal improvements at both the district and site levels.	Transportation		

	Urban Form & Development	Successful implementation of the Community Center concept relies on the consideration of several urban form characteristics during the development review process to ensure proposed development and redevelopment is consistent with the land use, design, and mobility goals of the Community Center. Appropriate thresholds for urban form characteristics used in the development review process should be tailored to a community's local policy and land development context. These revisions can be informed by the Design, Performance and Implementation Guidelines, which provide detailed performance standards for these areas. Use of the Development Review interactive worksheet can facilitate review of development and redevelopment proposals in the Community Center, but may require several assumptions, depending on the project status and project type.	Development		
	Comprehensive Plan & Land Use Regulation	This review of how local plans and regulations compare with smart growth policies suggests several priorities that the TCRPC and localities can implement in the near term (Table 1). The next steps for the Phase II study will focus on how these policies and strategies can be more fully integrated into local plans and regulations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an open space and greenway infrastructure plan • Develop a land monitoring system • Identify and implement financial incentives to facilitate infill development • Shift the focus from zoning by land use to regulating building type • Shift focus from accommodating cars to accommodate the entire spectrum of modes of pedestrians and bicyclists • Develop a community infrastructure plan 	Land Use		
	Review of National Smart Growth Survey	This report presents a review of a national smart growth survey conducted for St. Lucie and Martin Counties and the Cities of Fort Pierce, Port St. Lucie, and Stuart. The survey's purpose was to help the council identify policies and tools that could support the planned network of walkable, transit-oriented activity centers identified in the Phase 1 study. Based on this survey, a few key themes seem common to planners and citizens in towns and regions of nearly every size and culture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City revitalization • Suburban Development • Preserving Rural Areas • Collaboration between planners, developers, and citizens 		City revitalization continues to occur with various projects throughout. Indiantown is working on new developments.	
	Recommendations ↓				
		Develop US 1 as a multi-modal transportation corridor through quality redevelopment and new development that features transit-supportive and pedestrian-friendly site design and infrastructure;	Transportation	Ongoing	
		Define the scale and develop design guidelines for mixed-use centers that reflect market demand and local character;	Development	Ongoing	
		Invest in public transportation strategies that reduce dependence on automobile travel between activity centers in St. Lucie and Martin Counties by providing accessible and convenient premium transit service linking key origins and destinations;	Transportation	Transit is available in both MC and SLC, but it is not premium transit service. It is however located at convenient points.	
		Create an integrated network of roadways, greenways and bicycle/pedestrian facilities that improve connectivity and accessibility throughout the region; and	Transportation	Roadways, greenways and bicycle and pedestrian facilities have improved over the years. This is something we continue to strive for.	
		Monitor land use and transportation trends to track the effectiveness of the Community Centers vision in meeting the area's livability and mobility objectives.	Transportation	Ongoing	

Summary

The Regional Land Use Study, developed in two phases, proposes the creation of Community Centers—compact, mixed-use, transit-oriented areas—to improve mobility, guide land use, and preserve environmental resources across St. Lucie and Martin Counties. Phase I established the vision and engaged the public, while Phase II offered tools for local implementation, including policy templates and planning strategies. The overarching goals include reducing automobile dependence through multimodal corridors like US 1, enhancing regional connectivity, and concentrating development to limit sprawl. This vision aligns closely with Martin County's objectives for its Western Lands, which are characterized by agriculture, rural communities, and environmentally sensitive areas meant to remain largely undeveloped or developed in a low-impact, sustainable manner. By directing growth into designated centers, the Community Centers concept supports the County's Urban Service Boundary policy, helping preserve the rural character and natural assets of the west.

Several strategies have already been partially implemented, such as the identification of Community Centers in CRA and Comprehensive Plans, improved transit and pedestrian infrastructure, and redevelopment initiatives like the Village Green Master Plan. New developments like Newfield (fka Pineland Prairie) located near the western edge of urban development, exemplify how Community Centers can buffer against sprawl while supporting walkable, multimodal communities. However, the overall vision remains only partially realized. Many essential components—such as formal Multimodal Transportation District (MMTD) designations, countywide design standards, specific land use policy amendments, and codified Community Center classifications by scale—are still missing or underdeveloped. The implementation of density and intensity standards, connectivity and internal circulation requirements, and performance zoning/fiscal incentives remains largely unaddressed

Rural and Agricultural Lands Inventory - 2003

Relevant

Links:
<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/FE973>
<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/FE1071?>

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
	Rural + Agricultural Lands Inventory (Task 1)	This portion of the study created an inventory of lands with Agricultural, Agricultural Ranchette and Rural Density future land use designations located outside the Primary Urban Service District. Through the use of Department of Revenue Codes it attempted to identify the actual agricultural and other uses occurring on these three land use designations. There are approximately 11,492 acres of vacant residential land in unincorporated Martin County's Primary and Secondary Urban Service Districts with a residential Future Land Use designation (excluding the unincorporated area of Indiantown). In addition, there are approximately 3,063 acres of vacant residential land in the unincorporated area of Indiantown's Primary and Secondary Urban Service Districts with a residential Future Land Use designation- for a grand total of 14,555 acres of vacant residential land.	Future Land Use	On 9/9/2003 the board unanimously voted to accept this task and receive the balance of the report without endorsing the cost benefit analysis (Task 3) or the conservation methods (Task 4).	
	Agriculture Economic Importance (Task 2)	This task examined the economic importance of the agricultural activity on the Martin County economy. It found in 1999 agriculture accounted for over \$336 million in direct and secondary economic effects and 5,247 jobs. The economic multiplier is 1.33, meaning that every \$1.00 in direct agricultural output supports another \$0.33 in output through secondary effects. For every one direct agriculture job, another 0.38 jobs are supported by secondary effects. In 1999 the County had a total employment of 68,378 persons. Agricultural employment accounted for 7.7% of the jobs in the County.	Economic		
	Cost-Benefit Analysis (Task 3)	This task considered the question: what are the costs and benefits associated with allowing new very low residential development (one unit per 20 acres) to occur on agricultural lands. After subtracting public lands purchased as of 2003 the study identified 169,010 acres that could potentially be divided into subdivisions of 20 acre parcels for a total of 8,450 units. The analysis focused on 20-acre lots with substantial homes and without an agricultural tax reduction when it determined a tax benefit due to the creation of 20 acre estates. If the 20-acre parcels each have a lower assessed value due to agricultural activity, the property tax values accrued to the County would also be reduced. In 1999 the total output generated by the agricultural industry in Martin County is estimated to be over \$336 million with an economic multiplier of 1.33. Agriculture representing about 6.25% of the output of their economy. Agricultural employment accounts for 7.7% of the jobs in the county.	Economic		
	Conservation Methods (Task 4)	This Task suggests a menu of alternative conservation methods, in some way counter balancing the methods described in the Residential land study for increasing density. This chapter focuses on alternative methods for conserving the rural landscape. It draws from policies that have already been introduced at the state level and new methods that could be implemented at the local level; it also looks at methods used across the country for conservation. The alternative methods focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural land protection (zoning, conservation subdivisions, purchasing development rights, urban growth boundaries, and federal programs) • Conservation land protection (conservation subdivisions, mitigation ordinances and policies, transfer or purchasing of development rights, urban growth boundaries, and federal programs) • Benefits to farmers (tax credits, right-to-farm ordinances, and federal programs) 	Future Land Use		
	Martin County Methods ↓				
MC-01	Comprehensive Growth Management Plan	Martin County's main focus on preventing and controlling the encroachment of urban and suburban development into agricultural, rural and environmentally sensitive lands is through the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan. The overall purpose of the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan is to guide growth in an orderly manner by setting goals and policies for future land use, conservation and open space, and infrastructure.	Future Land Use	Yes	Growth Management
		All Wetlands in Martin County shall be protected	Environmental	Yes	Growth Management
		A minimum of 25% of the existing upland native habitat in the County will be preserved	Environmental	Yes Developments must preserve at least 25% of native upland habitat (or 25% of unique, endangered upland habitat) as part of their approval process.	Growth Management

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
		Wetlands protection policy requires that “no negative impacts shall be allowed in wetlands, within the wetland buffer, nor within the upland transition area surrounding the wetland.”	Environmental	Yes Mandates a 50-foot buffer around all wetlands — increased to 75 feet if the wetland connects to state waters — to serve as a protective upland transition area.	Growth Management
		Upland native habitat preservation policy requires that “all development shall protect and preserve native upland habitat in place within the development.”	Environmental	Yes Developers must preserve 25% of native upland habitat (or endangered/unique native upland habitat) found on a project site.	Growth Management
MC-02	Lands For You Program	\$20 million bond approved by voters in 1989 for acquiring conservation and recreation lands.	Environmental	Yes Completed in: Halpatiokee Regional Park – provides extensive recreational opportunities. Indian Riverside Park – protection of a historic mansion and Native Americans.	Environment
MC-03	Adequate public facility standards (Land Development Regulations Article 5)	Provision to ensure that all development in unincorporated Martin County is served by adequate public facilities, that the requirement of fiscal conservancy and efficient delivery of service is met, and that development pays its share of the cost of new public facilities	Future Land Use	Yes Comprehensive Plan, Land Development Regulations, impact fee structure, facility levels of service, and other enforcement mechanisms.	Growth Management
	Recommendations for Conserving Agricultural and Rural Lands ↓				
RALI-01	Agricultural District	The agricultural district strategy sets aside lands for agricultural uses and provides benefits to landowners. The program, which is usually authorized at the state level but implemented at the local level, encourages and protects commercial farming. Benefits to farmers typically include tax relief in the form of tax credits, differential property taxation or property tax relief. Once established, the agricultural district can include a number of provisions. The most common provisions include limits on the use of eminent domain by governments, limits on non-agricultural development, and restrictions on the amount of state construction of infrastructure, such as roads and sewers, in agricultural districts.	Land Use	Laws controlling the assessment of agricultural classification for tax relief permit this recommendation but an agricultural district strategy is not implemented. Although Martin County does have agricultural districts as part of the zoning code, the only provisions are policies regarding prohibited uses, permitted uses, and required lot areas. Rural lifestyle Rural Heritage FLU (inside USB; downsizing) Land Protection Incentives Amendment (Valliere) - convoluted	Growth Management
RALI-02	Agricultural Zoning	With agricultural zoning, activities other than agricultural production are restricted or discouraged. Several forms of agricultural zoning include exclusive agricultural zoning, large-minimum-lot-size zoning, area-based allowance zoning, fixed area-based allowance zoning, and sliding scale area-based allowance zoning. Area-based allowance zoning establishes a formula of non-farm dwellings permitted per acre. Fixed area-based allowance zoning specifies a certain number of dwelling units per acre, while sliding scale area-based allowance zoning allows parcels to be divided depending on the size of the tract. In addition, minimum lot sizes, determined by the implementing authority and right-to-farm provisions, are often included as part of agricultural zoning policies.	Land Use	Martin County does have agricultural zoning, and respects Right-to-Farm protections that limit local interference with agricultural operations. Yet, it does not employ detailed zoning strategies like area-based dwelling allowances, sliding-scale density rules, or explicit limits on infrastructure in agricultural zones. Agricultural zoning is part of the Martin County Zoning Code. However, agricultural zoning codes for the county are not consistent with other case studies where agricultural and rural lands protection is a main goal. Most cases, where agricultural zoning is used as a land conservation tool, the codes include lot sizes that are generally at a minimum of 20 to 100 acres and allow fewer permitted uses that could potentially reduce the productivity of agricultural lands.	Growth Management

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
RALI-03	Cluster Zoning/ conservation subdivision	Cluster zoning or conservation subdivision design allows compact residential development in areas that are zoned for large minimum lot sizes. The design reduces the perceived intensity of development, preserves desired rural character, and establishes distinct neighborhood identity. Conservation design achieves these benefits by maintaining existing residential density but clustering structures in the most buildable areas of the property in exchange for open space elsewhere on the site. To maintain the same number of lots as regular zoning districts, conservation layouts use flexible, and often smaller, lot dimensions to place homes in the buildable envelope. Roads may also be narrower within these communities. This approach preserves farmland and maintains the regional agricultural economic base of rural areas. This design also accommodates the demand for additional residential growth without depleting open spaces or fragmenting natural habitats. Since the design is often flexible, it also allows for a greater variety of housing types for lower-income and elderly persons and creates open space amenities for its residents. Site development costs for conservation developments can also be 25 to 50 percent less than conventional projects. Other advantages of conservation design include providing buffers between residential development and farmland. However, care must be taken so that nuisance charges will not be brought against farmers because of residential proximity to the pesticides, odors or harvesting procedures associated with farming. (see menu item #6. right-to-farm ordinances)	Zoning	<p>Implemented on a case-by-case, discretionary PUD basis, not via a countywide ordinance or zoning overlay. The Land Protection Incentives Amendment was adopted in 2007, Ordinance 777 and 795, to allow Planned Unit Developments on the Agricultural future land use. However, it has never been used to create a conservation subdivision.</p> <p>In Martin County, a constraint to implementing cluster zoning is the Primary Urban Service District (PUSD). The PUSD restricts water and sewer extensions past the boundary; therefore, any higher-density residential development outside the PUSD would be impossible without the required infrastructure.</p> <p>Pineland Prairie Ordinance</p> <p>Only part in the USB</p> <p>Rural Lifestyle Outside USB</p> <p>In 2001, the Florida Legislature provided for Rural Land Stewardship Area designations from the 1995 state law dealing with "innovative planning and development strategies" (Florida Statutes – Section 163.3177). This program allows the Florida Department of Community Affairs to test cluster zoning or cluster development in rural areas in conjunction with the purchase of development and density rights.</p>	Growth Management
RALI-04	Agricultural Conservation Easement	Agricultural conservation easements, also known as PACE or purchase of development rights (PDR), are the voluntary sale of development rights by private landowners to a government entity or nonprofit organization. Agricultural conservation easements limit the land use to agricultural practices or open space, and legally bind future landowners to the agreement.	Land Use	<p>No TDR program. There is a Rural Lifestyle Ag. Easement and the Martin County Forever Sales Tax. Discovery Planned Unit Development (PUD), where Martin County approved, as a zoning condition, the placement of an agricultural/conservation easement on 846.41 acres of the Becker Tree Farm parcel. The easement is perpetual and restricts future use to agriculture only, benefiting Martin County and the nonprofit Conservation Florida, Inc.</p> <p>Martin County actively uses agricultural conservation easements in specific planning scenarios (such as PUDs) and offers property tax incentives for easements via the Property Appraiser's office. Moreover, county landowners can also participate in federal (ACEP) and statewide (RFLPP, Florida Forever) programs to protect farmland through voluntary easements.</p>	Growth Management
RALI-05	Mitigation Ordinances and Policies	Mitigation ordinances and policies require developers of agricultural and rural lands to set aside a portion or percentage of the land as open space.	Land Use	<p>There isn't a dedicated mitigation ordinance mandating open-space set-asides for rural/agricultural projects, Martin County's policy framework effectively achieves similar conservation outcomes through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mandatory PAMP submission, which governs sensitive habitat and buffer protections. - A specific requirement for 25% preservation of native upland habitat in relevant developments. <p>Rural Lifestyle 70% Regular agreements = 50% lot</p>	Growth Management
RALI-06	Right-to-Farm Ordinances	Right-to-farm ordinances and policies protect farmers from public and private nuisance suits. Ordinances can be established at the state and local level. Typically, right-to-farm ordinances help farmers prevail in private nuisance lawsuits and establish farming as a desirable activity in the community. This is important when working farms begin to be surrounded by residential developments. In Florida, right-to-farm laws protect agricultural activities that have been under operation for a certain period of time from nuisance law suits. Also, under the Florida Statutes on right-to-farm laws, "a local government may not adopt any ordinance, regulation, rule, or policy to prohibit, restrict, regulate, or otherwise limit an activity of a bona fide farm operation on land classified as agricultural land" (Florida State Statute – 823.14).	Land Use	Implemented through state law which was further enhanced by SB 88 in 2021 to expand protections to include agritourism activities, increase the legal burden of proof for plaintiffs to clear and convincing evidence of non-compliance, and cap damages to the reduction in fair market value and allow recovery of attorney's fees if the lawsuit fails.	UF/IFAS
RALI-07	Tax Credits & Tax Relief Programs	The benefits of tax credits and tax relief programs include lowering farmers' expenses to ensure that agricultural lands and farming practices are protected and the inequities in the tax system are balanced. Tax credits or differential assessment are public policy in support of farming as a local resource to be protected	Economic	<p>Martin County does not have independent, county-created tax credits or relief programs for agricultural properties — it leverages state-established mechanisms, namely the Greenbelt classification and conservation easement incentives, which are implemented at the county level through the Property Appraiser.</p> <p>In Florida, agricultural and rural lands are taxed based on agricultural use instead of assessment based on development or speculative value. Martin County does not offer any further tax relief programs than what is provided by the state.</p>	Property Appraiser
RALI-08	Transfer of Development Rights	A transfer of development rights program, or a TDR program, allows landowners to transfer the right to develop one parcel of land to a different parcel of land. This transfer of rights allows higher densities than ordinarily permitted by base zoning. A TDR program is completely voluntary and has several benefits that include protecting farmland permanently while maintaining private ownership, directing growth to areas with adequate infrastructure, and providing incentives for growth in developed areas.	Land Use	Available as a planning tool under Florida law (FS 163.3177) but Martin County does not have a TDR program in place although the "Valliere Amendment" or Rural Lifestyle designation referenced conceptual ideas for TDR as a tool for rural preservation, but these were never adopted into county policy.	Growth Management

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
RALI-09	Urban Growth Boundaries	An urban growth boundary (UGB) is a legally enforced limit within a designated compact urbanized core. The UGB is a line drawn around an urban area outside of which local governments prevent or strongly discourage development. Urban growth boundaries are typically usually long-term tools, established for a period of 15 to 20 years. Advantages to UGBs include more efficient use of tax dollars towards public facilities and encouragement of compact development. Urban growth boundaries help stop communities from merging with one another thereby protecting community identity and allowing for a variety of densities to exist.	Future Land Use	Martin County already has an Urban Service District that acts much like an urban growth boundary.	Growth Management
RALI-10	Farm Bill 2002	The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, also known as Farm Bill 2002, is landmark legislation for agricultural and conservation protection funding. There is much debate about the bill but for our purposes, the conservation provisions were developed to assist farmers and ranchers in meeting environmental challenges on their land and provide a variety of subsidy for these agricultural uses. This legislation simplifies some existing programs and allows farmers and ranchers to participate in conservation programs.	Overall Goal	Obsolete references, FB's are done every x amount of years. Require action by the land owners but no action by Martin County. Even though it's not a local county ordinance. It provides funding and frameworks for multiple USDA and state-administered conservation, disaster relief, technical support, and farm assistance programs that serve farmers and landowners in the region.	
FARM-01	Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)	The Wetlands Reserve Program is U.S. Department of Agriculture's premier wetland restoration program. It offers landowners an opportunity to obtain financial and technical assistance for restoring and protecting wetlands on their property. The Farm Bill increases overall acreage caps for the WRP from 975,000 to 2.275 million acres.	Environmental	Martin County does not administer its own Wetlands Reserve Program, but landowners do have access to all related federal and state programs that support wetland conservation and restoration. WRP is updated to Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	
FARM-02	Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	The Farm Bill reauthorizes the successful Conservation Reserve Program. The CRP provides technical and financial assistance to reduce soil erosion, protect the nation's ability to produce food, reduce sedimentation in streams and lakes, improve water quality, establish wildlife habitat and enhance forest and wetland resources. CRP encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally-sensitive acreage to vegetative cover. The Farm Bill increases overall acreage for the CRP from 36.4 to 39.2 million acres. The Conservation Reserve Program was established in 1985 and provides farm owners or operators with an annual per-acre rental payment and half the cost of establishing permanent land cover, in exchange for retiring environmentally sensitive cropland from production for 10 to 15 years. In 1990, the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) estimated that the net social benefits of the Conservation Reserve Program at \$4.2-\$9 billion in present value over the life of the program. Some of the social net benefits included net farm income, the value of future timber, preservation of soil productivity, and improved surface-water quality.	Environmental	The FSA estimated that the CRP has reduced erosion by more than 454 million tons per year on the 34.6 million acres enrolled in the program (in Florida).	
FARM-03	Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)	The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is part of the CRP. It is a voluntary program designed to address specific grassroots environmental issues related to agriculture. Through the CREP, farmers can receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible land. The CREP combines the CRP with state programs to provide a framework allowing USDA to work in partnership with state government or local interests. Because the Farm Bill increases acreage caps for the CRP, it will provide more opportunities to create public partnership agreements.	Environmental		
FARM-04	Conservation Security Program	The Farm Bill creates a new Conservation Security Program to financially recognize ongoing stewardship efforts and help producers address additional resource concerns on working agricultural lands. The Farm Bill establishes the program for fiscal years 2003 through 2007. Payments to farmers are based on conservation practices and natural resource and environmental benefits. Payments will include three components: base payments for all acreage enrolled, cost-share payments for costs of adoption and maintenance of practices, and bonus payments for exceptional environmental benefits.	Economic		
FARM-05	Farmland Protection Program (FPP)	The Farmland Protection Program helps protect prime farmland from conversion to nonagricultural uses. The Farm Bill reauthorizes this program and extends it to nongovernmental organizations, as well as states, tribes and local governments, to purchase conservation easements. It also expands the program to protection of farms and ranches that contain historical and archaeological sites. A request for proposals for \$50 million in funding was published in the Federal Register on May 30, 2002	Land Use		
Suggested Methods to Use ↓					
	Transfer of Development Rights	The usual arguments against TDRs are cost and staff time. However, these can be overcome with policy direction from the citizens. The larger drawback is the incomplete market for the density transfers themselves. In other words, where within Martin is there a profitable market in transfers of development densities? Incentives to transfer the density must be big enough to create a complete market with both "buyers" and "sellers" of density transfers. On the other hand, by severely restricting development on rural lands, requiring large open space requirements and careful zoning restrictions on these lands pressure may increase on the transfer "seller" end of the transaction. Presumably the "buyer" end for density would increase as the perceived large quantity of developable land is restricted. Time and effort are a given in creating a workable TDR program. Carefully "pricing" incentives and dis-incentives of development in formerly rural areas, through strong and continued public policy and legislative actions will help create the market.			

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
	Cluster zoning/conservation subdivision	Any residential development that occurs outside the primary urban service district surely and possibly the secondary urban service district, should first take into account wetland and upland preservation, as is currently required. However, an overlay outside of the primary and secondary USD should be created requiring conservation subdivision design setting aside a large portion of undivided open space to remain protected. Careful consideration should be given size, configuration of open space, connectivity of open space to surrounding areas, as well as ownership of open space.		The Agricultural future land use designation has required minimum 20 acre lots since 1982. Implementing recommendation to allow cluster zoning/conservation subdivisions required a Plan amendment to change that long standing policy.	

Summary

Martin County has made partial progress implementing recommendations from its Rural and Agricultural Lands Study. Tasks 1 and 2—the land inventory and agricultural economic impact analysis—have been fully completed and accepted. However, Tasks 3 and 4, which addressed cost-benefit analysis and alternative conservation strategies, were received but not formally endorsed by the County Commission. While Martin County has implemented several conservation tools—such as wetland and upland habitat preservation policies, right-to-farm protections, and discretionary agricultural easements—key tools remain underutilized or unimplemented, including a formal Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program, cluster zoning overlay outside urban service boundaries, and a comprehensive agricultural zoning framework aligned with conservation goals. Additionally, although the County has access to state and federal conservation programs (e.g., ACEP, CRP, CREP), it doesn't have any locally driven tax credit or incentive programs.

To strengthen rural land conservation and smart growth, it is recommended that Martin County explore formal adoption of a TDR program, develop countywide cluster zoning policies with clear standards, and enhance agricultural zoning codes to include sliding-scale density or area-based allowances.

Rural Lands Symposium - 2003

Relevant Links: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/FE1071>

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
RLS-1	Maintaining Agriculture	Base community plans on a comprehensive understanding of the interdependent issues associated with agriculture.	Future Land Use	County's planning approach does not fully incorporate agriculture as a central, interdependent force driving community planning.	Growth Management
		Focus on incentive based strategies that help farmers keep their land in farming and not have to sell out for development.	Economic	Ongoing - State and Federal incentives, no local incentives	BDB
RLS-1.1		Involve farmers from the earliest stages of planning	Growth Management	Farmers are not consistently engaged. There's currently no institutional mechanism ensuring farmers' voices are present at the beginning of planning processes.	Growth Management
RLS-2	Sprawl solutions	Plan the big picture and evenly apply solutions	Growth Management	Comprehensive Plan	Growth Management
RLS-2.1		Come to grips with density if the children of today are going to be able to afford a home and have green space tomorrow	Growth Management	No increase in density	Growth Management
RLS-2.2		Provide for mixed use rural villages and towns that preserve more open space and create more housing choices	Growth Management	Rural Lifestyle and Newfield	Growth Management
RLS-2.3		Understand and support local agriculture	Economic	Ongoing	BDB
Case Studies ↓					
Lancaster-1	Lancaster, PA	Create an Agricultural Preserve Board to implement a farmland protection program. The board's goal was to preserve in perpetuity 278,000 acres of farmland that formed the heart of Pennsylvania Dutch country.			
Lancaster-2		Support the county's agricultural industries			
Lancaster-3		Create boundaries around urban areas in places where the richest soils were, thus channeling growth to locations more suitable for development			
Lancaster-4		Lancaster County cites two important factors in their success. First the farmland preservation program began with and still involves the farming community. Second, the program combined regulations with incentives.			
Lancaster-5		Adoption of strict agricultural zoning that generally allows one building lot of no more than two acres for every 25 acres.			
Lancaster-6		Enactment of a purchase of development rights program, thus enabling farmers to cash out an otherwise non-liquid resource and use that money to reinvest in the farm or pursue other options.			
Kentucky-1	Bluegrass of Kentucky	Rural Land Management Plan for the county's Rural Service Area, coupled with a purchase of development rights program.			
Collier-1	Collier County, Florida	Plan for a 200,000 acre area in the northeast breadbasket sector of the county			
Collier-2		Comprehensive rural land analysis and testing of alternative planning scenarios to help stakeholders understand the impacts of policy alternative			
Collier-3		Involvement of property owners and a multi interest Citizen Advisory Committee in collaborative decision making to prioritize tools, techniques, and strategies.			
Collier-4		Stewardship credits are based on the natural resource value of the land, with the amount of credits driven by the land characteristics that the public most valued.			
Collier-5		Compact new towns and villages based on traditional town planning principles serve as the receiving area for the stewardship credits from the protected natural resource areas.			
Key Recommendations ↓					
RLS-3	Effective solutions require looking at the bigger picture	The economic realities of farming must be considered in designing public policies and plans. To maintain agriculture as a part of their future, communities need to get busy evaluating the impact of planning decisions on the business of farming and supporting local agriculture.	Economic	Ongoing - Martin County's UF/IFAS Food System Study, Comprehensive Plan, Rural Lifestyle	BDB and UF/IFAS

RLS-3.1		Planning processes should forge links between agriculture and its neighboring communities. This should be done through a conversation that clearly defines the value of agriculture in the permanent landscape - why it is important and what it means to citizens. Agriculture needs good reasons to stay other than for food production or the economic value of farms.	Growth Management	Not part of a unified public planning process designed to build shared understanding across farming and non-farming populations.	
RLS-3.2		An understanding of market forces is essential to ensure that public policies and plans yield the pattern and character of development that citizens desire. Development is a market economy response to the public policies and restrictions that communities put in place.	Economic		Growth Management
RLS-3.3		The impact of public policy and investment decisions on agriculture and development patterns also should be examined in the context of how they hurt or help the restoration of the Everglades.	Environmental	Ongoing	Growth Management
RLS-4	Successful programs to preserve the countryside have the following ingredients:	Look at the long-term horizon - the consequences of how today's trends will play out over time - and plan the future of the countryside with the same level of detailed analysis and planning applied to urban areas. Farmland should not be just a big green area colored in on land use maps.	Future Land Use	Ongoing	Growth Management
RLS-4.1		Make sure that programs are based on sound information and analysis and are in proper balance. Begin with the farmers who own the land and base plans on community values and a planning process that has all voices at the table. It will not work if anyone is left out or feels unfairly treated.	Growth Management	Ongoing	Growth Management
RLS-4.2		Protect contiguous blocks of farmland in important agricultural areas, including reducing or eliminating 5 and 10-acre residential development in rural areas and directing development into compact urban areas.	Growth Management	Ongoing - Rural Lifestyle easements.	Growth Management
RLS-4.3		Emphasize incentives for farmers to maintain the land. Avoid the hammer of regulation only and enhance, not remove, landowners' property rights.	Economic	Ongoing - State and Federal incentives, no local incentives	BDB and UF/IFAS

Summary

Martin County has made partial progress in addressing agricultural preservation and sprawl-related goals. However, agriculture is not fully integrated as a central force in community planning, and there is no formal mechanism for early farmer engagement in the planning process. While state and federal incentive programs are utilized, local incentives to help farmers retain agricultural land are limited, and no significant density increases have been adopted to help balance affordable housing and land conservation. To strengthen outcomes, the County should institutionalize farmer participation in early planning stages, develop local financial incentives for agricultural land retention, and revisit residential density policies to better align with affordable housing and conservation goals. A more holistic, data-informed planning process—one that bridges agricultural, residential, and environmental interests—will be essential for preserving the rural landscape and ensuring agriculture remains a valued and viable part of Martin County's future.

Sustainable Treasure Coast - 2005

Relevant Links:

https://consensus.fsu.edu/publications/CSTC_final_formatted_toolbox.pdf

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
Retaining Rural Lands	Guiding Principles/ Action Steps ↓				
STC-01	A combination of tools and strategies work effectively to retain a functional, connected network of rural lands (open space, agriculture, and natural areas).	<p>a. Fund the retention of some rural lands (including open space and natural lands), in perpetuity, with resources provided by new development through the use of innovative tools, including but not limited to, Transfer of Development Rights programs, Rural Lands Stewardship programs, clustering, and open space requirements.</p>		<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Martin County has preserved a maximum residential density of one unit per 20 acres on agricultural lands and has adopted the Land Protection Incentives plan amendment as an additional tool to support this principle. While incentive-based tools such as clustering, rural lifestyle designations, and open-space bonuses are already in place, a comprehensive Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program has not occurred.</p>	
		<p>b. Develop innovative partnerships between urban areas, local and regional governmental entities, and rural landowners that take advantage of the services and benefits that rural lands can provide to urban areas and the region as a whole. Examples might include compensating rural landowners for wastewater/storm water disposal or user fees for recreation on private rural lands.</p>		<p>Martin County is in the early phases of exploring innovative partnerships between urban areas, local and regional governmental entities, and rural landowners that leverage the ecosystem services rural lands provide. While models for payments for ecosystem services (PES)—including stormwater management, water quality improvements, and recreational access—are emerging through programs administered by FDEP, FWC, FDACS, USDA, SFWMD, and Martin County Forever, formalized programs that compensate rural landowners for structured service or recreation provision are not yet established.</p>	
		<p>c. Comprehensive plans and land development regulations should include incentives and requirements for preservation of rural lands. These incentives and requirements should be incorporated in land development codes that provide visual representations and illustrations of the spatial designs that maximize the desired relationship between development and open space, agricultural lands, or natural lands in rural areas and establish parameters for allowable uses based on the physical form of development.</p>		<p>Formalized in comp plans and land-use codes; visual/spatial guidance becomes more consistent with Rural Lifestyle developments.</p>	
		<p>d. Develop strategies, programs, and activities that foster new, stronger, and more direct relationships between urban and rural leaders and residents (through Community Stewardship Organizations (CSOs), for example).</p>		<p>Limited to informal coordination; no formal cross-community stewardship body in place, previously disbanded in 2021.</p>	
		<p>e. Establish an on-going stakeholder group to advocate for and evaluate implementation of these recommendations and to refine them further.</p>		<p>County-level land oversight committee exists (Environmental Land Oversight Committee that was established to facilitate the Martin County Forever sales tax initiative); lacks a broader stakeholder group focused exclusively on rural preservation policies and development.</p>	
		<p>f. Establish acreage targets for the preservation of rural lands</p>		<p>Site-level preservation targets exist; no formal countywide rural-acreage preservation goals established yet.</p>	

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
STC-02	Rural lands retention supports natural systems restoration.	<p>a. Use rural lands for stormwater attenuation to enhance the outcome of CERP and enhance restoration of water bodies such as the St. Johns River, the Indian River Lagoon, and the Loxahatchee River. (This supports implementation of CERP as outlined in Natural Systems Principle 1.)</p>		<p>C-44 Reservoir & STA - Completed; operating/testing since 2021 Land Acquisition & Restoration - 45,000 acres purchased; ecological restoration ongoing Local Stormwater Projects - 100+ STAs and hybrid wetlands constructed/refurbished Advocacy & Funding - Active in BMAP, county coalition; pushing for C-23/24, C-25</p>	
		b. Cooperate to identify and implement a connected system of greenways and corridors on rural lands that allow wildlife movement and enhance biodiversity.		<p>Actively working to implement a connected system of greenways and wildlife corridors on rural lands. Recent milestones include the 2025 conservation easement on Bull Hammock Ranch (7,310 acres) and protection of over 71,000 acres that contribute to the Florida Wildlife Corridor. The county focuses on linking key ecological areas like Pal-Mar, Loxa-Lucie, and the Indian River Lagoon watershed to support wildlife movement, enhance biodiversity, and restore habitat. Ongoing management includes habitat restoration, invasive species removal, and public-private partnerships to ensure long-term corridor viability.</p>	
		c. Cooperate to identify and reestablish historic north-south movement of water.		<p>Restoring historic north-south water flow through projects like the Culpepper Ranch retrofit, which reconnects wetlands and sends water south to Cypress Creek and the Loxahatchee River. The C-44 Reservoir and STA also help move water south, mimicking natural flow patterns and improving regional hydrology.</p>	
		d. Ensure that comprehensive plans and land development regulations result in arrangement of land uses and agricultural activities in rural areas in ways that enhance ecological function.		<p>Land use regulations require wetland buffers, native habitat preservation, and clustered rural development to protect ecological function. New rules like the Rural Lifestyle designation and Preserve Area Management Plans ensure that agriculture and development in rural areas support habitat and water quality.</p>	
		e. Use Best Management Practices to enhance environmental restoration.		<p>Best Management Practices (BMPs) are being used in agriculture, landscaping, and stormwater projects to support environmental restoration. Efforts include updated BMP manuals, training programs, and restoration work across 35,000+ acres to reduce pollution and improve habitat.</p>	
STC-03	A sustainable agriculture sector contributes to the retention of rural lands and is a public purpose that justifies local, state, and federal support.	<p>a. Develop a comprehensive strategy in cooperation with the Institute of Food and Agricultural Services (IFAS) to promote the continuation of agriculture as a viable industry involving state agencies and universities and regional and local public and private sector interests.</p>		<p>No comprehensive strategy in place but yearly goals are set by UF/IFAS in accordance with contractual obligations to the County</p>	
		b. Create a planning and regulatory climate that allows agriculture to evolve and change so it can be economically competitive or adapt to increasing urbanization. This should include the availability in comprehensive plans of sufficient land for the continuation of agriculture.		<p>The Comprehensive Plan explicitly supports retaining sufficient land for ongoing agriculture, both economically and culturally. 50% of land is actively farmed. UF/IFAS is working with BDB and Farmers to be economically competitive.</p>	
		c. Focus United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and IFAS agricultural research efforts on issues related to the value and continued viability of agriculture in proximity to urban areas, and to shifts in farm size and other changes needed in agricultural practices to maximize the services, benefits, and values agriculture can provide to urban areas.		<p>UF/IFAS has created a direct marketing handbook and is assisting in the creation of a Farmers Market in Indiantown (Post Family Park)</p>	
		d. Promote direct sale of agricultural products in ways, such as local markets, that connect local production with local consumption. These connections will also promote awareness among urban residents of rural lands and their benefits.		<p>Newfield and continuation of services by UF/IFAS</p>	

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
		e. Develop an interim agricultural support strategy to assist the recovery of citrus and other affected agricultural sectors from the effects of the 2004 hurricanes and canker or similar natural disasters in the future. This strategy should include immediate financial relief through a bridge program to enable citrus growers to continue in sustainable agriculture rather than sell their groves for development as a result of the current crises. Programs developed under this strategy should identify the obligations of landowners who accept assistance.		UF/IFAS does damage assessment for natural disasters and provide preparation and recovery guidance	
		f. Provide funding for implementation of state programs such as Rural Lands Stewardship areas and the Florida Rural and Family Lands Protection Act.			
		g. Increase funding for preservation of rural lands in the current Florida Forever program and its successor.			
		h. Develop partnerships between the public and private sectors and local and national nonprofit organizations to implement rural lands protection programs.		UF/IFAS connects people with resources and education in addition to providing outreach and messaging to communities	

Development Patterns Study - 2007

Relevant

Links: <https://www.martin.fl.us/resources/2-staff-report-pdf>

<https://www.ordinancewatch.com/files/localgovernment/localgovernment15608.pdf>

https://martin.granicus.com/player/clip/99?view_id=24&meta_id=8508&redirect=true

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
Goals Related to Rural Development Patterns					
DPS-1		Protect/Acquire major natural systems, environmentally sensitive lands, land to restore water quality		Ongoing Martin County Forever	
DPS-2		Preserve large tracts of land for large-scale agricultural use, open space		Ongoing	
DPS-3		Create protected greenbelts as permanent edges to urban development		Ongoing	
DPS-4		Protect and enhance the quality of life within existing neighborhoods		Urban Service Districts Ongoing	
DPS-5		Redevelop CRAs and commercial corridors to improve livability and aesthetics within USD.		Comprehensive Plans and CRA Plans Ongoing CRA Plans	
Key Recommendations ↓					
DPS-6	General	Adopt a County-wide map of lands targeting for public acquisition. Use this map as the basis of providing incentives to landowners to protect these lands through clustering and a TDR program.	Environmental	Various maps in existence, and maintained by state and local agencies. However they are stale - maps need to be updated and consolidated; ELOC Committee and Martin County Forever Sales Tax	Growth Management
DPS-7	20-Acre Pattern	Require stricter regulation of proposed new 20-acre development pattern projects to achieve County public benefit objectives.	Land Use	No	Growth Management
DPS-7.1		Require all environmental lands protected by county, state or federal regulations to be placed in a conservation easement and to be in common ownership with permanent funding for long-term land management.	Land Use	No	Growth Management
DPS-7.2		Provide that when the amount of environmental lands protected by county, state, or federal regulations on a parcel is greater than or equal to 20 acres of scrub habitat or more than or equal to 200 acres for all other protected lands, such lands may be dedicated to a public entity for ownership and management. This provision would be an incentive for landowners to create larger connected areas of conservation lands.	Land Use	No	Growth Management
DPS-8	5- Acre Pattern	Encourage use of PUD process for proposed new 5-acre development pattern projects (within Agricultural Ranchette FLU) to achieve County public benefit objectives	Land Use	No	Growth Management
DPS-8.1		Encourage use of Planned Unit Development zoning, as allowed today, for all 5-acre subdivisions by providing an optional density bonus up to 20% that can be granted at the discretion of the Board of County Commissioners if consistent with the Comprehensive Plan policies and additional County objectives are achieved and minimum conditions are met (same conditions as Agriculture Future Land Use except the minimum lot size).	Land Use	No	Growth Management

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
DPS-2		Require that all environmental lands protected by county, state or federal regulations be placed in a conservation easement, be in common ownership, and have permanent funding for long-term land management.	Land Use	No	Growth Management
DPS-9	Cluster Pattern	<p>Allow the Cluster Development pattern in rural areas designated Agricultural Future Land Use at the discretion of the County Commission through a PUD process, where it will achieve public benefit objectives of the County and when the following conditions are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated Open Space creates or is connected to a regional habitat corridor and includes at least 60% of the total site that is under common ownership and has permanently funded management plan • Designated Open Space and conservation lands (all environmental lands protected by county, state, or federal regulations, including wetlands and protected native habitat) are protected by a conservation easement which easement is held in joint ownership by at least 3 public or non-profit entities • Management of the open space and conservation lands is funded in perpetuity by an HOA and/or other entities. • Designated Open Space includes a greenbelt at least 500 feet wide between any privately owned lot in the development and the property line of any adjacent parcel. • The development has no negative water quality impacts to the St. Lucie River or to the Indian River Lagoon • The minimum lot size within the development is 4 acres within the Agricultural Future Land Use Designation • The rural viewshed from all existing public roadways is preserved • The development is fiscally neutral to existing taxpayers • The development does not require expanding the county's Urban Service District Boundary • The development must master plan the entire parcel in order to be able to use this option 	Land Use	No	Growth Management
DPS-9.1		Provide an optional density bonus up to 20% for Cluster Development on lands that are adjacent to or east of Indiantown, that can be granted at the discretion of the County Commission	Land Use	No	Growth Management
DPS-9.2		Consider an optional density bonus up to 100% for density transfers from lands that have been identified for future picnic acquisition, where such lands are preserved as permanently protected open space.	Land Use	No	Growth Management
DPS-9.3		Consider an optional density bonus to 100% for density transfers from lands that will create a 1000 foot greenbelt buffer between the rural cluster development and adjacent urban lands.	Land Use	No	Growth Management
DPS-9.4		Implement a Transfer of Development Rights program	Land Use	No	Growth Management
DPS-10	Urban Infill Pattern	Continue to encourage the urban infill pattern within CRAs	Land Use	Yes	Growth Management
DPS-10.1		Encourage urban infill as an additional pattern for development/redevelopment of commercial corridors.	Land Use	Yes	Growth Management
DPS-10.2		Identify specific corridors that are appropriate for redevelopment and/or aesthetic upgrades, such as portions of US 1. Create a public review process that engages the community in the creation of urban design plans for these areas and make it easy to redevelop in accordance with the plan by funding public elements as an incentive (e.g. storm water, streetscape, etc.).	Land Use	Yes US1 in Stuart, Mapp Road, and Bridge Road	Growth Management
DPS-10.3		Provide incentives to create affordable and workforce housing.	Land Use	No Nothing at the local level besides the Martin County Community Land Trust, state and federal programs dictate	Growth Management
DPS-11	Urban Pattern	Establish the Urban Neighborhood Pattern as the preferred pattern for development within the existing Urban Services District.	Land Use	No	Growth Management

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
DPS-11.1		Review and revise the Martin County Land Development Code to incorporate elements of traditional neighborhood development, including design treatments that address adjacent existing neighborhoods.	Land Use	No Only in CRAs	Growth Management
DPS-11.2		Be pro-active in suggesting modifications to submitted site plans and subdivision plans to incorporate principles of traditional neighborhood development and sustainable design into new developments.	Land Use	Yes Newfield	Growth Management
DPS-12	Suburban Pattern	Review and revise the Martin County Land Development Code to make it easier to build developments in an urban development pattern rather than in historic suburban patterns.	Land Use	No	Growth Management
DPS-12.1		Prohibit the Suburban Development Pattern as an option for development associated within any expansion to the current Urban Services District Boundary unless specific principles of urban development are included in the design of the project and there is significant open space. Options for Open Space could include a requirement of at least 75% Open Space when the amendment is to lands with a current Future Land Use Designation of Agricultural Ranchette and at least 90% Open Space when the amendment is to lands with a current Future Land Use Designation of Agricultural.	Land Use	No	Growth Management
DPS-13	Urban Settlement Pattern	Establish the Urban Settlement Pattern as the preferred pattern of development for any expansion of the Urban Services District (USD) Boundary, when consistent with the Comprehensive Plan policies on USD expansion, upon the following conditions being met: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated Open Space creates or is connected to a regional habitat corridor; Designated Open Space and conservation lands (all environmental lands protected by county, state or federal regulations, including wetlands and protected native habitat) are protected by a conservation easement which easement is held in joint ownership by at least 3 public or non-profit entities; The development has no negative water quality impacts to the St. Lucie River or to the Indian River Lagoon; The development is fiscally neutral to existing taxpayers; The development creates a permanent greenbelt buffer of at least 5000 feet wide, as a permanent edge to urban development; Designated Open Space is at least 90% which may be reduced if the Open Space includes lands targeted for acquisition or lands with a future land use designation of Agricultural Ranchette. 	Land Use	No	Growth Management
DPS-13.1		Implement a Transfer of Development Rights program so that the development rights (units) of one parcel can be sold/transferred to another parcel. These transactions would require that a perpetual conservation easement be placed on the "sending" parcel to restrict the uses on the parcel to agriculture and other uses that advance county objectives (habitat corridors, targeted lands, rural viewsheds, open space, land for agriculture, water quality, etc.).	Land Use	No	Growth Management
Additional Recommendations ↓					
DPS-14		Continue to aggressively pursue the acquisition of lands targeted for purchase as environmentally sensitive or needed for Everglades Restoration. Introduce pro-active planning initiatives with landowners to encourage the use of cluster development patterns as a mechanism to get these lands into public ownership.	Environmental	Yes County has long term history of aggressive acquisition of public lands: Beach Bond, Save Our Coasts, LASC, Healthy Rivers Sales tax and new ½ cent sales tax.	Environment

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
DPS-15		Implement cluster development patterns and/or urban settlement patterns for land designated Agricultural Ranchette as a mechanism to protect regional habitat through the completion of a Special Area Plan that includes a community-wide participation process involving land owners and residents.	Land Use	No	Growth Management
DPS-16		Implement cluster development patterns and/or urban settlement patterns for land adjacent to Indiantown as a mechanism to protect regional habitat and establish a greenbelt buffer adjacent to the existing urban area through the completion of a Special Area Plan that includes a community-wide participation process involving land owners and residents.	Land Use	No	Growth Management
DPS-17		Prohibit roadway widening through lands designated Agricultural Future Land Use until all environmentally sensitive lands targeted for acquisition and all rural roadway viewsheds have been protected by conservation easement.	Transportation	No	Growth Management
DPS-18		Update the Comprehensive Plan to include a planning horizon of at least 30 years in order to focus on desired long term results.	Land Use	No 10 years is state statutory requirements	Growth Management
DPS-19		Establish a Transfer of Development Rights program to implement the recommended cluster pattern and urban settlement pattern alternatives. Insure all development rights from existing public lands are ineligible for transfer with this program.	Land Use	No	Growth Management
DPS-20		Establish agreements with other public/ non-profit agencies to hold conservation easements.	Land Use	Yes Martin County Conservation Alliance, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), The Nature Conservancy and other local land trusts.	Growth Management
DPS-21		Expand the County's capacity to monitor or manage conservation lands.	Environmental	Ongoing	Environment
Examples ↓					
DPS-22	07-12 Atlantic Ridge Preserve Amendment	Provides almost 16,000 acres of natural storage and recharge for the headwaters of the South Fork of the St. Lucie and Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee Rivers makes similar opportunities available, without guarantees, to other landowners who are willing to dedicate significant tracts of land for the public benefit in exchange for the clustering of additional dwelling units or the transfer of development rights or other advantages on a portion of their property. The Atlantic Ridge Amendment is a prime example of a beneficial change for all parties without requiring an amendment to the plan itself. a. It allows 100% density transfer from wetlands; all other PUDs get 50%. b. The PUD allows the clustered area to add units from adjoining lands, but then those adjoining lands still keep those same units - double-dipping. c. The language on density caps is vague and has loopholes; the commission could choose to allow higher urban density across the 191, 298 acres.	Environmental	Never adopted - DCA said no capacity on Bridge Road	

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
Summary		Significant gaps remain in the implementation of land use reforms aimed at discouraging inefficient rural sprawl. Key recommendations such as regulating the 20-acre and 5-acre development patterns, adopting a countywide TDR program, incentivizing cluster and urban settlement patterns, and updating planning horizons have not been enacted. Additionally, critical mechanisms like conservation easements tied to development, long-term management funding, and comprehensive mapping for strategic acquisitions are outdated or lacking. To close these gaps, the County should prioritize: (1) establishing a formal TDR program with clear incentives and conservation requirements; (2) updating and consolidating land acquisition maps; (3) revising the Land Development Code to support compact rural and urban settlement patterns; and (4) reintroducing community planning processes like Special Area Plans to balance development with public benefit. These strategies will better align land use with environmental and community goals, ensuring long-term rural preservation and smarter growth.			

Land Protection Incentives Amendment - 2008

Relevant

Links: <https://www.floridabar.org/the-florida-bar-journal/standing-to-appeal-an-administrative-order-cautions-from-martin-county-conservation-alliance-v-martin-county/>
<https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/fl-district-court-of-appeal/1548084.html>

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
LPIA-01	Land Protection Amendment	In 2007, the Martin County Commission passed two ordinances amending the Martin County Comprehensive Growth Management Plan (the Plan). The first amendment, known as the Land Protection Incentives Amendment (Land Protection Amendment), was submitted to create opportunities for permanent preservation of contiguous open space, environmentally sensitive land, and agricultural land use while maintaining residential capacity. The Land Protection Amendment created an optional development design for parcels of 500 acres or more [located outside" the boundaries of the county's Primary Urban Services District and Secondary Urban Services District], by authorizing clusters of residential units on smaller lots than the current minimum [size of 20 acres], while maintaining the density status quo, and permanently setting aside at least 50% of the parcel for preservation, continued agricultural use, or surface water management projects	Overall Goal	Adopted but never been used - complex, no density benefit, why do it? Needs a PDU and Comprehensive Plan amendment	Growth Management
	Policy 1	Perpetual protection and maintenance of contiguous open space, environmentally sensitive land and agricultural land set aside under this objective shall be enforced by the sensitive land and agricultural land set aside under this objective shall be enforced by the dedication of perpetual easements and/or the conveyance of fee simple title to a combination of at least three governmental and non-governmental entities, one of which shall be Martin County.	Land Use	Completed Martin County Forever but there's no open space protected under this policy	Growth Management
	Policy 2	Compliance with the minimum requirements of this objective qualifies the project to submit a residential Planned Unit Development (PUD) application with a concurrent Comprehensive Plan amendment but does not guarantee approval. Approval of the PUD will be based on significant site-specific public benefits that will be considered during the public hearing process for the PUD application and Comprehensive Plan amendment.	Land Use	Ongoing	Growth Management
	Policy 3	As an alternative to the 20-acre minimum lot size in Section 4.4.M.1.a., CGMP, a PUD zoning district may be approved by the Board of County Commissioners, consistent with the Agricultural future land use designation, provided all the minimum requirements are met.	Land Use	Ongoing	Growth Management
	Policy 4	Under this policy, PUDs that include land listed for acquisition by state, regional or local agencies as part of an established conservation program shall be subject to the following additional requirements: •At least 50% of the subject property that is listed for acquisition by state, regional or local agencies as part of an established conservation program must be conveyed by fee-simple title to at least three environmental, government or land trust entities; and •No development in the PUD shall be allowed on land listed for acquisition by state, regional or local agencies as part of an established conservation program unless the land has been previously impacted by agricultural activities and the proposed development is determined to be inconsequential to the implementation and success of the conservation program; and •The land to be conveyed shall be subject to a simultaneous Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map amendment changing the land's designation to Public Conservation land use; and	Land Use	Ongoing	Growth Management
	Policy 5	Under this policy, additional significant site-specific benefits may include, but are not limited to, such benefits as: •Setting aside more than the minimum amount of land required. •Restoring the historical hydrology of the land and the connectivity of natural systems •Creating a green buffer to prevent the incremental expansion of the Urban Service District •Placing restrictions on agricultural leases that provide for retaining agricultural uses while reducing their environmental impacts •Providing additional support for the maintenance or preservation of the lands in perpetuity. •Filling the gaps in natural systems, wildlife corridors, greenways and trails •Buffering roadways to limit access and to protect vistas	Land Use	Ongoing	Growth Management

Summary

The Land Protection Amendment, while adopted in 2007 with the intent of incentivizing permanent preservation of sensitive lands through clustered development, has not been utilized due to its complexity, lack of density incentives, and the requirement for concurrent PUD and Comprehensive Plan amendments. To increase effectiveness, the County should simplify the amendment process, introduce meaningful density or procedural incentives, and provide clearer guidance on public benefit criteria. Streamlining requirements and making the program more predictable and appealing could unlock its potential as a key tool for balancing growth with long-term land conservation.

St. Lucie Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) - 2013

Relevant

Links: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/6223e72c96fa4194839c3be688d17d9e>

<https://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Missions/Regulatory/Public-Notices/Article/1206309/saj-2017-00973sp-slr/>

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
	BMAP	<p>The St. Lucie River and Estuary Basin is located in southeast Florida in Martin, St. Lucie, and Okeechobee Counties. The St. Lucie Estuary is a major tributary to the Southern Indian River Lagoon (IRL-S). The basin is an economically important area where water quality is affected by freshwater runoff from agricultural and urban sources in the watershed and Lake Okeechobee (South Florida Water Management District [SFWMD] 2012a). To address the nutrient impacts in this important basin, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection adopted Total Maximum Daily Loads to reduce the watershed nutrient inputs to the river and estuary.</p> <p>This Basin Management Action Plan represents the joint efforts of multiple stakeholders to prepare a blueprint for water quality restoration for the St. Lucie River and Estuary to work towards achieving the adopted TMDLs to restore the waterbodies in the basin. The BMAP includes projects to reduce watershed nutrient loading and a monitoring plan to guide effective long-term restoration efforts. The BMAP was developed as part of Florida's TMDL Program. Stakeholder involvement is critical to the success of the TMDL Program</p>	Environmental	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Officially adopted in May 2013 and updated in February 2020 to expand on watershed nutrient loading reduction strategies and implementation timelines. The St. Lucie River BMAP draft update was published in April 2025 and is scheduled to be finalized by July 1, 2025. As of 2025, there are 54 total water-quality projects planned for 2025–2029: 16 are specific to the St. Lucie River & Estuary BMAP.</p> <p>Have met 100% of load reductions program for BMAP allocations and continuing to do additional projects. Water quality not met only regulatory.</p>	Environment
BMAP-01	Water Quality	<p>To reduce nutrient loadings and help meet the Total Phosphorus (TP) and Total Nitrogen (TN) TMDL targets, near-term (2012-2014) planned efforts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Continue technical activities for establishing collective performance measures required for source control program development in the St. Lucie River Watershed. •Continue technical activities for establishing collective performance measures required for source control program development in the St. Lucie River Watershed. •Initiate rule development to amend Chapter 40E-61, F.A.C., to implement the regulatory source control program in the St. Lucie River Watershed in coordination with the Governor' Office of Fiscal Accountability& Regulatory Reform. •Continue to enroll agricultural lands in the BMP program , identify and fund cost-share programs, conduct implementation assurance activities, adopt/update BMP manuals and evaluate BMP effectiveness as funds are available. •Continue moving forward with BMAP development for the St. Lucie River Watershed in collaboration with stakeholders. •Continue implementation of federal (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) and state-level (Environmental Resource Permit) water quality and resource protection permit programs. •Continue design of the Lake Point Restoration Project and construction on the CERP C-44 (St. Lucie) Reservoir/STA Project, both of which will provide storage and treatment. •Commence/continue construction of local water quality projects (stormwater/wastewater retrofits and restoration projects). •Support alternative nutrient reduction technologies including hybrid wetland treatment technology, chemical treatment and the investigation of new alternatives such as permeable reactive barriers and nutrient binding materials. •Conduct research, monitoring and development of tools to track progress toward achieving water quality goals. A key priority is the development of a nutrient budget that includes both the watershed and estuary. 	Environmental	<p>Ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Develop source control program (technical activities) - Ongoing. Coordinated through the St. Lucie River BMAP; technical modeling and tracking continue as part of the BMAP's 5-year update due by July 2025. •Amend Chapter 40E-61, F.A.C. (rulemaking) - In progress. Rule changes to support regulatory source controls are being developed in conjunction with BMAP updates. •Enroll agricultural lands in BMP programs - Significant progress. As of 2022, 62% of agricultural acreage enrolled; outreach, cost-share programs, and effectiveness evaluations are ongoing. •Continue BMAP development with stakeholders - Active. Ongoing collaboration with local governments, agriculture, and regional agencies as part of DEP's BMAP milestone process. •Implement NPDES and ERP permit programs - Fully operational. Federal and state permit programs are being used to manage stormwater and development-related nutrient sources. •Design and construct Lake Point and C-44 Reservoir/STA projects - Substantially complete. The C-44 STA is online; reservoir is operational, but seepage mitigation continues. Lake Point restoration efforts are in progress locally. •Construct local stormwater/wastewater retrofits - Active. Martin County has implemented several stormwater projects (e.g., baffle boxes, wetlands, septic conversions) with ongoing improvements. •Support alternative nutrient reduction technologies - Ongoing. Technologies like hybrid wetlands, permeable reactive barriers, and chemical treatments are being tested and implemented in select locations. •Research, monitoring, and nutrient budgeting - Continuous. Monitoring and nutrient loading analyses are conducted by SFWMD, DEP, and local governments to support adaptive management. 	Environment

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
BMAP-02	Water Storage	<p>Increasing water storage requires a mix of regional and dispersed water management projects (easements, cost-share, payment for services) to help meet the identified storage goal of 200,000 acre-feet in the St. Lucie River Watershed. Near-term (2012-2014) planned efforts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Continue to develop and expand dispersed water management retention sites, including the Northern Everglades-Payment for Environmental Services contracting opportunity. With an initial investment of \$7 million, the eight projects selected for funding in the inaugural year total 9,500 acres and collectively will provide 4,800 acre-feet of storage when operational •Pursue the concept of “water farming pilots,” which will utilize fallow/out-of-production citrus lands to store water and attenuate nutrients allowing stormwater to be used as an alternative water supply •Utilize publicly owned lands for interim storage until the large regional projects are built. Specific near-term projects include C-23/24 complex and the Allapattah Flats properties. •Continue to support initial construction on the C-44 Reservoir/STA project by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. A total of 50,600 acre-feet will ultimately be provided by the project. 	Environmental	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Dispersed Water Management (DWM): Multiple projects on private lands are active, including NE-PES contracts and water farming pilots. These provide thousands of acre-feet of storage annually and remain a key strategy due to cost-effectiveness and scalability.</p> <p>Water Farming Pilots: Successful pilots (e.g., Caulkins Citrus) demonstrate the viability of storing water on fallow citrus lands. Additional sites are in development or operation, contributing measurable storage volume and nutrient attenuation.</p> <p>Public Lands – Interim Storage: Lands like Allapattah Flats and areas around the C-23/24 Canal Complex are being used for interim storage and restoration, offering meaningful capacity until larger regional systems are completed.</p> <p>C-44 Reservoir/STA (Regional Project): Nearing full operational status. The system is delivering storage (50,600 acre-feet) and treatment benefits, though final seepage fixes are ongoing.</p>	Environment
SFWMD Led Projects in the St. Lucie River and Estuary Watershed ↓					
CA-01	Ten Mile Creek Water Preserve Area	The Ten Mile Creek Water Preserve Area was a joint project implemented by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District. The intent of the project was to provide seasonal storage of peak stormwater flows and then slowly release flows back to the creek to moderate salinity levels and reduce sediment loads. Control the quantity and timing of water delivery to the North Fork of the St. Lucie River by capturing and storing stormwater flows that originated in the Ten Mile Creek Basin.	Environmental	Construction completed in 2009 and currently in Operations and Maintenance [O&M]	Environment
CA-02	Indian River Lagoon- South Phase 1& 2	Phase 1: C-44 Reservoir and STA, C23 to C-44 Interconnect, C-23/24 North and South Reservoirs and STA, C-25 Reservoir and STA; Phase 2: 3 Natural Storage and Water Treatment Areas, North Fork St. Lucie Floodplain Restoration and dredging muck from St. Lucie Estuary.	Environmental	Underway - construction to be completed in 2030 (water quality and water storage)	Environment
CA-03	Adams- Russakis Ranch WMA	Store excess surface water from the South Florida Water Management District's (SFWMD's) C-24 Basin when it would otherwise be lost to tide and to retain all direct precipitation. 1,000-acre project area, which has an estimated water storage benefit of 536 acre-feet per year (ac-ft/yr). The proposed project includes the construction of two earthen rock rip-rap weirs in an existing ditch that is immediately downstream of the project site. The ditch runs North-South along much of the site's East boundary and the site drains into the ditch via sheet-flow over the ditch bank. The ditch drains primarily to the East to C-24 Canal via the Raulerson Canal, but also has the capability of draining north to the Orange Avenue Canal if water levels have not reached their high tail water condition. However, during most rainfall events, discharge to Orange Avenue Canal from this site is extremely limited. During such times, flow is primarily to the East via Adams Ranch ditches.	Environmental	Construction completed in 2020 and currently in Operations and Maintenance [O&M]	Environment
CA-04	C-23/24 Interim Storage Section C Water Farm	297-acre project area, which has an estimated water storage benefit of 2,958 ac-ft/yr.	Environmental	Construction completed in 2017 and currently in Operations and Maintenance [O&M]	Environment
CA-05	Bluefield Grove Water Farm	A public-private partnership project actively stores local stormwater runoff on 6,100 acres in the C-23 watershed in St. Lucie County. Designed to reduce nutrient loads and excess surface water discharges from the C-23 Basin into the St. Lucie Estuary. The project is estimated to provide a net annual average water storage benefit of 28,360 ac-ft/yr.	Environmental	Construction completed in 2021 and currently in Operations and Maintenance [O&M]	Environment

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
CA-06	Bull Hammock Ranch WMA	608-acre project area, which has an estimated water storage benefit of 285 ac-ft/yr. Bull Hammock Ranch has worked with agencies such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the South Florida Water Management District to make the ranch a showcase for water storage and environmental stewardship. The ranch currently contains a water farming area, located in a former citrus grove, which stores and treats excess water. The water farming area can treat and store approximately 240 acre feet of water, which is critical to the long-term sustainability of local water resources benefiting nearby urban areas and the fragile ecosystems found along the coast.	Environmental	Construction completed in 2015 and currently in Operations and Maintenance [O&M]	Environment
CA-07	Spur Land and Cattle	Watershed: 210-acre project area, which has an estimated water storage benefit of 1,500 ac-ft/yr	Environmental	Construction completed in 2014 and currently in Operations and Maintenance [O&M]	Environment
CA-08	Caulkins Water Farm	This Northern Everglades Public Private Partnership project actively stores local stormwater runoff and water from Lake Okeechobee regulatory releases on 3,275 acres of private land along C-44 Canal. Project is estimated to provide a net annual average water storage benefit of 60,000 ac-ft/yr. Since May 15, the Caulkins Water Farm has stored more than 5,500 acre-feet of local basin runoff and Lake Okeechobee discharges on top of the 6,000 acre-feet of direct rainfall on the site, keeping that water from flowing into the St. Lucie Estuary.	Environmental	Construction completed in 2017 and currently in Operations and Maintenance [O&M]	Environment
CA-09	Alderman- Deloney Ranch	170-acre project area, which has an estimated water storage benefit of 147 ac-ft/yr.	Environmental	Construction completed in 2012 and currently in Operations and Maintenance [O&M]	Environment
CA-10	C-23/24 Section A/B Restoration	Restoration of approximately 650 acres to provide wildlife habitat as well as ancillary water quantity and quality benefits.	Environmental	Planned (expected to be completed in 2026)	Environment
	Scott Water Farm	A public-private partnership project actively stores local stormwater runoff on more than 7,400 acres in the C-25 watershed in St. Lucie County. The project is estimated to provide a net annual average water storage benefit of 11,000 ac-ft/yr.	Environmental	Construction completed in 2021 and currently in Operations and Maintenance [O&M]	Environment
	Martin County Projects ↓				
MC-1	Cedar Point Water Quality Retrofit	Wet detention and swales on 31.4 acres	Environmental	Completed on 10/2004 for \$398,027 Reduces 71.5 total nitrogen and 33.6 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
MC-2	Indian River Drive Baffle Boxes	2nd generation baffle boxes on 39.1 acres	Environmental	Completed on 5/2010 for \$741,827 Reduces 30.8 total nitrogen and 5.6 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
MC-3	Warner Creek/Leilani Heights Water Quality Retrofit Phase I	Exfiltration trenches and swales on 69.8 acres	Environmental	Completed on 8/2011 for \$541,854 Reduces 229.9 total nitrogen and 49.3 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
MC-4	Warner Creek Phase II	Dry detention on 15.1 acres	Environmental	Completed on 7/2012 for \$1,750,338 Reduces 6.3 total nitrogen and 1.4 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
MC-5	Warner Creek Phase III – Beacon 21	Wet detention on 1,353.8 acres	Environmental	Completed on 7/2012 for \$2,122,935 Reduces 1291.1 total nitrogen and 597.1 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
MC-6	Manatee Creek Water Quality Retrofit Phases I, II, and III	Wet detention on 16 acres	Environmental	Completed on 7/2012 for \$419,948 Reduces 6 total nitrogen and 3.8 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
MC-7	Rio/St. Lucie Water Quality Retrofit – Phase 1	Exfiltration trenches and swales on 8.1 acres	Environmental	Completed on 9/2006 for \$354,161 Reduces 41.1 total nitrogen and 11 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
MC-8	Rio/St. Lucie Water Quality Retrofit – Phase 2	Wet detention on 119.8 acres	Environmental	Completed on 9/2008 for \$998,170 Reduces 190 total nitrogen and 73.7 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
MC-9	Salerno Creek Water Quality Retrofit	Wet detention on 207.9 acres	Environmental	Completed on 6/2003 for \$4,715,074 Reduces 407.6 total nitrogen and 134 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
MC-10	Coral Gardens Water Quality Retrofit	Wet detention on 2,008 acres	Environmental	Completed on 5/2005 for \$2,321,860 Reduces 1376.1 total nitrogen and 936.2 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
MC-11	Fern Creek Water Quality Retrofit	Wet detention on 607.1 acres	Environmental	Completed on 4/2005 for \$2,660,200 Reduces 684.7 total nitrogen and 257.9 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
MC-12	Old Palm City Water Quality Retrofit Phases I, II, and III	Wet detention, swales on 141.4 acres	Environmental	Completed on 3/2004 for \$1,544,600 Reduces 244.4 total nitrogen and 95.5 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
MC-13	North River Shores Baffle Boxes	1st generation baffle boxes on 187.3 acres	Environmental	Completed on 3/2002 for \$1,310,000 Reduces 3.6 total nitrogen and 3.8 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
MC-14	Palm Lake Park Water Quality Retrofit	Wet detention on 80.1 acres	Environmental	Completed on 2/2003 for \$1,741,098 Reduces 107.9 total nitrogen and 41.6 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
MC-15	Tropical Farms Water Quality Retrofit	Wet detention on 469.8 acres	Environmental	Completed on 12/2010 for \$4,045,470 Reduces 944.5 total nitrogen and 308.5 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
MC-16	Septic to Central Sewer Conversions	Septic to sewer conversion	Environmental	Ongoing Completed a portion for \$28,678,946	Environment
MC-17	Danforth Creek – Phase 1	Wet detention on 2,459.3 acres	Environmental	Completed on 4/2013 for \$1,981,799 Reduces 2434.7 total nitrogen and 1010.7 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
MC-18	Street Sweeping	Street sweeping	Environmental	Ongoing Reduces 108 total nitrogen and 69 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
MC-19	Baffle Box and Structure Cleanout	Clean out	Environmental	Ongoing Reduces 397 total nitrogen and 161 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
	Troup-Indiantown Water Control District Projects ↓				
TI- 1	C-44 Conservation Area	Conservation of 9135.1 acres	Environmental	Completed Reduces 23199 total nitrogen and 7496.7 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment
TI- 2	90% Implementation Agricultural BMPs	Agricultural BMPs	Environmental	Ongoing Reduces 1856.3 total nitrogen and 445.8 total phosphorus pounds per year	Environment

Summary

Significant progress has been made in Martin County's western lands toward meeting the nutrient reduction and water storage goals of the St. Lucie River and Estuary Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP). Multiple regional and dispersed water storage projects—such as Caulkins, Scott, and Bluefield Grove Water Farms—have been constructed on agricultural lands in western Martin County, collectively providing tens of thousands of acre-feet in annual storage and nutrient attenuation. These projects are instrumental in reducing harmful freshwater discharges to the estuary and achieving TMDL targets. Despite this progress, nutrient loading from agricultural and rural stormwater runoff remains a challenge. Gaps persist in fully implementing source control measures and enrolling all eligible lands in Best Management Practices (BMPs), with only 62% agricultural BMP adoption as of 2022. To address these gaps, continued expansion of cost-share programs, full implementation of regulatory source control via the amendment of Chapter 40E-61, and improved performance tracking are recommended. The western lands of Martin County represent a critical landscape for restoration, storage, and long-term water quality improvements, and continued investment in these areas is essential to the success of the BMAP and the protection of the St. Lucie Estuary.

Rural Lifestyle Land Use Presentation - 2022

Relevant

Links: <https://theguardiansofmartincounty.com/rurallifestyle-2/>

<https://www.martin.fl.us/rurallifestyle>

<https://www.martin.fl.us/resources/rural-lifestyle-recommended-order>

<https://www.wptv.com/news/treasure-coast/region-martin-county/comprehensive-plan-amendment-to-allow-development-farther-west-passes-3-2#:~:text=For%20years%2C%20Martin%20County%20has,required%20to%20be%20or>

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible Agency
RAPUD-01	The Ranch PUD	<p>The purpose of the proposed amendments is the development of a project to be known as The Ranch PUD, a future golf destination and residential enclave that will be located among substantial areas of continued agricultural operations, restored natural wetlands, upland habitat and preserves, and wildlife corridors. The application materials indicate that in recent decades the subject property has been used for agricultural production and ranch land operations in the management of cattle. The property owner is proposing to maintain a considerable element of bona fide agricultural use in connection with The Ranch Planned Unit Development (PUD).</p> <p>The County staff reports indicates that the proposed Rural Lifestyle future land use is not a change from rural to urban. It is intended for rural areas and densities comparable with the Agricultural and Agricultural Ranchette future land use designations outside the Primary, Secondary, and Freestanding urban service districts, which could be considered reasonable and consistent with the land use characteristics in the area. The staff also notes that a minimum 25% of the native upland habitat and all wetlands within the 3,900-acre site must be preserved and managed pursuant to a preserve area management plan included with a Planned Unit Development agreement. Additionally, the staff points out that the existing future land use designation of Agricultural requires a minimum of 50% open space, while the proposed future land use designation of Rural Lifestyle requires a minimum of 70%, which means that the proposed amendment will not result in a loss of open space and will require the preservation of this open space.</p>	Land Use	<p>The initial PUD and its first amendment have been fully approved. Project now moves into the implementation and permitting phase following the approved plans.</p> <p>No adverse effects on regional resources or facilities have been identified.</p>	Growth Management
RAPUD-02	Proposed Amendment 2 (Ranch PUD)	<p>The proposed amendment changes the future land use designation on ± 3,902.64 acres from Agricultural, which allows up to one dwelling unit per 20 acres, to Rural Lifestyle, which allows one dwelling unit per 20 acres to be developed and allows extension of utilities. The subject property is located south of the St. Lucie Canal, spanning both sides of SW Kanner Highway, south and west of the intersection with SW Bridge Road. Adjacent land use designations include Agricultural to the south, east, and west and Rural Density Residential, Agricultural Ranchette north of the St. Lucie Canal. In order to be eligible for the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation, a minimum of 1,000 contiguous acres located within unincorporated Martin County and outside the Primary Urban Service District are required. To minimize the extension of utility service, a portion of the minimum 1,000 contiguous acres must be adjacent to the Primary Urban Service District, the Secondary Urban Service District or a Freestanding Urban Service District.</p>	Land Use	<p>The Ranch PUD amendment has been approved and destined for development under the Rural Lifestyle designation, meeting size and adjacency requirements. The project is now undergoing the standard development review process, implying the transition to more technical and permit-focused work is underway.</p>	Growth Management
RLPUD-01	Rural Lifestyle PUD	<p>Within a specific parcel designated as Rural Lifestyle on the Future Land Use Map, development shall not exceed a maximum building height of four-stories or 40 feet and a minimum of 70 percent of the gross land area shall be established and maintained as open space. Wetlands, landlocked water bodies, upland habitat and land used for agricultural production may be used in calculating open space.</p>	Development	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ranch PUD</p>	Growth Management
RLPUD-02	Rural Lifestyle PUD	<p>Within the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation, gross residential density, including employee dormitory housing, shall not exceed a maximum of one unit per 5 acres. Employee dormitory housing shall be allowed, otherwise only detached single-family dwellings are permitted. Duplex dwellings and multi-family dwellings are prohibited.</p>	Development	<p>Ongoing</p>	Growth Management
RLPUD-03	Rural Lifestyle PUD	<p>Development proposed at a density of one unit per 20 acres or less shall be required to comply with all minimum preserve area, habitat protection and open space requirements in the Comprehensive Plan. Development proposed at a density of more than one unit per 20 acres shall be required to exceed the minimum habitat protection and open space requirements and provide proportionally more of the type of public benefit</p>	Environmental	<p>Ongoing</p>	Growth Management

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible Agency
RLPUD-04	Rural Lifestyle PUD	Development proposed at a density of more than one unit per 20 acres, but not exceeding the allowed maximum of one unit per five acres, shall provide open space preservation outside of the specific parcel designated as Rural Lifestyle on the Future Land Use Map. A minimum of one acre of open space shall be provided off-site for every two acres assigned the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation. The open space provided off-site shall be located within unincorporated Martin County and maintained in perpetuity. The following forms of open space may be provided off-site: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Native upland habitat,• Wetland habitat,• Lands in agricultural production,• Areas of restored habitat,• Water farming.	Environmental	Ongoing Atlantic Fields (Discovery)	Growth Management
RLPUD-05	Rural Lifestyle PUD	Golf cottages are permitted as an accessory use to a golf course as long as the golf cottages remain owned, controlled and operated by the owner(s) of the golf course for the exclusive use of members and their guests. Golf cottages shall not be counted toward the maximum gross density. One golf cottage per hole of each regulation 18-hole golf course shall be allowed up to a maximum of 54 golf cottages. Each golf cottage shall be limited to 6 bedrooms.	Development	A text amendment was approved in late 2024 to increase flexibility: now each golf cottage can contain between 2 and 12 bedrooms, while still capping the total at 54 cottages or 324 bedrooms overall	Growth Management
RLPUD-06	Rural Lifestyle PUD	The extension of utility services from or through a Primary Urban Service District, Secondary Urban Service District or Freestanding Urban Service District to a specific parcel with a Rural Lifestyle future land use designation and a Planned Unit Development zoning classification shall not serve any other property outside the Planned Unit Development agreement. All costs associated with the extension, ongoing service and maintenance of utility services serving a specific parcel with a Rural Lifestyle future land use designation and a Planned Unit Development zoning classification shall be paid by the Planned Unit Development. The following additional requirements shall also be applicable: (a) A utility plant for a regional sewage system shall not be constructed within the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation (b) Package water and wastewater treatment plants, as defined in Chapter 2, shall not be permitted in the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation. (c) On-site sewage treatment and disposal systems (d) A specific Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU) may be established for all costs associated with the extension, ongoing service and maintenance of utility services within each Planned Unit Development within the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation.	Utilities	Ongoing Calusa Creek (Ranch PUD) and Atlantic Fields	Growth Management
RLPUD-07	Rural Lifestyle PUD	The applicant for a PUD shall plan and appropriately fund public facilities consistent with Policy 14.1B.2. which requires that future development shall pay for the full cost of the capital improvements needed to address the impacts of such development. The PUD Agreement shall include conditions that address public facilities, infrastructure and the timing of development to be adopted prior to or concurrent with final site plan approval.	Development	Ongoing	Growth Management
RLPUD-08	Rural Lifestyle PUD	An economic analysis prepared by a qualified economic analyst shall evaluate the PUD's impact on the availability of public services and facilities, and the benefits provided by the PUD, to show a net positive fiscal impact to the County. a) Physical improvements made within the PUD shall have a taxable value that far exceeds the value of physical improvements typically found in the Agricultural future land use designation (1 unit per 20 acres). The gross density permitted within the Rural Lifestyle future land use shall not exceed one unit per five acres.	Economic	Ongoing GAI Consultants produced the Atlantic Fields (Discovery Project) in November 2021	Growth Management
RLPUD-09	Rural Lifestyle PUD	PUD Zoning Agreement. All development within a specific parcel designated as the Rural Lifestyle on the Future Land Use Map must be developed in accordance with a Planned Unit Development (PUD) Zoning Agreement.	Zoning	Codified in Comprehensive Plan	Growth Management

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible Agency
RLPUD-10	Rural Lifestyle PUD	Approval of a PUD agreement and master plan shall occur concurrently with a Future Land Use Map amendment becoming effective. The PUD master plan must include the entire acreage receiving the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation. If approval of a final site plan does not occur within five years, the Board of County Commissioners may initiate an amendment to the Future Land Use Map to cause the property to revert to its prior future land use designation or the most appropriate designation and rezone the property to a consistent zoning district.	Zoning	Ongoing	Growth Management
RLPUD-11	PUD Zoning Agreements	At a minimum, the PUD Zoning Agreement shall require the following public benefits:			
RLPUD-11.1		(a) The offset of biological and ecological impacts of new development through low impact development and environmentally beneficial practices including community farming, water and energy conservation techniques and innovative stormwater management systems that restore and enhance native habitat.	Environmental	No specific requirement, the Comprehensive Plan includes elements such as the Drainage and Natural Groundwater Aquifer Recharge Element and the Conservation and Open Space Element	Growth Management
RLPUD-11.2		(b) Enhanced water quality above the minimum requirements established in the Martin County Land Development Regulations through retention, detention and on-site irrigation prior to discharge into receiving waters and ultimately discharging into the St. Lucie River, the Loxahatchee River or the Indian River Lagoon.	Environmental	No specific requirement	Growth Management
RLPUD-11.3		(c) Protection and management of natural lands in perpetuity over and above minimum wetland and upland preserve area and open space requirements. The PUD Zoning Agreement shall require the perpetual management and/or maintenance of off-site lands encumbered by an agricultural or conservation easement and establish a funding mechanism for the required management and/or maintenance	Environmental	Ongoing Discovery	Growth Management
RLPUD-11.4		(d) Compatibility with adjacent agricultural uses and surrounding rural development through site design and location of open space.	Development	In progress	Growth Management
RLPUD-11.5		(e) Foster healthy lifestyles by creating an interconnected trail system providing access to managed natural areas, open space, parks and civic spaces.	Development	Ongoing May be worthy of mapping trails/facilities to understand how we have progressed or not?	Transportation
RLPUD-11.6		(f) Minimize greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled by providing a mix of transportation alternatives including multi-modal paths, alternative powertrain vehicles and equipment, on-site charging stations, etc.	Environmental	Ongoing	Transportation
RLPUD-11.7		(g) Provide for self-supporting project elements such as first-aid, private security, recreation amenities, community store and/or land use restrictions to reduce traffic impact and dependence on the lands within the urban service districts. A community store shall be restricted to utilization by only the residents, guests and employees of the PUD and shall not exceed 6,000 square feet.	Development	The provision regarding self-supporting project elements and a 6,000 sq. ft. community store remains in the Martin County Comprehensive Plan under the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation. Although an administrative law judge initially found this component internally inconsistent with policies limiting commercial uses to the Primary Urban Service District, that ruling was appealed to the Administration Commission. The Commission issued a Final Order finding the Rural Lifestyle future land use "in compliance" with State Statute. As a result, the requirement is considered in compliance and ongoing, and the policy remains part of the Comprehensive Plan text for consideration in Rural Lifestyle PUD approvals.	Growth Management

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible Agency
RLPUD-11.8		(h) Provide private or public recreation uses and events that support or complement sustainable rural or agricultural lifestyles and local charities or that provide direct environmental benefit, employment or economic opportunities.	Development	Ongoing	Growth Management
	Considerations for Development on Rural Lands ↓				
RLUP-01	Consideration 1	Low Density causes sprawl, not the other way around	Development		
RLUP-02	Consideration 2	Conversion of agriculture to subdivisions makes water quality goals unobtainable	Development		
RLUP-03	Consideration 3	Even "vacant" or "natural" land has to be managed	Development		
RLUP-04	Consideration 4	Towns surrounded by countryside is a desirable and sustainable pattern	Development		
RLUP-05	Consideration 5	Location matters- suitability is more than just size	Development		
RLUP-06	Consideration 6	Things that make sense in one place may not work generally	Development		
RLUP-07	Consideration 7	Transportation and land use are inextricably linked	Land Use & Transportation		
RLUP-08	Consideration 8	Utility Service and land use are strongly linked	Land Use		
RLUP-09	Consideration 9	Multi-pronged preservation approaches are most effective	Land Use		
RLUP-10	Consideration 10	Ranchette development makes long distance automobile use the only transportation option	Transportation		
RLUP-11	Consideration 11	Ranchette development is expensive to provide with infrastructure and services- and externalizes these costs onto others	Land Use		

Summary

The Rural Lifestyle future land use designation, a text amendment, was adopted by Ordinance 1185 on September 13, 2022 and amended by Ordinance 1222 on April 30, 2024. The Rural Lifestyle text was further modified by Ordinance 1232 on October 22, 2024 to change the number of bedrooms permitted with each golf cottage. December 10, 2024: The Martin County Board of County Commissioners discussed a text amendment to the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan revising the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation. Work on additional changes to the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation ceased with the adoption of Senate Bill 180 (2025) which prohibits new development restrictions for 3 years.

Martin 2040: The Western Lands Study - 2024

Relevant

Links: <https://1000fof.org/martin-county-2040/>

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
	Recommendations ↓				
MC2040-1	Martin 2040	Continue to implement locally financed land conservation programs to leverage federal, state and private funds to preserve natural and agricultural lands from development and protect critical lands buffering water bodies. A focused effort should be placed on connecting landowners with land trusts and other organizations to assist in maximizing opportunities to participate in state funded conservation programs.	Environment	Fully Implemented Martin County Forever sales tax	Environment
MC2040-2	Martin 2040	Discourage development in areas without adequate water and sewer infrastructure and continue to pursue funding for water and wastewater upgrades in existing town centers in order to keep fees generated from municipal services in the County. Policies that allow for the proliferation of septic systems not only encourage sprawl but have the potential to lead to long-term water quality issues and are more costly in the long run. Septic-to-sewer conversions are increasingly being implemented to counteract the effects of under-treated wastewater in urban and suburban areas across the state. Such projects are costly and often difficult to implement. Being proactive about wastewater collection and treatment reduces costs and protects water quality.	Land Use	Ongoing Already exists in Comprehensive Plan. Advanced wastewater treatment grants and no septic on less than 5 acres lot.	Growth Management
MC2040-3	Martin 2040	Develop strategies for adapting land uses and construction standards to anticipate and guard against climate change impacts – including sea level rise, flooding, and stronger storms – a regular consideration in any changes to land development regulations. Land development regulations should reflect best practices related to building in the coastal environment.	Land Use	In progress Working on resilience adaptation plan and the VA is in the process of being wrapped up.	Growth Management
MC2040-4	Martin 2040	Encourage higher density development in existing urban areas to accommodate increased population and alleviate development pressure in rural areas. This might be done by creating policies that discourage development or redevelopment of such areas at densities that are more appropriate for properties with lower intensity future land use designations.	Land Use	Unincorporated MC Community Redevelopment Areas City of Stuart	Growth Management
MC2040-5	Martin 2040	Critically evaluate the necessity of and policies related to the Rural Lifestyles Future Land Use Designation to ensure that developments remain as promised by requiring perpetual conservation easements over conservation areas.	Land Use	Implementation of adopted Plan text ongoing	Growth Management
MC2040-6	Martin 2040	Reconsider policies related to Freestanding Urban Services Districts, which represent a license to sprawl. Under the state's Live Local Act, the areas could be developed residentially, and should be evaluated with consideration for those impacts as well as the impact of the industrial uses for which they are intended.	Land Use	Additional Plan amendments considered in 2025 by Martin County were put on hold until the 2026 Florida Legislature considers amendments to SB 180.	Growth Management

Goal #	Project Name	Goal Description	Goal Type	Status	Responsible agency
	Summary	Martin County has made progress under the Martin 2040 Plan in preserving its natural and agricultural western lands, leveraging local sales tax revenue through the Martin County Forever program to protect critical conservation areas and buffer waterbodies from development. Land use policies discouraging development in areas lacking water and sewer infrastructure are helping to curb sprawl, while initiatives such as septic-to-sewer conversions and advanced wastewater treatment grants are gradually addressing long-term water quality concerns. Collaboration with land trusts and state programs should be expanded to maximize conservation outcomes. As climate change and population pressures intensify, proactive planning—including resilience strategies and targeted infill development—will be essential to preserving the rural character and environmental integrity of Martin County's western lands. The Martin 2040 study did not make detailed recommendations about density increases would be necessary inside the Urban Service Districts to accommodate projected population growth.			