

JOINT WORKSHOP MEETING
LEVY COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS & PLANNING COMMISSIONERS
October 7, 2025

The joint workshop meeting of the Board of County Commissioners was held on October 7, 2025 at 1:00 P.M. in the county cafeteria meeting room.

Madam Chair Desiree Mills called the joint workshop meeting to order at 1:00 P.M.

All Commissioners less Comm. Rock Meeks were in attendance. All Planning Commissioners were in attendance. The County Manager and County Attorney were in attendance.

Meeting Overview

The workshop, held on October 7, 2025, marked the kickoff for updating the county's comprehensive plan, aimed at guiding development through 2050. The meeting focused on establishing a shared direction among the board, planning commission, and public, while outlining the process, schedule, and public participation strategies.

Key Attendees

- **INFRASTRUCTURE CONSULTING & ENGINEERING - Christopher Brimo:** Led the meeting, emphasizing transparency and public input.
- **Michael Field:** Infrastructure expert, assisting with technical aspects. (not present- but mentioned as part of team that will assist in process)
- **David Boston:** Housing and economic development specialist, previously conducted a county analysis in April. (not present- but mentioned as part of team that will assist in process)
- **County Staff, Commissioners, and Public:** Provided input and feedback.

Purpose

- **Establish Direction:** Set a collaborative vision for the comprehensive plan update.
- **Public Engagement:** Introduce the public participation process and gather initial feedback.
- **Review Schedule:** Outline workshops and milestones from November 2025 to March 2026, with plan adoption targeted for December 2026.
- **Compliance:** Ensure the plan aligns with Florida statutes, addressing recent legislative changes (e.g., Live Local Act, SB 180).

Key Discussion Points

1. Public Participation Plan:

- A project website will be hosted on the county's page, providing updates, schedules, and materials vetted by county staff.

- Interactive workshops will use real-time polling via smartphones or tablets for live feedback.
- Contact forms were available for attendees to stay informed about the process.
- Surveys include:
 - General community survey (short and long versions) covering growth, housing, economy, resilience, and conservation.
 - Youth survey (ages 12–18) to engage future leaders on their vision for the county.
 - Senior survey to address specific needs of older residents.
- Surveys are anonymous, with optional demographic sections, and available in paper and online formats.

2. Plan Objectives:

- Guide county development for the next 10–15 years, balancing growth, conservation, and quality of life.
- Address housing affordability, infrastructure needs, and economic development while preserving rural character and natural resources (e.g., springs, state parks).
- Ensure compliance with Florida’s evolving planning laws, including provisions for affordable housing and recent legislative changes.

3. Challenges and Opportunities:

- **Housing:** Concerns about affordability, with some residents living in sheds or cars. The term “affordable housing” was debated, with a preference for “housing affordability” to address broader needs.
- **Infrastructure:** Limited water and sewer systems hinder growth in certain areas. Suggestions included planning for future infrastructure to support development nodes.
- **Economic Development:** Emphasis on attracting industries (e.g., agriculture technology) to boost the tax base and retain local talent. Concerns raised about 70% of residents commuting out of county for work.
- **Agriculture and Conservation:** Importance of preserving farmland and water quality, especially for the shellfish industry. Conservation easements and programs were suggested to maintain agricultural land.
- **Legislative Impacts:** SB 180 and the Live Local Act were noted as contentious, with ongoing challenges to balance local control with state mandates.

4. Community Feedback:

- Desire for evening workshops to increase public attendance.
- Importance of reviewing existing 2024 survey data to avoid duplication and incorporate prior resident input.
- Suggestions to engage civic groups (e.g., rotary clubs, churches) and schools to distribute surveys and foster participation.
- Concerns about managing growth to avoid sprawl, protect water quality, and maintain rural character.
- Interest in learning from other Florida counties (e.g., Volusia, Alachua) that have successfully managed growth.

5. Proposed Actions:

- Review 2024 survey results to refine new surveys and avoid redundancy.

- Develop interactive tools, such as land use maps with stickers or digital displays, to visualize development preferences.
- Explore agricultural technology and research hubs (e.g., UF/IFAS extension programs) to enhance economic viability.
- Address density and land use compatibility to guide development to areas with existing or planned infrastructure.
- Consider transportation solutions, such as cooperative shuttle systems, to support workers commuting to urban areas.

Next Steps

- **Survey Distribution:** Finalize and distribute surveys (general, youth, senior) within three weeks, incorporating 2024 survey insights.
- **Website Setup:** Launch the project website for transparent access to materials and updates.
- **Workshops:** Begin workshops in November 2025, focusing on visioning, land use, and economic development. Evening sessions will be added for broader participation.
- **Strategic Sessions:** Prioritize discussions on infrastructure, transportation, and agricultural preservation to align with community goals.

Closing

The workshop emphasized collaboration, transparency, and community-driven planning. The project manager committed to integrating public feedback and ensuring the plan reflects Levy County's unique needs and rural character while meeting state requirements.