

 **The Greenbelt Tool:**

Levy County uses Florida's "Greenbelt Law" to help keep our property taxes low and our landscape rural. By providing tax breaks to landowners who keep their property in active farming or timber, we ensure that thousands of acres remain as open space and wildlife habitat without using public funds to buy the land. This is the primary way we protect the "Rural Fabric" our residents value.

1. What is the Greenbelt Law?

The Greenbelt Law (Florida Statute 193.461) requires County Property Appraisers to assess agricultural land based on its "**current use value**" (what it's worth as a farm or timber plot) rather than its "**highest and best use value**" (what it would be worth if it were turned into a subdivision or shopping mall).

- **Tax Incentive:** This results in significantly lower property taxes for farmers, ranchers, and timber growers.
- **The "Bona Fide" Rule:** To qualify, the land must be used for "bona fide" commercial agricultural purposes (e.g., livestock, crops, orchards, or commercial forestry).

2. Why is it in the Comprehensive Plan?

Levy County's comprehensive plan, specifically Recreation & Open Space Policy 3.2, states that the Greenbelt Law is a primary means by which the County achieves its "Open Space" standards.

- **Sprawl Prevention:** By making it financially affordable for families to keep their land in agricultural production, the law discourages owners from feeling "forced" to sell to developers because of high tax bills.
- **Passive Conservation:** It allows thousands of acres to remain "open" and undeveloped, providing wildlife corridors and aquifer recharge areas at zero cost to the County government.
- **Economic Support:** It protects the agricultural industry, which 76% of your survey respondents said was "Extremely Important" to the county's identity.

3. Key Points

- **"It protects our Heartland:"** It ensures that farming stays profitable in Levy County by preventing "taxing farmers off their land."

- **"It keeps taxes low for everyone:"** Undeveloped "Greenbelt" land requires almost no county services (no new schools, no trash pickup, no sewer lines), which saves the County money in the long run.
- **"It meets our Open Space goals:"** Rather than the County needing to buy 100,000 acres for conservation, the Greenbelt Law allows private citizens to provide that open space while continuing to work the land.

4. Important Distinction

- It is important to note that mining is NOT typically considered an agricultural use under the Greenbelt Law.
 - If a property owner moves from timber (Agricultural/Greenbelt) to mining (Industrial), their property taxes will likely increase significantly because they lose that protected agricultural classification.
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