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Town of Loxahatchee Groves

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[STRATEGIC VISION & PLAN

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Strategic Plan Town of Loxahatchee Groves

Vision for the Future of the Community

Loxahatchee Groves will continue to protect its natural environment and rural character in the midst of an urbanizing region. The Town will continue to be a rural residential and agricultural community that has great respect for lifestyle choices balanced with historical community needs. This is reflected in a cost effective, minimal government structure that strives to protect the environment and our quality of unique lifestyles.

Positioning Loxahatchee Groves to Achieve the Vision

Loxahatchee Groves is a unique community in the South Florida region. The core vision for its future is preservation of those features that make it a distinctive place to live, work, and play. How can the essence of the Groves be preserved as the surrounding areas change and as residents change?

For distinctive communities that do not want to be like the surrounding areas, what can it mean to suggest that the vision is to “preserve” the community? There are three possible overlapping definitions.

1. Definition 1: “Preserve” means keeping it just as it is. Colonial Williamsburg or other historical sites where the goal is to maintain the physical structures and lifestyles at a period in history best exemplify preservation in this sense. In this case to “preserve” is to keep something we have and to intentionally disallow substantive change.
2. Definition 2: “Preserve” means keeping certain distinctive community assets or uses as the community changes. This approach is shown by communities that have historic districts, waterfronts, or other features or uses that the community seeks to keep. Preserve in this sense also means keeping social features of a community such as community



Strategic Plan Town of Loxahatchee Groves

events that draw the community together or exhibit a special heritage or maintaining the sense of personalness and friendliness that are equated to a “small town” character.

3. Definition 3: “Preserve” means maintaining quality of experience. These often include safety, recreation, education, economic opportunity, and social interchange. Preserve in this case requires continuous change and improvement because quality is a changing standard. In this case in order to keep something we have to change.

All three definitions are applicable to Loxahatchee Groves. To preserve it in the future the basic land uses and density must be preserved as it is today as stated in definition one. To keep and improve the quality of experience, new features such as trails or nature preserves may need to be added so change will be required as stated in definition three. Finally as stated in definition two, some changes in past practice may be needed. This will include community-appropriate enforcement of environmental protection measures in order to maintain the natural setting everyone values.

The residents of Loxahatchee Groves clearly want to preserve the Groves as a rural residential/agricultural community in a beautiful natural setting. Such a community offers residents the freedom and privacy to pursue their business and personal interests while still having ready access to the economic and recreational opportunities of the greater region. By positioning itself as a rural oasis, the Groves is able to have the best of both worlds – a small town rural lifestyle with ready access to urban and regional amenities when desired.

Values



Strategic Plan Town of Loxahatchee Groves

The Town seeks to practice these values in its policy decisions and operational practices.

- Limited government.
Town government will be limited in terms of costs and services to the taxpayer while protecting individual rights.
- Cooperation and respect for each other.
By working together and seeking to avoid undue intrusion into each other's lives, we aim to keep the distinctive nature of the Groves.
- Respect for history.
Understanding the history of the Groves and the features that have drawn residents to the community will help continue its distinctive character into the future.
- Respect for nature.
By understanding the native ecosystem and how our actions can either protect or degrade it, we will work together to maintain and enhance our native landscapes.
- Citizen involvement and volunteerism.
To keep the above values, citizens must continue to be involved in the life of the community and volunteer to do the work that will keep and enhance the community.

Goals

This plan seeks to achieve the following goals.



Strategic Plan Town of Loxahatchee Groves

- Preserve historical features and rural nature
 - It is the intent of this plan that the rural residential nature of the Groves be preserved into the future by retaining Ag/Res zoning and the other features of the community that make it distinctive from the suburban development pattern common to South Florida.
- Protect individual freedoms
 - Historically Loxahatchee Groves has attracted persons desiring to pursue their unique interests and lifestyle. It is the intent of this plan to protect this tradition by balancing individual rights with respect for the rights of others through minimal governmental intervention.
- Encourage citizenship and personal accountability.
 - This plan recognizes that the distinctive nature of Loxahatchee Groves can only be maintained through the efforts of its citizens. Involving citizens in all phases of the Town's work will be a characteristic of the Town's government.
- Preserve and enhance natural environment.
 - The Groves has been able to maintain a tree canopy and other natural ecosystems that have been lost in other communities. It is the intent of this plan to promote the preservation, restoration and conservation of this ecosystem.
- Deflect and minimize pass through traffic.
 - The intent of this plan is to minimize pass through traffic by supporting the development of transportation corridors on the peripheries of the Groves and other communities so that no community is harmed by disruptive traffic.
- Practice cost effective, minimal government
 - It is the intent of this plan that Town government remains minimal, operating in a cost effective manner so as to prevent excessive growth of both ad valorem and non-advalorem taxes.
- Provide greater outdoor recreational opportunities
 - This Plan recognizes that many residents value the outdoors and want to be able to move about the community. Therefore this



Strategic Plan Town of Loxahatchee Groves

plan will seek to provide residents with greater opportunities to engage in outdoor recreation and enjoy linked Greenways and Trail ways.

- Allow for limited non-residential development along Southern Boulevard.
 - To minimize traffic impacts, non-residential uses will be considered south of Citrus Road East.

Strategies

To achieve the above goals, the Town will use the following strategies.

- Traffic control and diversion.

To enable residents to move safely about the community, the Town shall work with other entities as needed, and will



Strategic Plan Town of Loxahatchee Groves

- Utilize a variety of traffic control and diversion actions such as lower speed limits and greater traffic enforcement,
 - Make access to Okeechobee and other major roads easier and safer,
 - Discourage cut-through traffic.
- Environmental protection and preservation.

To protect the natural ecosystems of the community, the Town will engage in a variety of incentive and protection actions as well as create public-private partnerships to permanently protect the overall environment.
- Lifestyle protection.

A prime goal and strategy of this Plan is to protect the distinctive lifestyle that drew and continues to draw residents to Loxahatchee Groves. The Town will consider non-residential uses south of Collecting Canal with a buffer.
- Communication, regional cooperation and leadership.

The Town recognizes that achieving the goals of this plan will require communicating and working cooperatively with its residents and other stakeholders who can influence the success of the Plan.
- Cost Effective, minimal Government.

It is the intent of this Plan to achieve these goals through a minimal government operated in a highly cost effective manner. The core policies to fulfill this strategy are low taxes, reliance on cost recovery for services or for additional public amenities, contracted services and use of county agencies instead of building a Town work force. Another key element of this strategy is fostering a cooperative, cost-effective working relationship with other government entities.

Principles that Preserve the Loxahatchee Groves' Lifestyle

Operating principles are guidelines for future decisions of the Town and provide a framework for action.



Strategic Plan Town of Loxahatchee Groves

Principles

1. The Town's basic approach to code enforcement will be driven by complaints and not actively seek violations.
2. The first step of response to a code violation will be educational.
3. The Town will ensure there is a buffer between the non-residential uses and Citrus Road East.
4. The Town will seek to minimize traffic impacts on interior roads that are created by non-residential development (high priority).
5. The Town will design transitional zoning from greater to lesser residential density from Southern Boulevard to Citrus Road East.
6. Applicants for commercial uses will be encouraged to locate in areas South of the Citrus Road East buffer except for any already approved uses.
7. Non-residential uses on Southern Boulevard should have connectivity between the uses where feasible.
8. The Town will encourage the establishment of riding trails within the buffer area along the southern side of Citrus Road East.
9. Rural Vista standards will establish the Town's commercial architectural guidelines.
10. The Town will manage the cost of government in order to keep ad valorem and non-ad valorem taxes low and limit the role of government (high priority).
11. Proposed additional services are to be provided on a fee basis.
12. The Town will maintain the practice of providing services through contracted management as long as it is financially advantageous to the Town to do so.

Principles defined the Loxahatchee Groves lifestyle can be understood by referencing the proclamation found in the Loxahatchee Groves Neighborhood Plan

"It might be said, in idealistic fashion, that government should be all good things to all good people. In the quest to achieve this most noble goal, the forefathers of



Strategic Plan Town of Loxahatchee Groves

this nation, listed certain "unalienable rights" in their Declaration of Independence. These included the rights of "LIFE, LIBERTY and the pursuit of HAPPINESS". These rights are considered by those of wisdom, to be one of the main foundation blocks of our society. It was also decided, that in certain circumstances, our individual rights must be curtailed when they unduly infringe upon the rights of others. For better or worse, it has been the trend in modern times, to define when, how and to what extent our individual rights should be curtailed in order to keep us from "infringing" on the rights of others. As our society grows more complex and congested, regulations restricting personal freedoms continue to grow. We have now reached a point in time when those who wish to enjoy the freedoms of our forefathers must find special places to go to if they are to enjoy these rights. Historically, in Palm Beach County, those who found the need or had the desire to live with these freedoms have found such a special place in Loxahatchee Groves.

In this rare and endangered place known as Loxahatchee Groves, we are free to pursue our dreams without worry that our actions will infringe upon our neighbors' rights. In this odd and precious niche, we pass the days with our doors unlocked, our keys in our cars and our children playing and fishing on our road sides. If due to an unexpected rainstorm, You must roll up your car windows in the middle of the night, you can run outside as you are without an intolerant neighbor reporting you for lewd and lascivious behavior. Most of us have raised families here, without ever giving a thought to the cautions that come hand in hand with urban sprawl. In these modern times, this is a condition that should be guarded; protected like any good thing that is in danger of extinction. Freedom is the heartbeat of our community. This is a heritage that should be protected for future generations.

Unfortunately, highly developed surrounding communities do not enjoy the same status. They, for better or worse, are headed in the direction of becoming "mega-suburbias". Although they have the land mass that is necessary to support this, they do not have the road systems that would permit the hoards of people to enter and exit their development. In order to alleviate this problem, they demand that

highways be carved through the heart of our community. They have no consideration for the fact that our dirt roads are what preserve our community's unique lifestyle. Destroying this community would destroy one of the lifestyles that Palm Beach County and the State of Florida were founded upon.



Strategic Plan Town of Loxahatchee Groves

Whether it is our children or yours who choose to enjoy these freedoms, we must protect this last community that affords them. Historical significance should be considered in striving to protect the last "Florida Frontier Community". The old one-room school house that educated the children of the pioneers of this community has been moved to the Fair Grounds and turned into an exhibit. An exhibit that is intended to show future generations what life was like in "Old Florida". It is a remembrance of an extinct way of life. We pray that the wisdom of the Board of County Commissioners do not allow those who would over run us seal a similar fate for our community."

*Loxahatchee Groves Neighborhood Plan
June 4, 1996*