

### **1. What is the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan?**

The State of Florida requires all cities and counties in the State to adopt comprehensive plans. In general, a comprehensive plan is needed to ensure that land development is conducted pursuant to sound planning principles and is closely coordinated with other governmental entities, such as the Regional Planning Council and surrounding jurisdictions. The Florida Statutes that govern comprehensive planning, often referred to as the "Growth Management Act", provides detailed standards as to the content of comprehensive plans but also for the procedures for amending the adopted plan. Martin County's comprehensive plan was adopted in 1990 and is called the Martin County Comprehensive Growth Management Plan. According to State requirements, the comprehensive plan includes numerous policy statements as well as a Future Land Use Map.

### **2. Who can propose an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan?**

Martin County periodically proposes amendments to the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan in light of changed conditions. In September of each year, the Martin County Growth Management Department also accepts applications from private landowners for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. Most often, private applicants are proposing amendments to the Future Land Use Map.

### **3. What is the Future Land Use Map?**

The Future Land Use Map is adopted as part of the County's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan and is one of the primary tools for managing land development. While it works similar to a zoning map, the Future Land Use Map is also used to demonstrate whether there is sufficient land allocated to meet all projected needs. The Future Land Use designation of a parcel of land determines the general type of use allowed, as well as the maximum level of density or intensity allowed (such as the number of residential units per acre). The zoning regulations provide one or more zoning districts for implementing, in more detail, each Future Land Use designation. For example, a parcel of land designated "Low Density Residential" could be zoned to allow multi-family residential dwellings or could be restricted to single-family only.

### **4. What exactly is the applicant proposing?**

The applicant is typically requesting a change to the Future Land Use Designation in order to change the type of use allowed or to change the maximum amount of development allowed (e.g., the number of residential units per acre or the maximum area of nonresidential development). While an applicant may offer a site plan as part of his or her application, e.g., showing proposed uses and building locations, a site plan is not required until there is an actual proposal to develop. Ultimately, because an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan is a legislative act, the Board must consider the requested amendment in light of the overall public policy implications, relying on other tools, such as the zoning code and the development review process, to ensure that the property is developed in a manner consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

### **5. Does the fact that an application for a plan amendment is being reviewed by the County mean it will eventually be adopted?**

Not necessarily. Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan can only be approved by the Board of County Commissioners after a series of public hearings. Requested plan amendments may be modified or even denied by the Board. Applications are sometimes withdrawn by the applicant prior to final action. If you have seen a yellow sign posted on a parcel of land or have received a notice in the mail, it is because applicants are required by the County to provide such notice. The County has voluntarily created these notice requirements, which are much more stringent than required by the Florida Statutes, in order to maximize public involvement in the process.

### **7. How long does the amendment process take?**

A successful amendment to the Future Land Use Map typically takes about 13 months. According to county policies, the Comprehensive Plan can only be amended twice per year. Thus, for any given year, there are typically two amendment review cycles known as the "first set" and the "second set". Each set of proposed amendments requires at least three public hearings as follows:

- Local Planning Agency (which makes a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners).
- Board of County Commissioners (to determine whether the proposed amendment should be transmitted to the Florida Department of Community Planning, the state land planning agency that oversees comprehensive planning).
- Board of County Commissioners (to determine whether the proposed amendment should be adopted).

#### **8. What accommodations are made for public input?**

All interested persons are invited to attend any or all of the above-described hearings and will have an opportunity to speak. The Local Planning Agency conducts its meetings after 7:00 p.m. All application files are available for public inspection during business hours at the address below. Written comments are included as part of the public record of the application.

#### **9. Where can application files be viewed?**

Martin County Administrative Center  
Growth Management Department  
Comprehensive Planning Division, 1st Floor  
2401 S.E. Monterey Road  
Stuart, Florida 34996

#### **10. Where should written comments be sent?**

Growth Management Director  
Growth Management Department  
Martin County Administrative Center  
2401 S.E. Monterey Road  
Stuart, Florida 34996

#### **11. How do I know when the public hearings will take place?**

Applicants are generally required to provide notice by mail to all property owners within 300 feet of the subject parcel, notifying them of any upcoming public hearings involving the request. The Growth Management Department also publishes a notice in the Stuart News at least 14 days prior to any public hearing for any proposed comprehensive plan amendment.

#### **14. Where can I get detailed information regarding a proposed amendment?**

All information submitted by the applicant, such as maps, aerial photographs and the justification for the proposed amendment, are kept in a file in the Growth Management Department. A detailed analysis of the proposed amendment is provided in the Growth Management Department's "staff report". The staff report typically becomes available about one to two weeks prior to the first scheduled public hearing and is updated from time-to-time throughout the process. The staff report includes an executive summary of the request, along with the recommendation of approval or denial.

#### **15. What is the role of the Division of Community Planning?**

All Plan amendments require three public hearings. The first public hearing is conducted before the Local Planning Agency, which provides a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. At the second hearing, the Board of County Commissioners determines whether or not to transmit the

amendment to the state and regional reviewing agencies. The state and regional reviewing agencies are required to review the amendment to ascertain if there are any impacts to important state resources and facilities and to provide their comments, if any, directly to the local government within 30 days of the agency receipt of the amendments. The third public hearing, called an adoption hearing, must be held within 180 days after the receipt of the reviewing agencies comments. If adopted, the County has ten days to send the amendment adoption package to the State Land Planning Agency. The State Land Planning Agency has five days to find the amendment adoption package complete. The effective date of a plan amendment, if the amendment is not timely challenged, is 31 days after the state land planning agency notifies the local government that the final plan amendment package is complete.