



ALACHUA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF GROWTH MANAGEMENT STAFF REPORT

Application Number: Z23-000003

Staff Contact: Ben Chumley, Principal Planner, (352) 374-5249

SUBJECT: County-initiated text amendment to the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Element to revise definitions of “Environmental Justice” and “Social Equity”; add equity, and community, historical, and neighborhood character among factors to be considered in land use and zoning decisions concerning the location of industrial and institutional land uses; add equity as a factor to be considered for proposed changes to the zoning map; and provide for the inclusion of environmental justice, equity, and community, historical, and neighborhood character among the factors to be included in the land development regulations for evaluating whether or not a special exception or special use permit should be granted.

APPLICANT/AGENT: Alachua County Board of County Commissioners

CHRONOLOGY: Local Planning Agency Hearing: 8/16/2023
County Commission Transmittal Hearing: 9/26/2023
County Commission Adoption Hearing: 12/12/2023

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approve ordinance to adopt Comprehensive Plan Amendment Z23-000003

LPA RECOMMENDATION: Recommend that the Board of County Commissioners approve transmittal to the State Land Planning Agency and other agencies for review and comment.*

** Additional comment was included in LPA recommendation that a robust community engagement process is needed to ensure these amendments are applied in practice.*

BoCC ACTION (transmittal): Approve transmittal for state agency review

BoCC ACTION (adoption):

Staff Report Exhibits: [Exhibit 1 – Proposed text amendments to the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan](#)

INTRODUCTION

The proposed amendment to the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan would amend the Future Land Use Element by updating existing definitions of equity and environmental justice and revising policies for industrial and institutional land uses to provide for the consideration of equity, environmental justice, and neighborhood character as part of land use decisions, with particular emphasis on recognizing, protecting, and preserving historically burdened communities. The proposed Comprehensive Plan text amendments are shown in strike-through and underline format in [Exhibit 1 of this report](#).

BACKGROUND

The Alachua County Comprehensive Plan recognizes and promotes equity (social equity) and environmental justice as part of several elements of the Plan, including Future Land Use, Economic, Community Health, Capital Improvements and Solid Waste. The Future Land Use Element specifically calls for the County to promote sustainable land development that provides for a balance of economic opportunity, social equity including environmental justice, and protection of the natural environment as one of its foundational principles (Principle 1). The Future Land Use Element also provides existing definitions of the terms “social equity” and “environmental justice”. The general Principle and the definitions have been part of the Comprehensive Plan since the early 2000s.

In addition to recognizing equity and environmental justice in the Comprehensive Plan, Alachua County has taken several key actions in recent years toward recognizing and working to eliminate inequities in County policies and operations, and within the overall community.

In 2018 the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) at the University of Florida published a report titled, “Understanding Racial Inequity in Alachua County”. This report was commissioned by Alachua County, Alachua County Public Schools, the City of Gainesville, Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce, Santa Fe College, UF Health, and the University of Florida to quantitatively document and provide insights about the extent, nature, and source of racial inequities in Alachua County. The report provided baseline data on specific categories of racial disparity including economic well-being, education, health, housing, transportation, land use, and energy; it also identified geographic areas where multiple indicators of inequity were concentrated. In 2019, this report was adopted by reference into the Comprehensive Plan with specific policies aimed at eliminating the disparities and inequities identified in the report.

In 2020, the Board of County Commissioners voted to place a Charter Amendment on the ballot stating that, “The Board of County Commissioners shall annually examine policies for all County operations and endeavor to eliminate all elements of racial and gender bias in both the design and delivery of County programs and services”. This Charter amendment was approved by the voters of Alachua County in November 2020.

In 2021, the Board of County Commissioners adopted the County's Equity Workplan Phase 1. The Workplan identified numerous strategies across the Alachua County government organization to incorporate equity into County systems, workplans, and policies. One of the strategies identified the Equity Workplan is a need to examine and potentially amend definitions of equity and how they are applied in the Comprehensive Plan.

The Alachua County Strategic Guide for Fiscal Year 2023, which is adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, identifies "Equitable and Resilient Community" as a priority for Alachua County. The Strategic Guide defines "equitable" as striving to treat everyone justly according to their circumstances, providing opportunity and access for everyone, while focusing on closing existing equity and access gaps; it also defines resilient as integrating the environment, the local economy, and equity to achieve sustainability.

The proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Plan is one component of the County's ongoing implementation of adopted Comprehensive Plan principles and policies to promote equity and environmental justice, the 2020 charter amendment, the Equity Work Plan Phase 1, and the Alachua County Strategic Guide.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT

The following is a summary of the changes that are proposed as part of this amendment to the Comprehensive Plan:

- Revise and clarify existing definitions of "social equity" and "environmental justice" in the Future Land Use Element Definitions section.
- Amend Policies 4.2.1, 4.4.1, and 5.2.2 of the Future Land Use Element to provide for the consideration of equity, environmental justice, community historic and neighborhood character among the factors that must be considered in decisions on the location of industrial and institutional land uses, with particular emphasis on recognizing, protecting, and preserving historically burdened communities.
- Amend Policy 7.1.2 of the Future Land Use Element to add equity among the factors to be considered in proposed changes to the zoning map.
- Amend Policy 7.1.17 to provide for land development regulations which include community, historical, and neighborhood character among the factors which will be utilized to evaluate whether or not a special exception or special use permit should be granted.

The adopted Comprehensive Plan makes multiple references to equity or social equity and environmental justice and contains definitions of those terms. Having clear and meaningful definitions of terms is essential to the implementation of the adopted Comprehensive Plan principles, goals, objectives, and

policies which refer to them. The adopted Comprehensive Plan definitions of social equity and environmental justice were adopted over 20 years ago, and since that time, there has been more recent research and analysis published on equity and environmental justice, including how these key terms are defined and how local governments can address these issues in their policies and operations.

One such example of research and analysis is the report titled, “Local Governments, Social Equity, and Sustainable Communities: Advancing Social Equity Goals to Achieve Sustainability” (ICMA, 2014). This report examines the extent to which social equity activities are included within an integrated approach to sustainability, how social equity is defined, and the level of commitment of local governments in addressing equity issues. Of particular relevance here, the ICMA report provides the following working definition of social equity upon which the proposed revision to the Comprehensive Plan definition of equity is based:

Social equity means redressing injustices and remediating damages that were previously incurred, fully incorporating all segments of the community in the political process, and establishing measures to prevent future inequities from occurring (Johnson and Svara 2011). Such efforts include expanding opportunity and promoting equal access to public services, providing equal service quality, ensuring procedural fairness, and striving for equal opportunity in such areas as education, health, and employment. The social equity dimension of sustainability refers to how burdens and benefits of different policy actions are distributed in a community. The more evenly they are distributed, the more equitable the community is, and this is reflected in economic, ecologic, and social outcomes.

Also of particular relevance here, the ICMA Report provides the following regarding equity as a dimension of community sustainability which has, in part, informed the revised Comprehensive Plan definitions of equity and environmental justice:

The lack of attention local governments seem to give to the equity dimension of a robust sustainability program may be, in part, due to a failure to clearly articulate the fundamental importance of social equity in a serious sustainability program. ... Residents of a community are connected economically, ecologically, and socially; the social equity dimension of sustainability refers to how burdens and benefits of different policy actions are distributed among them. The more evenly costs and benefits are distributed, the more equitable the community is, and this is reflected in economic, ecologic, and social outcomes. It is evident from the research on environmental justice that the largest proportion of environmental burdens that come from industry and energy production, disposal of waste, and transportation systems often fall on the communities that are least able to resist them; the poor and minority communities are often disproportionately burdened (Bullard 1990; Bryant and Mohai 1992; US EPA 1992).

Social equity in sustainability includes putting forth efforts toward rectifying previous environmental injustices, avoiding environmental injustices going forward, and providing equal access to participate in sustainability activities and shape their development.

The proposed updates to the definitions of equity and environmental justice in the Comprehensive Plan reflect a more current understanding of these terms and ensure that the definitions are meaningful and implementable, particularly in a land use context. The proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments would revise the definitions of equity and environmental justice as follows:

~~**Environmental Justice:** No group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the cumulative negative social or environmental consequences resulting from land use decisions.~~

Environmental Justice means that no group of people, including those from marginalized racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups or persons with disabilities, should disproportionately bear the cumulative negative social or environmental consequences resulting from land use decisions. Principles of environmental justice recognize historically that the largest proportion of environmental burdens come from industrial development, energy production facilities, disposal of waste, and transportation systems, and that these burdens often fall on the communities that are least able to withstand the impacts of them, i.e. poorer and marginalized communities. Environmental justice is a principle and practice that emerged historically from people of color organizing to protect their environments, community rights, lands, and health.

~~**Social Equity:** Principle of fairness, with attention to provision of opportunity to those portions of the community that are less well off; as applied to Comprehensive Plan, related issues include the provision of affordable housing, economic opportunity, and choice of living environments for all members of the community without regard to sex, race, age, religion, ethnicity, national origin, etc.~~

Equity means redressing injustices that were previously incurred, fully incorporating all segments of the community in the decision-making and planning processes and establishing measures to prevent future inequities from occurring. Such efforts include expanding opportunity and promoting equal access to public services, providing equal service quality, ensuring procedural fairness, and striving for equal opportunity in such areas as education, health, employment, mobility, and housing.

In the context of sustainability, equity refers to how burdens and benefits of different policy actions are distributed in a community. The more evenly they are distributed, the more equitable the community is, and this is reflected in economic, ecological, and social outcomes.

Equity in sustainability includes putting forth efforts toward rectifying previous environmental injustices, avoiding environmental injustices going forward, and providing equal access to participate in sustainability activities and shape their development.

The proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment also incorporates additional language into Policies 4.2.1 and 4.4.1 (Industrial land uses) and Policy 5.2.2 (Institutional land uses) of the Future Land Use Element to specifically provide that equity and environmental justice are taken into consideration as part of land use decisions, and that there is a particular focus on the impacts of these land uses on historically burdened communities.

Policy 4.2.1. Industrial *land* uses shall not be located adjacent to residential or agricultural areas without adequate buffering or integrating design and business practices to eliminate or minimize adverse impacts. Land use decisions concerning location of industrial uses shall take into consideration environmental justice, equity, and community, historical, and neighborhood character; this shall include consideration of the residents of the community, their relationship to the land, and the characteristics of the land itself. In considering community, historical, and neighborhood character, particular consideration shall be given to recognizing, protecting and preserving the resilience, collective desires, and resources of historically burdened communities. Historically burdened communities are those where the residents, often from racially or ethnically marginalized communities, face inequities and have disproportionate burdens associated with land use.

Identical new language is incorporated into Policy 4.4.1 for Heavy Industrial land uses.

Policy 5.2.2 Institutional facilities shall be designed and located for integration into the surrounding community. Land use decisions concerning location of institutional uses shall take into consideration environmental justice, equity, and community, historical, and neighborhood character; this shall include consideration of the residents of the community, their relationship to the land, and the characteristics of the land itself. In considering community, historical, and neighborhood character, particular consideration shall be given to recognizing, protecting and preserving the resilience, collective desires, and resources of historically burdened communities. Historically burdened communities are those where the residents, often from racially or ethnically marginalized communities, face inequities and have disproportionate burdens associated with land use.

The existing policy language for industrial land uses recognizes that these uses may have adverse impacts, and that such impacts must be minimized or eliminated through adequate buffering or design and business practices. The existing policy language for institutional land uses similarly calls for the design and integration of such uses into the surrounding community.

Planning and zoning practice generally calls for a compatibility analysis of the surrounding area when considering a proposed land use or development. This includes the identification of potential impacts (often things such as land use conflicts, traffic, stormwater management, environmental, noise, or visual impacts) of a proposed land use or development on the surrounding area, and consideration of strategies (such as buffers and setbacks) to mitigate such impacts. Florida Statutes defines compatibility as follows:

163.3164 (9) "Compatibility" means a condition in which land uses or conditions can coexist in relative proximity to each other in a stable fashion over time such that no use or condition is unduly negatively impacted directly or indirectly by another use or condition.

The statutory definition of compatibility recognizes that land uses should *coexist in relative proximity in a stable fashion over time* and that *no use or condition is unduly negatively impacted directly or indirectly by another use or condition*. While compatibility analysis is common practice in planning and zoning, it often fails to take into account the cumulative negative impacts that can occur when land uses that are perceived as undesirable neighbors, or that create more intensive adverse impacts, are disproportionately concentrated within certain areas of the community. Such disproportionate concentrations of perceived undesirable land uses in certain areas can unduly negatively impact other land uses in that area and result in negative health impacts, lower property values, or lack of private investment in those areas.

In Alachua County, the disproportionate concentration of industrial and institutional/government land uses has been one of the underlying causes of documented inequities within portions of the County. Buffering and design strategies are not always sufficient to minimize or eliminate impacts associated with disproportionate concentration of land uses. In order to address this issue, the proposed new language in Policies 4.2.1, 4.4.1, and 5.2.2 calls for the County to undertake a more holistic evaluation of potential adverse impacts when considering proposed industrial and institutional land uses that takes into account equity, environmental justice, and community, historical and neighborhood character, with particular consideration given to recognizing, protecting, and preserving historically burdened communities. These additional factors would be included as part of an overall compatibility analysis when considering proposed industrial or institutional land uses.

Related to these changes, the proposed amendment also revises Policy 7.1.2(c) of the Future Land Use Element to add "equity" among the several factors to be taken into account when considering changes to the zoning map. Additionally, the proposed amendment revises Policy 7.1.17 of the Future Land Use Element to provide for land development regulations which include community, historical, and neighborhood character among the several factors which will be utilized to evaluate whether or not a special exception or special use permit should be granted.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONSISTENCY

The proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment is internally consistent with the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan as adopted, and specifically the following provisions.

Future Land Use Element

Goal: Encourage the orderly, harmonious, and judicious use of land, consistent with the following guiding principles.

Principle 1: Promote sustainable land development that provides for a balance of economic opportunity, social equity including environmental justice, and protection of the natural environment.

Equity and environmental justice are presently recognized as an important consideration within a high-level principle of the Future Land Use Element, as adopted. The proposed amendment provides for more detailed and meaningful definitions of equity and environmental justice than those that are presently adopted within the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Element and have been part of the Comprehensive Plan since the early 2000s. The updated definitions will allow for more effective implementation of this principle and the subsequent policies of the Future Land Use Element which are based on this principle.

Principle 3: Recognize residential neighborhoods as a collective asset for all residents of the county.

The proposed amendments to the Industrial and Institutional land use policies recognize that residential neighborhoods are a collective asset to the County by adding policy language to ensure that decisions on proposed industrial or institutional land uses take into consideration environmental justice, equity, and community, historical, and neighborhood character, with specific emphasis on protection of historically burdened communities which are often disproportionately impacted by such land use decisions.

Policy 7.1.23. *All amendments shall be considered based on the applicable policies and objectives of this Element, shall be considered in light of the Basic Principles upon which the Plan is based, and shall be consistent with all Elements of the Plan.*

The proposed amendments are consistent with and will further the implementation of Future Land Use Element Principle 1 and Principle 3 as discussed above by providing for more detailed and meaningful definitions of equity and environmental justice. The more robust definitions that are proposed will ensure more effective and predictable implementation of existing policies within the Comprehensive Plan which mention those terms. The related amendments to the Industrial and Institutional land use policies will further the recognition and protection of residential neighborhoods as a collective asset for the County (Principle 3), and particularly those that are historically burdened.

Economic Element

GOAL 1, Economic Element: Promote the economic prosperity of all citizens of Alachua County, address economic equity, and expand and diversify the county's tax base.

OBJECTIVE 1.1 - ECONOMIC DIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABILITY (Economic Element): Diversify the County's economy. Achieve a diversified and sustainable economic base in Alachua County to minimize the vulnerability of the local economy and to provide economic opportunity for all segments of the population that shall include strategies to achieve the elimination of disparities identified in the "Understanding Racial Inequity in Alachua County" Report (2018) and attract and retain high-quality employers and employees within the workforce.

Goal 1 of the Economic Element calls for the County to address economic equity. Land use is one component of existing inequities in Alachua County as identified in the report titled, "Understanding Racial Inequity in Alachua County" as referenced in the Economic Element Objective 1.1. Disproportionate concentrations of industrial and institutional land uses has been one of the underlying reasons for the economic and other inequities which exist in certain geographic areas of Alachua County. The proposed amendments to the Industrial and Institutional land use policies seek to formally recognize the potential negative impacts on historically burdened communities that can be associated with industrial and institutional land uses and ensure that these impacts are formally considered among other factors as part of land use decisions going forward; this will help to ensure that existing economic inequities within certain areas are not perpetuated.

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment is not expected to have an effect on the provision of affordable housing in Alachua County. The proposed amendment revises and clarifies existing definitions of "environmental justice" and "equity" and revises Industrial and Institutional land use policies to ensure that equity, environmental justice, and neighborhood character are taken into consideration as part of land use decisions. The proposed amendment does not establish or modify any goals, objectives, policies or development standards for residential land uses that could potentially affect the development or cost of housing.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends **transmittal** of the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment to the State Land Planning Agency and other agencies for review and comment pursuant to Section 163.3184, Florida Statutes with the following bases:

1. *Principle 1, Future Land Use Element: Promote sustainable land development that provides for a balance of economic opportunity, social equity including environmental justice, and protection of the natural environment.*

The promotion of equity and environmental justice are part of this foundational principle of the Future Land Use Element. The proposed updates and clarifications to the definitions of “equity” and “environmental justice” and the Industrial and Institutional land use policies are based upon and further this general principle of the Future Land Use Element.

2. *Principle 3, Future Land Use Element: Recognize residential neighborhoods as a collective asset for all residents of the county.*

The proposed amendments to the Industrial and Institutional land use policies recognize residential neighborhoods as a collective asset to the County by adding policy language to ensure that decisions concerning industrial and institutional land uses take into consideration environmental justice, equity, and community, historical, and neighborhood character, with an emphasis on protecting historically burdened communities which are often disproportionately impacted by such land use decisions.

3. *Policy 7.1.23 Future Land Use Element: All amendments shall be considered based on the applicable policies and objectives of this Element, shall be considered in light of the Basic Principles upon which the Plan is based, and shall be consistent with all Elements of the Plan.*

As mentioned in Bases 1 and 3 above, the proposed amendments are consistent with and will further the implementation of Future Land Use Element Principle 1 and Principle 3 by providing for more detailed and meaningful definitions of equity and environmental justice, which will help to ensure more effective and predictable implementation of existing policies within the Comprehensive Plan that mention those terms. The related amendments to the Industrial and Institutional land use policies will further the recognition and protection of residential neighborhoods as a collective asset for the County, and particularly those that are historically burdened.

4. *GOAL 1, Economic Element: Promote the economic prosperity of all citizens of Alachua County, address economic equity, and expand and diversify the county's tax base.*

OBJECTIVE 1.1 - ECONOMIC DIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABILITY (Economic Element): Diversify the County's economy. Achieve a diversified and sustainable economic base in Alachua County to minimize the vulnerability of the local economy and to provide economic opportunity for all segments of the population that shall include strategies to achieve the elimination of disparities

identified in the “Understanding Racial Inequity in Alachua County” Report (2018) and attract and retain high-quality employers and employees within the workforce.

Goal 1 of the Economic Element calls for the County to address economic equity. Land use is one component of existing inequities in Alachua County as identified in the report titled, “Understanding Racial Inequity in Alachua County” as referenced in the Economic Element Objective 1.1. Disproportionate concentrations of industrial and institutional land uses has been one of the underlying reasons for the economic and other inequities which exist in certain geographic areas of Alachua County. The proposed amendments to the Industrial and Institutional land use policies seek to formally recognize the potential negative impacts on historically burdened communities that can be associated with industrial and institutional land uses, and that these impacts are formally considered among other factors as part of land use decisions going forward; this will help to ensure that existing economic inequities within certain areas are not perpetuated.

Exhibit 1 – Proposed Text Amendment to Alachua County Comprehensive Plan

Underlined text is proposed to be added

~~Struck through~~ text is proposed for deletion

FUTURE LAND USE ELEMENT

Principle 1. Promote sustainable land development that provides for a balance of economic opportunity, social equity, ~~including~~ environmental justice, and protection of the natural environment.

Definitions

~~**Environmental Justice:** No group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the cumulative negative social or environmental consequences resulting from land use decisions.~~

Environmental Justice means that no group of people, including those from marginalized racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups or persons with disabilities, should disproportionately bear the cumulative negative social or environmental consequences resulting from land use decisions. Principles of environmental justice recognize historically that the largest proportion of environmental burdens come from industrial development, energy production facilities, disposal of waste, and transportation systems, and that these burdens often fall on the communities that are least able to withstand the impacts of them, i.e. poorer and marginalized communities. Environmental justice is a principle and practice that emerged historically from people of color organizing to protect their environments, community rights, lands, and health.

~~**Social Equity:** Principle of fairness, with attention to provision of opportunity to those portions of the community that are less well off; as applied to Comprehensive Plan, related issues include the provision of affordable housing, economic opportunity, and choice of living environments for all members of the community without regard to sex, race, age, religion, ethnicity, national origin, etc.~~

Equity means redressing injustices that were previously incurred, fully incorporating all segments of the community in the decision-making and planning processes and establishing measures to prevent future inequities from occurring. Such efforts include expanding opportunity and promoting equal access to public services, providing equal service quality, ensuring procedural fairness, and striving for equal opportunity in such areas as education, health, employment, mobility, and housing.

In the context of sustainability, equity refers to how burdens and benefits of different policy actions are distributed in a community. The more evenly they are distributed, the more equitable the community is, and this is reflected in economic, ecological, and social outcomes. Equity in sustainability includes putting

forth efforts toward rectifying previous environmental injustices, avoiding environmental injustices going forward, and providing equal access to participate in sustainability activities and shape their development.

4.0 INDUSTRIAL LAND USE POLICIES

OBJECTIVE 4.2 - LOCATION AND COMPATIBILITY

Policy 4.2.1. Industrial land uses shall not be located adjacent to residential or agricultural areas without adequate buffering or integrating design and business practices to eliminate or minimize adverse impacts. Land use decisions concerning location of industrial uses shall take into consideration environmental justice, equity, and community, historical, and neighborhood character; this shall include consideration of the residents of the community, their relationship to the land, and the characteristics of the land itself. In considering community, historical, and neighborhood character, particular consideration shall be given to recognizing, protecting and preserving the resilience, collective desires, and resources of historically burdened communities. Historically burdened communities are those where the residents, often from racially or ethnically marginalized communities, face inequities and have disproportionate burdens associated with land use.

Policy 4.4.1. Heavy Industrial land uses shall not be located adjacent to residential or agricultural areas without adequate buffering or integrating design and business practices to eliminate or minimize adverse impacts. Land use decisions concerning location of industrial uses shall take into consideration environmental justice, equity, and community, historical, and neighborhood character; this shall include consideration of the residents of the community, their relationship to the land, and the characteristics of the land itself. In considering community, historical, and neighborhood character, particular consideration shall be given to recognizing, protecting and preserving the resilience, collective desires, and resources of historically burdened communities. Historically burdened communities are those where the residents, often from racially or ethnically marginalized communities, face inequities and have disproportionate burdens associated with land use.

5.0 INSTITUTIONAL LAND USE POLICIES

OBJECTIVE 5.1 – GENERAL

An institutional land use category shall be established to provide for a range of activities related to human development and community services, subject to the policies and standards contained in this Section.

Policy 5.1.1 Potential locations for major future institutional uses are identified on the Future Land Use Map. Institutional uses may be allowed in other land use categories designated on the Future Land Use Map, and implemented in accordance with the guidance and policies within this Section 5.0., and within the Comprehensive Plan as a whole.

Policy 5.1.2 The following uses are considered institutional and governmental uses in Alachua County:

- (a) Public and Private Educational Facilities (meeting State of Florida compulsory education requirements), Day Care Centers, and Nursery Schools.
- (b) Community Services (e.g. civic and government facilities, fire and emergency services, law enforcement, health facilities, community service organizations, correctional facilities).
- (c) Public Utility, Communications or Infrastructure Services (e.g. utility transmission and distribution facilities, landfills).
- (d) Religious Facilities; and
- (e) Cemeteries.

OBJECTIVE 5.2 - LOCATION AND COMPATIBILITY (*for Institutional Land Uses*)

Policy 5.2.1. The following criteria shall determine the appropriateness of potential institutional locations and uses requiring special use permits, and shall be demonstrated prior to establishing the institutional use:

- (a) Optimum service area.
- (b) Optimum operating size.
- (c) Access to clientele.
- (d) Compatibility of the scale and intensity of the use in relationship to surrounding uses, taking into account impacts such as, noise, lighting, visual effect, traffic generation, odors.
- (e) Nature of service provision.
- (f) Needs of the clientele.
- (g) Availability and adequacy of public infrastructure to serve the particular use.
- (h) Preservation and strengthening of community and neighborhood character through design and in accordance with Policy 5.2.2 of this Element.
- (i) Consistency with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Conservation and Open Space Element.

Policy 5.2.2 Institutional facilities shall be designed and located for integration into the surrounding community. Land use decisions concerning location of institutional uses shall take into consideration environmental justice, equity, and community, historical, and neighborhood character; this shall include consideration of the residents of the community, their relationship to the land, and the characteristics of the land itself. In considering community, historical, and neighborhood character, particular consideration shall be given to recognizing, protecting and preserving the resilience, collective desires, and resources of historically burdened communities. Historically burdened communities are those where the residents, often from racially or ethnically marginalized communities, face inequities and have disproportionate burdens associated with land use.

Policy 7.1.2 Proposed changes in the zoning map shall consider:

- (a) consistency with the goals, objectives, policies and adopted maps of the Comprehensive Plan
- (b) the availability and capacity of public facilities required to serve the development. When considering a rezoning, this includes availability and capacity of existing public facilities and timing of future facilities based on capital plans. Specific determinations for any exceptions to the requirement to connect to a centralized potable water and sanitary sewer system will be made at the stage of development plan review, as detailed in Policy 2.1.1 of the Potable Water and Sanitary Sewer Element.
- (c) the relationship of the proposed development to existing development in the vicinity and considerations relating to environmental justice, equity, and redevelopment opportunities.
- (d) those factors identified by law, including that as a general matter an applicant is not entitled to a particular density or intensity within the range of densities and intensities permitted by the Comprehensive Plan, given due consideration of legitimate public purposes relating to health, safety, and welfare.

Policy 7.1.17 The land development regulations shall provide for evaluation of certain land uses through processes by which special exceptions, special use permits, and temporary use permits may be granted. These certain uses include uses with intensities or characteristics that may create an adverse impact on surrounding neighborhoods or institutions which are evaluated on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the size, extent and character of that use is compatible with the surrounding uses. The regulations to implement this policy shall identify the general category of uses that will be subject to this process and the specific factors which will be utilized to evaluate whether or not a special exception, special use permit or temporary use permit should be granted. For special exceptions and special use permits, these factors shall include, but are not limited to, consideration of environmental justice, equity, and community, historical, and neighborhood character.

Reference Materials Included as Part of Supporting Data and Analysis

1. [Alachua County, "Alachua County Equity Workplan" Adopted by Board of County Commissioners August 24, 2021.](#)
2. [Alachua County, "Alachua County Home Rule Charter" Section 1.8, "Identify and eliminate racial and gender bias in County policies", approved by voters 2020.](#)
3. [Alachua County, "Alachua Strategic Guide Fiscal Year 2023".](#)
4. [American Planning Association, "Planning for Equity Policy Guide", 2019.](#)
5. [International City/County Management Association \(ICMA\), "Local Governments, Social Equity, and Sustainable Communities: Advancing Social Equity Goals to Achieve Sustainability", 2014.](#)
6. [University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research, "Understanding Racial Inequity in Alachua County", 2018.](#)

Summary of Community Workshop on Draft Comprehensive Plan Amendments for Equity and Environmental Justice Definitions and Policies

July 31, 2023 at 6:00 p.m., Grace Knight Conference Room and on Zoom

Alachua County staff hosted a community workshop to review and discuss the draft text amendments to the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan on equity and environmental justice definitions and policies. There were 13 members of the public in attendance either in-person or on Zoom. The following is a summary of the public comments and questions from the workshop. After the workshop, County staff reviewed and considered each comment and has included brief notes in response to the comments or questions below.

Environmental Justice Definition

The following new draft definition was presented:

Environmental Justice means that no group of people, including those from marginalized racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups, should disproportionately bear the negative social or environmental consequences resulting from land use decisions. Principles of environmental justice recognize historically that the largest proportion of environmental burdens come from industrial development, energy production facilities, disposal of waste, and transportation systems, and that these burdens often fall on the communities that are least able to withstand the impacts of them; poorer and marginalized communities. Environmental justice is a principle and practice that emerged historically from people of color organizing to protect their environments, community rights, lands, and health.

Public Comments on Environmental Justice Definition

1. Add “Identity” before group in first sentence.

Staff Notes: The focus of the definition is intentionally and specifically on *marginalized racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups* and the environmental burdens they face. Use of the term “identity group” may unintentionally broaden the definition in a way such that it would potentially apply to any number and type of “identity” groups that exist, many of which do not historically suffer from environmental burdens. This could potentially make the definition less meaningful when implementing it in the land use context.

2. Second Sentence – There are differential development outcomes for different areas. Example of tree cover in different neighborhoods.

Staff Notes: One of the purposes of these definition and policy changes is to recognize and begin to address differential development outcomes in parts of the community.

3. Second sentence - Missing intentionality of systems causing harm.

Staff Notes: Intentionality of systems causing harm is implied in the definition reference to “land use decisions” (emphasis added). A more explicit description of past intentionality would require a greater level of detail than would commonly be included in a Comprehensive Plan definition.

4. Question: Why are communities least able to withstand impacts? Reasons were suggested including lack of agency and lack of political capital.

Staff Notes: Staff agrees with the reasons suggested. In addition, lack of awareness or understanding of local government processes may also be a contributing factor. The County has sought to make improvements in its community outreach efforts on planning and zoning matters and across the organization recently in order to increase awareness of local government decision-making processes.

5. Good definitions overall. One thing that is not adequately addressed, specifically, “persons with disabilities.” Read ADA definition about equal treatment.

Staff Notes: Language on persons with disabilities has been added to the definition.

Equity Definition

The following new draft definition was presented:

***Equity** means redressing injustices that were previously incurred, fully incorporating all segments of the community in the decision-making and planning processes and establishing measures to prevent future inequities from occurring. Such efforts include expanding opportunity and promoting equal access to public services, providing equal service quality, ensuring procedural fairness, and striving for equal opportunity in such areas as education, health, employment.*

In the context of sustainability, equity refers to how burdens and benefits of different policy actions are distributed in a community. The more evenly they are distributed, the more equitable the community is, and this is reflected in economic, ecological, and social outcomes. Equity in sustainability includes putting forth efforts toward rectifying previous environmental injustices, avoiding environmental injustices going forward, and providing equal access to participate in sustainability activities and shape their development.

Public Comments on Equity Definition

1. First sentence: How would the County establish measures?

Staff Notes: The County is beginning the process of developing quantifiable measures by which progress on equity could be measured, tracked, and analyzed. The Equity and Community Outreach Office is heading up this effort with input from all other County Departments.

2. Second Sentence: “equal access” does not truly get at equity for disabled communities.

Staff Notes: Staff recognizes that inequities exist for persons with disabilities. The draft equity definition attempts to define equity more generally and be inclusive of all groups (see “all segments of the community”) rather than calling out specific groups that may experience inequities. Persons with disabilities are addressed to an extent in the Comprehensive Plan within land use, transportation, housing, and community health policies. Such policies may warrant further examination for adequacy, and that could be addressed as part of a separate process.

3. In some communities, access to participation is limited.

Staff Notes: Staff agrees that public access to participation in the decision-making process is limited for some persons and groups, and that this can be a key component of community inequity. Improving access to participation in local government is something that has and will continue to be addressed in practice through enhancements to community outreach efforts and methods as well as public notice methods.

4. What could rectify previous environmental injustices?

Staff Notes: There are several examples of potential ways that the County could rectify previous environmental injustices. The primary way would be through County decisions and budgeting on capital improvement projects such as stormwater/drainage improvements, water quality programs, land acquisition, flood mitigation projects, and extension of municipal utilities to unserved urban areas. In a planning and land use context, conditions for approval of Special Use Permits or Special Exceptions could potentially be modified in some instances to better address environmental concerns if or when such applications are proposed for renewal or modification.

5. Consider adding “housing” at the end of the equity definition.

Staff Notes: Housing has been added to the equity definition.

Industrial Land Use Policy

The following draft policy language amendment was presented:

Policy 4.2.1. Industrial land uses shall not be located adjacent to residential or agricultural areas without adequate buffering or integrating design and business practices to eliminate or minimize adverse impacts. Land use decisions concerning location of industrial uses shall take into consideration environmental justice, equity, and community, historical, and neighborhood

character; this shall include consideration of the residents of the community, their relationship to the land, and the characteristics of the land itself. In considering community, historical, and neighborhood character, particular consideration shall be given to recognizing, protecting and preserving the resilience, collective desires, and resources of historically burdened communities. Historically burdened communities are those where the residents, often from racially or ethnically marginalized communities, face inequities and have disproportionate burdens associated with land use.

Public Comments on Industrial Land Use Policy

1. Include descriptions or examples of historical burdens.

Staff Notes: There are numerous examples of environmental burdens that might be associated with industrial land uses including ground or air pollution, water quality degradation, noise, and odor. In some instances, these burdens may lead to a long-term deterioration of quality of life in nearby neighborhoods, reduction of land values, and lack of private investment in particular areas. The last sentence of the draft policy describes what constitutes a historically burdened community.

2. Add definition of “historical burdens”.

Staff Notes: Staff agrees it is important to define historical burdens so that the policy can be functional. As noted above, the last sentence of the draft policy describes what constitutes a historically burdened community. Staff believes this language in the policy in combination with the new definitions of equity and environmental justice (which will all be part of one Comprehensive Plan amendment package) adequately describe historical burdens.

3. Add recognition of persons with disabilities.

Staff Notes: Persons with disabilities are recognized in the definition of environmental justice. This ensures that persons with disabilities are taken into account as part of all policies which mention environmental justice.

4. Can we use the term “disenfranchised” instead of “marginalized”.

Staff Notes: Disenfranchised implies being deprived of a legal right or privilege, and that is not the subject of this policy which is focused on land use impacts on a community. Staff believes marginalized is the appropriate term in this instance.

5. Examples should include the specifics of the industries mentioned in the Environmental Justice definition.

Staff Notes: The County’s Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) contains detailed standards which regulate specific impacts associated with industrial uses ([Sec. 407.61](#)) and non-residential uses in general

([Sec. 407.60](#)). These standards address impacts such as waste discharge, smoke, dust, dirt, vibration, noise, odor, glare, fire hazards, radioactive materials, and electromagnetic interference. Comprehensive Plan policies such as the Industrial policy above are typically more general in nature with more specific details addressed in the ULDC.

Institutional Land Use Policy

The following draft policy language amendment was presented:

Policy 5.2.2 *Institutional facilities shall be designed and located for integration into the surrounding community. Land use decisions concerning location of institutional uses shall take into consideration environmental justice, equity, and community, historical, and neighborhood character; this shall include consideration of the residents of the community, their relationship to the land, and the characteristics of the land itself. In considering community, historical, and neighborhood character, particular consideration shall be given to recognizing, protecting and preserving the resilience, collective desires, and resources of historically burdened communities. Historically burdened communities are those where the residents, often from racially or ethnically marginalized communities, face inequities and have disproportionate burdens associated with land use.*

Public Comments on Institutional Land Use Policy

1. Same comment from above regarding need to address disabled persons.

Staff Notes: As noted above, persons with disabilities are recognized in the definition of environmental justice. This ensures that persons with disabilities are taken into account as part of all policies which mention that term.

Other Comments

1. Question about Charter amendment regarding equity.

Staff Notes: This question is in reference to the Charter language that was approved by voters in 2020 providing that the County shall annually examine policies and endeavor to eliminate all elements of racial and gender bias in both the design and delivery of County programs and services. The proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments are part of the County's overall equity work throughout the organization and the implementation of the Charter language.