

Environment, Climate, Energy Element

Synopsis: Natural Resources include the soil, water, plants, animals, land, air, energy, climate, wildlife habitat, invasive species and pests, and watersheds within the region. These principles apply to the comprehensive plan's Solid Waste, Potable Water, Sanitary Sewer, Stormwater, Conservation and Open Space, Environmental Protection, and Energy elements. This overview serves for all the following audit sections.

Within the context and management of natural resources, best practices for equity vary according to discipline and focus. Three types of considerations guide best practices related to equity. The first hub of practices is related to the material distribution of resources, hazards, and natural industry across a region. Historically, pollutants, waste, and environmentally damaging industries have been situated in or near low-income communities and communities of color. Distributive or material justice ensures that these communities do not bear a disproportionate burden of the region's industrial environmental costs thereby incurring negative effects to individual and communal health impacts and quality of life.

Procedural justice refers to the decision-making power and access that communities have related to the process and plans for natural resource management. Best practices related to equity ensure that diverse, historically situated communities can participate in planning, development, and implementation of natural resource management development and planning. Finally, best practices in natural resource management ought to incorporate and utilize cultural and historic bases of knowledge that are produced and retained within local, cultural, and historically marginalized communities that have often been left out of scientific discussions of climate change, climate consequences, and sustainable management of natural resources.

1. Does the plan mention environmental justice?

- a. [Internal] [Yes Specifically] The comp plan mentions and defines environmental justice. The term can be found in the Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE) and throughout the Future Land Use Element. The definition is located in the Future Land Use Element.

[Open Space Element: Policy 2.2.7][Land Use Element: Principal 1, Policy 4.2.1, Policy 4.4.1; Policy 7.1.2(c); Policy 7.1.17]

- b. [EAB]

2. Does the plan mention environmental protection, (air quality, noise mitigation, surface, and stormwater quality) in geographic areas that are underserved, or that have particular needs?

- a. [Internal] [Yes, generally] Staff found that the specific term "underserved" is not used in the Conservation and Open Space element. While the Comp plan does have policies regarding the environmental protection topics listed above, many of those policies are countywide broad-based best practices that are not targeted to any specific populations.

Additionally, staff used data and maps to locate all occurrences of the environmental protection issues throughout the county independent of community demographics. So, if there was an occurrence, then that data was recorded. In the ULDC, this data helped inform an area where special requirements and more restrictive policies would be needed, for example the special requirements of well construction in the Fairbanks area.

[ULDC Article XI, Sec. 406.68(b)]

Staff recognizes the importance of these issues as it relates to vulnerable populations, communities, and their unique identities and needs. Thus, a multi-departmental effort is in progress for the Climate Action Plan (CAP-Led by Stephen Hofstetter and the Environmental Protection Division team) which, after its completion, will get integrated into the Evaluation and Appraisal Review of our Comprehensive Plan where appropriate. In the CAP plan, there will be more information regarding the above issues incorporating community/population demographics data. The direction we're moving with our Climate Action Plan is identifying those underserved and special needs geographical areas.

b. [EAB]

3. Does the plan identify natural hazards?

a. [Internal] [Yes, specifically] Staff highlighted the Comp plan and Climate Action Plan's identification of various potential hazards, including soil, groundwater, flooding, and hazardous materials concerns. Additionally, the County has an established Hazardous Materials Management Code in place to address such issues effectively.

[COSE: Policy 2.1.1(a)(h)(i); Policy 4.6.2]

b. [EAB]

4. Does the plan talk about ensuring equitable protection from those hazards?

a. [Internal] [Yes, generally] Staff noted that the COSE section of the Comp plan primarily emphasizes the protection of natural resources based on the function (e.g., water quality, flood storage, wildlife habitat) and quality of those resources, rather than focusing on the hazards to individuals. Other sections of the plan address these hazards as they pertain to infrastructure and population protection. Staff noted that there may be room for policy as it

relates to inequity and where populations are living in relation to floodplains and low-lying wet areas.

b. [EAB]

5. Does the plan identify human-caused hazards, such as industrial pollution, nuclear radiation, toxic wastes, dam failures, and transportation or industrial accidents that result in explosions, fires, or chemical spill?

- a. Does the plan talk about ensuring equitable protection from those hazards?
- b. Does the plan talk about ensuring equitable protection from the above impacts?

- i. [Internal] Staff acknowledged that this question primarily pertains to emergency management. However, In the Comprehensive plan, hazardous materials are addressed in terms of where they should not be located within the county based on environmental concerns and the health and safety of citizens. The county has a hazardous materials management code and a hazardous material program to ensure proper handling and disposal by organizations, businesses, companies, and individuals. The Hazardous Materials Code mandates appropriate practices, and the accompanying program requires a prompt 24-hour response to hazardous releases resulting from incidents such as car accidents, explosions, or fires.

- ii. Regarding (b), staff discussed the inactive landfills that are dispersed across all four sides of the county. The Environmental Protection Division (EPD) is actively monitoring these land fills and recognizes concerns related to their location in proximity to residential areas. [COSE 4.5.2; Policy 5.7.1; Policy 5.7.10; Policy4.5.5(g)(1-6); Policy 5.7.1; Policy 5.7.7]

- iii. [EAB]

6. Does the community have a separate hazard mitigation plan?

- a. [Internal] [Yes, Specifically] The County has an existing and approved Local Mitigation Strategy Plan.

- [COSE 5.6.3, Intergovernmental Coordination Element Policy 1.1.9, Stormwater Element Policy 7.1.1, Capital Improvement Element Policy 1.5.2(2); Policy 1.6.7]

- b. [EAB]

7. Does the plan promote internal energy efficiency among county vehicle fleets? Does the plan promote the transition to energy efficient and clean energy vehicles

- a. [Internal] [Yes Specifically] As it relates to County vehicles, the energy element of the Comp plan has policy regarding the use of alternative fuel sources such as biofuel, methane, electric and/or solar in government fleets. The County also promotes internal energy efficiency by maintaining a fleet of newer vehicles. Newer vehicles are more fuel efficient, have lower emission rates, burn cleaner, and get more miles to the gallon compared to vehicles from 20-30 years prior. Alachua County has implemented a policy to reduce idling time for all County vehicles, further minimizing fuel consumption and emissions.

The Comp plan also promotes the transition to energy efficient and clean energy vehicles for the public by supporting the infrastructure needed by these vehicles. This policy can be found in the Transportation element where a minimum provision of Level 2 charging stations (240V) to new multifamily and TND/TOD developments is required/mandated.

[Energy: Policy 4.1.2; Transportation Element 1.4.1]

- b. [EAB]

8. Does the plan make recommendations about providing residents or businesses with options for renewable energy?

- a. [Internal] [Yes specifically] Staff highlighted several policies within the COSE that pertains to the provision of renewable energy. Additionally, within the Energy Element, there were several relating policies including a goal and priority focused on promoting and investing in renewable energy production that are public/citizen focused.

[COSE policy 5.1.1; 5.1.5;][Energy Objective 6.1: Policy 6.1.2; Objective 6.2, Policy 6.2.1, Policy 6.2.2; Objective 8.1, Policy 8.1.1-8.1.3]

- b. [EAB]

9. What are the impacts the plan identifies as being most of concern to this community?

- Water supply, both in terms of quality and quantity
- Habitat loss for animal and plant species
- Change in lake levels

- Rising temperatures

- Impact on agriculture

- Flooding, Invasive Species, other

- i. [Internal] Staff noted that the public often raises concerns about water (loss and quality) followed in no particular order by Habitat Loss, Impact on Agriculture, and Flooding/Invasive Species. As to being the most concerning to this community, it would be ill-advised to impose a one-size-fits-all priority on the residents of Alachua County. Priorities can differ for individuals and communities alike based on a number of factors such as geographical location and personal values. Therefore, generalizing all areas of the unincorporated area into a single universal major priority is not a discussion grounded in principals of equity, as it does not address the unique needs, challenges, and perspectives of the diverse communities within the county. There does, however, seem to be a strong consensus regarding water throughout all corners of the unincorporated area and as a result, can be seen throughout the Conservation and Open Space element and addressed in the Climate Action Plan (along with the other concerns listed).

- ii. [EAB]