
Wakulla County Evaluation and Appraisal Report

DRAFT

Prepared for:
Wakulla County

Prepared by:
 Kimley-Horn
and Associates, Inc.

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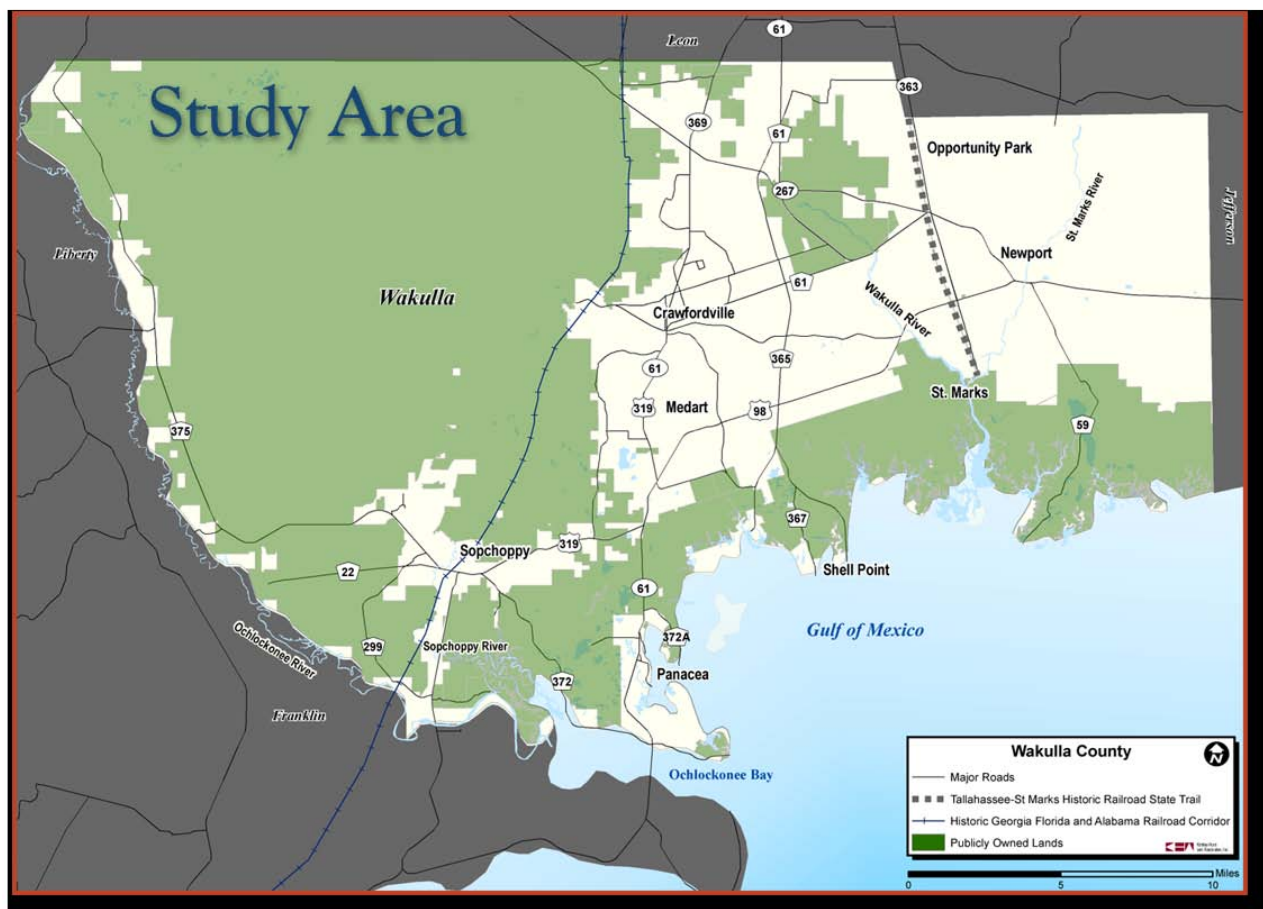
INTRODUCTION

County Profile

Wakulla County is located centrally in the Panhandle of Florida, bordered to the north by Leon County, to the east by Jefferson County, to the west by Liberty and Franklin Counties, and to the south by the Gulf of Mexico. The County's jurisdictional area consists of approximately 388,288 predominately rural acres or 606.7 square miles with a population density of 44 persons per square mile. While there are no Interstate highways in Wakulla County, several major routes pass through it, including US Route 98 and US Route 319. Other significant roads in the County include State Road 267, State Road 363, and County Road 375. Wakulla County has only two incorporated cities within its jurisdiction, St. Marks and Sopchoppy. The largest urban center in the unincorporated area of the County is Crawfordville, the County seat.

Two of the region's primary natural attractions are found in Wakulla County, Apalachicola National Park and Wakulla Springs, which is one of the world's largest freshwater springs. Other natural attractions include St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, St. Marks Lighthouse, Ocklockonee River State Park, and Fort San Marcos De Apalache. Figure 1 below shows the County and its boundaries. The areas shown in green represent the publicly owned lands in the County, which, as detailed later in this report, provide opportunities and constraints regarding development.

Figure 1: Study Area



Purpose of the EAR

The Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) process provides the County with an opportunity to evaluate and monitor the successes and shortcomings of its Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan). The EAR is conducted every seven years. This process provides guidance in updating the Comp Plan in response to major issues or changes in the community, as well as any changes in state and federal planning requirements. The EAR only provides recommendations for amending the Comp Plan.

Specifically, the purpose of the evaluation process is to:

- Identify major issues of the community
- Review past actions of the local government in implementing the Comp Plan since the last EAR
- Assess the degree to which Comp Plan objectives have been achieved
- Assess both successes and shortcomings of the Comp Plan
- Identify ways the Comp Plan should be changed
 - Respond to changing conditions and trends affecting the local community
 - Respond to the need for new data
 - Respond to changes in state requirements regarding growth management and development
 - Respond to changes in regional plans
- Ensure effective intergovernmental coordination

The State of Florida's local government comprehensive planning law, Chapter 163, Part 2, Florida Statutes (F.S.), requires that all counties and municipalities in Florida maintain long-range comprehensive planning programs, and that comprehensive planning should be a continuous and ongoing process. As a part of this ongoing process, local governments are required to monitor numerous community characteristics relating to development, provisions of services, environmental protection, and governmental activities that are used for development and support for the EAR.

Pursuant to Section 163.3191, F.S., "each local government shall adopt an evaluation and appraisal report (EAR) once every seven years assessing the progress in implementing the local government's comprehensive plan." Based on this evaluation, the report suggests how the Comp Plan should be revised to better address countywide objectives, changing conditions and trends affecting the county and changes in state requirements.

Section 163.3191, F.S. further specifies the procedures and criteria for the preparation, transmittal, adoption, and sufficiency review of the EAR and EAR-based Comp Plan amendments. Wakulla County needed to adopt and transmit its EAR to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for sufficiency review by September 1, 2007. The state mandated deadline was not met so Comp Plan amendment adoptions within the County were suspended until the EAR has been transmitted to DCA.

The scope and contents of this EAR reflect the County's best interpretation of the major issues to be addressed and the scope of work contained in the Letter of Understanding (LOU) provided by the County and agreed upon by DCA (**Appendix A**). The EAR has also been written to be consistent with the Florida Statutes, Florida Administrative Code, and other guidance documents issued by DCA and designated state and regional agencies.

Contents of the Ear

After 1998, the EAR requirements changed to allow for each community to evaluate its Comp Plan based solely on those issues that pertain to and affect that areas ability to meet its goals. Even though the EAR requirements have been localized, there are still standard components that every community must address. The standard EAR requirements include:

1. Population growth and changes in land area. [163.3191(2)(a)]
2. Location of existing development in relation to the location of development as anticipated in the Comp Plan. [163.3191(2)(d)]

3. Extent of vacant and developable land. [163.3191(2)(b)]
4. Financial feasibility of providing needed infrastructure to achieve and maintain adopted level-of-service standards and sustain concurrency management systems through the capital improvements, as well as the ability to address infrastructure backlogs and meet the demands of growth on public services and facilities. [163.3191(2)(c)]
5. A brief assessment of successes and shortcomings related to each element of the Comp Plan. [163.3191(2)(h)]
6. Relevant changes in growth management laws (the state comprehensive plan, the appropriate strategic regional policy plan, Chapter 163, Part II, F.S., and Rule 9J-5, F.A.C.) [163.3191(2)(f)]
7. Summary of the public participation program and activities undertaken by Wakulla County in preparing the report. [163.3191(2)(j)]
8. Identification of the major issues for the jurisdiction and, where pertinent, the potential social, economic, and environmental impacts. [163.3191(2)(e)]
9. Assessment of whether the Comp Plan objectives within each element, as they relate to major issues, have been achieved and whether unforeseen or unanticipated changes in circumstances have resulted in problems and opportunities with respect to major issues identified in each element. [163.3191(2)(g)]
10. Any actions or corrective measures, including whether Comp Plan amendments are anticipated to address the major issues identified and analyzed in the report. Such identification shall include, as appropriate, new population projections, new revised planning timeframes, a revised future conditions map or map series, an updated Capital Improvements Element, and any new and revised goals, objectives, and policies for major issues identified within each element. [163.3191(2)(i)]
11. An assessment of the success or failure of coordinating future land uses and residential development with the capacity of existing and planned schools; establishing with the school board appropriate population projections; and coordinating the planning and siting of new schools. [163.3191(2)(k)]
12. Assessment of the Comp Plan with respect to the water management district's regional water supply plan, including whether the Potable Water Element should be revised to include a work plan, converting at least a 10-year period, for building water supply facilities for which the local government is responsible, that are needed to serve existing and projected development. [163.3191(2)(l)]
13. Evaluation of whether any past reduction in land density within the coastal high-hazard area impairs the property rights of current residents when redevelopment occurs. The local government must identify strategies to address redevelopment and the rights of affected residents balanced against public safety considerations. [163.3191(2)(m)]
14. Assessment of whether the criteria adopted pursuant to s.163.3177(6)(a) was successful in achieving compatibility with military installations. [163.3191(2)(n)]

Organization of the Ear

The EAR for the Wakulla County Comp Plan is organized into the following six Chapters:

- Chapter 1 – Countywide Assessment
- Chapter 2 – Major Issues
- Chapter 3 – Element Assessment
- Chapter 4 – Special Topics
- Chapter 5 – Relevant Statutory Changes
- Chapter 6 – Recommendations

Chapter 1 – Countywide Assessment provides information detailing the County's population data and trends; changes in land area, including changes due to annexation; the location of existing development as it relates to where development was anticipated by the County's Comp Plan; summaries of vacant and developable land; the financial feasibility of maintaining level of service (LOS) for infrastructure; and relevant trends that impact the County's existing conditions and future directions.

Chapter 2 – Major Issues as identified in the County's LOU are evaluated.

Chapter 3 – Element Assessment provides a brief overview of the successes and shortcomings of the objectives of each element of the Comp Plan.

Chapter 4 – Special Topics assesses the progress of the required special topics- Public School Coordination, Coastal High-Hazard Areas, Regional Water Supply Plans, and Compatibility with Military Installations within the Comp Plan.

Chapter 5 – Relevant Statutory Changes provides a tabular summary of changes to the state comprehensive plan, Chapter 163, Part II, Florida Statutes, 9J-5, Florida Administrative Code, and the Apalachee Regional Planning Council (ARPC) Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) since the last EAR-based update of the County’s plan. The information illustrates how the County has addressed or proposes to address each relevant change since its last update.

Chapter 6 – Recommendations provides a list of recommendations for each major issue.

Schedule of the EAR Process

| Wakulla County Proposed EAR Adoption Schedule | |
|--|---|
| Project Kick-off Meeting with County Staff | July 26, 2007 |
| Major Issues Scoping Meeting with Local Agencies | September 11, 2007 |
| Major Issues Public Meeting | October 4, 2007 |
| Commission Workshop to Finalize Letter of Understanding (LOU) | November 5, 2007 |
| LOU submitted to DCA | November 7, 2007 |
| DCA agrees to LOU | November 21, 2007 |
| Draft EAR review with County Planning Staff | November 26, 2007 |
| County Commission Workshop Regarding Draft EAR | December 3, 2007 |
| Submit Draft EAR to DCA and Other Reviewing Agencies | December 5, 2007; 30 days allotted for review |
| LPA Public Hearing Regarding EAR | December 10, 2007 |
| County Commission Ordinance Reading for Adoption for Revised EAR | January 7, 2008 |
| County Adoption Date for EAR | January 21, 2008 |

Public Participation

A series of meetings, described below, were held to provide residents and community stakeholders an opportunity to participate in the EAR process and to provide input into the development of the major issues. Materials related to public participation can be found in **Appendix B**.

Agency Scoping

An agency scoping meeting was held on September 11, 2007 at the County’s Commission Chambers to discuss the preliminary list of major issues compiled by staff in addition to special topics required by state statutes. Invitations were extended to members of the local governments within the County, adjacent jurisdictions, and various regional and state agencies. Each agency was given the opportunity to provide its comments at the meeting and in writing. Pursuant to the Florida Sunshine Law, the public was notified of this meeting.

Meeting attendees included representatives from the Florida Department of Transportation District Three (FDOT), Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD), Apalachee Regional Planning Council, Wakulla County School Board, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), and three County Commissioners. Written comments were provided from the Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). All comments were incorporated with the preliminary list of major issues and included in the follow-up summary of the meeting.

Public Issues Meeting

Following the agency scoping meeting, a public meeting was held on October 4, 2007 at the Wakulla County Senior Citizens Center. There were a total of thirty attendees. The revised preliminary list of issues developed from the results of the Agency Scoping Meeting was presented. A brief PowerPoint presentation by the consultant described the EAR process and the information that had been compiled to date. Following the presentation, participants provided input through facilitated discussions. Once comments were provided, they were prioritized for further analysis.

Board of County Commissioners Workshops

As shown in the schedule above, two meetings with the Board of County Commissioners have been included in the EAR schedule. The first workshop, held on November 5, 2007, highlighted the results of the Agency Scoping Meeting and Public Issues Meeting. The major issues to be included in the LOU were reviewed.

The other meeting will be described once it is completed.

Local Planning Agency Public Hearing

This meeting will be described once it is completed.

Additional Efforts

Chapter 2-Major Issues describes additional activities, including visioning, that the County has conducted that provide important information for the EAR process.