

Sector Planning: A Sharper Tool to Manage Growth

By Bob Rhodes

Based to a large degree on the planning work done at Horizon West, the Florida legislature in 2011 revamped the state's sector planning program. The dual goal was to provide an effective, practical tool to promote long-term, innovative planning and development strategies while also addressing regional issues and extrajurisdictional impacts.

The legislation was driven largely by the limitations of the state's 1972 development of regional impact program and the 1985 growth management act, which, although they accomplished many goals, failed on two fronts: They didn't significantly discourage urban sprawl and didn't facilitate large-scale, long-term planning.

Sector planning is tailored to produce landscape level plans. Such plans must involve a minimum of 15,000 acres, and multijurisdiction, intergovernmental planning is encouraged. To foster long-range planning, a sector plan may be effective for more than the typical 20-year planning period provided in most of Florida's local plans.

The first planning level, a long-term master plan, establishes general standards for land uses and development, conservation, and agricultural activity. The master plan must include a framework land-use map that depicts a development pattern and generally identifies regionally significant resources, facilities, and infrastructure. It must also provide guidelines for producing a range of housing types and strategies for job creation.

The sector plan's broad approach to these subjects is refined at a second level by detailed specific area plans, each of which must encompass at least 1,000 acres. These DSAPs fill a gap by recognizing the impracticality of trying to plan large areas in detail over extended periods and the need to retain some measure of private and public sector flexibility to attain planning goals and to accommodate changing market demand.

Sector planning standards are intended to produce desirable urban form and discourage urban sprawl. Plans are directed to advance efficient land use and promote multiple transportation modes. A development pattern must reflect a hierarchy of places, include functional placemaking components, and limit urban sprawl.

The program underscores resource protection and land preservation. A master plan must identify regionally significant natural resources and protection and conservation measures, including conservation easements, which may be imposed during DSAP review.

Land use, transportation, and water supply planning must be linked. Whenever feasible, a metropolitan planning organization's long-range plan must be consistent with a sector plan's transportation policies and commitments. A regional water management district must incorporate into its regional water supply plan the water needs, sources, and supply projects identified in the sector plan. This intergovernmental planning linkage furthers legislative goals to promote comprehensively planned communities, forward-

looking regional resource and facility planning, and effective intergovernmental cooperation.

An approved sector plan and DSAP are surrogates for state-administered development of regional impact review. As such, sector plans must identify general procedures and policies that can facilitate intergovernmental coordination to address extra-jurisdictional impacts. A master plan is subject to state review for compliance with statutory standards that protect important state resources and facilities and DSAPs may be appealed to the state if they are inconsistent with an approved master plan.

Sector planning offers meaningful benefits to the public and private sectors. For state and local governments, these long-range plans allow planning of large growth areas over an extended period, and they discourage piecemeal development and fragmented decisions about resource protection and facilities.

The sector planning program enables landowners to chart a relatively predictable course for future development on large holdings and provides flexible time frames to determine how best to implement and finance a master plan through DSAPs.

Sector planning should help Florida avoid the sprawling development patterns that the state has long directly and indirectly encouraged. The plans will be done at a large scale, on a landscape level, and on a timeline that is practical and realistic for government and landowners alike. The program offers a much sharper tool to manage Florida's relentless growth.

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