



21ST CENTURY COUNCIL CITIZENS STUDY

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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND

LAND USE PLANNING

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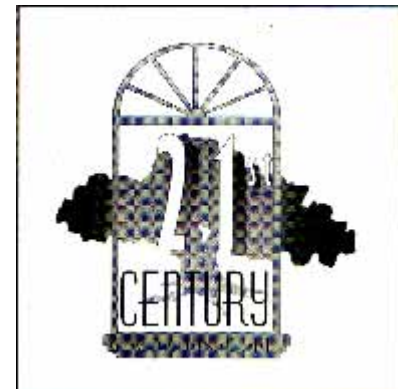
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November, 1995





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“ Although a community’s vision of its future may be more qualitative and less tangible than the specific steps it must take in the planning process, this shared vision is extremely important. Without such a vision, a community risks making decisions that determine its future based solely on technical information about current trends and anticipated conditions, on State-mandated requirements, or on random future events.”

William E. Sadowski

Building Successful Communities

December 1992(35)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mission

We, the 21st Century Council Study Committee on Transportation and Land Use Planning, are a group of citizens who are representative of the larger community. We seek an improved process of transportation planning and implementation in which citizens and decision-makers work together to build consensus on transportation priorities in Tallahassee and Leon County. Our mission is part of a broader context for improving the quality of life by recommending diverse strategies to increase the mobility of people, goods, and services in and through Tallahassee. For that purpose, we communicate a vision for Tallahassee in which the following interconnected issues are balanced when making transportation decisions:

- Transportation choices and levels of service
- Land use and development patterns
- Quality neighborhoods
- Environmental quality
- Economic development
- Public service costs
- Diversity of personal abilities

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The Current Situation

The Committee came to understand by studying, discussing and evaluating alternative strategies that transportation planning involves an interactive process of communication between a variety of experts and the public. This process can generate harmony or conflict. Currently our planning process focuses on physical infrastructure rather than human needs and has been fragmented by the discrete approach of various professional disciplines. Adding to this fragmentation is a lack of community vision to guide the planning process. As one of our Committee members put so well, "Tallahassee is not a community; it is a collection of neighborhoods." We can overcome this situation by creating a renewed planning process which is "owned by the community."

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A Revitalized Planning Process

The most effective way to make the overall planning process more efficient is to open the process to the public from the beginning, thereby generating community support from the start for transportation and land use improvements of all types. By focusing the planning process at the community sector level, consensus will be achieved early in the process by the people most affected. Our Study Committee envisions a planning process which lets citizens in each sector of the Tallahassee/Leon County area recommend the criteria they want to emphasize within their planning sector.

Sector planning would encourage consensus early in the process. When plans progress from the sector planning phase to the design and implementation phases, a great deal of public money can be saved. Most importantly, project plans will reflect the needs of people living within the affected area. Plans will also integrate land use and transportation planning, allowing for more effective and livable community design.

The Study Committee realized that the weakness of many planning processes is that they are designed by "others." We do not want to continue this mistake. We, as a Committee, could have created a specific vision or plan, but we believe that a good process will create a good product. **The planning process must be changed if we are to create a better community product.**

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Challenges

After going through an initial educational process, the Citizens Study Committee identified five key challenges for the community to overcome in improving the transportation system. These were later narrowed down to the four listed below:

- Involve the public earlier and more meaningfully in the transportation planning process.
- Integrate transportation and land use planning.
- Develop a community vision.
- Improve the overall transportation planning and implementation process.

Summary of Recommendations

Involve citizens earlier and more effectively in the planning process by undertaking three key strategies:

- Building a community vision for Tallahassee/Leon County.
- Integrating land use and transportation planning.
- Implementing community sector plans.



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Building a Community Vision

1. Develop a community vision for Tallahassee and Leon County that is an integral part of the transportation and land use planning process.
2. Identify environmentally sensitive areas that should remain natural and protected.
3. Identify areas where redevelopment, infill, and new development are to be encouraged.
4. Promote “quality community design” that offers the potential to reduce traffic, increase density, and that features the following elements:
 - Walkable scale and pedestrian oriented environments
 - Commons and green spaces
 - Mixed residential and “local serving” commercial activities
 - A variety of housing types and styles

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5. Consider the following framework as a starting point when formulating a community vision:

- Clear delineation between the urban core, suburban communities, and rural development
- Consideration of overall appearance and physical design
- Recognition of rural villages
- Redevelopment of downtown and existing neighborhoods
- Opportunities for employment diversity
- Opportunities for varying lifestyles
- Provision for cultural, social and recreational opportunities
- Development of a "livable downtown"
- Encouragement of the unique character of various community sectors
- Acknowledgment of regional economic and ecological issues



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Integrating Transportation and Land Use Planning

6. Reorganize the local government planning process:

- Combine the functions of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the City and County Commissions sitting in review of the Comprehensive Plan into a single Community Planning Organization (CPO).
- Expand the current Planning Commission's role into the Community Planning Commission (CPC) by adding responsibility for transportation planning.
- Create community sector committees (CSC) comprised of interested citizens, including residents, land owners and businesses within specific planning areas.
- Redirect the combined planning process to the community sector level.
- Review the role of the Transportation Planning Advisory Committee (TPAC) and other system level advisory committees. Consider adding CPC members to represent additional community interests.
- Utilize the current planning staff and technical committees to provide support to the revised planning process.

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7. Conduct the planning process at the community sector level:

- Employ charrette and workshop methods to facilitate planning.
- Present relevant areawide data information to the community sector.
- Integrate community sector plans with areawide plans.
- Develop all applicable elements of the comprehensive plan within each community sector.
- Check adjacent community sector and areawide plans for compatibility.
- Make updates of both the comprehensive plan and the transportation plan simultaneously.

8. Use mediation to work out conflicts early, before sector plans are finalized.



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Implementing Community Sector Plans

9. Inform the general public on the revised transportation and land use planning process:
 - Create a mutli-media communication program explaining how to participate in the sector planning process
 - Develop workshops and written materials on alternative community design standards and innovative community examples
 - Encourage a variety of advocacy groups to inform citizens on their key issues and explain community design options

10. Create a “community display room” where residents, developers and service providers can check the status of system maps, sector plans, and project implementation schedules. Utilize mobile or branch displays in active sectors.

11. Encourage sector planning committees to become both advocates and monitors of local projects.

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12. In conjunction with local media, inform the public concerning the activities of sector planning committees in various parts of the community:

- Air video updates on public cable access channels
- Publish information and plans in local community newsletters

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Summary of Chapters

Chapter I: Introduction

Chapter I outlines the current situation and places it within the historical context. It points out the influences of transportation on Tallahassee's development and targets four major aspects of planning in Tallahassee which need to be addressed.

Chapter II: Citizens Study Approach

Chapter II gives background information on the formation of the Study Committee and the timeliness of its deliberations. It also outlines the study process, pointing out the stages involved.

Chapter III: A Fragmented Planning Process

Chapter III discusses the current technical context for transportation and land use planning, describing the agencies involved in the process. It also illustrates some ways in which land use planning and transportation planning impact each other. Finally, it shows how the two processes are essentially similar.



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Chapter IV: Building a Community Vision

Chapter IV discusses the need for a Community Vision and defines two kinds of community visions. It also describes several visioning processes.

Chapter V: Integrating Transportation and Land Use Planning

Chapter V explains how transportation and land use planning processes could be integrated using existing agencies and personnel. It defines the community sector and outlines the stages involved in this approach.

Chapter VI: Implementing Community Sector Plans

Chapter VI explains the benefits to be gained from early public participation and discusses project prioritization and follow-through.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

Chapter VII indicates areas for further consideration and proposes a pilot to demonstrate the effectiveness of this revitalized planning process.



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I. Introduction

The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.

- George Bernard Shaw

Tallahasseeans care about their community. They have an intuitive sense of how this community can develop while maintaining its present, unique quality of life. Through a careful consideration of a various points of view, Tallahassee's overall transportation and land use planning process can more accurately reflect the desires of its citizens. The 21st Century Council Citizens Study Committee recommends that quality issues and technical decisions be considered together, early in the planning process.

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A. Current Context

Tallahassee is a contemporary community which possesses a rich cultural heritage. While appreciating our distinctly southern traditions, we have become a modern community interested in innovative public policies. The challenge facing us is nothing less than a desire to appreciate what is valuable in our past while adapting that past to the rapidly approaching future. In other words, we realize some changes need to be made as we experience growth, but we are uncertain exactly how our traditional transportation and land use patterns should be changed.

Many of our past actions reflect a lack of consensus on a future vision for our extended community. Because of the uncertainty our growing pains have caused, we have experienced reversals in many of our land use policies:

- We voted to collect transportation funds through a local option sales tax but now have difficulty finalizing needed improvement projects due to a lack of consensus.
- We adopted impact fees designed to make development share the cost of growth but then stopped them when they became a burden to small business.

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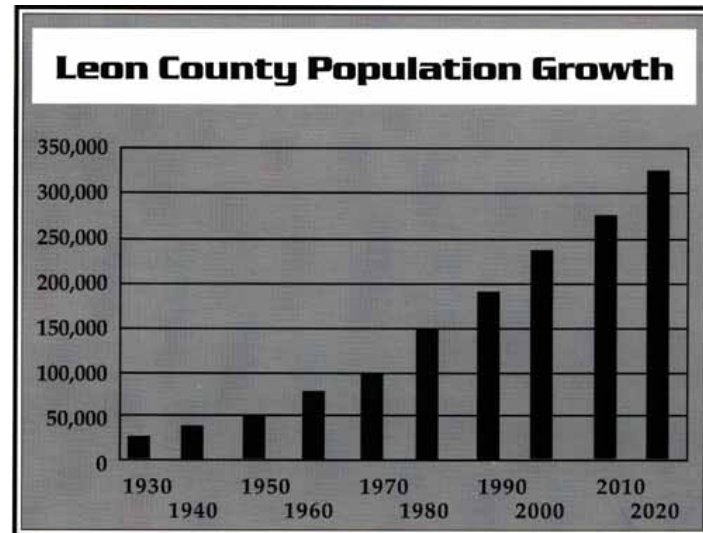
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- We adopted a sophisticated concurrency process in order to coordinate land use and transportation needs but then found it frustrates downtown economic development and may encourage urban sprawl.
- We adopted a joint City/County Comprehensive Plan and development regulations but then found them more complex and less predictable than earlier site-specific zoning.

Because of its size, Tallahassee is experiencing the same difficulties as many growing, sun-belt cities: we have too much automobile traffic for free-flowing travel and not enough density for efficient public transportation. While solutions to our transportation and land use planning needs certainly exist, they clearly will not be simple, one-dimensional approaches.





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Tallahassee's planning dilemma cannot be ignored for long. Our city is at a critical time in its growth cycle:

- We are continuing to experience steady population growth.
- Tallahassee is on the threshold of major land development in its suburban and rural fringe areas.
- Traffic congestion is building to levels within Capital Circle which the public considers unacceptable.
- Critical decisions are about to be made concerning new transportation investments in the suburbs to meet anticipated growth.
- Tallahassee is at a crossroads in its growth management policy.

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In addition, governmental entities are undertaking a variety of major development projects that impact the transportation network:

- We are considering a new high school site which is outside the Comprehensive Plan's designated urban service area.
- State government is finishing "the satellite office" complex in the Southeast, while Capital Circle, which will carry workers from the Northeast, will not be expanded for some time to come.
- Pensacola Street traffic will be re-routed around the "University Center" stadium, which will impact future development possibilities for Gaines Street.
- The City is finishing the "Capital Commons" which will provide extensive new parking capacity downtown.
- The Universities and the City can not form a common vision for a major expansion of the FAMU/FSU School of Engineering. How will Tallahassee/Leon County handle an additional 100,000 people by the year 2020? Now is definitely the time to address transportation and land use planning issues proactively in Tallahassee and Leon County.



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B. Historical Context

Transportation has played an important role in the development of our community. At first, it served commercial and social purposes for agricultural, business, and civic enterprises. The radial patterns of today's major roadways were set in the early 1800's when cotton from area plantations was taken to the railroad depot downtown. Thomasville Road is an example of this kind of "farm-to-market" road formed on the shortest path along the high ground between plantations to the north of the city and the railroad which shipped cotton and tobacco to ports on the gulf coast.

Later as the economy matured, land became a commodity to be bought and sold to satisfy increased residential and commercial demands. When the role of land changed, the role of the transportation system changed also. No longer merely a servant of land use, the transportation network influenced property values, affected the shape of the growing city, and promised to enhance the quality of life by providing mobility.

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In our century, the construction of two modern roadways have influenced Tallahassee's growth as profoundly as the railroad did in the 1800's. Interstate 10, north of town, has attracted commerce into nodes and stripes along its interchanges, while Capital Circle currently is experiencing commercial growth along the periphery both east and west of downtown.

Certain portions of our urban area suffer now from the lack of established circumferential roads in advance of development. This situation contributes to cut-through traffic and to other negative impacts on existing neighborhoods. Only recently have we begun to address this problem by building connector roads such as Hermitage Boulevard with our residential driveways. Transportation continues to play a vital role in the development of our community as well as in the quality of life we enjoy.

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C. Problem Statement

The Citizens Study Committee recognizes that there are many factors underlying Tallahassee's transportation difficulties.

- Our community has difficulty coming to consensus on ways to maintain an acceptable level of transportation service and balance other important quality of life issues:
 - Preservation of the environment
 - Diversification of the economy
 - Promotion of neighborhood vitality
- Our community perceives that there is a lack of accountability in the transportation and land use planning process.
- Our community seeks a clear vision which can offer the following guidance:
 - Establish a balance between various interest groups in Tallahassee
 - Integrate transportation and land use goals into consistent, cohesive, and mutually-reinforcing patterns
 - Direct our daily planning decisions effectively

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- Our community is concerned about rising taxes and waste of public funds.

These concerns mirror those of many communities in our nation and have prompted a philosophical debate over personal freedom and public responsibility. We desire the personal freedom and mobility of our automobiles, yet we also want government assurances that we will always enjoy free-flowing highways, secure neighborhoods, and a clean environment.

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Citizens Study Approach

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world... indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

- Margaret Mead

Tallahassee's 21st Century Council is composed of community leaders who are seeking to address our most pressing public issues. These issues are examined using a three-pronged approach:

- Developing a balanced Community Vision
- Conducting in-depth Critical Issues Studies
- Publishing a biennial Quality of Life Report

The Council realizes that our community's physical assets, natural and constructed, must be considered in relation to human, governmental and economic concerns. Although these elements appear to be independent, they are in reality interconnected and need to be addressed in a holistic manner. (See [Council Vision Statement in Appendix.](#))

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A. Background on Study Committee Formation

In 1993, concerned citizens, and the Council itself targeted and prioritized community issues to be researched. Transportation ranked just behind crime as one of our most pressing concerns. Because of this high ranking, the City Commission requested that transportation issues be analyzed and provided necessary funding for research to take place.

This year, a 21st Century Council Citizens Study Committee was formed to examine transportation needs in Tallahassee. Through a series of weekly meetings, our group realized that transportation and land use planning issues need to be addressed together, since separate approaches have historically resulted in fragmented results. The Study Committee also realized that quality of life issues need to be considered early in the planning process, along with technical issues. With a more integrated approach, transportation and land use plans can more effectively address community concerns. (See Chapter V, [Integrating Transportation and Land Use Planning](#), and Chapter VI, [Implementing Community Sector Plans](#).)



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B. Study Timing

The 21st Century Council Study Committee on Transportation and Land Use Planning promises to have an immediate and significant impact on at least two community planning processes:

- The federally mandated 2020 Long-Range Transportation Plan
- The Comprehensive Plan Evaluation and Review

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) will be voting on its federally mandated 2020 Long-Range Transportation Plan this January, at that point, the MPO will have screened and prioritized future transportation projects. This Transportation and Land Use Study will provide significant and challenging ideas for the MPO and will certainly influence the next update.

The Tallahassee City Commission and the Leon County Commission have established the Comprehensive Plan Issues Forum which is currently deliberating issues relative to the Comprehensive Plan Evaluation and Review. Our Transportation and Land Use Study can help Forum participants develop a community vision for the local Comprehensive Plan. The information in this study will also be useful to City and County Commissioners when they consider related Target Issues.



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This study can also influence transportation and land use decisions in the larger, Big Bend area. The Apalachee Regional Planning Council's Policy Plan recognizes Tallahassee as a major transportation hub and a regional employment center. The economic and governmental influence of Tallahassee/Leon County extends beyond the county line and tangibly affects nearby communities. A study which enhances land use and transportation planning in Tallahassee and Leon County will also serve to enhance the quality of life in neighboring communities.

On a state level, the Committee has a valuable connection with the Transportation Roundtable established by Representative Marjorie Turnbull to address state funding and intergovernmental coordination of transportation projects. It has also kept in touch with the Public Agenda's Growth and Environmental Discussion Group whose primary focus has been support for conducting a [Visual Preference Survey™](#).

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C. Study Process

The 21st Century Council's Study Committee on Transportation and Land Use was composed of a Citizen's Committee supported by a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) which provided transportation and land use expertise. The research process began with an educational component designed to provide participants with a working knowledge of modern transportation issues:

- History of U.S. Development and Suburban Growth
- Scale and Personal Choice in Transportation History
- Transportation Issues, Dilemmas, and Myths

After studying this background information, the Committee moved to brainstorming positive and negative aspects of transportation in Tallahassee/Leon County. The TAG team then grouped the Citizen Committee's ideas under four major areas:

- Integrated Community Design
- Innovative Transportation Planning
- Improved Project Implementation
- Flexible Transportation Demand and Systems Management

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Working groups were formed to study each of these four areas. Under the guidance of the TAG team, each study group appointed a chairperson, prioritized topics for examination, formulated study questions, and identified potential resources for expert information. Groups then held one or more meetings to study their areas in depth using presentations by experts and informational materials as resources. (See Appendix for topics and presenters.) An additional session on community building helped strengthen working relationships within the Committee.

At this point in the process, the study groups identified five key transportation challenges to be addressed:

- How can the public be involved earlier and more meaningfully in the transportation planning process?
- How can transportation and land use •planning can be integrated?
- How can we develop a community vision?
- How can we speed-up the planning process?
- How can we implement decisions and follow-through?



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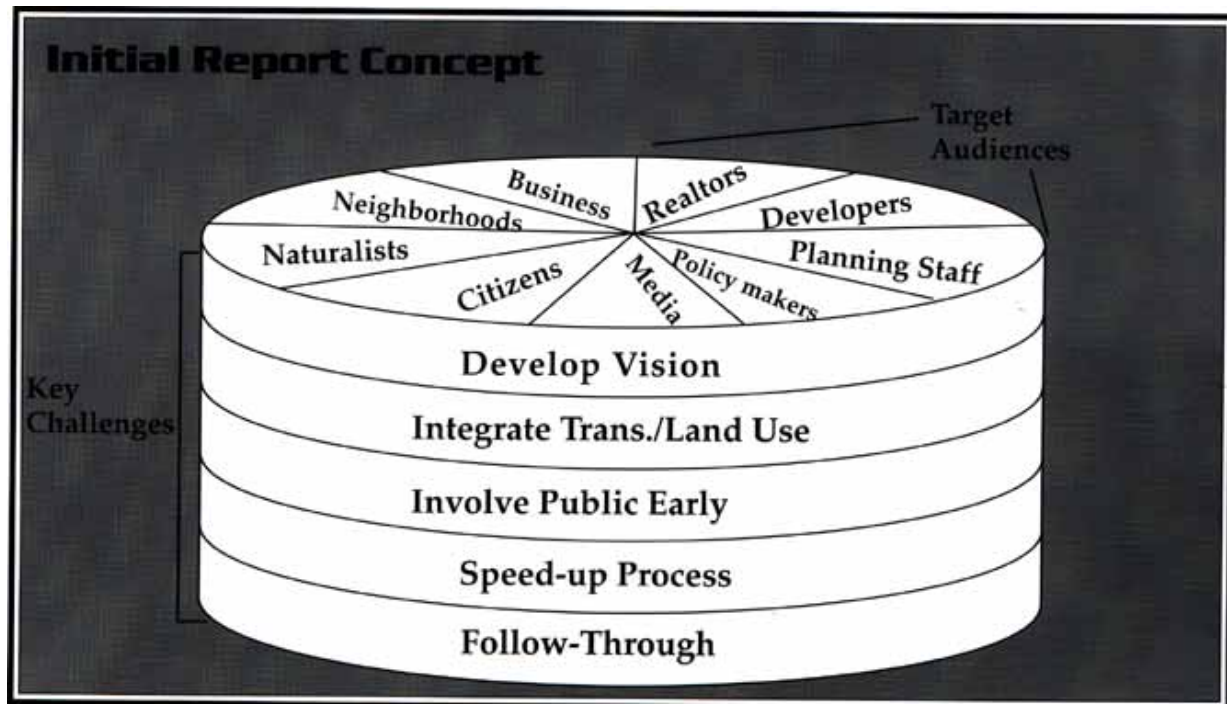
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Study groups were now ready to address ways to meet these challenges.

Dr. John Sample, Director of Professional Development at Florida State University's Center for Professional Development, facilitated the problem solving process, while study groups defined challenges more fully, generated alternative solutions, assessed the advantages and disadvantages, and assigned a priority to each challenge. The results were then synthesized into a set of written recommendations and reported to the Study Committee as a whole.



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Three separate panels, comprised of experts in development, environmental permitting, growth management law, comprehensive planning, transportation design, and pedestrian issues, addressed the Citizen's Committee on the critical issue of integrating transportation and land use planning.

From this intensive process, selected Committee members developed drafts concerning each key issue. During a day-long workshop, members reviewed key issues and recommendations, and the draft material was refined. Staff then worked with a writer/editor to develop a composite draft for the Committee's review and comment.



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III. A Fragmented Planning Process

“Our plans miscarry because they have no aim. When a man does not know what harbor he is making for, no wind is the right wind.”

- Seneca (4 B.C. - A.D. 65)

This 21st Century Council Study Committee spent many hours reviewing the existing planning process within Leon County to better understand its strengths and weaknesses. The review led to an early focus on the relationship between transportation and land use and public participation and implementation. The Study Committee soon concluded that the existing planning process would be more effective if transportation and land use planning were combined. (See Chapter V, [Integrate Transportation and Land Use Planning](#).) The committee feels that if the planning process is restructured, the difficult decisions concerning what to build will be resolved.



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A. Background on Planning Agencies

Planning in Tallahassee and Leon County consists of three major elements performed at three different levels:

- Planning Elements: Transportation, Land Use, and Environment
- Planning Levels: Region, County, Project

The following table illustrates the key agencies that manage planning within the process:

	Transportation	Land Use	Environment
Regional	FDOT*, ARPC*	ARPC	ARPC
County-wide	MPO*	Planning Commission/ TLCPD*	City, County
Project	FDOT, City, County	Private Sector	City, County

*FDOT - Florida Department of Transportation

*ARPC - Apalachee Regional Planning Council

*MPO - Metropolitan Planning Organization

*TLCPD - Tallahassee/Leon County Planning Department



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Federal and state planning regulations require that these agencies manage transportation and land use planning in Tallahassee and Leon County. The framework for how to manage these planning process was established at the national and state levels. Local government officials were required to set up a planning process within these guidelines.

However, the guidelines provide a great deal of choice in how we operate at the local level.

Transportation planning laws, regulations, and rules were first implemented in Tallahassee in the mid-1960s beginning first at the federal level and then moving to the state level. This federal planning structure evolved into today's Metropolitan Planning Organization with policy decisions, technical considerations, and citizen input all interacting according to specific guidelines. Technical staff from the Tallahassee/Leon County Planning Department carry out many of these planning efforts, with input from advisory committees such as the Transportation Planning Advisory Committee (TPAC).

In 1984, the Florida Legislature passed the State Comprehensive Planning Act, which eventually resulted in the current Comprehensive Planning Process managed by the Tallahassee/Leon County Planning Commission serving as the official designated Local Planning Agency (LPA). Land use and transportation elements are both required in the Comprehensive Plan, and the Tallahassee/Leon County Planning Department provides technical support for this process.



Interdependence of Transportation and Land Use

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How does land development affect a transportation network? How does a transportation decision affect current and future land use patterns? The answers to these questions are complex, yet they are vital to the way our cities function. Consider these examples:

- Land developed with a pattern that makes it difficult to walk from place to place will force citizens to depend entirely upon the automobile for access. These travel patterns are difficult to change once development has occurred.
- Granting access drives along a rural road results in severe traffic congestion when the rural road becomes a suburban arterial. Introducing a grid flow pattern near the arterial can relieve that congestion, but it can also be expensive and disruptive to existing land use patterns.
- Where a fringe roadway near downtown is widened, the resulting higher speeds discourage pedestrian travel; this lack of pedestrians will in turn affect walk-in businesses along that route. The unintended result at this location is a conversion to businesses dependent upon automobile access.

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Transportation and land use decisions made independent of each other can have unintended results. Our current planning process fails to look at the broader relationships between transportation and land use which would help us design a variety of places for Tallahasseeans to enjoy.

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Public Involvement and the Existing Planning Process

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In the existing process, the public first reacts when it learns of plans at the project level, long after areawide planning has been completed. When these plans are misunderstood, do not meet their needs or ignore their concerns, citizens are understandably surprised and angry. If the majority of the actors in the planning process do not agree at this point, projects are rejected. Considerable planning and preliminary engineering work goes into bringing a project forward from the areawide plan, so project rejection becomes a very expensive action.

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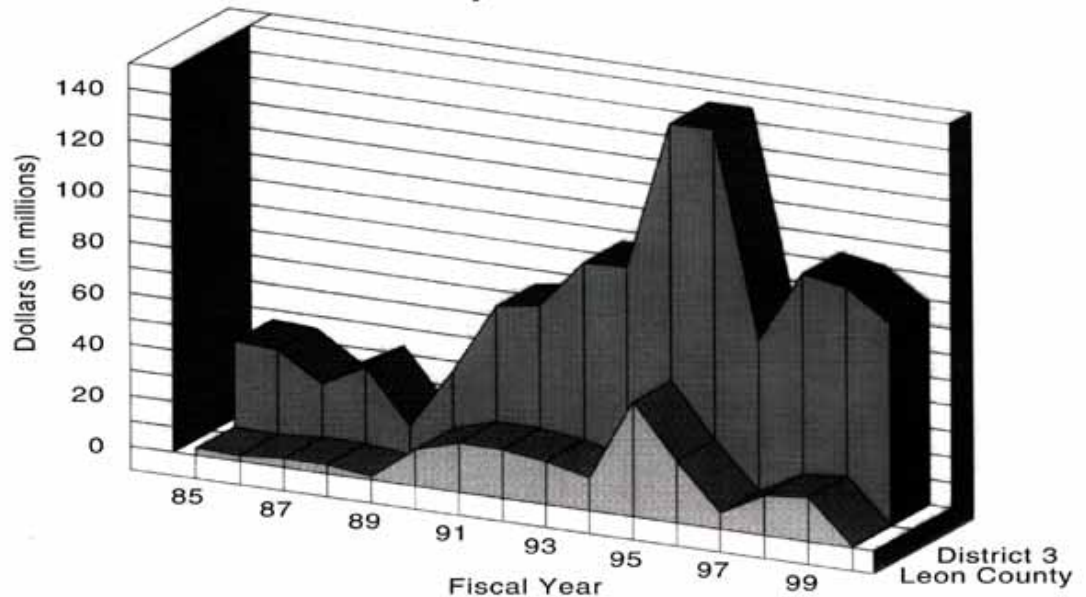
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In fact between 1977 and 1995 less than ten miles of state roads were multi-laned within Leon County. An additional seven miles of state multi-lane projects are currently scheduled for construction. According to FDOT - District 3 Leon County received 17 percent of the total funds from 1985 to 1992. By comparison Bay County received 11 percent and Escambia County 17 percent.

Road Construction Funding
Leon County vs. FDOT District 3



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The federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), passed in 1991, encourages the involvement of the public in new ways in transportation projects. Local planners have made sincere and innovative attempts to involve the public at the project level:

- The Tallahassee/Leon County MPO established the Local Advanced Project Delineation process or LAPD in response to concerns that corridor studies were being initiated without sufficient public participation and that planning resources were being wasted on projects that might not be feasible. LAPD aims to identify neighborhood concerns and environmental issues early in the process. This process was utilized on the most recent round of discussions on the Northeast Parkway.
- The County has instituted the Public Participation Program - P² which establishes a Citizens Advisory Committee when the need for a corridor study is first identified. This process was utilized successfully to create consensus for the Buck Lake Road project and is now underway for the Orange Avenue project.



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These project level efforts are definitely a step in the right direction. However, it is still very difficult to bring the public into system level planning in a meaningful way and get broad input on qualitative issue that effect the community.

To further aggravate this process, the lack of continuity from areawide planning to project planning (both in transportation and in land use) renders most system-level public input unusable for project planning. The understanding, logic and consensus developed during areawide planning seldom carries over to the project level. The integration of public involvement for both transporation and land use issues at an earlier stage in the planning process would help correct this inefficiency.



Similarities of Transportation and Land Use Processes

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The planning requirements specified by the state for both transportation and comprehensive (land use) planning are organized in a very similar manner. Both processes are structured to include policy action which occurs after ideas are generated and analyzed by staff, citizens, and other interested persons. Both have required performance measures, and both processes must continue to respond each year to local planning needs. Yet, since transportation and comprehensive planning processes are separated, they tend to be parallel undertakings with only minor interaction or coordination. Notice, in the following table, how policy decisions and recommendations are undertaken by different agencies within the Comprehensive Planning (Land Use) and Transportation Planning processes:

	Comprehensive Planning	Transportation Planning (MPO)
Policy Decisions	City and County Commissions	MPO* (Joint Commissions)
Recommended Actions	Planning Commission, Citizens	TCC*, TPAC*
Technical Support	TLCPD*	TLCPD
Update/Plan Maintenance	Changes twice yearly, update 5 years	Update 3 to 5 years
Public Participation	Unique committees, LPA* input	Unique committees per project

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	Comprehensive Planning	Transportation Planning (MPO)
Policy Decisions	City and County Commissions	MPO* (Joint Commissions)
Recommended Actions	Planning Commission, Citizens	TCC*, TPAC*
Technical Support	TLCPD*	TLCPD
Update/Plan Maintenance	Changes twice yearly, update 5 years	Update 3 to 5 years
Public Participation	Unique committees, LPA* input	Unique committees per project

*MPO - Metropolitan Planning Organization

*TLCPD - Tallahassee/Leon County Planning Department

*TCC - Technical Coordinating Committee

*LPA - Local Planning Agency

*TPAC - Transportation Planning Advisory Committee

Because of the similarities in organizational elements and features, these two processes could be integrated in order to provide Tallahassee with a more responsive and efficient planning process.

Although major public works projects and regulatory actions have always generated conflicting ideas and positions, the existing planning process is not as effective as it should be in resolving these conflicts. Projects are proposed over and over until political pressure builds for a solution. The time spent within this process has driven up the cost of specific projects and aggravated actors on all sides. The important question for Tallahasseeans to consider now is – **Can we have a transportation and land use planning process which allows more people to come to consensus in a way that is less expensive than the current process?**



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Building a Community Vision

“Go to the people. Live with the people.

Learn from them. Start with what they know.

Build on what they have. When the task is finished,

The people will say. ‘We did it ourselves.’”

- Aga Kahn of Pakistan

Tallahasseeans prize their natural environment and seek to create land uses which foster and protect it. Frustrations arise in the planning process when we find urban development conflicting with our natural surroundings. With the exception of our universities and the Capital complex, there are very few common areas in Tallahassee that provide a quality urban experience. The Study Committee feels Tallahassee/Leon County needs to develop a community vision as a vital first step in identifying a unified plan for our city and county. That community vision could be developed using one or both of the following frameworks: the broad community vision framework using a process such as the American Assembly and a physical community vision based on layout and design considerations.

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A. Background on Community Vision

The idea of a community vision which directs future transportation and land use planning is not new. The Local Government Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulation Act addresses visioning:

Each local government is encouraged to articulate a vision of the future physical appearance and qualities of its community as a component of its local comprehensive plan. This vision should be developed through a collaborative planning process with meaningful public participation and shall be adopted by the governing body of the jurisdiction.

The Third Environmental and Land Management Report - ELMS III (a review of the state's comprehensive planning process) recommend that the Legislature should encourage local governments to use the Evaluation and Appraisal Report process to develop a local vision that would help revise their Comprehensive Plans.



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The Comprehensive Plan Issues Forum, established by the City and County Commissions, is currently developing a set of principles aimed at contributing to the Comprehensive Plan Review. Included in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan are goals and objectives for issues related to community vision: urban sprawl, development cost, development type, rate of growth, natural environment, and residential neighborhoods.

For a vision to belong to an entire community, it must be created by the people living in it. Any attempt to force a particular vision on a community will end in discord. If local citizens are intimately involved in the visioning process and if the visioning process has integrity, the resulting vision will reflect public preferences and will be useful. Plans based upon this vision will be assimilated more readily than those developed without significant public input. The visioning process also educates the public in the complicated interrelationships between natural resources, urban development, and community social structure. Also, if the public is involved in the visioning it will follow through to implementation.

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A Broad Community Vision

The Study Committee believes that the community needs to create both a broad vision of “what we want to be when we grow-up” and, more specifically, a physical vision of what we want Tallahassee/ Leon County to look like in the future.

Creating a broad community vision can involve a number of survey and visioning techniques. An excellent way to involve the community in documenting their interest, needs and concerns would be to conduct extensive telephone or mail surveys to bring the opinions of the broader community to the surface. A recognized national firm could be hired to conduct the survey and provide a clear, objective perspective. This survey would bring the views of the entire community to bear and provide a foundation for the visioning process.

A method that involves citizens in a face-to-face visioning is the American Assembly Process. The American Assembly is a negotiating procedure designed to help diverse groups come to consensus on controversial issues. The Assembly provides information on issues, offers a forum for open discussion, and guides a group in coming to consensus. The Assembly also assists the group in producing policy statements on important issues.

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Recently, Florida State University's Reubin O'D. Askew School of Public Administration and Policy and the Florida Institute of Government have proposed to coordinate an American Assembly in order to build community consensus on key issues related to Tallahassee's future. Approximately one hundred to one hundred and fifty participants representing a cross-section of public and private sector interests would be invited to participate.

There are also several qualified consultants in Florida that offer similar forms of visioning that encompass various time frames and provide for different levels of professional support in the process.

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C. A Physical Community Vision

Because a physical community vision is concerned with a built environment (shape and form), it is helpful for this visioning process to be conducted on a multi-dimensional level. Two techniques which allow for two and three dimensional visioning can be found in *Visions for a New American Dream* by Anton Nelessen: the [Visual Preference Survey™ \(VPS\)](#) and the [“Hands-On Model Workshop”](#).

The typical [Visual Preference Survey™](#) includes more than two hundred, 35mm slides which present different kinds of design features, land uses, and environments in a side-by-side comparison format. This process provides concrete, visual representations, which are easier to react to than verbal or written descriptions. The viewing of these slides helps a community to make design judgments concerning the layout and appearance of their community. The VPS™ is consequently a “bubble up” community design technique which allows the public to give significant input in the planning process. This survey was recently used successfully in Clearwater, Florida to help identify design elements and aesthetic standards for a downtown revitalization project. One outcome was to make the community’s virtually abandoned waterfront more of a focal point for residential, commercial and recreational activities again.

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The result of the Visual Preference Survey™ is a set of general visual goals and objectives that identify important planning elements:

- Physical Characteristics
- Design Components
- Legal Issues

The typical survey includes slides taken in the community as well as slides exhibiting quality design examples from around the nation. Tabulated results indicate not only preferred design elements but design elements which should be avoided. This process is particularly beneficial for two reasons: it allows for substantial public input because it can be applied repeatedly for a variety of audiences, and it focuses on community character and quality of life issues early in the planning process.

The Hands-on Model Workshop, a type of charrette, is another visioning process that works well at the community sector planning level. During this kind of charrette, actual models are manipulated by citizens as they lay out a small community. As models are moved from place to place and new ideas are considered, participants are able to conceptualize how roads, buildings, and common spaces might fit together. They also begin to envision how the combination of constructed and natural elements affect mobility, character, livability, and social structures within the community.



Building a Community Vision : Recommendations

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1. Develop a community vision for Tallahassee and Leon County that is an integral part of the transportation and land use planning process.
2. Identify environmentally sensitive areas that should remain natural and protected.
3. Identify areas where redevelopment, infill, and new development are to be encouraged.
4. Promote “quality community design” that offers the potential to reduce traffic, increase density, and that features the following elements:
 - Walkable scale and pedestrian oriented environments
 - Commons and green spaces
 - Mixed residential and “local serving” commercial activities
 - A variety of housing types and styles

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5. Consider the following framework as a starting point when formulating a community vision:

- Clear delineation between the urban core, suburban communities, and rural development
- Consideration of overall appearance and physical design
- Recognition of rural villages
- Redevelopment of downtown and existing neighborhoods
- Opportunities for employment diversity
- Opportunities for varying lifestyles
- Provision for cultural, social and recreational opportunities
- Development of a "livable downtown"
- Encouragement of unique character of various community sectors
- Acknowledgment of the regional economic and ecological issues



V. Integrating Transportation and Land Use Planning

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The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level we were at when we created them.

- Albert Einstein

Because of the parallel and detached nature of the existing planning process in Tallahassee/Leon County, the Study Committee on Transportation and Land Use Planning suggests a reorganized process for achieving early citizen input and consensus. As we have noted earlier, an important step toward an effective planning process involves creating a community vision which reflects the goals and preferences of Tallahasseeans (See Section IV, Building a Community Vision.) First, however, city and county policy makers must reorganize the planning process itself. (See Chapter III, A Fragmented Planning Process.)

We must move from the present situation, where only several dozen individuals understand both comprehensive planning and transportation planning, to a scenario in which hundreds of staff, citizens, and decision makers understand the key interrelationships involved.



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A second step represents an even greater challenge: Directing the focus of planning to the community sector level where a wider public understanding and commitment to quality planning can flourish. To this end, the Study Committee suggests a two-pronged approach which will integrate transportation and land use planning and foster consensus:

Combine the Comprehensive Planning (land use) and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (transportation) processes

Implement the Community Planning Process at the Community Sector Level.



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A. Background on Integration of Transportation and Land Use Planning

The integration of transportation and land use planning involves merging the two planning processes which currently exist. When these two processes are blended, transportation and land use issues would be considered simultaneously. This simultaneous consideration encourages a unified urban design which meets the needs of the community more fully. Aided by significant public and private sector input, these plans also foster consensus regarding project implementation. The overall product is one which fulfills the community's vision effectively and uses public funds efficiently.

Land use planning is probably the single most effective long-range option for reducing travel demand in urban areas. Mixed land permitting residential, commercial, office, and recreational facilities on the same sight would reduce dependence on private automobiles for work and shopping trips. Trip frequency and length would decrease while walking and bicycling would increase.

- Institute of Transportation Engineers,
ITE Journal, April 1985, (44)

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B. Reorganization of the Planning Process

To blend the two planning processes, the policy, citizen and staff components of the process must be considered. First, the name of the Metropolitan Planning Organization would be changed to the Community Planning Organization (CPO) to reflect its new role. The CPO would deal with both transportation and land use issues, as has been done already on certain occasions. This action would encourage ongoing consideration of the interrelationships between transportation and land use.

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Next, the current Planning Commission should become the Community Planning Commission (CPC). Currently, the Planning Commission advises the City and County Commissions on land use decisions. With its new identity, the CPC would advise both Commissions on transportation and land use issues. The CPC would also satisfy one element of public involvement by serving as an advisory group of citizens. The Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) would continue its coordinating role in support of the merged process. The role of existing citizens transportation advisory committees, such as the Transportation Planning Advisory Committee (TPAC), would be reviewed with the idea of expanding the membership of the CPC.

A new component of this reorganization would be the Community Sector Committees (CSC), comprised of citizens within specific geographic planning areas. CSC's would be established to advise the CPC and CPO concerning planning issues affecting their sectors. The Tallahassee/Leon County Planning Department, for its part, would continue to staff the planning process.

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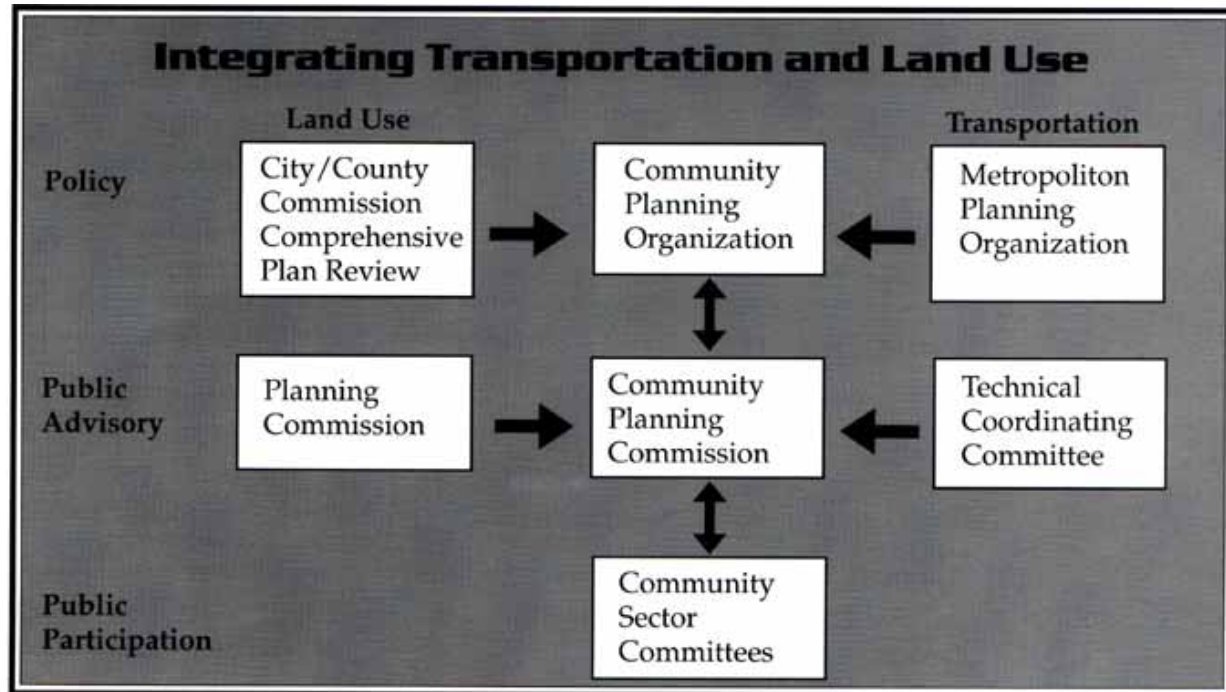
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The second and more critical step is a redirection of planning effort from the system level to the community sector level where citizens are more comfortable working within the process. Areawide planning would not cease. Currently most of the transportation and land use planning is done at the areawide level. Certain elements would remain at this level because they are more efficiently done on an areawide basis, such as computer traffic assignments and drainage studies. However, in the future the majority of planning efforts would focus on the community sector level.



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C. Community Sector Planning

City staff, in their August 30, 1995 report entitled "Transportation/Roads Target Issue Work Plan," describe Tallahassee's current planning challenge:

Up until now, the process for deciding on [transportation] projects to include on the long range plan has not addressed any community issues other than transportation, thus leaving questions about conflicting community values unresolved without acquiring broad public consent for a comprehensive program.

We need to address this lack of consensus by creating community sectors in which citizens will have a direct voice early in the planning process affecting their sector.

Citizens are most interested in the geographic area near their home, shopping, or work locations. Project-level meetings have illustrated this point. Areawide meetings in which system decisions are discussed usually have more staff in attendance than citizens. Meetings at the project level often draw a large crowd, sometimes an angry one, due to firm areawide decisions made with very little local level citizen input. With community sector planning, the planning process would begin with significant citizen input, thereby promoting consensus. This consensus would subsequently help project plans move forward.



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The Committee recommends then, that initial work on combined transportation and land use plans occur at the community sector level. The area covered by a community sector should include locations where people within that sector live, shop for daily needs, enjoy daily recreation, and experience other routine activities associated with their neighborhood. ("Sector" is preferred over the term "neighborhood" because homeowners associations are generally subdivision or neighborhood oriented, thereby excluding the commercial, retail, and office uses so vital to community interactions.) Community sectors should possess the following initial characteristics:

Be an area where individuals come into daily contact with others

Have an average population of 10,000 to 15,000

Overlap with other sectors (because roads are not good boundaries for the planning process)

Encompass several neighborhoods within one sector

Include one or more elementary schools

Sectors should be mapped to make sure they meet the above criteria as well as additional criteria that may be defined later.



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The community sector plans must address a wide-range of genuine concerns for each specific portion of Tallahassee/Leon County. This sector planning process should begin by considering the major concerns of sector residents and land owners. Do citizens wish to emphasize residential preservation? Do they want to develop economically? Do they want to build on a unique characteristic or feature of their sector? A wide-range of issues must be considered at the sector level. Sector plans, then, will encompass many features including the following:

- mobility of young, elderly and physically challenged
- designation of present and potential transit stops
- opportunities for exchange and establishment of commons
- future road alignments
- bike lanes/paths/trails
- storm water retention locations
- potential parks and green spaces
- plantings and screening issues
- needs for new commercial services
- future school sites
- sidewalks/hiking trails
- public lighting/safety



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The typical sector planning process might involve the following steps over a six month period:

A technical planning team is formed that would included a variety of disciplines: landscape architect, transit planner, drainage engineer, urban planner, traffic engineer, site civil engineer, and environmental specialist.

A Community Sector Committee is formed representing a variety on interests in the area, including: residents, landowners, businesses, developers and public institutions.

Planning team members would bring areawide information to the Community Sector Committee such as the following:

- The Community Vision Report
- Maps and data from drainage studies
- Computer traffic estimates
- Survey information

The Community Sector Committee studies areawide data and brainstorms with the planning team to generate alternatives that meet their stated needs.



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Planning team members would develop design concepts based on these alternatives and present these designs back to the Committees. (Roadways, for example, are taken to approximately 10% design.)

This interaction continues for several iterations until a reasonable consensus is achieved between all parties.

Planning team members would be responsible for assuring that alternatives considered in each sector are compatible with areawide needs.

Planning teams and Sector Committees would meet with the Community Planning Commission to present plans.

If an occasional project becomes problematic, mediation should be utilized early in the process to come to agreement on tough issues. This process would focus on creative ways to make designs more acceptable rather than going back to questioning their original premise. Professional mediation is widely available in our community and certainly preferable to going to court in the majority of cases. The community sector plans would serve as a concrete base from which to examine whether projects are on target or are in violation of approved design concepts.

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Various areas of the overall community will be in different phases of their life cycle, from the establishment of a new “green field” development to the redevelopment of older downtown areas. This locally-based planning approach will get citizens involved because it will allow them to focus creatively on their specific needs. Intelligent compromises and informed trade-offs can then be made between competing needs close to home.

Resources for this aspect of the planning will have to be drawn from local sources such as those used for the LAPD and P2 process as well as from the state funds from the initial phases of Project Development and Environmental studies (PD&E). This bottom-up planning strategy also fits in well with the City’s new emphasis on neighborhood services and will provide a source for updating all elements of the comprehensive plan.



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Required comprehensive plan elements include:

Capital improvement

Future land use

Traffic circulation

General sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water and natural ground water aquifer recharge

Conservation

Recreation and open space

Housing

Intergovernmental coordination

Transportation

Mass transit

Port, aviation and related facilities

Optional elements can include a wide variety of other important issues from economic development to education and preservation



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D. Integrating Transportation and Land Use Planning: Recommendations

1. Reorganize the local government planning process:

- Combine the functions of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the City and County Commissions sitting in review of the Comprehensive Plan into a single Community Planning Organization (CPO).
- Expand the current Planning Commission's role into the Community Planning Commission (CPC) by adding responsibility for transportation planning.
- Create community sector committees (CSC) of interested citizens including residents, landowners and businesses within specific planning areas.
- Redirect the combined planning process to the community sector level.
- Review the role of the Transportation Planning Advisory Committee (TPAC) and other system level advisory committees. Consider adding CPC members to represent additional community interests.
- Utilize current planning staff and technical committees to support the revised planning process.

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2. Conduct the planning process at the community sector level:

- Employ charrette and workshop methods to facilitate planning.
- Present relevant areawide data information to the community sector.
- Integrate community sector plans with areawide plans.
- Develop all applicable elements of the comprehensive plan within each community sector.
- Check adjacent community sector and areawide plans for compatibility.
- Making updates of both the comprehensive plan and the transportation plan simultaneously.

3. Use mediation to work out conflicts early, before sector plans are finalized.



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VI. Implementing Community Sector Plans

“In order to make a good decision, you must be open minded. You must operate democratically within your own mind and with other people. But once a decision is made ... you must commit to the decision, be strong-willed and carry it through.”

- Ichak Adizes, Mastering Change

Once transportation and land use plans have been formulated at the community sector and then the areawide levels, it is very important that they be implemented efficiently. The transition from the planning to project implementation is critical to the overall process. Changing direction at the final project level results in frustration, unmet goals, and a waste of public funds. A planning process which begins at the community sector level should yield projects which are likely to be supported because consensus has been reached near the beginning of the process.

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A. Benefits of Early Public Participation

The primary benefit of moving the planning process to the community sector level is getting the public involved early in the planning process. Numerous advantages result from the early public participation:

Consensus evolves early in the planning process from the community sector level.

Citizens appreciate involvement in sector planning because they will have a voice in planning which affects their area.

The community sector process resolves conflict in favor of citizens who are then served by the professionals.

No further public hearings are needed after the community sector plan is adopted.

Project plans will be more in line with citizen desire and will consequently move forward more smoothly.

When studied together, transportation, land use and environmental designs will be more compatible.



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B. Prioritization of Projects

One of the most desirable aspects of the sector planning process will be the ability for the local community to “negotiate” the compatibility of sector plans with system-wide projects. No longer will the idea for a new road or a drainage pond come as a surprise to local residents. Major arearwide projects that involve more than one sector will be discussed within each sector and between sectors. Citizens will be involved not only in determining their priority issues, but will be made aware at the earliest stage of the larger community’s needs. This process will require a type of interactive, two-way communication that was practiced face-to-face in the past, when communities were smaller and common interests more obvious.

Once the spectrum of issues has been documented, consensus built, and a genuine constituency created, the sector plans can move directly into the process of implementation. This stage involves getting the project funded, just as it does under the present system. However, community sector based projects of various types that are sensitive to local conditions, technically feasible and have strong citizen support can move ahead to design and implementation. They will not be forced to go into a costly project planning mode for several years before serious consideration for implementation. A great deal of money can be saved at this point.



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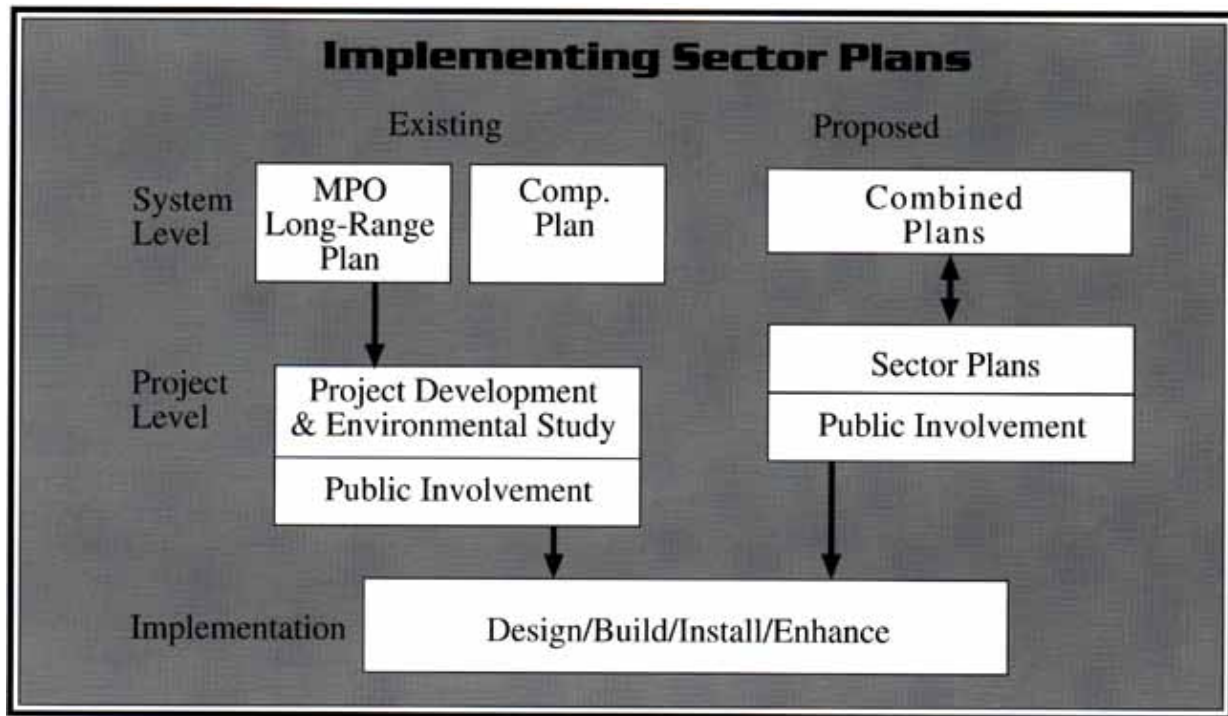
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Public involvement would shift, at this juncture, from shaping the design to advocating funding and ensuring that project implementation is "according to design."



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C. Project Follow-Through

Once the public has been heard, the needs documented and preliminary specifications detailed, we must ensure that items will stay in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or the Capital Budget long enough to allow the state or local government to complete the project.

Community sector planning is an innovative initiative designed to stabilize the political environment by developing broad-based support for infrastructure improvements. The intention is to bring residents, developers and technical experts to the table early enough to work out viable solutions. This collaborative approach should discourage costly end runs by special interests. In addition, it should make for smoother completion of projects once they are programmed.

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D. Implement Community Sector Plans - Recommendations

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1. Inform the general public on the revised transportation and land use planning process:

- Create a multi-media communication program on how to participate in the sector planning process

- Develop workshops and print material on alternative community design

 - standards and innovative community examples

- Encourage a variety of advocacy groups to inform citizens on their key issues

 - and how they fit into design options

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2. Create a “community display room” where residents, developers and service providers can check the status of system maps, sector plans, and project implementation schedules. Utilize mobile or branch displays in active sectors.
3. Encourage sector planning committees to become both advocates and monitors of local projects.
4. In conjunction with local media, create features on what is happening with sector planning committees in various parts of community:
 - Air on public access cable channels
 - Publish in local community newsletters



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VII. Conclusion

“The health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of functions performed by private citizens.”

- Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859)

While the Committee came to consensus on major changes in planning strategies, there remain some areas for future consideration:

Establishment of parking management strategies, such as reducing free parking, to encourage car/van pooling

Creation of an “intelligent transit system” based on a concept similar to the “dial-a-ride” used for the transportation disadvantaged

Expansion of the successful “work flextime” program developed under the Capital City Transportation Management Association, Inc.



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There also remain some very bold ideas about how to “take the politics out of the process” that did not achieve consensus:

Changing the make-up of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to include less elected representatives

Establishing a transportation authority to implement MPO plans

Establishing a policy that would require a “super majority” vote of the MPO to remove projects from the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

These are ideas our community may wish to consider in future deliberations.



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Pilot Project

Before it is implemented, the community sector planning process should be tested. A demonstration project would determine the final scope and actual costs of sector-based planning. It would also give some indication of the level of consensus that can be expected from the revitalized planning process and the quality community design that might result.

The Tallahassee/Leon County area is an ideal location for an innovative demonstration project since both state and local officials responsible for transportation and comprehensive planning are residents of our community. An improved transportation and land use planning process in Tallahassee could serve as a model for other communities facing similar issues. Most importantly, however, Tallahassee would be able to preserve much of its uniqueness for fu-

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A Community Legacy

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Very few communities across the country, have devised a system to create the type of quality growth they want. The Study Committee has proposed an interactive planning strategy which will balance criteria within a sector against the overall integrity of the community at large. The resulting community design will seek to ensure both a variety of urban experiences and the preservation of the natural setting we Tallahasseeans so appreciate. By involving citizens more meaningfully in the community planning process, we will not only use public funds more effectively, but will create an even more valuable legacy for the 21st Century.

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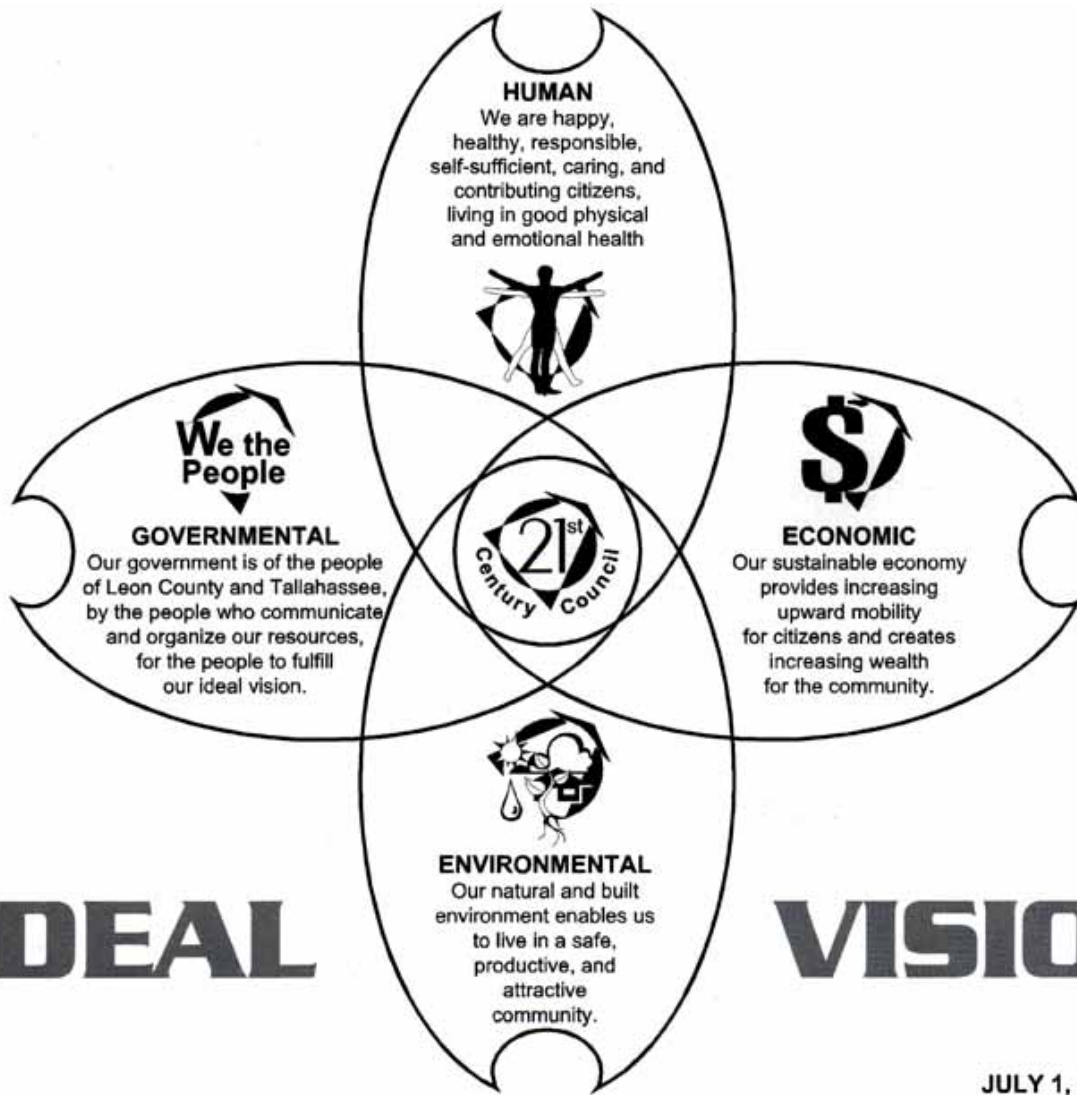
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Proposed Community Vision Statement

The 21st Century Council

July 1, 1995

We are a community of equals who value the dignity and worth of all people, and who cooperatively seek to create and maintain a diverse community where:

We are happy, healthy, responsible, self-sufficient, caring, and contributing citizens, living in good physical and emotional health.



We have the opportunities, skills, and motivation to support ourselves and our families. We make well reasoned, thoughtful, challenging, and healthy lifelong decisions. We celebrate life-long learning. We respect the rights of others. Personal, intimate, and loving partnerships will form and sustain themselves. Every child feels secure and loved.

Our natural and built environment enables us to live in a safe, productive, and attractive community.



Our air and water are clean and safe. Leon county's environment is healthful and aesthetically pleasing. We interact as a community of interconnected neighborhoods, capable of completing trips safely, effectively, and efficiently. Diverse cultural and recreational events enrich the entire community.

Our sustainable economy provides increasing upward mobility for citizens and creates increasing wealth for the community.



Our businesses earn profits in a sustainable environment based on investing and applying knowledge to products and services. A diversity of economic opportunities exists for all citizens. Our economic base is expanding by developing exportable products and services. Employers produce products and services which improve the quality of life. Every family earns at least as much as it costs to live.

Our government is of the people of Leon County and City of Tallahassee, by the people who communicate and organize our resources, for the people to fulfill our ideal vision.



Our government operates effectively and efficiently with sound fiscal management and planning to achieve the objectives which establish the foundation for the common good.