The Strategic Regional Policy Plan, Regional Planning and Urban Design: Components for Building a Healthy Region

A Series Dedicated to the Education and Dialog on Regional Planning in the Treasure Coast Region

June 19, 2009
An Overview

• Top 10 Ten Things You Should Know About the SRPP
• Its Importance and Relevance to the Council
• Origins of the SRPP
• Rationale Behind the SRPP
• Four Fundamental Growth Management Principles of the SRPP
All RPCs Authorized to Prepare SRPPs by Florida Statute Chapter 186.507
Unanimously Approved by Council for Use on December 15, 1995

SRPP ROCKS!
Developed Using Five Years of Public Input
Gathered During the Course of 27 Public Planning Charrettes (1989-1994)
All Around the Treasure Coast Region

Today they call it “Regional Visioning”
STRATEGIC REGIONAL POLICY PLAN
COMMITTEE MEMBERS

• Commissioner Dennis Armstrong
• Commissioner Cliff Barnes
• Commissioner Karen T. Marcus
• Commissioner Jeff Koons
• Councilwoman Ann Zugelter
• Councilmember Peter Spyke
• Councilmember Nelia Coyle

1993
Contains 7 Elements, 51 Goals, 99 Strategies, 355 Policies, and 81 Illustrations

FUTURE OF THE REGION

(VISION STATEMENT)

Affordable Housing
Education
Economic Development
Natural Resources of Regional Significance
Regional Transportation
Emergency Preparedness
The SRPP is Council’s Business Plan for the Region

Ensures a High Level of Discipline and Predictability from Staff and the Council
It was Evaluated and Appraised (EAR’d) by Council in 2000.

- 23 of the Region’s Local Governments
- 7 Local Governments Outside the Region

“100 Year Plan”
LET IT WORK
How Will The Next Million People Coming To Live In The Region Be Organized In The Landscape?

The Messy Question

Somebody Needs To Decide Because The Instructions Are Not In Local Comprehensive Plans, The State Plan Or Florida’s Growth Management Law
It’s Principle Focus is on Influencing the Form and Location of Growth

Because the Region is Expected to Continue Growing Over the Life of the Plan…

- Public spaces, parks and plazas
- A variety of quality housing opportunities
- Transportation and mobility
- Civic and cultural institutions
- Convenient shopping and entertainment
- Public safety and low crimes rates
- Attractiveness for investment/economic development
- Public health and a healthy Countryside

“Good urban form and livability is an economic imperative”

Robert Solow
Nobel prize-winning economist
Eight Physical Elements Found in All “High Quality of Life” Communities

- Parking Placement
- Parking Quantity
- Building Placement
- Building Height
- Mixing of Uses
- Street Dimensions
- Building Fronts and Backs
- Parks, Plazas and Open Spaces
Premise for the SRPP

Sure Glad They Followed the SRPP
New building philosophy planned

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A Treasure Coast council might approve a proposal to change regional development.

By Willie Drye

PALM CITY — The Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council will decide next month whether to give final approval to a long-range strategic plan that would encourage major changes in the way the region grows for its future residents.

The planning council got a second look at the plan Friday when it brought back minor revisions. If the council approves it at its Dec. 15 meeting, it will provide a guide for long-range development in Martin, St. Lucie, and Indian River counties.

Supporters of the plan say change is needed in the way Florida has grown. Under current regulations, the prevailing form of development is urban sprawl that consumes large tracts of land and much traffic on the roads.

"We're designing places the infrastructure to fail by design," Busha said.

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Proponents of neo-traditional development, such as Miami architect Andres Duany, said the plans for revitalizing downtown Stuart — based on their developments on old-fashioned city planning in which residential development is dense, neighborhoods are connected by an orderly network of streets and residents aren't required to drive to so many of their destinations.

That's not being done now, Busha said.

"All the things that people need to survive in their daily lives have been disconnected and placed along roads in areas where no one complains about them," Busha said. "Those that do complain don't have a voice in how things get done."

But the plan also has its critics.

"What they seem to consider sprawl in my view is what has the most appeal to the residents of Martin County," said Martin County Commissioner Chairwoman Charlene Hoag, who also is a member of the council.

Hoag said she would be reluctant to vote for the plan in its present form.

Stuart Mayor Kevin Henderson said the proposed plan was "long on theory, short on practical application."

"I'm not saying that the vision is a bad vision," Henderson said. "I'm not saying we shouldn't be trying to change the forms of development that were the old-fashioned development can still work. But others say downtown Stuart isn't a realistic example."

"Downtown Stuart is a boutique," Henderson said. "If you had to go build it, it couldn't happen. The land cost would be too high, the rate of return wouldn't come close to covering your investment."

Downtown Stuart's revitalization couldn't have happened if property values hadn't plummeted during its decline, Henderson said.

Stuart development planner Mike Houston said the strategic plan should offer a choice for developers. "The personal preference of individual planners shouldn't be the driving force," Houston said. "We need to say what's preferred."

Martin County Commissioner Dennis Armstrong, a member of the council, said he was glad the plan's latest version included a provision for amending the document after it is adopted.

"Let's have something that is current and that we can keep current," Armstrong said.

Busha said he realizes that the type of development advocated by the strategic plan hasn't gained widespread favor. But that could change, he said.

"It's going to take time for mind-sets to change, just like it took time for people to protect the wetlands," he said.

Peter Spyke, an Indian River County representative on the Council, told the panel Friday that changes have to be made to prepare for the 7 million people expected to move to Florida in the next 20 years.

If we stick to the old way of doing things and plug 7 million people into the equation, we're going to have serious problems," Spyke said.

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1995
All Development Is Not Created Equal
Sustainable Forms vs. Sprawl Forms

- 30% less energy used
- 2 to 4 times better water quality
- 25% to 50% less time in our cars
- 30% to 40% less land used
- Public transportation is an option
- 10% to 12% extra income not spent on cars
- Kids might have a shot at walking to school

- Sustainable products out perform comparable sprawl products on sales price and absorption
- Road building will no longer take priority over the arts, culture, care of the elderly, water quality and education of your children
- Reduced regional fiscal impacts of $606 million through 2025
- Reduced regional capital costs of $4.19 billion through 2025
A Happy Motoring Society?

We now know this is NOT TRUE
The Not So Happy Motoring Society

I hate the idea of giving up the freedom of my car.

Think gas is expensive now? Just wait. You've heard it before, but this time it's for real. We're at the beginning of the end of cheap oil.
Eddie Van Halen AFTER He Got His Driver’s License
The Ten Great Myths of Modern Planning

1. The urban service boundary line is where growth will stop

2. Low Rise & Low Density = Green

3. Concurrency automatically = Good Planning

4. The “Free” market will take care of everything and is actually “free”

5. Big roads must be better and will solve our problems once and for all

6. What they are building must be illegal

7. Wide separation of different land uses and buildings will reduce impacts of growth

8. Five and ten-acre lots will protect the countryside and accommodate future growth

9. Affordable housing is bad for the economy and must be segregated

10. Mass transit will not work
Most of What Is Known About Building Sustainable Towns, Cities and Regions was on the Ground over 2500 Years Ago

The walled enclosure, the street, the boulevard, the house block and alley, the market, the square, the worship district, the administrative district, the entertainment district and the workshop district.
Regional Planning Without Urban Design is Bad Medicine

Lost in Translation....
Regional Planning Without Good Urban Design is Dangerously Unpredictable
FOREWORD

According to Chapter 186, Florida Statutes, and Chapter 27E-5, Florida Administrative Code, the Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) for the Treasure Coast Region shall be a long range guide for the physical, economic, and social development of the Region which identifies regional goals and policies. The SRPP is not merely a plan for the regional planning council, it is a plan for the Region and all those who are active participants in shaping its future.

The SRPP is intended to be a direction-setting document. Its goals and policies will be implemented only to the extent that financial resources are available from local revenue sources, legislative appropriations, grants or appropriations of any other public or private entities. The plan does not create regulatory authority or authorize the adoption of agency rules, criteria, or standards not otherwise authorized by law.

The goals and policies contained in the SRPP shall be reasonably applied where they are economically and environmentally feasible, shall not be contrary to the public interest, development of the Plan should continue after adoption. Over time the Council may want to amend the Plan to incorporate meaningful regional guidance found in new legislation and in the findings and recommendations of other regional planning activities and programs currently in progress (e.g., revisions to the State Comprehensive Plan, long range MOU plans, the Sustainable South Florida effort, the Florida Greenways program, etc.). The initiative to amend the Plan may come from the Council itself or from citizens who come before Council with their aspirations and ideas to improve the Plan. Regional planning councils are not limited to a twice-a-year window for plan amendments and can revise the Plan at any time.

As it pertains to the development of local government comprehensive plans, land development regulations, and local development orders subject to regional planning council consistency review, it is recognized that some ideas suggested in the SRPP are applicable and can be furthered in varying degrees in certain areas of the Region and some cannot. When applying the Plan, this is a determination that must be continually made by the consortium of local government representatives and citizens appointed by the Governor which make up the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council.

The SRPP acknowledges and the Council recognizes that the Region is large and diverse and that thoughtful consideration of local differences need to be fully considered when making policy decisions. It is also recognized because of local differences and preferences that there may be other approaches for implementing and furthering regional goals and policies other than those specifically suggested in the Plan. The SRPP will require the Council to use good judgment in applying the Plan and to maintain a receptiveness to new or different ideas which may not be specifically suggested in the Plan, but which will keep the Region on course towards a healthier and sustainable future.

Lastly, all goals, policies, and strategies that utilize directive verbs such as should, shall, and will should not be interpreted to override the decision-making and fiscal prerogatives of local government. All references to the “Region” in goals, policies, strategies and background analyses should be taken to mean the Region as a whole. It is implicit that all regional goals, strategies, and policies suggesting shortened review processes, preapproval, concurrency relief, or other incentives suggested to encourage preferred forms and patterns of development will be carried out within the limits of State law.

Excerpt from SRPP for the Treasure Coast Region 1995
It Is NOT about **Growth** vs. **No Growth**

It is about **HOW** we grow
The SRPP’s Vision for How We Grow Follows Four Guiding Principles:

- Preserve and Enhance the Environment and Countryside
- Revitalize Existing Urban Areas
- Create New Towns
- Prevent Sprawl Forms and Patterns of Development
The Plan recognizes the “vision” can never be implemented or built overnight. It will take patient piecemeal growth, so every planning decision sanctioned by local government is always helping to create or generate preferred patterns and forms of development on a small and large scale. The end result... a more sustainable future for the Treasure Coast Region.

Excerpt from SRPP for the Treasure Coast Region 1995
It’s Not A Process Problem… It’s A Planning Problem

So What More Can The Regional Planning Council Do?
Peter Spyke, an Indian River County representative on the council, told the panel Friday that changes have to be made to be made to prepare for the 7 million people expected to move to Florida in the next 20 years.

Spyke said, “If we stick to the old way of doing things and plug 7 million people into the equation, we’re going to have serious problems.”

“The gridlock,” he said, “Dade and Broward are there, Palm Beach County is moving in that direction. We need more people in St. Lucie, Indian River counties. We need to continue with education and development of our residential and commercial development and encourage people to walk instead of drive.”

Proponents of new development, Spyke added, are coming up with ideas that old-fashioned development can still work. But others say downtown Stuart isn’t a realistic example.

“Downtown Stuart is a boutique,” Henderson said. “If you had to go build it, it couldn’t happen. The land cost would be too high, the rate of return wouldn’t compete with the commercial development.”

Downtown Stuart’s revitalization couldn’t happen if property values hadn’t plummeted during its decline, Henderson said.

Stuart development planner Mike Houston said the strategic plan should offer a choice for developers. “The personal preference of individual planners shouldn’t be the driving force,” Houston said. “We need to have a plan that can be implemented.”

But the plan also has its critics.

Stay The Course and Continue With Education
The Strategic Regional Policy Plan and Planning for the Treasure Coast:
The Region, Corridor, District and Neighborhood

A Series Dedicated to Education and Dialogue on
Regional Planning and Urban Design for the Treasure Coast Region

June 19, 2009
• OVERVIEW: The Strategic Regional Policy Plan, Regional Planning and Urban Design: Components for Building a Healthy Region

July 17, 2009
• Regional Planning and Urban Design: An Odd, But Essential Couple

September 18, 2009
• The Neighborhood: Building Blocks of a Region

October 16, 2009
• The District and Corridor: Centers and Edges

December 11, 2009
• Streets, Blocks, and Alleyways: Interconnectivity and Detailing the Street

January 15, 2010
• Public Open Spaces: Creating Memorable Infrastructure

February 19, 2010
• Civic and Public Buildings: Placement and Priority

March 19, 2010
• Mix of Uses: Vertical and Proximal Relationships

April 16, 2010
• Mix of Housing: The Integration of Varying Building Types and Price Points

May 21, 2010
• Building Typologies: Form, Density, Height, and Discipline

June 18, 2010
• Parking: How to Handle the Necessary Nemesis

July 16, 2010
• The Countryside: The Region’s Natural Infrastructure
Questions/Comments