



Fellsmere

Ray Eubanks
Department of Community Affairs
Division of Community Planning
Plan Processing Team
255 Shumard Oak Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2100

March 29, 2010

RE: EAR Letter of Understanding – City of Fellsmere

Dear Mr. Eubanks:

The purpose of this letter is to present the major issues of the City of Fellsmere to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for approval to be included in the City's Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) due May 31, 2010. These issues are being addressed for compliance with Florida Statute 163.3191. Initially, the identification of issues was conducted internally with City Staff and a preliminary list was prepared. The list was supplemented based upon input obtained through coordination with adjacent local governments, Indian River County, and various State and Regional agencies. Informal coordination (individual meetings, telephone calls, emails, etc.) was conducted in lieu of a formal scoping meeting. On May 17, 2010, a workshop with the Local Planning Agency (LPA) and public was held, and based on that discussion, the preliminary list was revised and prioritized. On May 18th, the preliminary list as presented to the City Council where they endorsed the list prepared by the LPA.

The City of Fellsmere requests a written agreement for the identification of major issues identified below [163.3191(2)(e)]:

Maintain Historic Character of the Historic City. The City of Fellsmere, originally platted in 1911, has developed over the years with a classic small town character. The City is anchored by a town square in which prominently sits the historic elementary school – now converted to the Town Hall. The cross roads at the town square (CR 512 and Broadway) serve as the center of town and contain the historic business center and numerous historic structures. Within walking distance of the town square lie residential neighborhoods laid out on a dense street grid. Pocket parks and recreational facilities are interspersed throughout the City allowing residents easy access to ample open space. These characteristics were lost in America for many decades and are now sought after in new neo-traditional developments and have been found to reduce dependence on vehicular travel and thus reduce green house gas emissions and energy requirements. As the City continues to develop outward from the city center, maintaining the historic character is paramount. The EAR will evaluate whether current Plan policies will ensure the continued character and viability of the historic city center.

Complete Streets (Street lighting, Sidewalks, Paved streets). Within the City, only nine out of the thirty-six miles of local streets are paved, and virtually none provide street lights while only a small fraction contain sidewalks. The City feels the quality of life of its residents would be improved if the



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roads were designed as completed streets. Complete streets provide safe and secure means of travel and accommodate all modes of travel. Although the scale of the city-center is indeed walkable, without complete streets, walkability is reduced. As new development occurs within the City, complete streets will be even more important to ensure that the strong foundation that exists within the historic city-center continues throughout the City. The EAR will evaluate whether Plan policies are sufficient to ensure that all streets are designed and constructed as complete streets.

Expanded Bus Service. Currently, the income level of the households within the City is skewed toward the lower ranges. Access to automobiles is not often available. Transit service is therefore important for many residents to carry out their daily chores. Unfortunately, given the limited resources of the transit provider and given the small number of riders in Fellsmere, as compared to the County as a whole, transit service is limited. To provide expanded opportunities for our residents to access employment outside of the City, transit service to eastern urbanized areas of the County has been initiated. As mentioned though, service frequency is limited. The EAR will evaluate, through data available from the transit provider, what level of enhanced transit in Fellsmere is feasible and what resources would be required to implement such enhanced service.

Codes to Meet Vision. As the City continues to grow, a strong desire exist to ensure that such growth will not result in the same standard nondescript, commonplace look that can be found anywhere in the Treasure Coast. The EAR will evaluate whether Plan policies are sufficient to ensure that strip commercial will not eventually line CR 512 as it spans from the historic city center to Interstate 95 and that residential communities are not filled with cookie-cutter homes on gated and disconnected street networks.

Implement Central Sewer System. Except for new commercial establishments on CR 512, the City is not served by a central sewer system. Although a central water system was installed throughout the City during the evaluation period, sanitary sewer is still served by individual septic systems. The County has planned and accommodated adequate capacity to serve the City's sanitary sewer needs, the City has yet to embark on this effort. Since a majority of the local streets are still unpaved, now is the time to consider a central system. The EAR will evaluate the general cost and potential funding sources of implementing a central sewer system as well as other non-cost considerations.

Capitalize on our Conservation Opportunities. The City of Fellsmere is nearly surrounded by major conservation tracts of the State. To the west lies Blue Cypress Lake and the Blue Cypress Marsh. To the south lies the Blue Cypress Water Management Area. To the east lies the Sand Lakes Conservation Area and an ACOE mitigation bank. Meanwhile to the northeast lies the St. Sebastian River Preserve. The EAR will evaluate whether the Plan policies are sufficient to allow the City to capitalize on these resources for ecotourism, recreation, and other economic development opportunities.

Economic Development. Although times are tough for most Americans and many governments at all levels, the City of Fellsmere has always struggled economically. For years, the City has had a higher percentage of unemployment, low income households, and substandard housing than the



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region on average. Historically, and even today, the economy of Fellsmere is largely dependent upon agriculture. With global competition and the ever looming threat of pestilence, the City strongly desires economic diversification. To this end, the City has taken strong, bold action to position itself for economic success. Having recently annexed over 20,000 acres of vacant land and embarked on a number of economic development initiatives, the City is pro-actively seeking economic development. The EAR will evaluate whether the Plan policies are supportive of economic development and take advantage of available incentives.

Within this evaluation of major issues, the City of Fellsmere will conduct an assessment of whether plan objectives, within each element, have been achieved as they relate to the major issues identified above. The City will also identify unforeseen or anticipated changes in circumstances, which have resulted in problems and opportunities with respect to major issues identified in each element and the social, environmental and economic impacts of the issues [163.3191(2)(e)&(g)]. A summary of actions or corrective measures including plan amendments necessary to address the major issues identified above will be identified. Such identification shall include, as appropriate, new population projections, new revised planning timeframes, a revised future plan map and land use studies, an updated capital improvement element and any new and revised goals, objectives, and policies for major issues identified within each element [163.3191(2)(i)]. In addition, the City of Fellsmere will also address the following:

- Population growth and changes in land area, including annexation, since the adoption of the original plan or the most recent update amendments. [163.3191(2)(a)];
- Extent of vacant and developable land [163.3191(2)(b)];
- The financial feasibility of implementing the comprehensive plan and of providing needed infrastructure to achieve and maintain adopted level-of-service standards and sustain concurrency management systems through the capital improvements element, as well as the ability to address infrastructure backlogs and meet the demands of growth on public services and facilities. [163.3191(2)(c)];
- Location of existing development in relation to the location of development as anticipated in the plan [163.3191(2)(d)];
- Relevant changes to the state comprehensive plan, the requirements of this part, the minimum criteria contained in chapter 9J-5, Florida Administrative Code, and the appropriate strategic regional policy plan [163.3191(2)(f)];
- Assessment of successes and shortcomings related to each element [163.3191(2)(h)];
- Summary of public participation activities in preparing the report [163.3191(2)(j)];
- Assessment of the success or failure of coordinating future land uses and residential development with the capacity of existing and planned schools as well as joint decision-making processes engaged in by the City and the school board in regard to establishing appropriate population projections and the planning and siting of public school facilities [163.3191(2)(k)];

Susan Adams, Mayor
Jason Nunemaker, City Manager

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- Assessment of the extent to which the City has been successful in identifying alternative water supply projects and traditional water supply projects, including conservation and reuse, necessary to meet the water needs identified in s. 373.0361(2)(a) [163.3191(2)(l)];
- Assess whether a common concurrency methodology for measuring impacts on roadways is needed [163.3191(2)(p)].

The City requests agreement from the Department that this EAR need not address the following:

- 163.3192(2)(o) – The City of Fellsmere has not designated a concurrency exception area, a concurrency management area, or a multimodal transportation district;
- 163.3191(2)(m) – The City of Fellsmere is not a coastal community and does not have a coastal high hazard area; and
- 163.3191(2)(n) – The City of Fellsmere is not adjacent to or near a military institution.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Mark D. Mathes, AICP
Community Development Director
City of Fellsmere