



A GUIDE FOR
ADDRESSING
LAND USE ISSUES

Community Land Use Toolkit

*A Florida Cooperative Extension Program
collaboratively led by faculty from
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical
University and the University of Florida*

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Public participation at the appropriate time can make a difference in ensuring the community's priorities remain focused and upheld.



Photo by Tyler Jones, University of Florida/IFAS

Community Land Use Toolkit

The [Community Voices, Informed Choices \(CIVIC\)](#) program developed this resource for Florida Extension faculty who want to help their communities examine land-use issues and concerns.

Land use in Florida (e.g., development, transportation, water supplies, land use designation, natural resource preservation) is codified and enforced through comprehensive plans, zoning, and land development regulations established for and by each county and municipality. Creating, revising, or amending comprehensive plans and local legislation includes opportunities for public input. This dedicated and reserved space is where the public may express their vision and concern for their community, consider where and how development should occur, and if they wish to protect critical areas of historical significance or wildlife habitat. Public participation at the

Benefits of the Land Use Toolkit

The CIVIC Land Use Toolkit supports all Extension program areas. Whether in rural, suburban, or rural regions of Florida, this guide is intended to assist faculty who want to engage with, educate, and empower community leaders, community members, and other stakeholders to become active participants in making land use decisions.

The Land Use Toolkit provides research-based information to help faculty educate their clientele on land-use issues and provides guidance on:

- Hosting forums that build community capacity through deliberative dialogue
- Expanding participants' knowledge of the legal processes that frame land-use decisions, and the organizations and agencies involved in making those decision
- Providing resources

appropriate time can make a difference in ensuring the community's priorities remain focused and upheld.

The CIVIC Land Use Toolkit supports a diversity of programs within Extension to bridge gaps in engaging with governmental staff and other decision-makers during land use decision processes. Whether in urban, suburban, or rural regions of Florida, this guide can assist Extension faculty in engaging with, educating, and empowering community leaders, community members, and other stakeholders to become active participants in the decision-making process around land use. The Land Use Toolkit is an educational reference and living document that will expand over time to allow its reach and value to grow.

The Goals of the Land Use Toolkit are to provide research-based information to help faculty educate their clientele on land-use issues in Florida and guide faculty to:

- Host deliberative discussions that build community capacity through dialogue
- Expand their knowledge of the legal processes and agencies that frame land-use decision-making in Florida
- Provide resources and contacts relevant to land-use decision-making

The first section of the toolkit explores CIVIC's approach to engaging communities in deliberative dialogue. The second portion of the toolkit focuses on land-use planning, emphasizing Florida's comprehensive plan requirements as a framework to address the complexity of land use issues. As part of this section, a decision matrix provides further details on the comprehensive plan, questions/concerns related to it, and additional Florida-specific resources and contacts.

Florida Extension Community Voices, Informed Choices (CIVIC) Program

The Community Voices, Informed Choices (CIVIC) is a [Florida A&M](#) and [University of Florida IFAS Extension](#) program that Extension faculty can use to help local governments, non-governmental agencies, community members, and businesses address complex community issues. It complements other Extension programs by creating a platform for community members to learn about and discuss issues or concerns they care about but cannot solve as individuals. CIVIC uses deliberative forums and town hall meetings to help participants learn about issues, hear different perspectives, and identify actions that might solve the issue.

A CIVIC activity involves several steps, beginning with building partnerships with community organizations and bringing community members together to share their concerns. In some cases, Extension faculty might work with an organization or agency to learn how the community perceives the issue. Some issues might require more research to understand the issue and potential solutions. Community members might also want to learn more. The [CIVIC Guide](#) provides research-based information about deliberative dialogue and steps to implementing CIVIC activities.

Why Land Use?

Florida's natural capital and economic incentives, like year-round sunshine and no state income tax, draw in new residents worldwide. With a thousand people moving to Florida daily, the state population is expected to grow from an estimated 21.5 million in 2020 to 33.7 million by 2070¹. In addition to



Community-level concerns that have roots in land use:

Economic opportunities
Affordable Housing
Urban greenspace
Water quality
Public health
Community character
Social inequities
Tourism
Property Rights Security
Forestry
Sea level rise
Viable agriculture
Nature conservation
Transportation access
Landscape management

¹[Florida Population Estimates by County](#)



Traditional methods of public meetings are not especially effective strategies for informing residents or creating opportunities to address their concerns.

offering newcomers the services, employment, and “paradise” they seek, there are inherent challenges in maintaining resources and infrastructure while protecting existing community identity and natural ecosystems. Another consideration is the direct Link between land use and water quality due to Florida’s peninsular geography and porous geology. This connection exists on the surface and in underground aquifers, which provide much of the state’s drinking water. Decisions around land use significantly impact many aspects of life for Floridians, and they should have opportunities to influence the land-use decisions that affect their local community.

The CIVIC program offers a framework for faculty to guide and shape discussions that allow community members to comment on what they value—natural areas, historical resources, clean water, traffic safety, jobs, and farmland, to name a few. To find more information about CIVIC’s framework and methods, click the [CIVIC Guide](#).

Public Engagement in Land Use Decision Making

“[T]he question of when and how public participation is useful in planning is not straightforward ... This is partly because people often associate “participation” with the conventional processes of public hearings and planning commissions—settings that in most cases are not participatory at all” (Nabatchi: p 157). Traditional methods of public meetings are not especially effective strategies for informing residents or creating opportunities to address their concerns.² Also, under-resourced and underserved populations may never receive announcements or be effectively engaged. More than ever, innovative methods that support constructive dialogue are needed to engage the public to help them learn, explore other perspectives, preferences, and visions, and formulate solutions and next steps toward creating resilient communities. Community members can move the conversation into action with a foundation of deliberative dialogue. This toolkit aims to provide insight into the deliberative dialogue method of stakeholder engagement and to introduce the comprehensive plan -the ultimate guide of a county or municipality required by Florida state law as an outline for addressing and tackling complex land use questions and concerns posed by clients.

The term land use refers to “...the human use of land. It represents the economic and cultural activities (e.g., agricultural, residential, industrial, mining, and recreational uses) practiced at a given place.”³ This definition describes how land use encompasses more than just a physical space; it impacts the food, water quality, livelihood, and community character that affect well-being.

Land use is a broad and interdisciplinary topic with complex intersections that blur the lines between economic, social, and environmental disciplines. There are many factors to consider regarding the impact of land use on communities, including property rights, legal processes, and political dynamics. Cultural and political differences and a lack of information can be barriers for people who want to participate in decision-making. Land-use decisions involve determining which uses are appropriate for which lands. The local jurisdiction makes some of these decisions, while others are restricted by state law (e.g., you cannot build a house in a wetland area

²Nabatchi, T., Leighninger, M. Public Participation for 21st Century Democracy. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., NJ, 2015.

³[Land Use defined by Environmental Protection Agency](#)

without a permit).

Whether your extension program falls within Natural Resources, Agriculture, 4-H, Family and Consumer Sciences, Community Resource Development, or Sea Grant, land use is relevant to your clientele. The impacts felt by communities and the self-efficacy⁴ community members feel in having a say in decisions that impact their lives are threaded together by how land is used and who determines that use.

With strong connections in established local communities, Extension is poised to educate residents on civic engagement, convene stakeholders in deliberative dialogue forums, and help facilitate the next steps. Other possibilities might include organizing to raise awareness of a problem, asking experts to speak to the community to address specific questions, collecting data to explore potential solutions, developing recommendations for decision-makers, inviting elected officials to community meetings, or serving on a committee as a community representative. Depending on such considerations as education versus advocacy, level of conflict, or timeline for decision-making, CIVIC suggests a variety of ways to plan land-use activities:

- Suppose there is no conflict, but people want to know more about the issue. In that case, a Town Hall format can provide information, allow participants to ask questions of the experts, and provide resources.
- A Deliberative Forum would be appropriate if there is awareness of the issue and people are ready to discuss solutions. The [Land Use Issue Guide](#) is a valuable tool for guiding deliberative discussions.
- Chapter 2 of the [CIVIC Guide](#) suggests developing partnerships with land use agencies and organizations.
- Suppose local agencies or stakeholders seek community input or want to engage the public in plans such as a comprehensive plan (legally required), or they may seek public input on a new project. Start by working with the local agencies involved in land use decision-making to speak at a town hall meeting or an educational program that teaches community members how to engage in decision-making. See the Land Use Frequently Asked Questions for resources and contacts.
- Suppose a great deal of conflict surrounds the issue, or Extension's involvement crosses into advocacy. In that case, consult with your county extension director or county administrator if you are the director to determine if there is an appropriate role for Extension.

CIVIC Deliberative Forums and the Land Use Issue Guide Deliberative Forums Issue Guides

An issue guide is used to guide participants in a deliberative forum. The [Land-Use Issue Guide](#) was created through an iterative progression, described in detail in Chapter 6 of the [CIVIC Guide](#). During the early stages of developing the CIVIC Land Use Toolkit, community members were interviewed and surveyed by Extension faculty to identify land-use concerns. Some common themes surfaced: rapid housing development affecting natural areas and community character, stormwater run-off impacting water quality, and affordable housing becoming hard to find due to gentrification and economic disparities. The resulting [Land Use Issue Guide](#) can be used as-is, or the actions/tradeoffs can be modified to be locally relevant to your community.



An issue guide is used to guide participants in a deliberative forum.

⁴Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific outcomes (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997).



An issue guide is used to guide participants through a deliberative forum.

Option 1: Shaping your community's future landscape

In this option, we recognize that some development is necessary and desirable. It is also vital, however, to develop within the limitations of our water, air, and land natural resources. A comprehensive plan should guide land development and protect areas that have natural, agricultural, historical, and cultural values. But these good ideas cost money and may require hiring staff.



Photo by Marisol Amador, University of Florida/IFAS

Examples of what might be done	Some trade-offs and consequences to consider
1. Protect water resources both on surface and below ground.	Stricter regulations may restrict development of economically viable industry and housing.
2. Maintain and protect access to cultural and historical places and their character.	Setting aside these areas may hinder economic growth and reduce tax revenue. Private property rights may be infringed upon.
3. Protect farmland and greenspace in rural and urban areas.	The value of land declines if development is not an option. Greenspace does not generate tax revenue.
4. Promote tourism and visitation that showcases the resources of a community.	Tourism itself may change the character of an area.
5. Policies in our community should protect property values and aesthetics.	This can prevent individuals from using their property how they see fit - e.g., grow gardens, install rain barrels, or dry clothes on a line.
Additional actions?	

The Land Use Issue Guide and Deliberative Forums

An issue guide is used to guide participants through a deliberative forum. Developing an issue guide usually begins with concern collecting, a community engagement process that asks community members to share their perspectives. When concern collecting for the [Land Use Issue Guide](#), some common themes emerged: rapid housing development affecting natural areas and community character, stormwater run-off impacting water quality, and affordable

housing becoming hard to find due to gentrification and economic disparities. These themes were incorporated into the [Land Use Issue Guide](#), which can be used as-is, or the actions/tradeoffs can be modified to be relevant to your community. The [CIVIC Guide](#) describes in detail how to develop an issue guide.

The issue guide consists of three options that address the issue, and within each option are potential actions and tradeoffs for each action. The three options in the [Land Use Issue Guide](#) are: 1) shaping your community's future landscape, 2) shaping community decision-making on land use, and 3) shaping community decisions about land development. If participants identify additional actions and tradeoffs not listed, they are encouraged to add them.

Hosting a Deliberative Forum

Working closely with your partners is essential to hosting a successful deliberative forum. Partners can help identify attendees or advertise the event to the community. Refer to the [CIVIC Guide](#) for details on building strong partnerships and hosting deliberative forums. Planning a deliberative forum takes time and should be done alongside your partners. Below is a guide to help you get started.

Timeline for Planning a Forum

One day to one week	Read Chapters 6 and 7 of the CIVIC Guide and become familiar with the Land Use Issue Guide .
One week or more	Decide if the forum will be in person or virtual. If the forum is in person, identify a location that is convenient and accessible to all participants. Can the venue help with advertising? Can the room seating be arranged in a circle? Is there ample parking? If the forum is virtual, identify barriers that might prevent some community members from participating (e.g., low bandwidth and lack of digital skills).
One week to one month	Identify a facilitator and schedule some time to meet with them. They will need to become familiar with the issue guide and know your goals for the forum. Determine what supplies and equipment the facilitator will need, who is providing them, and when the facilitator needs them. Consider other roles that need to be filled. Are their funds to cover costs (e.g., refreshments, supplies, honorarium for the facilitator)? Chapter 6 of the CIVIC Guide provides more detail.
One week to one month	Send invitations and distribute advertising materials. A Convener's Guide to Hosting a Public Forum is an excellent resource for learning more. When advertising the event, be clear about what the forum entails and what participants will be expected to contribute.
One day to one week	Prepare the evaluation form or reach out to the CIVIC team for assistance. Prepare any additional surveys or evaluations that your partners might require. Chapter 9 of the CIVIC Guide provides instructions for setting up the CIVIC Evaluation tool.



Working closely with your partners is essential to hosting a successful deliberative forum.

Chapter 8 of the [CIVIC Guide](#) describes some next steps or actions that forum participants might take. In cases where local government wanted community input or participation from community members, a report summarizing the deliberative discussions might suffice. Reporting back to decision-makers, writing reports for partners or county agencies about citizen input, and sharing results with local leaders are other ways to encourage action. Here are some tips for post-forum engagement:

- Collectively agree on potential next steps before leaving the forum.
- Schedule time for informal discussion after the forum.
- Create opportunities for future meetings that keep the conversation going.
- Follow up with participants post-forum to continue developing



Local comprehensive plans cover a wide variety of topics categorized as elements.

relationships.

- Note and answer questions that arose during the forum.
- Assist participants in tracking information and action items.
- Use Extension resources to support continued engagement with participants.
- Provide opportunities to build leadership skills through Extension programs such as *Strengthening Your Facilitation Skills*, *Empower You*, and the *Sustainable Living Series*.

Florida's Land Planning Process 101: Understanding the growth management process

Public policy is shaped by those who participate. Extension's relationship with regional, county, and city governments enables faculty to bridge the gap between the public and government staff, collect and synthesize public opinion, and engage those who don't often participate. Citizens are often unaware of Florida's planning process or may become aware of a rezoning request or a proposed land-use change too late to engage in public input periods or hearings. Equally frustrating, governmental officials often feel that proper public notice is provided, but the public doesn't get involved until the last moment when plans are nearly final.

The following section of the Land Use Toolkit provides an overview of the state's growth management process. This information can be used to educate clientele how to effectively engage in the local decision-making process.

Comprehensive Plan as a Guide to Community Participation

Under Florida's Community Planning Act⁵, each city and county are mandated by state law⁶ to adopt a local comprehensive plan⁷. This plan is used to guide and control future development, deal with problems associated with the use and development of land, promote public health and safety, and protect human, environmental, social, and economic resources.

Local comprehensive plans cover a wide variety of topics categorized as elements. Some are mandatory elements, like capital improvements, intergovernmental coordination, future land use, housing, transportation, conservation, recreation and open space, property rights, sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water, and natural groundwater aquifer recharge. Some elements are optional based on a place's unique needs or desires, such as coastal management⁸ and historic preservation.

The comp plan must also include an outline of the goals, objectives, and policies stating how the government will accomplish the elements of the plan. For example, one regulation requires local governments to adopt a Future Land Use Map (FLUM) that shows the "proposed distribution, location, and extent of the various categories of land."⁹

Comp plans must be reviewed and updated at least once every seven

⁵[2023 Florida State Statutes \(2\)](#).

⁶[Florida State Statute Chapter 163](#)

⁷[2023 Florida Statutes \(4\)](#)

⁸[Coastal High Hazards Area \(CHHA\) element](#)

⁹[2010 Florida Statutes](#)

years¹⁰. Local county and municipal governments can amend their plans if conditions change. Private landowners or other entities must submit an application requesting an amendment to change the intended use of a piece of property or the development density. Refer to the Land Use Frequently Asked Questions for more information on the comp plan elements and who to contact.

Zoning

Zoning is how a county or municipality regulates how the land in its jurisdiction is used or developed. Zoning laws, often referred to as land development codes (LDC) or land development regulations (LDR)¹¹, are a planning tool for subdividing land into geographical “zones” or classifications. Zoning codes implement the locality’s comprehensive plan Future Land Use Map (FLUM), prevent potential land-use conflicts, and incorporate best land use and development practices. The land development regulations help manage expectations for property owners, land developers, and regulators. Each zoning category has a unique set of development regulations with assigned density, intensity, maximum building heights, setbacks (such as how far away from a road or waterway), and other development design guidelines and standards to promote public health, safety, and welfare. Like the comprehensive plan, county and municipal governments, private landowners, and other entities can submit requests to change zoning codes.

Extension faculty are often asked questions about zoning especially when agriculture is involved. For example, a client might ask if they can raise chickens on their property. To answer this question, start by contacting the zoning staff of the appropriate city or county government. If the client wants to engage in an activity not allowed under current zoning, the first step is to request a pre-application meeting with staff. During this meeting, staff can direct the applicant whether they need to submit a request for either an administrative approval or a special exception, also known as a variance application (application type may vary depending on municipality), to the city or county zoning department. When all documents are submitted, and the application is found sufficient, the client or authorized agent will next attend a public hearing of the Zoning Board to present their request. If a zoning variance is not approved, the applicant can consult with zoning staff to determine the appropriate next steps.

Regional Planning

Planning issues frequently cross jurisdictional boundaries. Four types of agencies oversee regional planning issues in Florida: Regional Planning Councils, Water Management Districts (WMD), Florida Department of Transportation Districts (FDOT), and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO)—links to maps of each district. The intergovernmental coordination element in the comp plan shows the various agencies and entities who are play a role in addressing specific topics. For example, this section can show who monitors drinking water, repairs roads, or regulates industrial complexes. Extension resources could include a guide for referencing the community’s comprehensive plan.



Planning issues frequently cross jurisdictional boundaries.

¹⁰[Rule Chapter 73C-49, Florida Administrative Code](#)

¹¹[Florida’s Community Planning Process](#)



Resources

- [Community Voices, Informed Choices \(CIVIC\)](#)
- [CIVIC Guide](#)
- [Land Use Issue Guide](#)
- [Conveners Guide to Hosting a Public Forum](#)
- [Chapter 163 of State Statute](#)
- [Coastal High Hazards Area \(CHHA\) element](#)
- [Comprehensive planning](#)
- [Community Planning Act](#)
- [2021 Florida Statutes](#)
- [Evaluation and Appraisal Review of the Comprehensive Plan \(listed by county with man-datory review dates\)](#)
- [National Issues Forums Institute](#)
- [Land Use in the Wildland-Urban Interface: Land Conservation Tools and Zoning. Lauren McDonell and Martha C. Monroe, 2018. Updated 2022](#)
- [Land Use in the Wildland-Urban Interface: Urban Sprawl and Smart Growth. Lauren McDonell, Martha C. Monroe, Gene Boles, and Terri Mashour, 2018. Updated 2022](#)
- [Seeking a New Relationship with Communities: How Officials Want to Bridge Divides, Distrust, and Doubts. J. Miller, A. Taylor, R. Harwood. Prepared by the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation in Collaboration and the Kettering Foundation, 2020.](#)
- [1000 Friends of Florida](#)

Regional District Maps

- [Water Management District Map](#)
- [Department of Transportation Districts and Metropolitan Planning Organization Areas](#)
- [Regional Planning Councils Directory](#)

Frequently Asked Questions About Land Use

Required Comprehensive Plan Elements

Capital Improvements	
Need for and location of public facilities and efficient use of such facilities. Approximate standards, schedule, cost, and projected revenue sources.	
FAQs	Resources and Contacts
How is public infrastructure paid for in my town? Who pays for what? How does a city budget for improvements?	Refer to the Capital Improvements Element of the local comprehensive plan to better understand which improvements are planned and budgeted. Search “capital improvements element [your] county.” Once improvement is defined, contact the local city clerk or public works department to direct you to pertinent contact. Meet with or contact staff and local elected officials to inquire about the municipal budget and planned improvements in your area.

Intergovernmental Coordination	
Coordination of the local comp plan with the comp plans of adjacent municipalities. must provide procedures for identifying and implementing joint planning areas, especially for the purpose of annexation, municipal incorporation, and joint infrastructure service areas. Interlocal agreements.	
FAQs	Resources and Contacts
What is the difference between my city, town or county? How do they work together or independently? How do I know who manages what or makes what decision?	Consult local municipality and/or county level comprehensive plan or start with search: “intergovernmental coordination element [Your] county” which typically summarizes which agencies and organizations have agreements pertaining to specific services (i.e., drinking water, solid waste services, etc.) and entities (i.e., district school board, fire and rescue district, etc.). Some Extension offices and municipalities offer Citizen Academy opportunities for learning about local agencies.
Additional information	
The Intergovernmental Coordination Element document can provide a foundational understanding for the often complex relationships between regional, county, municipal, and other entities like school boards and water management districts.	
Water Management District Map Department of Transportation Districts Metropolitan Planning Organization Areas Regional Planning Councils Directory	

Future Land Use

A future land use plan element designating proposed future general distribution, location, and extent of the uses of land for residential uses, commercial uses, industry, agriculture, recreation, conservation, education, public facilities, and other categories of the public and private uses of land. The future land use element shall include a land use map or map series.

FAQs	Resources and Contacts
What is the different between the existing use of the land and the future land use designation?	Local municipalities often have their future land use map publicly available for review; contact local municipality or county planners and/or zoning professionals
How do I know what my property is designated for?	Contact local municipality or county zoning board and professionals
We want to see an increase in economic opportunities in our area, the old business district needs reviatlization and incentive for small businesses to move in - what can we do to get that rolling?	Search for local community redevelopment agencies to learn about current projects, challenges, and steps that can be taken: "Community Redevelopment."
What is smart growth?	Land Use in the Wildland-Urban Interface: Urban Sprawl and Smart Growth

Transportation

Traffic circulation, including the types, locations, and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares and transportation routes, including bicycle and pedestrian ways. The mobility issues shall be addressed in relation to the size and character of the local government. Transportation corridors, level of service (LOS), availability of services, and deficiencies.

FAQs

Resources and Contacts

How are streets classified? Who is responsible for what? Private vs public roads? How do I learn more about public transportation in my town/city?

Refer to [Metropolitan Planning Organization Areas](#) or [Department of Transportation Districts](#) map to learn name of your district.
Contact local office of [Department of Transportation Districts](#) if non-metropolitan region, Metropolitan Planning Organization if population > 50k, and Transportation Management Area if population > 200k; in Florida it is subjective on how municipalities want to be named or branded, so names may vary slightly (e.g., Palm Beach calls their organization the Transportation Planning Agency). MPOs are a great resource. TPOs would also know if a project has already been identified, and if so where it is at, if it's funded, who is working on it, etc. The Intergovernmental Coordination Element document can provide a foundational understanding for the often complex relationships between entities that are responsible for roadways.

Who makes the decisions on how streets or sidewalks are placed, used, expanded, or planned?

Planners, zoning professionals, and elected officials work in concert to make these decisions

What is a complete street?

Complete Street page of [FDOT website](#), includes map to find local project information. Local MPO may be able to offer more details on project(s)

There are terrible potholes on my street, who can I call? I want to inquire about installing bike lanes in my neighborhood.

A good place to start when addressing road issues and their related safety concerns is with local municipal planners, public works departments, and DOT maintenance offices. This can sometimes be tricky. The Intergovernmental Coordination Element document can provide a foundational understanding of the often complex relationships between regional, county, municipal, and other entities that are responsible for roadways. Once you know who the maintenance agency is, contacting their planning or public works department is a good first step.

Drivers frequently running a red light, not yielding to pedestrians, or a business regularly parking vehicles on the sidewalk.

Police or Sheriff's department

Additional information

A [Metropolitan Planning Organization](#) is the policy board of an organization created and designated to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process. MPOs are required to represent localities in all urbanized areas (UZAs) with populations over 50,000, as determined by the U.S. Census.

Sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water, natural groundwater aquifer recharge

Correlated to principles and guidelines for future land use, indicating ways to provide for future potable water, drainage, sanitary sewer, solid waste, and aquifer recharge protection requirements for the area. The element may be a detailed engineering plan including a topographic map depicting areas of prime groundwater recharge. Each local government shall address in the data and analyses required by this section those facilities that provide service within the local government's jurisdiction.

FAQs	Resources and Contacts
My street is flooded who do I call?	Public works department
Where does my drinking water come from? How do I learn more about the quality of my drinking water?	The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has the primary role of regulating public water systems in Florida by delegation of the federal program from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency . Contact one of the DEP's six water program district contacts . The Intergovernmental Coordination Element document can provide a foundational understanding for complex relationships between regional, county, municipal, and other entities supplying water to municipalities or counties.
What is a retention pond? Where does the water that collects in parking lots go? Why is stormwater run-off bad for local waterways?	Stormwater Pond Management: What You Need to Know About Aeration
Who handles garbage removal in my community?	The Intergovernmental Coordination Element document can provide a foundational understanding for complex relationships between regional, county, municipal, and other entities responsible for waste removal.

Additional information

A public water system is one that provides water to 25 or more people for at least 60 days each year or serves 15 or more service connections. These public water systems may be publicly or privately owned and operated. Very small water systems that provide water for public consumption, but which do not fall under the above definition, are regulated by the Department of Health and the county health departments. Bottled water and water vending machines are regulated by the [Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Food Safety](#). Digging of water wells, both public and private, and the quantities of water that may be extracted, are regulated by the water management districts.

Conservation	
For the conservation, use, and protection of natural resources in the area, including air, water, water recharge areas, wetlands, waterwells, estuarine marshes, soils, beaches, shores, flood plains, rivers, bays, lakes, harbors, forests, fisheries and wildlife, marine habitat, minerals, and other natural and environmental resources, including factors that affect energy conservation	
FAQs	Resources and Contacts
Natural vs man-made environments. Understanding eco-systems and land development. Who builds what where? Water quality. Algae blooms. Wildlife management, wildlands vs managed lands. Impact of adjacent land uses on the natural environment or down stream. Resource and energy conservation.	County natural resources department, Florida Fish and Wildlife .
There are many trees slated to be cut down for a new development, what can I do to stop it?	Contact local municipality or county zoning board and professionals, county natural resources department
How can I encourage my town to invest in low impact development (LID)?	Contact local municipality or county zoning board and professionals, speak with county/city elected officials
I've noticed the water quality of the river nearby looks terrible, you can no longer see the bottom. What can I do to help fix this? What is the different between the existing use of the land and the future land use designation?	Contact local municipality or county zoning board and professionals, county natural resources department

Recreation and Open Space	
Parks, green space, trails etc. Whether there are amenities or not. This could include wildlife corridors etc.	
FAQs	Resources and Contacts
I noticed that the most frequented fishing spots don't have garbage cans or any facilities, who can I talk to about making these places safer and cleaner?	Depending on the jurisdiction: county natural resources department, Florida Fish and Wildlife , water management district, municipal parks and recreation department, etc.

Housing	
All housing. Must include types, access and affordable housing.	
FAQs	Resources and Contacts
I'm worried about the lack of affordable housing in my area!	Contact your county's housing department, talk with elected officials (e.g., city/county councilpersons, commissioners)
There are many delapidated buildings in my area and yet they're building new ones all around. Is there anything we can do to improve the old and bring life back to the area?	Check with local community redevelopment agencies to learn of any plans for addressing this issue in specific neighborhoods or areas and/or to learn more about details of the process on bringing it forward to local government. Search: "Community Redevelopment Agency [Your] County".

Property Rights	
<p>A local government may adopt its own property rights element or use the following statement of rights. The following rights shall be considered in local decision making:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The right of a property owner to physically possess and control his or her interests in the property, including easements, leases, or mineral rights. 2. The right of a property owner to use, maintain, develop, and improve his or her property for personal use or for the use of any other person, subject to state law and local ordinances. 3. The right of the property owner to privacy and to exclude others from the property to protect the owner's possessions and property. 4. The right of a property owner to dispose of his or her property through sale or gift. <p>This element was newly codified (put into law) in 7/2021. Florida communities that have adopted parts of the property rights element include City of Webster, City of Sanford, City of Stuart, and Hillsborough County. Courts have recognized due process rights in Florida land use hearings including the right to receive notice, the right to be heard, the right to present or rebut evidence, and the right to be informed of all facts on which a local government bases its decision.</p>	
FAQs	Resources and Contacts
There's a drainage ditch close to my house that is overflowing and not being properly maintained. Why is the county slacking on its maintenance?	Frequently, where drainage systems exist, stormwater runoff problems can be corrected by maintenance and repair efforts. Any maintenance agency, like the county, may be constrained by property rights that inhibit their ability to maintain certain portions of a drainage easement. They must get permission from the property owners prior to maintaining most outfall ditches and legally document it as an easement (An easement is a legal right to occupy or use another person's land for specific purposes).
Why can't I have chickens on my property?	This is a zoning issue and requires submitting a request for exception (a variance) with the Zoning Board of Adjustments. Search for your local city or county board of zoning adjustments.

Optional Comprehensive Plan Elements

Coastal Management	
Depends on whether the municipality is located along a coast. This element may include the Coastal High Hazard Area assessment and other plans relative to fisheries, coastal erosion, coast line/beach restoration, and hurricanes.	
Historic	
Optional if there are historic, cultural features in the municipality: buildings, districts, artifacts, features, cemeteries, Indigenous burial mounds, folklore, bridges, etc	
FAQs	Resources and Contacts
I've noticed some artifacts on the ground in my neighborhood, who can I talk to learn more about them? Can I help get them protected?	National Register of Historic Places , Florida Division of Historical Resources , Florida Master Site File , Florida Trust for Historic Preservation or call local planning department to inquire if there is a local historical board or citizen advisory committee
There are many delapidated buildings in my area and yet they're building new ones all around. Is there anything we can do to improve the old and bring life back to the area?	Check with local community redevelopment agencies to learn of any plans for addressing this issue in specific neighborhoods or areas and/or to learn more about details of the process on bringing it forward to local government. Search: "Community Redevelopment Agency [Your] County".

CIVIC is an Extension program of both Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University and the University of Florida IFAS Extension that builds capacity in communities to work toward their improved well-being. Through deliberative discussions and town hall meetings, CIVIC activities provide information and engage communities in the hard work of discussing contentious issues that require community-scale solutions. Learn more at: <https://programs.ifas.ufl.edu/civic/>



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