
CONSERVATION ELEMENT

The purpose of the Conservation Element is to document how the City conserves, manages, appropriately uses, and protects the natural resources of the City to ensure continued resource availability and environmental quality. The City is home to many residents who have lived in Fort Pierce their whole life. There is a strong desire by these individuals to protect the quality of life they have enjoyed. This is a desire that is shared by the elected officials, employees, and visitors as well. It is important that as the City grows there is recognition of its roots as a coastal community that offers a quality of life worth preserving.

Fort Pierce is uniquely positioned, stretching from western pine flatwoods to the Atlantic Ocean. The City includes wetlands, preserves, the North Fork of the St. Lucie River, and the Indian River Lagoon. Numerous creeks and canals play an important role in flood management, but also in water quality for the Indian River Lagoon. The City has done extensive work along Moore's Creek to restore the quality of water entering the Indian River from this creek.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Goal 4

To conserve, manage, appropriately use and protect the natural resources of the City ensuring continued resource availability and environmental quality.

4.1 Objective:

Maintain the best possible air quality, meeting or exceeding state and federal air quality standards.

4.1.1 Policy:

The City shall support the enforcement of applicable standards for air quality to control significant emissions of air pollutants in order to maintain and improve the existing air quality.

4.1.2 Policy:

Open burning shall be prohibited.

4.1.3 Policy:

Through the site plan approval process, the City shall ensure appropriate measures are taken to contain and stabilize exposed or destabilized soil

surfaces at construction sites to prevent erosion and the degradation of ambient air quality through the generation of dust particles.

4.1.4 Policy:

The City shall reduce the potential for green house gas emissions by the following means:

- a) Require vegetative buffer strips along all vehicular use areas;
- b) Require pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented design elements to be included in all development, such as transit stops, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, or other applicable multi-modal facility; **and**
- c) Amend the design requirements for parking lots to include reflective surface coatings, to require the use of shade trees and to increase island landscaping requirements.

4.2 Objective:

Conserve, appropriately use and protect the quality and quantity of current and projected water sources and waters that flow into estuarine waters or oceanic waters.

4.2.1 Policy:

The City shall cooperate with St. Lucie County and the South Florida Water Management District **(SFWMD)** for the implementation of water demand management policies and programs, including mandating xeriscape principles for all development.

4.2.2 Policy:

The City shall ensure that existing and new development shall be serviced with an adequate supply of potable water at the adopted levels of service, that, at a minimum, meets the state water quality standards.

4.2.3 Policy:

The City shall cooperate with the ~~South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)~~ and St. Lucie County to conserve water resources in emergencies and during declared water shortages. The City shall continue and expand efforts to publicize and encourage water conservation.

4.2.4 Policy:

Activities and land uses known to adversely affect the quality and quantity of identified water sources and within natural groundwater recharge areas shall be restricted to protect the quality and quantity of this water source. Parking spaces that exceed minimum requirements and excessive amounts of impervious surface coverages for new development shall be discouraged.

4.2.5 Policy:

The City shall achieve compatibility with other related regional water resource planning efforts. These include the Indian River Lagoon (IRL)

Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Plan, Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), CERP IRL – South Project, CERP North Palm Beach County Project Part 1, Lake Okeechobee SWIM Plan, Lower East Coast and Kissimmee Basin Water Supply Plans, IRL National Estuary Program Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan, and the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) Districtwide Water Supply Assessment.

4.2.6 Policy:
The City will continue to implement recommendations as proposed in the Water Supply Plan.

4.2.7 Policy:
The City shall monitor the activities of the Port Authority to ensure Best Management Practices (BMP) are implemented to avoid negative impacts to the lagoon and ocean water habitats.

4.2.8 Policy:
The City shall develop non-potable sources for irrigation in coordination with [Fort Pierce Utilities Authority \(FPUA\)](#).

4.2.9 Policy:
The City shall amend the Land Development Regulations ([LDRs](#)) to discourage or restrict onsite septic treatment.

4.3 *Objective:*
Assure that generation, storage, transport and disposal of wastes in the City is managed with the best available technology to protect environmental quality.

4.3.1 Policy:
When new sewers are extended into an area currently using septic systems for wastewater disposal, all buildings must connect with the public wastewater collection system within the time frame required by Florida Statute.

4.3.2 Policy:
All new development shall eventually be required to provide water and wastewater connections via FPUA through implementation of a transitional strategy developed by the City in coordination with the FPUA.

4.3.3 Policy:
The City shall cooperate with appropriate public agencies to assure that solid and hazardous wastes generated within the City, are properly managed to protect the environment. The City shall report any hazardous waste violation they may become aware of to the appropriate jurisdictional agency.

4.3.4 Policy:

The City shall coordinate with St. Lucie County and the state to encourage the development of effective strategies to improve the area-wide Solid Waste Management Program to include more innovative solid and hazardous waste management technologies to save energy, produce renewable energy and effectively manage hazardous waste.

4.4 Objective:

Conserve, appropriately use and protect natural resource systems, including floodplains, in recognition of their inherent values.

4.4.1 Policy:

The City shall strictly enforce all ordinances designed to protect and conserve natural resources and shall seek funding from all state and federal agencies to support such protection. The City shall support the enforcement of related state and federal regulations.

4.4.2 Policy:

Compliance with approved permits with other local governments, state, federal and private plans and programs for conservation of natural resources shall be required prior to receiving development approval.

4.4.3 Policy:

The City shall require approval from all applicable external agencies regarding the protection **of** environmentally sensitive habitat and shall require consistency with the policies in the Plan that govern the following:

1. Management of surface water;
2. Preservation of open space;
3. Preservation of native vegetation; and
4. Preservation of environmentally sensitive habitats.

4.4.4 Policy:

The City shall require that surrounding land uses are compatible with lands recognized by the county, state or federal government as environmentally sensitive.

4.4.5 Policy:

The City shall require site plan review of all proposed development or redevelopment to prevent unnecessary destruction or inappropriate use of existing natural resources and natural sites. Site development shall limit the ecological and environmental impacts of design and shall include a site analysis to include the following natural factors:

1. Existing drainage pattern;
2. Geology;

3. Topography;
4. Hydrography (streams, lakes, swamps);
5. Vegetation;
6. Wildlife and habitat;
7. Climate factors (solar orientation, seasonal winds, humidity, precipitation); **and**
8. Soil (type, suitability, bearing capacity).

4.4.6 Policy:

The City shall coordinate with the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council, St. Lucie County, the state, federal and other public agencies concerned with managing and mapping natural resources. The City may also coordinate with private environmental organizations and individuals interested in resource conservation. The goal of such coordinating activities shall be to protect the values and functions of natural systems.

4.4.7 Policy:

The City shall work cooperatively with all agencies as appropriate, to administer land acquisition programs to acquire environmentally sensitive lands. The City shall also support the efforts of state and federal and other public and private conservation agencies in the acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands.

4.4.8 Policy:

The City shall continuously identify environmentally sensitive priority sites, located within the City, for acquisition, preservation, or restoration. Priority sites shall also include those disturbed areas where restoration will result in the greatest habitat benefit at the least cost.

4.4.9 Policy:

The City shall provide for open space as a part of the requirements for all development and redevelopment. Open space areas shall be designated and treated in such a manner as to maintain the integrity, whether the primary purpose is to serve as natural vegetative or wildlife habitat, or as cultivated landscaped space. No land shall be developed, used or occupied such that the amount of open space on the parcel proposed for development is less than the required open space established by City ordinance.

4.4.10 Policy:

When a parcel proposed for development contains more than one habitat type or native vegetative community, the City shall require development to avoid the most sensitive natural areas to the maximum extent feasible through clustering provisions

4.4.11 Policy:

Through site plan review, the City shall provide special protection for:

- 1.Champion trees as recognized by Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS);
- 2.Specimen trees as recognized by FDACS Florida Department of Agriculture;
- 3.Plant species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as threatened or endangered; and
- 4.Plant species listed by the FDACS as threatened or endangered

4.5 *Objective:*

Conserve, appropriately use and protect natural functions of fisheries, wildlife, wildlife habitat and marine habitat.

4.5.1 Policy:

The City shall protect and conserve the natural functions of existing soils, fisheries, lakes and floodplains through the enforcement of existing local, and support of state and federal regulations designed to protect and conserve these functions.

4.5.2 Policy:

The City shall support the state and federal laws regarding the protection of endangered and threatened species and significant plant and animal habitat.

4.5.3 Policy:

The City shall cooperate with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and other agencies as applicable to restore seagrass beds within its jurisdiction.

4.5.4 Policy:

Through the development review process the City shall regulate the location, density and intensity of development activities known to adversely impact wildlife and wildlife habitats. The City shall provide for flexible development alternatives, such as density transfers and flexible development options on developable portions of a site.

4.5.5 Policy:

The City shall protect listed wildlife and wildlife habitats by promoting public acquisition of known listed species wildlife habitat and through the dedication of conservation easements or deed restrictions.

4.5.6 Policy:

The City shall protect existing natural reservations and conservation areas as identified in the Recreation and Open Space and Future Land Use Elements.

4.5.7 Policy:

The City shall coordinate with St. Lucie County, the Heathcote Botanical Gardens Board of Directors and appropriate public interest groups to promote awareness of endangered, threatened and regionally important species.

4.5.8 Policy:

The City shall coordinate and cooperate with the organizations which are monitoring and have research underway in the South Indian River Lagoon and its watershed, including but not limited to the SFWMD, ~~FDEP, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)~~, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC), Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute (HBOI), Smithsonian Marine station, ~~National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)~~, United ~~and the~~ states Geological Survey (USGS). Review current studies with regard to the Indian River Lagoon including a review and analysis of protective measures and their impacts on the overall quality and vitality of the area. If it is determined that current measures are not meeting overall goals, coordinate with the applicable agencies to amend existing requirements and/or provide new requirements with the goal of increasing compliance with the adopted plans of the local, regional, and state agencies.

4.5.9 Policy:

Protective landscape buffering shall be required between conservation areas and between lands recognized by the county, state or federal government as environmentally sensitive and any land uses that may negatively impact the conservation and sensitive ecosystems. These standards and criteria shall be defined in the ~~Land Development Regulations LDRs~~.

4.5.10 Policy:

The City shall work cooperatively with the ~~U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)~~ and the ~~Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC)~~ to protect and promote the recovery of species designated by these agencies as threatened and endangered or of special concern. Related activities shall include:

1. Require notification to these agencies when development proposals are received for sites documented as having historic and/or current occurrences of listed species;
2. Technical assistance consultation with these agencies; or
3. Cooperation with these agencies in locating potential introduction sites for designated species.

4.5.11 Policy:

The City shall support ongoing education programs about native plant and listed animal species and the diversity of natural communities through the

consideration of a natural resources division or the expansion of the urban forestry program.

4.6 *Objective:*

Require that development activities mitigate adverse ecological changes or improve previously degraded environmental conditions.

4.6.1 Policy:

Any development projects proposed in those areas designated on the Future Land Use Map for conservation shall be subject to review by the City Commission to ensure those projects could not be located in any other land use designation, will protect natural resources through site plan conditions, and the sole purpose of the project is to enhance conservation and recreational activities.

4.6.2 Policy:

Non-jurisdictional native vegetative communities shall be preserved during development or redevelopment and if any non-jurisdictional native vegetative community must be removed during development or redevelopment, another native vegetative community shall be replanted to replace the removed vegetative community in equal value in terms of area, quality and quantity.

4.6.3 Policy:

The City shall strictly enforce landscaping standards which require the preservation of existing natural growth, the removal of invasive, exotic plant species and the promotion of native plant materials usage. These standards shall contain limitations, restoration and mitigation measures to compensate for the loss of native vegetation and define stabilization measures for areas impacted by development.

4.6.4 Policy:

The City shall use the best available existing technical criteria and information for the formulation of regulations and ordinances to ensure that future development, to the maximum extent practicable, is compatible with the functions of existing natural systems and resources conservation.

4.6.5 Policy:

The City shall monitor the characteristics of natural resources through development review. Indications of changes shall be examined and current conservation management policies shall be refined as needed in order to remain responsive to evolving problems and issues.

4.6.6 Policy:

The City shall continue to implement the scheduled maintenance plan for the effective removal of invasive vegetation removal on City lands. This program

shall include monitoring and plans for re-vegetation. The City shall coordinate these efforts with the City Urban Forester.

4.6.7 Policy:

The City shall establish a program for the restoration of City owned beaches and beach berm areas. This program shall include monitoring and plans for re-vegetation.

4.6.8 Policy:

City restoration projects shall be completed as funding is established and sources become available. Local, state, federal and private funding sources shall be pursued and used to support restoration projects.

4.6.9 Policy:

The City shall coordinate with St. Lucie County and the Heathcote Botanical Gardens Board of Directors on the implementation plans to restore degraded lands within the Regional Botanical Park.

4.6.10 Policy:

The City shall amend the [Land Development Regulations LDRs](#) to require the identification of natural habitats through an environmental impact study during the development review process.

4.7 *Objective:*

Assure the maintenance and conservation of open space and trees within the City, through the continued maintenance of trees within City properties and through the site plan review process for new development.

4.7.1 Policy:

Native vegetative communities shall be preserved during development or redevelopment, as outlined in the adopted City landscape and tree ordinance.

4.7.2 Policy:

The City shall provide beautification of streets, rights-of-way and public open spaces and facilities within the City through grant applications or other funding sources.

4.7.3 Policy:

The City shall encourage and educate the public in the planting and maintenance of trees through its ongoing Urban Forestry plan and through coordination with the Keep Fort Pierce Beautiful and other appropriate organizations.

4.7.4 Policy:

The City shall expand the Keep Fort Pierce Beautiful Program beyond litter removal and transfer oversight of the program to the Urban Forester.

4.7.5 Policy:
The City shall continue to be certified, as it has since 1989, as a Tree City USA by the National Arbor Day Foundation.

4.7.6 Policy:
The City shall complete an inventory of tree species located on public lands through the application of a tree survey.

4.7.7 Policy:
The City shall amend the ~~Land Development Regulations~~ LDRs to include open space requirements for all residential developments.

4.8 *Objective:*
Wetlands and natural functions of wetlands shall be preserved and protected pursuant to FDEP. Uses shall be directed away from wetlands and development shall be designed to preserve and protect wetlands and the natural functions of wetlands. Mitigation may be considered as one means to compensate for loss of wetland functions.

4.8.1 Policy:
Proper landscape buffering shall be required between wetlands and land uses that negatively impact the wetland ecosystem to be defined in the ~~Land Development Regulations~~ LDRs.

4.8.2 Policy:
Wetlands and submerged lands shall be used for purposes which are compatible with their natural values and functions, and ~~City Land Development Regulations~~ LDRs shall be revised where warranted to provide these areas with the maximum possible protection.

4.8.3 Policy:
Land uses identified as being incompatible with the protection and conservation of wetlands and wetland functions shall be directed away from wetlands and when incompatible land use impacts are unavoidable these impacts shall be mitigated to compensate for loss of wetland functions.

4.8.4 Policy:
The City shall distribute land uses in a manner that avoids or minimizes, to the greatest degree practicable, negative impacts on jurisdictional wetlands recognized by the county, state or federal government as having high functional value and on undisturbed marine habitats containing listed species or recognized by the county, state or federal government as serving as essential fish habitat.

4.8.5 Policy:

This City shall support and coordinate with the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), EPA, FWS, FDEP, and FWCC and/or other agencies as appropriate to establish a list of priority wetland restoration sites. Priority wetland restoration sites shall include those disturbed wetlands having the greatest potential functional value after restoration.

4.8.6 Policy:

Through the site plan approval process the City shall ensure appropriate measures are taken to prevent development activities that adversely impact water quality through shoreline erosion and sedimentation over-wash onto wetlands.

4.9 *Objective:*

Conserve, appropriately use and protect the natural minerals and soils, in recognition of the inherent values of these areas left in their natural state.

4.9.1 Policy:

Through the development review process the City shall ensure appropriate measures are taken to contain and stabilize exposed or destabilized soil surfaces at construction sites to prevent erosion and sediment run-off.

4.9.2 Policy:

Applicants seeking permits and licenses for resource extraction or mining operation in the City shall be subject to review by the City Commission.

4.9.3 Policy:

The City shall require all development projects to adhere to the erosion control requirements as specified in the development permit application.

4.9.4 Policy:

Soil suitability shall be considered as a component of development approval in areas of undisturbed substrate.