

**WHITE SPRINGS, FLORIDA**  
**EVALUATION AND APPRAISAL REPORT**  
**(EAR)**

**Adopted**

**September 14, 2010**

**Prepared by**

**The White Springs Planning Board**

**for**

**The White Springs Town Council**

# **WHITE SPRINGS, FLORIDA**

## **EVALUATION AND APPRAISAL REPORT (EAR)**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The Town of White Springs is located in the Southeastern corner of Hamilton County. It is a rural farming and mining community in the Northeastern part of Florida. The County encompasses approximately 515 square miles and includes several incorporated municipalities and rural village communities. The County Seat is the City of Jasper. In 1990, the Town of White Springs was approximately 1.7 square miles or 1,070 acres in area. Since then, the Town has increased in size due to several annexations, including a large area west of the Town that includes all of the Stephen Foster State Park. The current population is 761 residents. The Town is an historic rural village surrounded by agriculture, forestry and phosphate mining land use activities.

The White Springs Comprehensive Plan was originally adopted in 1991. The original Plan has been amended several times changing certain provisions of several elements. These changes are discussed below in the section of this Report that covers the status of the individual elements at the time of adoption and at the time of this Report. Since the Town has such a small resident population with limited municipal staff, this is the first Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) for the community.

### **Community Profile and Community-wide Assessment:**

White Springs was incorporated in 1885; however, the historic village is much older than that. There are many historically significant structures, both residential and commercial located in the Town. White Springs is one of the three incorporated, developed areas of Hamilton County. The Town is located on the banks of the Suwannee River and is the site of the Stephen Foster State Park

The Interstate 75 / County Road 136 exchange is a commercial area located west of the Town, in Suwannee County. This interstate exchange is the major gateway to the Town. White Springs is a low-density residential community with limited neighborhood commercial services.

The 1990 Census population for White Springs was 704. In 2000, the population increased to 819, however in 2010 the population had decreased to 766. In 2025, it is projected to be only 751. This projection reveals a slight declining growth rate, but also shows a stable permanent residential population.

### **Purpose of EAR:**

The purpose of the evaluation and appraisal report for the Town of White Springs is to review and evaluate the Town of White Springs Comprehensive Plan since it was originally adopted in 1991. This EAR will analyze new data and consider changes that have taken place since 1991, that may require revisions to the Plan Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and the adopted Goals, Objectives and Policies (GOPs) of the different elements of the Plan.

This EAR includes:

- A listing and discussion of the Major Issues for the Community;
- A review of the Town of White Springs's Plan implementation activities and processes;
- A general discussion of the Plan Objectives and how these Objectives have been achieved;
- A discussion of the successes and shortcomings of the Plan; and
- An identification of needed revisions based upon the growth trends, changing conditions, data and analysis, changes in state and regional planning requirements.

### **Public Participation Process:**

The Town of White Springs Local Planning Agency (LPA) began to develop a list of the issues to be included in the Evaluation and Appraisal of the Town Comprehensive Plan in April of 2009. While this process did not evolve into the "Focus Group" generation of a priority list, the results are incorporated into this Report and constitute the basis for Major Issues.

These workshops did not actually develop a "Vision Plan" or Vision Statement," but did record multiple requests for Plan revisions from different people from diverse areas of the Town. Most of these requests centered on the Future Land Use designations on the current FLUM, and on the currently assigned densities associated with these land use designations, as well as the need to generate more development opportunities, increase tourism and promote and protect the historical character of the community. These comments are the basis for several of the "Major Issues" identified in this EAR.

The Town of White Springs Comprehensive Plan contains basic Public Participation Procedures which follow the statutory requirements and which constitute the required Public Participation Processes for Plan amendments and for this Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR). The Town has continued to implement these procedures for all amendments and for this Report. During the drafting and development of this Report the Town held multiple workshops with the Local Planning Agency (LPA) and invited public input. The Local Planning Agency conducted the required, advertised Public Hearing and recommended approval to the Town Council. The Town Council held an advertised Public Hearing and adopted the EAR by Resolution 10-06.

**In February 2010, the Town of White Springs Local Planning Agency and the Town Council conducted a workshop to begin the process of prioritizing the Major Issues list for the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR). The following agenda was employed to organize the meeting.**

**Planning Workshop**  
**February 24, 2010**  
**6:00 PM**

**The sixteen people attending the workshop, including members of the Planning Commission, Town Council and the public, were asked the following questions and provided the following responses.**

**Define the Current Community**

**1. What kind of Community is White Springs Today**

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| <b>Agricultural/Farming Community/mining</b>             | <b>10</b>            |
| <b>Industrial/manufacturing Town</b>                     | —                    |
| <b>Tourist Community</b>                                 | <b>15</b>            |
| <b>Low Density, Residential Community</b>                | <b>12</b>            |
| <b>Medium Density Residential Community</b>              | <b>3</b>             |
| <b>High Density Residential Community</b>                | —                    |
| <b>Seasonal Residential Community</b>                    | <b>6</b>             |
| <b>Service/Retail Market Area</b>                        | <b>2</b>             |
| <b>Retirement Community</b>                              | <b>8</b>             |
| <b>High Technology Employment Center</b>                 | —                    |
| <b>Government Center</b>                                 | —                    |
| <b>College Town (college facilities student housing)</b> | —                    |
| <b>Port/Commerce and/or Fishing Community</b>            | —                    |
| <b>Other</b>   | Mining, Outdoor Rec. |

## Define the Past Community

### 2. What kind of Community do you think it was 10-20-30 years ago?

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Agricultural/Farming Community                    | 11 |
| Industrial/manufacturing Town                     | —  |
| Tourist Community                                 | 10 |
| Low Density, Residential Community                | 10 |
| Medium Density Residential Community              | 5  |
| High Density Residential Community                | 1  |
| Seasonal Residential Community                    | 4  |
| Service/Retail Market Area                        | 2  |
| Retirement Community                              | 3  |
| High Technology Employment Center                 | —  |
| Government Center                                 | —  |
| College Town (college facilities student housing) | —  |
| Port/Commerce and/or Fishing Community            | —  |

## Define the “Desired” Future Community

### 3. What kind of Community do you think it will be 10 years from now?

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Agricultural/Farming Community/mining             | 8     |
| Industrial/manufacturing Town                     | —     |
| Tourist Community                                 | 14    |
| Low Density, Residential Community                | 10    |
| Medium Density Residential Community              | 4     |
| High Density Residential Community                | 1     |
| Seasonal Residential Community                    | 6     |
| Service/Retail Market Area                        | 2     |
| Retirement Community                              | 8     |
| High Technology Employment Center                 | —     |
| Government Center                                 | —     |
| College Town (college facilities student housing) | —     |
| Port/Commerce and/or Fishing Community            | —     |
| Other   | _____ |

#### 4. What kind of Community do you want it to be 10 -20 years from now?

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Agricultural/Farming Community                    | 7  |
| Industrial/manufacturing Town                     | —  |
| Tourist Community                                 | 16   |
| Low Density, Residential Community                | 8  |
| Medium Density Residential Community              | 7  |
| High Density Residential Community                | 1  |
| Seasonal Residential Community                    | 9  |
| Service/Retail Market Area                        | 8  |
| Retirement Community                              | 9  |
| High Technology Employment Center                 | —  |
| Government Center                                 | —  |
| College Town (college facilities student housing) | —  |
| Port/Commerce and/or Fishing Community            | —  |
| Other   | High Tech Eco-Dev,<br>Better Cell Reception,<br>State of Art<br>Communications |

Next, the workshop participants were asked to prioritize community issues, resources and characteristics using the following Community Planning tools.

## Community Planning

### Priorities:

1. Keep what is working, that is good and that you like!
2. Expand and enhance what is working!
3. If you have resources left, create new development!

**List the three (3) things that you think are the best part of your community.**

*Issues, resources and characteristics (number of participants listing issue)*

**Stephen Foster/State Parks/cultural resources (12)**

**Historic character/small town charm (10)**

**Suwannee River (4)**

**People (4)**

**Arts and Crafts Shops and neighborhood commercial (2)**

**Library (with internet access)**

**Low Density/large lots**

**Med Density**

**Christmas display**

**Major highways**

**City Government**

**List the three (3) things that you think need to be done or fixed.**

**Code Enforcement: dilapidated property, trash pick-up (6)**

**Improve local roads/sidewalks (6)**

**Youth programs (3)**

**More jobs (3)**

**School patrol/crossing guards (3)**

**U.S. 41: slow traffic, pedestrian crossings (2)**

**Tree maintenance/animal control**

**Better street signage and lighting**

**List the three (3) things that you most want to do for your community.  
What are your priorities?**

**Economic development/tourism: historic, natural and cultural (10)**

**Advertising Program/expand cultural events/sustainable (10)**

**Historic structures protection/restoration (4)**

**Develop a Town Vision for eco-tourism (3)**

**U.S. 41 rerouted around historic district**

**More arts/crafts businesses**

**Protect natural resources: water**

**Citizen involvement in government/ Town government that listens/**

**Do not let a few influence Town decisions.**

**In summary, the historic and natural resources of the community are the key to the Town’s future. Eco-tourism and historic preservation, as well as utilization of the park facilities should be the focus of future planning efforts.**

**POPULATION PROJECTIONS AND GROWTH TRENDS ANALYSIS**

The Town of White Springs, Florida was incorporated in 1885 and gradually developed during growth periods as an agricultural area and market place, and an historic tourism destination. The original Town of White Springs Plan stated that the Town has had a slow growth rate but a steady permanent population. The following Census counts and population projections show that the Town has maintained that steady permanent population.

**TOWN OF WHITE SPRINGS, FLORIDA  
POPULATION DATA AND PROJECTIONS**

| <b>YEAR:</b>        | <b>1990</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2008</b> |             |             |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>POPULATION:</b>  | <b>704</b>  | <b>819</b>  | <b>766</b>  |             |             |
| <b>YEAR:</b>        | <b>2010</b> | <b>2015</b> | <b>2020</b> | <b>2025</b> | <b>2030</b> |
| <b>PROJECTIONS:</b> | <b>761</b>  | <b>755</b>  | <b>752</b>  | <b>751</b>  | <b>747</b>  |

**Source: U.S. Census and BEBR.**

The seasonal population of White Springs is mostly “day-trippers” associated with special cultural and/or recreational events. The Town has major tourist and resort activities centered around the Suwannee River and the Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center. There is a limited number of licensed Public Lodgings in the Town with multiple motel and hotel units within easy driving distance. Due to the Town’s historic and cultural resources, as well as open space and recreational areas, the Town does have a number of visitors that come on “day-trips.”

# **MAJOR ISSUES**

## **EVALUATION AND CORRECTIVE MEASURES:**

### **Major Issue 1. Lack of Resources for Planning and Intergovernmental Programs**

The Town of White Springs is a small rural Town with very limited resources. The Town is an Economically Depressed local government, which does not have enough resources to adequately provide for a Planning Department. The Town does not have economic development staff or in-house planning capabilities.

The State of Florida keeps mandating that local governments develop, adopt, amend and implement Local Government Comprehensive Plans, but there are no State resources provided to support these mandates. The Town of White Springs desires to manage growth and protect the natural resources of the area, but there are simply not enough local resources to adequately accomplish this task.

## **ASSESSMENT OF PLAN OBJECTIVES AND PLAN AMENDMENTS NEEDED:**

There are no Comprehensive Plan Element changes that the Town could make that would directly generate the needed planning resources. However, if the Town could amend the Future Land Use Map designations and the associated densities to allow more development, this would increase the opportunity for the Town to grow and increase the Town tax base.

### **Major Issue 2. Lack of Implementation and Control of the Plan and Planning Processes**

This "Major Issue" is related to the first issue, but is an historic process problem and not necessarily an economic development concern. Since the Town has never had the resources needed to maintain a Planning Department, the Town has always had to rely on grants for planning projects, which are almost always project specific and cannot be used to fund in-house planning activities. In addition, the Town has always had to rely on outsourcing planning to consultants.

The result is that the Town has little or no internal institutional knowledge of planning processes, procedures and Plan maintenance, amendment and implementation. When the Town began this EAR, the Town did not have a copy of the FLUM that they could reproduce. Neither did the Town have a digital copy of the FLUM or the text of the Goals, Objectives and Policies. If someone requested a copy of the FLUM or the

Plan, they had to go to Gainesville and purchase the documents from the Regional Planning Council.

Needless to say, if the Town could not reproduce the documents, they certainly could not initiate amendments without hiring a consultant. Therefore, a primary goal of this EAR process is to ensure that the Town has the capability to control and maintain their Plan and the ability to provide those documents to the residents.

**ASSESSMENT OF PLAN OBJECTIVES AND PLAN AMENDMENTS NEEDED:**

There are no Plan objectives related to this major issue.

**Major Issue 3.      Need for more Economic Development**

This is one of the Major Issues that surfaced during the Town Hall Meetings. White Springs has limited economic growth opportunities. The area's economic base is primarily agriculture and mining and the related support industries. The primary economic engine within the Town is the eco-tourism industry centered around the cultural events associated with the State Parks. The Town needs to increase the tax base and expand the possibilities for future growth focusing on the cultural, historic and natural resources of the community.

**ASSESSMENT OF PLAN OBJECTIVES AND PLAN AMENDMENTS NEEDED:**

To achieve this, the Town needs to revise the FLUM and the density policies which implement Objective I.1, to allow for more growth. The Town should also review the need for more commercial areas while protecting the river and the historic structures.

**Major Issue 4.      Need for an updated New Concurrency Management System**

The current White Springs Comprehensive Plan has the basic Concurrency Management System (CMS) that was developed upon the original 1985 Growth Management Act. The CMS has not been amended since the original Plan adoption. The Statutory requirements have been changed several times. The White Springs CMS needs to be updated and revised to be consistent with the changes including School Facilities Concurrency.

**ASSESSMENT OF PLAN OBJECTIVES AND PLAN AMENDMENTS NEEDED:**

The White Springs Concurrency Management System, which is a sub-section of Chapter VIII, The Capital Improvements Element, needs to be revised to include the School Facilities Concurrency process.

## CONCURRENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Chapter 9J-5, Florida Administrative Code requires the adoption of a concurrency management system to ensure that facilities and services needed to support development are available concurrent with the impacts of such development. This concurrency management system is designed to ensure that prior to the issuance of a development order and development permit, that the adopted level of service standards required within this Comprehensive Plan for roads, potable water, sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage and recreation and open space will be maintained.

The Town has adopted policies within this Comprehensive Plan, which establish level of service standards for public facilities. The concurrency management system in turn provides a mechanism by which the Town can ensure the maintenance of the standards concurrent with the impacts of development.

The minimum requirements for concurrency within this management system are provided below.

1. For roads, potable water, sewer, solid waste, drainage and recreation and open space, **and Public School Facilities Level of Service Standards**, at a minimum, provisions which ensure that:
  - a. the necessary facilities and services are in place at the time a development permit is issued; or
  - b. a development permit is issued subject to the condition that the necessary facilities and services will be in place where the impacts of the development occur; or
  - c. the necessary facilities are under construction at the time a permit is issued; or
  - d. the necessary facilities and services are guaranteed in an enforceable development agreement that includes the provisions of Chapter 9J-5.0055 (2)(a)(1-3), Florida Administrative Code, as amended. An enforceable development agreement may include, but is not limited to, development agreements pursuant to Chapter 163.3220, Florida Statutes, as amended or an agreement or development order issued pursuant to Chapter 380, Florida Statutes.

These minimum requirements shall be ensured as follows:

1. **Building Permits.** The issuance of a building permit has more of an immediate impact on the level of service for public facilities than may be

the case with the issuance of other types of development orders. Therefore, building permits shall be issued only when the necessary facilities and services are in place.

The determination of the existence of the necessary facilities and services in place shall be made by using the estimates made by the Local Planning Agency as part of their most recent monitoring and evaluation of the Capital Improvements Element. Such determination shall be made by the Zoning Administrator as part of the Certificate of Zoning Compliance procedure. For roads, this determination shall apply to the adopted level of service standards for roads within appropriate, identified, geographical areas of the Town's jurisdiction. All public facility impacts shall be determined based on the level of service of the facility throughout the facility geographical service area.

2. Other Types of Development Orders. Other types of development orders include, but are not limited to approval of subdivisions, re-zoning, special permits and site plan approval. These other types of development orders have fewer immediate impacts on public facilities and services than the issuance of a building permit. Therefore, subject to the Local Planning Agency determining that the necessary facilities or services are in place and are maintaining the adopted level of service, the following concurrency management requirements shall apply for the issuance of such development orders.
  - a. Provisions shall be included within the development order which shall require the construction of additional public facility capacity, where public facilities, due to the impacts of the development proposal do not meet the adopted level of service; or
  - b. To require the necessary public facilities be constructed by the developer and at the developer's expense, or by the public or private entity having jurisdictional authority over the facility to the level of service identified and within conformance with the 5-Year Schedule of Improvements found within the Town's Capital Improvements Element.

In such cases where there are competing applications for public facility capacity, the following order of priority shall apply:

1. Issuance of a building permit based upon previously approved development orders permitting redevelopment;
2. Issuance of a building permit based upon previously approved development orders permitting new development;
3. Issuance of new development orders permitting redevelopment;

4. Issuance of new development orders permitting new development.

In conclusion, the following conditions apply to the Town's concurrency management system:

1. Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan can be made twice each year and as otherwise permitted as small scale developments. In addition, changes can be made to the Capital Improvements Element by ordinance if the changes are limited to the technical matters listed in Chapter 163, Part II, Florida Statutes.
2. No development order shall be issued which would require the Town Council to delay or suspend construction of any of the capital improvements on the 5-Year schedule of the Capital Improvements Element.
3. If by issuance of a development order a substitution of a comparable project on the 5-Year schedule is proposed, the applicant may request the Town to consider an amendment to the 5-Year schedule in one of the twice annual amendment reviews.
4. The result of any development not meeting adopted level of service standards for public facilities shall be cessation of the affected development or the reduction of the standard for level of service (which requires an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan).

## Major Issue 5. Need for a Marketing/Vision Plan

The results of the EAR workshops listed the need for the Town of White Springs to develop marketing plans that will advertise the Town's special historic, small town charm and invite more tourism to the cultural events and natural resources and facilities within the Town. The Town is also interested in developing an Eco-Lodge and Executive Education/Civic Center. A priority for the community is the development of the Camp Historical Museum Complex and the refurbishment of the Spring House.

### **ASSESSMENT OF PLAN OBJECTIVES AND PLAN AMENDMENTS NEEDED:**

The Marketing Plan can be established by creating policy language in the Future Land Use Element and then can be produced as a separate document. The civic center and other facilities may require land use map designation changes.

## Major Issue 6. Need to update the Future Land Use Map

The current White Springs Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map is only available as a static paper map. The Map needs to be created in a GIS format and needs to be updated to include small amendments and annexations that have occurred since 1990, as well as to correct multiple mistakes that were mis-designated on the original map.

### **ASSESSMENT OF PLAN OBJECTIVES AND PLAN AMENDMENTS NEEDED:**

The Future Land Use Map Series will need to be revised.

## Major Issue 7. Improve the Interstate 75 and County Road 136 Gateway

The Interstate 75/County Road 136 exchange is the commercial area located west of the Town, in Suwannee County. This interstate exchange is the major gateway to the Town. This “front door” into White Springs needs major restoration and improvements. This is a major intergovernmental issue for the Town.

County Road 136 leaves the Town of White Springs and crosses the Suwannee River into Columbia County. The Road then crosses into Suwannee County just east of the Interstate 75 interchange. The Town would like to establish an intergovernmental working group, composed of members from White Springs, Hamilton County, Columbia County and Suwannee County, to coordinate activities to clean-up, renovate and enhance the interchange into a more appealing gateway into the Community. This could be an excellent economic development opportunity for all the communities in the region.

### **ASSESSMENT OF PLAN OBJECTIVES AND PLAN AMENDMENTS NEEDED:**

The Town needs to establish a new Intergovernmental Coordination Element Goal or Objective to create this working group. There will need to be action statements in Policies to create the group and to formalize the membership and meeting schedules. The representatives of the Town will also need to work with the other local governments and with regional and state agencies to get similar plan language in the other local plans and to address resources for this project.

## Major Issue 8. Target and Market Specific types of new development

The Town of White Springs has an interesting demographic profile. The community is a living, working family oriented area. There is a great interest in providing educational facilities that support the community's youth. The Town is also a community where many older people come to live after retirement. So, there is also a need to provide facilities that cater to an older population.

The Town is interested in pursuing a Folk Art School to leverage the Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center, and link it with local and regional artists. The Town is researching the formation of a Charter School which could be combined with the development of the Carver Education Campus, which could also include a Science and Technology Museum and a Library.

Due to the lack of medical services in White Springs and Hamilton County, the general health and wellbeing of the population is at risk. The facilities needed for our community are a community health clinic and an Urgent Care Facility, providing access to Medical Doctors, Dental Care, Visual Care and a Pharmacy.

The Town also wants to support industries within the greater community. White Springs has also been an agricultural market area. There are opportunities for the creation of and expansion within the winery, cannery, fish farming, and plant nursery industries. There is also great prospect in the development of new products such as olives for branded olive oils and support of Urban Farming/Local farm to table initiatives.

The genesis of these economic development options is the University of Florida Final Report on Eco-tourism and the Natural Environment – Hamilton County, August 2009, and the Mayor's Focus Group Meeting conducted on July 22, 2010. These reports are incorporated by reference into this EAR Report.

### **ASSESSMENT OF PLAN OBJECTIVES AND PLAN AMENDMENTS NEEDED:**

The Marketing Plan can be established by creating policy language in the Future Land Use Element and then can be produced as a separate document. The specific facilities may require land use map designation changes, as well as policy language supporting the agricultural projects.

## **SPECIAL TOPICS:**

### **General Summary of Coordination of Future Land Uses with Schools:**

White Springs has successfully implemented the coordination mechanisms required. The Town has adopted the Plan provisions, including the School Facilities Element and the Interlocal Agreement. These plan revisions have been reviewed by the State and approved and are included in this EAR.

### **General Summary of the Extent the Town has identified Water Supply Projects.**

The Town of White Springs has not updated the Comprehensive Plan to include a 10-Year Water Supply Plan. Therefore, the Town has not identified any Water Supply Projects.

### **General Summary of the Coastal Density**

White Springs is not a Coastal Community.

### **General Summary of the Military Installations**

White Springs does not have any Military Installations.

### **General Summary of Concurrency Exception Areas**

White Springs does not have any Concurrency Exception Areas

### **General Summary of the Need for a Common Concurrency Methodology**

White Springs has revised the Capital Improvements Element and the Concurrency Management System to be consistent with current state requirements for School concurrency. The Town has historically implemented a Concurrency system which maintains infrastructure capacity amounts. The Town has ensured that the LOS standards have been maintained on a permit by permit basis. But there is no intergovernmental coordination mechanism established between the local governments for concurrency.

## **CHANGES IN LAND AREA**

### **Annexations and Contractions:**

Since the adoption of the original Plan, White Springs has executed several annexations. There have been no contractions. The annexations include some small tracks of the land north of Town along Highway 41, and several large tracks of land on the western border of the Town that included all of the State Park lands. All of these annexations were voluntary.

The EAR amendments will include an updated Future Land Use Map that will depict the new Town boundaries.

### **Vacant Land for Future Developments:**

The Town has not adopted any large scale map amendments and has only adopted four small scale amendments during the past 20 years. All development within the Town has occurred as infill, based upon current land use designations. The Town is mostly built-out and the only areas that could accommodate new developments are north of Town along Hwy. 41. The areas east, west and south of Town are wetlands and floodplains of the Suwannee River. Therefore, future development areas will have to be annexed to the north.