

INTRODUCTION

The primary intent of these design guidelines and standards is to create a sustainable and balanced community in Southeast Orlando with the characteristics of traditional “Orlando”: where streets are convenient and comfortable for walking, where parks are a focus for public activity, and where the life and vitality of a mid-sized town can be enjoyed by its residents and visitors.

A full range of uses, services, amenities, and activities are planned in Southeast Orlando to fill the needs of the ultimate population of roughly 65,000. Along these lines, a hierarchy of places has been proposed, ranging from a Town Center that will serve as one of the primary destination and job centers within the community, to Village and Neighborhood Centers that provide local shopping and civic spaces for Residential Neighborhoods, to Airport Support Districts that include a variety of industrial, office, and supportive commercial uses.

The size of Southeast Orlando, as well as the coordinated effort underway to plan for the area, provide an opportunity to create a unique image and character that is immediately identifiable to visitors and residents. Like some older communities, Southeast Orlando should be immediately identifiable by the pattern of residential districts that focus on village and neighborhood centers; by the design of homes and commercial buildings; by the trees planted along major boulevards and the scale of local streets; and by the proximity to nature. These design guidelines and standards establish a framework for such a community to evolve.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Establish an Identifiable Regional Edge and Infill with Urban Development

Virtually all of the Orlando region is surrounded by environmentally sensitive lands. Though some growth has already hopped beyond this natural edge, the majority of the region is defined by the regional system of drainageways and protected habitat. In areas where growth is progressing, regulatory efforts or strategic land purchases can help to create and reinforce an identifiable regional edge and help to limit urban sprawl.

Conversely, the majority of regional growth should be directed to developable lands within the urban area. Funding for roads, infrastructure, services, and schools should support compact development patterns.

The Southeast area represents a substantial new growth area which should be planned and developed with these principles in mind.

Plan a Community, Not a Bedroom Suburb

The 19,300 acres represented by the Southeast Orlando area is the size of a mid-size town. A full range of uses, services, amenities, and activities should be planned to fill the needs of the new Southeast Orlando citizens. Along these lines, a hierarchy of places has been proposed, ranging from a Town Center that will serve as the “downtown” for the community, to Village and Neighborhood Centers that provide local shopping and civic spaces for Residential Neighborhoods, to Airport Support Districts that include a variety of job-generating uses. Each of the centers will take on their own identity over time. For example, one center may focus on retail and entertainment, another on business, and another on civic uses.

Reinforce Linkages to Regional Activities

The Orlando International Airport is a strong and growing economic engine within the region. The Greater Orlando Airport Authority, GOAA, plans to construct a fourth runway, expand terminal facilities, build new on-site roadways, pursue regional rail transit linkages, and actively market airport-related industrial, office and commercial development.

The Southeast Orlando area is directly adjacent to this significant regional center and has the potential to benefit by serving as a prime location for new office and industrial development. In addition, the Southeast Orlando area's location can capitalize on traffic to the airport through strategically placed commercial/lodging activities, and by providing a full range of housing that is both affordable and convenient for airport employees.

Similarly, the Southeast Orlando area is also within a 10 to 20 minute driving distance of many of the region's entertainment attractions, as well as other regional job and education centers. The mix of uses and housing types within the Southeast Orlando area should strengthen these linkages and fill market niches to the greatest extent possible.

Protect and Strengthen Primary Ecological Systems

Southeast Orlando is situated between two regionally significant systems: the Econlockhatchee River (The Econ) and Boggy Creek. The site itself includes portions of two major drainage basins (Boggy Creek and Lake Hart), a connected system of lakes and small water bodies, high concentrations of wetlands, and a great diversity of plants and wildlife, many of which are protected by the City's GMP Conservation Element as well as Federal and State regulations. Though much of this habitat forms contiguous corridors, some areas have been altered by roadways, agricultural conversion, ditching, and cattle grazing.

An opportunity exists in the Southeast Orlando area to create a permanently protected ecological system that is both regionally significant and maintains the integrity of on-site drainage and wildlife corridors. Envisioned as a Primary Conservation Network, or PCN, this area can also become a "mitigation bank" that allows smaller wetland areas outside the network to be transferred to areas of increased importance and viability. As the Primary Conservation Network becomes the mitigation receiving zone, gaps in the system could be recaptured, helping to reinforce the overall integrity of this ecology. Careful siting of trails, parks, and ponds would also allow the PCN to serve as an integrated community amenity.

Create Identity and Sense of Community

Identity and community are often lost in the faceless growth of many suburban areas. Typically, each developer works on a separate track to build and market their property. Public facilities and civic spaces are often placed on the left over, least expensive land. The result is a disjointed series of subdivisions, rather than a community of people and places.

The size of the Southeast Orlando area, as well as the coordinated effort that has been put forth and will continue in planning for the area, provide an opportunity to create a unique image and character that is immediately identifiable to visitors and residents. Like some older communities¹, Southeast Orlando should be immediately identifiable by the trees planted along major boulevards and the scale of local streets²; by the pattern of residential districts that focus on village and neighborhood centers; by the design of homes and commercial buildings; and by the proximity to nature.

A sense of community can be nurtured through the town's physical structure. Each residential district should be scaled to the pedestrian, making casual interactions among neighbors possible. Schools and parks should be focal points for neighborhood activities, rather than anonymous institutions and large no-man's lands. Commercial districts should integrate public facilities and spaces, creating a civic atmosphere typical of more traditional downtowns.

¹ Winter Park has been suggested as a good example of a community that has a distinct identity.

² The landscape improvements to Narcoosee Road are an important first step in developing an identity for the community.

Develop a Model Small School System Based on Innovation and Excellence

For Southeast Orlando to grow in a competitive and community-oriented manner, a new approach to the school system must be considered. Large schools that force children into an anonymous setting and require parents to become chauffeurs, inevitably work against our goal to create a sense of community.

Small schools give children the attention they need to build a sense of identity and self-esteem. Schools that are within a short walk of most homes help to nurture neighborhood pride. Schools that build innovative linkages to local industries and educational institutions bring the hope of reestablishing a commitment to education excellence and building a long-term future for the next generation.

A coordinated schools strategy should be prepared for Southeast Orlando area that addresses school size, funding, phasing, and management.

Build to Support Transit, Walking and Bicycling

Pedestrian travel is the basic building block for developing a balanced transportation system. Streets will provide direct connections to local destinations, such as Village and Neighborhood Centers. These trips should not require driving onto the arterial network or the freeway system. The mix of uses at commercial centers should encourage “trip linking” so that several errands can be accomplished in one stop. In addition, travel within neighborhoods should be distributed among several “connector streets” that lead to local parks, schools, and commercial centers. High volume collector streets that divide neighborhoods and discourage walking or bicycling should not be permitted. A goal of the planning effort is to create a plan with no arterials larger than four lanes – an interconnected local and connector street system will help achieve this goal.

Neighborhood streets must be safe for children, comfortable for bicycling, and pleasant to walk along. Narrow and tree-lined streets should be lined with building entries and living spaces so that residents can know their neighbors and keep streets safe. Traffic calming is an essential ingredient for creating a pedestrian and bicycle friendly street network. In order for an interconnected street network to provide desirable residential environments, streets widths and corner curb radii should be as small as possible, while providing for legitimate safety and emergency vehicle considerations. Curb and gutter design, street lighting, park strips, and street trees are important aspects of townscape and should reflect the unique character of individual neighborhoods.

The possibility of local rail service using the existing OUC rail line should also be considered over time. In the interim, transit service to Southeast Orlando will be limited to Lynx bus service. Stops should be located at village and neighborhood centers to provide a centrally-located connection within walking distance of most homes. Rail service, most likely an extension of an airport connection, is a long term prospect that has the potential to link Southeast Orlando’s Town Center to other regional destinations.

Ensure that the Plan is Implementable

While the intent of the Southeast Orlando Sector Plan is to create a visionary approach to building a new community, the plan is also grounded in practicality. This will aid in the smooth implementation of the plan over time. A potent yet flexible framework makes the Plan capable of transcending time and changing market conditions.

THE SOUTHEAST ORLANDO MASTER PLAN

The Southeast Orlando Sector Plan establishes a comprehensive development framework for this growing region in central Florida. The Southeast Orlando Sector Plan - Master Plan Map works in conjunction with the Design Guidelines and Standards to visually illustrate the concepts of the overall planning effort. The Master Plan Map provides a tool for public and private parties to approach the physical structure and building of this new community. The Master Plan Map shows locations of major natural and ecological features; existing and proposed highways and roads; proposed locations for Town, Village, and Neighborhood Centers; as well as various land uses proposed within the study area.

While the locations of many of the elements in the plan are conceptual, the number and relative size of the uses are should be seen as accurate. For example, the location of schools may vary slightly within each neighborhood, however, the individual number of elementary, middle, and high schools is accurate for the expected population of the entire study area.

How to Use These Guidelines and Standards

This Illustrated Guidebook provides a comprehensive summary of the guidelines and standards which pertain to the Southeast Orlando Sector Plan. However, this Illustrated Guidebook is not an officially adopted document. The City’s Growth Management Plan and Chapter 68 of the Land Development Code provide the specific policy and land development standards applicable to the Southeast Plan area. Where conflicts exist, the adopted GMP and LDC Chapter 68 shall prevail.

Applicants are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the pertinent GMP goals, objectives and policies which affect the Southeast Orlando Sector Plan area (Future Land Use Policy 2.4.4, Goal 4 and associated objectives and policies). In reviewing projects in the Southeast Plan area, applicants shall review the appropriate GMP goals, objectives and policies, the Future Land Use Map and the Zoning Map, before attempting to determine how these guidelines and standards shall be applied.

INTERPRETATION

Shall; Should; May; Includes

The words “shall” or “must” are mandatory; the word “should” is directive but not necessarily mandatory; the word “may” is permissive. The word “includes” shall not limit a term to the specific examples, but it intended to extend its meaning to all other instances and circumstances of like kind or character.

Conflicts

The particular shall control the general. In case of any difference of meaning or implication between the text of and/or any caption, figure, illustration, summary table, or illustrative table presented in this Illustrated Guidebook and the officially adopted LDC Chapter 68, the text of Chapter 68 shall control.

Interpretation of Undefined Terms

Terms not otherwise defined herein shall be interpreted first by reference to the City’s GMP, if specifically defined therein; second, by the City of Orlando LDC; third, by the Congress of the New Urbanism Lexicon; and fourth; by reference to generally accepted engineering, planning, or other professional terminology if technical; and otherwise according to common usage, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. Specific definitions are presented at the end of this Illustrated Guidebook.

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