

Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan

1.0 About the Plan Document

The Santa Rosa County Comprehensive Plan 2040 contains both foundational information as well as the goals, objectives and policies for growth and development as adopted by the Santa Rosa County Board of County Commissioners (BCC). Included in these goals, objectives and policies are the Capital Improvements implementation program and the Comprehensive Plan monitoring and evaluation procedures. The Future Land Use and Future Transportation Map Series are also included in the Policy Document. The foundational information, included before each policy section, contains background information including the technical support data and analyses for the various elements of the plan.

Pursuant to Chapters 163 and 380, Florida Statutes (F.S.), the foundational information does not require adoption by the Board of County Commissioners. The un-adopted status of the foundational information allows for continual updating and refinement of the data contained in these sections of the Comprehensive Plan without requiring plan amendments. It is intended that this data and analysis be updated every five years at a minimum or as necessary. The following sections of the Comprehensive Plan require adoption by the BCC:

1. Goals, Objectives and Policies;
2. Requirements for capital improvements implementation, including the Five Year Schedule of Capital Improvements;
3. Procedures for monitoring and evaluation of the plan;
4. Future Land Use and Transportation Map series; and
5. Plan Adoption Ordinance, contained as an appendix to the Policy Document.

1.1 About Santa Rosa County

Santa Rosa County is located in northwest Florida bordering the Gulf of Mexico and Santa Rosa Sound. The County is bounded on the west by Escambia County, on the east by Okaloosa County and on the north by Escambia County, Alabama. **Map 1-1** depicts the regional setting of Santa Rosa County.

The total area of Santa Rosa County is approximately 655,048 acres, including land and water. Approximately 33% of the county consists of military reservation lands and conservation lands (Eglin Air Force Base comprises 10.2%, Naval Air Station Whiting Field and NOLFs comprise almost 1.0%, and Blackwater River State Forest comprises approximately 21.8% of the total county land area). The county's three municipalities comprise only about 1% of the entire county area. The unincorporated area of Santa Rosa County (including Eglin, Whiting and Blackwater Forest) comprises approximately 431,949 acres, most of which is rural in nature. **Table 1-1** provides the breakdown of total County land in detail.

Table 1-1

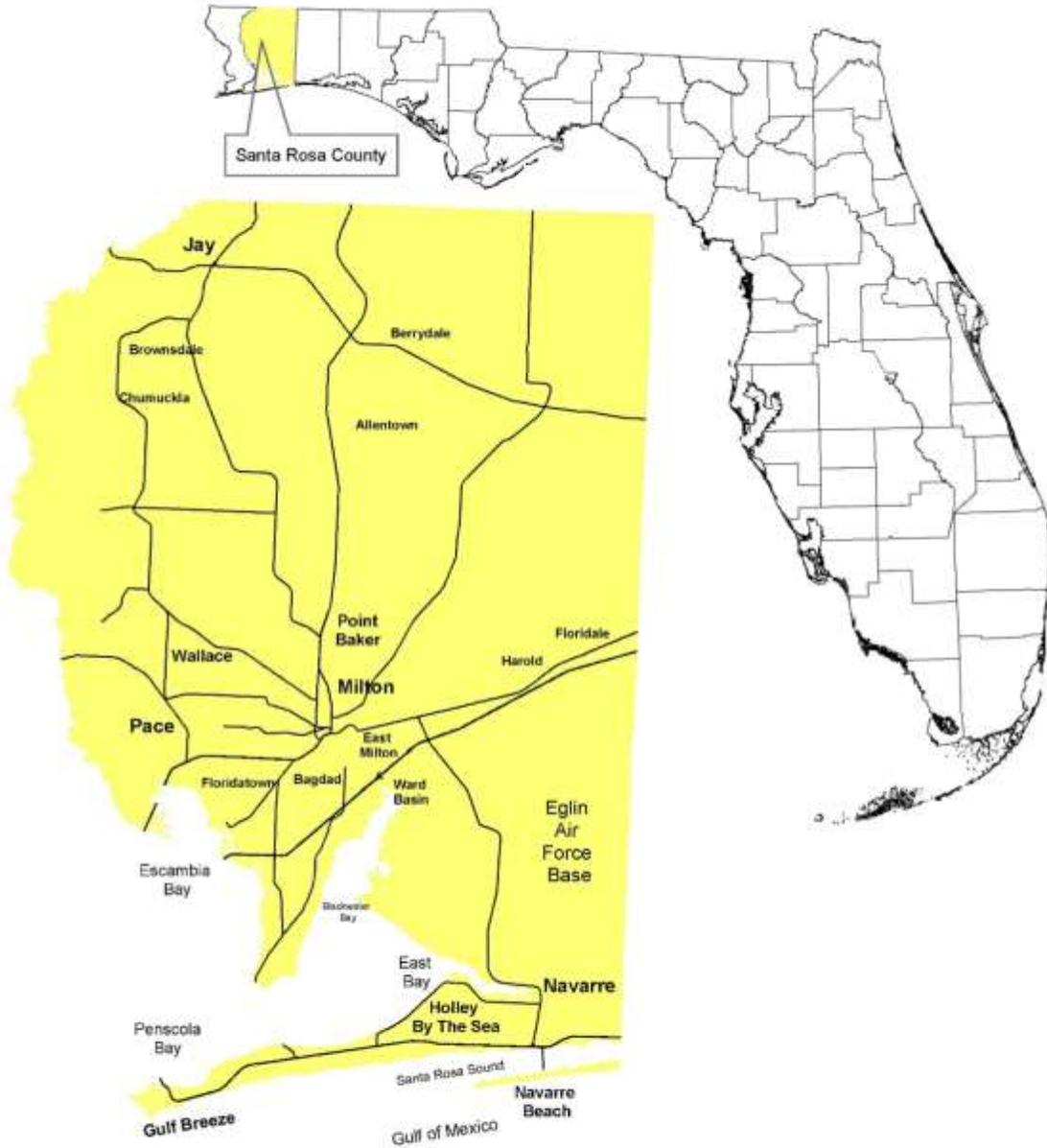
Municipalities and Major Land Uses in Santa Rosa County

Land Use Category	Acreage	Percentage of Total County
Municipalities	6,886.86	1.05 %
Jay	1,046.10	
Milton	3,117.20	
Gulf Breeze	2,723.56	
Eglin Air Force Base Military Reservation	66,760.56	10.19 %
Naval Air Station Whiting Field and Naval Outlying Fields (OLFs)	6,264.43	0.96 %
Blackwater River State Forest	143,186.89	21.86%
Remainder of Unincorporated Santa Rosa County	431,949.31	65.94%
Total	655,048.05	100 %

* **Note:** The total acreage for Santa Rosa County listed here was calculated based on the County GIS database for Property Appraiser Department of Revenue (DOR) land use code boundaries. This figure does not precisely match acreage figures used in the 2000 Census Information and in other databases from various agencies utilized for information in other elements of this Plan.

Source: Santa Rosa County Community Planning, Zoning and Development Division GIS, 2015

Santa Rosa County Map 1-1- Location Map



Legend

- SANTA ROSA COUNTY
- MAIN ROADS

Disclaimer:
The GIS maps and data distributed by the Santa Rosa County BOCC departments are derived from a variety of public and private sector sources considered to be dependable, but the accuracy, completeness, and currency thereof are not guaranteed. The Santa Rosa County Commission makes no warranties, expressed or implied, as to the accuracy, completeness, currency, reliability, or suitability for any particular purpose of information or data contained in or generated from the County Geographic Database. Additionally, the Santa Rosa Commission or any agent, servant, or employee thereof assume no liability associated with the use of this data, and assume no responsibility to maintain it in any matter or form.



Community Planning, Zoning
and
Development Division
October 28, 2002

1.2 Definitions

The definitions found in Chapter 163, Part II, Florida Statutes are included by reference. The Santa Rosa County Land Development Code, Ordinance 91-24, as amended, will contain any other specific definitions germane to land development regulations referred to in the various elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

1.3 Planning Time Frame

The Santa Rosa County Comprehensive Plan currently spans a twenty-four year planning horizon (2016-2040) and a projected population through 2040. The Five Year Schedule of Capital Improvements addresses the five-year period from fiscal year 2015/2016 (beginning October 1, 2015) to fiscal year 2020/2021 (ending September 30, 2021).

1.4 Urban and Rural Planning Concepts

1.4.1 *The Comprehensive Plan*

For many local governments across the Country, the basic element of most planning programs is the creation of a plan. The Comprehensive Plan is developed through analysis of data and identification of goals for the community. Often times these goals come from elected officials in the form of targeted issues or agendas. For instance, if a stated goal is economic development, Plan policies may be created to address added infrastructure, quality of life improvements, or other place based goals objectives and policies. Plan policies also arise through the public process as staff helps the community and its various groups identify their goals and form a particular vision.

In the creation of a plan, strategies are identified by which the community can reach its goals and vision. Local government planning staffs are also typically responsible for the implementation or enforcement of many of the strategies, often coordinating the work of other local government departments and divisions in implementation of the Plan's policies. For many local government the plan becomes a management tool, coordinating the organization and roles of various local government departments and employees in order to systemically prioritize the goals of the elected officials or community through the work done by staff.

Local government planning in Florida has been guided over the past 30 years by the 1985 Growth Management Act, which is contained in Chapter 163, Florida Statutes and was codified in Rule 9J-5, Florida Administrative Code. The Growth Management Act required that every local government in Florida adopt a comprehensive plan to guide growth and development. Under this State mandate, plans must include elements that address future land use, housing, transportation, infrastructure, conservation, recreation and open space, intergovernmental coordination, and capital improvements. With the implementation of this Act in 1985, the State of Florida took a decisively growth management oriented approach and this was done primarily in response to the State's unprecedented growth leading up to the passage of the Act. The main provision under this growth management approach was the concurrency requirement. Local governments were required to make certain that growth related infrastructure was provided concurrent with development. This included roads, water, sewer, solid waste, stormwater, parks and recreational facilities. Public schools were made subject to the concurrency requirement as well at a later date.

Santa Rosa County responded to the state comprehensive planning mandate in 1992 with the adoption of the County's first Comprehensive Plan. This plan has been amended numerous times since this original adoption, including a subsequent revision to include the Public Schools Facilities Element and subject

public schools to the concurrency requirement. The Plan contained all the required elements listed above and also included an Administrative Procedures Element and an Economic Development Element (not required). The comprehensive plan amendment process is guided by Chapter 163, FS.

Comprehensive Planning is a continuous and ongoing process. Recognizing this, the state required the County to conduct an Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) every seven years to assess its progress in implementing the Comprehensive Plan. The EAR process allowed the County to identify major issues and to respond to changes in state, regional, and local planning and growth management policies as well as changing conditions and trends. Santa Rosa County completed Evaluation and Appraisal Reports and adopted related amendments in 2003 (Ordinance 2003-25) and 2009 (Ordinance 2009-32).

In 2011, the Florida Legislature made significant changes to the state level planning requirements in Florida. These changes included:

- Repealing Rules 9J-5 and 9J-11.1023, Florida Administrative Code and establishing new guidelines for state level processing and review of comprehensive plans and plan amendments;
- Changing the requirements for Evaluation and Appraisal Reports (EARs), sufficiency review by the Department, and mandatory comprehensive plan updates;
- Concurrency for transportation, schools, and parks and recreation facilities were made optional for local governments;
- Financial feasibility for capital improvement plans is no longer required;
- Removing the twice per year plan amendment limitation;
- Removing energy efficiency / greenhouse gas reduction provisions;
- Making the previously required Public School Facilities Element optional; and

Effective June 2, 2011, local governments now have more discretion in determining whether or not they need to update their local comprehensive plan as well. As such, local governments no longer need to submit evaluation and appraisal reports to the State for a sufficiency determination. Instead, the County must determine whether or not the Comprehensive Plan needs to be amended to reflect changes in State requirements every seven years. Once this determination is made, the County is responsible for notifying the State land planning agency and then preparing and transmitting any proposed amendments for review, if any. Santa Rosa County is required to make this determination by December of 2016. In preparation for this, a major update to the Plan was accomplished in 2016 to update the Plan as well as create consistency with significantly revised statutory requirements.

1.4.2 Growth Management

Growth management is a set of techniques used by local governments to ensure that as growth in population and development occurs there are services available to meet the demands of this new population and built environment. Growth Management, specifically for local governments who are in the business of providing urban services such as centralized water and sewer or transportation facilities, is a financial management tool. However, these services are not necessarily only government services. Other demands such as the protection of natural spaces, sufficient and affordable housing, preservation of buildings and places of historical value, and sufficient places for the conduct of business are also considered, depending on the wishes of the local electorate. Florida's original legal framework was heavily oriented towards growth management with a one size fits all approach to planning requirements. Santa Rosa County is not a major infrastructure provider, with water and sewer services being provided by private

utilities or incorporated cities, and with a majority of new road construction being state funded in the past. This made the growth management approach difficult in application for the County historically.

One growth management technique is application of zoning to reduce the cost of service delivery. Zoning can be used to reduce the area affected by urbanization, allowing the same number of people to live and work in a smaller area, allowing governmental services to be delivered more efficiently. For example, fire protection and emergency medical response services are less expensive to provide in compact areas than in areas where the population is more spread out. This results in lower expenditures for the same level of service, which saves taxpayer dollars. Land development code provisions such as open space, landscaping, buffering and design related provisions can ensure the compatible coexistence of various densities and intensities of commercial uses within close proximity.

Preventing suburban densities from affecting a large area also has the effect of providing open spaces and the protection of agriculture and natural resources.

1.4.3 Rural Development and Agricultural Preservation

For counties and local governments with a rural contingent like Santa Rosa, preservation of agriculture and rural lifestyle is an important planning consideration. Some communities across the County have also found it necessary to prevent the premature conversion of agricultural lands to more urbanized land uses. Rural planning can also involve environmental protection of certain areas, infrastructure provision in support of farming activities and the creation and sustaining of rural communities that provide vital commercial land use opportunities within closer proximity. Planning for farm related activities such as farm related retail, farmers markets and other agribusiness related land uses is also important. Santa Rosa County has prepared the Rural Development Plan which encompasses many of these concepts. This small area Plan's recommendations have been incorporated into the County's Comprehensive Plan.

1.4.4 Small Area Planning, Neighborhood or Special Area Plans

A small area plan is any plan that addresses the issues of a portion of the County or City. Small area plans can cover three different geographic scales -- neighborhood, corridor, and district. They can cover as few as 10 acres or as many as 4,500 acres. Small area plans cover a specific geography that often has a cohesive set of characteristics and may be developed in order to address a major issue such as declining neighborhood character or to implement community specific goals and objectives without applying plan concepts to the larger political area.

Santa Rosa County has undertaken several small area or special area planning efforts. These plans contained a number of recommendations, some of which have been implemented and others that are in various stages of implementation. The following lists these efforts:

- 1) South End Tomorrow (November, 2003)
- 2) Navarre Town Center Plan (October 2004)
- 3) Pace Area Plan (June 2007)
- 4) Rural Development Plan (January 2007)
- 5) Bagdad Historic District (June 2008)
- 6) Navarre Beach Master Plan (Updated June 2002)
- 7) NAS Whiting Field Joint Land Use Study (September 2003)
- 8) Eglin Air Force Base Joint Land Use Study (June 2009)
- 9) Eglin Small Area Study (December 2012)

1.5 Regulatory Framework

Urban and regional planning has traditionally been a State, regional or local process without much national input. The following describes the regulatory framework currently in existence as it relates to the Santa Rosa County Comprehensive Plan and planning process.

1.5.1 State

Chapter 163, Part II, Florida Statutes (Local Government Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulation Act) establishes the process for land planning and growth management within the State. These provisions are passed on to local governments through the adoption of a Comprehensive Plan by local governments. The intent of Chapter 163, Part II, is to protect, preserve, and enhance, as appropriate, the use of land, water, and resources, consistent with the public interest and effectively deal with potential problems that may result from the use and development of land. Local Government Comprehensive Plans are required to be consistent with the State Comprehensive Plan and the Strategic Regional Policy Plan.

Chapter 186, Florida Statutes, establishes the process for state and regional planning. Chapter 186 sets the framework and requirements for the State Comprehensive Plan, State Agency Plans, provides for public participation throughout the planning process, and provides the broad-based goals for local growth management planning. Section 186.504, F.S., establishes Regional Planning Councils; Section 186.507, F.S., requires the establishment of Strategic Regional Policy Plans that addresses the needs of a designated region and establishes goals and polices for housing, protection of natural resources, and regional transportation. Regional Planning Councils are comprised of elected local officials, appointees of the Governor, and representatives of regional and State agencies.

Chapter 187, Florida Statutes, is the adopted State Comprehensive Plan that provides the basis for all local government comprehensive plans, strategic regional policy plans and other regional plans and state agency plans.

Chapter 380, Part I, Florida Statutes (Environmental Land and Water Management), is intended to protect the natural and environmental resources within the State. The Development of Regional Impact (DRI) process is established in Chapter 380, Florida Statutes.

1.5.2 Regional

The West Florida Regional Planning Council (WFRPC) is responsible for coordination of DRI projects through the local government planning process with all other state and regional agencies. The Regional Planning Council also provides a recommendation on DRI projects that assist the local government in making its decision. The WFRPC serves as the local emergency planning committee in cooperation with local governments, provides intergovernmental coordination and review on federally funded projects (federal clearinghouse function), serves as the official planning agency for the transportation disadvantaged program, provides regional dispute resolution, provides review of local government comprehensive plans, and prepares and implements the Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP). The current SRPP was adopted in 1996 and establishes direction, priorities and strategies for the physical, economic and social development of the region.

1.5.3 Regional Agencies or Entities Involved in the Planning Process

The North West Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD) is responsible for managing water and land related resources. The NFWFMD provides research and enforces regulation for utilization of these

resources. The NFWFMD permits well construction and consumptive use of water, regulates the management and storage of surface waters and stormwater runoff and monitors aquifer recharge. The NFWFMD also imposes water restrictions in time of water shortages or drought and implements land acquisition programs by acquiring lands for preservation of wetlands, streams, rivers and similar natural resources. The NFWFMD maintains and updates the *Regional Water Supply Plan* that is a District wide water supply plan identifying water supply options to meet the projected demand for a specified long range planning time period.

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT or Department) is an executive agency, which means it reports directly to the Governor. FDOT's primary statutory responsibility is to coordinate the planning and development of a safe, viable, and balanced state transportation system serving all regions of the state, and to assure the compatibility of all components, including multimodal facilities. A multimodal transportation system combines two or more modes of movement of people or goods. Florida's transportation system includes roadway, air, rail, sea, spaceports, bus transit, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The Florida Department of Transportation is decentralized in accordance with legislative mandates. Each of the districts is managed by a District Secretary. The districts vary in organizational structure, but in general each has major divisions for Administration, Planning, Production and Operations. Also, each district has a Public Information Office that reports to the District Secretary and a District Chief Counsel who reports to the DOT General Counsel in Tallahassee. Santa Rosa County is in FDOT District Three (Northwest Florida) headquartered in Chipley and including: Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Wakulla, Walton, and Washington Counties.

Federal Law (Section L34,23 , U.S.C.) requires that areas with populations of 50,000 or more establish a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Funded by the Highway Trust Fund, MPOs represent local, regional, and national interests in the transportation planning process. Congress vests MPOs with the authority to plan for regional and national transportation needs and to set funding priorities for highway, transit, safety, and security projects receiving Federal aid. Santa Rosa County is included within the Florida – Alabama Transportation Planning Organization (TPO). This TPO includes the urbanized portions of Santa Rosa and Escambia Counties as well as the coastal portion of Baldwin County, Alabama. Staffing for the TPO is provided by the West Florida Regional Planning Council who is responsible for the preparation of TPO related planning documents and satisfying state and federal planning requirements.

The County also partners with several state and federal agencies for environmental review including: wetland delineation and permitting (the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection); listed species protection (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission); and stormwater management (US Environmental Protection Agency and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection). More detail on this is provided within the Conservation Element Data and Analysis Section.

1.5.4 Local Agencies or Entities Involved in the Planning Process

The Santa Rosa County School Board is a planning partner and the school boards role in land development monitoring and review is provided for within the adopted Interlocal Agreement for Public School Facilities between the Santa Rosa County School Board, the Board of County Commissioners and the incorporated municipalities (Jay, Gulf Breeze and the City of Milton).

The County also coordinates with the private water and sewer utilities located within the County as well as the municipalities on service provision and meeting future demand. Each year, County planning staff in conjunction with the public and private utilities prepares the Utility Operational Status Report which contains information on planned capital improvements, available capacity and future demands.

In addition, the incorporated cities of Milton, Gulf Breeze and Jay are planning partners particularly in relationship to interlocal review of major Comprehensive Plan changes, utility planning and transportation planning.

1.6 Elements and Critical Components of the 2016 Plan

1.6.1 How the Elements Function Together

The various elements of the Comprehensive Plan have been designed to work together and critical relationships exist amongst the elements. The following table (**Table 1-1**) explains some of these relationships for the most important elements of the Plan.

1.6.2 Santa Rosa County's Planning Area Framework

A critical component of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan is recognizing the diversity of Santa Rosa County and building in some ability to plan for the various areas of the County in different ways. Santa Rosa is many things, it is a home for several military bases, it is agricultural in parts and historic in parts with rich culture, it is an urbanizing beachfront community, and it is a bedroom to the Pensacola urban area. Recognizing this within the Plan is mechanism for the County's planning efforts to be more tailored and responsive to the needs of the various communities located within Santa Rosa.

Along these lines, the County has been divided into six separate and distinct planning areas (**Map 2-1**). These planning areas have been developed considering the availability of centralized water and sewer services, the existing development pattern, census tract divisions, transportation infrastructure and environmental constraints. A description of each planning area including any special or small area planning efforts within each larger planning area can be found within the Future Land Use Element's Supporting Documentation. The main goals of the planning areas are also described in the Support Documentation for the Future Land Use Element.

Table 1-1: Relationship of Key Comprehensive Plan Elements to Other Elements of the Plan

ELEMENT	RELATED ELEMENTS			
Future Land Use	Infrastructure – the availability of infrastructure and the County’s concurrency management system greatly influence the availability of raw land for development at higher densities and intensities in a financially sustainable manner	Conservation – the conservation element establishes areas of the County that are set aside for conservation purposes influencing the availability of lands for development	Transportation – the transportation network enables commerce and citizen mobility which are key development inputs	
Transportation	Infrastructure - addresses public water and sewer, stormwater and solid waste, thereby helping to shape development trends within the planning horizon and influencing the analysis of transportation demand and facility need.	Coastal Management - management of transportation services for the purposes of hazard mitigation	Recreation and Open Space - determines the location and types of recreational facilities for which access is necessary, as well as addressing conversions of abandoned transportation facilities to active recreational trails, and the establishment of an overall system of bikeways and pedestrian trails.	Capital Improvements - transportation capital outlay, which should support the Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the Plan
Capital Improvements	Infrastructure – the LOS standards contained within the Infrastructure Element provide the Planning basis or establish the need for additional capital projects	Intergovernmental Coordination - provides opportunities to improve the County’s collaboration and coordination with other agencies, such as the Florida Department of Transportation, neighboring Counties and jurisdictions, and private utilities who are facility or service providers within the County	Recreation and Open Space - provides guidance on the development of recreational facilities within the County. This includes analysis of current facilities and policies related to needs.	Future Land Use – the availability of infrastructure or planned infrastructure influences the ultimate development potential of the Future Land Use Map
Conservation	Future Land Use – land characteristics that are described in the Conservation Element such as soil types or the presence of wetlands influence the development potential of the Future Land Use Map and also have influenced the development of conservations lands within the County	Recreation and Open Space – The conservation lands within the County are an abundant resources for both recreational facilities and open space preservation and enhancement		

1.7 Plan Implementation

The following graphic (**Figure 1-1**) provides the main mechanisms by which the County's Comprehensive Plan is implemented on an ongoing basis. In addition other special planning efforts or projects can be implemented via inclusion into the Comprehensive Plan. For instance, elements or recommendations of the South End Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan or the Rural Development Plan are integrated into the Comprehensive Plan.

When amendments for land use changes are processed, these amendments are reviewed for consistency with the various elements of the Plan, particularly the Future Land Use, Infrastructure, and Conservation Elements. In this manner, the Plan provides guidance on future development proposals. The Plan is also implemented in part by the annual update of the Five Year Schedule of Capital Improvements. While public dollars will always be limited, capital projects that facilitate growth and development in accordance with the Plan ultimately implement the Plan. Finally, the County's Land Development Code is the primary implementation mechanism that is utilized on a day to day basis. The Land Development Code contains regulations that are authorized by the Comprehensive Plan and ensure that the County is achieving the overall development related guidance that is contained within the Plan.

Figure 1-1: Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan

