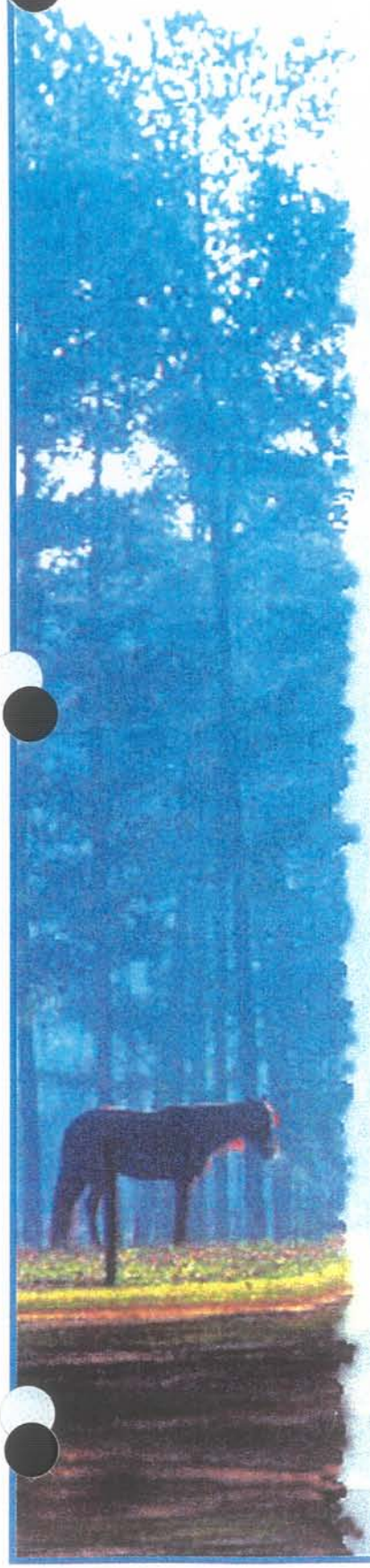

Bradfordville Sector Plan

Leon County, Florida

Adopted: July 11, 2000

Prepared by the

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With

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Preamble

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The adoption and implementation of the Bradfordville Sector Plan is an important milestone for the Tallahassee-Leon County community. It culminates a decade of intense activity, of study and analysis put forward by different interest groups in the Bradfordville sector. The purpose of the Sector Plan is to establish appropriate levels, type, time, and sequence of development in the Bradfordville study area; to establish and prioritize capital improvements; to provide for effective stormwater management; to protect the rural quality of life; to provide for a pedestrian-oriented village center, and to achieve other long-range planning for this area consistent with the provisions of the adopted Tallahassee-Leon County Comprehensive Plan. These policy provisions include, but are not limited to, the establishment of more stringent stormwater standards, the protection of the area's rural character and the development of a commercial center to meet the needs of the immediate Bradfordville area. The process of creating the Sector Plan was also an opportunity for open community dialog, one which could begin to replace discord with discussion, and produce a shared direction which might, at last, reconcile diverse, and often opposing, interests.

The Sector Planning process, as evidenced in the Appendices section of this document, sought extensive community input in the form of Working Groups with specific assigned tasks, as well as stakeholder interviews, community charrettes and public workshops and hearings before the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners. All those with a stake in the future of Bradfordville were given ample opportunity to voice their ideas and concerns. This input had a profound influence on the process and the product of the effort. Nevertheless, the Sector Plan may not satisfy some with strongly held and widely divergent convictions. The Sector Plan does, however, define a "common ground" of common

sense, compromise and consensus, between advocates of a rural community with little growth and those seeking maximum opportunity for commercial growth reaching beyond the populations needs of the sector.

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This Sector Plan demonstrates full compliance and consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, and its objectives and policies under Goal 8, which specifically address the future of Bradfordville. The stormwater study, called for in the plan, has been successfully completed and its findings and recommendations have been incorporated into stringent new standards which will more effectively protect water quality in Bradfordville's lakes and reduce the threat of downstream flooding. New standards are proposed to protect Bradfordville's other natural, scenic and historic resources. The Sector Plan incorporates new concepts and initiatives to curb sprawl and to maintain, in perpetuity, the rural character and heritage of Bradfordville; qualities which make it attractive to residents and developers alike. Areas presently zoned "Urban Fringe" are placed in a "Rural Residential" category, providing a more gradual transition from areas more suburban in character, inside the Urban Services Line, to areas more rural in character outside the line. Many of these standards and approaches, such as the recommended standards for rural roads, have applicability beyond Bradfordville, and should be applied County-wide.

The Sector Plan has thoroughly addressed the most divisive issue, the setting of limits on development within the Bradfordville Commercial Center. The commercial development limitation applied by the Sector Plan ensures that zoning changes granted following Comprehensive Plan adoption will be consistent with Comprehensive Plan policies that commercial development be limited to that necessary to meet the needs of the immediate Bradfordville area, and that development occur in a compact pattern, with high standards of aesthetic quality which reflect the unique character of Bradfordville and Tallahassee-Leon County.

More commercial development will be accommodated within the Bradfordville Commercial Center, although less than

current zoning would otherwise permit. Present commercial zoning, with its potential capacity for over 1.0 million square feet of additional commercial development, is well beyond what could reasonably be considered to be needed, or appropriate, in Bradfordville, at least through the next twenty years. It is also well beyond what the local real estate market would likely absorb in the foreseeable future, considering the amount of commercial likely to occur elsewhere in the vicinity.

Future commercial development will be limited to 350,000 square feet, a common sense estimate of what is needed by the immediate area over the next twenty years. The Sector Plan does not impose a specific rate at which this increment of commercial development may occur. However, the Sector Plan does permit substantial, free-standing commercial development only in those commercially zoned areas most suitable for commercial development, until such time that additional commercially designated land areas may be needed to absorb this, or future, measures of commercial need.

The Sector Plan provides that, after ten years, this measure of commercial needs will be recalculated, taking into consideration updated demographic information, as well as the actual characteristics of planned or "vested" development which may meet some of the needs of the immediate Bradfordville area. Applying incentives and reasonable regulatory limits, this increment of additional commercial development will be guided into a more compact "village" pattern, which will better exemplify the heritage of Bradfordville and become a focal point of community identity, consistent with comprehensive plan policies.

The Sector Plan ensures that the future development of properties in the commercial area will be subject to all provisions of the Sector Plan, including new stormwater and design standards, and other ordinance provisions.

Because of the Comprehensive Plan policy to limit commercial development to that amount proportionate to the needs of the immediate Bradfordville Area, the hopes of some property owners for commercial use of their land may not be met, at

least through the next ten to twenty years. These owners, however, are not deprived of reasonable economic use of their land, and are given expanded opportunities and incentives for residential, office or other non-commercial uses of their properties, until such time as additional commercial growth may be warranted.

Over the course of the sector planning process a number of positions have been expressed which run counter to the direction taken in the Sector Plan in order for it to meet the mandate to comply with the Comprehensive Plan, including:

- ***"In order to 'save' rural Bradfordville, we must halt further growth and change;"***
- ***"Government should not interfere with private market forces;"***
- ***"Property 'rights' and development expectations must be accommodated;"***
- ***"Special protections for Bradfordville are unwarranted, or may "diminish" other areas of the community."***

These perceptions reflect strongly held opinions and concerns and they deserve a reasoned response, as follows.

The position that ***in order to save rural Bradfordville, growth and change must stop,*** reflects a desire by some residing in desirable, rural fringe areas to 'close the door' on further growth. While the maintenance of quality of life and protection of community character is a legitimate public purpose of managed growth, maintaining "exclusivity", or arbitrarily denying reasonable needs and expectations for compatible development, is not. While it may be possible to adjust demographic variables and assumptions so as to suggest that no further commercial growth is warranted, the application of such measures to land use policy must coincide with other factors such as, site use suitabilities, land use transitions, design factors and maintaining reasonable economic use of private property.

It is instructive to note that, in contrast to the stated position of some homeowners that no more commercial development is needed or desired, the vast majority of participants in the Sector Plan "design charrette" endorsed a shared vision of what the Bradfordville Commercial Center should become (refer to Appendix 4). The characteristics which residents used to imagine this new "village center" included a broader range of shopping, outdoor dining, entertainment activities for all ages, a local "vernacular" architectural character, compact building arrangements with second floor office or residential uses, and active "people places", etc. Such a place does not yet exist in Bradfordville, and can only be created with significant additional commercial development, at an intensity greater than what present regulations permit.

The real challenge of protecting the rural heritage of Bradfordville lies not in the commercial center, but beyond the Urban Services Area (USA) boundary. Outside this line lies the bulk of Bradfordville which remains truly rural, both in character and land use, and which has not yet experienced development pressures. By holding the line on sprawl here, and by the supporting the efforts of the Red Hills Conservancy and others to designate conservation easements and greenways, there is good reason for optimism that this entire area can be kept rural, forever. The means of reducing pressures to expand development beyond the line, is to guide appropriate in-fill development within the line, where the framework for continued development is well established and where infrastructure and transportation improvements have the capacity to accommodate growth.

The position that ***government should not interfere with market forces*** can be addressed in two ways. First, Florida law not only authorizes, but requires, that local government take an active role in managing growth through its regulatory and capital investment decisions. The purpose of doing so is not to impose arbitrary authoritarian interference in a market economy, but to protect the public from the consequences of unplanned development: congested roads, overloaded schools and infrastructure systems, polluted air and water, fiscal

imbalance and a degraded quality of life. Local government has a constructive role to play in setting and maintaining standards for community growth and development. When such planning is not prudently applied, unmanaged market forces may produce patterns, such as sprawl, which are inherently inefficient, unsustainable and which impose unfair burdens on taxpayers to maintain.

Second, it must be recognized that government already plays a direct, although sometimes inadvertent, role in creating market pressures and development expectations, which it is sometimes reluctant to regulate. By extending new or widened roads and infrastructure systems into outlying areas, where land development may be less expensive, and by granting rezoning requests in such areas, sometimes before market demand exists, government exerts a direct influence on where "the market" chooses to target new development. Considering the finite market demand which can be supported by the population in a given market area, such influence may tend to inadvertently accelerate obsolescence and disinvestment elsewhere in the community. Without reasonable guidelines and standards, inappropriate development in emerging growth areas, guided solely by short-term market opportunities, may contribute little long-term value and may reduce the likelihood of continued investment. It is reasonable therefore, for government to acknowledge its influence on those market forces which drive growth, and to prudently and purposefully apply such influence to serve the public interest.

The position that ***property 'rights' and development expectations must be accommodated*** may seem a reasonable premise of fairness. However, the rights and expectations of property owners to develop must be weighed in context with the rights and expectations of other property owners. The development of land and the activities this development then accommodates, cause incremental change to occur and produce impacts upon an entire community. These changes and impacts include more traffic on roads, more runoff into streams, less open space and many other influences, which inevitably change the character of a community. At some point the cumulative effects of these

incremental changes will create conditions which are contrary to the standards of the community. Because local government, under Florida Law, must define such level of service standards, it also must, at some point, draw the line and guide or limit development before its standards are exceeded.

Investment-backed expectations deriving from land use plan designations and zoning approvals are always subject to the application of existing standards at the development approval stage, as well as to future legislative enactment of regulations governing environmental, public facility, and change in community character. The 1995 provisions of the Comprehensive Plan relating to Bradfordville clearly establish that environmental standards, water quality and runoff standards, timing and sequencing of commercial growth, and design standards are all subject to change by implementation of required studies on these areas laid out in the Comprehensive Plan.

In performing these studies, it became clear that the development capacity of present commercial zoning is beyond what is estimated to be needed in Bradfordville during the planning horizon, and inconsistent with the policies of the Comprehensive Plan. The Sector Plan has sought to preserve those capacity expectations, but only to that extent which complies with the policies of the adopted Comprehensive Plan.

A response to the position that ***special protections for Bradfordville are unwarranted, or somehow diminish other areas of the community*** must begin with an acknowledgment that Bradfordville is indeed different; in its heritage, its natural environment and its pattern of land use. Its homeowners generally have higher incomes, drive further to work and, perhaps, are more vocal about their expectations than residents elsewhere in Tallahassee-Leon County. Most live in Bradfordville because they choose to live in a scenic, rural area, and can afford to. The incomes of those that live, or may soon, live there fuel the development pressures that some wish to resist, and that others in Leon County wish they had.

Homeowners in Bradfordville have made clear their desire for government to apply high standards of protection. Their doing so did not suggest that standards elsewhere should be set lower. The "special protections" identified for Bradfordville in the Comprehensive Plan are unique only in that they reflect the specific needs and characteristics of Bradfordville. These protections are similar to those applied in similar rural areas throughout the nation, which have set out to maintain rural character. Many of these measures can and should be applied elsewhere in Tallahassee-Leon County. Certainly Tallahassee-Leon County has many neighborhoods with strong roots and pride in heritage, including those in the urban center and the southern portion of the County, which have not experienced the level of investment which has occurred in Bradfordville. Addressing this imbalance by lowering standards in Bradfordville, rather than by raising standards elsewhere; or by permitting Bradfordville to experience excessive growth, or continued degradation of water quality, does nothing constructive to benefit other areas of the community which may feel neglected, by either a lack of investment or the erosion of community character.

Healthy regions and metropolitan areas comprise healthy and livable urban, suburban and rural communities, which share a pattern of investment that is balanced and which maintains quality of life standards for all. Throughout the nation, quality of life expectations are being raised, as citizens expect more than look-alike suburbs and commercial strips which erase the uniqueness of each community. In demanding better choices, some will choose to live in outlying areas, which they expect will be protected from sprawl so as to remain rural, at least in character. Others will opt for urban living, in revitalized older in-town, mixed income neighborhoods, which will require a proportionate share of (re)investment. Holding the line on sprawl in Bradfordville, with appropriate standards for the quality and quantity of growth, improves, rather than compromises, opportunities for investment to occur elsewhere in the community where it is needed. As the community prepares for reinvestment, and a shift in growth back into the urban core, along Gaines Street, All Saints, Stearns-Mosely

and other older neighborhoods in the recently designated Community Redevelopment Area, the adoption and implementation of the Bradfordville Sector Plan has an important role in fostering more balanced growth throughout the region.

Beyond merely demonstrating Comprehensive Plan compliance, the Sector Plan provides a rational framework for guiding change into the future. It bridges the gap between extreme "no-growth" and "unrestricted growth" postures by embracing "***smart growth***", through which reasonable development expectations are accommodated and guided to create sustainable, economically healthy communities which maintain high standards of community character and quality of life.

Communities throughout the United States which have applied "smart growth" principles have discovered that the quality of life they offer, and the community character they maintain, are the reasons for the economic vitality they enjoy. In the emerging, highly mobile, information-based economy, location and investment decisions, whether by individuals, corporations or government, are based increasingly on "quality of life" issues, or simply on *"where and how people want to live."* Those communities which have embraced "smart growth" understand that the most effective means of maintaining a competitive position for healthy growth is one in which the regulatory role of government is to guide, rather than to thwart, growth pressures. This "smart growth" approach also allows government and the private sector to move toward a more cooperative, less adversarial, partnership in building communities of lasting value. To observe the effectiveness of this "smart growth" approach, one needs only to compare communities where such policies have been place, with neighboring communities, where they have not.

Compare Sanibel Island with the rest of suburban Lee County. Compare Hilton Head Island with the rest of coastal South Carolina. Compare the Houston satellite planned community, The Woodlands, with the sprawl which envelopes the Houston metroplex. With increasing prosperity and mobility, people are

choosing to live in communities which offer a higher quality of life and more unique community character. It is no coincidence that these are the communities which set higher standards. Contrary to the myth that high standards discourage investment, development interest is greatest in areas where people want to live. The link between quality of life and healthy economic growth is unmistakable.

Tallahassee-Leon County already is, and should remain, one of those places which offers a high quality of life and unique community character that people, and the investment they bring, are drawn to. Consider the region's own economic development marketing literature, which proudly presents Tallahassee's quality of life, alongside its educated labor force, university research and technology resources, and proximity to state government as its competitive advantages in attracting investment. The attraction is largely the lifestyle choice available here –the ability to live in high quality urban, suburban or rural settings, within a community that retains its historic small town character. Bradfordville represents some of the best that the region has to offer; an irreplaceable scenic natural environment, a close-in, yet still largely rural setting, and quality neighborhoods and schools.

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the value of protecting the heritage of Bradfordville, not just in the interest of Bradfordville homeowners, but in the interest of the entire region. The Comprehensive Plan establishes an intent, through Goal 8, to avoid the consequences of unplanned, unmanaged growth; the erosion of rural character, degradation of water quality, traffic gridlock and other by-products of sprawl. The Bradfordville Sector Plan, along with the associated ordinances and other implementation measures recommended herein, now fully addresses these challenges, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. As painful as the events which led to this Sector Plan have been, the common ground of reasonableness, which the plan embraces, provides the opportunity to end a stalemate and start a new era of cooperation and collaboration.