

# Environmental & Sustainability

Conservation Element per Chapter 163

## Introduction



By virtue of its subtropical climate and variable hydrology and geology, Hillsborough County supports a rich and diverse complement of natural resources. The County borders the largest estuary in the State, Tampa Bay, and three major rivers (Hillsborough, Alafia and Little Manatee) flow through the County. The County includes various solution sinks and depressions containing a wide variety of wetland flora and fauna. Simultaneously, the higher well-drained elevations support rare evergreen forests on well-drained sandy soils and scrub habitats. The County and its citizens have made it a priority to acquire, preserve, restore, and maintain the function of important habitats. By preserving a variety of habitats, the County ensures there will be natural spaces for native wildlife to thrive, ecosystems to maintain, and improved quality of life for County residents.

The County's economy and quality of life are intricately linked to a healthy environment. The correlation between the built and natural environments are also crucial, as the quality of our natural

environment has a direct impact on the health of the human community. By recognizing the value natural systems have in sustaining life and prosperity, it is important that growth and development use sustainable practices. This ensures we meet the community's present needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet theirs. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan's Environmental and Sustainability Element is to provide a framework for conserving, maintaining, and restoring the natural environment and factors that affect energy conservation. Handling of hazardous waste materials is addressed in this section; however, please refer to the **Solid Waste Management Section** for additional policies regarding recycling and solid waste management. Policies related to water resources and aquifer recharge can be found in the **One Water Chapter**.

# GOAL 1

*Ensure sufficient, reliable, and clean energy is available to meet the future needs of Hillsborough County residents, businesses, and government.*

## Objective 1.1

**Actively participate in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s Energy Star for Buildings program, which promotes energy conservation in major public and private structures and facilities.**

### Policies

- 1.1.1 Engage in and promote practices that result in energy conservation and efficiency.
- 1.1.2 Continue to offer energy conservation and efficiency information to enable residents, businesses, and County employees to reduce electrical loads and demands on the electrical utility system.
- 1.1.3 Conserve energy and become more energy efficient within operations by developing and adopting a comprehensive energy management plan.
- 1.1.4 Promote energy efficient and sustainable development practices.
- 1.1.5 Encourage builders and developers to exceed the minimum requirements for energy efficiency of the Florida Building Code by sharing information on available training, tools, or literature on resource efficient development.
- 1.1.6 Continue cross jurisdictional and departmental collaboration to create and implement mutually supporting sustainable and/or resilience programs and initiatives.

## Objective 1.2

**Support the development, and consider use, of alternative energy/fuel.**

### Policies

- 1.2.1 Support domestic production of environmentally safe energy sources.
- 1.2.2 Promote the use of alternative energy technology for existing, new, and renovated County facilities and vehicles.

## GOAL 2

*Handle industrial hazardous waste in a manner that minimizes risk to all residents and the environment.*

### Objective 2.1

**Ensure the dependable, environmentally safe means to dispose of industrial hazardous waste.**

#### Policies

- 2.1.1 The County and the Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) will ensure existing hazardous waste generators, as well as hazardous waste transporters and treatment/storage/disposal facilities, are identified and to the extent authorized by Chapter 1-7, Rules of the EPC. Ensure that very small quantities of hazardous waste generators (VSQG) and small quantities of hazardous waste generators (SQG) are regulated.
- 2.1.2 The EPC will continue the regulation of and revise, to the extent authorized by Chapter 1-7, Rules of the EPC or through any delegation of authority from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), all Class I and Class III landfill operating plans to ensure adequate safeguards exist to prevent the disposal of hazardous waste.
- 2.1.3 Continue to assist the EPC in providing technical assistance to the EPA and the FDEP to rank clean-up priorities. The County shall continue to assist said agencies in their efforts to direct federal and state funds to the implementation of investigations, and clean-up actions for currently identified potential chemical contamination sites.
- 2.1.4 The County and the EPC will continue to assist the FDEP, EPA or other federal agencies, to direct federal and state funds to the implementation of cleanup actions for all currently identified Superfund sites within County boundaries.
- 2.1.5 In cooperation with EPC, continue to provide information needed by hazardous waste generators to comply with federal and state regulations.

## GOAL 3

*Support the preservation, conservation, restoration, and management of natural resources while maintaining or enhancing environmental quality.*

### Objective 3.1

#### **Comply with all national and state ambient air quality standards.**

#### **Policies**

- 3.1.1 Collaborate with the EPC to promote energy conservation measures and alternative energy sources to reduce the demand for electricity and to minimize power plant emissions from the burning of fossil fuels.
- 3.1.2 Support public and alternative transportation programs and actions intended to reduce motor vehicle emissions.
- 3.1.3 Support environmental programs and policies designed to improve air quality and protect the public.
- 3.1.4 Continue to support EPC's efforts to inventory and regulate stationary sources and facilities which generate regulated and/or hazardous air pollutants (HAPs).
- 3.1.5 Support the local hazardous and toxic air pollutants program as implemented by the EPC.
- 3.1.6 Continue to provide a public outreach campaign in coordination with the EPC to educate residents of air quality issues.
- 3.1.7 Coordinate with federal, state, and local agencies and governments in pursuing regional compliance with ambient air quality standards.

- 3.1.8 Cooperate with the EPC to ensure fugitive dust control measures are used during nonagricultural land clearing and development.
- 3.1.9 Cooperate with EPC to encourage techniques and ways to minimize noise pollution to protect, promote and preserve the health, safety and welfare of Hillsborough County residents and ensure compliance with EPC Chapter 1-10, Rules of the EPC (Noise Pollution Rule) sound level limits.
- 3.1.10 Collaborate with the EPC and FDEP to institute the most effective procedure to alert the public of an Air Pollution episode.
- 3.1.11 Continue to work with the EPC and FDEP to ensure that an air quality monitoring program to monitor compliance with all ambient air quality standards is maintained.
- 3.1.12 Continue to coordinate with the State to update building code requirements in order to minimize the risk of radon gas emissions and accumulation in residential developments.

## Objective 3.2

### Manage mining and reclamation lands to ensure a healthy environment, economy, and quality of life.

#### Policies

- 3.2.1 The prudent operation of mining activities and timely reclamation of mined areas is required.
- 3.2.2 The phasing of mining to ensure that limited land areas are affected by excavation and settling ponds at one time and that reclamation occurs in the most effective manner is required.
- 3.2.3 Implement the Phosphate Mining Regulations to require prudent operation of mining activities.
- 3.2.4 Require appropriate setbacks between mining activities and adjacent existing and future land uses.

- 3.2.5 Regulate the location and operation of land excavations to minimize negative impacts on surrounding properties, ensure that land excavations are appropriately reclaimed, and encourage the productive reuse of such areas.
- 3.2.6 Prohibit mining and land excavation activities in documented habitats of Listed Species except as provided under local rules and regulations including mitigation as required.
- 3.2.7 Land excavation activities that adversely impact surface or groundwater levels or wetlands and/or other surface waters on surrounding property are prohibited.
- 3.2.8 Setbacks between land excavations and adjacent land uses to protect public health, safety, and welfare are required.
- 3.2.9 Reclamation plans to ensure environmentally and economically viable reuses of excavated lands are required.
- 3.2.10 Mining reclamation plans are required to comply with, or exceed, state and local regulations related to land reclamation.
- 3.2.11 The preparation of wetland/lake management plans for the reclamation of land excavation projects to be reclaimed as lakes to ensure that such areas become viable and productive aquatic systems are required.
- 3.2.12 Demonstration of the capability of restoring Essential Wildlife Habitat prior to permitting mining in areas that support Listed Species is required.
- 3.2.13 Mining activities shall comply with County criteria, standards, methodologies, and procedures to regulate mining within floodplains of rivers and streams and provide for streamside buffers for mining and mining related activities to protect perennial streams.
- 3.2.14 Require proof of long-term financial responsibility for the reclamation of mined lands.
- 3.2.15 Provide the public with information regarding health hazards associated with reclaimed lands and radon gas emissions.

### Objective 3.3

### Conserve soils, discourage erosion, and maintain water quality through consideration of topographic conditions and natural soil characteristics.

#### Policies

- 3.3.1 Soil conservation and protection measures, consistent with best management practices, will continue to be reviewed and required during land alteration or development activities.
- 3.3.2 The use of soils in accordance with the soil suitabilities identified by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service is encouraged.
- 3.3.3 Site-specific analysis of proposed incompatible land use and identified soil suitability is required prior to the commitment of resources.
- 3.3.4 In cooperation with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, topsoil best management practices are required during all land alteration activities.
- 3.3.5 Evaluate the threat of sinkholes through the County's planning and land development process based on adopted criteria, standards, methodologies, and procedures including those of the Department of Environmental Protection.
- 3.3.6 Cooperate with the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) to provide technical expertise to the public regarding sinkhole risk.

### Objective 3.4

### Protect and conserve Surface Waters for the environmental, recreational, economic, and quality of life benefits these areas provide.

#### Policies

- 3.4.1 Support the EPC's scientifically defensible Surface Water quality monitoring program in order to monitor compliance with State Water Quality Standards.

- 3.4.2 Work to improve surface water quality as measured by data collected by the EPC. Water quality of natural surface water bodies that do not meet state and water management district water quality standards for their designated use shall be improved or restored to the applicable water quality standard.
- 3.4.3 Support a public education program aimed at residential homeowners that addresses the impacts of improperly managed lawn litter and fertilizer/ herbicide/pesticide applications on Surface Water quality, wetlands, and/or other surface waters.
- 3.4.4 The County shall conserve, appropriately use, and protect the quality and quantity of current and projected water sources, as well as protect from activities and land uses known to affect adversely the quality and quantity of identified water sources, including natural groundwater recharge areas, wellhead protection areas, and surface water sources used as a source of public water supply. Further details, including principles, guidelines and standards, can be found in this Element as well as the **One Water Chapter**.

**Objective 3.5**

**Apply adopted criteria, standards, methodologies, and procedures to manage and maintain wetlands and/or other surface waters for optimum fisheries and other environmental values in consultation with EPC.**

**Policies**

- 3.5.1 Collaborate with the EPC to conserve and protect wetlands and/or other surface waters from detrimental physical and hydrological alteration. Apply a comprehensive planning-based approach to the protection of wetland ecosystems assuring no net loss of ecological values provided by the functions performed by wetlands and/or other surface waters authorized for projects in Hillsborough County.
- 3.5.2 Collaborate with the EPC through the land planning and development review processes to prohibit unmitigated encroachment into wetlands and/or other surface waters and maintain equivalent functions.



- 3.5.3 Channelization or hardening (e.g., paving, piping) of natural Shorelines and natural waterways to include tidal creeks is prohibited, except in cases of overriding public interest as established by the County or where necessary for reasonable use of a property as determined by the EPC. Encourage Shoreline stabilization with native plant communities and living Shorelines.
- 3.5.4 Regulate and conserve wetlands and/or other surface waters through the application of local rules and regulations including mitigation during the development review process.
- 3.5.5 In cooperation with the EPC and the Southwest Florida Water Management District, promote the use of Florida native wetland plant species for the creation of wetland habitat and for biologically enhancing filtration and treatment of pollutants in newly constructed stormwater Retention and Detention ponds.
- 3.5.6 All wetland and/or other surface water mitigation projects must comply with the State Uniform Mitigation Assessment Method (UMAM). Mitigation projects must demonstrate the restoration of the ecological values provided by the functions performed by impacted wetlands and/or other surface waters unless a previous evaluation method was authorized by the appropriate regulatory agencies.
- 3.5.7 Wetlands and/or other surface waters shall be designated as conservation or preservation on all development plans and plats.
- 3.5.8 Establish setbacks and buffers based on current science for protecting the hydrologic and biologic integrity of wetlands/other surface waters, including the Hillsborough County Wetland Ecological Buffers study published in February 2012.

## Objective 3.6

### The ecological integrity of natural lakes and ponds shall be maintained or improved.

#### Policies

- 3.6.1 Ensure surface water bodies meet or exceed state water quality standards for their use.
- 3.6.2 Maintain adopted criteria, standards, methodologies, and procedures to retain existing natural areas on aquatic Shorelines in as natural a state as feasible.
- 3.6.3 A development project's potential impact on a lake's existing environmental quality shall be assessed during the planning and development review process. Development shall be compatible with maintaining or improving a lake's environmental quality.
- 3.6.4 Collaborate with the EPC and the SWFWMD to provide information and technical assistance regarding the management, hydrology, and ecology of lakes.

## Objective 3.7

### Promote projects and innovations that integrate the pillars of Sustainability: natural resource protection, community health and wellbeing, and economic prosperity.

#### Policies

- 3.7.1 Regulations and performance standards shall ensure that water quality and quantity, environmentally sensitive areas, wildlife habitats, lakes, rivers, and creeks are protected from degradation by development.
- 3.7.2 Regulate development in areas that possess the following characteristics: wetlands, 100-year floodplain, and/or habitats for Listed Species as provided under local rules and regulations including mitigation as required.
- 3.7.3 Coordinate with existing natural resources action plans of other agencies through participation in the development and review process.

- 3.7.4 Consult with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in determining the issuance of, and conditions to be placed on, land development approvals that would impact Listed Species as appropriate.
- 3.7.5 Minimize impacts on open space, environmental resources, and floodplains, through adopted criteria, standards, methodologies, and procedures including, but not limited to, clustering and the transfer of development rights to increase contiguous pervious surface.
- 3.7.6 Development shall comply with adopted criteria, standards, methodologies, and procedures to prevent adverse effects on Essential Wildlife Habitat.
- 3.7.7 Discourage and minimize the removal of natural upland vegetation caused by site filling and clearing.
- 3.7.8 Manage and maintain a healthy urban tree canopy for its benefits, including the mitigation of the heat island effect and expanded ecosystem services it provides.
- 3.7.9 Continue to require the conservation of trees including those achieving Grand Oak status and existing native vegetation during the land development process.
- 3.7.10 Encourage Florida-Friendly Landscaping principles and continue to distribute Florida-Friendly Landscaping public education materials.
- 3.7.11 Utilize Florida-Friendly Landscape principles in conjunction with native plants and trees in public rights-of-way and other public lands to conserve water, improve habitat for urban wildlife, conserve Central Florida flora, and improve the County's aesthetic appeal and environmental quality when feasible.
- 3.7.12 Foster projects and initiatives that value natural resource protection, conservation and improve environmental quality of our air, water, land, and natural habitat.

## Objective 3.8

### Policies

## Manage flora, fauna, and uplands to ensure a healthy, functioning environment, economy, and quality of life.

- 3.8.1 Protect and conserve Significant Wildlife Habitat and ensure a no net loss of Essential Wildlife Habitat.
- 3.8.2 Continue to prohibit unmitigated encroachment into the 100-year floodplain to protect and conserve the functions and natural wildlife habitat attributes where they exist within the 100-year floodplains of rivers and streams as provided under local rules and regulations including mitigation as required.
- 3.8.3 Maintain local wildlife and wildlife habitat protection and management programs to protect native plants and wildlife.
- 3.8.4 Continue to apply adopted criteria, standards, methodologies, and procedures that require the development and implementation of management plans for Significant or Essential Wildlife Habitat determined to provide particularly valuable and manageable habitat qualities.
- 3.8.5 Offsite preservation will not be permitted for field verified Significant Wildlife Habitat which is capable of being managed or restored onsite as a high-quality native plant community or communities, except in cases of overriding public interest (Per Governor and Cabinet Final Order AC-93-087).
- 3.8.6 The abundance and distribution of Listed Species shall be maintained and/or increased.
- 3.8.7 Coordinate with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in the management of natural preserve lands owned or managed by the County when appropriate.
- 3.8.8 Collaborate with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the FDEP in the implementation of protection and recovery programs for Listed Species.

- 3.8.9 Control the spread of exotic and nuisance species on County managed land by at least 90% from previously uncontrolled levels.
- 3.8.10 Collaborate with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, FWC, SWFWMD, and the FDEP to control and/or eliminate exotic and nuisance species on County owned or management land and incorporate these efforts into the management plans of natural preserve lands.

**Objective 3.9**

**Manage natural preserves to ensure a healthy, functioning environment, economy, and quality of life.**

**Policies**

- 3.9.1 Consider residents and visitors in the governance of natural resources to ensure equitable access and distribution.
- 3.9.2 Increase the acreage of natural preserve lands, ensure their protection, proper use, and implementation of appropriate management activities.
- 3.9.3 Continue to implement the Jan K. Platt Environmental Lands Acquisition and Protection Program (ELAPP), at funding levels equal to or greater than the current funding.
- 3.9.4 Seek assistance in public acquisition of natural preserves under federal, state, and regional programs.
- 3.9.5 Provide multiple use opportunities on County-owned natural preserve lands consistent and compatible with natural resource protection and conservation.
- 3.9.6 Promote public land acquisition projects and public land dedications that remove land in the River Corridor Overlay District from development, particularly lands vegetated by natural plant communities, containing or buffering environmentally sensitive areas, contributing to aquifer recharge, or those providing wildlife habitat.

- 3.9.7 Enhance the ability to qualify for matching funds from state and regional land acquisition programs, such as Florida Communities Trust, Florida Forever, and Save Our Rivers.
- 3.9.8 Continue to fund land management, research, fieldwork, and qualified staff to maintain, restore and enhance upland, freshwater, and marine natural habitats and ecosystems, including Beaches and Shorelines.
- 3.9.9 Protect natural resources, coastal resources, publicly owned, or managed natural preserves from adverse impacts attributable to adjacent land uses. Continue to require development activities on adjacent properties to comply with adopted criteria, standards, methodologies, and procedures to prevent adverse impacts.
- 3.9.10 Preserve rare and threatened native vegetative communities and protect Listed Species from development and associated impacts of development, such as habitat fragmentation, noise, light, and domestic animals as provided under local rules and regulations including mitigation as required.
- 3.9.11 Restore and enhance degraded natural areas on lands acquired for preservation, including removal of noxious exotics, reforestation, aquatic grass bed restoration, reintroduction of fire through prescribed burns, and restoration of Shorelines and natural hydrology, as needed.
- 3.9.12 Encourage private landowners to utilize multiple-use management techniques to provide both economic (e.g., cattle grazing, silviculture) and ecological (e.g., provision of Wildlife habitat) benefits.

**Objective 3.10**

**Identify, enhance, and protect corridors or linkages that maintain a contiguous network of wildlife habitat between public and private lands per local rules and regulations.**

**Policies**

- 3.10.1 Require consideration, and where appropriate, incorporation of County approved conceptual Greenway System and Wildlife Corridor plans into reclamation plans.
- 3.10.2 Land alteration activities adjacent to viable public Wildlife Corridors shall be regulated in a manner consistent with the continued function of the corridor, in accordance with adopted criteria, standards, methodologies, and procedures.

- 3.10.3 Wildlife Corridors within development projects shall be preserved, as provided under local rules and regulations including mitigation as required and extension/ expansion of corridors is encouraged.
- 3.10.4 Establish and maintain desirable native vegetative buffers on public lands along Wildlife Corridors.
- 3.10.5 Continue to acquire and physically link existing public preservation areas with Wildlife Corridors into a contiguous system.
- 3.10.6 Encourage appropriate agencies and private organizations to assist the County in conserving and preserving public natural area linkages which may function as Wildlife Corridors.
- 3.10.7 Collaborate with private landowners to limit the fragmentation of wildlife movement areas. Analyze the cumulative impacts of development, steps to mitigate, and steps to maintain and enhance native ecosystems.
- 3.10.8 Coordinate with surrounding county governments and private landowners to increase regional wildlife corridors and wildlife distribution to link other public and private lands.
- 3.10.9 Coordinate with neighboring counties and jurisdictions to identify those lands for public acquisition necessary to preserve vital portions of Wildlife Corridors.
- 3.10.10 Promote Wildlife Corridor linkages to lands in adjacent counties to develop a system of interconnected public Greenways and Blueways.
- 3.10.11 Protect or enhance Wildlife Corridors by minimizing road crossings over wetlands and floodplains and designing crossings to allow for unimpeded passage of wildlife as provided under local rules and regulations including mitigation as required.
- 3.10.12 Review, update, and maintain regulatory adopted criteria, standards, methodologies, and procedures to protect the integrity of Shoreline Wildlife Corridors.
- 3.10.13 Continue to identify, adopt, and preserve Wildlife Corridors/Greenway System, generally north of the City of Tampa's northern boundary to the Pasco County line, connecting Cypress Creek and the Hillsborough River (Per Governor and Cabinet Final Order AC-93-087).

## GOAL 4

*Protect the natural resources of the Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve from environmental degradation and manage the Preserve's resources for the benefit and enjoyment of all residents.*

### Objective 4.1

#### **Continue to implement the "Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve Management Plan."**

#### Policies

- 4.1.1 Appropriate provisions from the Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve Management Plan shall continue to be considered as appropriate tools to help implement this Plan or other applicable plans endorsed by the Board of County Commissioners.
- 4.1.2 Take all practical action to revive the shellfish habitat of the Cockroach Bay Area.
- 4.1.3 New permitted discharges likely to impact the Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve will meet or exceed applicable water quality standards.
- 4.1.4 Review, and mitigate or restrict as appropriate, all proposed development likely to impact the Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve to ensure that water quality or habitat degradation does not occur.
- 4.1.5 Seek to establish a scientifically defensible protective buffer zone between the Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve and adjacent upland land uses to prevent degradation of water quality and aquatic vegetative habitats.
- 4.1.6 Continue to support preservation, restoration, and monitoring goals in the Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve.
- 4.1.7 Work with the appropriate authorities, including the EPC and the FDEP, to implement means of protecting seagrasses from propeller dredging throughout the Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve.



## GOAL 5

*Ensure rivers are cleaner, safer, and more attractive; protect their natural ecological functions which support plant and animal Wildlife; and promote the enhancement of the rivers as recreational and aesthetic assets to the surrounding community. This goal and its associated objectives and policies shall be known as the River Corridor Policy Overlay.*

### Objective 5.1

#### **Maintain and improve, water quality in rivers and primary tributaries and meet or exceed State Water Quality Standards.**

#### Policies

- 5.1.1 In conjunction with the EPC and other appropriate agencies, identify pollution sources that adversely affect rivers and develop strategies by which to mitigate or eliminate such sources and their effects.
- 5.1.2 Solid waste landfills and hazardous material facilities in Unincorporated Hillsborough County shall be sited and managed such that they will not adversely affect the rivers, tributaries, and associated floodplains and wetlands.

### Objective 5.2

#### **Preserve and restore natural vegetative and wildlife habitats and preserve archaeological resources along rivers and primary tributaries.**

#### Policies

- 5.2.1 Natural riverbanks, levees and vegetative buffers along river and tributaries shall be conserved, preserved, and restored unless authorized by the appropriate regulatory agencies.
- 5.2.2 Restrict clearing or filling of natural plant communities within 50 feet of wetlands and/or other surface waters, rivers, creeks, and designated River Corridor Overlay Districts or within 100 feet of the mean and ordinary high-water line of such rivers and creeks, whichever is greater. If no beneficial use of the property is possible without clearing or filling within this area, impose conditions which will mitigate the adverse impact of these activities on wildlife habitat, native vegetation, and natural stormwater filtration systems.

- 5.2.3 Draining, clearing, or filling wetlands hydrologically connected to rivers in Hillsborough County shall be prohibited, except as provided under local rules and regulations including mitigation and where authorized by appropriate regulatory agencies.
- 5.2.4 The removal of healthy native trees, with a diameter at breast height of five inches or greater, is prohibited within 100 feet of wetlands and/or other surface waters; except when reasonable property utilization is not possible without tree removal or in cases of overriding public interest or as part of standard, accepted habitat management, and/or restoration practices.
- 5.2.5 Continue to preserve natural shorelines and reverse the trend toward hardened shores and channelization along rivers and primary tributaries. Continue the restoration of vegetated shorelines, including the replacement of deteriorated seawalls and rip-rap with native vegetation and hybrid shoreline improvement strategies which support aquatic/wildlife and provide resiliency benefits to the community and property.
- 5.2.6 Prohibit backfilling of waterfront properties or extension of waterfront lots through artificial means, unless authorized by appropriate regulatory agencies.
- 5.2.7 Increase public awareness of the ecological and economic implications resulting from hardening of Shorelines and the removal of native vegetation and wildlife habitats along the river.

**Objective 5.3**

**Manage rivers as important community assets and provide appropriate public access to these valuable natural amenities.**

**Policies**

- 5.3.1 To enhance public safety and natural resources, continue to establish and post marine regulatory speed zones, where appropriate, including in the vicinity of marinas, bridges, marine structures, navigably constricted areas, and in areas of rivers where manatees are known to inhabit.
- 5.3.2 Hillsborough County recognizes the special character of its rivers and shall not take any action which will impair the use or enjoyment of state designated canoe trails in Hillsborough County. These areas include but not limited to the Hillsborough River Canoe Trail, the Alafia River Canoe Trail, and the Little Manatee River Canoe Trail.

- 5.3.3 Minimize river use conflict and mitigate public nuisances.
- 5.3.4 Water dependent uses such as docks, boat slips, and boardwalks shall constitute the only private over-the-water structures allowed on rivers. Structures that are clearly in the public interest, such as bridges, shall also be allowed.
- 5.3.5 Seek state funding through the Marine Patrol Derelict Vessel Removal Program to remove all abandoned craft recommended for removal by the Marine Patrol or Port Tampa Bay.
- 5.3.6 Upon advisement of Port Tampa Bay, all abandoned/deteriorated docks and seawalls shall be removed at the expense of the owner. Removal shall occur within an amortization period set forth by the Port Authority. Any replacement structures shall be constructed according to adopted Port Tampa Bay and County rules and regulations.

**Objective 5.4**

**Implement standards for development addressing the unique qualities, visual intrusion, protection, and use in the river corridors.**

**Policies**

- 5.4.1 In keeping with the natural character of the Rivers, parking lots and service roads are prohibited within 500 feet wetlands and/or other surface waters of the river and its tributaries, unless there is an overriding public interest such as, but not limited to public facilities (parks, boat ramps, etc.), or reasonable use of the property would otherwise not be possible.
- 5.4.2 Encourage the reclamation of lands along rivers with native vegetation and encourage public acquisition, where appropriate.
- 5.4.3 Widen and soften altered creek or river corridors to restore hydrologic eco-hydric function where appropriate and feasible.

## GOAL 6

*Make the Hillsborough River cleaner, safer, and more attractive, protect its natural ecological functions which support plant and animal wildlife and to promote the enhancement of the river as a recreational and aesthetic asset to the surrounding community. This section shall serve as the Hillsborough River Master Plan, pursuant to Chapter 86-335, Laws of Florida.*

### Objective 6.1

**Continue to protect this major source of drinking water and promote the improvement of water quality in the Hillsborough River, where it does not meet or exceed State Water Quality Standards for its designated use.**

#### Policies

- 6.1.1 No person shall control or attempt to control aquatic plants by chemical or biological means in the Hillsborough River except as provided in permits issued by the EPC and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Alternative methods to chemical control, and side effects of current methods, shall be evaluated on a regular basis and reported to the Hillsborough River Interlocal Planning Board in an effort to identify and promote less harmful methods of weed control.
- 6.1.2 Prevent further destruction of desirable natural vegetative buffers along the Hillsborough River and its tributaries.
- 6.1.3 Wastewater treatment facilities within the drainage basin will meet or exceed regulatory standards.

### Objective 6.2

**Reverse the trend toward hardened shores and channelization on the Hillsborough River.**

#### Policies

- 6.2.1 To preserve natural wildlife habitat, the construction of vertical seawalls in the Upper Hillsborough River, north of Fletcher Avenue, will be prohibited, unless in cases of overriding public interest or where authorized by the appropriate regulatory agencies.

- 6.2.2 Support the elimination of hardened Shoreline and replacement with natural slopes and wetland vegetation along the riverbanks as existing bulkheads are repaired or replaced.

**Objective 6.3**

**Continue to cooperate with state and federal programs to provide for improved boat traffic control in the Hillsborough River and minimize public use conflicts and nuisances by promoting the enforcement of water safety laws.**

**Policies**

- 6.3.1 New marinas shall be prohibited on the Upper Hillsborough River.
- 6.3.2 The construction of new boat ramps is restricted along the Hillsborough River.
- 6.3.3 Water skiing on the Hillsborough River is allowed only between the dam (Tippin Water Treatment facility) and the 56th Street bridge.
- 6.3.4 To prevent riverbank erosion, protect wildlife habitat, and ensure public safety, especially during low water periods, that portion of the river north of 56th Street shall be posted with "Idle Speed, No Wake" signs.
- 6.3.5 In recognition of the Florida Designated Paddling Trail on the Hillsborough River, from Fletcher Avenue, southerly and downstream to River Hills Park, the County will not take any action which will impair its use as designated by the state within or along its jurisdictional limits.

**Objective 6.4**

**Implement standards for development in the Hillsborough River corridor.**

**Policies**

- 6.4.1 Within 100 feet of the river's wetlands, existing publicly owned parking lots, loading docks, and service areas (containing such items as trash receptacles and machinery) are required to be screened from the river by dense planting using Florida Friendly Landscaping principles and native vegetation when appropriate.

- 6.4.2 Support the guidelines and standards for riverfront development as recommended in the Hillsborough River Corridor Overlay Study.
- 6.4.3 Pursuant to Chapter 86-335, Laws of Florida, cooperate with the Hillsborough River Interlocal Planning Board and Technical Advisory Council in the performance of its mission by providing information, staff coordination, and participation.

**Objective 6.5**

**Continue to cooperate with state and federal programs to provide for improved boat traffic control in the Hillsborough River and minimize public use conflicts and nuisances by promoting the enforcement of water safety laws.**

**Policies**

- 6.5.1 The number of docks in single family zoning districts is limited to one per zoning lot. Shared ownership of docks is encouraged in all new subdivisions adjacent to the river. Shared ownership may be accomplished by construction on the property line or by establishing the dock(s) as common property.
- 6.5.2 Multifamily zoning districts are permitted one dock per zoning lot and one additional dock for every 100 feet of linear river frontage in excess of 100 feet. Where multiple docks are permitted, they must be clustered with a maximum separation of 30 feet between docks. Each dock is limited to no more than two berths.
- 6.5.3 Continue to support the multijurisdictional distribution of a pamphlet detailing proper marine construction by Port Tampa Bay, EPC, FDEP, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, local building departments, and other appropriate entities that can effectively provide the pamphlet to contractors and the public.
- 6.5.4 Maintain the requirement of a local specialty license for contractors involved in marine construction projects to assure the proper placement, methods, and materials are used in the construction of seawall, docks, ramps, and other marine related structures.

## Objective 6.6

**Continue to manage the Hillsborough River as an important community asset and provide appropriate public access to this valuable natural amenity.**

### Policies

- 6.6.1 Private landowners are encouraged to provide public vistas, dedications of land interests, and pedestrian/bike paths which link public and private property within the river corridor into a linear greenbelt system.
- 6.6.2 At public access points, provide information on laws created to minimize use conflicts and mitigate public nuisances along the Hillsborough River, where feasible.
- 6.6.3 Acquire vacant waterfront parcels as they are available and restrict the sale of County owned riverfront property.
- 6.6.4 Dead-end roads on the riverfront will not be vacated and will be utilized for passive open space and stormwater retention, where environmentally feasible.

## Objective 6.7

**Continue to preserve and enhance wildlife habitats and preserve archaeological resources on the Hillsborough River.**

### Policies

- 6.7.1 The removal of exotic nuisance species from riverbanks shall be encouraged and may be required as a permitting condition.

## Objective 6.8

**Preserve the rural character of the Upper Hillsborough River by discouraging additional development within the river corridor except for those sites improved or developed that are dedicated to passive recreational pursuits.**

### Policies

- 6.8.1 The Upper Hillsborough River shall be managed as a Wildlife Habitat Corridor to provide an area for wildlife passage.
- 6.8.2 Recreation facilities in the Upper Hillsborough River Corridor shall be designed to minimize impacts upon wildlife habitat by encouraging less disruptive passive pursuits such as hiking, nature study, photography, picnicking, fishing, and canoeing. No buildings shall be constructed within 500 feet of the river's wetlands.
- 6.8.3 To preserve the quiet pristine character of the upper Hillsborough River, additional boat docks and ramps in this section of the river are prohibited, unless authorized by appropriate regulatory agencies. This provision shall not apply to canoe launches.



*\*These will be added to the **Definitions** section in the final version of the Comprehensive Plan.*

# Natural Open Space Definitions

## Conservation Areas

Environmentally Sensitive Areas, including the following:

- Natural shorelines (other than those included in preservation areas);
- Class III Waters;
- Wetlands, including, but not limited to, freshwater marshes, wet prairies, hardwood swamps, and cypress swamps;
- Significant Wildlife Habitats

## Endangered and Threatened Species

Faunal species identified by the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission in Chapter 39, Florida Administrative Code; and floral species identified by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services "Preservation of Native Flora Act," Chapter 581, Florida Statutes. Endangered species are so designated due to man-made or natural factors which have placed them in imminent danger of extinction, while threatened species are so designated due to rapid decline in number or habitat such that they are likely to become endangered without corrective action (see "listed" species).

## Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Environmentally sensitive areas are Conservation Areas and Preservation Areas. Conservation Areas include the following types of wetlands(w), natural water bodies(nwb), and uplands(u): freshwater marshes(w), wet prairies(w), hardwood swamps(w), cypress swamps(w), natural shorelines other than natural beaches and dunes(w), Class III Waters(w, nwb), and significant wildlife habitat (w, nwb, u). Preservation Areas include the following types of wetlands, natural water bodies and uplands: coastal marshes(w), mangrove swamps(w), marine grassbeds (w, nwb), natural beaches and dunes(w, u), Class I and II Waters(w, nwb), aquatic preserves(w, nwb), essential wildlife habitat (w, nwb, u), and natural preserves (w, nwb, u).



# Natural Open Space Definitions

## Essential Wildlife Habitat

Land or water bodies which, through the provision of habitat, are necessary to maintain populations of endangered or threatened species or species of special concern.

## Grand Oak

A Grand Oak is a tree of the genus *Quercus* with a trunk measuring 34 inches DBH and greater, a condition rating of good or better in accordance with the Tree Condition Evaluation Form referenced as Section 4.1.6.1.9 of the Development Review Procedures Manual, and whose trunk circumference, height, and crown measurements are of the size and character to total a minimum 175 points in accordance to the Tree Point System methodology defined by this Code.

## Green Development

Those sustainable developments that have received third party certification as green developments by the Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC) under the Green Development Standard, by a National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Green Development Standard, or by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Neighborhood Development (LEED ND) certification program.

## Greenway System

A linear park or open space which connects natural, cultural, recreational, or historic resources. A greenway may include a hard surfaced trail that permits various recreational uses such as walking, jogging, or biking or a natural corridor with a trail along a stream or riverbank. A Greenway may lie within utility rights-of-way, so long as they are usable for the functions described herein. A Greenway typically includes environmentally sensitive areas such as rivers, wetlands, wildlife habitat, or floodplains.



# Natural Open Space Definitions

## Hazardous Waste

A material identified by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection as a hazardous waste. This may include but is not limited to a substance defined by the Environmental Protection Agency based on the 1976 Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, as amended, as:

- Being ignitable, corrosive, toxic, or reactive;
- Fatal to humans in low doses or dangerous to animals based on studies in the absence of human data;
- Listed in Appendix 8 of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act as being toxic and potentially hazardous to the environment.

## Listed Species

All species of plants and animals which are listed as threatened, endangered, or species of special concern in Chapter 39, Florida Administrative Code, or Chapter 581, Florida Statutes, and occur in Hillsborough County. (see Endangered or Threatened Species).

## Natural Plants

Plants, once established, that survive on rainfall without irrigation.

## Natural Plant Communities

Naturally occurring stands of native plant associations exhibiting minimal signs of anthropogenic disturbance. Specific community types can be identified by characteristic dominant plant species composition. Community types found in Hillsborough County include pine flatwoods, dry prairie, sand pine scrub, sandhill, xeric hammock, mesic hammock, hardwood swamps, cypress swamp, freshwater marsh, wet prairies, coastal marsh, mangrove swamp, coastal strand (see natural beaches and dunes) and marine grassbeds.

## Natural Preserves

Publicly or privately owned lands or waters set aside for preservation in their natural state.



# Natural Open Space Definitions

## Riverine Corridor Overlay (RCO) District

This district is comprised of the 25-year floodplain for designated riverine corridors within Urban Level land use categories. RCO Districts are established pursuant to the Future Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Industrial land uses are prohibited. Refer to the land use map to locate RCO districts. The provisions of this district do not apply to parcels of land for single family dwellings where the parcel is exempt from the provisions of the Hillsborough County Subdivision Regulations or where the parcel is part of a recorded plat on January 28, 1988.

## River Corridor Policy Overlay

The Environmental and Sustainability Section's River Resources "Goals, Objectives and Policies" shall be known as the River Corridor Policy Overlay. Rivers and primary tributaries of the County shall be protected by Goals, Objectives and Policies as provided for in the Environmental and Sustainability's Section Goal 5 as the River Corridor Policy Overlay.

## Significant Wildlife Habitat

Contiguous stands of natural plant communities which have the potential to support healthy and diverse populations of wildlife and which have been identified in the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission Natural Systems and Land Use Cover Inventory for Hillsborough County.

## Sustainability

The wise use of resources to meet the current needs of individuals and society while helping to sustain and protect the wellbeing of people, the environment, and the local economy.

