

# Immokalee Area Master Plan Element

## STATEMENT OF ISSUE

The Immokalee Area Master Plan (IAMP) is an “optional element,” under Section 163.3177(7), Florida Statutes. As such, there are no specific criteria to guide the format and purposes of this Element. The Immokalee Area Master Plan was originally developed, as mandated by (1988) Policy 6.4 of the Future Land Use Element of the Collier County Growth Management Plan.

## ISSUE BACKGROUND

Work on the original Master Plan began with the appointment of a Technical Advisory Committee in November 1988. An initial public workshop was held in February 1989, and subsequent informational workshops were held periodically, thereafter. The Collier County Board of County Commissioners adopted the Immokalee Area Master Plan, as an element of the County’s Growth Management Plan, on February 5, 1991. The first set of amendments to the plan, involving changes to both the text and the Immokalee Future Land Use Map, were adopted in 1993.

In 1996, based upon recommendations contained in Collier County’s adopted Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR), staff initiated amendments to the Immokalee Area Master Plan. Unlike the 1988 – 1991 process, the process initiated in 1996 did not involve an advisory committee specific to the Immokalee Area. Instead, the proposed IAMP amendments were formulated and reviewed by staff, aided by an Evaluation & Appraisal Report Advisory Committee, which also helped staff formulate and review amendments to other Elements of the Growth Management Plan. The EAR-based amendments affected virtually the entire Immokalee Area Master Plan, including the Immokalee Area Future Land Use Map. Various subdistrict boundaries were revised and two new subdistricts were created. Based upon the EAR recommendations, in October of 1997, the Board of County Commissioners adopted an Ordinance enacting the revised Master Plan.

The BCC adopted the Second EAR for the GMP on July 27, 2004. Such EAR called for revisions to the Immokalee Area Master Plan to be prepared as part of the subsequent County’s EAR-based amendments. During 2003, as part of the preparation of the EAR, the BCC authorized Comprehensive Planning staff to prepare recommendations for revising the 1997 IAMP. Subsequently, the Board authorized creation of an advisory committee, the Immokalee Area Master Plan Restudy Committee (Restudy Committee), to work with staff in making proposed revisions to the IAMP.

The Restudy Committee, assisted by Comprehensive Planning staff, submitted recommendations to the EAR (for recommended amendments to the IAMP), in November 2003. However, during the performance of its tasks, the Committee determined that a longer, more intense restudy of the IAMP was necessary. Therefore, the IAMP Restudy Committee expressed a desire to extend the life of the Committee so that it could continue to assist the Board with the implementation the IAMP. The re-established Committee was renamed as the Immokalee Area Master Plan and Visioning Committee (IMPVC). The BCC adopted Ordinance 04-62, sunsetting the Immokalee Area Master Plan Restudy Committee and creating the IMPVC, on September 28, 2004.

One of the Committee's first official acts was to direct staff to prepare Request For Proposals and Scope of Services to hire a consulting firm that would assist the IMPVC in revising the IAMP. The CRA hired the consulting firm RMPK Group and worked for a period of over four years conducting public meetings, collecting and analyzing data, and drafting revisions to the IAMP. This firm prepared a study entitled "Immokalee Inventory and Analysis Report" in May of 2006, but relinquished their services to the Immokalee CRA in 2008. RWA, Inc. was then hired and is presently the agent in charge of the proposed amendments to IAMP and subsequent Land Development Code (LDC) regulations. The IMPVC sunsetted on December 31, 2009 by Resolution 2009-306.

A series of public meetings and workshops were held in relation to the preparation of the current amendment to the IAMP. Agencies involved included the IAMPVC, and Immokalee Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Board (CRAAB).

The Immokalee Area Master Plan Element of the GMP is currently in the process of revising and replacing each existing Goal, Objective and Policy of the IAMP, as well as revising and replacing all future land use designations on the IAMP and IAMP FLUM. The IAMP is expected to be adopted during the first quarter of 2011.

In general, the amendment to the IAMP element of the GMP proposes eight new goals, each with respective objectives and policies; followed by the revised Land Use Designation Description Section which includes and describes the proposed land use designations that will guide patterns of development within the Immokalee urban area and further the proposed goals through standards set forth within such land used designations, and the types of allowed land uses that could be requested.

The first goal establishes the prioritization of capital projects and other IAMP activities to accomplish the proposed goals, subject to funding as approved by the BCC on an annual basis. The second goal prioritizes economic development in regard to opportunities for business and redevelopment initiatives and incentives that promote social benefits to the Immokalee community; encourages development away from environmentally sensitive lands; and allows for agriculture related business within certain areas of the Immokalee urban area. The third goal deals with housing, as it relates to farm worker and migrant housing needs; conservation and rehabilitation of housing; and the promotion of affordable workforce and gap housing. Provisions for public infrastructure and public facilities are dealt with in goal four. The fifth goal outlines standards and policies related to natural resources. Goal six describes the revised land use designations in Immokalee. Goal seven relates to development design standards that are specific to the Immokalee Urban area. Goal eight provides for coordination with certain agencies. The last portion of the revised IAMP specifies the changes among each new land use designation and the density rating system, including density bonuses and the density and intensity blending provision, and the applicable correlating revisions to the FLUM.

The proposed IAMP intends to implement the Immokalee community's vision, as approved by the IMPVC, by promoting economic development and efficient delivery of services through greater density and intensity that encourage dense, clustered development; incorporating smart growth principles; and by providing greater development flexibility through mixed-use Subdistricts.

The proposed Plan intends to increase density and intensity as the main mechanism to promote economic development within the Immokalee Urban Area. Staff acknowledges and supports the desires of the CRA and IMPVC to promote and diversify economic development in Immokalee.

Specifically:

- Changes in the FLUM proposes the majority of dense, mixed use of commercial and residential development along the main thoroughfares of Immokalee, surrounded by land uses that have the highest allowance for density. These higher density areas transition to lands that are allowed lower density and which are located mainly towards the edge of the urban area. Industrial development remains in the current general location of the Immokalee airport.
- Increase in density bonuses for mixed use development are meant to incentivize higher density along the main thoroughfares, and promote the changes in the land use designations of these areas that would further the proposed GOPs.
- The proposed FLUM reduces the amount of residentially designated lands by 636 acres. This change allows for the re-designation of current Low Residential Designated lands located around the main thoroughfares of Immokalee. Such existing Low Residential areas are proposed to be re-designated to allow higher density and non-residential uses in order to further the proposed GOPs and create transition towards the low density areas.
- In addition, some of the changes, such as the location of the Industrial – Mixed Use Subdistrict (IMU) do not seem to be compatible with the proposed adjacent designations. However, added development standards, such as specific landscaping buffers between the industrially designated lands and the residential areas, are meant to ameliorate compatibility issues between them.

The following are some of the major changes proposed in the IAMP amendment:

- Re-configuration of the wetland boundary that connects to Lake Trafford/Camp Keais Strand System Overlay (see attached Map 1). This revision was requested by staff.
- The re-designation of the lands within the boundary of the Immokalee Regional Airport from Industrial (ID) to Immokalee Regional Airport Subdistrict (APO).
- The addition of ±103 acres of land that are proposed to be removed from the Rural Lands Stewardship Area Overlay (RLSA) and be included within the boundary of the Immokalee Regional Airport Subdistrict (APO). (Correlating changes to the countywide Future Land Use Map Series are not proposed at this time, but will be considered during adoption hearings.)
- The addition of the “Loop Road,” which is proposed to allow access from the Immokalee Regional Airport and Florida Tradeport areas, to SR82 and SR29.
- Revisions to the land use designations in the IAMP FLUM include:

- An increase in the base density allowed within the mixed use designated areas. However, no change in base density (DU/A – dwelling units per acre) is proposed within the Low, Medium, High and RT designated areas:
  - Low Residential: no change (4 DU/A).
  - Medium Residential: no change (6 DU/A)
  - High Residential: no change (8 DU/A)
  - Mixed use: from 12 DU/A allowed within the existing Commerce Center Mixed Use (CC-MU) and Neighborhood Center (NC) to 16 DU/A allowed in the proposed Commercial Mixed Use (CMU) designated areas.
  - Recreational Tourist (RT): no change (4 DU/A).
- An increase of about 10 percent in the number of potential dwelling units that could be developed through base density:
  - A reduction in the base number of potential dwelling units within the Low, Medium and High Residential designated areas, from 57,230 dwelling units to 55,829 dwelling units. This change would allow 1,401 less dwelling units.
  - An increase in the base number of potential dwelling units within the Mixed-Use designation, from 10,341 dwelling units to 17,670 dwelling units. This change would allow 7,299 additional dwelling units.
  - An increase in the base number of potential dwelling units within the Recreational Tourist designation, from 1,005 dwelling units to 1,805 dwelling units. The 800 additional dwelling units is due to the increase in the amount of acreage proposed to be designated as RT in the revised FLUM.

The above noted reductions and additions in the base number of potential dwelling units in the IAMP FLUM, in conjunction with the changes in the amount of acreage of each land use designation, including the increase in acreage of RT designated lands, yields an increase in the total base number of potential dwelling units, from 68,576 dwelling units to 75,307 dwelling units. This change represents an additional 6,730 dwelling units that would be allowed in the IAMP.

- Changes in the maximum density (DU/A – dwelling units per acre) allowed within the low residential (reduction) and mixed use designated areas (increase):
  - Low Residential: from 12 DU/A to 8 DU/A
  - Medium Residential: no change (14 DU/A)
  - High Residential: no change (16 DU/A)
  - Mixed use: from 12 DU/A allowed within the Commerce Center Mixed Use (CC-MU) and Neighborhood Center (NC) to 20 DU/A allowed in the proposed Commercial Mixed Use (CMU) designated areas.
  - Recreational Tourist (RT): no change (4 DU/A)

- An 18 percent reduction in the maximum number of potential dwelling units that would be allowed in the IAMP:
  - A reduction in the maximum number of potential dwelling units within the Low, Medium and High Residential designated areas, from 157,011.4 dwelling units to 113,879.2 dwelling units. This change would allow 43,132.2 less dwelling units.
  - An increase in the maximum number of potential dwelling units within the Mixed-Use designation, from 10,341.6 dwelling units to 22,088 dwelling units. This change would allow 11,746.4 additional dwelling units.
  - An increase in the maximum number of potential dwelling units within the Recreational Tourist designation, from 1,005 dwelling units to 1,805 dwelling units. This change would allow 800 additional dwelling units due to the increase in the amount of acreage proposed to be designated as RT in the FLUM.

The above reductions and additions in the maximum allowed number of potential dwelling units, in conjunction with the increase in acreage of RT designated lands, yields a reduction in the total maximum number of potential dwelling units in the IAMP FLUM, from 168,357.8 dwelling units to 137,774.4 dwelling units. This change represents a reduction of 30,583.4 dwelling units from what is currently allowed to be developed in the IAMP.

- An increase in the amount of Recreational Tourist (RT) designated lands: from ±251.2 acres to ±451.8 acres, an increase of ±201 acres. This change would allow an increase in the potential number of dwelling units, from 1,005 dwelling units to 1,805 dwelling units (see Table 3); as well as an increase in the maximum amount of potential dwelling units that could be developed.
- An increase on the cap of allowed density that can be requested within the Immokalee Urban Area, via density bonus, from a maximum of 16 DU/A to a cap of 20 DU/A.
- A five percent reduction of residential designated lands. This change of over ±636 acres of residential designated lands are proposed to be re-designated to allow commercial and industrial development, as well as uses that are allowed under the RT designation.
- An increase in the amount of commercial designated lands: from ±1024.4 acres to ±1,104.4 acres, an increase of ±80 acres of commercial designated lands.

An increase in the amount of industrial designated lands: from 2,643.5 acres to 3,105.4 acres, an increase of ±462 acres of industrial designated lands. This increase includes the re-designation from Industrial (ID) to Immokalee Regional Airport Subdistrict (APO) of 1484.3 acres of land that are part of the Immokalee Regional Airport boundary.

The proposed Plan includes Objectives and Policies that address HB 697. The Immokalee Area Master Plan has incorporated language within these Immokalee-specific amendments to address the energy efficiency issues. Specifically, the following proposed Goals, Objectives and Policies are designed to comply with HB 697 in the following manner:

**Reducing the number and length of automobile trips (VMT):**

**Objective 2.2**, and its related policies, seeks to diversify the local economy and increase employment opportunities within the Immokalee Urban Area, thereby lowering the need to travel greater distances for work or services. **Objective 4.2** addresses vehicular and non-vehicular transportation options and specifically references the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and minimize energy consumption. **Policies 4.2.6** and **4.2.7** discuss the need to improve and expand public transit options in Immokalee. **Policy 4.2.8** seeks to evaluate whether a Transportation Concurrency Exception Area is appropriate for Immokalee. **Policy 6.1.5** specifically states that compact mixed-use development patterns are encouraged to create walkable communities, reduce vehicle miles traveled and increase energy efficiency.

**Promoting alternative modes of transportation:**

**Objective 4.2** addresses non-vehicular transportation options and specifically references the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and minimize energy consumption. **Policy 4.2.2** references the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and **Policy 4.2.5** recognizes the need to improve safety for pedestrians and bicycles. **Policies 4.2.6** and **4.2.7** discuss the need to improve and expand public transit options in Immokalee. **Objective 7.1** recognizes the need for Immokalee-specific land development regulations that will encourage pedestrian friendly urban form and promote energy efficiency. **Policy 7.1.2** encourages new community facilities to be within a half-mile of residential and mixed use centers to encourage walking, bicycling and non-vehicular travel.

**Allowing for compact mixed-use development patterns:**

**Goal 6**, and its related Objectives and Policies, pertain to land use and specifically reference allowing and encouraging a mixture of uses. **Objective 6.1** references the need to coordinate the Future Land Use Map that encourages desirable growth and energy efficient development patterns. **Policy 6.1.5** specifically states that the Immokalee area encourages compact mixed-use development patterns to create walkable communities, reduce vehicle miles traveled and increase energy efficiency. **Policy 4.1.2** encourages future parks to be located in the most densely populated areas, and recognizes the need for public plazas, greens and urban parks to make Immokalee more pedestrian friendly. **Objective 7.1**, and its related policies, recognizes the need for Immokalee-specific land development regulations that will encourage pedestrian friendly urban form and promote energy efficiency. **Policy 7.1.2** recognizes that new community facilities should be within walking distance to mixed use and residential centers. **Policies 7.1.2, 7.1.3** and **7.1.4** all relate to compact, mixed-use, urban design criteria. The Urban-Mixed Use district allows for commercial development within the Residential Subdistricts, as described in the Land Use Designation Description section. Density bonuses are also allowed for projects that are proximate to Commercial Uses.

**Allowing for higher densities in appropriate places, which reduces the per capita carbon footprint, supports transit and reduces sprawl.**

**Policy 7.1.5** also encourages high intensity development in Immokalee through the development of a Central Business District overlay subdistrict in the Land Development Code. The Urban-Mixed Use district and subdistricts, as referenced in the Land Use Designation Description section, allow for higher residential densities. The base residential densities range from four (4) units per acre for Low Residential (LR) subdistrict to ten (10)

dwelling units per acre in High Residential (HR) and sixteen (16) in the Commercial-Mixed Use subdistricts. Density bonuses are also allowed for projects that are proximate to Commercial Uses or in infill areas, as well as for providing affordable-workforce housing.

The revisions to the IAMP are intended to implement the Immokalee community's vision, as approved by promoting economic development and efficient delivery of services through greater density and intensity that encourage dense, clustered development; incorporating smart growth principles; and by providing greater development flexibility through mixed-use Subdistricts.