

# City of Alachua

*The Good Life Community*



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## STRATEGIC PLAN

Fiscal Year 2024

Adopted September 25, 2023

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Alachua, FL 32615  
(386) 418-6100  
[www.cityofalachua.com](http://www.cityofalachua.com)

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# ELECTED OFFICIALS AND ADMINISTRATION

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## **ELECTED OFFICIALS**

Gib Coerper, Mayor

Dayna Miller, Vice Mayor

Shirley Green Brown, Commissioner

Jennifer Blalock, Commissioner

Ed Potts, Commissioner

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Mike DaRoza, City Manager

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Incorporated in 1905, the City of Alachua encompasses approximately 36 square miles and has a population of more than 10,000 residents. It is a vibrant, small town community located in the heart of North Central Florida. The City of Alachua is home to international corporations, amongst which there are several Fortune 500 companies. It is a great place to visit and an even greater place to live, with superb quality of life features and all the amenities in place for self-sustainability.

The City of Alachua is commonly referred to as “The Good Life Community” thanks in large part to its quality of life. Alachua is a thriving, forward looking community with a positive outlook for growth while it maintains a small-town atmosphere. Alachua has a fair climate, a great public school system, great opportunities for recreational and cultural activities suited to all ages, maintains a multi-sport set of facilities and has a scenic, natural landscape.

The City of Alachua is committed to its residents and provides electric, water, and wastewater services; operates its own police department and provides maintenance services for public roads and rights of way.

## **On April 23, 2012 the City Commission adopted the 2030 Vision Statement:**

*The City has a strong image as the “Good Life Community.” The image is woven throughout the work of the City with a commitment to premium service delivery and a high quality of life. The City will be a business-friendly community, encouraging economic development and the establishment and expansion of major job centers in the industries of logistics, manufacturing, high-tech and bio-tech. The City will continue to invest in providing high quality recreational and cultural arts facilities and programs that create a sense of community. Alachua will be a place where housing choices are available to meet the needs of all citizens. Alachua will be a leader in fostering quality, well-planned growth and redevelopment. Alachua will be a community where citizens can safely choose one of several multi-modal transportation options, including cycling, walking, and innovative options such as ride shares. Alachua will strive to be continually known for its collaboration between citizens, business communities, schools and government and will continue working together for the common good.*

## **The vision is to be implemented via four established goals:**

1. Economic Development
2. Community, Educational, Cultural and Recreational Development
3. Transportation Mobility
4. Residential Opportunities

### **Goal #1: Economic Development (E)**

The City of Alachua has a unique business climate. The City is home to corporations, technology incubators, local businesses and start-up companies. The City will maintain its focus on a welcoming business environment and encourage business development in the downtown area and along the US 441 corridor. The City supports a sustainable, thriving Main Street with a variety of businesses and a downtown area that attracts shoppers and patrons through cutting edge marketing strategies. The City will continue to support the redevelopment and revitalization of the historic center of the community. Alachua desires to continue to be a home to innovative businesses and an employ-

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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ment center where jobs are available to citizens of all educational and skill levels and ages. The City will continue to encourage the growth and development of established industries, such as the life sciences, technologies and emerging industries and encourage the diversification and expansion of commercial businesses which provide integral services to the City's residents. The City will encourage a sustainable use of natural resources to ensure that economic growth and development will responsibly continue within the community. The City will build strong relationships with local, regional and state-wide economic development organizations in order to work together to retain existing businesses and attract future businesses. The City will pursue business incentives that encourage additional private investment from new or existing businesses that will enhance employment opportunities and the quality of life of residents.

### **Goal #2: Community, Educational, Cultural and Recreational Development (C)**

The City of Alachua has a very strong sense of community involvement as evidenced by community events and festivals which promote cultural arts and recreational activities, including art festivals, musical performances, sporting events and holiday events. The City will foster cultural growth, outreach and cultural tourism and enhancement of the community by supporting cultural arts programs. The City will maintain its strong recreation program and encourage a diversity of recreational programs to meet the needs of citizens. The City will strengthen partnerships to make educational opportunities in Alachua of the highest quality in order to attract families and produce graduates who positively contribute to the community and the world.

### **Goal #3: Transportation Mobility (T)**

The City of Alachua transportation system includes a heavily traveled US 441 corridor and a walkable downtown Main Street. The City will provide efficient traffic circulation that is safe and convenient while maintaining or improving the level of service on roadways. The City will encourage multi-modal enhancement and trail systems and provide for an aesthetically pleasing gateway between the I-75 interchange and downtown. The City will further a safe and connected pedestrian network that helps ensure a high quality of life for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities. New roadway construction and significant reconstruction projects will incorporate the principles embodied by the Complete Streets approach whenever possible. The City will explore opportunities for public transportation for Alachua residents, including innovative options such as ride shares and other emerging and technology-based options. The City will continue to pursue the interconnectivity of development in order to limit access points onto roadways, thereby reducing negative impacts upon the transportation network. The City will strengthen connections between major hubs within the community, such as those between the historic core and Progress Park and Legacy Park.

### **Goal #4: Residential Opportunities (R)**

The City of Alachua recognizes that residential development is tied to growth and employment opportunities and supports a diversity of housing types in order to enhance the City's physical and social fabric. The City will encourage the provision of housing types to serve a wide range of people, from those moving to Alachua to work and/or to raise families to those seeking senior housing and assisted living options. The City supports the provision of safe, affordable housing for all income levels. The City will encourage the construction of housing types including single-family conventional dwelling units, duplexes and quadraplexes, apartments and town homes, traditional mixed-use neighborhood planned development, live/work units, conservation subdivisions, and other innovative housing options that respond to societal changes and needs and are appropriate for the character of the City. The City supports enhancements that strengthen and upgrade improve existing neighborhoods, thereby maintaining a livable community for all demographics.

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# DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN

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The City Commission adopted the City’s first Strategic Plan on September 14, 2015. The City Commission met at a publicly announced meeting on June 15, 2023 for the purpose of outlining specific initiatives for the update of the City of Alachua Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan will help the City Manager and staff members develop a scope and action plan for each strategic initiative to support the realization of the Vision Statement in a planned, systematic and incremental manner, based on City Commission established priorities.

The following Strategic Initiatives were developed by the City Commission at that meeting.

These Strategic Initiatives are ranked in Priority Order (Highest, Higher and High as informally ranked by the City Commission during the June 15, 2023 meeting). **Each Strategic Priority demonstrates which Goal it supports (E, C, T, R).**

## Strategic Initiatives for FY 2023-2024

### Highest Priority

- Upgrade the water supply with additional well fields to prepare for future growth. **E**
- Develop and implement a strategy to enhance, cultivate and maintain relationships in life sciences, technology and emerging technologies industries. **E**
- Develop a collaborative strategy with the Alachua County School Board to improve performance of local schools. **C**
- Develop strategies to ensure cohesive residential development to accommodate the growth of infill development and redevelopment. **R**

### Higher Priority

- Revitalize Main Street and the downtown area. **E**
- Implement a marketing strategy that highlights and publicizes beneficial activities, events and services occurring in the City. **E**
- Implement a plan to provide online access to City services for residents and businesses to do business with the City from anywhere in the world. **C**
- Develop and implement a strategy to increase cultural arts opportunities for residents. **C**

### High Priority

- Explore opportunities for improvements in transit services that connect citizens to resources beyond the City limits. **T**
- Identify and explore potential opportunities to increase connectivity throughout the City, promoting a more walkable community. **T**
- Encourage construction of senior living housing opportunities including assisted living facilities. **R**

The Priority Rank is also shown graphically by use of the following symbols:



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# DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN

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The City Manager assigned a champion or champions at the Executive and Department Director levels to further define each Strategic Initiative as follows:

- Define the scope of the initiative;
- State desired outcome;
- Provide summary background;
- Identify the stakeholders;
- Provide the fiscal impact and funding source;
- Develop an action plan to accomplish the initiative;
- Provide the estimated completion date for each action item; and
- Create Critical Success Metrics to support progress report.

The City Manager will present the Strategic Plan at a City Commission Meeting and request review and adoption annually by a majority vote of the City Commission.

Upon adoption of the Strategic Plan by the City Commission, the budget components for each initiative will be itemized for the corresponding fiscal year.











It is envisioned that the City of Alachua Strategic Plan will be a living document, subject to adjustments and revisions as deemed necessary by the City Commission and the City Manager. The City Commission, by a majority vote, shall be able to add or remove initiatives in the Plan during the annual adoption process or more often if deemed necessary. The City Manager shall have the authority to revise the activities necessary to carry out the initiatives as these may change from time to time and are administrative in nature. Such changes by the City Manager shall be incorporated in the subsequent annual adoption process.

The City Manager will monitor progress and provide regular updates of the Strategic Initiatives. These updates will be in the form of a progress report and will be produced quarterly unless set otherwise by a majority vote of the City Commission. In addition, the City Manager reserves the right to bring up specific Strategic Initiatives to the City Commission if discussion is warranted.

Particular attention will be afforded to the metrics defined to support initiative progress. Some will be easily quantifiable (for example, a construction project progress will be monitored by an established baseline schedule and budget). Other initiatives do not lend themselves to be easily measured and the staff will provide specific events and milestones that can be presented to the City Commission.

The ultimate goal of a Strategic Plan is to develop and implement specific action plans so that the community's growing needs and future vision are met in an efficient and equitable way.

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES BY GOAL

Initiative Number	Description	Goal	Priority Level
1.1	Revitalize Main Street and the downtown area.	E	
1.2	Upgrade the water supply with additional well fields to prepare for future growth.	E	
1.3	Develop and implement a strategy to enhance, cultivate and maintain relationships in life sciences, technology and emerging technologies industries.	E	
2.1	Implement a marketing strategy that highlights and publicizes beneficial activities, events and services occurring in the City.	E	
2.2	Implement a plan to provide online access to City services for residents and businesses to do business with the City from anywhere in the world.	C	
2.3	Develop and implement a strategy to increase cultural arts opportunities for residents.	C	
2.4	Develop a collaborative strategy with the Alachua County School Board to improve performance of local schools.	C	
3.1	Identify and explore potential opportunities to increase connectivity throughout the City, promoting a more walkable community.	T	
4.1	Encourage construction of senior living housing opportunities, including assisted living facilities.	R	
4.2	Develop strategies to ensure cohesive and compatible residential development to accommodate the growth of infill development and redevelopment.	R	



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# STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1.1

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## Goal 1: Economic Development

### INITIATIVE 1.1: REVITALIZE MAIN STREET AND THE DOWNTOWN AREA.

**Priority:**



**Champion:**

Planning and Community Development Department

**Stakeholders:**

City Residents and Business Owners, Alachua Chamber of Commerce, Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA).

**Desired Outcome:**

A sustainable, thriving Main Street with a variety of businesses and a downtown area that attracts visitors through various initiatives which support and promote downtown businesses by attracting shoppers and patrons.

**Fiscal Impact:**

The following items have been budgeted in FY 2024: Marketing (\$43,000), Operating Expenses (\$29,000), Grants/Aids (\$25,000), Professional Services (\$106,500) Contractual Services (\$80,000), Building Repair and Maintenance (\$20,000), and Capital Projects (\$255,000 total – Theater Park renovation \$140,000, Wayfinding signage \$100,000, Interpretive kiosks \$15,000).

*Funding Source: Community Redevelopment Agency*

**Completion Date:**

Ongoing

**Background:**

During the economic downturn many Main Street businesses closed, with the domino effect of fewer visitors coming to what once was a lively downtown. During FY 2015, the City Commission and the DRTB discussed the need to devise methods to revitalize Main Street in order to enhance the character of downtown, provide for business retention and expansion and market the uniqueness of downtown Alachua. Several stakeholder meetings were held over the subsequent two years.

**Progress to Date:**

- In FY 2016, the City completed Strategic Initiative 1.3 of the FY 2016 Strategic Plan, which was to develop an implementation plan to revitalize Main Street and the downtown area. The City retained RMA consultants to perform the market analysis, which was completed and accepted by the City Commission in July 2016.

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1.1

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- In Dec. 2016, the CRA was restructured with the City Commission sitting as the CRA Board.
- A CRA Coordinator was hired in Jan. 2017.
- The CRA Advisory Board was established in April 2017 and is meeting regularly.
- A Downtown Business & Property Owner Stakeholder Meeting was held in Sept. 2017 to receive input on revitalization efforts.
- Potential wayfinding signage locations have been identified.
- Marketing plan for FY 2019 has been developed.
- Staff developed Business Facade Grant Program documents.
- The CRA and CRAAB developed a Main Street and CRA Brand.
- Staff developed an event and program schedule.
- Phase III of the multi-year Main Street Landscape Beautification Project was completed in June 2018.
- Staff created and implemented a business facade improvement grant program.
- Staff implemented a marketing plan.
- Staff retained CHW Professional Consultants to design wayfinding signage.
- Third Thursday program has been sunsetted while staff works with downtown businesses to develop a new events program.
- Staff completed land rights acquisitions and construction documents to build a new parking lot and underground utilities from NW 148th Place to NW 150th Ave. Staff awarded the bid to construct the parking lot, and the project was completed and open to the public on March 23, 2023.
- Staff prioritized locations from the Wayfinding and Signage Report to locate signage on US 441 and Main Street.
- Staff prioritized marketing strategies to attract patrons to downtown with the use of videos that will be used in website and social media campaigns.
- Signature Events are being created to increase patronage on Main Street. The first signature event was Holiday Nights during the month of December, started in 2021.
- Billboards on Interstate-75 have been installed with rotating advertisements to showcase various events and seasonal messages.
- Staff worked with the public to revise the Business Façade Grant Program, increasing the 50% matching grant award for façade improvement costs from \$5,000 to \$12,500 and including signage as a potential eligible reimbursable expense.
- Staff implemented a redesign of the landscape on Main Street which was enhanced by additional plantings during the Great American Cleanup Main Street Beautification projects in 2022 and 2023.
- Staff retained a graphic designer to produce a Walking Guide to Main Street Alachua.
- The City was awarded a \$25,000 Duke Energy Foundation Economic Development Grant to fund a Downtown Strategic Plan to be performed by Retail Strategies. The scope of work will include market research, full demographic market analysis, a Strategic Visioning Workshop and a 5-Year Downtown Strategic Plan.
- Staff secured grant funding from the Pomeroy Foundation for a National Register marker to commemorate the placement of the City of Alachua Downtown Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places in 2000. The marker will be installed at the entrance of Theatre Park.

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1.1

- Staff promoted the Visit Florida free web site listing program to tourism-related businesses in the CRA district and throughout the City. The City qualified for a “City Page” on VisitFlorida.com, the State of Florida’s official tourism marketing website.
- The City of Alachua will be included in Visit Florida’s annual Official Florida Vacation Guide starting in 2024.
- The City of Alachua became a member of Main Street America in 2023, an organization committed to strengthening and revitalizing communities through preservation-based economic development in older and historic downtown and neighborhood commercial districts.

### Action Plan for FY 2024:

Action Steps		Estimated Completion Date
1.	Continue implementation of 2016 Market Study.	Ongoing
2.	Develop “Signature” events throughout the year.	Ongoing
3.	Develop a phased plan to renovate Theatre Park.	October 2023
4.	Explore grant opportunities for capital improvement projects within the 5-year plan, such as Wayfinding Signage, Theatre Park, Façade Enhancements and various events.	November 2023 and ongoing
5.	Select locations to be prioritized for establishing Wayfinding signage as outlined in the 2019 Wayfinding Master Plan, and select manufacturer(s) to produce those signs.	January 2024
6.	Revise 5-year plan for site-specific capital improvement projects that promote business attraction and retention.	March 2024 and ongoing
7.	Complete phase 1 of Theatre Park renovation.	June 2024
8.	Complete installation of prioritized Wayfinding signage.	August 2024

### Critical Success Measures:

- Continue to build upon and enhance the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting and work with key downtown business partners and organizations to promote Holiday Nights on Main on Fridays in December, as well as other signature events held throughout the year.
- Maintain conversations with key partners to work toward spearheading and facilitating new special events and activities to improve downtown visitation.
- Restore past events and activities that provided direct benefits to and were enjoyed by the community, such as the Farmer’s Market.
- Attract new target businesses to Main Street to fill empty storefronts.

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# STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1.2

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## Goal 1: Economic Development

INITIATIVE 1.2: UPGRADE THE WATER SUPPLY WITH ADDITIONAL WELL FIELDS TO PREPARE FOR FUTURE GROWTH.

**Priority:**



**Champion:** Public Services Department

**Stakeholders:** City residents, current businesses located in the City, future residents and businesses looking to locate or relocate in the City which currently use or intend to use the water utility service provided by the City.

**Desired Outcome:** To construct new wells and provide additional capacity from the well head protection area and the City ground storage facility.

**Fiscal Impact:** \$8,000,000

*Funding Source: Water Fund, Legislative Appropriation, Grant funding*

**Completion Date:** May 2025

**Background:** This project consists of the engineering design, permitting, and engineering services needed to construct a 1-MGD supply well, raw water main, treatment improvements, and office/lab facilities. The design will include a new 1.0 million gallon per day (MGD) production well, treatment facilities, an operating facility, yard piping improvements, electrical backup and associated infrastructure improvements. The treated water will meet applicable water quality standards. The project will help ensure dependable access to clean water and will protect the City's drinking water supply by diversifying local water supply sources and making the water supply system more resilient to extreme weather events and potential water quality impacts. In 2017 Hurricane Irma resulted in the City of Alachua experiencing contamination of its water supply, preventing drinking water to all 10,000 residents and hundreds of businesses for more than a week. This occurred in large part due to the current wells supplying the drinking water, which are all geographically located close together amidst the karst geology of the region and can be overwhelmed during storm events and impacted by surficial contamination.

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1.2

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### Progress to Date:

- Worked with consultants to identify potential concerns in the water distribution system that lead to pressure and volume issues and how the construction of new wells would impact these metrics.
- Performed preliminary review of future water needs.
- Performed preliminary screening of suitable land for potential well field development.
- Confirmed current allowances of existing Consumptive Use Permit with Suwannee River Water Management District.
- Developed a scope of work and retained a consultant to assess and identify sites for future potable water supply well(s).
- The City was awarded \$375,000 appropriation from the State of Florida for a new well field.
- Developed field test and sampling for future well field site.
- Jacobs Engineering developed design and work scope.
- Construction Documents completed, and Bid Document prepared.
- Evaluated bid proposal.

### Action Plan for FY 2024:

Action Steps		Estimated Completion Date
1.	Develop, plan and hold Groundbreaking Ceremony	October 2023
2.	Commence construction of new well field.	November 2023
3.	Complete construction of new well field	May 2025
4.	Develop, plan and hold Ribbon-cutting Ceremony	June 2025

### Critical Success Measures:

- Complete construction activities

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1.3

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### Goal 1: Economic Development

INITIATIVE 1.3: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A STRATEGY TO ENHANCE, CULTIVATE AND MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS IN LIFE SCIENCES, TECHNOLOGY AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES INDUSTRIES.

**Priority:**



**Champion:** Executive Department

**Stakeholders:** Life sciences and technology companies located in Alachua, Council for Economic Outreach and City residents.

**Desired Outcome:** Build strong relationships with life sciences, technology and emerging technology industries in Alachua to promote the growth of these sectors in Alachua through business retention and attraction efforts.

**Fiscal Impact:** \$50,000

*Funding Source: General fund special expense*

**Completion Date:** Ongoing

**Background:** The City of Alachua is home to many companies specializing in life sciences, technologies and emerging technologies. These companies serve as a major employment base for the community and contribute to the quality of life through their contribution to ad valorem taxes and corporate citizenship activities among other efforts. Alachua has an impressive presence in these industries with many located in Progress Park, Foundation Park, Copeland Park and San Felasco Tech City. The University of Florida Sid Martin Biotechnology Institute located in Alachua is a world-renowned business incubator with graduate companies attracting more than \$5.6 billion in funding and M&A activity. Additionally, after completing the incubation program at the Institute, 88-percent of the companies are still operating five years post-graduation.

**Progress to Date:**

- The City established the Corporate Park zoning district in 2012 to promote the development of these industries.

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1.3

- City staff presented the Commission with a draft of the Business Incentive Program on September 23, 2019, at which time the Commission gave approval for staff to return with proposed legislation.
- City Commission adopted Business Incentive Program on June 22, 2020.
- By March of FY 2021, staff met with 16 Alachua life sciences companies and two educational stakeholders to better understand the sector’s needs.
- Staff developed marketing strategy to promote Business Incentive Program as a priority growth initiative in the BEST Business Climate, a 5-year Economic Development Strategy, to be proposed to the City Commission in May of FY 2021.
- Staff secured University of Florida President Dr. Kent Fuchs, Santa Fe College President Dr. Paul Broadie and two C-level officers from Alachua bio and life science companies to co-chair the Alachua Biotech Partnership in June of FY 2021.
- Staff introduced Economic Development Manager to several businesses within the bio and life science community.
- Staff collaborated with consultants to broaden the scope of the proposed Biotech Partnership to include companies involved in all emerging technologies.
- Staff applied for a Federal grant as part of a coalition of local entities to be awarded capacity planning in order to be designated as a Regional Technology and Innovation Hub – if awarded, this designation would serve essentially the same role as the proposed Biotech Partnership.

**Action Plan for FY 2024:**

Action Steps		Estimated Completion Date
1.	Implement strategy for capacity planning with coalition partners for designation as a Regional Technology and Innovation Hub if awarded Federal grant.	December 2023
2.	Deliver presentation for either Regional Hub or Emerging Technologies Partnership to UF and SFC presidents.	February 2024
3.	Launch official Partnership.	May 2024
4.	Hold first Partnership Steering Committee meeting.	June 2024
5.	Establish and foster alignment in the City between emerging technology business and education stakeholders.	Ongoing

**Critical Success Measures:**

- Receive capacity planning Federal funding for coordination work to receive designation as a Regional Technology and Innovation Hub.
- Hold meeting with UF and SFC presidents.
- Retain lead generation strategies, and build lead database for marketing aspects of Alachua Biotech Partnership.

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2.1

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### Goal 2: Community, Educational, Cultural and Recreation Development

INITIATIVE 2.1: IMPLEMENT A MARKETING STRATEGY THAT HIGHLIGHTS AND PUBLICIZES BENEFICIAL ACTIVITIES, EVENTS AND SERVICES OCCURRING IN THE CITY.

**Priority:**



**Champion:** Executive Department

**Stakeholders:** City residents and businesses.

**Desired Outcome:** Develop a marketing strategy that regularly conveys to the world why Alachua is the place of choice to live, work and play, creating a sense of community and unity among citizens.

**Fiscal Impact:** \$30,000 annually.  
*Funding Source: General Fund.*

**Completion Date:** Ongoing

**Background:** The City has a strong image as “The Good Life Community.” This image is woven throughout the work of the City with a commitment to premium service delivery and a high quality of life. Furthermore, the City has enjoyed a reputation as a business-friendly community, encouraging economic development that has resulted in major job centers in the industries of logistics, manufacturing, high-tech and biotech. The combined quality of life and availability of career options make Alachua the perfect place to live, work and play.

**Progress to Date:**

- Elected officials and staff participate in regular networking events with organizations to share the work being done by the City as well as to receive input.
- The City participates in various informational marketing campaigns, communicating its quality of life and business friendly climate.
- The City retained a consultant (RMA) to perform a market study of the downtown area and Main Street. The study was completed and approved by the City Commission on July 11, 2016.
- Staff waited to receive the market study before moving forward with the overall City marketing plan to ensure the findings and recommendations of the market study could be incorporated.



## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2.1

- Staff entered into an agreement with 601 Studios on February 12, 2020 to begin production of a marketing material to promote and market the City of Alachua.
- Staff developed and implemented work processes in January of FY 2021 to standardize the way events and news segments appear on the website to create a more consistent messaging to internal and external stakeholders.
- Staff broadened the City’s social media reach by implementing an invite and post/event boost process (through both organic and paid items) that produced 116 new likes/followers (average of 38.7 per month), with a reach (people who viewed posts at least once) of 7,083 in June FY 2021 alone.
- Staff repurposed the calendar on the City website to serve as a community event calendar.
- Staff added TV monitors to the waiting areas of City Hall and began running event notifications there, in the lobby at the Legacy Park Multipurpose Center and at Cleather Hathcock Sr. Community Center.
- The City Manager determined to hire a City Public Information Officer (PIO) in FY 2024 to coordinate and centralize all official City communication.

**Action Plan for FY 2024:**

<b>Action Steps</b>		<b>Estimated Completion Date</b>
1.	Hire Public Information Officer (PIO).	March 2024
2.	Develop and implement ways to communicate activities within the business community (such as on closed circuit TV, community calendars, window/door flyers, e-mail blasts, a city guide, and the Good Life Report).	April 2024 and ongoing
3.	Assemble e-mail address list.	Ongoing
4.	Develop and complete PIO Procedures Manual.	September 2024
5.	Develop avenues in which to record and disseminate civic storytelling.	September 2024

**Critical Success Measures:**

- Promote and strengthen traffic to existing social media platform.
- Monitor website to maintain fresh content pertaining to positive and valuable activities in the City.

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2.2

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### Goal 2: Community, Educational, Cultural and Recreation Development

INITIATIVE 2.2: IMPLEMENT A PLAN TO PROVIDE ONLINE ACCESS TO CITY SERVICES FOR RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES TO DO BUSINESS WITH THE CITY FROM ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

**Priority:**



**Champion:** Finance & Administrative Services

**Stakeholders:** City residents and city businesses

**Desired Outcome:** Establish online platforms for City services to be accessed by residents and businesses to do business with the City virtually.

**Fiscal Impact:** \$150,000 annual appropriation; additional funds necessary for specific service upgrades.

*Funding Source: General Fund.*

**Completion Date:** September 2024

**Background:** The City of Alachua offers a wide variety of services including utilities, building permits, recreation programs, planning and development, among others. As technology advances, opportunities are being created for a host of services to be delivered online. Currently, residents and businesses are able to access City services in person, with limited services accessible online. While providing services in person is an important component of service delivery, society has evolved to raise the standard of service delivery to include online platforms. Providing in-person and online service delivery options will afford residents and businesses choices in how they interact and do business with the City of Alachua. In order to provide online services in an efficient and secure way, the City must take a measured approach that considers these metrics and navigates the complexities in information technology. This approach will likely take up to five years to rollout services, although some services will likely be available sooner.

**Progress to Date:**

- The City offers limited services available online.
- A focused investment in information technology has been a priority of the City, allocating \$150,000 annually beginning Fiscal Year 2017-18.

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2.2

- The City has invested in major software improvements with functionality to develop online platforms for residents and businesses to access.
- Staff completed network assessment with Ivanti Software company in April of FY 2020.
- Staff implemented E-Check payment option on City website.
- Staff implemented online payments related to miscellaneous receivables, building and planning invoices in FY 2020.
- Staff deployed new City website in August of FY 2020.
- Staff procured 6 new servers and virtualization software in FY 2021.
- Staff increased the size and space of the network operations lab/room by nearly 50% in June of FY 2021
- Microsoft Outlook Office Exchange was implemented for City Staff in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter of FY 2023.
- Network virtualization upgraded in July 2023.

### Action Plan for FY 2024:

Action Steps		Estimated Completion Date
1.	Develop online HR job application.	December 2023
2.	Rollout HR job applications online.	February 2024
3.	Develop utility billing online interface.	April 2024
4.	Rollout utility billing online.	May 2024
5.	Develop online Recreation signups and rental documents.	July 2024
6.	Rollout Recreation signups and rentals online.	August 2024

### Critical Success Measures:

- Develop remaining online service documents and applications.
- Finalize rolling out remaining online services.

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2.3

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### Goal 2: Community, Educational, Cultural and Recreation Development

#### INITIATIVE 2.4: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A STRATEGY TO INCREASE CULTURAL ARTS OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS.

**Priority:**



**Champion:** Recreation and Culture Department

**Stakeholders:** City residents and arts and cultural organizations.

**Desired Outcome:** Provide cultural opportunities to residents to contribute to a positive quality of life.

**Fiscal Impact:** \$25,000

*Funding Source: General Fund.*

**Completion Date:** Ongoing

**Background:** The City of Alachua provides a strong quality of life for residents. The Recreation & Culture Department has a longstanding history of providing top-notch services to residents that create a sense of community. With the construction of the Legacy Park Multipurpose Center and the Legacy Park Amphitheatre, the City has invested in the facilities necessary to provide a robust arts and cultural offering. The City has hosted cultural events in FY 2018, FY 2019 and FY 2020, including ballets, musical performances, art lessons and community gatherings. With a commitment to investing in staff resources and physical infrastructure, the City is poised to implement cultural programs in a robust way.

**Progress to Date:**

- Legacy Park Multipurpose Center (with performance stage) opened in June 2017.
- Legacy Park Amphitheater opened in October of 2019.
- City has hosted a variety of cultural and arts programs available to the public.
- City annually funds staffing for the Recreation and Culture Department who are available to administer cultural programs.
- Staff scheduled a monthly Concert Series that included a group of five (5) diverse performances to span the summer of FY 2020, but was cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic.
- Staff identified The State of Florida's Division of Cultural Affairs grants programming as a funding opportunity to support cultural programming in the City in FY 2020.

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2.3

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- Since reopening in June 2020 (after COVID-19 shut down), the Recreation and Culture Department added several outdoor performances to programming in FY 2021, including ballets, a spring and fall concert series in which diverse musical genres were scheduled for March, April and May, and in September, October and November.

### Action Plan for FY 2024:

Action Steps		Estimated Completion Date
1.	Identify funding opportunities to support programming.	Ongoing
2.	Partner with Swamp Bots of Santa Fe to bring a For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) event to Legacy Park Multipurpose Center.	February 2024
3.	Attempt to schedule popular and well-known music acts for Spring Concert Series at Legacy Park Amphitheater and increase advertising.	February 2024
4.	Schedule event with Music & Arts Program (MAP) at Legacy Park Multipurpose Center	May 2024
5.	Schedule Cade Camp with Cade Museum at Legacy Park Multipurpose Center.	July 2024

### Critical Success Measures:

- Identify funding sources.
- Improve attendance at Spring Concert Series.
- Increase social media presence and engagement.

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2.4

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### Goal 4: Community, Educational, Cultural and Recreation Development

INITIATIVE 2.5: DEVELOP A COLLABORATIVE STRATEGY WITH THE ALACHUA COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS WITHIN THE CITY.

**Priority:**



**Champion:**

Executive Department

**Stakeholders:**

City residents and businesses, home builders (local and regional), Alachua Chamber of Commerce, School Board of Alachua County and various governmental entities.

**Desired Outcome:**

Establish a collaborative approach with the Alachua County School Board that provides students within City of Alachua public schools an opportunity to achieve their highest academic potential.

**Fiscal Impact:**

N/A

**Completion Date:**

Ongoing

**Background:**

The City has a strong desire and commitment to be recognized as “The Good Life Community.” This image is woven throughout the work of the City with a commitment to service and a high quality of life. The State of Florida assigns letter grades to schools based on a variety of measures. Some of the public schools within the City of Alachua have received a letter grade of “C” or below for several years. Education is the foundation to many aspects of daily life, directly impacting a person’s well-being - both social and economic - employment rates, housing and property values and involvement with the justice system, to name a few. This is true for all children, but is compounded for marginalized/vulnerable youth. According to Florida Department of Education, nearly 60% of all youth in Alachua County are economically disadvantaged. That percentage is even higher within Alachua’s city limits; Alachua Elementary (100%), A.L. Mebane Middle School (92%) and Santa Fe High School (55%). Providing a high-performing and equitable educational system is essential for the overall well-being of a community. Therefore, it is vital that all students in the City are provided an opportunity to achieve their highest academic, professional and life goals potential.

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2.4

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### **Progress to Date:**

- On December 9, 2019, the City Commission authorized the City Manager to submit a grant application to the Children’s Trust of Alachua County (CTAC) for RFA 20-937.
- Staff hosted a Joint City of Alachua-Alachua County School Board Meeting on December 10, 2019.
- The CTAC application, submitted by City Staff on December 18, 2019, included funding for programs in after school activities, tutoring services, summer enrichment and education services, and summer high school credit courses in music and science/technology.
- On February 24, 2020, the City Commission authorized City Staff to enter into an agreement with the Children’s Trust of Alachua County in the amount of \$135,002 to provide the services under the grant application.
- In coordination with the School Board of Alachua County (SBAC), staff was able to receive reported percentages of student attendance in City’s after-school tutoring program – the first-step in monitoring measurable outcomes – in the three SBAC schools in Alachua in March of FY 2021 2nd Quarter. Alachua Elementary reported 98% student attendance, Mebane Middle School reported 96% student attendance and Santa Fe High School reported 60% student attendance. Program facilitators at Santa Fe pointed to an existing, school-created extra “power hour” during school hours as a possible detraction from the after-school tutoring program.
- Staff made a request of SBAC Superintendent Dr. Carlee Simon for a joint meeting with the SBAC in the 2nd Quarter of FY 2021.
- In June of FY 2021, Alachua County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Carlee Simon gave a special presentation to the City Commission.
- In September of FY 2021, staff held a phone conference with Alachua County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Carlee Simon to schedule an in-person meeting between the two staffs to begin strategizing and developing a plan to improve performance of schools within the City.
- Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the programming for the 2019 CTAC grant was delayed and began in October of 2020. With that award, staff started an after-school tutoring program at Alachua and W.W. Irby Elementary, Mebane Middle School and Santa Fe High School.
- In the Spring of FY 2021, staff applied for a second grant from CTAC for summer programming and was awarded funds to develop summer camps. Camps were developed for children grades Kindergarten to 12th grade.
- In the 4th Quarter of FY 2022, Staff met with Alachua County School Board Superintendent Shane Andrew to identify tangible ways to impact schools in the community.
- Staff met with the principals of all public, charter and private schools that teach kindergarteners within the City and received feedback and established the basis for ongoing communication in the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of FY 2023.
- Education Task Force created in 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter of FY 2023 to advise City Commission on best practices for addressing ways to support improvements in education.

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2.4

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### Action Plan for FY 2024:

Action Steps		Estimated Completion Date
1.	Develop methods for robustly advertising Education Task Force meetings to maximize public involvement.	January 2024
2.	Establish active relationships between the Education Task Force and leaders in local schools and early education centers.	February 2024
3.	Establish an annual joint meeting between the City Commission and School Board of Alachua County later in the school year.	March 2024
4.	Establish and implement ways of evaluating and monitoring early education and after-school tutorial program.	Ongoing

### Critical Success Measures:

- Connect Education Task Force to local schools, daycares and early childhood education centers.
- Implement after-school and summer programming.
- Improved school test scores.



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# STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 3.1

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## Goal 3: Transportation Mobility

INITIATIVE 3.1: IDENTIFY AND EXPLORE POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE CONNECTIVITY THROUGHOUT THE CITY, PROMOTING A MORE WALKABLE COMMUNITY.

**Priority:**



**Champion:** Planning and Community Development Department

**Stakeholders:** City residents and businesses visitors.

**Desired Outcome:** To create a safe and connected pedestrian network that helps ensure a high quality of life for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.

**Fiscal Impact:** TBD.  
*Funding Source: General Fund; Grants.*

**Completion Date:** Ongoing.

**Background:** Walking is fundamental. It contributes to health, happiness, social connections and a sense of community. Improving pedestrian connectivity creates an amenity that is attractive to current and future residents as well as others visiting the City of Alachua. Providing comfortable, safe walking routes and connections between homes, businesses, schools, parks, etc. provides the opportunity to reduce traffic on roadways, increase outdoor social interactions and makes it easier to walk to daily destinations. Such improvement should also be designed to make getting around accessible for all ages and abilities.

**Progress to Date:**

- A Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) was adopted by the City Commission on May 22, 2017. This LRTP was developed as a result of a Strategic Initiative in the FY 2015-16 Strategic Plan. The LRTP focuses on vehicular transportation but also includes a section on bicycle and pedestrian facilities as well as a priority list of sidewalk projects for consideration.
- Staff coordinated with Public Services Department to identify areas for improved sidewalk maintenance and enhancement.

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 3.1

- Staff reviewed the City’s Long-Range Transportation Plan to identify areas where installation of new sidewalks have yet to be completed.
- Staff identified potential locations for the installation of rapid-flashing beacons at new or existing crosswalks.
- Staff applied for the Safe Routes to School Grant to further enhance pedestrian accessibility between residential areas and schools.
- The City’s Safety and Wellness Program has developed a Step Walking Challenge for City employees in order to encourage healthy exercise habits, utilizing specific sidewalk routes near City Hall.
- The Planning Department, in coordination with the Public Services Department, identified a sidewalk project within the CRA which would enhance walkability from downtown to the Hal Brady Recreation Center.

**Action Plan for FY 2024:**

Action Steps		Estimated Completion Date
1.	Develop a pedestrian needs survey for the downtown area.	December 2023
2.	Distribute the pedestrian needs survey for the downtown area.	January 2024
3.	Analyze the results of the pedestrian needs survey for the downtown area.	April 2024
4.	Present the findings of the pedestrian needs survey to the City Commission along with Staff recommendations.	June 2024
5.	Complete a feasibility study for sidewalks on City Commission-selected streets and roadways.	August 2024

**Critical Success Measures:**

- Distribute a pedestrian needs survey for the downtown area.
- Develop a prioritized list of improvements to be considered by the City Commission, based on results of the pedestrian needs survey and Staff recommendations.

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# STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 4.1

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## Goal 4: Residential Opportunities

INITIATIVE 4.1: ENCOURAGE CONSTRUCTION OF SENIOR LIVING HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDING ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES.

**Priority:**



**Champion:**

Compliance & Risk Management Department

**Stakeholders:**

City senior residents and future residents, general public and governmental entities.

**Desired Outcome:**

Improve the quality of life by increasing the amount of adequate, safe and affordable senior housing.

**Fiscal Impact:**

Financing of the more than \$10 million new 40-unit Senior Apartment Facility in Merrillwood on Alachua County Housing Authority (ACHA) land was secured by ACHA and its co-developer without participation by or recourse to the City. The bulk of the financing package, more than \$6,709,929 and \$800,000 is in no repayment federal housing funds and nearly \$3 million is in the form of a long-term FHA low-interest loan. The City Commission also authorized a \$200,000 funding commitment in order to demonstrate City support of the project and as a part of the ACHA successful application for added federal funds to meet unexpected cost increases.

**Completion Date:**

September 2026

**Background:**

Affordable senior housing is currently a pressing need being addressed by the City and ACHA as there is no dedicated public-supported senior housing in the City. ACHA, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Alachua County Development Corporation (ACDC) are dynamic entities that are professionally staffed, highly experienced and function professionally in the area of public financing of public and private low-income home ownership. ACHA and the City of Alachua are close partners in providing affordable housing in the city and are presently focused on improving current facilities and meeting the need for senior housing. City staff, at the direction of the City Commission and City Manager, have worked diligently with operators of residential group homes to increase the number of residents who receive such housing and assisted living care. The financing approved for the affordable senior housing facility at Merrillwood (Phase I) was followed by an unsuccessful ACHA application in August of 2021 and a new package to be filed in the Fall of 2022 for funding to replace the remaining Merrillwood 49 Single Family (SF) units with more than 90 new SF

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 4.1

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units (Phase II). Phase III is planned to replace all existing 50-year-old units with additional new energy efficient homes all designed and constructed to accommodate all persons including seniors and persons with special needs. Residents who are displaced by any construction will be moved within the Merrillwood neighborhood or relocated at ACHA expense to qualified affordable housing.

### **Progress to Date:**

- The City, through a cost sharing grant with the Suwannee River Water Management District and Florida Department of Environmental Protection, enlarged and enhanced an existing retention basin to improve drainage and facilitate expansion of the complex.
- The City repaved all interior streets and upgraded the Merrillwood complex stormwater system. The improvements prepared the site to accommodate the Senior Housing Facility, Phase II and Phase III at a reduced cost just in time to help offset the large increases due to the still present supply chain disruptions and labor shortages brought about by the Pandemic.
- Demolition of the 17 existing single-family residential units began on April 2023 and is complete.
- Plans to construct the 40-unit ACHA Senior Housing Facility in Merrillwood are complete, the financing is in place, building permit is approved and construction is underway.
- Formal ground-breaking ceremony for the new Senior Housing Facility was held June 8, 2023.
- ACHA anticipates filing the next Request for Applications for funding family housing in the Fall of 2024.
- Any ACHA request for “Local Support” in the form of a \$37,500 long term low-interest loan to be made as part of the application for 9% Tax Credit financing will not require City of Alachua funding until FY 2024-25.
- City Staff continues to work closely with ACHA Staff and will continue to work with its selected co-developer. ACHA issued a request for proposals, received three including current co-developer Arbour Valley Communities and will make a selection at the meeting of the ACHA Board on July 24, 2024.
- A new concept of Assisted Living Facility (ALF) is evolving. Rather than construct large group living facilities with large kitchen and other support staff, facilities are moving to individual single, townhomes or multifamily units with meals and other support services provided by contract. About half of the 92 new Merrillwood family units will be so configured and a single ALF likely will not be in the final plan.

# STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 4.1

**Action Plan for FY 2024:**

**Phase I Senior Housing**

Action Steps		Estimated Completion Date
1.	Commence construction of facility.	October 2023
2.	Complete construction of facility.	October 2024
3.	Develop, plan and hold Ribbon-cutting Ceremony with ACHA.	November 2024

**Phase II Family Housing**

Action Steps		Estimated Completion Date
1.	Application Submission for ACHA Merrillwood Family Housing	October – November 2024
2.	Site Plan and Architectural submission to City (120 days).	February 2025
3.	Develop, plan and hold Groundbreaking Ceremony with ACHA.	June 2025
4.	Commence construction of facility.	August 2025
5.	Complete construction of facility.	September 2026
6.	Develop, plan and hold Ribbon-cutting Ceremony with ACHA.	October 2026

**Critical Success Measures:**

- Maintain regular contact with ACDC.
- Evaluate other senior living opportunities.

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 4.2

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### Goal 4: Residential Opportunities

INITIATIVE 4.2: DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO ENSURE COHESIVE AND COMPATIBLE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT TO ACCOMMODATE THE GROWTH OF INFILL DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE CITY.

**Priority:**



**Champion:**

Planning and Community Development Department

**Stakeholders:**

City current and future residents.

**Desired Outcome:**

Ensure infill development and redevelopment occurs alongside greenfield and existing residential development in a cohesive and planned manner.

**Fiscal Impact:**

N/A

**Completion Date:**

June 2024

**Background:**

A variety of housing opportunities are available for residents and future residents of the City of Alachua. With the expected continued growth of the City, new housing developments and residential opportunities are forecasted as well. The City's Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations (LDRs) provide the framework and regulatory mechanisms to ensure the development of land occurs consistent with established urban and regional planning practices and the vision of the community.

The City has experienced primarily greenfield development over its history, transitioning from a solely agrarian community to a City with both rural and urban characteristics. With growth occurring primarily on undeveloped lands, there has been a limited amount of infill development or redevelopment. Even though the City still has a substantial amount of greenfield land available for development, due to the City's growth patterns, infill development and redevelopment of lands is inevitable. It is important the City continues to examine how infill development and redevelopment are best encouraged and facilitated, particularly via the Comprehensive Plan and LDRs, with a focus on the efficient utilization of land resources, compatibility with existing density residential development, a variety of residential development options and efficient delivery of public services. In addition to other strategies, emphasis may include how zoning categories and standards can be enhanced to accomplish these goals. This may involve creating new development standards related to transitional areas, lot sizes, buffering, distance between homes, architectural variability, new housing types and methods to increase density in the downtown/urban core.

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 4.2

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### Progress to Date:

- The City held multiple stakeholder forums to understand issues and questions regarding the residential land development process.
- The City adopted several amendments to its LDRs to enhance the residential development process on July 27, 2020.
- The City adopted an updated fee schedule on August 24, 2020 that decreased the fiscal impact on the residential development process.
- A new Project Assistance Team (PAT) was unveiled in Summer 2021 that replaced the former Development Review Team, with a focus on assisting stakeholders through the land development process.
- Staff reviews existing development patterns when reviewing applications for subdivisions and requests for amendments to the Future Land Use Map and Zoning Atlas and advises the applicant of appropriate designations and standards in consideration of surrounding development.

### Action Plan for FY 2024:

Action Steps		Estimated Completion Date
1.	Research peer community comprehensive plans and LDRs for new and/or innovative planning standards and techniques.	January 2024
2.	Develop proposed amendments to the City Comprehensive Plan and LDRs.	March 2024
3.	City Commission consider adoption of proposed amendments.	June 2024

### Critical Success Measures:

- Proposed amendments presented to City Commission.