



Groveland

FLORIDA

City with Natural Charm™



STRATEGIC PLAN • JUNE 21, 2022

Strategic Plan – June 21, 2022

Mission Statement:

The City of Groveland is an ecosystem intentionally connecting safety service, and innovation to support a vibrant welcoming community with natural charm.

Vision Statement

Groveland is a collection of towns, villages, and hamlets interweaving a diversity of people into an eco-agrarian landscape, embodying the following core values.



Core Values

Intentionality



We value our shared vision and becoming what we think about. Being intentional means being descriptive on what kind of city we want to be. It means thinking with the end in mind and taking incremental steps toward that vision. The Strategic Plan sets a vision for what we want to become in 10 years, provides actions toward achieving that vision, and is framed around our core values.

We value our connection with nature and with each other. Relationship- building, complete and walkable communities, park and trail systems, and mobility systems are examples for how we enhance our connectivity.

Connectivity





We value our natural and agricultural landscape and know that will enhance our quality of life and will attract others. This value is the result of combining our conservation and eco-agrarian focus areas and bringing about an economic development and tourism strategy that works with those areas of focus rather than against it. Groveland is a local city with a global vision.

Vitality



Knowledge



We value education and lifelong learning. We envision neighborhood scale schools where kids can walk or bicycle to school. Training and certificate programs for agriculture, culinary, construction, art, and the jobs of the 21st century. actions toward achieving that vision, and is framed around our core values.

We value how we treat one another, sharing our knowledge, talents, and resources. Providing everyone with a seat at the table, ensuring equitable access to community services, and taking action in the present moment.

Heart



Informed and Engaged Community

Current State

The City has established a dedicated Communications Division which is committed to providing charming informational content that keeps our communities apprised of charming activities and opportunities the City has to offer. Our current public outreach methods extend beyond digital and include avenues such as press releases, newspaper ads, banners, word of mouth, community presentations, marquee signs and more. A member of the Communications Division is always present at city events and takes pride in providing our residents with commemorative items that families of all ages can enjoy.

Goal Statement

Provide all Groveland community members with inclusive access to informational resources, connecting people to each other and the City's charming culture.

Objectives

1. Partner with local schools to plan, design, and build the schools that are consistent with the City Vision including neighborhood schools, integrated in walkable neighborhoods, with shared facilities such as parks. Start with a prototypical modern schoolhouse.
Core Values: Connectivity, Knowledge
2. Promote parks and open spaces as inclusive central community gathering spaces that bring people together to share knowledge, information, experiences, cultures, and the community's biodiversity. *Core Values: Connectivity, Knowledge, Heart*
3. Expand community access to high-speed broadband to enhance opportunity, innovation, and quality of life. *Core Values: Connectivity, Knowledge*
4. Develop an intentional, multi-faceted campaign and communications strategy to inform the community and create connection around the city's values.
Core Values: Knowledge, Heart, Intentionality
5. Create a leadership engagement program for students, residents, and business owners, to learn and enhance how the community functions. *Core Value: Knowledge*



Performance Metrics

- Percentage of residents enrolled in email blasts
- Percentage of residents attending city-sponsored events
- Increase in residents satisfaction with city communication and engagement (through annual or biannual resident survey)
- Percentage of students in walkable/bikeable distance to schools
- Percentage of residents with access to high speed internet
- Groveland schools rating in Florida Department of Education Annual School Grades Report



Preservation and Conservation

Current State

Lands located within Groveland's utility service boundary currently comprise approximately 34,000 acres. The City's Comprehensive Plan calls for a minimum of 60% of these parcels to be protected as conservation or working agricultural lands. Groveland's Parks Master Plan envisions conservation lands as a key component of the City's interconnected park system. Additionally, the City is working to protect the night sky from excessive light pollution with its Dark Sky Lighting Initiative. A study is needed to identify the City's most important parcels for preservation. The City currently has no conservation parks and no designated conservation lands. A partnership with the County focused on prioritized purchases of conservation parcels could be a fruitful outcome of the upcoming Joint Planning Agreement (JPA) process.

Goal Statement

Preserve and enhance our natural environment to connect people to nature, bring vitality to Groveland and ensure shared stewardship of our lands.

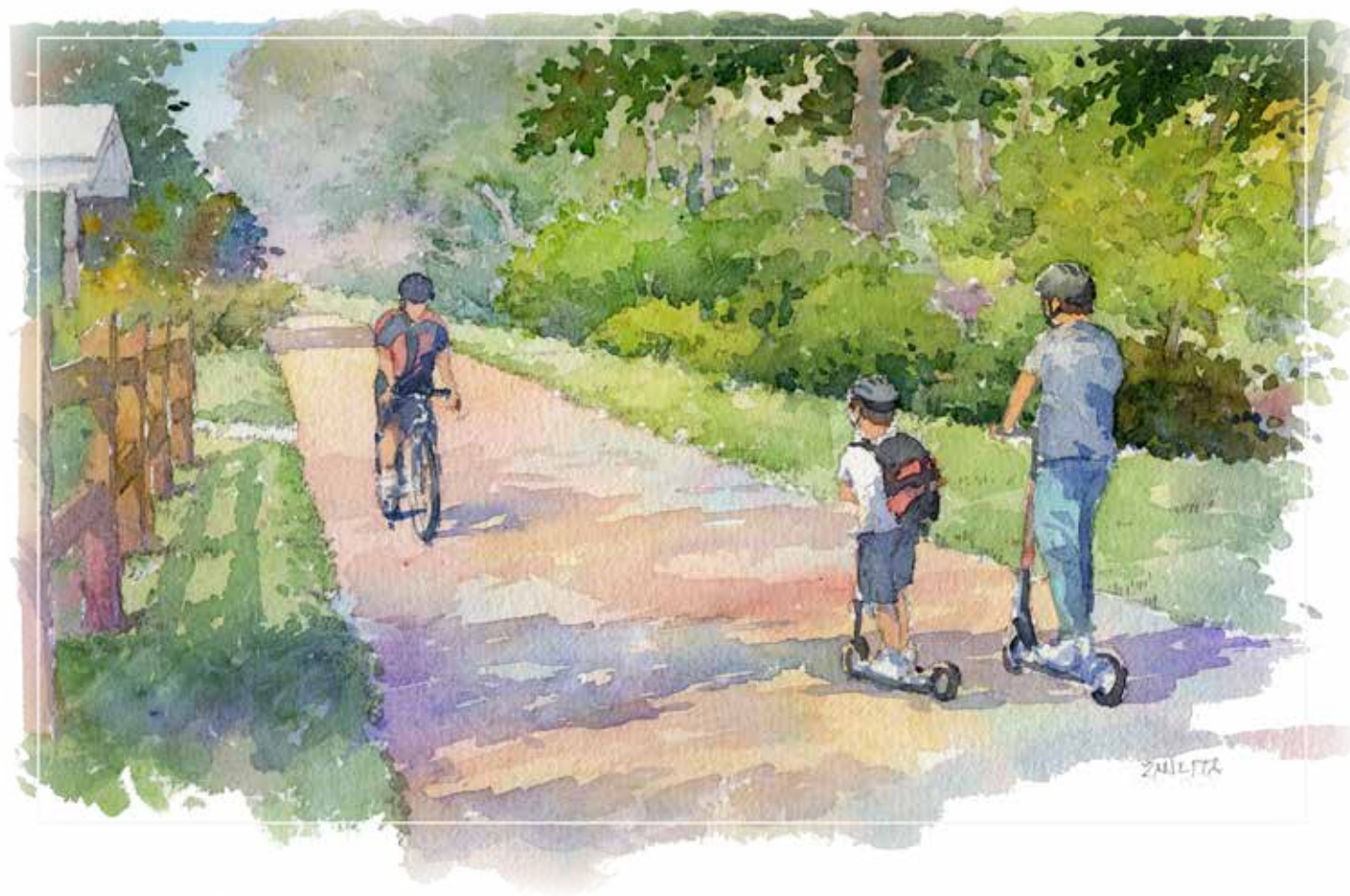
Objectives

1. Identify and preserve historic buildings, landmarks, and districts and the natural and agricultural lands within the city's utility service area that should be prioritized for preservation. *Core Values: Intentionality and Vitality*
2. Establish a Joint Planning Agreement with Lake County to preserve natural and agricultural lands through, but not limited to, Comprehensive Plan policy updates, a transfer of development rights program, and land acquisition.
Core Values: Intentionality and Vitality
3. Develop and enhance the City's programs to preserve our natural systems and green infrastructure, including removal of non-native exotic vegetation, wetland preservation and water and mineral conservation.
Core Values: Intentionality, Connectivity, Vitality, and Knowledge
4. Expand opportunities for people to responsibly interact with our surroundings by activating more of our natural spaces through educational events and partnerships with agri-civic visionaries, encouraging people to engage with and appreciate these preserved environments. *Core Values: Connectivity, Vitality, and Knowledge*
5. Adopt Dark Sky Lighting Ordinance and achieve International Dark-Sky Association Community designation. *Core Values: Connectivity and Vitality*



Performance Metrics

- Percentage of City's utility service area as conservation "nature"
- Percentage of City's utility service area as preserved agriculture
- Lake water quality



Eco-Agrarian Lifestyle

What is Eco-Agrarian?

Eco-agrarian is a lifestyle that connects Groveland residents and visitors with nature and each other. It provides purpose and support for preserving our natural areas and agricultural lands. It's about how we use these spaces, from outdoor recreation to growing our food, to create a strong sense of place and belonging. It's the feeling you get when you're out kayaking with friends enjoying the water, sunshine, and fresh air. It's an evening enjoying a farm-to-table meal with family underneath the star lit skies. It enhances our quality of life, impact on our environment, and stimulates our local economy. It's the City with Natural Charm.

Current State

Currently, Groveland provides a monthly farmer's market, an aquaponics farm, and opportunities for outdoor recreation (e.g., kayaking the Palatka River, biking the South Lake Trail, and fishing at Lake David). While we have made progress toward cultivating an eco-agrarian lifestyle, there are opportunities to improve: offering farm-to-table restaurants; offering more fresh, natural locally grown and harvested products to residents; encouraging more local growers to attend our farmer's market and to partner with local restaurants; increasing the frequency of local markets; powering parts of the city with renewable energy sources; improving walkability in our downtown and new community types; creating lodging accommodations; developing community and rooftop gardens, and edible landscapes; and encouraging permaculture and organic farming practices. Such steps will move us even closer toward our vision of cultivating an eco-agrarian lifestyle in Groveland.

Goal Statement

Become a close-knit community in which all activities are thoughtfully integrated into existing eco-systems and to enhance healthy development, self-reliance and maintain a continued eco-agrarian way of life.

Objectives

1. Establish a city-supported agriculture program (CSA) "Groveland Grown" to promote healthy locally grown food in the community, creating opportunity for farmers, residents, and merchants. Include certification, marketing, and an indoor/outdoor Groveland Market for agricultural sales and education.
Core Value: Vitality
2. Develop a Waterways Master Plan to coincide with the Parks and Trails Master Plan. Amplify natural recreation opportunities like kayaking, boating, fishing, running, bicycling, equestrian, and gardening, as these are activities for residents and visitors to experience and connect with Groveland's water ways and nature corridors.
Core Values: Intentionality, Vitality, Connectivity



3. Revise the city's Economic Development and Tourism strategies and incentives around eco-activities, lodging, recreation, and local agriculture.

Core Values: Intentionality, Vitality, Connectivity

4. Develop a lodging strategy that coincides with eco-agrarian activities.

5. Explore and implement renewable and sustainable practices for solid waste collection that align with and support an eco-agrarian lifestyle, such as composting.

Core Values: Intentionality and Vitality

6. Hire City personnel to lead environmental and agricultural activities for the city.

Core Values: All

Performance Metrics

- Acres of active farm and vineyard land in Groveland's utility service area
- Number of farm-to-table restaurants
- Solid waste tonnage converted to compost or recycling
- Number of lodging units
- Number of people employed in the eco-agrarian sector



Community Livability

Current State

Groveland has established a momentum toward making community livability and enhancing quality of life for our residents a key priority. Recent accomplishments include a newly renovated Lake David Park and streetscape improvements in Downtown. City Council recently approved a new Parks and Trails master plan including construction plans for Cherry Lake Park. The City's newly adopted Future Land Use and Community Development Code requires more preserved open space with standards that will allow for future squares, plazas, greens, walking paths, and pocket parks integrated within new neighborhoods. These regulatory changes will also result in more walkable communities with enhanced street design and a mix of uses. New master plans for transportation, utilities and schools will meet the growing demand for more health and medical oriented uses as population increases and help achieve the future vision for new schools that are integrated into new neighborhoods, as well as charter school options that will meet the growing demand for quality education.

Goal Statement

Create a community that invites innovation, enhances vitality, provides access to shared resources, and offers diverse choices and opportunities so people can become their best selves.

Objectives

1. Plan, design, and construct a Downtown Lake David project that embodies all Strategic Plan Core Values and serves as a destination. Components may include a compelling lodging experience, a walkable main street, a trail circling Lake David, a nature preserve, farm-to-table restaurants, a market, new civic venues, live/work homes, outdoor activities, dark sky lighting, sustainable landscaping, and public parking. *Core Values: All*
2. Beautify Downtown by continuing to improve streetscapes, business facades, and public spaces. *Core Value: Vitality*
3. Prioritize, phase, and implement the projects in the Parks and Trails Master Plan. Include and prioritize Nature Preserves and connecting Groveland's existing trails to the Florida Coast-to-Coast Trail. *Core Values: Connectivity, Vitality*
4. Partner with Lake County and FDOT to plan, design, and construct improvements for County, State, and City roads that are context sensitive, attractive, and safe for all modes of transportation. Use complete streets and traditional town planning design principles. Prioritize completion of the Coast-to-Coast Trail system within Groveland. *Core Values: Connectivity, Vitality*
5. Plan for a "health village" that serves Groveland residents and others in the region.



A health village is a multi-use environment that integrates healthcare with retail, commercial, education, residential, and wellness services. Health villages not only provide health care services to treat those who are sick but also offer resources and services for people to continue staying healthy and well. *Core Values: All*

6. Prioritize, phase, and implement the projects in the Utilities Master Plan with a focus on water quality and cost-effective upgrades.

Core Values: Intentionality, Connectivity, Vitality

7. Work with developers and builders to meet the growing need for more diverse and affordable housing options. *Core Values: All*

Performance Metrics

- Total linear feet of new streetscapes, new facades, and open spaces in Downtown
- Total miles of trail network completed (City, County, State)
- Total miles of complete streets completed (City, County, State)
- Acres of park land per 1,000 residents (goal is 6 acres per 1,000)
- Acres of park facilities per 1,000 residents (goal is 3 acres per 1,000)
- Drinking water quality, lake water quality
- Vehicular miles traveled



Financial Health

Current State

The City is focused on developing a budget and financial position that is commensurate with a community transitioning from a small town to a new-urbanism city that accentuates its natural features. In developing the budget and the City's financial plan, the objective is to create a sound financial and operational plan that addresses the City's priorities while continuing to provide resources to evolve, grow and support demand for services and enhanced quality of life. In order to maintain fiscal responsibility, the City will create a financial sustainability policy that utilizes the growth from annexations and commercial construction to reduce the overall tax burden on residents. Budget increases and timing will be crucial to the development of future budgets and long-term financial health.

Goal Statement

Achieve financial health while prioritizing the needs of today without sacrificing the ability to meet the needs of future generations.

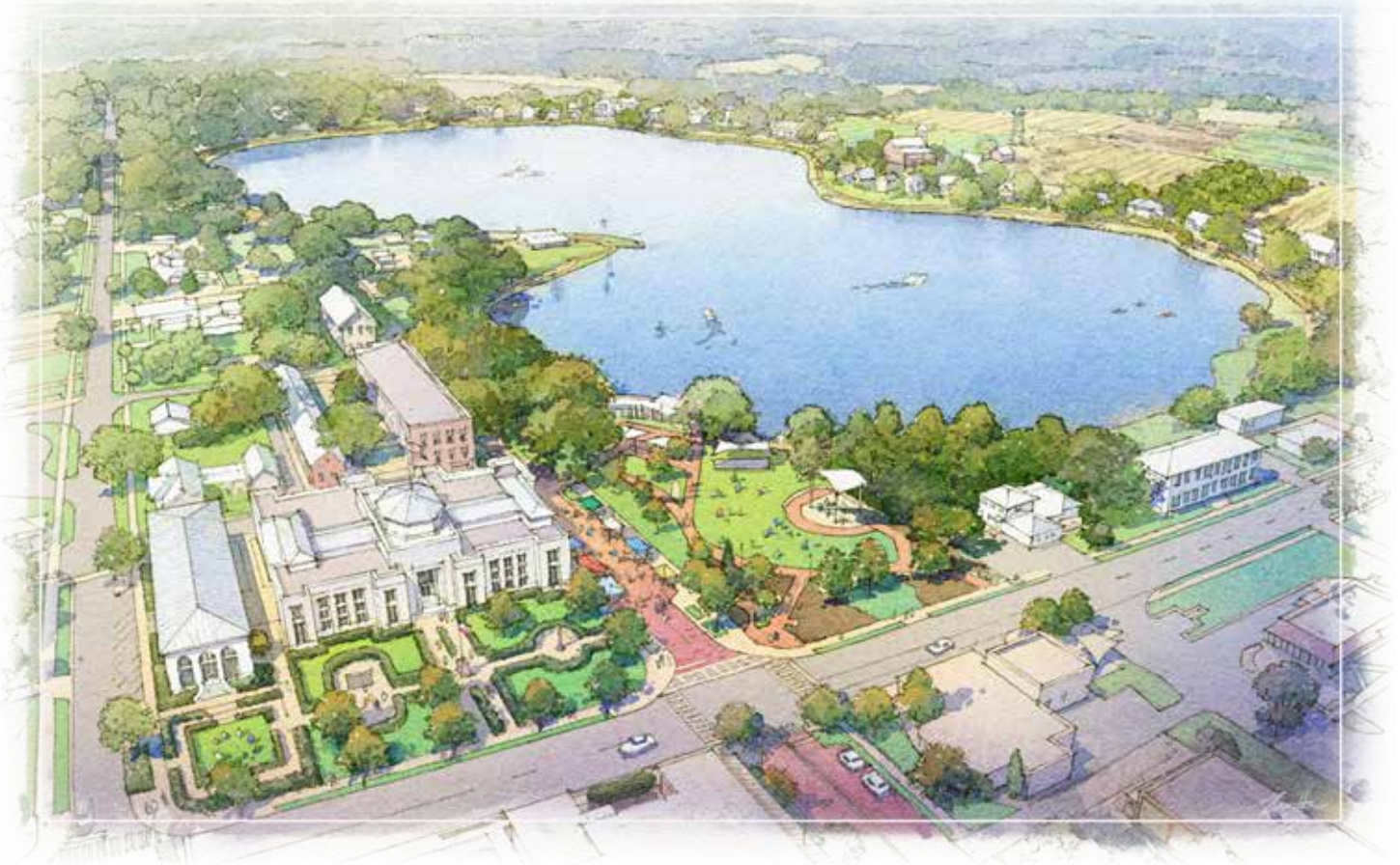
Objectives

1. Align the City's budget with the Strategic Plan to support achievement of the goals and vision. *Core Values: Intentionality, Connectivity*
2. Develop a debt management program incorporating those attributes of Strong Towns principles that are aligned with the city's Strategic Plan and priorities. Strong Town finance principles state that having more assets than liabilities, in addition to capably paying off debt, is a prerequisite for a city's long-term prosperity. Strong Towns must evaluate the long-term and short-term costs to maintain the success of proposed projects. *Core Value: Intentionality*
3. Create a standardized fiscal analysis that measures projects' fiscal impacts equipping City Council and leadership to make informed decisions when establishing the annual City Budgets. *Core Value: Intentionality*
4. Maintain fiscally responsible tax rates by diversifying the tax base, achieving a healthy balance between land uses, incentivizing development consistent with our vision, and applying user assessments to better address specific services such as stormwater, transportation, conservation, and public safety. *Core Value: Intentionality*
5. Recognizing that Groveland is a safe place, continue to financially prioritize the core services and public safety. *Core Value: Intentionality*



Performance Metrics

- Budget and capital improvements reflecting values and objectives of the strategic plan.
- Annual revenues/expenses on a per acre basis
- City departments directly link their budget requests to strategic priorities in the plan during budget development
- Maintain an ISO Public Protection Classification (PPC) of 3/3x (top 10% of U.S. cities as defined by the nationally recognized standards of the Fire Suppression Rating Schedule) and work toward a rating of 2/2x by 2027.
- Movement, trended year over year, toward a desirable balance of commercial and residential taxes
- Debt management and fiscal analysis standards set based on best practices of the Florida Benchmarking Consortium



Implementation

1. Dedicate funds for City leadership to conduct field research in benchmark communities.
Core Values: Intentionality and Knowledge
2. Create a vibrant Downtown Hub, open to residents and visitors. *Core Value: All*
3. Designate an individual or group of individuals to oversee implementation and progress monitoring of the Strategic Plan. *Core Value: Intentionality*
4. Facilitate a process between the adoption of the Strategic Plan and next year's City budget that ensures harmony between the two directive documents. This process should involve City Council, the Strategic Planning Committee, City Staff, and a facilitator. Special emphasis should be placed on how the sequencing of capital improvements either fits into or falls short of the new Strategic Plan recommendations. *Core Value: Intentionality*
5. Hold an annual State of the City addressing both the progress and metrics from the previous year and priorities of the coming year.



Acknowledgements



City Councilmembers

Mayor Evelyn Wilson
Vice Mayor Randolph Waite
Councilman Mike Smith
Councilman Mike Radzik
Councilwoman Barbara Gaines

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