

To kick off 2008, the Orlando Sentinel offered five goals for 2008. One of the five goals, titled "Grow Right" calls for regional leaders to move forward on several growth related initiatives that were approved in 2007. Among those mentioned was the "How Shall We Grow?" Campaign, during which elected officials from across Central Florida pledged to continue working together to implement the Central Florida Regional Growth Vision.

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EDITORIAL GOALS 2008

Grow right - Carry out promises

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Some Central Florida policymakers finally seemed to get it in 2007: that if the region is to grow right, they've got to do a lesser job of fasttracking development and a better job of protecting the environment, enhancing transportation options and improving the affordable-housing stock.

Orange County and the South Florida Water Management District vowed to get more of us to conserve water resources. Orange, Orlando and others committed to going green -- their fleets, buildings and operations. Governments from Volusia to Osceola greenlighted commuter rail. And the neglected Wekiva Parkway project, which in Seminole, Lake and Orange counties would complete a people-moving, critter-protecting beltway around Orlando, at long last got some officials to make funding it a priority.

Meanwhile, school-district and county leaders in Osceola and Orange announced the coming of workforce housing, and 16 government representatives signed pledges supporting the goals outlined by the regional How Shall We Grow initiative.

Good. But now the hard part: getting them to deliver on their promises -- and getting others to follow their lead.

The South Florida Water Management District announced that lawn-care restrictions should outlast the drought. OK. But it and the St. Johns River Water Management District also need to abandon what would be costly and environmentally dangerous schemes to tap rivers and build desalinization plants. They should marshal everyone in their reach to improve water conservation through drought-resistant landscaping and other measures.

Local green initiatives? Great. But agreeing to them is only a start. We'll press officials to do them this year, despite budgetary pressures that could derail them.

Commuter rail's a "go." But its backers this year need to promote it to merchants and builders, who can inject vitality along the streets near its stations.

The road so vital to relieving the entire region -- the Wekiva Parkway -- needs to get bankrolled, and we'll push officials, from Gov. Charlie Crist to folks at the Turnpike Authority, to ante up. It's a model project that others eyeing projects such as the Heartland Parkway would do well to emulate.

Central Florida won't grow right if workers live ever farther from their jobs. Orange and Osceola can show other communities the way. Each last year announced initiatives on affordable units. Now it's time to build them.

Central Florida also can grow right if its leaders do what they promised the How Shall We Grow folks, including enacting policies that facilitate transportation and protect the region's seven jewels. We'll hold them to those promises.