

*The "How Shall We Grow?" Summit on August 10, 2007 produced media coverage throughout the seven-county region. Below are media articles, commentaries and editorials published before or after the summit highlighting the Central Florida Regional Growth Vision:*

**FLORIDA TODAY – AUGUST 7, 2007**

## **Central Fla. 2057: No sprawl? Regional planning initiative shares its plans Friday**

*By Scott Blake, Staff Writer*

After more than a year of collecting public input, a regional planning campaign is ready to unveil its vision for countering suburban sprawl in a seven-county area of Central Florida, including Brevard County.

The myregion.org campaign, which originated at the Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce, will unveil its framework for future development Friday at the Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate near Orlando.

As an alternative to sprawl, the framework calls for:

- **Conservation:** Establish a "green areas" conservation footprint.
- **Centers:** Promote growth in current city, town or village centers and encourage the development of additional population centers to counter sprawl.
- **Corridors:** Connect centers with a balance of roads, light rail, streetcars and buses planned by county transportation planners cooperating regionally.

"It's a vision for 50 years. It's not all going to happen overnight," said Shelley Lauten, director of *myregion.org*. "At the end of the day, it's our elected officials who will be making decision on things like land use and transportation."

The campaign is based on the projection that Central Florida's population will grow to 7.2 million in 2050 from about 3.5 million in 2005. Brevard's population is expected to grow from roughly 450,000 to more than 930,000.

**ORLANDO SENTINEL – August 10, 2007**

## **Grow up, not out, planners urge area**

*By Vicki McClure, Sentinel Staff Writer*

Central Florida needs to grow up -- not spread out -- to preserve its quality of life.

That's the vision of the future being unveiled today by the planning group called [myregion.org](http://myregion.org). It's the culmination of more than a year's work based on the opinions of more than 20,000 residents and business and government leaders from seven counties and 86 cities in the region.

Urban centers should be encouraged, the group maintains, providing a mix of amenities that would allow people to walk to a grocery store, restaurant or entertainment from their home. The areas should be connected to one another by transportation corridors that offer more than just new or wider roads for automobiles, the group says.

If cities and counties embrace mass transit and limit population densities to certain areas, the region can accommodate the about 4 million new people expected to live here by 2050 without plowing under the remaining green space with suburban homes, said Shelley Lauten, director of [myregion.org](http://myregion.org).

"If we continue growing in the same way, more land will be consumed in the next 50 years than in the first 500 years," Lauten said. "That is not a future we want to see."

More than 700 people are expected to attend the half-day meeting summit at Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate titled "How Shall We Grow?"

The \$850,000 campaign is set to expire then.

[Myregion.org](http://Myregion.org) has no legal authority over growth patterns in the counties it covers: Brevard, Lake, Orange, Osceola, Polk, Seminole and Volusia. Its board of directors, though, includes elected officials from local government.

If no change occurs, a 2005 study showed, the region will resemble Los Angeles by midcentury, with its unwieldy sprawl and traffic woes.

Salt Lake City's model

Suzanne Cartwright, community-outreach director with the Urban Land Institute, said a growing number of local governments are reaching across jurisdictional lines to better manage growth and improve quality of life.

The Salt Lake City area led the charge a decade ago as it became inundated with waves of ex-Californians moving in, she said. As a result, residents were able to preserve critical lands and create a popular mass-transit system that residents want expanded, Cartwright said.

Other metropolitan areas such as Washington and Dallas-Fort Worth have launched similar efforts, focusing on redeveloping existing suburbs to make them more transit-friendly.

Central Florida stands out, Cartwright said, with its high level of participation by business leaders and residents as myregion.org did its work. She said she also has seen the area change as it went through the planning process.

"There is a much stronger, more broad-based regional identity, both at the grass-top levels -- the influential leaders -- and the grass roots," Cartwright said. "That is not such an easy thing to do."

Commuter rail is one goal

One of myregion.org's objectives has already been secured: the recent commitment by the region's counties and affected cities to build a commuter-rail line through Volusia, Seminole, Orange and Osceola counties.

Also in the works is a "green print," or regional plan for an interconnected network of conservation lands, open space and recreational areas. This is to be unveiled toward the end of the year.

The group's board of directors plans to continue to meet to help carry out other objectives. It has been funded by state and local governments as well as the Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce.

A key to ensuring that the rest of the vision becomes reality, though, will be the guiding hand of the state's regional-planning councils, which will help cities and counties update their land-use policies to incorporate the goals.

The communities that want to add tens of thousands of residents will be encouraged to embrace urbanization in core areas and shun ever-expanding suburbs.

Getting with growth plan

Tavares has started the process, said Phil Laurien, executive director of the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council. Seminole County has asked to do a growth-management plan in conjunction with all its municipalities as well, he said.

"If we don't make a real dent in this in the next five years, I think the goodness of the project will lose a lot of its strength," Laurien said. "If we are going to stay out of [natural and agricultural] areas, cities will have to add density to accommodate population and provide amenities and attractions so we create great urban spaces where people want to live and work."

*Vicki McClure can be reached at [vmcclure@orlandosentinel.com](mailto:vmcclure@orlandosentinel.com) or 407-420-5540.*

**DAYTONA BEACH NEWS JOURNAL - August 11, 2007**

## **Regional planners map out green growth**

*By John Bozzo, Staff Writer*

ORLANDO -- Loud and clear, Central Florida residents prefer a greener map for the future of our region.

The question of how to get there has always been the sticking point.

More than 500 people from seven counties including Volusia gathered at the posh Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate on Friday to begin discussing how to achieve the green vision developed from public forums and surveys during the previous 18 months.

Building partnerships, relationships and working together is the key to achieving goals of the planning effort dubbed "How Shall We Grow?" Volusia County Chairman Frank Bruno told the assembly.

"We need to be consensus building," Bruno said during a panel discussion of regional leaders. "We do try to plan locally, but it's important to try to plan regionally."

Volusia County School Board member Candace Lankford said local governments will need to coordinate growth plans and work with state legislators to stay on track with the green vision.

"We agree to monitor progress toward this vision and to develop a process for updating the vision over time to respond to evolving regional trends," she said.

If current trends go unchanged, developed land in Central Florida will more than double by 2050 to 5,200 square miles.

By that time, Central Florida's population is expected to double from 3.6 million to 7.2 million. Volusia's population of about 480,000 might hit 874,000 people.

To make room for the additional people without paving over all the open land, cities and counties will need to funnel some growth into higher buildings, said Phil Laurien, executive director of the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council.

"In order for us to grow more compactly by 2050 and preserve the areas we want to preserve, we have to grow up to a certain extent," he said.

That won't be an easy sell in some communities. In the audience after the conference, Bill McMunn, president of Consolidated-Tomoka Land Co., said taller buildings are a controversial solution.

"The problem is going to be trying to change the direction of the public," said McMunn, whose company is one of Volusia's largest landowners and a co-sponsor of the regional planning effort. "People prefer to live in low-density houses. That tends to produce sprawl. Citizens in cities tend to not want more density."

Volusia County Councilwoman Pat Northey, who also attended the event, said achieving the regional goals will mean "holding the feet of elected officials to the fire" and engaging the business community in discussions.

"We're doing some of that already in Volusia County with our smart growth workshops," she said. "It's not going fast enough. They need to stop talking and begin to act."

Stephanie Kopelousos, Florida Department of Transportation secretary, praised the Central Florida planning effort and vowed to be a good partner.

"We have to get to the grass-roots level," she said. "Wherever we go, we should be talking about this. At the end of the day, it's all about quality of life."

[john.bozzo@news-jrnl.com](mailto:john.bozzo@news-jrnl.com) <<mailto:john.bozzo@news-jrnl.com>>

## **Greener Future**

*Led by organizations such as [myregion.org](http://myregion.org) <<http://myregion.org>> and the Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce, the "How Shall We Grow" planning effort distilled comments from nearly 20,000 people from Volusia, Brevard, Lake, Orange, Osceola, Polk and Seminole counties into four main goals:*

- Establish green conservation areas.
- Preserve the countryside outside of urban areas.
- Promote growth in population centers and eliminate sprawl.
- Connect population corridors with balanced transportation options of roads, light rail, streetcars and buses.

**FLORIDA TODAY – August 11, 2007**

## **Area looks at growth Central Florida officials ponder sprawl trend**

*By Scott Blake, Staff Writer*

Take a drive across Brevard County and Central Florida. Do you like what you see?

That was the crux of a regional planning meeting Friday for a seven-county area of Central Florida, including Brevard.

The event was aimed at getting leaders in 86 represented communities to support the idea of changing the current trend of suburban sprawl development -- the theme of a campaign titled "How Shall We Grow?"

The meeting was impressive in that it drew about 600 officials and other community representatives from across the region, indicating a desire to move away from the continued development of strip shopping malls and cookie-cutter housing subdivisions, organizers said.

"We've got to be more creative about how we get things done in this region," said Shelley Lauten, director of *myregion.org*, a campaign that originated at the Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce.

During the four-hour session at the ChampionsGate golf resort near Orlando, the group unveiled its framework for local officials to follow -- if they choose -- over the next 50 years or so to alter the character of the region's current landscape.

The themes were:

Conservation: Establish a "green areas" conservation footprint through the region.

Countryside: Preserve countryside, including farm land, outside of urban centers.

Centers: Promote growth in current city, town or village centers and encourage the development of additional population centers to counter the current pattern of sprawling development.

Corridors: Connect centers with a mix of roads, light rail, streetcars and buses, ensuring that county transportation planners take a regional perspective.

The concepts advocated in the plan could call for areas of increased density of development, perhaps with taller buildings, instead of spreading out construction, although that choice would be left to individual communities, Lauten said.

Bob Kamm, director of the Brevard Metropolitan Planning Organization and one of several local officials at the meeting, said carrying out the "How Shall We Grow?" vision, if that is what happens, will mean changes in laws and regulations.

It also could mean potential conflicts with builders and developers used to that status quo, he said.

"It's going to take a sustained effort over the long-term to develop the kind of area we want to have in the future," Kamm said.

Shannon Meyer, president and chief executive officer of the Melbourne-Palm Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, called the myregion.org report "very positive."

"I think it's a great plan for regional visioning," Meyer said after the meeting. "Because we're part of a seven-county coalition, it means we'll have a stronger voice in Tallahassee on issues that are important to Brevard, such as transportation and affordable housing."

Merritt Island resident Mary Hillberg, who has raised concerns about the plan before county commissioners, said the campaign seems to be long on concepts and short on logistics and details.

"What they're talking about is massively expensive," Hillberg said. "You ask questions and you can't get answers. It like proposing to do something before you know how you're going to do it. You've first got to get the resources in line."

**Contact Blake at 242-3644 or [sblake@floridatoday.com](mailto:sblake@floridatoday.com)**

**LAKELAND LEDGER – AUGUST 11, 2007**

## **'What Kind of Community Are You Willing to Pay For?'**

*By Tom Palmer*

The presentation was the finale of an Orlando-based effort titled "How Shall We Grow?"

The program was organized by *myregion.org*, which has been sponsoring studies and public meetings over the past two years to spark a change in the way growth is discussed.

The core of the effort involves a discussion of ways to accommodate expected population growth between now and 2050 without gobbling up large expanses of the remaining open spaces.

If this is successful, it could:

help create conditions for alternative and more efficient transportation choices;

save the remaining wild areas such as the Green Swamp and the Lake Wales Ridge;

improve the region's quality of life.

The region defined in this vision includes Polk, Lake, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Volusia and Brevard counties.

Some local officials attended Friday's event at the Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate.

"This is a great exercise," said County Commissioner Sam Johnson.

He said the hard part is going back and trying to implement it.

County Commissioner Jean Reed said although she likes the design proposals, she was troubled by the fact that there was little mention of the region's water shortage.

Utilities in most of the region have been told that after 2013 they must look to alternatives to pumping water from the aquifer.

"Water concerns me and it was never brought up," she said. "There are no easy answers to it."

During a panel discussion, Orange County Commissioner Teresa Jacobs acknowledged that implementing the vision will be challenging.

"Vision and idealism will collide with reality," she said. "Giving people more density on their land is easy, but telling other people they have to keep their land vacant is hard."

"Somebody has got to pay for it," she said.

Jacobs said finances are at the heart of many of the issues.

"What kind of community are you willing to pay for?" she asked.

Despite the challenges, the regional effort is being used as a model in other parts of Florida, said Stephanie Kopelousos, Florida's transportation secretary.

"You could set the standard for the rest of the state," she said, explaining there are opportunities to do a better job of pairing land-use and transportation decisions and seeking more technical help from state agencies.

Kopelousos praised myregion's use of young people as discussion leaders and participants in the program.

"They're the people who are going to be living here," she said.

*Tom Palmer can be reached at 863-802-7535 or [tom.palmer@theledger.com](mailto:tom.palmer@theledger.com).*

ORLANDO SENTINEL – August 11, 2007

## Visionaries look for harmony

# People of different ages and backgrounds try to get on the same track for Central Florida's future.

*By Vicki McClure, Sentinel Staff Writer*

Kimberly Loewen moved to Central Florida two years ago to be near her friends and was struck by the sprawl.

She had a hard time finding the sense of community she had come to enjoy while living in cities such as Seattle, Chicago and Washington, D.C. The lack of public transportation frustrated her, as did the ubiquity of strip malls. She also missed the abundant cultural offerings she found in more urban settings.

But the 25-year-old who majored in environmental studies said she loved the area's natural beauty. And as one of 50 young professionals and college students volunteering with *myregion.org*, she was excited about the possibility of preserving it by creating urban centers that could absorb the 4 million or so new people expected to live here by mid-century.

The success of such a vision, though, rests with the hundreds of civic, government and business leaders who likely will be dead by 2050, as Loewen adjusts to retirement.

If they do not work together -- as they largely pledged to do at a Friday summit -- to divert Central Florida from its current path of becoming latter-day Los Angeles without the movie stars or picturesque mountains, Loewen knows what she will do.

"I'll move," said Loewen, a planner with the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council. "It is easy to sit here and talk about it. But talking needs to become action. There are huge risks to take."

One challenge will be raising the money to build a mass-transit system and to buy rural land to prevent it from being developed.

Without a workable commuter-rail network, creating compact cities with greater population densities will only worsen traffic. If land is not dedicated for preservation, it can succumb to development.

The subject was broached publicly at the "How Shall We Grow?" forum as *myregion.org* laid out the vision it culled from the opinions of 20,000 residents and leaders from seven counties and 86 municipalities.

Curbing or stopping growth was not presented as an option.

Orange County Commissioner Teresa Jacobs stated the problem bluntly. "Somebody has got to pay for it," Jacobs said. "If you want to get people out of their cars, give them a transportation option they want."

Haines City Commissioner Roy Tyler, who also serves as chairman of the Central Florida Regional Planning Council, urged his fellow politicians to consider their roles.

Too many, he said, "think keeping their job is their job."

The depth of the challenge could be seen at Loewen's table, where she led seven individuals of diverse backgrounds through a discussion of the regional vision at the Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate.

David Marsh, an Orange County resident, said he thought this was the beginning of a groundswell to put pressure on the politicians.

"Local governments have to bite the bullet and say no to development," Marsh said.

Mike Cassara, a hotelier and developer, reacted to several comments about slowing the pace of growth, asking why he would want to "risk my capital" in such a place.

"If I can get an incentive, I'll go elsewhere," Cassara said.

Port Orange Vice Mayor Mary Martin, who earlier stated that there was no such thing as "no growth," said her community would respond by saying, "Go ahead and go someplace else."

Afterward, Michael Joachim, a real-estate developer in Polk County, said he felt somewhat optimistic about the vision that myregion.org presented Friday.

He noted, though: "There's already a lot of land gone, a lot more than they are showing. I think everyone is in for a rude awakening, but they need this awakening. At least maybe they can stop the bleeding."

*Vicki McClure can be reached at [vmcclure@orlandosentinel.com](mailto:vmcclure@orlandosentinel.com) or 407-420-5540.*

**FLORIDA TODAY – August 14, 2007**

## **Our view: A regional vision Brevard, Central Florida's other counties should cooperate on growth problems**

Imagine Central Florida turning into a sprawling concrete-paved, traffic-choked Los Angeles by 2050.

That could happen if residents don't insist local governments change course to preserve their quality of life.

Some are already gearing up for the fight, including representatives from the seven counties that make up the visioning group *myregion.org*.

With Brevard County members early supporters, the group is seeking a cooperative approach to the challenges presented by a population that's expected to double to 7 million in about 40 years.

As we have said before, the smart growth and mutual cooperation that are the foundation of *myregion.org*'s philosophy are essential to the Space Coast's future.

That's why members just unveiled a framework that could -- if local governments and citizens choose -- intelligently guide the direction of growth for the next half century.

Integrating the ideas of 20,000 residents and officials, including many from the Space Coast, it has four major goals:

- Establishing conservation areas that cross county lines, providing recreation and a natural escape for the public and giving wildlife, vegetation and the whole ecosystem a better chance to survive.

In that, Brevard County is already a leader, with an Environmentally Endangered Lands Program that has become a national model for how localities can protect tracts from the bulldozer.

- Preserving rural areas outside urban centers, which reduces costly development sprawl while saving farmlands, drinking water resources and community character.

That's a decision made just a year ago by the citizens of rural Grant and Valkaria, who voted to incorporate rather than become the site of still more Palm-Bay spawned subdivisions.

- Promoting high-rises in urban centers, and bringing population to already developed areas where residents could walk to work, stores and services.

Think Cocoa Village, Downtown Melbourne and Downtown Titusville, all of which are looking to multi-story condominiums for economic vitality.

- Developing transportation corridors, with mass transit such as buses and commuter rail center to center, cutting the need for more roads.

Brevard alone has more than \$400 million in unfinanced road needs, with more on the way unless changes are adopted.

Brevard Metropolitan Planning Director Bob Kamm is right when he says the changes necessary to accomplish these regional goals are likely to generate conflicts with developers who like the status quo.

We say it's going to be about as easy as changing the orbit of the Earth.

But it has to happen if we want to save open land, keep air and water clean, reduce sprawl and put the brakes on traffic gridlock.

Like it or not, Brevard is an integral part of Central Florida, with people crossing county lines to live and work, and changes in one area reverberating through neighboring counties.

The solution is creative planning and cooperation among local governments that recognize the regional nature of problems and their solutions.

Myregion's framework offers an important step forward on these issues and deserves strong support.

**LAKELAND LEDGER – August 14, 2007**

## **Vision of Growth May Need Eye for Change**

*By Tom Palmer*

Several years ago I was working on a piece on the growth patterns that were beginning to be felt in the Four Corners area.

I was showing an editor and a couple of fellow reporters around and told the editor who was driving to pull off onto a dirt road. As we sat parked along the dirt road, all that was visible were a couple of old wooden houses and a lot of woods.

Friday, I was thinking about that image as I sat about 200 yards from where we were parked that day.

This time I was sitting in a large meeting room at the Omni Orlando Resort Hotel at ChampionsGate, one of the major developments to move into this part of the area during the past decade or so.

The meeting I was attending concerned how we'll handle growth in the region over the next half century.

The setting was a great metaphor for the topic. Like most of Florida, the meeting room was overcrowded.

The seats around the tables were full, and people were shoehorned into a row of chairs around the edge of the room. Some of us latecomers didn't even get chairs.

There was an expanse of name tags lying on the registration table.

They held the names of people who signed up but didn't show, somewhat like the future residents for whom we'll have to make room someday.

The condition of the room was made more noticeable by galleries of pictures of Central Florida as it looked when it was a much less crowded place, a time some of us homegrown folks remember to some extent, depending on our age.

In 1950, 33 square miles of this seven-county region was considered urban. Today close to 1,000 square miles falls into this category.

But the focus was on the future, which we can affect, not the past, which is past any chance of revision. Around the tables the discussion leaders were young people, which was appropriate because they or someone like them will be the ones dealing with the results of this planning exercise.

Their reports from the collection of roundtable discussions that occurred during Friday's finale of the "How Shall We Grow?" campaign contained some notable comments.

Some stressed the practical aspects of growth management, such as how to change human behavior

and perceptions so that people accept the prescription of living in smaller houses on smaller lots or in tall buildings somewhere. The recognition that some of this would cost more, at least up front, wasn't lost on them, either.

But the one comment that struck me went beyond discussions of development regulations and transportation planning.

One leader asked not "how shall we grow?" but "how shall we live?"

The future is about conserving water and energy, recycling, telecommuting or bicycling where we can and becoming more educated so that we can persuade our leaders to stay on track with this vision.

It's clear that the way growth has been carried out during the past 50 years or so hasn't worked very well, which is why it's time to talk seriously about alternatives.

One panelist described how he had lived in a place where the vision is inculcated into school curriculums so that people grow up knowing how things are supposed to be, which is certainly a way to sustain a community consensus.

If there's going to be any chance to sustain any kind of long-range vision for this region, it just may take something like that.

*Tom Palmer can be reached at 863-802-7535 or [tom.palmer@theledger.com](mailto:tom.palmer@theledger.com).*