

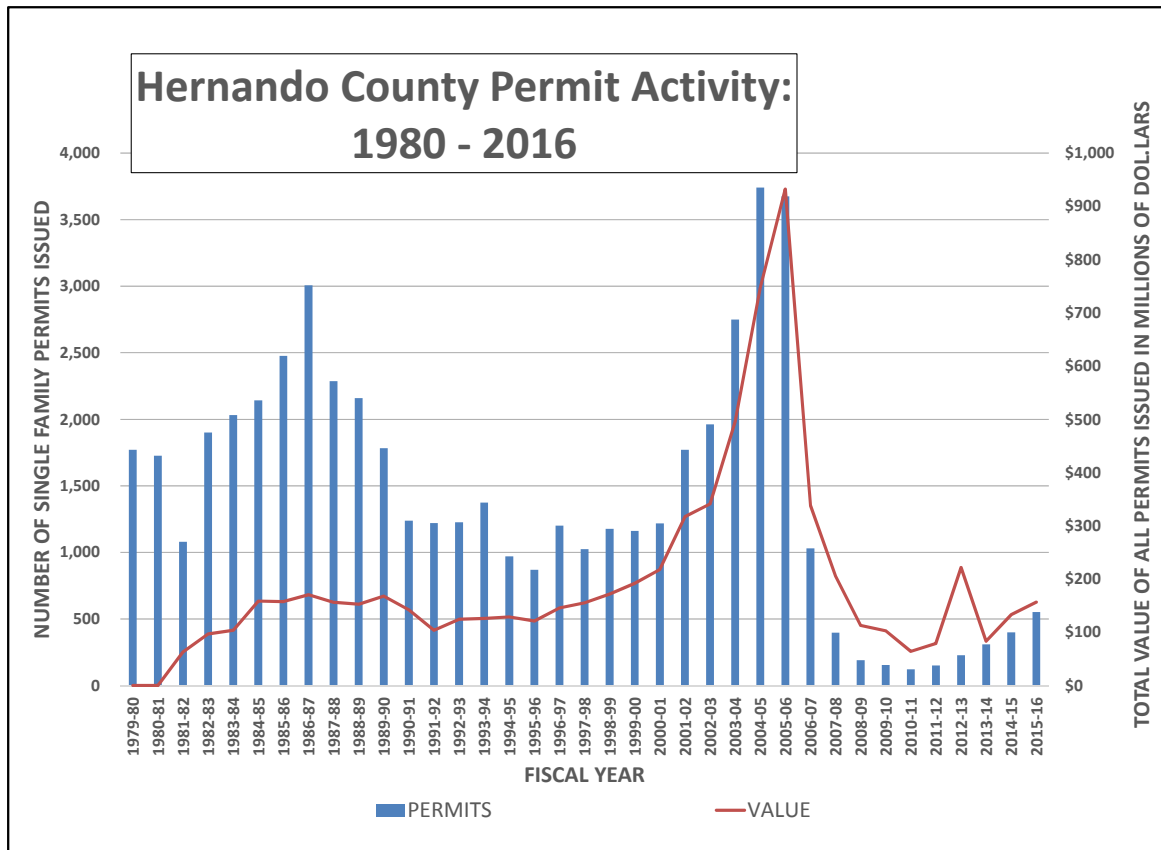
**HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA
2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**PLAN INTRODUCTION AND
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN INTRODUCTION

There is a reason why you must be north of the Hernando County line to harvest the bay scallop (*Argopecten irradians*). There is a reason why the majority of Hernando’s housing starts are located near regional transportation and regional trails. There is a reason why Hernando County has won the drinking water taste contest three times. There is a reason why the reputation of Hernando County’s springs and hilly terrain resonate with residents and visitors alike.

For these and many other reasons, Hernando County is a place to raise a family, a place where the charm of community still coexists alongside the majesty of nature; where traditions of agriculture, fishing and hunting can still be pursued amidst a growing population; where new technology and a new tourism brand provide promise of a clean, growing economy.



Hernando County is a community that has experienced the boom and bust of growth cycles before. If our southern neighbor, Pasco County, provides any indication, Hernando County is on the threshold of another upswing in growth. Over the next 20 years, expanded regional transportation options coupled with desirability as a place to live and work will lead to growth. The challenge for community leaders, the business community and elected officials will be to accommodate growth without compromising the natural assets and characteristics that make people want to call Hernando County home.

This 2040 Comprehensive Plan provides an opportunity to establish a strategic foundation for quality growth: Growth strategies that retain the rural countryside sights, sounds, flavor and traditional pursuits; Growth strategies that preserve the path of success for small business pursuits; Growth strategies that guide the County to new economic success through its airport/technology center and its tourism/recreation initiatives that capitalize on the natural environment; Growth strategies that encourage new neighborhoods and invite old neighborhoods to reinvigorate their family-friendly charm; Growth strategies that provide for attractive places and spaces; Growth strategies that provide opportunities for multiple transportation options; Growth strategies that protect a high quality natural environment; Growth strategies that provide for housing needs and choices for all income and age groups; Growth strategies that provide for choice commercial development without blighting roadway corridors; Growth strategies that retain unique character and attributes – This is the challenge.

“Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity”

– Seneca (4 BC – 65 AD)

“The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra”

– Jimmy Johnson

HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA
2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hernando County 2040 Comprehensive Plan is a legislative document that guides future land use decisions and future development. This document encompasses strategies intended to be interpretive and flexible, in addition to providing a foundation for the expectations of property owners and private property rights. The Board of County Commissioners are the ultimate decision makers in determining Plan consistency. Updates to the Plan during the planning horizon are essential to ensure that the document strategies can adapt to changing conditions.

The Florida Growth Management Act was adopted in 1985. Five years later, Hernando County had a newly adopted Comprehensive Plan. The first twenty years of Plan implementation was a time of fairly active growth for the County. Plan performance was primarily focused on the ability to provide an orderly process for land use and infrastructure decisions. December 2007 marked the beginning of an economic decline popularly termed, “The Great Recession.”

During the recession Hernando County’s average population growth dropped to less than one percent per year for the first time since 1980. Housing permits for the 5-year period of 2007 to 2012 averaged 203 per year, 81% below the previous 5-year low (1995 to 2000). When the Comprehensive Plan was evaluated in 2010, the impact of the economic downturn was the single greatest topic of discussion. That influence, along with the adoption of the Florida Community Planning Act in 2011, caused a shift in the function of the Comprehensive Plan from process-oriented (reactive) to vision-oriented (proactive).

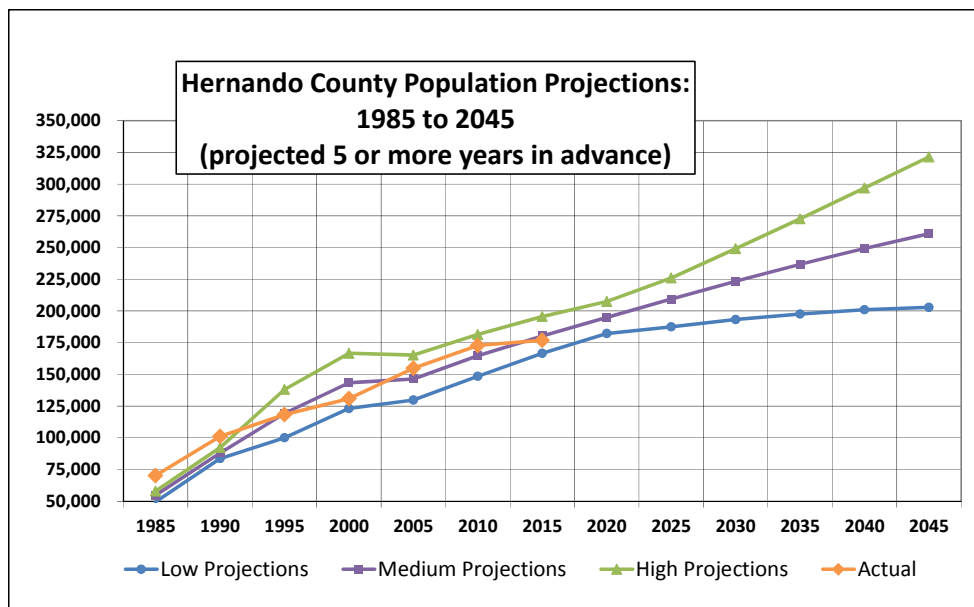
The following factors will impact Hernando County’s growth management strategies going forward:

- The continued trend to downsize government and prioritize budgeted services;
- Trimmed state budgets affecting infrastructure funding, land acquisition and other state programs;
- Regionalization pressures will continue to shape decisions on issues important to Hernando County such as transportation, groundwater and economic development;
- The aging and diversification of the Spring Hill urbanized area;
- Over 61,000 approved residential units yet to be built have the potential to redefine the County’s future population centers;
- Transportation infrastructure will change with expanded regional access via State Road 50 and the Suncoast Parkway, transportation technology advances that will affect mobility, and, expanded use of travel modes outside traditional automobiles;
- Economic recovery will renew potential development pressures on and near the County’s rural, conservation and farming areas;
- Agriculture has been trending towards more numerous smaller farms with a diverse suite of new products;
- Existing mining lands will approach depletion placing emphasis on finding opportunities for reuse of the land.

HERNANDO COUNTY EXISTING LAND USE					
Existing Land Use	Acres	Percent of Total	Existing Land Use	Acres	Percent of Total
Agriculture	79,199	24.4%	Private Institutional	2,554	0.8%
Commercial	2,146	0.7%	Publicly Owned	4,325	1.3%
Conservation	97,626	30.1%	Recreation	6,965	2.1%
Education	1,187	0.4%	Right of Way	16,643	5.1%
Industrial	836	0.3%	Single Family	39,010	12.0%
Mining	6,314	1.9%	Utilities	1,918	0.6%
Mobile Homes	14,192	4.4%	Vacant	35,139	10.8%
Multi-Family	569	0.2%	Water/Wetlands	15,338	4.7%
			Totals	323,961	100.0%

Hernando County is made up of 473 square miles. As of April 2017, the County population was estimated at 181,878 people, with 8,079 of that number living in the cities of Brooksville and Weeki Wachee. The average household size was 2.39 persons. Approximately 80% of the population is in the urbanized area of Spring Hill/Brooksville. The land use breakdown indicates that 30% of the land area is used for conservation purposes, and 24 % is used for agriculture.

The University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) provides thirty-year population projections at low, medium and high levels. The medium projections have proven to be the most accurate for planning purposes, indicating an estimated total County population of 236,200 by 2040, for a projected growth of 54,322 persons (30% increase).



Plan Horizon: 2040**Growth Strategy:**

- Continue to ensure respect for private property rights.
- Retain the current urbanized area depicted on the Future Land Use Map as the foundation of the 2040 Growth Strategy by encouraging continued infill development.
- Retain the current rural countryside land use pattern by providing standards for rural conservation design incentives
- Enhance natural resource retention through innovative master planning and site design.
- Adapt to the changing needs of agriculture and recognize the importance of Agriculture in the local community heritage and economy.
- Preserve the existing rural character and lifestyle.
- Revitalize existing communities through effective planned development processes, recognition of important centers of activity, protection and planning for neighborhoods (especially in the urbanized area), incentives for economic enhancement and place-making development features, and, preservation of community values that are essential to Hernando County's culture and quality of life.
- Promote a consistent and coordinated multi-modal transportation system in conjunction with the Hernando/Citrus Metropolitan Planning Organization's Long Range Transportation Plan.
- Include flexibility and innovation for larger new developments to achieve desired land use patterns and efficient infrastructure utilization.
- Maintain an Economic Development Element to coordinate land use initiatives with long-term strategies for a resilient Hernando County economy that includes industry, business sites, a regionally competitive airport and exceptional tourism opportunities.
- Implement an efficient infrastructure strategy at all levels – seamless service, proactive funding and implementation, five-year scheduling, and long-term coordination with land use.
- Maintain the quality of life for all segments of the community.
- Provide for a variety of housing types and flexible development options.