



VILLAGE OF ESTERO

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT
STAFF REPORT**

**VILLAGE CENTER
CPA 2016-01**

(PUBLICLY SPONSORED AMENDMENT)

**Village Council
March 30, 2016 Public Hearing**



CASE NAME: VILLAGE CENTER
CASE TYPE: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MAP AND TEXT AMENDMENT (PUBLICLY INITIATED)
CASE NUMBER: CPA 2016-01
VILLAGE COUNCIL TRANSMITTAL HEARING: MARCH 30, 2016

REQUEST SUMMARY

The Village of Estero is proposing a series of map and text amendments to its Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code to support compact walkable development patterns in certain areas near US 41 referred to as the Village Center. These areas are anticipated to include employment, housing, shopping, recreation, and civic uses.

The request being considered by the Village Council on March 30 is limited to the Comprehensive Plan amendments, which would have the greatest effect on about 522 acres of land located near US 41 from the city limits with Bonita Springs north to just south of Broadway.

An important feature of these amendments is a new category on the Future Land Use Map to be called “Village Center.” In this category, higher densities may be allowed if certain criteria are met. Final density decisions would be made by the Village Council at the time of rezoning.

Four ‘tiers’ or levels of development would be described in detail in the Land Development Code. As higher tiers are requested by developers, the allowable ‘base density’ increases and the code’s criteria increase correspondingly. Additional density may be available in exchange for public features offered by developers such as enhanced streetscapes, public hiking and bicycling trails, gathering places (including outdoor cafes), and other amenities or improvements; these increases are called ‘incentive density.’ Density limits for both types of density are summarized in the following chart.

	<i>(densities in units per acre)</i>		
	Base Density	Incentive Density	Maximum Density
Tier 1	Up to 6	Up to 3	9
Tier 2	Up to 10	Up to 4	14
Tier 3	Up to 15	Up to 5	20
Tier 4	Up to 21	Up to 6	27

Detailed code requirements and potential incentive offers will be described in detail in Land Development Code Amendments, which will be adopted concurrently with final approval of these Comprehensive Plan amendments.

APPLICATION SUMMARY

Project Name: Village Center

Applicant: Village of Estero

Requests: Amend the Future Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan:

- Amend Lee Plan Map 1 (Page 1 of 8 of the Future Land use Map) to establish a new “Village Center” land use category and to redesignate about 522 acres of land into this new category
- Amend Lee Plan Map 1 (Page 6 of 8) to remove the “Mixed- Use Overlay” from land being designated into the new “Village Center” category
- Amend policies under Objective 1.1
- Amend policies under Goal 19
- Delete Goals 12 through 18 and 20 through 35 and all objectives & policies under these goals
- Amend Objective 2.12, 4.2, and 4.3 and policies under them
- Amend Goal 6 and policies & standards under Objective 6.1

Amend the Glossary

Amend Tables 1(a) and 1(c)

Size of Property: 522 acres will be designated into the “Village Center” category; none of that land will remain in the “Mixed-Use Overlay”

Property Location: The “Village Center” category is near US 41, beginning at the Village limits with Bonita Springs and ending just south of Broadway (see Attachment B).

Current Zoning: Much of the affected land has been zoned into one of the Planned Development zoning districts (see Attachment D).

Future Land Use Categories: (current) in Village Center area; see map in Attachment A

Urban Community	347 acres	(66.5%)
Suburban	112 acres	(21.5%)
Outlying Suburban	9 acres	(1.7%)
Public Facilities	54 acres	(10.3%)

Allowable Densities: (in current categories being changed to Village Center):

Future Land Use Category	Standard (Base) Density Range		Bonus Density
	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
Urban Community	1	6	to 10
Suburban	1	6	<i>no bonus</i>
Outlying Suburban	1	3	<i>no bonus</i>
Public Facilities	n/a	n/a	<i>no bonus</i>

FEMA Floodway: A FEMA-designated floodway runs along the Estero River through the Village Center category.

Historic Resources: Part of the Village Center category is within level 2 sensitivity areas for archeological and historic resources. About 10 acres of the Koreshan Unity National Register Historic District is east of US 41 on the south bank of the Estero River and would be in the new “Village Center” category.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public meetings or workshops have been held on the following dates to discuss the evolving Village Center planning effort:

- In 2016: March 9, March 8, January 12
- In 2015: October 28, August 18

On March 22, 2016 the Planning and Zoning Board held a public hearing to consider these comprehensive plan amendments.

PROJECT HISTORY

As the real estate market was beginning to recover from the recession, a community planning initiative was sponsored by a coalition of Estero community organizations to anticipate changing demographic trends and their impact on Estero. That process included a detailed market assessment and an extended planning workshop to explore development scenarios for a surplus of commercially zoned land near US41.

A possible framework for the development of the remaining vacant tracts in Estero was presented through a series of community meetings. This framework was based on the principles of compact, walkable, transit supportive, mixed-use development, with an emphasis on employment, housing variety, and recreational and civic uses. These principles could guide Estero toward a more sustainable model for future development that serves current residents of Estero while anticipating the needs and desires of future residents.

Findings from the community planning initiative were documented in three reports:

- *Estero Community Market Assessment* (September 2013, by Peloton Research Partners)
- *Estero Planning Workshop: February 24-27, 2014* (March 2014, by Seth Harry & Associates)
- *Community Planning Initiative, Final Report* (January 2015, by Seth Harry & Associates and Spikowski Planning Associates)

The market assessment was based on conditions in 2013. Since that time, real estate development has recommenced in Estero at a rapid pace. Lee Memorial Health System is about to develop a 31-acre site as a walkable mixed-use medical complex with complementary shops and services that are integrated with surrounding uses. Private developers are providing additional commercial uses and several smaller luxury gated communities that fit the prior Estero model, plus housing types that are new to Estero including apartment complexes and specialized housing with related medical care. The renewed economic activity and its diversity is welcome after the lengthy recession, but should be well-planned.

Additional data and analysis for these comprehensive plan amendments includes:

- *Land Use Scenarios for Lee County, Florida* (January 2015, by the Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization)
- All data and analysis supporting amendments to the Estero Community Plan (Goal 19 and its objectives and policies) as adopted in late 2014.

The Village Council authorized the preparation of Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code amendments in May 2015 through a consulting contract. The planning team included Bill Spikowski of Spikowski Planning Associates and urban designer Seth Harry of Seth Harry & Associates. These Comprehensive Plan amendments were prepared as part of that effort.

STAFF SUMMARY & ANALYSIS

The comprehensive plan amendments proposed in this report affect several different portions of the Comprehensive Plan. The following summary highlights the most significant changes. The map amendments are shown in Attachments B and C. The complete amendment language is provided in Attachment F. All three attachments were revised through March 24 to respond to ongoing input and comments.

Policy 1.1.12 and Map 1 (Page 1 of 8):

This policy would establish a new “Village Center” category on the Future Land Use Map:

POLICY 1.1.12: *The Village Center Area lies near US 41 in the heart of the Village of Estero. This area includes housing, employment, shopping, recreation, and civic uses and can accommodate additional development in walkable mixed-use patterns. Uses and densities must meet the standards for the Urban Community category unless land is rezoned as a planned development to apply alternate tiered standards for*

the Village Center Area as described under Objective 19.8. Densities in the Village Center Area may exceed the standard density ranges in Table 1(a) only if the Village Council applies the alternate tiered standards through rezoning.

The Future Land Use Map would be amended to include about 522 acres of land into this category (see Attachment B). Owners of land in this new category could participate in the new tiered standards by requesting rezoning.

Policy 19.4.6:

A new Policy 19.4.6 would be added to expand on and replace existing Policy 19.4.2.f. The new policy would implement recommendations from the Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization about preserving the rail corridor for future transportation purposes (potentially including enhanced freight service; commuter rail, light rail, or bus rapid transit; and hiking/biking/walking trails). The corridor bisects Fort Myers, Estero, and Bonita Springs and terminates in far northern Collier County.

The rail corridor is ideal for trails and bike paths because it would link most of Estero to destinations to the north and south without requiring walking or biking on busy roads. Trails and bike paths can be placed alongside active railroad tracks (known as ‘rails-with-trails’) or using abandoned rail corridors (‘rails-to-trails’). Because the CSX / Seminole Gulf rail corridor is important for many transportation purposes, the MPO recommended the ‘rails-with-trails’ approach. The right-of-way is wide enough in most places to accommodate multiple uses including trails. The MPO recently identified the rail corridor as the preferred location for the critical north-south corridor for a system of greenways and trails in Collier and Lee Counties.

The rail corridor is owned and controlled by two private entities: CSX and Seminole Gulf Railway. CSX owns the land within the right-of-way. Seminole Gulf Railway has a long-term lease on the land to operate freight rail service; Seminole Gulf also owns and maintains the tracks and rolling stock.

The MPO concluded that in order to maintain options for multiple uses of this corridor, a public entity such as Florida DOT should pursue purchasing real estate interests in the rail corridor. (Lee County Rail Corridor Feasibility Study, October 2013)

Policy 19.6.3:

Policy 19.6.3 addresses the Estero Community Park with suggestions for integrating the park with the surrounding neighborhoods by constructing the originally planned westerly entrance onto Via Coconut Point.

Policy 19.7.3:

Policy 19.7.3 is being updated to avoid inconsistencies with the Village’s Ordinance 15-01 that established advisory boards and updated the standards for public information meetings.

Objective 19.8 and subsequent policies:

The new policies following Objective 19.8 amplify Policy 1.1.12's general description of the new Village Center category and describe in general terms how the new tiered process would work, including the maximum allowable densities.

Goal 19 Generally:

Numerous minor editorial and updating changes are also proposed, for instance to reflect the jurisdiction of the Village of Estero rather than Lee County.

Goals 12 through 18 and 20 through 35:

These goals and their objectives and policies are being deleted; they apply only to other communities in unincorporated Lee County.

Objectives 4.2 and 4.3 and Map 1 (Page 6 of 8):

These objectives contain policies that apply to Lee County's "Mixed-Use Overlay."

This overlay would remain in effect for land outside the Village Center area where it would be applied in accordance with the modified terms under these objectives.

For land within the Village Center Area, this overlay would be removed. However, Policy 4.2.1 would be modified to indicate that development approvals that had been based on a property having been within the prior mixed-use overlay may request minor modifications to those approvals if they would not increase the previously approved densities and intensities.

Attachment C shows the existing Mixed-Use Overlay and land being redesignated to Village Center where the overlay will no longer apply.

Glossary:

The Glossary would be expanded by adding definitions for "mixed-use pattern" and "walkable," terms that are used in the policies but which aren't currently defined. The existing definition of "mixed use" would be deleted because it refers to individual development projects rather than to the development pattern that supports mixed uses; a more relevant definition of "mixed use" would replace it.

Table 1(a):

Table 1(a) would be amended to include the Village Center Area.

Table 1(c):

Table 1(c) would be deleted entirely.

Future Land Use Map:

Map 1 of 8 would be amended to redesignate about 522 acres of land from Urban Community, Suburban, Outlying Suburban, and Public Facilities to the new Village Center category.

Map 6 of 8 which includes the Mixed-Use Overlay would also be amended to remove the Mixed-Use Overlay where the Village Center category is being applied, as shown on Attachment C.

Vision statement:

Vision statements for 25 distinct communities in unincorporated Lee County are presented at the beginning of the Comprehensive Plan. The vision statement for Estero was updated in late 2014; it is reprinted on Page 1 of Attachment F but no additional changes are needed.

STAFF SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

Village Ordinance 2015-01 assigned the Planning and Zoning Board to serve as the Village's local planning agency. Under Florida law, local planning agencies are responsible for preparation of comprehensive plans and must hold a public hearing on all proposed amendments and make a recommendation on such amendments. Estero's Planning and Zoning Board held its public hearing on these amendments on March 22, 2016

The Village Council must hold its own public hearing and decide whether the amendments should be "transmitted" to state and regional agencies for formal review (or "not transmitted"). After formal review, the Village Council will hold another public hearing to make a final decision to adopt or not adopt the amendments.

Issues to be considered by the Village Council Board include:

- Do the amendments further the Village's policy goals in an effective and equitable manner?
- Are the amendments based on sound planning principles and appropriate data and analysis?
- Will the Comprehensive Plan be internally consistent if the amendments are adopted?

Staff recommends that the Village Council find in the affirmative on each of these criteria and vote to transmit these amendments for formal review at this time but to withhold final approval of these amendments until the Land Development Code can also be amended to provide suitable criteria for carrying out the Comprehensive Plan amendments.

Several maps are provided as attachments to this report. The most important are Attachment B which shows the new "Village Center" category and Attachment C which shows where the Mixed-Use Overlay would no longer apply.

The full text of the comprehensive plan amendments are presented in Attachment F immediately after the maps. Additions are shown underlined; deletions are ~~struck through~~; both additions and deletions are also **highlighted in yellow**.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Future Land Use Map (existing)

Attachment B – Future Land Use Map (area being changed to “Village Center”)
(modified on March 24, 2016)

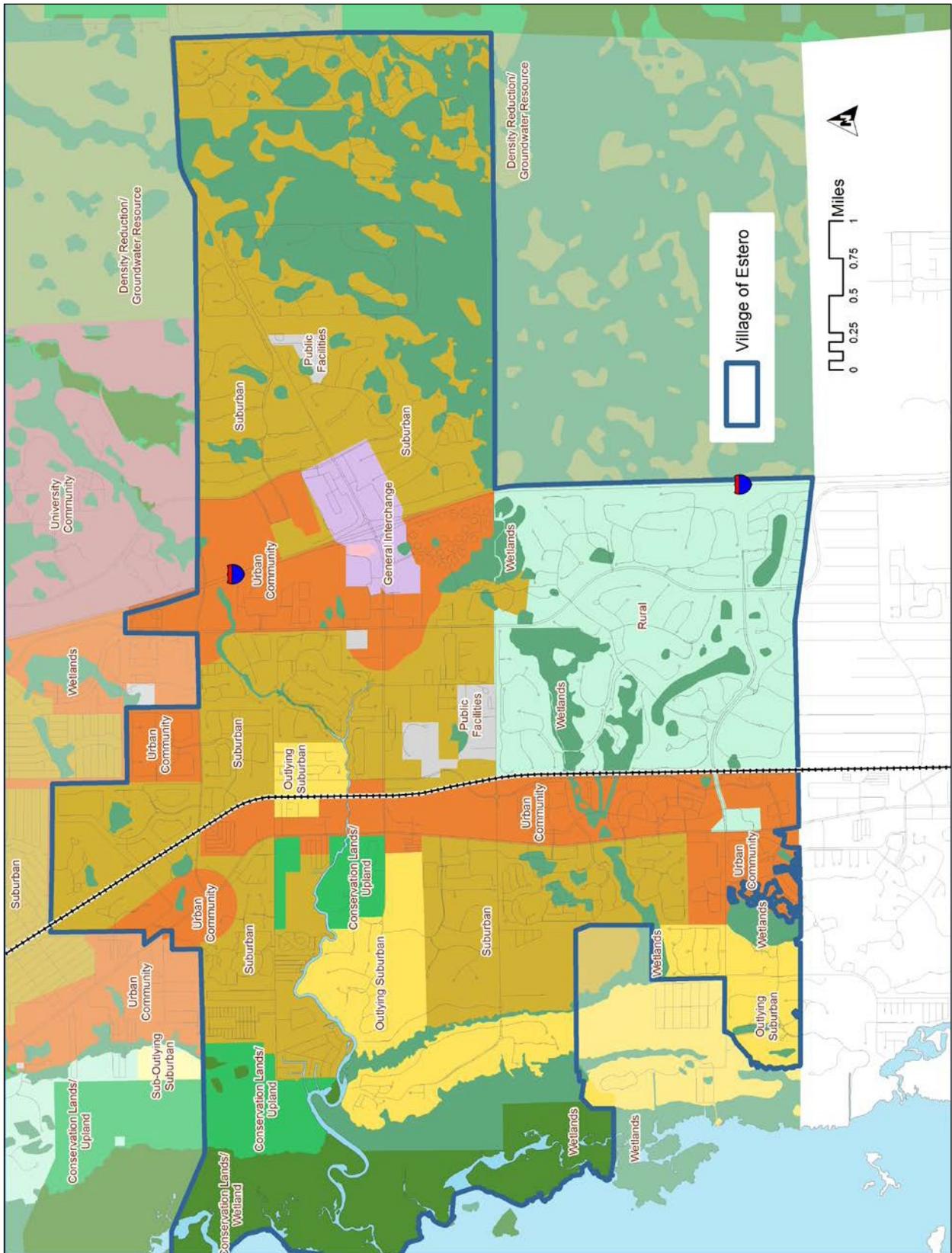
Attachment C – Mixed-Use Overlay (modified on March 24, 2016)

Attachment D – ‘Planned Development’ Zoning (existing)

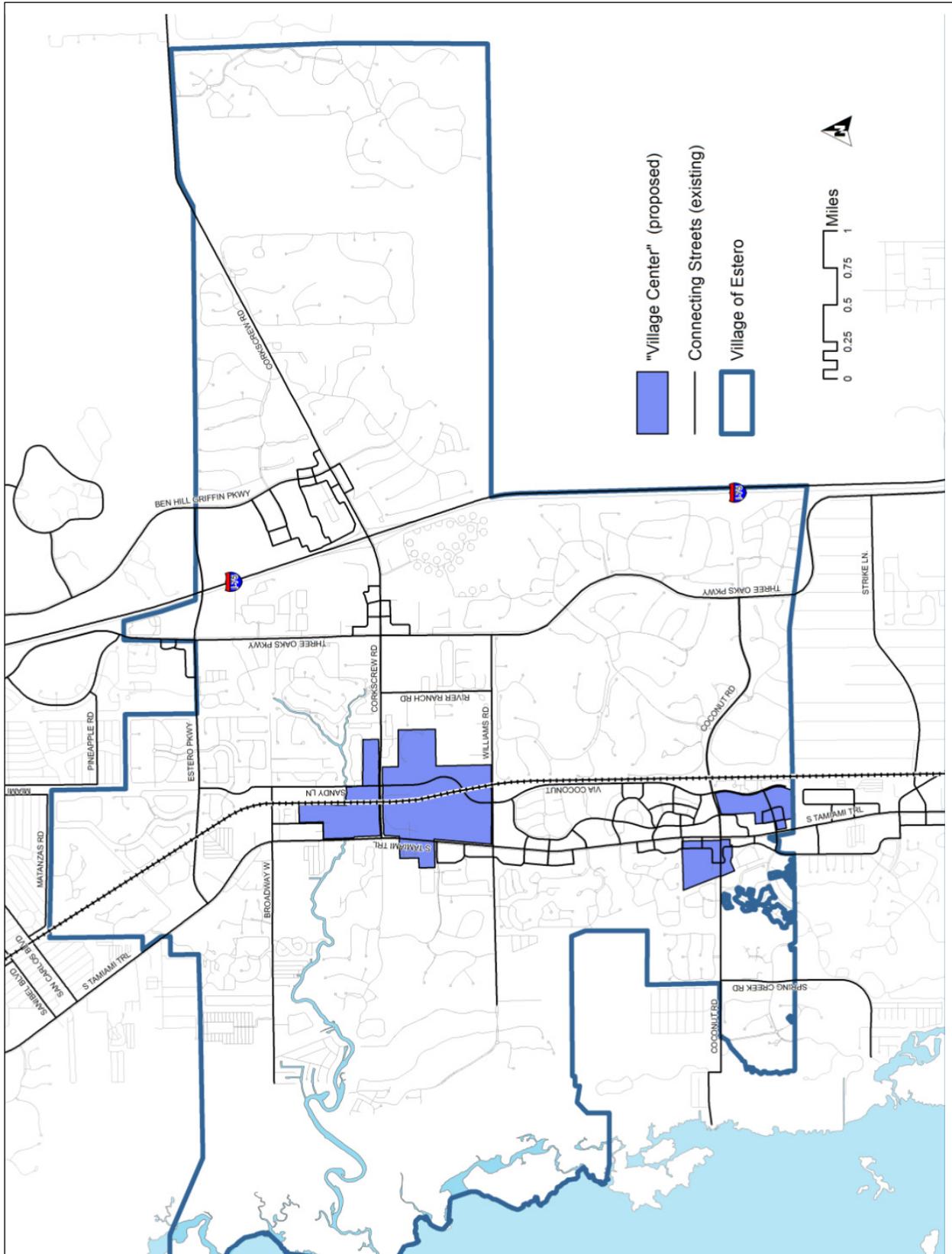
Attachment E – Map 3E (existing map that is referred to in new Policy 19.4.6)

Attachment F – Proposed changes to goals, objectives, and policies
of the Comprehensive Plan (Draft, March 24, 2016).

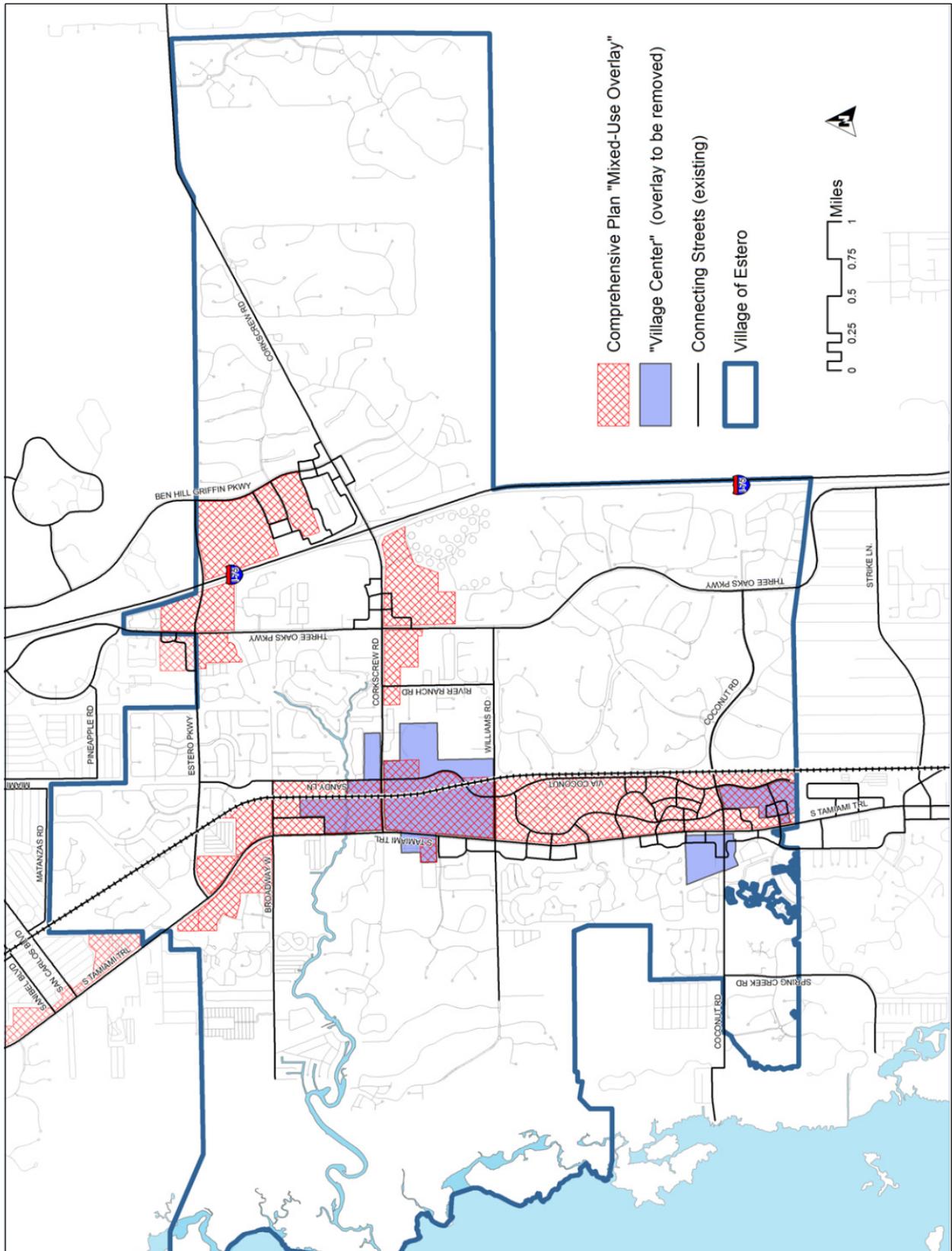
Attachment A – Future Land Use Map (existing)



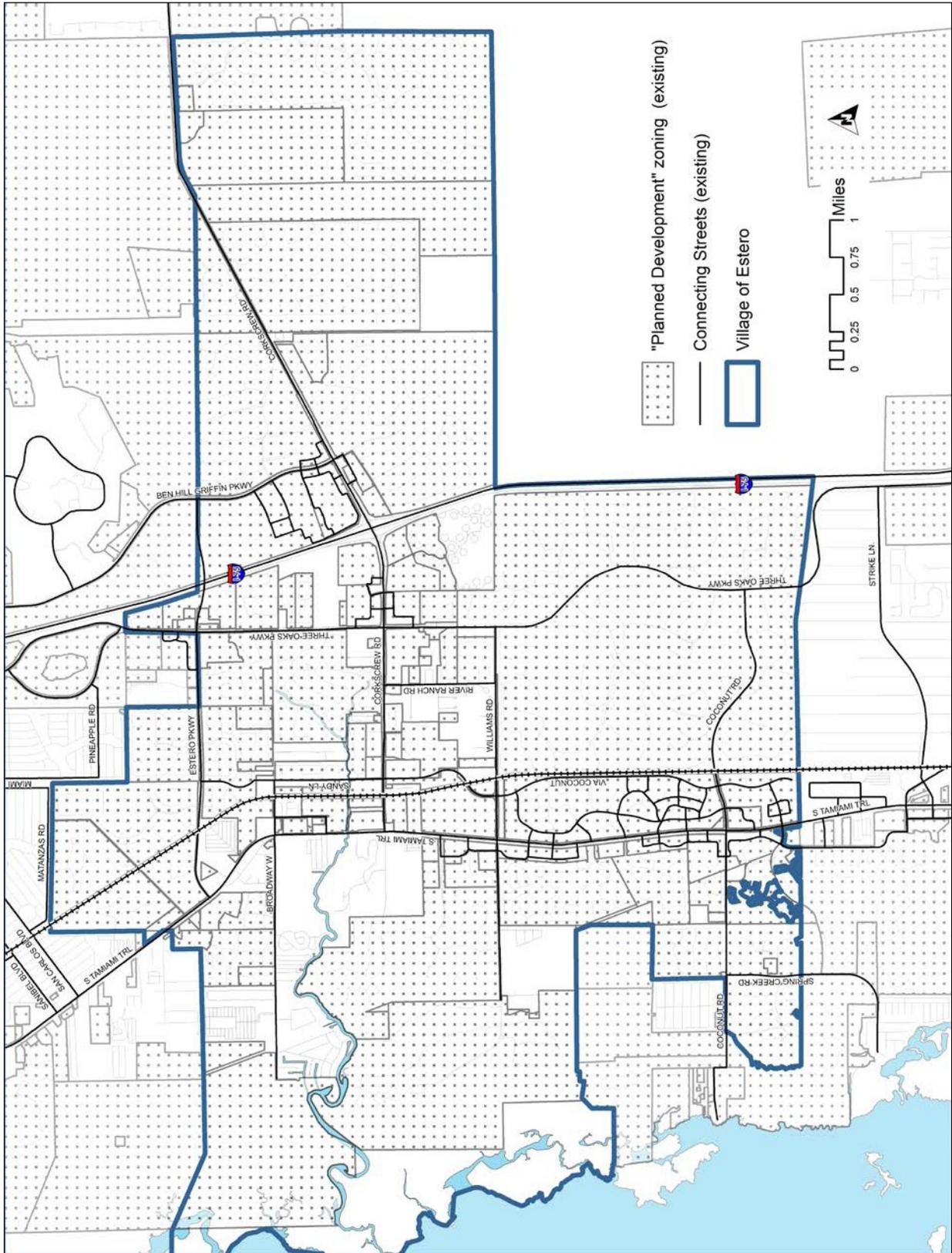
Attachment B – Future Land Use Map (area being changed to “Village Center”)



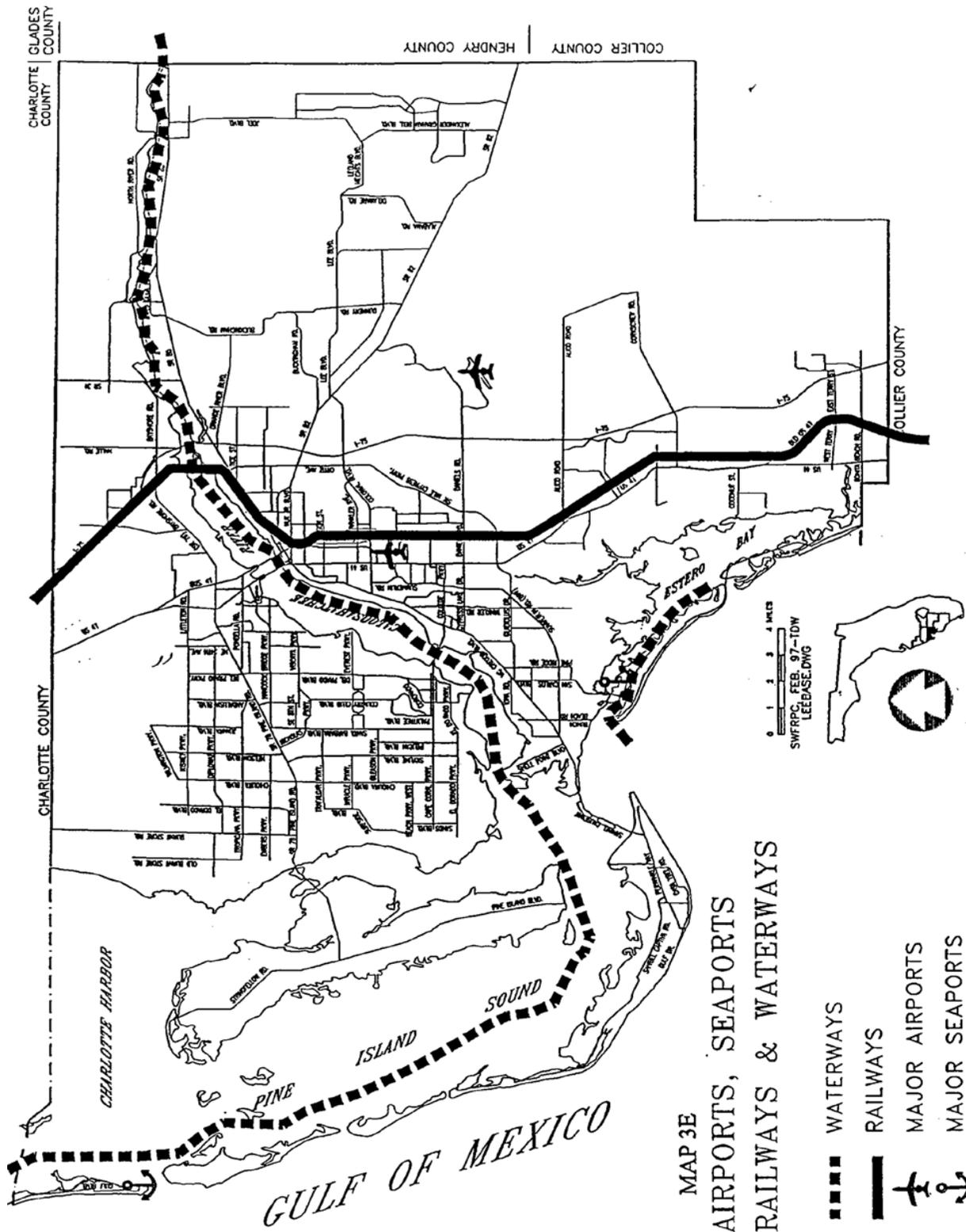
Attachment C – Mixed-Use Overlay
 (existing overlay plus “Village Center” area being removed from overlay)



Attachment D – 'Planned Development' Zoning (existing)



Attachment E – Map 3E (existing)



MAP 3E
 AIRPORTS, SEAPORTS
 RAILWAYS & WATERWAYS

- WATERWAYS
- RAILWAYS
- ✈ MAJOR AIRPORTS
- ⚓ MAJOR SEAPORTS

SWFRPC, FEB 97-TDW
 LEEBASE/DWG