

## MARTIN COUNTY 2070

*By Maggy Hurchalla*

A map of 2070 urban development for Florida has been submitted which makes the future look bleak for Martin County. Under the scenario in this map, one possible outcome derived from the *Florida 2070* report issued by 1000 Friends of Florida, Martin County would go from 14% of its acres being urban to 52% of its land in urban use by 2070 if current growth and development trends persist.

I am a long-time supporter and admirer of 1000 Friends, but I think that map needs an update to reflect more accurate figures. Many have taken it to mean we must change our comp plan to reflect higher densities and intensities or we will end up destroying our rural areas with urban sprawl.

The project was based on 2010 Census numbers and assumptions about what Martin County's land use patterns and policies would house 70,000 new permanent residents countywide. Using 2017 population estimates, actual growth since 2010, and updated county estimates of the amount of residential units that can be available in the current land use patterns of the urban service districts, Martin County would need to change its land use intensities or its urban boundary to accommodate 7300 housing units. The County recently extended the urban boundary and approved 4200 housing units for the Pineland Prairie development. That leaves a need for land use changes to accommodate just 3100 additional units in the next 50 years. \* That could be accommodated in a minimal increase in density or an expansion of the urban boundary of only 1500 acres.

**THIS IS SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT FROM THE 2070 TREND SCENARIO THAT FORESES AN URBAN AREA THREE TIMES AS LARGE BY 2070, OR THE 2070 ALTERNATIVE SCENARIO IN THE REPORT, IN WHICH THE URBAN AREA WOULD BE ALMOST TWICE AS LARGE.**

In many ways Martin County is a poster child for control of urban sprawl. It has had strong, specific, mandatory comprehensive plan policies about locating urban development and urban services within the urban boundaries and limiting expansion of the urban boundary to what is needed for the next 15 years of growth. It has policies to prevent strip commercial on highways, ensure concurrency, and make growth pay for itself. It has had policies to limit the expansion of commercial land uses to what is needed for expected population growth. It does all that while protecting the environment.

IF the County keeps those policies and implements them consistently, infill will be required as well as encouraged and very little expansion of the urban boundary will be needed.

The updated figures on 50-year need and residential land use capacity within the urban service districts along with the county's urban boundary policies show a future very different from other Florida counties.

Martin County is sometimes accused of encouraging sprawl by its 15-unit density cap, its four-story height limit, its strict wetland preservation requirements, its requirements for preservation of native habitat on site, and its general low density, less intense lifestyle.

Looking at updated numbers and existing policies, it appears we can have our cake and eat it too. We can grow while having the kind and quality of life that existing residents enjoy, and we can avoid the urban sprawl that has destroyed so much of Florida.

IT ALSO VERIFIES WHAT IS OBVIOUS FROM COUNTIES TO THE SOUTH OF US - SIMPLY ENCOURAGING HIGH RISES AND HIGH DENSITIES DOES NOT PREVENT URBAN SPRAWL.

\*For detailed calculations of housing unit needs based on BEBR 2017, the Martin County Population Technical Bulletin 2017 and the Martin County Residential Capacity Update 2018, contact [mhurchalla@hotmail.com](mailto:mhurchalla@hotmail.com)