

**Theme 2. Protect rural character and open spaces in the western areas of the planning district.**

A reliance on low-density patterns of development will not adequately protect the environment or maintain the desired rural character of the Northwest Planning District. Low-density development uses up raw land at a faster rate than other forms of growth. Scattered, sprawled growth also creates a “checkerboard” effect across the landscape, taking out chunks of open space, wetlands, and wildlife habitat and turning them into disconnected, unusable fragments.

This theme and set of options focus on preserving the rural character of the Northwest and maintaining the health and integrity of the area’s natural systems. As part of this theme, the City would allow new growth in the Rural/Conservation Area in the form of rural villages.

**Issue:** Scattered, low-density, single use residential development, particularly in western portions of the district, reduces the

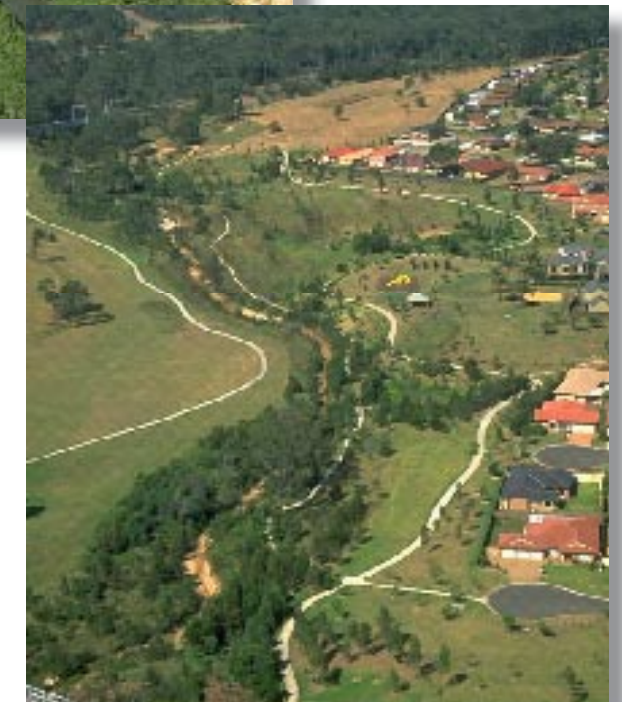
amount of open space and diminishes the area’s rural character.

**Policy:** Promote village-based subdivision design in the district’s most environmentally sensitive areas to protect existing natural and cultural resources.

**Implementation Options:**

**Option 1:** In the Rural/Conservation Area, build on the traditional development patterns of the rural village

This option would recommend organizing growth and economic activity within rural clusters that reflect the traditional architectural, land use, and open space features of Florida’s early 20th Century villages. The Rural Village model demonstrates the key features of appropriate rural design. The idea is to bring some of the convenience of restaurants, stores, and public facilities to the district’s far western neighborhoods, while maintaining the rural character of the area.



New development should fit within the natural landscape

**Theme 2**

**Community Layout:**

- Small center with a pedestrian focus.
- Smaller-lot single-family homes surround the village center.
- Larger-lot, low-density single-family homes are beyond the village center, along with large employment or commercial uses.

**Land Uses:**

- Some commercial uses that revolve mostly around daily goods and services, such as grocery stores, restaurants, gasoline service stations, hardware stores and small offices.
- Public/civic functions concentrate in the center.

**Buildings/Landscape/Streets:**

- Buildings and signs within the center reflect the traditional rural architecture of the 1920s and 1930s.
- Buildings are one or two-story.
- Roads have protected wooded views and fence lines.

**Special Amenities:**

- Village has nearby trails, paths, and open space areas.

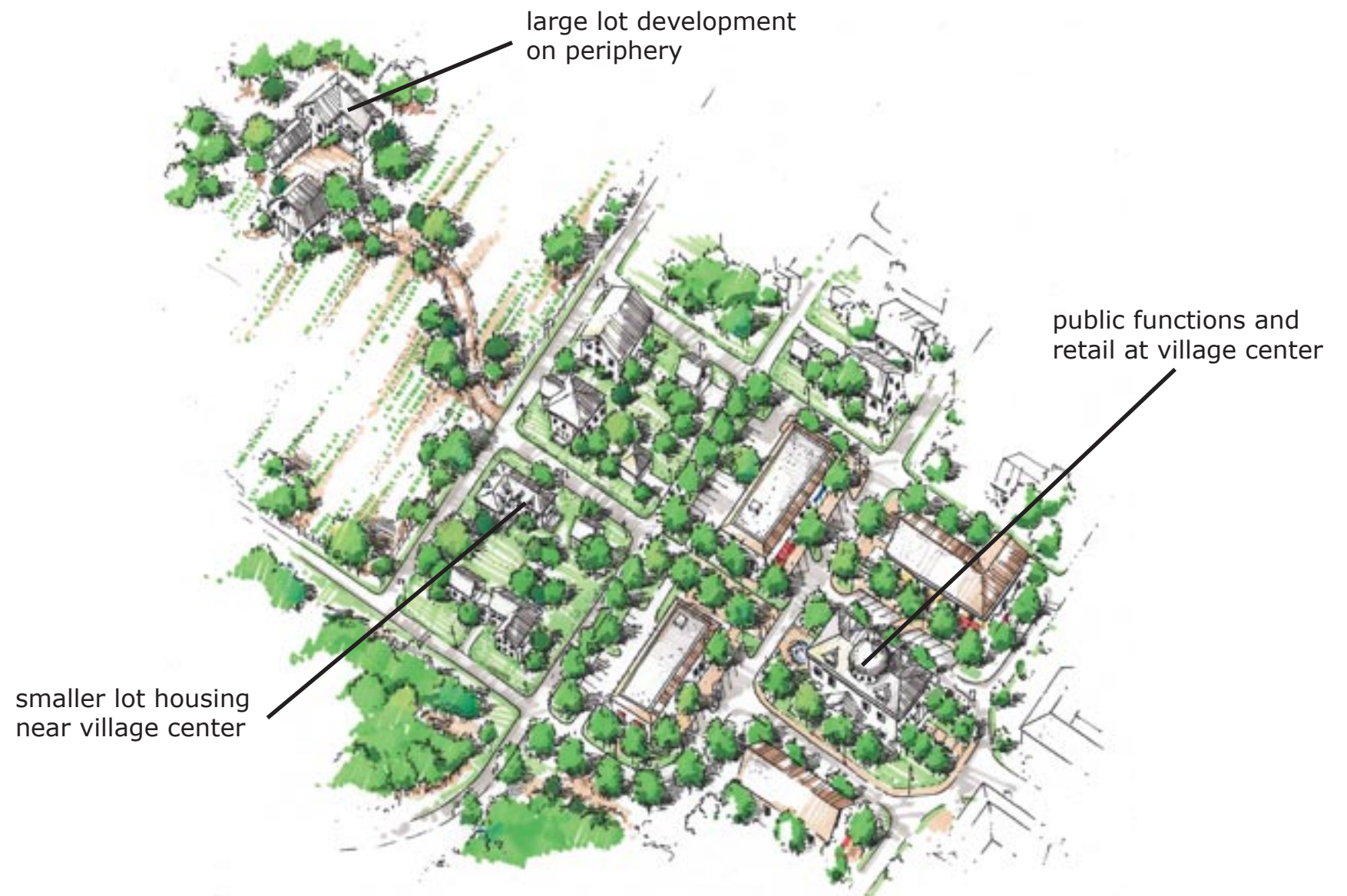
**Services:**

- The Rural Village uses package plant wastewater treatment services.
- Village center has sidewalks throughout and most roadways are two-lane country roads without curb and gutter.
- Roadways use open swales to collect storm water.

**RURAL VILLAGE CENTER**

**"Country Living"**

**Purpose: To preserve rural character in the western parts of the Northwest Planning District.**



Under this option, the City would permit new growth that replicates the rural village layout in appropriate land areas of the Rural/Conservation Area.

In general, rural villages have the following characteristics:

- preservation of agricultural land, open space, scenic vistas and natural resources
- creation of a distinct village center surrounded by a rural landscape with land for agricultural, forest, recreational or environmental protection purposes
- the design of dwellings, shops, workplaces, and civic uses in a village center at a pedestrian scale; the uses should be diverse and complementary enough to satisfy the daily household needs of surrounding residents
- buildings that generally front streets
- a general grid pattern of streets, alleys, and blocks forming a connected network
- squares, greens, landscaped streets and parks woven into the village center pattern
- an identifiable, functionally diverse, visually unified village center, organized around a village green or square
- adequate wastewater treatment service will be delivered through a package plant designed to meet the size and capacity specifications of the JEA

## Theme 2

### *Rural Village*

**Option 2:** For all areas, create a database of green infrastructure

This option would recommend that the City continue the ongoing efforts of the Preservation Project to create a Geographic Information System-based inventory of the Northwest's "green infrastructure." This infrastructure includes the network of open space, woodlands, wildlife habitat, parks and other natural areas that sustain clean air and water, and enrich quality of life. An inventory of resources should include:

- wetlands
- sensitive wildlife habitat
- waterways
- parks and greenways
- recreation facilities and trail networks
- conservation easements
- private working lands of conservation value, such as forests, farms, and ranches
- scenic views or distinctive landscape features
- historic structures



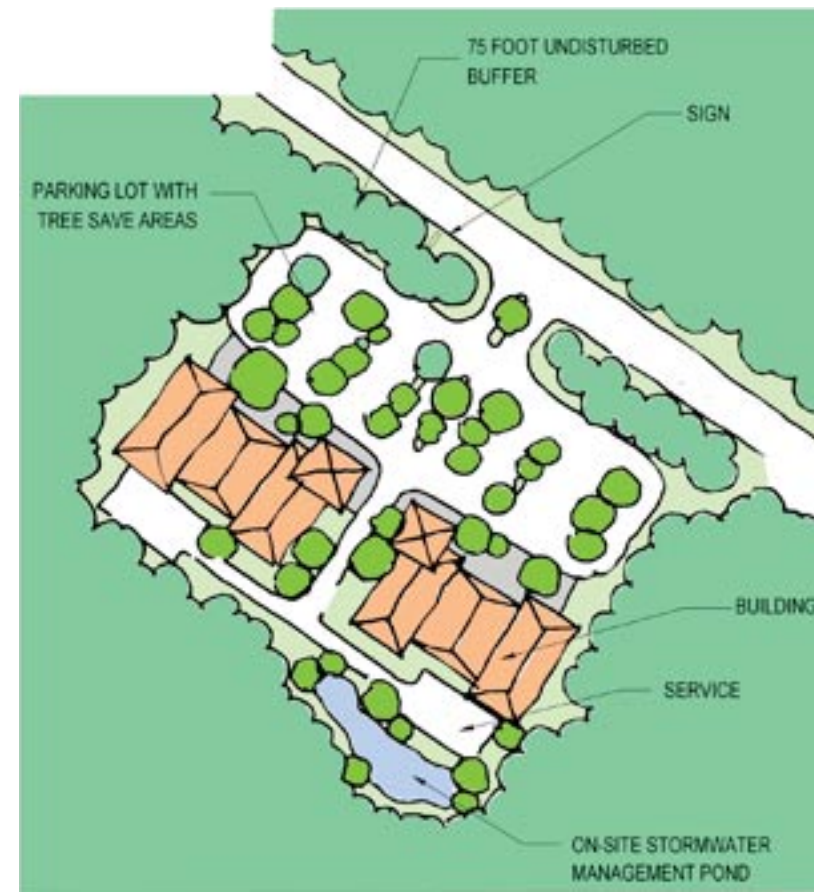
Wetlands are an essential component of green infrastructure

The database should be made readily available to developers to assist in identifying the key conservation features of proposed project sites.

**Option 3:** In the Rural/Conservation Area, protect the character of existing corridors

High-capacity roads near emerging residential areas are especially vulnerable to strip commercial development. This strategy recommends the use of guidelines to ensure that future commercial activity in the western portion of the district enhances the existing rural character of the area. Buildings and roads should maintain the rural landscape, protect scenic views, and minimize impacts on adjacent properties. Rural corridor design may include:

- preservation of a natural buffer along the road front
- placement of parking behind or to the side of buildings or screening of front parking lots
- encouraging the use of ground signs by allowing a size bonus
- screening of service areas, loading docks, truck parking, outside storage and dumpster areas



Rural corridor overlays can accommodate new growth, but preserve the natural look of rural roadways.

## Theme 2