

Sunnyside Task Force Study Report

Prepared by the City of Leesburg Community Development Department
on behalf of the Sunnyside Task Force:

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LEESBURG
The Lakefront City

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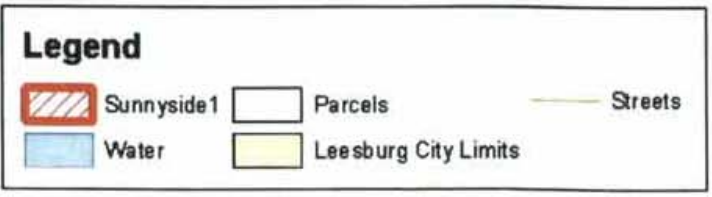
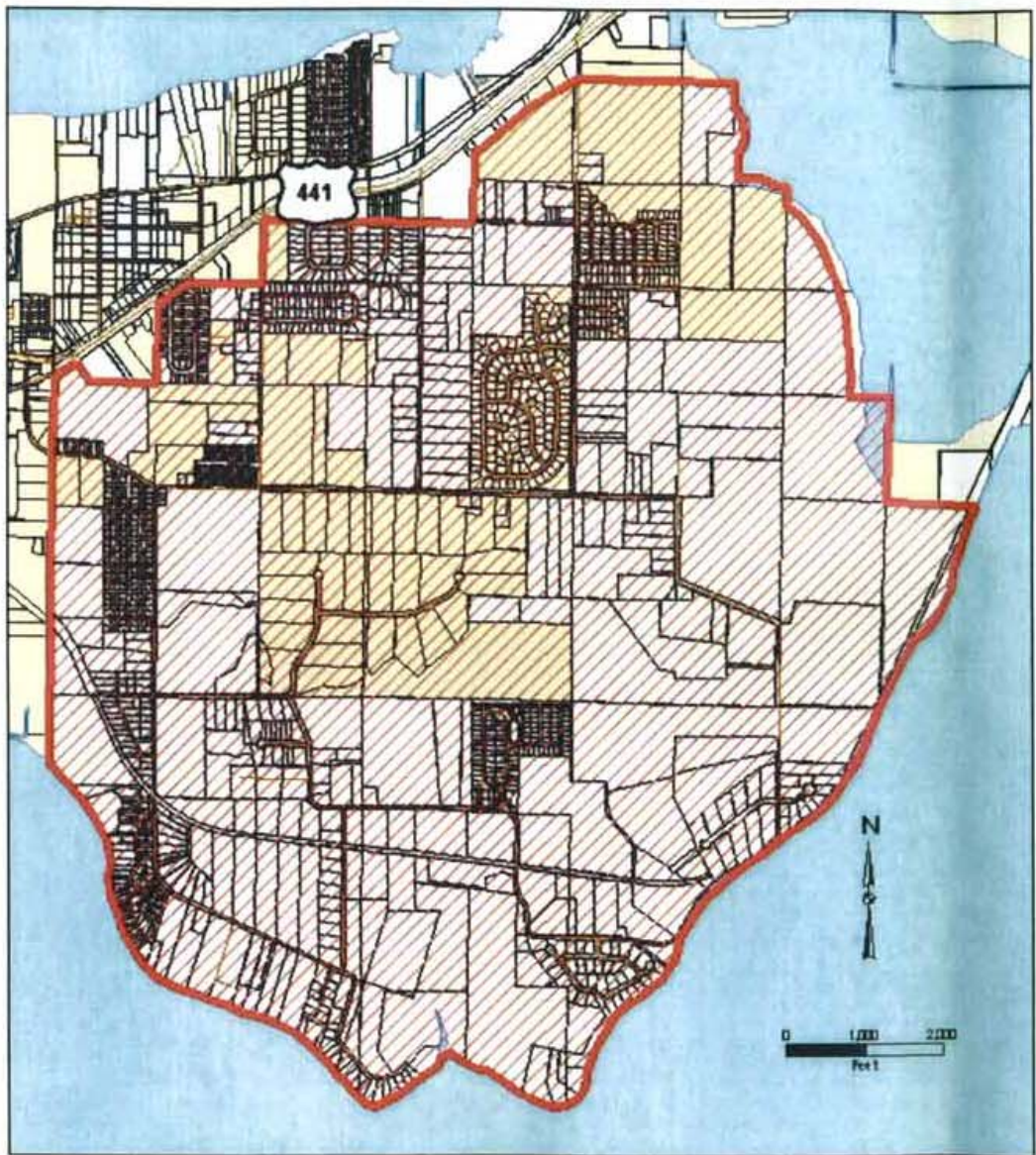
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Figure 1: Sunnyside Study Area



I. Executive Summary

In November 2003, the Leesburg City Commission considered a request for annexation of a 41-acre parcel within the area commonly referred to as "Sunnyside", an area located south of U.S. Hwy 441, roughly 1.3 miles east of downtown Leesburg. It is a traditionally rural area with large portions of vacant land, which lies mostly outside the municipal limits of the City. During public comment for the annexation request, the residents of the area did not appear to be opposed to annexation per se, but rather they appeared to oppose the density and type of development being proposed. In recent years, current residents of the Sunnyside area have opposed expansion of the City's municipal limits in their area, in part because they perceive that the City lacks an overall plan for the development of the area. The City Commission disapproved the request and adopted Resolution No. 6983 on November 24, 2003, which directed City staff to begin a study of the development patterns in the Sunnyside area and formulate a plan to guide future annexation and development in the area. The Commission approved the formation of a Task Force to prepare the study. The study includes recommendations on appropriate levels of density, infrastructure, and transportation design for the Sunnyside area.

II. Organization and Objectives

City staff created a series of maps and data which would provide information on existing densities, zoning, land use, utilities and wetlands. Staff also included information on Land Development Code regulations which could affect the Sunnyside area. Officials from Lake County provided information on traffic counts and road conditions in Sunnyside. The Task Force was asked to make recommendations on appropriate density levels for residential property and intensity levels for commercial property. The second objective for the Task Force was to define the appropriate levels of infrastructure necessary to support proposed land uses.

Figure 2: City and County Zoning

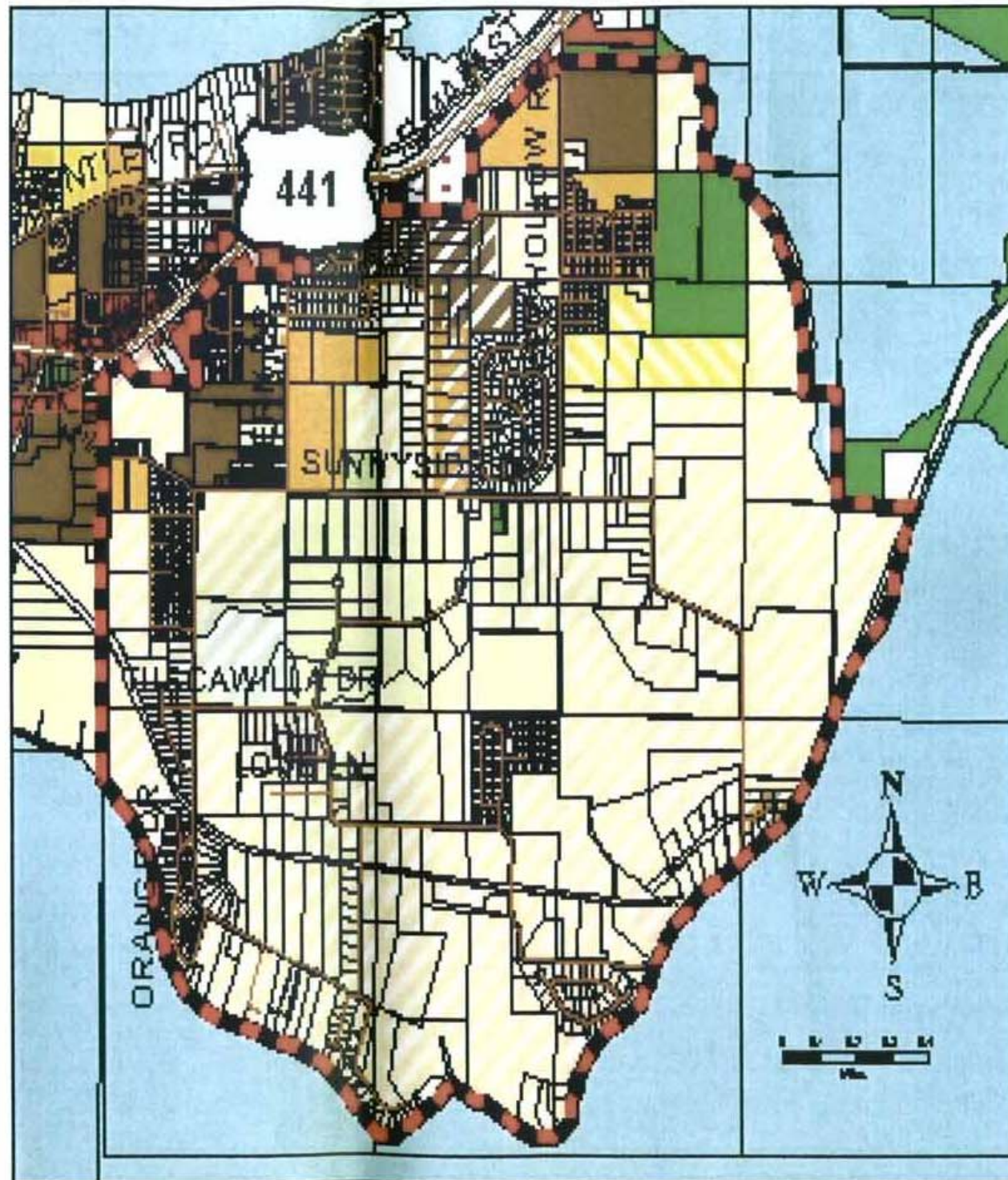


Figure 3: City and County Future Land Use

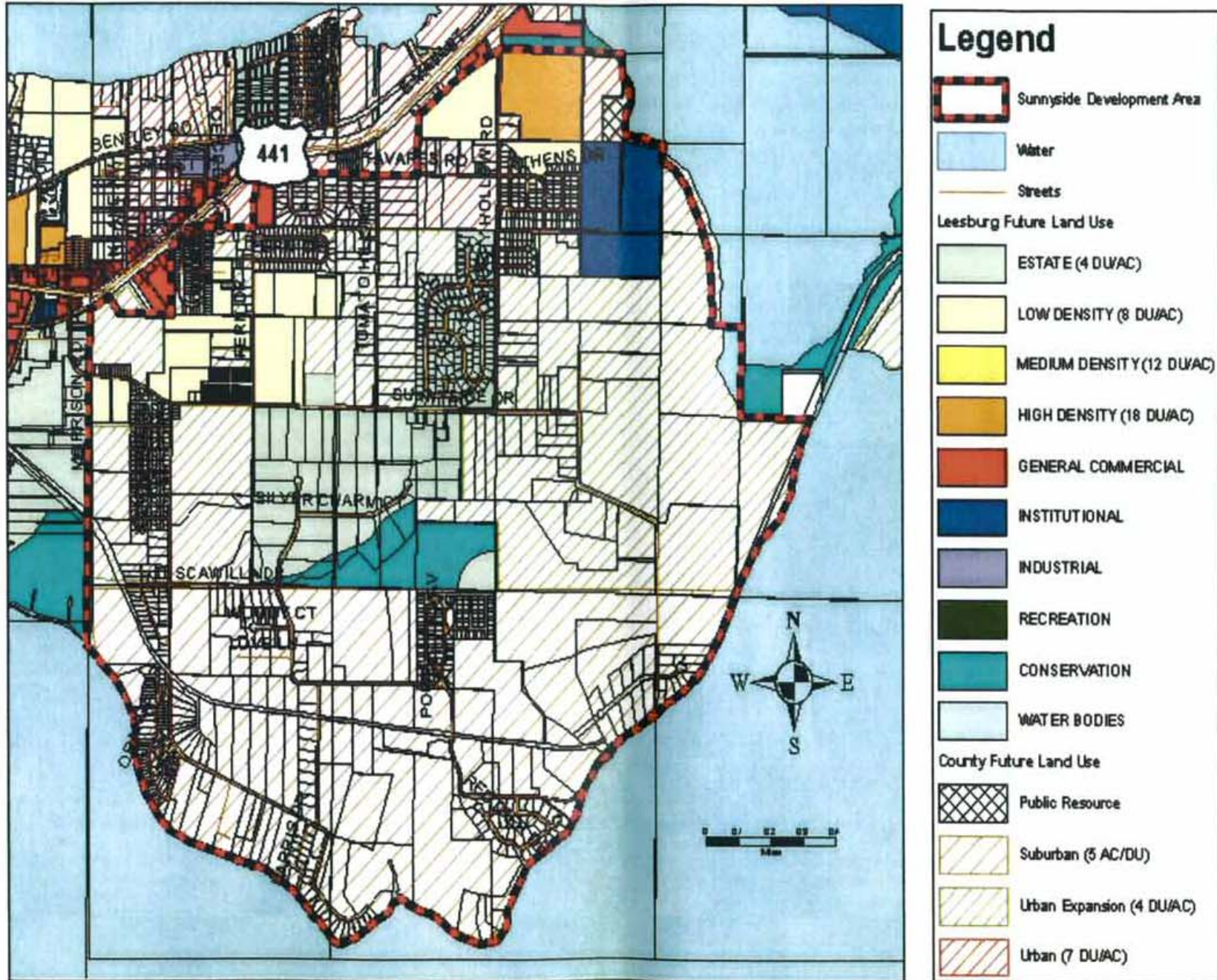
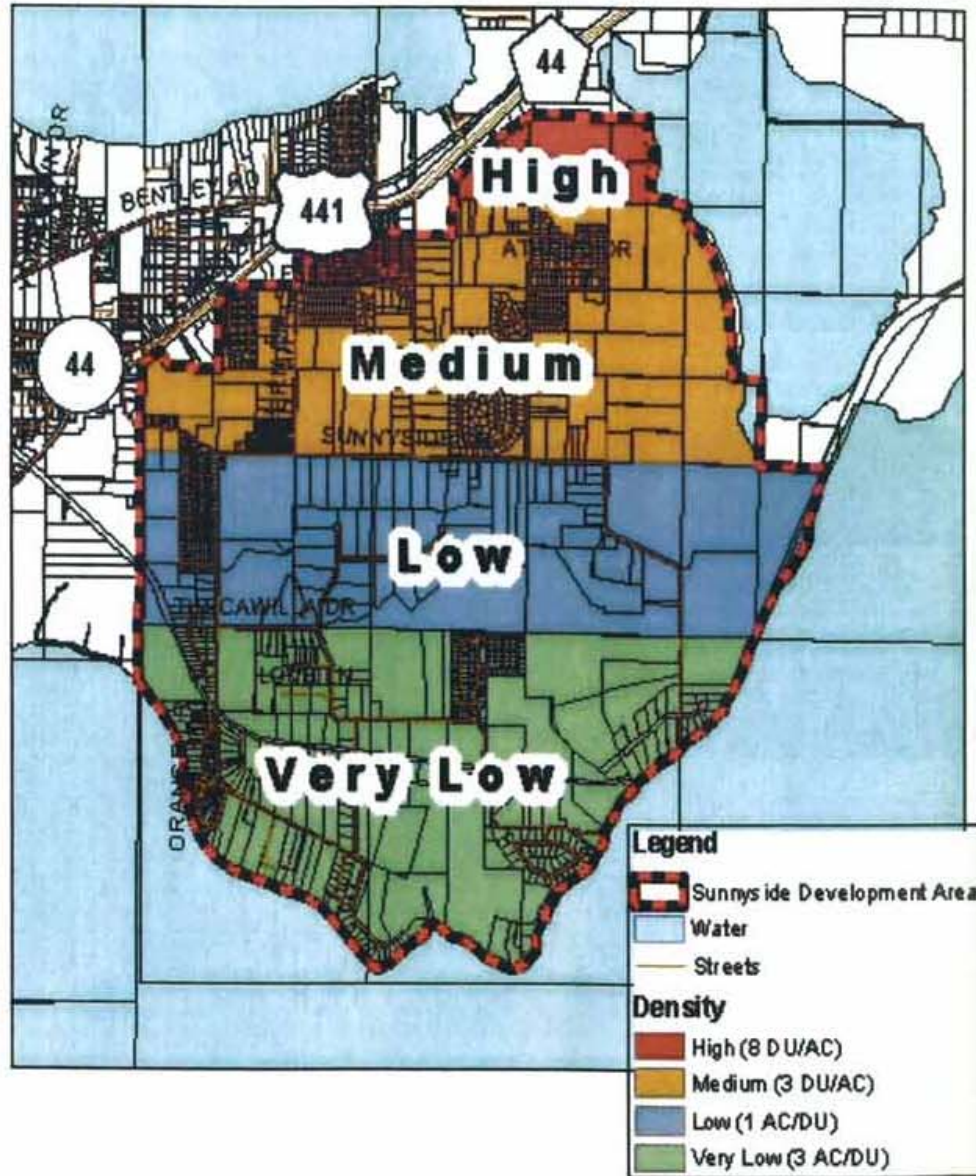


Figure 4: Recommended Density Levels



A. Density and Type of Development

Density refers to the numbers of housing units per acre. Density levels must be defined to help maintain the quality of life in Sunnyside. In order to determine the appropriate levels of density for Sunnyside, the first task was to examine existing development conditions. Existing development was calculated by totaling the number of houses, including those platted and planned. Potential development under current allowed densities was determined by examining City and County zoning and land use maps. Development limitations due to the presence of wetlands or site constraints were also taken into account.

After determining the current allowed densities, City staff proposed segmenting the Sunnyside area into sections and applying density standards to each section, which best matched current allowed densities. In an effort to encourage more uniform development, the density would transition from High (nearest to U.S. Hwy 441) to Very Low (nearest to Lake Harris). The Task Force considered several density levels and concluded that three units per acre would be more reasonable for the medium section. (See Figure 4) According to this model, the Medium and High density sections showed the most decrease in development with applied density standards of 4 units per acre and 8 units per acre, respectively. Cluster development was discussed as an option for developers of residential projects, in order to utilize land preserve open space. Also, the addition of a one unit per acre zoning district in the City's new Land Development Code would provide an option for those who prefer to develop at a lower density.

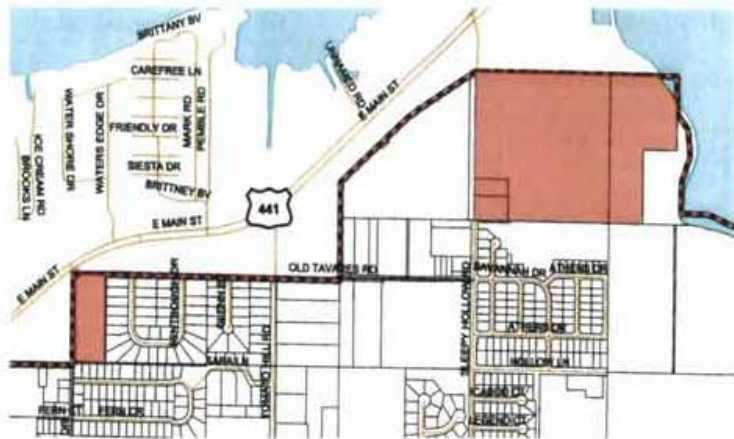
Figure 5: Density Table for the Sunnyside Study Area

Current Number of Units	Current Maximum Number of Units under currently allowed densities	Current Maximum Number of Units under recommended densities
759	2700	2335

There were several residentially and commercially zoned parcels of land located near U.S. Hwy 441 which could potentially support commercial uses (See Figure 6). Staff analyzed the feasibility of commercial development here, with the consideration of various geographical constraints. The Task Force indicated that commercial uses should be allowed on these parcels, only when significant buffers from the residential uses are put in place. Staff presented information on Planned Unit Developments as a tool to enhance or vary design elements.

The Task Force agreed that it would be appropriate to allow commercial development on the east side of Sleepy Hollow Road, with buffering requirements between the commercial and residential development. Additionally, the Committee agreed that it would be appropriate for commercial development to occur on the east side of Fern Drive, on property currently zoned "C-3".

Figure 6: Parcels recommended for commercial use



B. Infrastructure (Utilities)

In the Sunnyside area, the City is the main provider of water, and the only provider of wastewater and natural gas (see Figure 7). The pressure for annexation into Leesburg is due in large part to the availability of utilities. Most of the existing utility service is concentrated north of Sunnyside Drive, while development south of Sunnyside Drive is dependent on wells and septic tanks. City staff has determined that once density levels drop to less than three (3) units per acre, the cost of extending water and wastewater lines becomes a financial burden. Consequently, the Task Force felt that City utilities could eventually be extended south of Sunnyside Drive at the property owner's expense, but would not be required due to the low level of density.

Figure 7: Utility locations

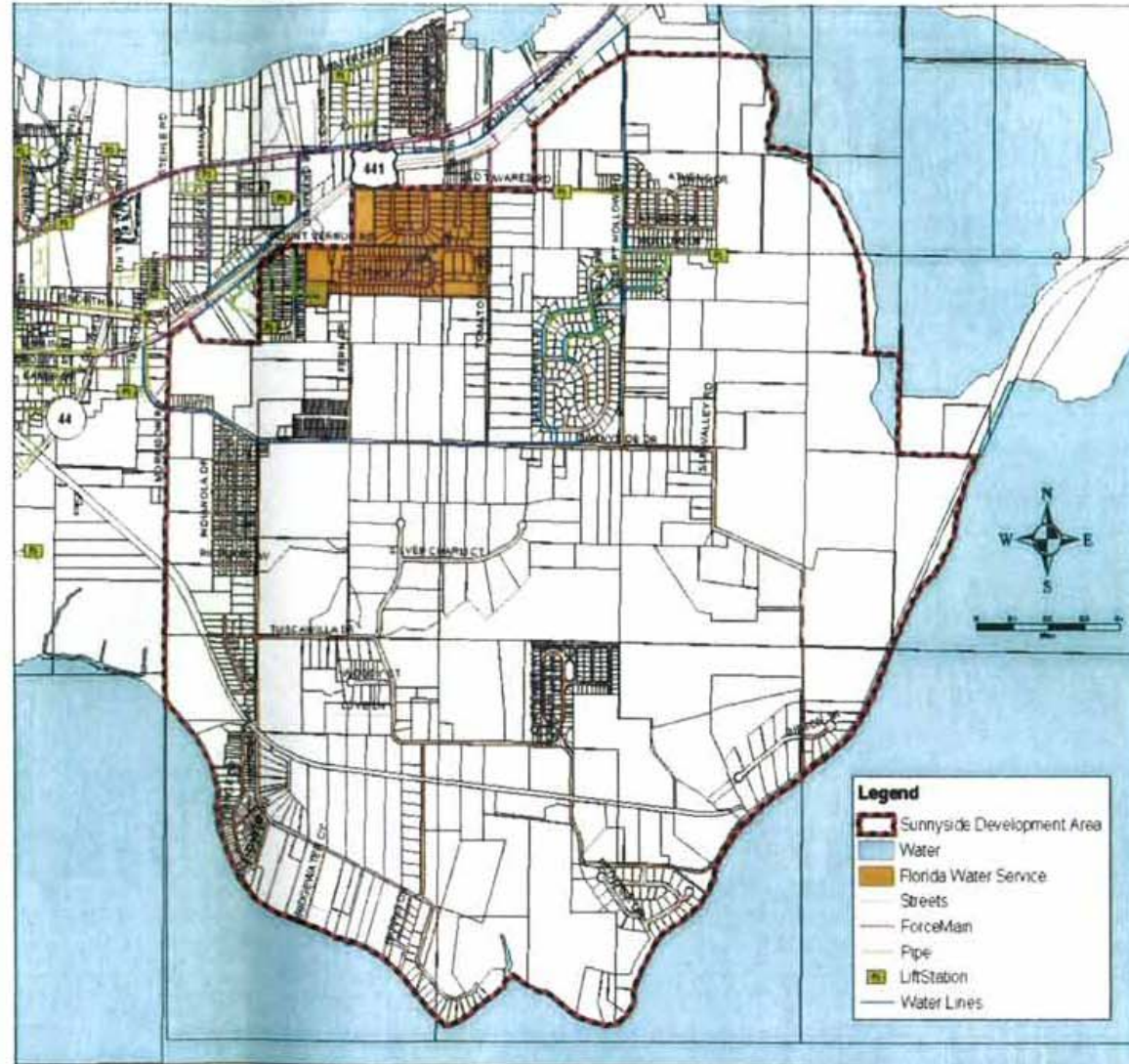


Figure 8: Traffic counts for roads in Sunnyside: Based on AADT (Annually Averaged Daily Traffic)

Traffic Count Location	Year 1999	Year 2000	Year 2001	Year 2002	Year 2003	Year 2004
Sunnyside Drive just south of Main Street	2,342	2,256	2,426	2,554	2,494	2,707
Fern Drive just south of Hwy 441	363	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mt. Vernon Road between Hwy 441 and Fern Drive	502	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tomato Hill Road just south of Hwy 441	584	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Old Tavares Road between Tomato Hill Road and Sleepy Hollow Road	216	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sleepy Hollow Road just south of Hwy 441	823	N/A	N/A	886	941	1183
Sunnyside Drive just west of Tomato Hill Road	795	836	846	N/A	N/A	1,207
Sunnyside Drive between Tomato Hill Road and Sleepy Hollow Road	607	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sunnyside Drive west of Sleepy Hollow Road	350	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

C. Transportation

Residents of the Sunnyside area have voiced concern that the roads are not adequate to support further development and that the area has recently experienced a rapid increase in traffic. Officials from Lake County provided information on roads in the Sunnyside Study Area. A map was used to show a series of traffic counts over several years and a grading of the road surface conditions. While the traffic counts for roads have increased over the past five years, the counts are still well below the threshold of 2500-3000 cars a day, which triggers road improvements by Lake County. The only road improvements currently under design is the realignment of Sleepy Hollow Road at US Hwy 441, which should be completed by 2007. Additional work to the remainder of Sleepy Hollow Road is proposed by the County but not currently programmed. This data seems to indicate that development has not adversely affected road capacity.

Road improvements in Sunnyside are particularly challenging due to several factors. Most roads are narrow with two-lanes and in many cases, lined with canopy trees. Many motorists travel these roads at very high speeds. The lack of dedicated right-of-way presents an obstacle to widening for the purpose of accommodating cars, bicycles, or pedestrians. The Task Force expressed a desire to maintain the rural nature of the roads while addressing the need for pedestrian safety.

III. Recommendations and Implementation

The following recommendations, drawn from discussions during Sunnyside Task Force meetings, were formulated to guide future annexation and development in the Sunnyside area. The focus of the study was to plan for the future, with an understanding of the past. These recommendations should not affect development rights of Lots of Record. The recommendations are followed by a description of how they can be implemented.

A. Density of Type of Development

1. The study area should include a variety of residential densities, including low density development. There should be a transition between high intensity development and low intensity development, with higher intensity development occurring closer to US 441, and lower intensity development occurring closer to Lake Harris.

The Task Force approved the map reflecting the Very Low, Low, Medium and High areas. The following density levels were defined for each area:

Very Low	one unit per three acres
Low	one unit per one acre
Medium	three units per acre
High	eight units per acre

Implementation: Most densities will be enforced through annexation or developer agreements. In the Medium and High sections, density will be determined by taking into account public health, safety and welfare and traffic and environmental issues. The defined density levels in the High and Medium sections will be applicable unless an otherwise higher density was allowed as of May 2004. The sections delineated in the recommended density map allow for a transition in the level of development. A one unit per acre zoning district shall be incorporated into the City's new Land Development Code to provide an option for those who prefer to develop at a lower density.

2. Cluster development should be supported and promoted in areas of high and medium density development.

Implementation: The City's Comprehensive Plan sets out provisions and incentives for cluster development. City staff will encourage the use of cluster developments as may be appropriate for each new residential development.

3. The preservation of environmentally sensitive lands should be encouraged.

Implementation: The Conservation Overlay District defined by the Comprehensive Plan will be applied to wetland areas in Sunnyside to require a wetlands jurisdictional delineation before development occurs.

B. Infrastructure (Utilities)

4. *Utilities and government services should be provided in a planned, coordinated and efficient manner.*

Implementation: For development in the High and Medium sections, a determination will be made as to what type of utilities are appropriate for the area. Annexation/Developer agreements will reflect these requirements.

5. *Centralized utilities shall be required for areas with urbanizing density and intensity of development.*

Implementation: Septic tanks will be allowed in the Low and Very Low Density sections . Any necessary amendments to the Land Development Code and Comprehensive Plan will be evaluated by staff.

C. Transportation

6. *Roads need to be able to support development or be upgraded prior to new development.*

Implementation: New development will be required to provide sidewalks and right-of-way for future road expansion, including other features such as bus stops to ensure safe and adequate access. City staff will work with Lake County to secure funding to improve existing roadways and pedestrian and bicycle access in the areas of Sunnyside currently in the City or subject to annexation.

IV. Conclusion and Next Steps

The Sunnyside Task Force study was an opportunity to examine issues related to regional growth and development at a smaller scale. Planning for development in Sunnyside requires the coordination of several entities, both public and private. The final recommendations will be forwarded to both the Leesburg City Commission and the Lake County Board of Commissioners for their consideration.