

INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR)

Section 163.3191(1), Florida Statutes (F.S.) requires that, at least every seven years, local governments evaluate the community's Comprehensive Plan (the Plan) to determine if amendments are necessary to reflect changes in State requirements in Chapter 163, F.S. since the last update of the Plan and notify the State Land Planning Agency (formerly known as the Department of Community Affairs) as to its determination. To meet this requirement, Monroe County (the County) has prepared an EAR of its Plan. The previous Monroe County EAR was adopted August 1, 2004, therefore this review is consistent with Section 163.3191(1), F.S.

The EAR is a periodic evaluation of how successful a local government has been in addressing major issues as part of its Plan. Based on this evaluation, the EAR suggests how the Plan should be revised to reflect changes in State requirements in Chapter 163, F.S. and better address the County's objectives, changing conditions and trends. HB 7207, which significantly amended Chapter 163, F.S., was signed into law the summer of 2011 after the EAR and Technical Document update had already been initiated by the County. Because of the timing of the passage of that law, certain previous EAR requirements had already been met and as such are included. Because the amended law affords more flexibility in the EAR process, there are no inconsistencies between the County's previous work on the EAR and Section 163.3191, F.S. as adopted. In addition, for the purposes of this document, the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), which is also the State Land Planning Agency, has now been changed to the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO). Therefore, all references to either DCA or the State Land Planning Agency within this document refer to the DEO.

This EAR is intended to accomplish several purposes:

- Identify major issues for the community;
- Review past actions of the County in implementing the Plan since the last EAR;
- Assess the degree to which the Plan's objectives have been achieved;
- Assess both successes and shortcomings of the Plan;
- Identify ways that the Plan should be changed;
- Respond to changing conditions and trends affecting the County;
- Respond to the need for, and availability of, new data;
- Respond to changes in State requirements regarding growth management;

- Respond to changes in regional plans; and
- Ensure effective intergovernmental coordination.

2. County Profile

The County is primarily comprised of the Florida Keys (Keys), an ecologically fragile island based community stretching some 130 miles in an archipelago. The County includes the Mainland area and over 1,700 islands which lie along the Florida Straits, dividing the Atlantic Ocean to the east from the Gulf of Mexico to the west, and defining one edge of the Florida Bay. The largest of these islands include Key Largo, Islamorada, Marathon, Tavernier, Big Pine and Key West. The total land area of the Keys is nearly 1,000 square miles.

Collectively, the County represents considerable natural and economic resources including two national parks, world renown tourism and destination resorts, a long established commercial and recreational fishing industry and extensive accessible coral reefs which support a large recreational snorkeling and scuba diving industry.

The pattern and mix of existing land uses is indicative of the market forces and natural resource constraints which have shaped existing development and are likely to influence future growth.

Planning Areas

The unincorporated areas of the County are divided into four unique Planning Areas (PAs):

- Lower Keys PA: West boundary of Stock Island to the eastern limit of the Seven Mile Bridge. The Marquesas Keys, located 30 miles west of Key West and the Dry Tortuga Keys, located 70 miles west of Key West are also included within this PA;
- Middle Keys PA: Eastern limit of the City of Marathon to the western limit of the Village of Islamorada, including Lignumvitae Key and Shell Key. It excludes the incorporated City of Layton, the City of Marathon, the City of Key Colony Beach and the Village of Islamorada;
- Upper Keys PA: Western limit of the Village of Islamorada to the northern County line; and
- Mainland PA: Bounded to the north by Collier County, to the east by Miami-Dade County, to the west by the Gulf of Mexico and to the south by Florida Bay. This PA encompasses two national landmarks: The Everglades National Park and The Big Cypress National Preserve and accounts for approximately 85 percent or 562,149 acres of the overall County land mass. Approximately 99.8 percent of the Mainland PA consists of federal lands designated as Conservation use.

Socio-Economic Characteristics

To effectively create a comprehensive plan that reflects the needs of the County, the social characteristics that define the community must be considered. Using information obtained from the *2009 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimate*, the following items list several socio-economic facts regarding the County as a whole:

- **HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES:** In 2009 there were 28,335 households in the County. The average household size was 2.52 people. Households include all the persons (families) who occupy a housing unit. Families made up 57.5 percent of the households in the County. This figure includes married-couple families (46.3%). Non-family households made up 42.5 percent of all households in the County. Most of the non-family households were people living alone, but some were composed of people living in households in which no one was related to the householder.
- **GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY:** In 2009, 89 percent of the people at least one year old living in the County were living in the same residence one year earlier; five percent had moved during the past year from another residence in the same county, two percent from another county in the same state, 3.5 percent from another state, and 0.6 percent from abroad.
- **EDUCATION:** In 2009, 31.5 percent of people 25 years and over had at least graduated from high school and 24.4 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher. Eleven percent were high school dropouts; they were not enrolled in school and had not graduated from high school. The total school enrollment in the County was 13,201 in 2009. Nursery school and kindergarten enrollment was 1,500 and elementary or high school enrollment was 8,027 children. College or graduate school enrollment was 3,670.
- **DISABILITY:** In the County, among people at least five years old and older in 2009, 13 percent reported a disability. The likelihood of having a disability varied by age - from 3 percent of people under 18 years old, to 12 percent of people 18 to 64 years old, and to 30.5 percent of those 65 and older.
- **INDUSTRIES:** In 2009, for the employed population 16 years and older, the leading industries in the County were arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services, 20 percent, and Educational services, and health care, and social assistance, 14.7 percent.

- **OCCUPATIONS AND TYPE OF EMPLOYER:** Among the most common occupations were: Service occupations, 28.8 percent; Management, professional and related occupations, 28.4 percent; Sales and office occupations, 27 percent; Construction, extraction, maintenance, and repair occupations, 9 percent; and Production, transportation, and material moving occupations, 4 percent. Seventy percent of the people employed were Private wage and salary workers; 20 percent were federal, State, or local government workers; and 10 percent were Self-employed in own not incorporated business workers.
- **TRAVEL TO WORK:** Sixty-one percent of the County workers drove to work alone in 2009, 11 percent carpooled, 1 percent took public transportation, and 20.7 percent used other means. The remaining 6 percent worked at home. Among those who commuted to work, it took them on average 16.9 minutes to get to work.
- **INCOME:** The median income of households in the County was \$49,721. Seventy-six percent of the households received earnings and 21 percent received retirement income other than Social Security. Thirty-one percent of the households received Social Security. The average income from Social Security was \$15,589. These income sources are not mutually exclusive; that is, some households received income from more than one source.
- **POVERTY AND PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS:** In 2009, 12 percent of people were in poverty. 14.3 percent of related children under 18 were below the poverty level, compared with 10.7 percent of people 65 years old and over. Seven percent of all families and 28 percent of families with a female householder and no husband present had incomes below the poverty level.
- **HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS:** In 2009, the County had a total of 54,243 housing units, 48 percent of which were vacant. Of the total housing units, 61 percent was in single-unit structures, 24 percent was in multi-unit structures, and 15 percent was mobile homes. Twenty-six percent of the housing units were built since 1990.
- **OCCUPIED HOUSING UNIT CHARACTERISTICS:** In 2009, the County had 28,335 occupied housing units - 17,901 (63%) owner occupied and 10,434 (37%) renter occupied. Four percent (1.193 units) of the households did not have telephone service and six percent (1.696 units) of the households did not have access to a car, truck, or van for private use. Thirty-nine percent had two vehicles and another 9 percent had three or more vehicles.
- **HOUSING COSTS:** The median monthly housing costs for mortgaged owners was \$2,323, non-mortgaged (housing units without a mortgage) owners \$592, and renters \$1,206. 62.2 percent of owners with mortgages, 22.1 percent of owners without mortgages, and 65.8 percent of renters in the County spent 30 percent or more of household income on housing.

- **POPULATION:** Population for this document is based on the countywide functional population forecast through 2030. This is explained in full detail in *Chapter 2: Community-Wide Assessment, subsection “Population Analysis: Trends and Projections”*. **Table 1** shows the permanent and seasonal population projections for unincorporated Monroe County through the year 2030. Functional population is the sum of permanent plus seasonal population. The seasonal population series is based on the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority (FKAA) data series. The permanent population series is the latest published by the University of Florida, Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR).

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Table 1 – Unincorporated Functional Population Distribution by Sub-Area

Year	Upper	Middle	Lower	Total
2000	29,183	2,138	37,957	69,277
2001	29,205	2,145	38,163	69,512
2002	29,222	2,151	38,364	69,737
2003	29,192	2,155	38,504	69,850
2004	29,150	2,157	38,628	69,935
2005	29,313	2,175	39,027	70,515
2006	29,222	2,174	39,089	70,485
2007	29,075	2,169	39,073	70,317
2008	28,928	2,169	39,240	70,338
2009	29,185	2,199	39,927	71,311
2010	28,980	2,183	39,645	70,808
2011	29,126	2,194	39,846	71,166
2012	29,187	2,199	39,929	71,315
2013	29,248	2,203	40,013	71,464
2014	29,309	2,208	40,097	71,613
2015	29,370	2,212	40,181	71,763
2016	29,429	2,217	40,263	71,909
2017	29,489	2,221	40,345	72,055
2018	29,549	2,225	40,427	72,201
2019	29,608	2,230	40,510	72,348
2020	29,668	2,234	40,592	72,494
2021	29,728	2,238	40,674	72,640
2022	29,787	2,243	40,756	72,786
2023	29,847	2,247	40,838	72,933
2024	29,907	2,252	40,921	73,079
2025	29,966	2,256	41,003	73,225
2026	30,026	2,260	41,085	73,371
2027	30,086	2,265	41,167	73,518
2028	30,145	2,269	41,249	73,664
2029	30,205	2,274	41,332	73,810
2030	30,265	2,278	41,414	73,956

Source: Fishkind & Associates, Inc. April, 2011

NOTE: Slight differences in totals due to rounding.

3. Overview of the EAR

Pursuant to Section 163.3191 F.S. the County has reviewed its Plan to ensure that it appropriately reflects current and anticipated conditions, embodies the County's vision for its future, targets the major issues that the County should address in the near and long term, and complies with State requirements as required by Section 163.3191, F.S.

Coordinating this effort on behalf of the County, the Planning Department, within the Growth Management Division, began the County's EAR process in January 2010 with the update of the data and analysis within the Technical Document that forms the basis of the EAR.

Preparing the EAR

The EAR process includes three basic steps as outlined below:

Step 1: Identification of Major Issues

As part of the EAR process, a community generally identifies a "List of Issues" to address as part of the report. Previously, Chapter 163, F.S. required that once these issues were identified, a community would enter into a "Letter of Understanding" (LOU) with DCA before the formal evaluation proceeded. The County's LOU is dated October 29, 2010. This letter documents the County's issues to be addressed as part of the evaluation process.

Step 2: Evaluation of the Plan

The Plan has been assessed or evaluated to determine its success in addressing the major issues identified as part of Step 1. Growth-related strategies are then generally developed to address these major issues, and the changes needed to implement these new strategies are identified.

Step 3: Amendment of the Plan

Local governments have twelve (12) months to amend their comprehensive plans to reflect changes in State requirements if they determine that amendments are necessary. Since the planning horizon of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan has ended, the County has worked with the community to develop current major issues that are to be addressed. The County defined these major issues in a Compilation Report that was sent to the State Land Planning Agency for review. The County then received a "Letter of Understanding" from the State Land Planning Agency, which accepted the County's defined major issues. Therefore, the County can now proceed with the preparation of the necessary amendments to its Plan.

The County is using the same general process for preparing its EAR as that used for most other local government programs and projects, with the steps that are noted above. The EAR provides an “audit” of all Plan-related data since the completion of the previous EAR in 2004 to determine whether the community is achieving the Goals, Objectives and Policies (GOPs) it has set for itself through the Plan. It should be noted that as a result of the 2011 legislative session, Rule 9J-5, F.A.C. was repealed. For the purposes of the “Policy Framework” discussions, references to Rule 9J-5 F.A.C. remain because those Rule references were from the Monroe County 2010 Comprehensive Plan, which was in effect before the Rule was repealed. This is to assure an accurate reflection of the Goal, Objective or Policy language from the 2010 Plan.

Content of the EAR

The EAR includes the following information:

- Population growth and changes in land area, including annexation, since the adoption of the original plan or the most recent updated amendments;
- The extent of vacant and developable land;
- The location of existing development in relation to the location of development as anticipated in the original plan;
- An identification of the major issues for the County and, where pertinent, the potential social, economic, and/or environmental impacts;
- Relevant changes to the requirements of Chapter 163, F.S. since the most recent EAR update amendments;
- An assessment of whether the plan objectives within each element, as they relate to major issues, have been achieved;
- A brief assessment of successes and shortcomings related to each element of the plan;
- The identification of any actions or corrective measures, including whether plan amendments are anticipated to address the major issues identified and analyzed in the report;
- A summary of the public participation program and activities undertaken by the County in preparing the report; and

- An assessment of each of the following Special Topics:
 - 1) The Plan based upon the SFWMD’s regional water supply plan;
 - 2) The County’s policies related to the Coastal High Hazard Area, particularly their impact upon private property rights;
 - 3) The effectiveness of any transportation concurrency exception areas;
 - 4) The extent to which changes are needed to develop a common methodology for measuring impacts on transportation facilities for the purpose of implementing the concurrency management system; and
 - 5) The need to revise the County’s policies to assure military compatibility.

Schedule For Adoption of EAR-based Amendments

The EAR is intended to provide recommendations to amend the Plan, such as deleting outdated policies, establishing goals and defining new objectives to address local issues that have evolved since the previous EAR. Section 163.3191(2)F.S. requires that such “EAR-based plan amendments” be adopted within twelve (12) months after submission of the EAR evaluation determination letter. The most recent State Land Planning Agency schedule calls for the County to submit this letter by May 2014.

Based upon this schedule, the County has until May, 2015 to adopt amendments to the Plan that result from the EAR.

Public Involvement Process

A broad-based public involvement strategy was utilized to address the early steps of the EAR Process. The community was actively engaged to identify significant local issues and to identify strategies to address these issues. Public participation was initiated through a website created for the update of the Plan and the EAR process (www.keyscompplan.com). The site contains a brief overview of the EAR process, information about public workshops and meetings, and links to EAR related documents.

One of the steps in the public involvement occurred on May 13, 2010. Government and agency stakeholders attended a “Scoping Meeting” in Marathon, Florida to help identify local issues that should be addressed as part of this process. This provided an opportunity for the attendees to offer early guidance on relevant issues. The Scoping Meeting invitation is provided in **Appendix 1**. The input from this meeting was combined with information obtained during a series of public information gathering meetings that were held at various locations throughout the County. In addition, individual meetings with members of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) took place and input was obtained during a public meeting with the Planning Commission.

All of the above helped the County formulate a proposed list of local “major issues” to discuss in the EAR. This list was proposed to DCA mid-September, 2010 and a Letter of Understanding, dated October 29, 2010 was received from DCA confirming the County’s list of local “major issues”. A copy of DCA’s Letter of Understanding can be found in **Appendix 2**.

Details of public involvement and outreach for the EAR process are described more fully in *Chapter 1: Public Involvement Process* of this document.

Major Issues

The County’s major local issues are addressed in Chapter 4 of this document. The nine (9) identified issues will require strategic actions such as the implementation of Plan amendments, changes to the Land Development Code or other County ordinances, and/or other new formal agreements or mechanisms. From the results of the public involvement process and surveys that were performed, the County developed a proposed “Compilation Report” of EAR major issues for submittal to the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) in mid-September 2010. A final Letter of Understanding, dated October 29, 2010, was received from the DCA confirming the County’s list of local “major issues” to be discussed in the EAR. They are as follows:

1. County-wide Visioning and Planning

Capitalize upon and protect the uniqueness (sense of place) of the various communities within the planning areas; implement the recommendations within the existing visioning plans.

2. Economic Sustainability

Promote economic sustainability, in a manner consistent with environmental stewardship, with a special focus upon existing businesses.

3. Land Use/Mobility

- *Promote Attractive, Well-Planned Development Adjacent to Services, and Existing Commercial “Hubs”, with an Emphasis on Redevelopment.*
- *The County Should Meet or Exceed Hurricane Evacuation Requirements as required.*
- *Support Historic Preservation.*
- *Assure Continued Public Waterfront Access; Protect and Expand Water Dependent/Water Related Uses.*
- *Increase Availability and Use of Alternative Modes Transportation.*

4. Natural Resource Protection

- *Preserve and protect natural resources, including water, habitat and species.*
- *Complete Wastewater and Drainage Upgrades.*

5. Climate Change/Hazard Mitigation

Monroe County should support and promote “green” initiatives; address climate change; and develop and implement hazard mitigation/adaptation best practices.

6. Public Facilities Funding

Assure adequate capital funding to complete necessary improvements or purchase lands for conservation or affordable housing purposes.

7. Affordable Housing

Promote the development of affordable, attainable and senior living housing that is well-planned, attractive and energy efficient.

8. Public Involvement/Information

Promote robust public involvement and information sharing regarding land use issues throughout the planning and development process.

9. Intergovernmental Coordination

Provide effective and efficient intergovernmental, interdepartmental and interagency coordination.

These major issues were seen as the foundation of an effort to create a more sustainable community for current and future County residents, businesses and other stakeholders in the community and to comply with then-existing (October 29, 2010) requirements of Chapter 163, F.S. and Rule 9J-5, F.A.C.

Community-Wide Assessment

Chapter 2, Community–Wide Assessment of this document discusses the outcome of an extensive effort to update the County’s Existing Land Use Map (**See Map 1**) and also assesses the changes in population and development patterns since the adoption of the Plan. Some of the key findings include:

County Land Mass: Approximately 1.67 million acres; of which 1.6 million acres are located on the Mainland.

The unincorporated Keys consist of approximately 73,138 acres:

- 65 percent located in Lower Keys;
- 3 percent located in Middle Keys; and
- 32 percent Located in Upper Keys.

Seventy-five percent of all land in the unincorporated County is set aside for conservation purposes. The second largest land use (4,988 acres) is Residential (6.8%), consisting of single-family; multi-family; mobile homes, apartments and mixed use residential.

Historic and Existing Population:

- 1970 population was 52,586; 2000 population was 79,589, an increase of 27,003 people.
- Highest growth rate between 1970 and 2000 was during the ten year period from 1980 (63,188) to 1990 (78,024) , an increase of 14,836 people.
- Lowest growth rate was from 1990 (78,024) to 2000 (79,589) an increase of only 1,565 people.
- 2010: U.S. Census - 73,165 Permanent (County-wide)

Population Trends:

- Shifting from Permanent to Seasonal Population
- 2010-2030: Projections (unincorporated)
 - Permanent: (2010) 35,972; (2030) 34,730; (-4%)
 - Seasonal: (2010) 33,951; (2030) 37,705; (+10%)
- Functional (unincorporated): (2010) 70,808; (2030) 73,956; (+3,148 or _4%)

The Plan Element Assessment

Chapter 3: Element Assessment of this document concludes that overall, the majority of GOPs in the Plan have been met. The assessment of the current 2010 Plan has generated recommendations to be considered, and identifies those that may require a plan amendment.

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