



## Conservation & Open Space Element

**GOAL PROTECT, MAINTAIN, AND CONSERVE OPEN SPACES AND NATURAL RESOURCES FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE COMMUNITY.**

**Objective 1 Sustainable Environmental Practices. Implement sustainable environmental practices that minimize impacts to natural habitats caused by the development of land.**

- Policy 1.1 Sustainable Land Development Strategies. By 2012, evaluate the following sustainable land development strategies through the City's Land Development Regulations to protect natural habitats and conservation lands by making the best use of urbanized land areas. The strategies to be evaluated include:
- A. Reduction of impermeable surface areas.
  - B. Infill and redevelopment practices that enhance Venice's unique character.
  - C. Removal of invasive non-native plant species and immediate replacement with native Florida plant species.
  - D. Utilize conservation easements, transfer of development rights, open space set-aside, wetland protection, and environmental lands programs to direct new growth from these areas.
- Policy 1.2 Environmental Impact Mitigation. Utilize the site and development process to ensure that developers identify, address, and mitigate the environmental impact of all new and redevelopment projects. Development shall not adversely impact any threatened or endangered species of concern without appropriate permitting and/or mitigation.
- Policy 1.3 Tree Resource Protection. Protect tree resources by continuing to partner with Sarasota County on the implementation and enforcement of the Sarasota County Tree Protection Code through the site and development review process.
- Policy 1.4 Landscape Upgrading. In the updating of the City's Land Development Code there shall be greater emphasis on landscape requirements for both new construction and reconstruction of commercial and multi-family residential properties. These requirements shall emphasize the enhancement of buffering, shade canopy, open space, and setback areas using Florida-friendly and other environmentally appropriate trees and



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plantings. Existing trees and plants shall be preserved or replaced in and/or around the development envelope.

- Policy 1.5 Protection of Native Habitats. The City shall protect significant native habitats by implementing land use practices including the following:
- A. Use of clustered homes, mixed-use developments, and planned urban development practices to protect native habitats in open space and/or conservation areas.
  - B. Encourage development forms that provide enhanced open space preservation and protection of native habitats.
  - C. Directing development to first avoid impact to native habitats.
  - D. When impacts to native habitats are unavoidable, directing development to minimize impacts and then mitigate adverse environmental impacts whenever areas of native habitats are involved in the development of property.
  - E. Requiring that impacts to lower quality habitats and resources shall be considered and used in a development project before impacts to higher quality habitats and resources are considered and used.
  - F. Configuring or designing development and infrastructure to optimize habitat connectivity, minimize habitat fragmentation, and minimize barriers to wildlife movement.
  - G. Implementing appropriate measures to preserve, protect, and enhance all threatened native habitats.
- Policy 1.6 Native Habitats Inventory and Assessment. By 2014, the City will coordinate with Sarasota County to inventory and assess significant native habitat remaining within the City limits.
- A. The City shall partner with Sarasota County to identify, manage, and protect native habitats by conducting a baseline assessment of native habitats located in the City.
  - B. The City shall adopt or amend ordinances to protect native habitats.
  - C. The City shall partner with Sarasota County to complete an updated native habitat land cover map and risk assessment study for each native habitat identified within the Comprehensive Plan. Remnant native habitats contained within urban areas shall be included within this analysis along with alternatives to the use of regulatory powers to encourage restoration and protection of native habitats that are threatened due to current land use practices.
  - D. By 2014, the City shall consider developing and implementing a land management plan to expand and enhance native habitats.



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- Policy 1.7 Green Building Strategies. Support green building strategies that mitigate the environmental impacts that result from the construction of buildings and development of land, including:
- A. Consider the site’s location in relation to the sun and other sources of renewable energy, access to transportation alternatives, and availability of water and natural resources.
  - B. Reduce use of building materials by creating open floor plans, building smaller units, and more compact, efficient design.
  - C. Encourage “Florida Friendly” landscaping.
  - D. Maximize water efficiency by supporting SWFWMD water conservation programs such as the Water Conservation Hotel and Motel Program (Water CHAMP), the Water Program for Restaurant Outreach (Water Pro) and the Florida Water Star Gold (residential) Program.
  - E. Make smart use of materials and resources.
  - F. Reuse, recycle, and reduce amount of waste products.
  - G. Safeguard indoor environmental quality.
  - H. FGBC and/or LEED criteria.
- Policy 1.8 Low-Impact Development Site Design Practices. Reduce the amount of stormwater runoff by utilizing Low-Impact Development (LID) Site Design Practices including:
- A. Reduced impervious area through use of permeable pavement surfaces, reduced parking widths, shared parking resources, and compact development (e.g, clustered homes and mixed-use).
  - B. Reduced clearing of existing natural resources.
  - C. Use of natural drainage/hydrology as a design element
  - D. Landscaping of stormwater retention ponds to prevent erosion, encourage bioretention and biofiltration of pollutants, and enhance appearance
  - E. Use of “Florida Friendly” ground cover.
  - F. Use of green infrastructure for infill and redevelopment projects (e.g., green roofs, landscaped swales, etc.)
  - G. Reduction of fertilizer runoff.
- Policy 1.9 Development to Promote Habitat Connectivity. Development and infrastructure shall be configured or designed to optimize habitat connectivity, minimize habitat fragmentation, and minimize barriers to wildlife movement.



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- Policy 1.10 Wetland and Aquifer Recharge Areas Protection. The City shall protect its groundwater sources, particularly in wetland and aquifer recharge areas, through its site and development review process by:
- A. Directing development to first avoid impact to wetlands and aquifer recharge areas.
  - B. When impacts to wetlands and aquifer recharge areas are unavoidable, directing development to minimize impact and then mitigate for impacts to wetlands and aquifer recharge areas.
  - C. Limiting activities that are known to adversely impact such areas.
  - D. Requiring that site plans include an identification and analysis of natural drainage features, man-made drainage structures, and impact of the proposed development on drainage and topographic features.
  - E. Coordinating with federal and state review agencies on the designation of and permitting within such areas.
  - F. Wetlands shall be restored in connection with new development, where feasible.
  - G. The natural flow of water within and through contiguous wetlands shall not be impeded.
  - H. Buffers of existing upland vegetation that protect the function and values of the wetlands from the adverse impacts of adjacent development will be required.
  - I. The amount of wetland mitigation required will be based upon the most current state-approved methodology.
- Policy 1.11 Water Resource Protection. The City will coordinate with other governmental and private entities to protect water resources.
- Policy 1.12 Water Conservation. Utilize the “Florida Yards and Neighborhoods” program to promote water conservation and the maintenance of surface water quality through the use of native plant materials in landscaping.
- Policy 1.13 Natural Drainage Channels Protection. Construction and development activities in natural drainage channels shall be limited, except for public flood protection projects designed to correct specifically identified pre-existing flood conditions and for which no reasonable alternative flood control measures are available, provided that:
- A. Such activities shall not increase the flood potential for areas outside the project target area
  - B. The overall water quality of the affected drainage channels shall not be reduced as a result of the activities.



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- Policy 1.14 Mining Operations. Encourage efficient mineral resource extraction through resource conserving extraction methods, use of reclaimed water when available, and other cost effective and resource conserving techniques.
- Policy 1.15 Mining Regulatory Oversight. Coordinate with local, regional, state, and federal mining regulatory agencies to ensure that new and existing mining operations meet all governmental requirements. Fugitive dust, noise, illumination, and truck traffic should be minimized to avoid unnecessary impacts to abutting or nearby properties.
- Policy 1.16 Reclamation Plan. Upon discontinuation of mining activity, the City shall require mining operations to produce a reclamation plan to eliminate or mitigate post-mining environmental concerns.

**Objective 2 Open Space Corridors. Utilize the City's open space corridors to provide urban green areas and key environmental features, establish a unified greenway system, and define the City's urban development area.**

- Policy 2.1 Open Space System. The City of Venice shall utilize its site and development process to expand its open space system. The features of the City's open space system are:
- A. Permanently set aside undeveloped land or common areas for public or private use.
  - B. Reserved for passive or active recreation parks, walking paths, or other passive natural uses.
  - C. Accessible and interconnected pedestrian trails and bikeways.
- Policy 2.2 Open Space Areas and Natural Communities. The City's open space system shall provide habitat for natural species that are able to live within urban development corridors and coexist with human populations. Open space areas are not intended to act as natural habitats and conservation lands.
- Policy 2.3 Open Space Corridor Study. Through the land development review process, the City shall continue to identify opportunities for:
- A. Creating an interconnected open space corridor system that links existing open spaces, greenways, public right of ways, and trails.
  - B. Prioritizing where future open space areas should be created.
  - C. Connecting the City's open spaces with those in Sarasota County.



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- Policy 2.4 Open Space Corridor Development Strategy. The City shall utilize the site and development review process to facilitate opportunities to:
- A. Create new open space areas.
  - B. Provide low-impact natural activities such as walking trails, picnic areas, and canoe launches.
  - C. Preserve viewsheds, establish focal points, and support landscape design features.
- Policy 2.5 Open Space Development Standards. The City shall establish development standards for the preservation of open spaces and natural features. Such standards shall include, but not be limited to:
- A. Preservation of existing native vegetation and natural areas.
  - B. Establishment of new open space areas that connect to adjacent neighborhood open spaces and natural areas.
  - C. Creating of neighborhood buffers that link to the community's open space corridor system.
  - D. Construction of stormwater systems that include wetland features.
  - E. Selection of open space acreage shall favor factors such as onsite and adjacent off-site habitat connectivity.
  - F. Native habitat shall be used whenever possible to fulfill open space requirements.
- Policy 2.6 Regional Greenway System. By 2013, coordinate development of a regional greenway and open space system with local, regional, state, and federal partners in order to ensure that all open space and conservation areas throughout the county and region are connected.
- Policy 2.7 Natural Parks and Open Spaces. Limit recreational activities in natural parks and open space areas to those compatible with the natural environment.
- A. Boating activities along the Myakka Wild and Scenic River shall be limited to non-motorized vessels.



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### **Objective 3 Native Habitats, Conservation Lands, and Natural Resources. Implement preservation strategies that protect native habitats, conserve environmental lands and natural resources, and minimize environmental pollution.**

- Policy 3.1 Natural Habitat Conservation. The City shall protect natural habitats from habitat fragmentation. The City shall implement this policy in coordination and partnership with Sarasota County to preserve a network of habitat connectivity across the landscape that ensures adequate representation of native habitats suitable to support the functions and values of all ecological communities.
- Policy 3.2 Endangered or Threatened Species Protection. Consistent with Policy 1.6 of this Element, the City shall protect threatened or endangered native species from incompatible development by requiring that proposed greenfield development sites be examined for location of Listed Species. By 2013, the City will:
- A. Consider implementing a plan to identify, manage, and protect critical habitats and endangered or threatened species, or species of special concern identified in official federal, state, or international treaty lists.
  - B. Require applicants to consult with the appropriate agencies, to use recognized sampling techniques to identify listed species, and to provide documentation of such coordination and compliance prior to City approval to conduct any activities that could disturb listed species or their habitat.
    1. If endangered or threatened species, or species of special concern are found, such species' habitat shall be identified on the proposed site plan and a plan for mitigation shall be discussed in the site plan narrative.
    2. Such information shall be addressed through the project staff report.
  - C. Coordinate with Sarasota County Environmental Services' Resource Protection Programs in meeting this objective.
- Policy 3.3 Effects of Pre-Construction Clearing of Native Habitats. In developing the Land Development Regulations (LDRs), the City shall evaluate the effects of pre-construction clearing of native habitats, characterize the problem, and develop a strategy which may include new regulations to avoid the loss of native habitat functions and values.
- A. As part of the development review process, the City shall require area-wide wildlife surveys for determining wildlife corridors for both protected species and existing wildlife populations.
    1. All wildlife corridors shall be integrated into Statewide or



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Countywide corridor systems whenever possible.

B. By 2013, ordinances shall be enacted and/or amended to protect significant native habitats.

- Policy 3.4 Endangered and Threatened Species Coordination. Partner with local, regional, state, and federal environmental agencies in the promotion, maintenance, and protection of environmental state and federal law. Areas of special consideration ought to include the habitats of natural communities identified as threatened or endangered by state and federal law.
- Policy 3.5 Public Resources and Conservation Lands. Protect the natural diversity, processes, and functions of natural communities in the greater Venice area's public resource and conservation lands including the Myakka Wild and Scenic River, Myakka State Forest, and Oscar Scherer State Park. Coordinate conservation activities in these areas with local, regional, state, and federal government partners including Sarasota County, Florida Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Florida Department of Environmental Protection.
- Policy 3.6 Non-Native Invasive Species. As financially feasible, prevent the spread of non-native invasive vegetation, wildlife, insects, and other species and protect the health and well-being of the native environment through:
- A. Removal of existing non-native invasive species in coordination with City initiated work projects and replacement with native Florida plant species.
  - B. Prohibition of the use of non-native invasive species.
  - C. Removal of non-native invasive species through conditions of approval for site and development review. Removal of non-native invasive species shall be maintained in perpetuity.
  - D. Public awareness about the harmful impacts of non-native species into the environment.
  - E. Regional, state, and federal partnerships on efforts to eradicate invasive species.
- Policy 3.7 Habitat Protection. Coordinate with Sarasota County and other local, regional, state, and federal environmental entities in the renourishment and protection of sensitive natural habitats. Such habitats include wetland and mangrove areas, tidal marshes, pine forests, coastal strand vegetation systems, and mature growth trees that are part of the history of Venice.



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- Policy 3.8 Marine Habitats. The City shall partner with local, regional, state, and federal marine environment agencies to maintain or increase the amount of native marine habitats, particularly those located within the Coastal Planning Area by:
- Retaining and as possible reestablishing native species habitats.
  - Filtering runoff pollutants before they enter the City's water bodies.
  - Preserving the unique natural character of the City's shorelines.
  - Preventing the intrusion of invasive species which provide inferior habitat.
  - Protecting, and where feasible, replenishing mangrove habitats.
  - Providing water quality treatment, as possible, to minimize runoff pollutants before they enter water bodies with the City.
- Policy 3.9 Manatee Habitat Protection Zones. The City shall coordinate with Sarasota County, West Coast Inland Navigation District, and other state and federal agencies to ensure that areas of critical manatee habitat are posted and maintained as manatee protection zones pursuant to state law.
- New and expanded motorized boating facilities shall not be located in or adjacent to areas of significant manatee habitat.
  - New and expanded motorized boating facilities shall not adversely impact the manatee.
- Policy 3.10 Sea Turtle Habitats. The City, through its Land Development Regulations, shall protect sensitive sea turtle habitats by working with Sarasota County, Mote Marine Laboratory, and other public and private environmental organizations to ensure that:
- Nests are identified, monitored, and protected.
  - Nest protection devices are installed and maintained.
  - Public is made aware of dangers to sea turtle nesting habitats through appropriate education programs.
  - Directional and turtle friendly lighting is utilized during nesting season.
  - The City will revise, amend, and/or enact appropriate ordinances to protect sea turtles.
- Policy 3.11 Beach and Dune Habitats. Maintain, restore, and preserve the health of beach and dune natural habitats. Beach area projects should include continuing, maintaining, and expanding the City's efforts to:
- Re-nourish beach areas and natural shore features
  - Provide dune walkovers for pedestrian traffic.
  - Prohibit vehicular traffic on all beach areas.
  - Protection of sea turtle habitats and nest monitoring.



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E. Restore and preserve the dune line by planting appropriate coastal vegetation.

Policy 3.12 Florida Scrub-Jay, Gopher Tortoise, and Other Sensitive Habitats. Coordinate with Sarasota County on the implementation of a county-wide Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), including scrub-jay, gopher tortoise, and other sensitive habitats.

Policy 3.13 Wetland Protection. The City shall protect its wetlands by:

- A. Directing development to first avoid impacts to wetlands.
- B. When impacts to wetlands are unavoidable, directing development to minimize impacts and then mitigate for impacts to wetlands.
- C. Limiting activities that are known to adversely impact wetlands.
- D. Requiring that site plans include an identification and analysis of natural drainage features, man-made drainage structures, and impact of the proposed development on drainage and topographic features.
- E. Coordinating with the applicable federal and state review agencies on the designation of and permitting within such areas.
- F. Wetlands shall be restored in connection with new development, where feasible.
- G. The natural flow of water within and through contiguous wetlands shall not be impeded.
- H. Buffers that protect the function and values of the wetlands from the adverse impacts of adjacent development will be required.
- I. The amount of wetland mitigation required will be based upon the most current state-approved methodology.

Policy 3.14 Wetland Encroachments. The City shall require development to identify and delineate wetland boundaries with final wetland delineations to be reviewed and approved by the applicable federal and state review agencies. Wetlands of 20 acres or more shall require structures to be located outside of wetlands and wetland buffers except as provided below. Such exceptions are applicable only when the land use designation on the property permits the development of land use activity listed below; site characteristics are such that wetland impacts cannot be avoided, the impacts are limited to the minimum necessary to allow the permitted use of the property; and the site development or use complies with federal and state review agencies for permitting and mitigation.

- A. Residential lots of record existing on or before the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan which does not contain sufficient uplands to permit development of a residence without encroaching into wetlands, may be developed with one residential dwelling.



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- B. Resource-based recreational facilities such as trails, boardwalks, piers, and boat ramps.
- C. Private water-related facilities, such as boathouses, docks and bulkheads.
- D. Essential public services, access roads and appurtenant structures.

- Policy 3.15 Wetland Considerations Relative to Setback Modifications. Wetland and water body protection shall be considered when the City evaluates applicable setback modifications that would move development away from wetlands and water bodies.
- Policy 3.16 Wetland Habitat Site and Development Protection. Promote conservation and protection of natural wetland, stream, and river habitats in order to ensure the health and well-being of the City's natural communities.
- A. The amount of wetland mitigation required will be based upon the most current state-approved methodology.
- Policy 3.17 Wetland Habitat Alterations. Wetlands and wetland habitats shall not be dredged, filled, or disturbed in any manner that diminishes their natural functions, unless appropriate mitigation practices are established in coordination with and approved by local, regional, state, and federal agencies.
- A. The City, in cooperation with Sarasota County, will establish wetland mitigation policies and regulations.
- Policy 3.18 Control and Monitoring of Water Pollutants. The City shall protect the water quality of its wetlands, rivers, streams, bays, and coastal areas by coordinating with Sarasota County on the monitoring and elimination of point and nonpoint sources of pollution to the City's waterways.
- A. The City will continue to participate in an ambient water quality-monitoring program and to conduct baseline assessments of water quality in City water bodies.
  - B. The City will maintain a program of water quantity and quality data collection and analysis.
- Policy 3.19 Runoff Filtration Processes. The City will continue to utilize appropriate stormwater filtration processes to purify stormwater runoff before the runoff filtrates into surface waters and natural water systems. Methods to be utilized include, but are not limited to:
- A. Bio-retention strips or rain gardens (i.e., grass buffers, sand beds, and ponding areas).
  - B. Vegetative buffers, swales, and filter strips.



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- C. Disconnected impervious areas and separate localized water detention cells.
- D. Cistern collection systems.
- E. Regular sweeping of paved surfaces areas.
- F. Planted littoral zones to provide water quality treatment for surface water and wildlife habitat.
- G. Promote the use of pervious concrete or asphalt on beach parking lots, drives, accesses, etc.
- H. Continue to pre-treat stormwater runoff from new development prior to its discharge so stormwater runoff does not violate applicable local, state or federal water quality standards or degrade the quality of the receiving water body.

- Policy 3.20 Groundwater Resources. The City shall protect and conserve surface and groundwater resources and require that land use and development activities in important groundwater recharge areas be consistent with water resource protection criteria established by the Southwest Florida Water Management District.
- Policy 3.21 Location of Hazardous Substances. The City shall maintain a current list of all hazardous wastes and uses within 500 feet of every wellhead.
- Policy 3.22 Hazardous Substances in Floodplain. The storage of hazardous or acutely hazardous substances or wastes are prohibited within the 100 year floodplain of any watercourse or within 200 feet of wetlands associated with any watercourse, whichever is greater.
- Policy 3.23 Pollution Prevention and Enforcement. The City shall coordinate with the Sarasota County, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and other governmental entities in identifying pollution problems and providing documentation and other relevant assistance as appropriate and feasible towards the mitigation and remediation of pollution problems, including assistance as necessary in cases where sanctions may be imposed for violations of applicable environmental regulations.



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**Objective 4 Regional Environmental Coordination. Utilize intergovernmental partnerships to expand the City’s ability to protect, enhance, and maintain its open spaces and natural resources.**

- Policy 4.1 Funding Resources. Pursue funding from county, regional, state, or federal sources to expand, maintain, and implement the Venice community’s open space and natural resource conservation efforts.
- Policy 4.2 Regional Protection. Partner with Sarasota County and other local, regional, state, and federal environmental organizations to identify, protect, and enhance significant open space and natural resource areas.
- Policy 4.3 Myakka River Partnerships. Partner with local, regional, state, and federal entities to appropriately manage development activities in the Myakka River Area per the Myakka River Wild and Scenic Designation and Preservation Act, Section 258.501, F.S., and execute the strategies established in the Myakka Wild and Scenic River Management Plan.
- Policy 4.4 Air Quality. Support all local, state, and federal efforts to maintain a comprehensive air quality monitoring and analysis program including the U.S. Conference of Mayor’s Climate Protection Agreement and *Florida’s Energy and Climate Change Action Plan*.
- Policy 4.5 Emergency Water Conservation. The City shall continue to implement emergency water conservation practices in accordance with the Southwest Florida Water Management District. Such directives include the implementation of water management plans and emergency conservation directives.
- Policy 4.6 Promote Ecotourism. The City shall promote ecotourism and recreation activities which do not involve the use of fossil fuels.



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**Objective 5 JPA/ILSBA Planning Areas. Implement the environmental standards set forth in the Joint Planning and Interlocal Service Boundary Agreement (JPA/ILSBA) between the City of Venice and Sarasota County.**

- Policy 5.1 Wildlife Corridors. The City will coordinate with Sarasota County to establish and maintain wildlife corridors and coordinate with state and federal wildlife agencies when reviewing development proposals within the JPA/ILSBA Planning Areas set forth in Future Land Use Map Series.
- Policy 5.2 Myakka River Protection. The City supports protection of the Myakka River corridor and the implementation of the Myakka Wild and Scenic River Management Plan protection requirements and will prohibit new or increased public access of motorized watercraft to the river within the JPA/ILSBA Planning Areas set forth in the Future Land Use Map Series. Buffers for new developments within the Myakka River Protection Zone shall be a minimum of two hundred twenty (220) feet.
- Policy 5.3 Manatee Habitat Protection Zones. The Sarasota County Manatee Protection Plan requirements shall apply to the areas of the Myakka River located within the JPA/ILSBA Planning Areas set forth in the Future Land Use Map Series.
- Policy 5.4 Habitat Conservation. The City shall continue to participate in the development and implementation of the Habitat Conservation Plan in coordination with Sarasota County.