Osceola County
Florida
LI—the Urban Land Institute is a non-profit research and education organization that promotes responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the total environment.

The Institute maintains a membership representing a broad spectrum of interests and sponsors a wide variety of educational programs and forums to encourage an open exchange of ideas and sharing of experience. ULI initiates research that anticipates emerging land use trends and issues and proposes creative solutions based on that research; provides advisory services; and publishes a wide variety of materials to disseminate information on land use and development.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has more than 32,000 members and associates from 88 countries, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. Professionals represented include developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, students, and librarians. ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice. The Institute has long been recognized as one of America’s most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

This Advisory Services panel report is intended to further the objectives of the Institute and to make authoritative information generally available to those seeking knowledge in the field of urban land use.

Richard M. Rosan
President
The goal of ULI’s Advisory Services Program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 400 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfields redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI’s Advisory Services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI’s interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives; a day of hour-long interviews of typically 50 to 75 key community representatives; and two days of formulating recommendations. Many long nights of discussion precede the panel’s conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. A written report is prepared and published.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel’s visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI’s five-day panel assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor’s issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI’s unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academicians, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

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Osceola County is part of the Metro Orlando region, located in central Florida. The Orlando Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is the only one of Florida’s major metropolitan areas not located along the coast. The population of the metropolitan area reached 1.8 million in 2004. Metro Orlando continues to be one of the fastest-growing areas in Florida and the nation.

Metro Orlando’s History

The city of Orlando was incorporated in 1875, and rail lines were extended to the city in 1880. The rail lines gave Orlando access to northern markets for its citrus crops, which resulted in the rapid expansion of the area’s citrus industry. By 1900, Orlando’s population was approximately 2,500, and by the mid-1920s the city had a population of more than 10,000. World War II brought military bases and training facilities to the area. Thousands of men and women were trained in Orlando during and after the war.

By 1950, with a population of 52,000, the Orlando area was becoming the transportation hub of Florida. Orlando’s proximity to Cape Canaveral became an important factor in the area’s growth when the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) located there in 1955. The following year, the Martin Company (now Lockheed Martin) relocated to Orlando, marking the beginning of Orlando’s technological economy.

When NASA established its space launch center at Cape Canaveral, the Bee Line Expressway (State Road 528) was constructed to ensure that the space center’s connections were west to Orlando. The Bee Line gave Orlando access to the Atlantic coast; other connections are through Interstate 4 to Tampa and north, and through Florida’s Turnpike to Miami and the south.

By 1960, Orlando was becoming the center of an expanding metropolitan area that included Orange, Seminole, Osceola, and eventually Lake counties.

In 1964, Walt Disney announced plans to build the world’s largest theme park. The Walt Disney World property—located approximately 15 miles southwest of Orlando in Orange and Osceola counties—covers 47 square miles, about twice the size of Manhattan. The Magic Kingdom opened in 1971, and in its first two years it received 20 million visitors and employed 13,000 people. Additional attractions were added to the area, including Sea World and Universal Studios. Hotels and retail establishments grew rapidly to serve the tourist trade.

Orlando welcomed more than 43 million visitors in 2000—which makes Orlando the number-one...
tourist destination in the world. Visitors can stay in one of more than 100,000 hotel rooms and visit seven major theme parks and numerous other attractions.

Recent Growth of the Metro Area

Between 1990 and 2004, Metro Orlando’s population grew from 1.22 million to 1.83 million. It is the third-largest metropolitan area in Florida. Metro Orlando has experienced substantial growth for the past four decades and continues to grow rapidly. Its growth rate of 11.3 percent between 2000 and 2004 was higher than that of any other U.S. metropolitan area with a population of over 1 million, and in numeric terms Metro Orlando was the fifth fastest-growing metropolitan area in the country during that period. This high-growth trend is expected to continue for at least the next decade.

Areas in Metro Orlando that are growing particularly fast include south Lake, south and southwest Orange, and northwest Osceola counties. Nearly 43 percent of the metropolitan area’s growth between 1990 and 2000 took place in those areas. Lake and Osceola, east-central Florida’s smallest counties, continue to experience rapid growth. This trend is caused in part by their lower development costs, as well as new roads, such as the Greenway and Western Beltway, that have made Lake and Osceola counties more accessible to downtown Orlando and other employment centers.

Growth in Osceola County

In 1960, Osceola’s population was just under 20,000; less than 5 percent of the four-county metropolitan area. By 2000, over 10 percent of Metro Orlando, about 172,000 people, called Osceola home.

The Bureau of Economic and Business Research at the University of Florida has projected population by county to the year 2030. Figure 1 shows those projections by county and for Metro Orlando. Metro Orlando’s population is projected to reach 3.2 million by 2030, and 20 percent of that growth is expected to occur in Osceola County. The county’s population is projected to increase from 172,000 in 2000 to more than 475,000 by 2030.

Figure 1
Population Projections, Orlando Metro Area and Counties, 2000–2030

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Source: Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida.
Northwest Osceola County

Northwest Osceola is where most of the Osceola County's development activity has taken place; 97 percent of the population of the county resides in this northwest area. Northwest Osceola includes the cities of Kissimmee and St. Cloud and the unincorporated communities of Campbell, Celebration, Poinciana, and Buenaventura Lakes. Lake Tohopekaliga lies between the cities of Kissimmee and St. Cloud. Known as Lake Toho, it was Osceola's recreational centerpiece before the theme parks and resorts came. Nevertheless, it continues to be a significant open-space amenity for the Orlando metropolitan area as well as the county.

With a current population of approximately 235,000, Osceola faces rapid growth pressures, which are intensified by the region's strong tourism industry.

Southeast Osceola County

Southeast Osceola is dominated by ranch lands and undeveloped prairie, woods, and marsh, although the area does include a few rural settlements, such as Holopaw, Kenansville, and Yeehaw Junction. Southeast Osceola County also includes the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints–owned Deseret Ranches and a number of other large privately operated ranch and agricultural lands. The county has a proud ranching tradition that extends over generations. Ranching was never easy in Osceola County, and it was all the more challenging given the county's landscape, which is characterized by numerous lakes, wetlands, and wet prairies. Protecting the ranching tradition beyond the growth boundary is an important objective, but good planning should allow the development of comprehensive large-scale master-planned communities as an efficient use of land and an alternative to sprawl.

The Challenge

The proposed study area covers 42.8 square miles (27,389 acres) on Lake Toho's southern and eastern shores. Approximately 20 percent of the county's projected 2025 population of 525,000 is expected to reside within the study area. In the past, development in and around Lake Toho has taken place a few dozen or a few hundred units at a time, resulting in a patchwork pattern not unusual in suburban Florida. Those small developments have not offered opportunities for a comprehensive review of development in the county.
OSCEOLA COUNTY, SHOWING THE DESIGNATED GROWTH AREA (YELLOW) AND THE STUDY AREA (ORANGE).

Developments of Regional Impact

Five new developments of regional impact, or DRIs, have been proposed along the east and south shore of Lake Toho. DRI review is a state-mandated process that allows neighboring jurisdictions and appropriate state agencies—in this case including Orange County, the cities of Kissimmee and St. Cloud, the Florida Department of Transportation and Environmental Protection, and the South Florida Water Management District—to participate in a shared review of large-scale projects that are expected to have regional effects. The full impact of these five specific developments cannot be determined because the applications are in the initial stages, but the developments likely will add at least 35,000 new dwelling units and 5 million square feet of commercial and office space. The timing of these proposed developments gives Osceola County a chance to consider how development will take place along the shores of Lake Toho and throughout the county. The developments, when completed, should set a high standard for future development countywide.

The Panel’s Assignment

In 2025, the shores of Lake Toho could be the site of a great community, comprising several developments that offer all of the things that a successful community offers:

- An attractive place to live;
- A choice of quality housing at a competitive price;
- A safe environment for families and individuals;
- Work and shopping opportunities;
- Open space and recreational amenities;
- Efficient infrastructure and services;
- Good quality water; and
- Well-protected natural resources.
Osceola County and central Florida offer several outstanding examples that can be models for future development, including great traditional communities, such as Mount Dora and Winter Park. Examples also exist of innovative developments that exhibit characteristics of new urbanism (Baldwin Park), traditional neighborhood development (Celebration), and rural-by-design movements (Harmony). Those developments stand in direct contrast to the subdivisions composed of cookie-cutter rooftops surrounded by high walls, with little interconnectivity or sense of place.

The panel has been asked to look at the Lake Toho area from the perspective of the natural and built environments—to envision a community composed of self-reliant individuals, healthy families, competitive enterprises, and strong institutions, coexisting in a safe and sustainable natural environment. Furthermore, the county asked that the panel propose a strategy to achieve that community.

**Summary of Findings**

The panel was asked to assess the development potential of a 28,000-acre study area located on the eastern and southern shores of Lake Toho and the likely effect of growth in this location. This area contains five proposed developments that would produce approximately 35,000 new homes, 3.5 million square feet of retail, 500,000 square feet of office, and 84,000 square feet of industrial space, with a resident population of 100,000. Clearly, decisions about how these projects will be designed and developed will affect the quality of life in Osceola County for the next half century or more.

After spending a week in Osceola County touring, interviewing stakeholders, and debating, the panel has arrived at the following conclusions.

**Osceola Is in the Path of Growth**

Little doubt exists that significant residential growth will occur in Osceola during the next several decades. The real challenge will be to ensure that this growth benefits the county environmentally, economically, and as a community.

**Osceola Should Form a Vision for the Future and Pursue It with Passion**

Decisions made for the sake of short-term expediency can close future options and preclude successful achievement of long-term goals. Public pol-
icy implementation should be patient and disciplined; however, active participation is a requirement for success.

Regional Relationships Are Important
Osceola must be an active participant in and support organizations and institutions that work to shape the region’s future. The county’s interests must be factored into the regional decision-making process. Corporate job creation is more likely if the county is seen as a vital part of the region within the global network.

Focus on Building Community Rather Than on Land Development
Sometimes in the process of land development, the big picture’s desired outcome gets lost in the details. We do not minimize the importance of sound engineering and quality construction, but never forget that land development is the process by which we build the communities of the future.

Address Quality-of-Life Issues
Address quality-of-life issues with as much energy as is devoted to regulatory review. Focus on development outcomes and not on the regulatory processes.

Keep in Mind Important Community Building Blocks
The following are the important building blocks for a successful and sustainable community:

• An efficient transportation network—in Osceola County, for example, this network might include the completion of the loop road around Lake Toho, a connector road to the east coast, and commuter rail and light rail to serve the community.

• A good educational system from pre-kindergarten to the university level.

• A high-quality natural environment with plentiful open space.

• Security and public safety.

Other building blocks exist, but these are vital.
The Orlando metropolitan area is one of the nation’s fastest-growing regions. It has an increasingly diversified economy, a strong business climate, relative affordability, superb transportation links, unique tourism assets, and significant land availability. Economic forecasts project continued rapid expansion of the region and a doubling of the current population of 2 million in the next 30 years. This economic growth will drive increasing employment opportunities and household incomes for current and future central Florida residents. Osceola County and the East Lake Toho study area are superbly positioned to capture a significant portion of this regional growth. This section covers the overall Orlando MSA and Osceola County real estate markets and highlights issues for the East Lake Toho study area within that framework.

**Growth Projections**

In the 2000 U.S. census, Orlando was the 28th-largest MSA in the United States. The Orlando MSA is defined as Orange, Osceola, Lake, and Seminole counties. Between 1990 and 2000, however, Orlando was the nation’s third-fastest-growing large MSA; its population increased overall by 34 percent, or 400,000 residents. The current population is over 1.8 million and the area has nearly 1 million jobs. This rapid growth is projected to continue. Most growth estimates forecast more than 2.5 percent annual household and employment growth in the Orlando MSA, compared with a national trend of 1 percent overall. When Polk, Brevard, and Volusia counties are included, the total projection for central Florida population is more than 7 million.

Orlando developed at the crossroads of Interstate 4 and Florida’s Turnpike. A number of factors have shaped the Orlando region, including the location of historical town centers, the location of Disney World, transportation connections to Tampa Bay, and the fact that Florida’s Turnpike is a toll road. Thus, the main growth corridor has been from southwest to northeast through central Orlando along Interstate 4. This corridor, however, is becoming built out. More Orlando growth is now occurring along the Bee Line Expressway east toward the Atlantic Coast and to communities along Florida’s Turnpike. Although the specific demand depends on the development type, Osceola County in the southwest portion of the metropolitan region and Lake County in the northeast must effectively manage an increasing share of the region’s growth in order to benefit from it.

**Residential**

The Orlando residential housing markets have been among the nation’s strongest, with over 15 percent annual price appreciation, 10 percent annual volume growth, and nearly 30,000 new home sales last year. A portion of this rapid growth reflects national trends, such as the move of the baby boom generation into the age categories with top home ownership and the increase in home purchasing by minority and younger buyers. The lower interest rate environment and the shift in equities from the stock market to housing accentuate those trends.

The Orlando market is fortunate that it is underpinned by strong fundamental demand drivers. Those forces include new household formation, 700,000 households wishing to move up in housing, a small portion of the more than 48 million annual visitors who are purchasing second or investment homes, and continued capture of retirees. Although rentals and resale homes will capture a large portion of that demand, reasonable housing market estimates forecast more than 35,000 new for-sale and rental units annually in the near to middle term. This forecast does not necessarily translate into continued double-digit price and
volume increases, but the underlying Orlando housing demand is strong.

Forecasts indicate that the supply of new housing may not be able to keep up with the pace of demand. Approved housing in all Developments of Regional Impact in the Orlando MSA totals 103,000 units. Although approved DRIs represent only one-third of reasonably projected housing deliveries in the middle term, units approved in other large developments represent in the best circumstances just three years of projected housing need. Eventually, additional DRIs will be approved and small subdivision development may fill demand; nevertheless, the push for additional development will be intense.

Osceola County will capture a significant portion of this growth. The county's 80,000 current households represent approximately 11 percent of the total MSA. Recent home sales in Osceola County (7,000), however, are more than 23 percent of the MSA total. The county has thus been growing at more than twice its share of the total MSA. This rate contrasts with that of Lake County, which with similar current population numbers as Osceola, had new home sales of just 17 percent of the MSA total. The county has thus been growing at more than twice its share of the total MSA. This rate contrasts with that of Lake County, which with similar current population numbers as Osceola, had new home sales of just 17 percent of the MSA total. The 2005 average new home price in Osceola County was $240,000—10 percent below the MSA average, reflecting its lower employment base and earlier stage in the process of land development. Osceola County, however, has had recent price increases near 20 percent annually compared with the 15 percent MSA average. This narrowing of the traditional gap between home prices in Osceola and the rest of the MSA reflects the county's increasing attractiveness as a place to live.

Osceola County's share of the MSA housing market will continue to expand. Of the 103,000 units in approved DRIs, more than 30 percent, or 32,000 units, are in the county. The proportion of other planned development is similar. This growth reflects the fact that Osceola County is largely undeveloped compared to the more heavily developed remainder of the MSA. In summary, Osceola County has 11 percent of the current population of the region, 23 percent of current new home sales, and projects in the review process that would supply 30 percent of future home sales. The Orlando economic engine is creating households, and Osceola will both benefit from and need to manage that growth.

Office and Industrial

This growth is also driving a strong Orlando office market. With vacancies under 10 percent, the MSA is among the nation's leading office markets. Total office space in the Orlando MSA is approximately 50 million square feet, with net annual absorption of nearly 2 million square feet. The forecast, however, is not as strong in the office market as it is in the housing market. Total approved office space in DRIs in the MSA is more than 60 million square feet. Thus, readily available new office supply exceeds the total of all current space and represents 30 years of absorption at current run rates. Significant office opportunities exist, but the environment will be more competitive than in the housing market.

The industrial market is similar to the office market. Total MSA industrial space is more than 110 million square feet with a 6 percent overall vacancy rate. The absorption rate is more than 2.5 million square feet annually. Total projected industrial space in approved DRIs is more than 60 million square feet, which represents 20 years of supply. Industrial opportunities and major relocations exist, but the overall market does not offer the significant potential untapped demand of the housing market.

Osceola County, with its location, affordability, incentives, and superb economic development team will capture some new office and industrial demand. With significant regional investment in competing locations like Innovation Way, however, and with the overall new projected supply, the county's capture of new commercial space will likely expand slowly. Moreover, until additional residential fills in and new transportation solutions are developed, this commercial demand will likely migrate to more-established Osceola County locations like Poinciana and Stephens Plantation than to new space at East Lake Toho. The decision to focus East Lake Toho on residential uses is supported by the market. Nevertheless, some portion of the study area should be reserved for future
business and research growth. That area should be small and located with easy access to the transportation network.

Retail

Orlando residents benefit from a world-class retail environment. An additional 30,000 square feet of retail space is planned in approved DRIs. With the significant current and projected competition, retail in the near term at East Lake Toho will be best aimed at the local markets. The 100,000 new residents along East Lake Toho will need to be supported by six or more 120,000-square-foot community shopping centers integrated into town centers. The plan for a major regional mall at Green Island is potentially supportable in ten years or more, as the county fills in within its proposed Urban Growth Boundaries, and transportation links to other population centers are improved.

Overall, from a market potential point of view, the best use for the East Lake Toho area is quality housing with integrated town center retail. With construction of major transportation improvements, including the Southport connector and its connection to Florida’s East Coast, this area holds additional potential for expanded economic development, including office and industrial facilities.

New Corridors and Centers

Osceola County faces an important choice: will it remain a suburb of Orlando, or will it become a new economic center with abundant high-paying jobs? Osceola can become a new economic center because central Florida has developed as a multi-nodal region. Osceola County is situated amid numerous economic centers, including Tampa, Disney, Orlando, Orlando International Airport, Space Coast, Melbourne, and the new center of Viera. Growth is simultaneously coming toward Osceola from the west (from Tampa and Disney), from the north (from Orlando and the airport), and from the east (from Brevard County). As south-central Florida develops into an emerging “super region,” Osceola sits in the middle of that region.

Central Florida’s multiple economic centers need to be connected with new multimodal transporta-
tion corridors. Such connections will strengthen and enhance the region. In addition, new connections could make Osceola County a new economic crossroads and spur economic development in the county. Indeed, long-term economic development in both the region and Osceola County will depend largely on the creation of new transportation corridors. In central Florida, jobs have historically tended to cluster around major high-access transportation facilities, including freeways and airports. The existing primary transportation corridors, however, are becoming more and more congested. Moreover, freeway interchange areas are rapidly being built out. New corridors in Osceola County will provide needed transportation-served job sites to the county and the region. Providing multiple travel modes within those corridors will further increase their economic development potential.

The new corridors should tie Osceola County to important economic centers in the region. A corridor directly connecting Tampa to Brevard County through Osceola County will enhance the region by connecting economic centers and will provide potential new employers in Osceola County with excellent connectivity to major economic centers and industry clusters. This new corridor should provide a direct connection, rather than the current circuitous route along U.S. Highway 192. Connecting Osceola County directly to Orlando International Airport, which is gradually becoming the center of the east-central Florida region, is also important. Sites along a corridor providing direct access to this major airport and economic center would have excellent economic development potential. The Orlando Expressway Authority has already proposed new expressways connecting Osceola County to the emerging new center of Viera and to the airport. Osceola County should seek to make these new expressways a reality and expand them to create a cross-Florida connection between Tampa and Brevard County.

Attaining these new corridors will require a multifaceted strategy that includes development of appropriate land uses along the proposed new alignments. Transportation facilities—particularly toll roads and mass transit, which rely on user fees for funding—tend to follow actual and planned population projections. Using land use policy to create demand for the new corridors will greatly aid in making them a reality. Comprehensive plans and zoning maps should place appropriate urban densities along the corridors, and development should be encouraged in the area. If Osceola County does not allow urban growth along the new corridors, applicable agencies may not be convinced that the corridors are needed.

Allowing new growth centers along transportation corridors is preferable to an accretion model of expansion in which new land accretes to the existing urban centers, primarily in the form of bedroom communities. The accretion model leads to urban sprawl, lack of open-space preservation, and traffic congestion. As recognized by “Central Place Theory,” new urban centers along transportation corridors form a natural and preferred model for urban growth in which multimodal transportation drives market demand for high urban densities, open-space areas are preserved, land use is adequately served by transportation, and trip lengths are reduced as commercial and job destinations are placed closer to housing. Situating the new centers along corridors that provide direct access to existing economic centers will drive the new centers to become forces for economic development and job creation.

Osceola County should actively participate in the myregion.org seven-county regional visioning process. The county should ensure that the regional vision both benefits the region and reflects Osceola County’s concerns and viewpoints. The probability that new corridors and economic centers will be created in Osceola County, as well as the likely locations for such new corridors and centers, will be greatly affected by the outcome of myregion.org’s regional visioning process, which will strongly influence regional and state allocation of infrastructure, particularly for transportation, as well as regional growth patterns.

The Reality of Growth and the Need for Planning

The choice to grow is not something that a community necessarily makes. Market forces combine with available opportunities to produce dynamic growth situations. The mistake that communities
often make is to ignore the reality of the marketplace. Many communities have taken the position that they will remain rural without accommodating growth. That error leads to sprawl and sometimes a complete loss of community character.

Failure to plan for growth effectively leads to random, sprawling patterns of development. Community character is sacrificed, and opportunities to shape a more vibrant future are forever lost.

Conscious choice is the best way to preserve the historical land use patterns that define the community while maximizing the benefits that the marketplace brings for the future. The current comprehensive plan is an excellent step toward planning for the future growth of Osceola County.

**Infrastructure as a Determinant of Economic Growth**

The single greatest frustration that a rapidly growing community faces is watching growth overwhelm infrastructure. Schools become crowded, roads become congested, and basic municipal services begin to suffer. Simply throwing money at the problem is not the solution. Where to start addressing the problems and who should pay are always the issues of concern. A balanced approach of imposing taxes, collecting impact fees, and growing the economic base of the community can address the financial side of the equation, but the issue of where to start is often the more complicated question.

Planning for growth is essential. The planning process identifies where the growth will occur, how much is appropriate, and how much public investment will be necessary to complement it. In looking at Osceola County’s future, plans already are being made for the areas to the east and south of Lake Toho. Those plans will raise concerns and highlight the issues that must be faced.

The single-greatest problem foreseeable in the area is related to transportation. The network of roads in the area is inadequate to handle the current pace of development, and new development projects will only add to the problem. Although new projects will no doubt address the road issues within their boundaries, a need exists for significant upgrades to the countywide road network that will connect the projects to each other and to the larger community.
If economic growth and diversification of the job base is the goal, then the transportation network must be in place when commercial growth occurs. Commerce depends on access at many levels. Goods and services need to freely flow into and out of both the site and the region. Employees need easy access to places of employment. Investors need to know that the transportation system will keep pace as their businesses grow.

Attracting the desired economic growth in the study area faces other obstacles. The county needs to plan for housing affordability, utilities, schools, and municipal and commercial services in order to be competitive in the regional marketplace.

In the competition to attract jobs, the need for programs and incentives to help businesses relocate or grow is equal to the importance of physical infrastructure. Impact-fee credits, streamlined permit processing, land buydowns, and other programs at the county level can provide incentives to job creation.

Still, the attractiveness of Osceola County to business and industry may increasingly depend on human infrastructure. The availability of an educated workforce and the ability to house that workforce in an attractive and affordable community are critical to attracting a higher-paying job base. The study area provides an opportunity to meet this challenge through comprehensive planning and the articulation of a proper community vision.

Regional projections estimate that an additional 250,000 residents can be expected in the next two decades. Osceola County is anticipated to absorb a disproportionate share of that population when compared with past trends. The major force that will drive this share will be available land and competitive land prices. The growth curve is not speculative. All of the growth estimates are based on solid data analysis and market trends.

Although the actual numbers may be estimates, the effects are not. New schools need to be planned and built, existing roads will need to be widened, and new roads need to be designed and built. Social services, parks and recreation, and municipal services will all need to be upgraded and expanded. County government must lead the way on these issues as well as many more. All of these improvements must be funded in a timely manner and at sustainable levels.

**Housing and Economic Sustainability**

The county has developed under a mostly rural density model. Historically, development has grown from ranching and agriculture on larger land parcels to the development of five-acre homesteads. Development that has been approved in the recent past has averaged slightly more than one home per acre, with some housing variety represented in the planning and construction.

Future development will need to be much more aggressive with respect to density if growth is to be accommodated while preserving the lifestyle currently valued in the community. New areas for urban centers similar in scale to Kissimmee and St. Cloud need to be established. Those centers need to be based on a neighborhood model that allows for a greater variety of housing choices. The multiple neighborhoods need to link together in a community-building framework.

Housing choices need to include single-family homes of varying sizes and prices, townhomes, condominiums, and rental apartments. The form of this housing must follow more of an urban than a rural model. The density requirements in the new areas within the Urban Growth Boundary need to be greater than the three units per acre in the current comprehensive plan. Densities in the plan need to be calculated on a gross acreage basis that represents total land ownership.

The density model needs to allow for areas of higher density to accommodate the transfer of development into the study area from the surrounding areas in an effort to preserve open space. Selected sites within the study area will require significantly higher densities in an effort to balance new development with the preservation of Osceola’s unique lifestyle. Higher densities can also be used to maintain housing affordability. Bonuses and incentives should be granted, where appropriate, to encourage the construction of workforce housing in the community in a balanced and cohesive fashion. These bonuses should also be used to encourage the inclusion of mixed-use
projects, commercial services, employment centers, and transit facilities within the proposed projects. The inclusion of those elements within the new communities will, using good design principles, provide for a more walkable community in the future.

The county must think and manage in a way that mirrors the private sector. The county staff members and elected officials need to be aware of the ever-changing opportunities and restrictions within the regional marketplace. The influence of regulatory practices on the housing and commercial marketplace must be evaluated and adjusted constantly.

The need for diverse products within the marketplace is healthy for a community, and the county needs to evaluate and understand housing options. ULI has documented emerging trends—such as transit-oriented development, active adult communities, and condominium hotels—that are examples of products that have been developed over the past decade. Each of those trends, as well as new trends that have yet to emerge, can add to the housing diversity in the community.

Approvals for proposed master-planned communities need to have specific details about the type of development yet allow for the flexibility to respond to the marketplace. Detail is essential in good planning with respect to public infrastructure, while flexibility is essential in meeting market demand. Balancing flexibility with specifics can result in the successful implementation of the community vision.

Another area that may require the county to take a more private sector–like approach is in understanding of housing cycles. The future of the study area represents a long-term planning and development commitment. Several cycles of growth and contraction in the economy may occur before the plans are completed. County leadership needs to be stable and consistent while understanding the unique circumstances of each cycle. Being a partner with the development community in completing the community vision may mean being at the table and in full partnership in both the good times and bad.

The Region, the World, and a Crystal Ball

The Orlando region is a major destination for worldwide tourism. This fact has driven the Orlando regional economy and the real estate market for decades. The Orlando International Airport is the dominant portal for visitors to the region. Nevertheless, the Osceola Jetport is fast becoming an important player in this market. In the future it can become a primary access point for corporate executives and financial investors in the region.

The majority of visitors to the region come for the theme parks and the resort and golf experience. The quality of this experience is vital to its continued success. Although neither the weather nor the international economy can be controlled, the county can still have a significant effect on maintaining the quality of the experience. Tourism depends on a large workforce, and that workforce depends on a solid community support network. Housing choice and cost as well as transportation choices will play a significant role in this support network.

Tourism is the key to future investment in the community. Many company executives may get their first glimpse of the region while on vacation, and first impressions are important and lasting. Future decisions to invest in the region may be based on those first impressions.

Osceola County has shown that it is ready to accommodate growth. Projects in the county—such as Celebration—have already achieved worldwide recognition. Future developments must build on this distinction. Osceola has the opportunity to combine great location and climate with great infrastructure and services. This opportunity must not be wasted through mistakes and short-sighted plans. Though the required investment may be considered large, the long-term return on the investment will be substantial if the plans are wisely implemented.

Housing development is the key to the county’s participation in the regional economy. The study area should be seen as an area for community-based housing. It is well positioned for this devel-
development activity, and the creation of diverse, quality neighborhoods will support not only the region at large but also the local need for additional local economic growth.

Although many of the decisions that are made today will establish the direction for the future, today’s planners must leave room for responsiveness to emerging opportunities. The balance between flexibility and direction is important. Areas that are important to the realization of the vision must remain consistent while allowing for changes that respond to the marketplace.

The Role of Planning and Discipline in Attracting the Best

Many great success stories exist throughout the country: for example, the Ballston Corridor in Arlington, Virginia, and Stapleton, the airport redevelopment in Denver, Colorado; those communities appear to have it all. In truth, none are overnight success stories. A great deal of planning, preparation, patience, and discipline is at the root of each successful community.

Community leaders in Osceola County need to take an active role in the process. After the vision and the plan have been determined, the follow-through must be disciplined. The community must believe in the vision it has chosen. Community members must possess the conviction of their choices even when nothing appears to be happening. Political leaders need to stay the course, even through election cycles, while recognizing that some reasonable midcourse correction may be necessary from time to time.

The long-term vision must be based on a solid, realistic understanding of Osceola County’s position in that marketplace. The best vision of the future is one that is chosen and embraced by the community at large. If the process is open, widely shared, and based on consensus, it will be easier to bring to realization.

Osceola County needs to create an environment that encourages both first-rate jobs and high-quality housing. Good planning and cooperative leadership may be all that are required to create high-quality communities, given the nature of the regional marketplace. The creation of good jobs will be the more difficult and more restrictive enterprise for the county.

The creation of good jobs is somewhat beyond local control. Still, skilled preparation is a key component. Having plans in place that allocate land to commerce is important. Upgrading the roads and infrastructure ahead of development is critical. The best chance to attract jobs will come through careful investment in community infrastructure. High-paying jobs are currently being created where lifestyle components are desirable, the business climate is friendly, and return on investment is good.

Osceola County must position itself well for corporate recruitment and have a ready-and-willing attitude. The availability of good-quality, diverse housing and a growing population base will certainly help; however, most corporations are not willing to wait for roads and infrastructure to be completed. Too many areas of the country are competing for the jobs. Companies also look at the aspect of just-in-time delivery—which is key to many sectors of the economy—in site selection. Locations need to be available when the market is ready to grow. It takes a willingness to move quickly with approvals and a well-planned and financed commitment to meet this market expectation.

Osceola County has a distinct market position in a region that is growing dynamically. That position is based on the abundance of available land in a location that can accommodate growth and development. How that land is used will determine the future of the community. Decisions must be based on realistic expectations and the proper regional perspective. Policies must be established that clearly reinforce the community vision. Incentives need to reinforce the positive goals while regulations should serve to discourage, if not prohibit, development that falls short of meeting community expectations.

The community must be willing to say no to proposals that miss the mark, even during downturns in the economy. At the same time, innovative proposals that further community goals need to become the by-right development model. Osceola County should strive to make good development
Even if you’re on the right track you’ll get run over if you just sit there.

—Will Rogers

The market opportunity presented to Osceola County today is solidly based on residential development. The region needs quality housing to continue to grow and prosper. Osceola can provide that housing base. Commercial growth will be best if it is scaled proportionately to the housing demand and if it provides the necessary services to the community.

the easy path to follow for the landowners and the development community. For this approach to work, the vision needs to clearly articulated and supported throughout the system. This support includes cooperation from regulators and service providers that are outside the county system of review and approval, such as the South Florida Water Management District or MetroPlan Orlando. Communication and coordination are essential.
Oscella County has the potential to build a vibrant and sustainable community by providing diverse opportunities for economic development, public enjoyment, and civic identity. The provision of these opportunities must be specified within the policies and plans that guide decision making in the county. In other words, building a community is not the same as regulating the planning and design of multiple Developments of Regional Impact.

Community building starts with an overall vision for the future of Osceola County and, in particular, the Lake Toho area. This vision should reflect the natural, cultural, and economic assets of the area as well as the hopes and aspirations of the people who live or work in the county. The vision should articulate a clear statement of the county’s priorities and objectives related to growth and what the county wants to be like 10, 20, or 50 years from now.

The process of articulating a vision begins with the adoption of a set of guiding principles. These guiding principles serve as the framework for defining a vision. The panel recommends that Osceola County consider the following principles.

- Celebrate the environment: Go beyond just protection and mitigation and create a place that honors the natural, cultural, and historical features that shape the character of the county.
- Encourage economic development: Provide the public leadership and resources needed to stimulate the private investment that will lead to greater prosperity for the residents of the county.
- Promote opportunities for public interaction: Strengthen the connections that hold communities together by creating inviting and attractive public spaces.
- Allow flexibility for the long term: Agree to appropriate responses to unforeseen conditions and opportunities.
- Risk greatness: Accept the risks that will need to be taken to achieve a truly exceptional vision for the county.

The panel recommends that a unified vision be created for Lake Toho and its surroundings. This area would include the five proposed DRIs, the Bella Lago DRI, the Kissimmee lakefront, St. Cloud, and the remainder of the lakefront property that has not been included in the study area. The county should retain an outside planning consultant with national experience to facilitate the visioning process.

One approach to the vision would be to form a hierarchy of activity centers that would complement and support Kissimmee and St. Cloud. One town center would be built; it would be a mixed-use, high-density employment area. Each of the proposed DRIs would become villages with smaller village centers as the focus of their identity. The villages in turn would consist of two or three neighborhoods, depending on their size.

Each village could comprise a mix of housing types and densities, schools, parks, institutional uses (churches, post office, and the like), and local commercial service uses. The important thing is to connect the neighborhoods within the villages and the villages to each other and the town center. The connections should be made with streets, trails and sidewalks, green space, view corridors, and boat docks.

The panel also recommends that the county adopt a set of performance standards for development plans. These standards would establish expectations concerning the following:

- Public access to the lakefront;
• Clustering of development;
• Vehicular and pedestrian connectivity;
• Environmental protection and enhancement;
• Density and scale of neighborhood and village centers;
• Mix of uses;
• Landscaping, lighting, and signage;
• Design consistency for public improvements (streets, trails, green space, and so on); and
• Quality of public buildings and facilities.

The important point is to establish and specify the standards of the community’s design. A document should be created to help architects, landscape architects, developers, builders, and property owners understand the design principles used to create the character and image of their community.

Finally, the panel recommends that the county prepare a Lake Toho Management Plan. The plan should address recreational and environmental issues related to the anticipated new development. The plan should focus on the number and location of marinas and boat launches; on habitat protection, fishing events, ecotourism, and wildlife sanctuaries; and on security and other topics. The community design standards and the lake management plan should be companion documents that work in concert to produce the quality of development that Osceola County deserves.

Celebrate the environment: Go beyond just protection and mitigation and create a place that honors the natural, cultural, and historical features that shape the character of the county.
The panel’s interviews uncovered a broad consensus among the general public, elected officials, technical staff members, and others that the transportation system serving the study area is severely deficient. The situation has been well documented in the Osceola County 2006 Network Capacity report, the Westlake Cove and Edgewater DRI submittals, and the draft East Osceola County Transportation Study (so named because it lies on the east end of the existing urbanized area; the study area is, in fact, well within the county’s northwest quadrant). Several of the adjacent roadways are currently at or near capacity, even without the additional traffic expected from the proposed new developments. Concern has understandably been considerable about the transportation impact of the DRI proposals in the study area. In addition, because of the current low population density, the study area has poor transit service and poor pedestrian and bicycle accommodations to help ease the transportation problem.

**Existing Regional Network**

The existing regional roadway network is highlighted in the illustration on page 25. The following major roadways are in the immediate vicinity of the proposed DRIs:

- Florida's Turnpike;
- U.S. Highway 192;
- Neptune Road;
- Kissimmee Park Road;
- Kings Highway;
- Old Canoe Creek Road; and
- Canoe Creek Road.

In the broader context of the study area, the following roadways also play an important role:

- U.S. Highway 17/92;
- Poinciana Boulevard;
- State Road 15/Narcoossee Road;
- Pleasant Hill Road;
- Interstate 4; and
- State Road 417.

As shown in the illustration, regional access to the DRIs is constrained by the isthmus formed between Lake Tohoekaliga and East Lake Tohoekaliga where Florida's Turnpike, U.S. Highway 192, and Neptune Road all convene. U.S. Highway 192 and Neptune Road each currently operate with select segments at level of service (LOS) E during the peak hours. Level of service is a quantitative measure of traffic operations based on average delay per vehicle, with LOS A representing free-flow conditions and LOS F representing gridlock conditions. Whereas the northern portion of the study area suffers from lack of capacity, the southern portion of the study area lacks roadways altogether.

Transit service is currently provided by LYNX to the cities of St. Cloud and Kissimmee. The north-south route operating between Kissimmee and downtown Orlando (Route 4, Orange Blossom Trail) carries approximately 143,000 passengers monthly, and it is one of LYNX’s most heavily traveled routes.

Pedestrian and bicycle amenities in the vicinity of the study area are limited, except for the Bill Johnson Memorial Pathway located along Neptune Road and on-street routes.

**Future Transportation System**

One can quite easily surmise that if the existing transportation system is inadequate with today’s
traffic volumes, motorist delays and crashes are likely to increase in the future. Even without the proposed DRIs or other developments in the immediate vicinity of the study area, the traffic volume increases would continue because of growth in neighboring areas, and the operation of the study area roadways would continue to degrade.

Several of the roadways affecting the entire region are planned to be expanded within the next five years. Those roadways are shown in the illustration. This expansive and aggressive roadbuilding campaign will add significant capacity to the system.

In addition, to address regional transportation needs, the five DRIs jointly sponsored the *East Osceola County Transportation Study*. The regional study was not final and available at the time the panel met, but a brief review of the preliminary data showed recommendations to address transportation on a regional basis. Of particular significance was the recommendation for the Southport Connector road from U.S. Highway 192 in the vicinity of east Lake Toho to Cypress Parkway. The panel agrees that these improvements are important and necessary.

The city of Kissimmee is evaluating an intermodal transportation station to promote existing connections between Amtrak, Greyhound, and LYNX and future connections with a potential commuter rail line. The station would facilitate LYNX’s desired shift toward a timed transfer network, because the intermodal facility could be a transfer location for the additional southern routes expected with the projected population growth in Osceola County. The intermodal station is seen as an integral component of the city’s Community Redevelopment Area.

**Regional Impact of DRIs**

Based on the proposed land uses as shown in figure 2, the five study area DRIs are expected to generate roughly 250,000 to 400,000 daily trips,
depending on the level of internal capture or multiple-stop trips in the development.

The simultaneous advancement of these developments provides a tremendous opportunity to design the internal street and connectivity network so that the cumulative impact of all five developments is less severe to the transportation infrastructure than that of the five developments individually. The preliminary site plans show connections between the adjacent DRIs, but the designs do not do an adequate job of providing a meaningful transportation link between the north and south ends of the study area.

**Transportation Recommendations**

The aggressive reconstruction schedule planned for northwest Osceola County primarily focuses on improving the existing roadway network. The panel recommends implementing a comprehensive multimodal transportation system as shown in the illustration on page 27.

**Roadway Network**

Specifically, the panel concurs with the *East Osceola County Transportation Study* recommendation for a Southport Connector. The Southport Connector provides regional transportation alternatives not only for the planned DRIs, but also for the existing population and future developments. The Southport Connector should operate as a limited-access facility. The panel recommends a comprehensive long-term solution for the Southport Connector that extends beyond Cypress Parkway and provides a direct link to Interstate 4. This solution will create a regional east-west link between the coasts, and it will place Osceola County directly in line with the corridor and its accompanying growth.

The linkages between the study area and the external roadway network are vitally important. For the purposes of this analysis, a *major access* is defined as providing direct connectivity to the entire study area through a signalized intersection, while a *secondary access* will serve a subarea of the study area, probably with a limited-access intersection. The following linkages are recommended:

- Consider a major access to Westlake Cove on Neptune Road. This new access should provide a relatively direct link to U.S. Highway 192 and Florida’s Turnpike interchange with Shady Lane.
- Provide secondary access to Mariners Cove along Neptune Road.
- Provide access to the Edgewater DRI along Kissimmee Park Road, which will have a full in-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 2</th>
<th>Development Proposals for Lake Toho Projects</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single-Family Residential (units)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bella Tara</td>
<td>950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Island</td>
<td>10,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariner’s Cove</td>
<td>2,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgewater</td>
<td>3,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westlake Cove</td>
<td>2,325</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19,881</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Green Island retail uses include a 1.55 million-square-foot mall.

*Source: Bella Tara, Green Island, and Mariner’s Cove preapplication documents; Edgewater and Westlake Cove Applications for Development Approval.*
terchange with Florida’s Turnpike and intersect with U.S. Highway 192.

- Provide the Bella Terra DRI access to Kissimmee Park Road.

- Use an interchange along the proposed Southport Connector (adequately spaced from the system interchange with Florida’s Turnpike) to provide a major access to Green Island.

- Provide Green Island with a major access along Canoe Creek Road.

- Connect the major access along Neptune (within Westlake Cove) and the proposed interchange along the Southport Connector with a four-lane divided internal road (convertible to six lanes). The exact location should be determined through site engineering and planning to identify wetlands, eagle’s nests, and other environmental constraints. Nevertheless, the roadway should be designed as a continuous route through the study area. The road can meander through each site, but the design should not force motorists to turn onto other roads to continue through the site.

- Design the remainder of the internal street network to promote connectivity within and between the individual DRIs and the currently undeveloped parcels.

- Design all internal roadways to allow emergency vehicles to access all roadways; buses to operate on the collector streets; and trucks to operate in the retail, office, and industrial areas. The county should be responsible for the design review to ensure trucks, buses, and emergency vehicles can access appropriate destinations.

Transit Network

The panel recommends providing a transit connector route between the study area and the future city of Kissimmee intermodal center. A route should be able to travel the new north-south roadway in the study area. The eventual density, land use mix, and street network will determine the
extent of transit service that can be provided. The county can encourage transit-oriented development along the corridor through its comprehensive plan and zoning. The panel also recommends that all future corridors in Osceola County accommodate and promote multimodal transportation alternatives.

**Pedestrian and Bicycle Network**
Osceola County developed a Parks and Recreation Plan in November 2005 that encouraged connectivity for pedestrians and bicycles through a network of trails, paths, and greenways. The panel recommends implementing the principles identified in the plan throughout the study area. Specifically, a greenway should be provided along as much of the lakefront as is possible. From a transportation perspective, the greenway should include a continuous multiuse trail for pedestrians and bicyclists. A vehicular parkway should join the greenway for segments, and unpaved hiking trails should be provided at select locations.

Internal to the site, the panel recommends a series of interconnected multiuse paths to join neighborhoods, parks, and village centers. The paths should provide direct connections between areas that are not directly connected for motor vehicles. Bicycle accommodations should be provided along the main north-south roadway to provide a commuter connection to the proposed intermodal facility.

**Implementation**

The recommended improvements identified in this section provide a solid foundation for addressing the significant growth expected in Osceola County. The improvements are expected to accommodate the buildout of the study area. Nevertheless, if the county population projections are realized, the regional transportation system will need significantly more improvements than have been suggested here.

The county must identify and implement procedures that allow quick expansion of existing roadways and construction of new roadways. The county’s interest lies in reconstructing its currently planned roadways quickly.

Development is occurring fast, and the roadway infrastructure is already deficient. Small-scale transportation improvements (beyond the county’s planned roadway improvements) to address developer-related impacts should not be implemented one development at a time. Such a strategy will result in a transportation system that is constantly under construction and unable to accommodate current traffic load. The county must proactively construct the cumulative improvements required to accommodate developments within select subareas. The county should consider creating a transportation authority, community development districts, or both to manage the fast-tracked and comprehensive roadway construction needed for the future developments. The county must evaluate the sequencing of the proposed developments as it relates to planned roadway improvements and available access.

**Transportation Conclusions**

Osceola County faces significant obstacles in creating a transportation system that can sustain and attract the type of growth desired, including timing and environmental constraints. At the same time, if the county proactively addresses transportation issues before significant development, several implementation mechanisms (for example, transportation authority and community development districts) could assist with construction because the largely undeveloped nature of the study area makes implementing an effective transportation system easier.
Osceola County is entering a new phase of development as its growth patterns in the northwest quadrant around Lake Toho shift from predominantly rural to predominantly suburban and urban. In order to manage this transition effectively, the county government and residents will need to create and apply more-formal growth management procedures. Up to now, gradual changes in rural land use could be accommodated largely through informal understandings and interpersonal relationships that were based on face-to-face exchanges and trust, along with mutual understanding of small-town and ranching needs. That informal system, supplemented with basic zoning and land use plans, has worked well in the past.

As the county undergoes extensive growth in population, changes in land use will occur at a larger scale, at a faster pace, and more as the result of corporate, rather than individual, decisions. The county growth management system will need to institute more-formal plans and written rules to ensure that citizens and decision makers have a common understanding of and commitment to the public goals and objectives. To prepare and apply these plans and rules, the county will need professional staff members who not only can carry out the necessary technical analyses but who also can work with residents and businesses to build consensus about the desired vision of the future.

Unless the county citizens and government agencies develop a clear and compelling vision to guide the coming growth, valuable environmental resources can be degraded, land use patterns will be uncoordinated, and economic opportunities may be missed. The comprehensive plan sets forth a goal of sustainable development to be achieved through smart growth. However, in order to be effective and widely accepted, these general goals must be translated into a more specific and grounded vision of Osceola County 20 years from now. They must explain what it will be like to live and work in tomorrow’s communities and neighborhoods. The future is not fixed; it can be shaped. But first the county must understand its options and agree on its vision.

Three critical factors stand out. First, Osceola’s vision must recognize and sustain its wealth of environmental resources, which are the source of its uniqueness and value in the region. Second, Osceola’s vision must strive to maintain social equity, particularly through providing affordable housing for its workforce. And third, the county’s vision must be integrated with that of the metropolitan region through active partnering in regional transportation and economic development programs in order to enlarge the local options for a diverse economy.

### Strategies for Maintaining the Boundary between Urban and Rural Development

When urban development encroaches on areas set aside for rural activities, such as ranching, conflicts occur between uses, urban services can be fragmented, and infrastructure extensions are more expensive. Under orderly growth management, the line between urban and rural development is maintained in order to prevent the undesirable side effects of encroachment. A regulatory strategy for separating urban and rural land uses is the delineation of an urban growth boundary (UGB). An incentive-based strategy is the use of a transfer of development rights (TDR) program.

Both of these strategies are proposed in the county’s most recent comprehensive plan. Both, however, are complex undertakings that require considerable expertise to implement and are not automatically successful. For example, nationally only a few of the proposed TDR programs have actually succeeded in selling rights and preserving large amounts of conservation acreage.
Urban Growth Boundary

The concept of the urban growth boundary is simple and appealing in theory. A line is drawn on a map, enclosing the land area required to accommodate the population growth projected to take place over a 20-year planning period. Then, development rules, standards, and goals are set for the areas both inside and outside the boundary line in order to facilitate dense urban development inside and to maintain lower-density rural uses outside. The line is reviewed periodically and may be extended to ensure that enough land remains for growth for the next 20 years. To make an urban growth boundary work, however, planners and decision makers must take a number of other coordinating actions.

Inside the UGB, the location, timing, and capacity of major roads, schools, utilities, transit, rail, and other public facilities must be planned to provide an orderly framework for the decisions of individual private developers. Without such a framework, no predictability exists for public actions to support development, and these decisions are made incrementally by the private sector. Zoning and other development regulations and incentives must be enacted to guide the density, intensity, type, and location of future development into smart growth patterns—higher-density, mixed-use communities and neighborhoods. Finally, individual development projects must help fund the public facilities through impact fees, easement dedications, and provision of infrastructure improvements aligned and timed to support the burdens of development, so that all can reap the benefits of planned and orderly growth.

Outside the UGB, zoning and development regulations must be adopted that discourage sprawl and maintain rural character. These zoning categories should recognize the underlying nature of the rural land uses. They should encourage the continuation of rural activities, such as ranching, and prevent the conflicts that can arise when adjacent lands are subdivided for residential development. By requiring minimum lot sizes and withholding public water and sewer services, these regulations should discourage sprawl and help maintain environmental systems. And they should consider the
need to maintain rural character through zoning overlays, view shed designations, and the like.

Transfer of Development Rights

The TDR concept also is simple and appealing in theory. Rather than depending on regulations to accomplish community development goals, TDR substitutes a market-based program that allows rural and agricultural landowners to sell the development rights on their property while continuing to use it for ranching or other rural uses. Locations designated as eligible for selling development rights are termed sending areas. Once sold, the development rights can be transferred to locations where denser urban growth is desired, which are called receiving areas. In receiving areas, a certain base level of density (for example, five dwelling units per acre) is allowed by right, with the potential for doubling the density through transferred development rights. TDR is a way of clustering development by using a market mechanism. Transactions are recorded on the titles of properties that have sold their rights. For a TDR to work, however, it must be designed on the basis of a careful market analysis, indicating that a market for the rights will actually develop, and receiving areas must be willing to accept the additional density.

In many areas, finding a willing receiving area is difficult because existing residents object to the imposition of higher density (the NIMBY syndrome). One possible solution to this problem in Osceola County is to propose that one or more of the new villages be designated as receiving areas, and to set their base densities to be able to accommodate the higher transferred densities. Ideally, the receiving areas would be inside the UGB and adjacent to high-access points, such as interchanges, on the future transportation system. If a receiving area were to be considered outside the UGB, it would have to be completely self-sustaining with respect to city and county services.

TDR programs, while attractive in theory, have not always proved to be effective tools for preserving open space for several reasons. First, very few TDR programs actually result in a significant number of development rights transfers, primarily because a market for development rights is difficult to establish, and, therefore, a fair market value for TDRs is difficult to ascertain. Recent years have seen a remarkable proliferation of TDR programs, but it is too soon to judge the overall success rate of the newer programs.

Second, even if TDR programs create a successful market for transfers of development rights, they generally will not result in a desirable pattern of open-space preservation. Because the programs rely on landowners’ willingness to sell development rights, no guarantee exists that the most important environmental or open-space areas will be preserved. Instead, those landowners whose land is farthest from existing urban areas, and therefore in the least danger of being urbanized, are most likely to sell development rights.

Third, by making density more expensive, TDR schemes can actually decrease densities and thereby result in more-rapid land consumption. The more compact the development patterns in which new growth occurs, the less open space new growth will consume through urbanization. By forcing developers to purchase TDRs to develop at densities above certain levels, TDR schemes increase the cost of, and therefore provide a disincentive for, high density. Thus, TDR programs can often result in less, not more, open space, particularly where the programs do not result in many TDR transfers, in which case the program becomes simply a cap on density.

Finally, TDR programs, by forcing new development to bear an inequitable burden of preserving open space, are unfair and likely illegal. Requiring those who develop at higher densities to purchase TDRs is akin to assessing an impact fee or requiring a dedication of property. In either case, Supreme Court case law suggests that the fee or dedication must have a “roughly proportional” relationship to the impact of the new development. Showing that the TDR purchase requirement is proportional to the impact of new development would be very difficult. Rather than spread the cost of open-space preservation equitably among all residents, the TDR scheme places the bulk of the burden on new development, imposing a cost on new residents that is usually in excess of the amount contributed by existing residents to open-space preservation.
Green infrastructure includes the lakes, wetlands, vegetation (e.g., live oaks), wildlife habitats, aquifer recharge areas, and other natural elements. Those features work together as ecological systems in which they interact and influence each other and provide important environmental services, such as cooling shade, flood control, and improved water quality. Ensuring that the green infrastructure remains healthy requires monitoring its status and taking timely action to deal with problems. A number of state and regional agencies have environmental responsibilities. If their data collection could be coordinated to prepare an annual green infrastructure report, then citizens and elected officials would remain aware of problems with the county’s environment.

Preparing a Greenprint Plan that designates environmental areas to be conserved will help to identify and maintain important connections between ecological patches and corridors and to set forth action to achieve conservation goals and objectives. Making the plan will also provide an opportunity for involving citizens and environmental organizations and for formulating strategies, such as

None of the foregoing discussion is intended to suggest that TDR programs should not be considered by Osceola County, but rather it is intended to underscore the need to analyze and manage the program carefully.

**Land Conservation Strategies**

Osceola County’s environmental resources are the keys to its sustainable future. In the past they could be taken for granted to some extent. Under the pressures of projected future growth, they must be actively managed. Three management strategies are recommended: (1) issue an annual report on the health of the green infrastructure, (2) prepare and implement a Greenprint Plan to manage the ecological systems for both active and passive recreation, and (3) put in place low-impact development practices that make use of natural processes to manage stormwater runoff. The comprehensive plan recognizes the value of these resources and proposes a number of actions to conserve them. Some additional steps, however, will be helpful.

The southwestern shore of Lake Tohopekaliga within the study area.
purchase or donation of conservation easements in collaboration with the Nature Conservancy or the Trust for Public Land. The Greenprint Plan can become a part of the Parks and Recreation Department’s active and passive recreation program for parks, marinas, fishing areas, nature study areas, trails, greenways, and the like.

Stormwater management has traditionally relied on drainage pipes and detention ponds. The recent concern with managing water quality as well as water quantity has generated interest in a new approach called low-impact development, which relies on natural processes, such as bioretention (control practices that use the chemical, biological, and physical properties of plants, microbes, and soils for removal of pollutants from stormwater runoff), infiltration, percolation, and evaporation. Low-impact development replaces underground stormwater drainage pipes with surface grassed swales, rain gardens, and other permeable infiltration areas. A local example is the placement of rapid infiltration basins in sand traps at Champions Gate. Putting low-impact development materials into design standards and other development rules will make the development community aware of the benefits of this approach. Both the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and Environmental Protection Agency recommend the approach in their stormwater best practice and smart growth publications.

Water Quality and Quantity Management for Lake Tohopekaliga

Lake Toho and other surface waters within the UGB are vital to water quality and quantity, stormwater runoff, and flood protection for the county. They are at risk, however, from the lack of a coordinated approach to water quality, water quantity, and solid and hazardous waste management practices in the region. Numerous local, regional, state, and federal authorities are responsible for providing and regulating potable water, sewer service, stormwater management, flood control, and hazardous and solid waste management. Because all of these functions will be affected by the significant increase in development anticipated in the county, it is imperative that the county coordinate with all of these groups to manage the aquifer, the supplies of potable water and its delivery systems, waste systems, stormwater runoff systems, and flood protection. This coordination must ensure that the comprehensive plans and zoning and development ordinances for Kissimmee, St. Cloud, and Osceola County include the necessary elements that will mitigate the effects of development and even use the opportunity of development to improve these systems. The county or the cities of Kissimmee or St. Cloud should consider purchasing shoreline tracts to ensure public access and use.

To the extent it is agreed that they are necessary to preserve water quality and quantity or enhance stormwater runoff and flood control in the county and region, the comprehensive plans and zoning and development codes for Kissimmee, St. Cloud, and Osceola County should include the following strategies:

- Specific locations and technical standards for required buffer areas (for filtration, water level, and flood protection);
- Detention ponds;
- Channels as necessary for interconnectivity to improve filtration;
- Swales and natural infiltration;
- Flexibility for water-level control;
- Hydrilla and aquatic vegetation management; and
- Preservation of live oaks and other vegetation.

If such water quality and water quantity requirements are included with specificity and enforced consistently, they will provide a dependable and equitable strategy for managing growth in the county; provide certainty for the development community; ensure compliance by all developments, small and large; and allocate the cost of providing those services among all developers and users. The panel also suggests that the comprehensive plans and zoning and development codes include specific requirements with respect to the location of any new physical improvements that will be required (treatment facilities, detention ponds, interconnectivity requirements, water lines, wells, pumping stations, and so on) as well as
a timeline for providing each of these facilities. Developers of projects of all sizes should be required to contribute proportionately to the cost of providing these facilities, by impact fees, dedication of land and facilities, and maintenance responsibilities, as appropriate for the development. Individual project development permits, entitlements, and approvals should be conditioned upon these contributions at a stage of development that will allow water, sewer, stormwater, flood control, and waste management services to be in place with sufficient capacity to serve homes upon completion of development. Phasing of developer contributions should be commensurate with the water, stormwater, flood control, and waste management burdens imposed by each stage of development.

Inasmuch as Lake Toho and other surface waters of the county serve as recreational amenities for the county, comprehensive plans and development and zoning codes should include specific rules and requirements for Lake Toho and other surface waters consistent with conservation and recreational goals adopted by the county and other city and regional authorities. One goal that the panel heard is to permit greater water-level fluctuation in Lake Toho and other detention ponds. Therefore, in the interest of improving water management, the plans and codes should give the depth that will be required for new detention ponds, and the setback or buffer areas required for each type of surface waterway. The county may choose to prevent all permanent improvements within a portion of the perimeter of some waterways or to permit or require landscaping, nonpermanent recreational improvements, or both within other setback areas. Dedication for public roadways or access to the waterways for transportation, maintenance, and recreational or emergency purposes may also be required.

The panel recommends that Osceola County carry out a recreation carrying-capacity study for Lake Toho. This study will provide a firm understanding of the number of marinas and individual docks that should be permitted along the lakefront. It may also result in limits on the number of boats permitted on the lake at any given time and perhaps restrict the number of public boat ramps on the lake as well. Implementation of the carrying-capacity study may be inconsistent with expectations of shoreline landowners and users from adjacent canals and locks. This study should be initiated promptly and the results implemented as quickly as possible, especially for shoreline and canal/lock developments. Further study will be needed to determine how these limitations are best imposed, and the priority, if any, given to owners of shoreline properties or in new developments.

Equitable Financing of Recreational and Conservation Areas

The county’s 2005 Comprehensive Plan divides the county’s parks and recreational areas into the following categories:

- Regional parks: Resource-based parks a minimum of 75 acres in size, serving more than two communities and often including an outdoor recreation area;
- Community parks: Parks ranging in size from 15 to 75 acres that serve the needs of two or more neighborhoods and residents within a radius of three miles, including passive and active recreation lands;
- Neighborhood parks: Parks two to ten acres in size that you can walk to, including playgrounds, open play areas, and attractive landscaping;
- Miniparks and tot lots, providing primarily passive recreation but including playground areas, from 2,500 square feet to one acre in size;
- Special use facilities: For example, sports facilities;
- Natural resource areas: Lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics or buffering that may include passive recreation opportunities;
- Greenways and recreational pathways: Linear open spaces protected and managed as part of a linked system of conservation lands or recreational lands; and
Facilities owned and operated by other agencies: For example, nature preserves and managed wildlife areas.

Growth in Osceola County will increase the need for additional recreational facilities as well as the level of use of existing facilities, particularly the regional and community parks and special use facilities. Creative funding strategies will be required for land acquisition, construction, and maintenance of each of these types of facilities. As with other strategies for managing growth in the county, the panel recommends that the county leverage its unique ecological and conservation strengths to attract funding from other local governmental and quasi-governmental agencies and community groups, including organizations with goals consistent with the parks' uses or purposes—whether wildlife conservation; environmental protection; or one of the active uses, such as fishing, swimming, boating, or soccer. As the county recognized in its 2005 amended comprehensive plan, combining parks and recreational areas with schools and other community facilities can be an efficient way of leveraging or sharing the infrastructure required for each and decreasing the initial development and ongoing maintenance costs for the combined facilities.

In anticipation of the coming growth, a detailed parks plan should be prepared as soon as possible. It should include locations of specific parks and recreation areas, the general improvements and activities for each recreation area, and timing for land acquisition and development of each facility. The plan should be based on an analysis of future population and the park facilities required per household. Consistency between the comprehensive plans and development and zoning codes for Kissimmee, St. Cloud, and Osceola County with respect to these amenities would be helpful, at least regarding regional and community parks and special use facilities, and as necessary to have meaningful natural boundaries for natural resource areas, and greenways and recreational pathways.

Osceola County has a special tax that funds land acquisition for conservation areas and can be used for natural resource areas, and greenways and A detailed parks plan should include locations of specific parks and recreation areas, the general improvements and activities for each recreation area, and timing for land acquisition and development of each facility.
recreational pathways. Land acquisition and construction costs for new recreational facilities may also be funded from recreational impact fees imposed on new developments, recreational fees imposed on county residents, and land dedication and facilities construction by developers. To the extent the comprehensive plans and development and zoning codes of Kissimmee, St. Cloud, and Osceola County consistently locate these amenities and include a timetable for development, imposing the proportionate cost on both small and large developers will be easier and more equitable. In the amended 2005 comprehensive plan, the county has made an explicit effort to exclude mini- and neighborhood parks from the county’s required level of service and maintenance. Therefore, if communities generally believe that these neighborhood parks and miniparks are beneficial, the comprehensive plan and development and zoning codes must impose responsibility for the dedication, construction, and maintenance of these parks on local developers, homeowners associations, or other community or neighborhood organizations. The county should determine what enforcement strategies are available to ensure that these neighborhood parks and miniparks continue to be available and are properly maintained.

Operational costs for parks can be supported by service charges and user fees. User fees would include general admittance fees and may be more controversial in the community for the general use parks and facilities. The community may be more accepting of fees charged for commercial activities in the parks, such as paid fishing guides, than for purely private activities. Service charges are generally less controversial and could be managed by increasing the special programs offered at the parks and facilities. For example, community groups or local experts might agree to lead wildlife or wildflower hikes on a regular basis, and the county could charge a fee for participating in the activity. An opportunity may exist to charge a fee to permit community or nonprofit groups to conduct some of their educational or social activities at county recreational facilities. Examples might include Red Cross swimming lessons, a local bass fishing group’s tournament, and similar activities. Note that marketing this last type of program to local and regional groups will require some commitment of resources from the county if no such programs currently exist.

The county should avoid any exemptions from recreational impact fees for resort, timeshare, and other limited-occupancy residential products. Finally, the panel recommends that the county require payment of impact fees and dedications of land earlier in the process, so that the parks and other facilities can be completed closer to the time new residents occupy their homes and overuse of existing park facilities can be avoided.

Financing Schools to Keep Pace with Growth

Osceola County must work closely with the county school district to develop a methodology for identifying the number, size, and location of schools required to accommodate the growth anticipated in the community. The comprehensive plans and zoning and development codes of Kissimmee, St. Cloud, and Osceola County should include these school requirements. Dedication of land for elementary, middle, junior high, and high schools should be required as part of the entitlement process for large developments, and impact fees should be required of both large and small developers.

The Osceola County School District will be challenged to provide funding for construction and operation of new schools. State funding and taxing authority are controlled and limited by Florida law, and very little of the school funding system, other than new construction impact fees, is within the control of Osceola County. Current law permits developers to defer payment of school impact fees until the certificate of occupancy for each unit is issued. Developing a new school from land acquisition through construction takes one to three years, but if the impact fees are not paid until occupancy permits are issued, the supply of school facilities is unlikely to catch up with demand as long as growth continues. The county is in the process of amending this requirement so that the education impact fees must be paid earlier in the process. Obviously, the earlier in the approval and permitting process that those fees can be fairly collected, the more likely the schools will be fin-
ished and available for the students when they move in.

School facilities may also be financed through:

• Education Facility Districts, essentially charter schools funded by a developer and operated as a charter school through cooperation with the developer, the residents, the school district and the county; and

• Community Development Districts.

Both of these options appear to provide viable alternatives to the traditional school district construction plan, funded in whole or in part by education impact fees and local taxes.

Other strategies available to Osceola County to assist the school district in funding new schools and improve the quality of life for its residents might include the following:

• End education impact fees exemptions for resort, timeshare, and other limited-occupancy residential products.

• Share growth projections with the school district and work with the school district to provide the best available head-count projections to the state of Florida to maximize state funding levels.

• Encourage the school district to build neighborhood schools near where people live.

• Create a forum for the school district to work with local and regional agencies and community groups to encourage partnerships for complementary uses for facilities and, where appropriate, sharing the costs. Examples might include colocation of parks, libraries, social service agencies, and early childhood education.

• Create a forum for the school district to work with local service agencies and community volunteers to make the school facilities available before and after core school hours to provide community services. Examples include early morning and after school care for younger children, teen and community centers, adult literacy and parenting programs, and English as a second language programs.

• Invest in infrastructure for new schools (water, sewer, stormwater management) to the extent those costs are not funded from other sources.
Unprecedented growth will bring major changes to Osceola County over the next ten to 20 years. Preparing for that growth and having the will to manage it effectively will be the difference between a county that is gracious and livable, with open space that reflects generations of tradition and environmental systems that are healthy and sustainable, and one that is overrun with sprawl and identical to a thousand other suburbs that have deteriorating environments and are choked with congestion.

Being prepared for this coming surge of growth means Osceola County must be an active participant in organizations and institutions that work to shape the future of the Orlando metropolitan region. The county must assert its interests as it becomes a more and more important contributor and participant on the regional scene and a growing part of Metro Orlando’s global competitiveness. It is time to focus on quality of life and build the community of the future. The county can now begin to create the place that people will wish to live in.

As it grows, Osceola County must know that its future can be desirable and prosperous. Having a well-articulated vision and the public policy discipline to implement it over the long term can make that happen. Minor setbacks and economic downturns must not derail the plan. Be disciplined, and stick to the vision.
About the Panel

Roger L. Galatas

Panel Chair
The Woodlands, Texas

Roger L. Galatas is president and chief executive officer (CEO) of Roger Galatas Interests, LLC, and provides advisory and development services to owners, investors, and executive management of real estate ventures, with a focus on master-planned communities.

Previously, Galatas served as president and CEO of The Woodlands Operating Company, L.P., and directed all the company’s real estate activities related to the internationally recognized 27,000-acre new community of The Woodlands, located just north of Houston, Texas. For the past 25 years, Galatas has been actively involved in the development of major communities in the Houston region and in resort development on Galveston Island and at Aspen and Steamboat Springs, Colorado. His experience involves the development, marketing, and sale of projects valued at more than $2.5 billion.

In addition to his real estate involvement, Galatas is actively engaged in a number of professional, community, and civic activities. He was a founding director of The Woodlands Hospital; a board member of the Memorial Hermann Hospital System; a founding director of the John Cooper School; and president of the Conroe Independent School District, where an elementary school was named in his honor. Galatas served as a trustee and officer of the Urban Land Institute. He is on the Real Estate Advisory Committee of the Trust for Public Land and board member of the Center for Houston’s Future.

Recently, Galatas, joined by Jim Barlow, the longtime journalist and business columnist with The Chronicle, wrote a book titled The Woodlands, The Inside Story of Creating a Better Hometown.

Andrew Borsanyi

San Francisco, California

Andrew Borsanyi is a principal and director of the San Francisco office of The Concord Group. Borsanyi is responsible for building client relationships, directing projects, participating in firm leadership, and managing the San Francisco office. Specifically, he focuses on the firm’s Northern California and Pacific Northwest business, on expanding the firm’s application for finance-driven analytical tools, and on developing and implementing The Concord Group’s next-generation business model.

Previously, Borsanyi was president and founder of the Trestle Corporation, a publicly traded imaging company. He led Trestle from startup to industry leadership and more than $7 million in annual revenues from more than 100 clients in seven countries. Borsanyi also oversaw the sale of Trestle to a strategic buyer and raised more than $5 million in equity capital. Prior to joining Trestle, he worked in investment banking with Morgan Stanley and Robertson Stephens and in management consulting at McKinsey and Company.

Borsanyi has been involved in the real estate industry since 1987. He has completed successful marketing and financial studies for residential, office, and industrial clients for both The Concord Group and other leading firms. In addition, Borsanyi assisted in the founding of The Concord Group in 1995, helping create the firm’s initial business plan, marketing strategy, and financial infrastructure.

He holds an MBA from Harvard University and a BA from Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut.
David Godschalk
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

David Godschalk is a city and regional planner and a Fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners. His research and publications span three planning fields: (1) growth management and land use planning, (2) hazard mitigation and coastal management, and (3) dispute resolution and public participation. He is a consultant to state and local governments on growth management, coastal management, and hazard mitigation.

Godschalk is Stephen Baxter Professor Emeritus in the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill. He also is adjunct professor in the real estate curriculum at the Kenan-Flagler Business School at UNC, where he teaches an MBA course on site planning and design. He holds degrees from Dartmouth College, University of Florida, and University of North Carolina.


Godschalk has been vice president of a Tampa consulting firm; planning director of Gainesville, Florida; and a planning faculty member at Florida State University. He has served as an expert witness in planning and growth management cases and as an elected member of the Chapel Hill Town Council. He is a registered architect (inactive) in the state of Florida.

Pat Hawley
Brookfield, Wisconsin

Pat Hawley has 14 years of project management experience, specializing in traffic analysis, parking, roundabouts, and transportation planning. He has managed large, multidisciplinary project teams on complex projects. Hawley’s public relations skills have enabled him to successfully orchestrate consensus among elected officials, public groups, and key stakeholders on dozens of highly controversial projects. He presents annually at both local and national events, and he has taught many classes at Marquette University and through the University of Wisconsin system.

Ann Saegert
Dallas, Texas

During Ann Saegert’s 27 years with the firm of Haynes & Boone, LLP, she has represented investors, publicly traded real estate companies, lenders, funds, and corporate users in real estate transactions and other transactions involving real estate.

In addition, Saegert has made numerous presentations to industry and professional associations, international conferences, client groups, and the legal community, covering complex acquisition and disposition transactions, innovative financing concepts, and environmental matters.

In the course of her practice, she has been involved with structuring, documenting, and negotiating the following transactions: acquiring and leasing real estate assets totaling more than $300,000,000 for a publicly traded real estate company; representing lenders and corporate users in more than 25 synthetic lease transactions across the United States; financing of hotels in 42 states and Mexico; and sealed bid marketing and disposition of a major city center office development.
Gerard P. Tully
Salt Lake City, Utah

Gerard P. Tully is a registered landscape architect in the state of Utah and has been a professional land planning and development consultant for more than 25 years. Tully is currently a senior project manager for Psomas, a multidisciplinary consulting firm with offices throughout the western United States. Prior to joining Psomas, he was the executive vice president of the Proterra Companies, an award-winning Salt Lake City real estate consulting and development company, specializing in community development, urban infill, and redevelopment projects. Tully has also been the principal of his own design and planning firm, Tully Design Group, Inc.

He serves as the chair of the Utah District Council of the Urban Land Institute and is a member of the National Leadership Council of the Urban Land Institute in Washington, D.C. As program chair for the Utah District Council, he was responsible for organizing community outreach and Technical Assistance Panels for Ogden City, West Valley City, and Clearfield City. He has served on several Urban Land Institute Advisory Service Panels, including the preparation of a transit-oriented town center plan for the city of Greenwood Village, Colorado, and has worked with ULI and the Federal Transit Administration in their rewrite of the New Starts funding guidelines.

Tully has been a guest lecturer for ULI, the American Planning Association, Envision Utah, and the U.S. Agency for International Development and is an adjunct professor at the University of Utah College of Architecture and Planning. He has been actively involved in the Envision Utah process since its inception and has served on several steering committees involved in charting the future course of development in Utah. He is the past president of the Sugarhouse Park Authority, where he served an eight-year term.

Tully’s development projects have received several “Governor’s Quality Growth Awards” in recent years from Envision Utah as well as an urban design award from the Utah Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Douglas M. Wrenn
Germantown, Maryland

Douglas M. Wrenn is a principal with Rodgers Consulting, Inc., where he directs the firm’s work on a broad range of urban planning and site development projects. Prior to joining Rodgers Consulting, Wrenn was the director of redevelopment programs for Montgomery County, Maryland. He was responsible for the management of all aspects of the county government’s participation in a $400 million public/private partnership to revitalize downtown Silver Spring and the county’s Redevelopment Office in Wheaton, Maryland.

Wrenn has many years of consulting experience as a land planner and urban development specialist. He has directed multidisciplinary teams on large-scale community planning and urban redevelopment projects, for both public and private real estate interests. He established a national reputation for his work in urban waterfronts, initially as author of the Urban Land Institute’s first book on the subject, and later as a planning consultant on numerous projects.

Wrenn holds a BS in environmental management and a master’s degree in landscape architecture, both from North Carolina State University.