

Lake Wales Envisioned Adopted by City Commission

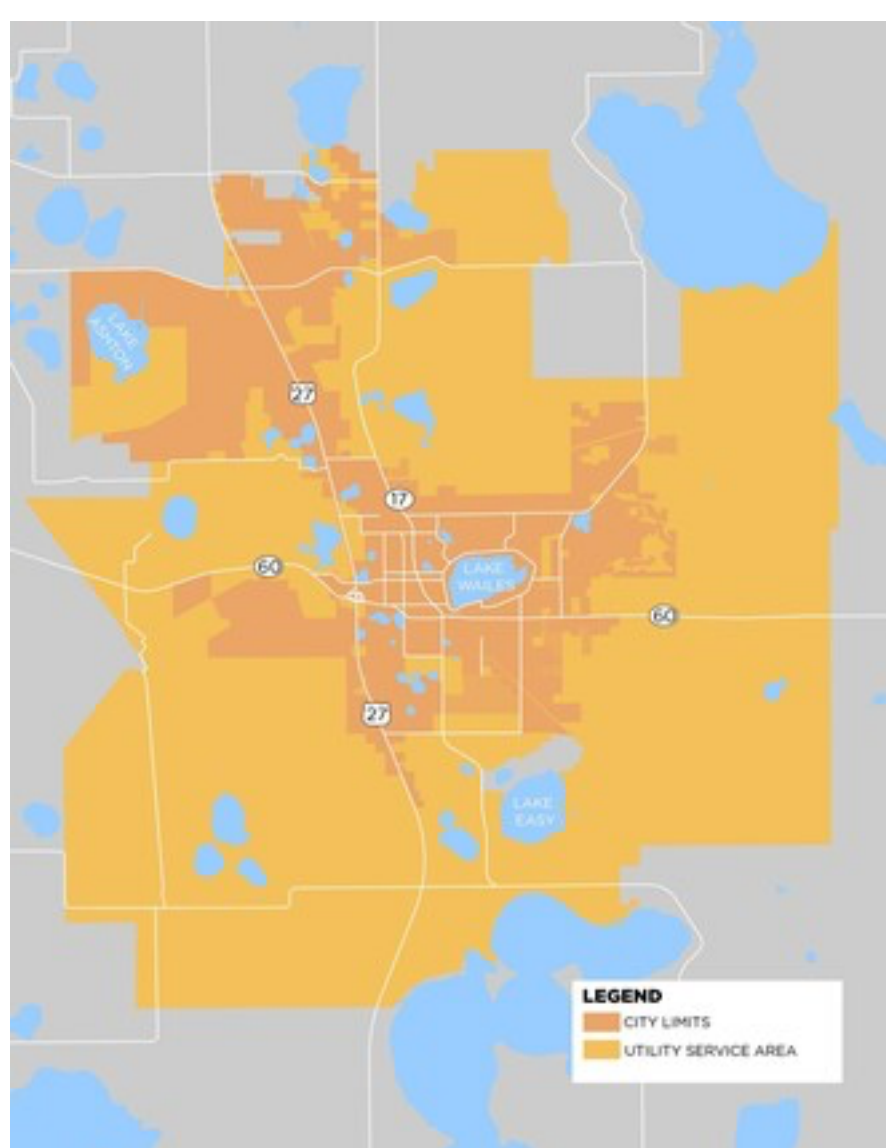
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Lucy Lawliss, Paul Owens Among Speakers Endorsing Plan as Nationally Significant

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Courtesy City of Lake Wales

The Lake Wales Envisioned plan is intended to be a road map for future development within an expansive area designated as the city's "Utility Service Area." Unincorporated lands within that zone may eventually be permitted to apply for annexation.

In a major step toward addressing the challenge presented by an enormous wave of growth, the [Lake Wales](#) city commission voted to adopt a resolution in support of the [Lake Wales Envisioned](#) plan.

Facing development proposals that would readily triple the population of the city, the board had agreed to fund the planning study in January, leading to months of effort by planners, residents, and city staff.

The project included numerous public meetings, open workshops, webinars, and charrettes that gathered and compiled opinions and ideas from residents. Information on best practices came from experts in transportation, architecture, neighborhood designs, and environment.

Leading a long line of speakers in support of adoption was Lucy Lawliss, the former superintendent of the US National Park Service. Lawliss represented the [Olmsted Network](#), a national organization advocating the protection of the works of Frederick Law [Olmsted](#).

"Lake Wales has the opportunity to lead," Lawliss said. "By adopting [Lake Wales Envisioned](#) the city can revive [Olmsted's](#) principals of beauty, nature and design first offered here in the 1920's by [Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.](#)

The younger member of the [Olmsted](#) father-and-son team was responsible for the first zoning codes and streetscapes of the city, as well as the gardens at Bok Tower.

"For too long cities have accepted cookie-cutter neighborhoods that emphasize cars over people," Lawliss told commissioners, adding that designs that separate people from greenways, parks, and neighbors are a "detriment" to mental and physical health.

"Too many cities and towns have settled for residential development that lacks sidewalks, lighting and tree canopy, and (offer) homes without front porches," Lawliss added.

The [Envisioned](#) plan was crafted by a team led by Dover, Kohl & Partners. A [website](#), colorful booklet, and a [30-minute video](#) were created to explain the plan that resident Tammy James called "a piece of artwork" that includes paths to address each of the challenges faced by the city.

"It will provide economic development," James said, and was an alternative to allowing developer to "set the tone" of future development here.

Paul Owens, president of [1000 Friends of Florida](#), called the plan "a visionary plan that reflects the wisdom and the will of this community." He emphasized the economic opportunity represented saying "top employers and top talent want to locate and...put down roots in communities that protect the environment and quality of life."

Resident Brandon Alvarado told commissioners that the city was "at a crossroads" and that the enforcement of the plan was essential.

Tricia Martin read a statement on behalf of [Bok Tower Gardens](#) president David Price, who called for adoption of the plan. "It means growth..." which will allow the city to become "better and more beautiful" in keeping with Edward Bok's vision.

"We want better things, more beautiful buildings, streets, and squares, so that our children will not be brought up to consider beauty as an exceptional thing, but as an accustomed feature of their daily environment," Price wrote.

Annalisa Jahna told commissioners that the plan showed her "there's some hope" that what the area offers won't be lost before her children are grown.

Mayor Jack [Hilligoss](#) took time to thank Victor Dover and his partners for the hard work and told fellow commissioners that "I think it's a good plan." The unanimous vote to adopt, modified to add the phrase "as amended from time to time," brought sustained applause from the audience.



Robert Connors

[Lake Wales](#) citizens invested thousands of hours of their time and hundreds of ideas in the development of the [Lake Wales Envisioned](#) plan that Paul Owen of 1000 Friends of Florida called a reflection of the wisdom of the community.