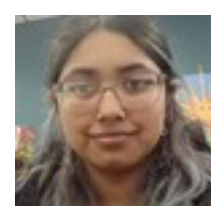


Lake Wales Opportunities Highlighted in Documentary Film Premier

By [Rachel Negrete](#)
News Staff Writer



Showing Drew Large Crowd Thursday Night

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Courtesy Dover, Kohl & Partners

A rapt audience watched as their community was offered a set of choices in the documentary film "Lake Wales Envisioned," which encapsulated much of the eight-month process to address the many challenges of impending rapid growth.

known as [Lake Wales Envisioned](#), an effort to guide the city through a future fraught with both opportunities and perils.

The screening at the [Lake Wales Woman's Club](#) auditorium was organized in rapid-fire fashion after the completion of the film less than 24 hours before the showing. It encapsulates the eight-month-long process of gathering community input and applying state-of-the-art planning tools to help city leaders address the impending development of some 15,000 new residential units.

[The entire 30-minute documentary is viewable by clicking here.](#)

Public Comment Welcomed

City commissioners will be offered a showing of the film at their workshop meeting on Thursday, October 12, beginning at 2:00. The public is welcome but cannot speak at that gathering.

An opportunity to offer comment will come at the commission's regular meeting on Tuesday, October 17 beginning at 6:00. Those wishing to address the commission must complete a speaker's form prior to the start of the meeting.

Growth Creates Fear, Offers Opportunity

Booming growth has followed in the rapid decline of the citrus industry due to [Citrus Greening](#), leaving many area families dependent upon the industry with few options beyond selling their former agriculture lands. An onslaught of development proposals has followed, creating a city that has been growing and changing over the years.

[Lake Wales](#) has a reputation as a city that draws people due to its beautiful scenery and sense of community identity, and many residents fear that the coming changes will negatively affect the town.

The film highlighted the several quality-of-life factors addressed by the [Envisioned](#) process, including solutions to traffic problems, [benefits for community health](#), and the protection of the open space and environmental quality that makes the community attractive. Proposed solutions include a "big green network" of parks and natural lands connected by a network of trails that will allow for active lifestyles, and "complete streets" that include sidewalks, bicycle tracks, and lots of trees and greenery.

"Traditional neighborhood design" is proposed that de-emphasizes cars and allows architecture to dominate neighborhoods, with front porches and rear garages allowing use of streets for interaction between residents.

Among the efforts included in the project is the identification of new job centers that would offer career opportunities for young people, allowing them to remain here rather than leave the area for work. Manufacturing, tech, and remote work were among the solutions considered in the plan.

A wealth of plan documents and details are viewable at [LakeWalesEnvisioned.com](#).

How Bad/Good Can it Get?

In prior presentations by project leader Victor Dover of Dover, Kohl & Partners, the question of "how bad can it get?" was often juxtaposed with "how good can it get?" Many in the audience seemed to have hope for the potential positive effects.

The [Envisioned](#) process has included a series of events intended to gather input from citizens. Open-studio workshops, charrettes, and hand-on designing sessions allowed residents to offer their own suggestions, and vote on those that they preferred. The enthusiastic response of the audience during a question-and-answer session at the end made it clear that many [Lake Wales](#) citizens are excited for what could possibly be a greener and brighter future.

The film was introduced by Robert Connors, president of [Lake Wales Heritage](#), an [Olmsted Conservancy](#), and David Price, president of [Bok Tower Gardens](#). Both organizations were among the dozen sponsors and boosters of the project. Other organizations involved included 1000 Friends of Florida, the [Lake Wales Area Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development](#), [Lake Wales Main Street](#), [Lake Wales Arts Center](#), the University of Miami, Rollins College, and the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation.



Courtesy Dover, Kohl & Partners

[Lake Wales News.net](#) has offered editorial support for city commission efforts to design the community's future from within, rather than allowing it to be defined by others.

Author Bio

Rachel Negrete, News Correspondent

Rachel Negrete is a Lake Wales High School Junior who has strong writing skills and hopes to create a career as a writer and author. Working for Lake Wales News.net is helping her develop skills and reach her goals.