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An Access Management Strategy for the Us 98 Highway Corridor

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AN ACCESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE US 98 HIGHWAY CORRIDOR

This research was supported by
the Florida Department of Transportation.

The recommendations contained herein are not necessarily the policies of the
Florida Department of Transportation.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1995, the Pensacola, Fort Walton Beach and Panama City Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) included access management planning tasks in their Unified Planning Work Programs (UPWPs) for the US Highway 98 Intrastate Segments due to concerns over rising traffic congestion and growing development pressures along the US 98 highway corridor. The purpose of the study is to develop an access management plan for the segments of US 98 which are on the Florida Intrastate Highway System, and conduct a training workshop for local elected officials, planning officials, government staffs and the planning community on the techniques to manage access on arterial roads.

The Center for Urban Transportation Research, under a grant from the Florida Department of Transportation, was asked to assist with this effort through a review of planning and regulatory practices of four counties that share the US 98 Corridor: Bay, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Walton Counties.

The purpose of this research effort is to document current access management practices in each county, identify continuing issues and problems, and assist each local government in developing potential solutions. Current practices were assessed through interviews with local planning and engineering officials and a review of local comprehensive plans and land development codes in each county. This report documents the findings of this research effort.

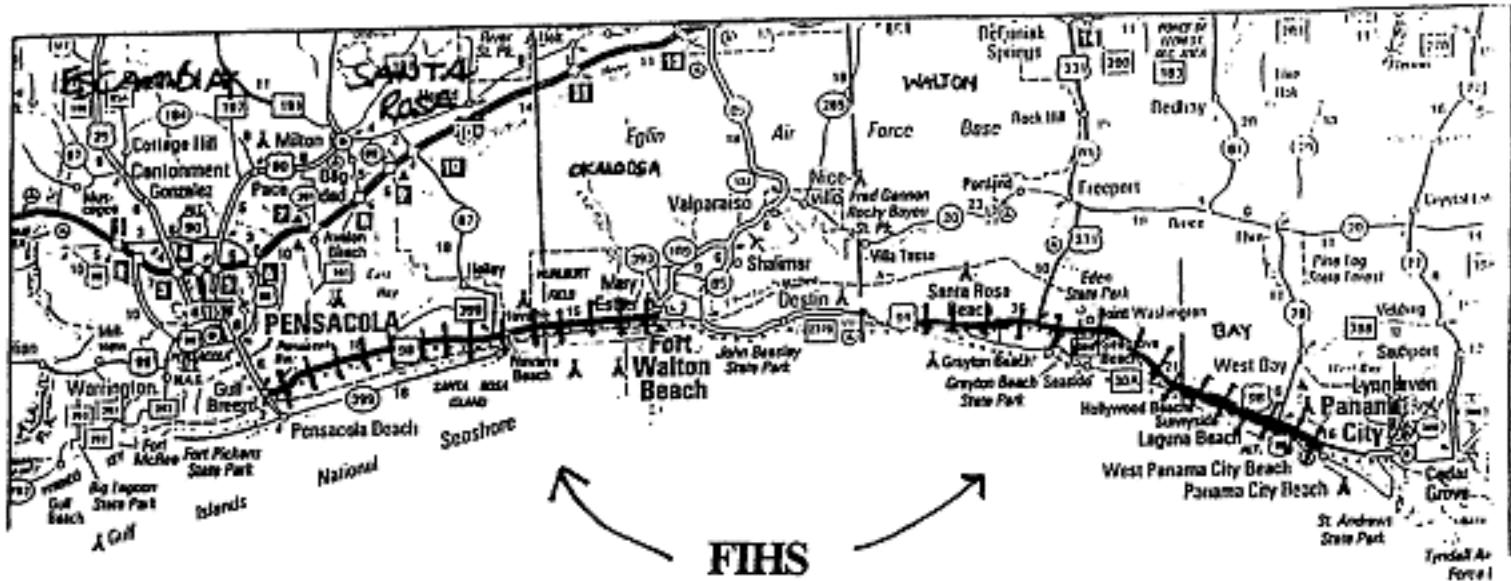
BACKGROUND

The Florida Intrastate Highway System

The US 98 Highway corridor is a part of the Florida Intrastate Highway System (FIHS)—the network of highways that are essential to the economy, hurricane preparedness, and overall transportation mobility of the State of Florida. The FIHS is defined as the statewide system of limited access and controlled access facilities that allow for high-speed and high-volume traffic movement within the state (§ 338.001 Florida Statutes). This system was designated by FDOT and adopted by the Florida legislature in 1991, in an effort to preserve regional and statewide transportation mobility.

The FIHS program involves development and improvement of a system of highways with strict access controls. All segments are planned to be brought into compliance with system criteria and standards within a 20-year period. Process, Criteria, and Standards for the FIHS Plan emphasize the need for the Florida Department of Transportation to coordinate with local governments on managing access to those portions of the FIHS, such as US 98, that are not limited access facilities. They call for FDOT to enter into formal agreements with local governments for coordinating land use planning and regulation with state access standards for controlled access facilities. In addition, controlled access facilities on the FIHS must be classified at an access classification of 2 or 3. Any segments assigned an access classification of 5 must eventually be upgraded to a Class 2 or 3.

Figure 1: FIHS US 98 Corridor Study Area



The above segments of US 98 are designated as part of the Florida Intrastate Highway System.

FDOT Access Management Program

In 1988, the Florida Legislature adopted the State Highway System Access Management Act, Chapter 335.18, F.S., in response to intensive development pressures and growing congestion on state highways. The state access management program is carried out through two administrative rules. Rule Chapter 14-96, State Highway System Connection Permits Administrative Process, which governs permitting and addresses application and permitting procedures, permit requirements, and permit modifications or conditions. Rule Chapter 14-97, State Highway System Access Management Classification System and Standards, governs access classification of highways and provides spacing standards for driveways, median openings, and signals (see Table 1).

The US 98 Corridor has been classified as a Class 3 or Class 5, depending upon the segment. Access Class 3 is defined as a controlled access facility where existing land use and roadway sections have not been built out to the maximum land use or roadway capacity or where the probability of significant land use change in the near future is high. Access Class 5 refers to those facilities where existing land use and roadway sections have been built out to a greater extent than those segments classified as Class 3 or 4 and where the probability of a major land use change is not as high as on a Class 3 or 4.

Table 1: FDOT Access Classification System & Standards

Access Class	Medians**	Connection Spacing (feet)		Median Opening Spacing		Signal Spacing
		>45 mph	≤45 mph	Directional	Full	
2†	Restrictive w/ Service Roads	1320	660	1320 -	2640	2640
3†	Restrictive	660	440	1320	2640	2640
4	Non-Restrictive	660	440			2640
5	Restrictive	440	245	660	2640/ 1320	2640/ 1320
6	Non-Restrictive	440	245			1320
7	Both Median Types	125		330	660	1320

* For roads with posted speed limits ≥ 45mph.

** A "Restrictive" median physically prevents vehicle crossing. A "Non-Restrictive" median allows turns across any point.

† Required classifications for all Florida Intrastate Highway System facilities.

All developments needing access to the State Highway System must obtain a permit in accordance with Rule 14-96. The Florida Department of Transportation may stipulate conditions or additional requirements that must be met by the applicant/property owner before an access permit is issued. Permit conditions may be recorded with the deed where cross access agreements or other applicable conditions apply.

1992 Amendments to the Access Management Statute

The 1988 Act enabled the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to deny access to the State Highway System if safety and operational concerns were evident and the property owner had reasonable access to another public road abutting the property. Local governments were authorized to adopt access management standards equal to or more stringent than those established by the FDOT.

In 1992, the legislature amended the Act thereby limiting some authority of FDOT. Some of the 1992 amendments included:

- ▶ FDOT must now demonstrate that a severe compromise to safety or operational concerns exists, prior to the denial of a connection along the State Highway System. However, this “test” is somewhat less for roads on the Intrastate.
- ▶ Local governments are no longer permitted to adopt access standards for State Highways in their jurisdiction more restrictive than those adopted by FDOT.
- ▶ FDOT’s ability to attach joint access requirements to access permits as a condition has been restricted.

Coordination Issues

The ability of FDOT to manage access along high priority corridors has been constrained by the proliferation of small lot frontages requiring individual access along major highways. In the absence of alternatives to direct highway access or site specific safety problems, FDOT often has no other option but to issue a driveway permit. Yet it is the cumulative effect of closely spaced driveways and poorly managed turning movements that accelerates congestion and traffic hazards and ultimately undermines the safety and capacity of the highway facility. Therefore, the effectiveness of the state access management program relies heavily on participation at the local level where land development decisions are made.

Local governments have also noted coordination problems related to District access permitting decisions. To better coordinate with local governments, FDOT does not issue a final permit until local development approval has been provided. Instead, a Notice of Intent to Permit is issued where all necessary requirements have been met or no other alternative exists. Nonetheless, some local officials note that developers perceive the Notice of Intent as if it were the final permit decision and this sometimes leads to coordination issues where it conflicts with local development decisions.

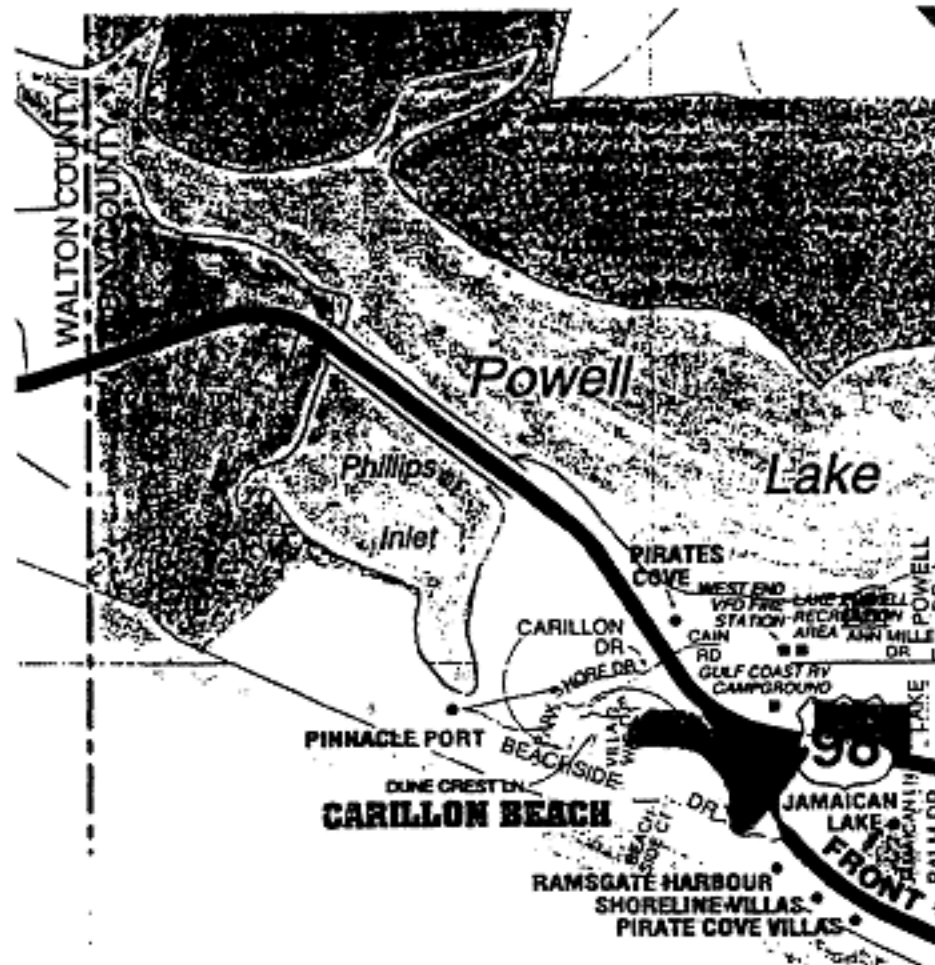
Concerns have also been expressed about the need to balance access management and capacity improvements with other important community objectives, such as preserving a canopy road or achieving economic development. It is essential that unique natural features be protected in the permitting process and that reasonable access be provided for land development. Clearly, these objectives can be balanced through the use of service roads, planned unit development (PUD) strategies, and adequate minimum lot frontages and setbacks.

State Planning Requirements Related to Access Management

Administrative rules of the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) require traffic circulation elements of local comprehensive plans to include policies for implementing access controls. DCA also includes access management and development clustering requirements (such as PUDs) as techniques that will be considered in determining compliance with new administrative rules for discouraging urban sprawl.

These requirements are reinforced through policies in the new *Florida Land Development Plan*, prepared by the Department of Community Affairs, pursuant to the 1993 changes in the state growth management legislation. The plan calls for identifying and controlling access points onto major transportation corridors and minimizing curb cuts and median openings through land use planning, regulation, and access permitting.

Figure 2: FIHS Designation in Bay County (US 98)



US 98 from the Walton County line to the intersection of Front and Back Beach roads is designated as part of the FIHS.
 Source: "MAPSource," St. Petersburg, Florida, 1994.

BAY COUNTY

STATUS OF PLANNING AND REGULATORY PROGRAM

Bay County adopted a Comprehensive Plan in May of 1990, and adopted a Land Development Code in December of 1990. In September 1995, the County amended its Land Use Code to include language supporting access management techniques. The County is currently developing a parcel-specific land use map to accurately assess existing and proposed future land uses. The Department of Community Affairs is encouraging the County to limit commercial strip zoning along the coastal areas and feels the County is over-allocated on commercial land use in relation to its projected population. However, the County experiences high seasonal demand for commercial uses, which are heavily concentrated along the coast and feels that the large influx of tourists and the seasonal population could sustain a higher level of commercial development.

ACCESS ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

Bay County is in a unique situation regarding land development. It is facing "urban" problems from extensive commercial development located along its major coastal arterials, yet it must deal with "rural" issues which exist throughout the rest of the largely undeveloped county. The County has made efforts to address the broad range of development issues by providing opportunities for flexible zoning and mixed use development.

Where US 98 branches off into ALT US 98, a corridor called Front Beach Road, the land is intensely developed with commercial uses. Front Beach Road is a clear example of the safety and capacity problems that arise due to inadequate access management. Access problems along Front Beach Road are becoming so burdensome that the possibility of heavier commercial rezoning along Back Beach Road is being considered.

The Comprehensive Plan provided that by 1990, the County and the City of Panama City would jointly seek FDOT designation of US 98 from the west approach at Hathaway Bridge to SR 368, and US 98 from Thomas Drive to the Hathaway Bridge as Backlogged and Constrained Facilities. Along the portion of US 98 east of Hathaway Bridge—specifically the intersection of SR368 and US 98—access has become such a problem, that despite a recent DOT road-widening project which turned the two-lane road into a four-lane road with a median, there is still heavy traffic congestion.

The County also included in its Comprehensive Plan that by 1995, no permits for development would be issued along US 98 from the Walton County line to the intersection of Front Beach and Back Beach Roads—that portion of the US 98 Corridor designated as part of the FIHS— if a development would exceed the maximum allowable traffic volumes for that segment.

The County is reviewing its subdivision practices to address the issue of commercial frontages along US 98. Along US 98 west of Hathaway Bridge to the City of Panama City Beach city limits, there are only approximately three miles of commercial frontage and relatively few commercial establishments along this stretch of the highway. Additionally, approximately 77% of the land in Bay County is owned by either the military or large paper companies. This serves to restrict the location of commercial development to the coast, but has also protected portions of the US 98 corridor from further subdivision and commercial development.

From the Walton County line to the intersections of Front and Back Beach Roads, the US 98 Corridor is designated as part of the FIHS (see Figure 2). Much of the land along this segment is zoned for silvaculture, residential, and neighborhood commercial land. Some of the residential land uses within this segment have a density of up to fifteen dwelling units per acre; a silvaculture designation allows one dwelling unit per 20 acres.

CURRENT ACCESS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Access Management Policies

Bay County includes several policy statements in its comprehensive plan which support access management, as described in the Land Use, Traffic Circulation, and Intergovernmental Coordination elements. The objectives and policies established in the plan relate to the development of a local road network, establishment of on-site circulation provisions for commercial developments, and coordination of land use practices and regulations among different governmental agencies.

Policy 1.3.1 - For principal arterials, Bay County will develop and adopt highway frontage property access standards equal to or greater than the Department of Transportation State Highway System Arterial Access Management Rule.

[Note: as of the 1992 amendments to the State Access Management legislation, local governments are prohibited from establishing standards greater than those established by Florida Department of Transportation.]

Policy 1.3.2 - Principal arterial frontage zoning will provide for parallel service roads designed to provide local property access and local circulation among properties.

[Note: instituting frontage roads typically results in operational problems at major intersections.]

Policy 1.3.3 (Land Use Element) - Principal arterial frontage zoning will provide for right turns at individual private driveways connecting with the arterial and will provide for left turns at intersections with designated public cross streets.

[Status: No such standards have been adopted to date.]

Policy 1.3.3 (Traffic Circulation Element) - In 1991, Bay County will adopt an Arterial Access Management Plan, considering various stages of land development on each roadway, to limit the number of curb cuts on arterial roadways in the County. At a minimum, access management will be implemented on SR30 (US 98) Back Beach Road, SR77 and SR75 to protect the arterial function of these roadways.

[Status: adopted Access Management requirements for Back Beach Road, SR 77, and SR 75 in the Land Development Code, § 7.01.06]

Policy 1.9.4 - Land development regulations shall provide for safe and convenient on-site traffic flow and provide for adequate parking based upon the professional accepted standards such as those of the Institute of Transportation Engineers. This shall include the provision of adequate loading and unloading areas. Consolidated access to roadways shall be encouraged through shared driveways.

[Status: adopted in Land Development Code, § 7.01.06, D 1-2, "any non-residential use or other development requiring site plan review... shall be encouraged to be designed to provide for mutually coordinated or joint parking, access, and circulation with adjacent properties."]

Policy 1.6.2 - Regulations shall be adopted in 1990 that require developers to include interconnections between adjacent neighborhoods and commercial centers to minimize travel on and along major collector and arterial streets.

[Status: adopted in the Land Development Regulations, §7.01.0 3(3-4), "The street layout in all new development shall be coordinated with and interconnected to the street system of the surrounding area." and "Streets in proposed subdivisions shall be connected to rights-of-way in adjacent areas to allow for proper inter-neighborhood traffic flow. If adjacent lands are unplatted, stub outs in the new development shall be provided for future connection to the adjacent unplatted land."]

Policy 1.4.4 - The county shall support the creation of planned unit developments (PUDs).

Policy 1.10.1 - Land development regulations shall provide for PUDs to encourage innovative site design and provide for mixed land use.

[Status: No standards have been adopted to provide for PUD or other mixed land use in the Land Development Code to date.]

Policy 1.2.3 - Provide for joint planning through interlocal agreements with other adjacent local governments.

[Status: Bay County has not developed interlocal agreements on transportation issues; however, the County enters into coordinated agreements with adjacent local governments on projects which are expected to have a regional impact.]

Policy 1.6.1 - Contained in the commercial district land development regulations shall be a requirement for developers to construct a 5-foot wide sidewalk along frontage on collector and arterial roadways.

[Status: adopted in the Land Development Code, §7.01.08 A and B: Sidewalks and Bikeways, "Any developments that are adjacent to or within 1,000 feet of an activity center comprised of commercial, office, service, school, or recreation activities shall provide pedestrian and bicycle access in the form of a sidewalk along the roadway frontage of the property," and "Pedestrian-ways or crosswalks, not less than ten (10) feet wide, may be required... to be placed across the roadway...to provide circulation or access to schools, playgrounds, shopping centers, transportation and other community facilities."]

Zoning

The Bay County Land Development Code contains no minimum lot frontage requirement. The County has established land use districts, but applies no specific dimensional requirements for lots, apart from density requirements and FDOT driveway spacing standards if the property abuts the State Highway System.

Land Division and Subdivision Regulations

Property owners wishing to subdivide their property must submit to a development plan review process established by the County and detailed in the regulations. Local regulations define *subdivision* as, "The platting of real property into three or more lots, parcels, tracts, tiers, blocks, sites, units, or any other division of land." The 1995 amendment to the Subdivision Standards in the Land Use Code includes a series of exemptions to the review process. "The division of land into lots that are three (3) acres or larger in size provided each lot created has a minimum of fifty (50) feet frontage on an existing street or road," is not considered a subdivision. This exemption can create additional access problems for the County as lots are divided into long, narrow parcels with small frontages.

Subdivision review criteria do not specifically address access; however, it is the County's current practice to review the characteristics of the site for access and to make recommendations for transportation improvements. The recent amendment to the Subdivision Standards stipulates that, "in no case shall access be provided through a residential lot in an existing recorded subdivision. Street stub-outs may be constructed to provide access to future phases of the same subdivision or to provide access for future roads." New subdivisions are also required to provide stub outs for future connections to adjacent unplatted lands. Further, the amendment requires that driveways within a subdivision may acquire access only from local and minor collector streets; no driveway will be allowed a connection to any major collector or arterial road.

Minor Subdivisions. For minor subdivisions, the County adheres to the guidelines established in the Florida Model Land Development Code. Specifically, all lots are required to abut a public or private street with appropriate lot dimensions as specified in zoning requirements for that land use district; however, for any lot which abuts a street right-of-way but does not conform to public design specifications, the owner may be required to dedicate one-half the required right-of-way width necessary to meet the minimum design standards. Additionally, Bay County prohibits further division of an approved minor replat without a development plan.

Access Controls

Road Classification System. Bay County includes provisions in the Land Development Code for the classification of the County road system into a functional hierarchy. Local streets, collectors, arterial roads, and freeways are classified according to function and posted legal speeds.

Driveway Spacing. The County provides driveway spacing standards for improving access along arterials and reducing hazards associated with entry to and exit from the roadway. According to its general standards for spacing of access points, the County will permit one access point for each site from each of one or two abutting streets. If circumstances warrant, an

additional one or two access points may be permitted, depending upon the length of lot frontage.

The distance between access points on US 98 and other state-maintained roads must adhere to the standards established by the Florida Department of Transportation which Bay County has adopted by reference. For all non-state-maintained roads, the distance between access points is determined as follows:

Table 2: Access Spacing

FUNCTIONAL CLASS OF ROADWAY	DISTANCE BETWEEN ACCESS POINTS
Major Arterial	300 Feet
Minor Arterial	245 Feet
Major Collector	185 Feet
Minor Collector	140 Feet

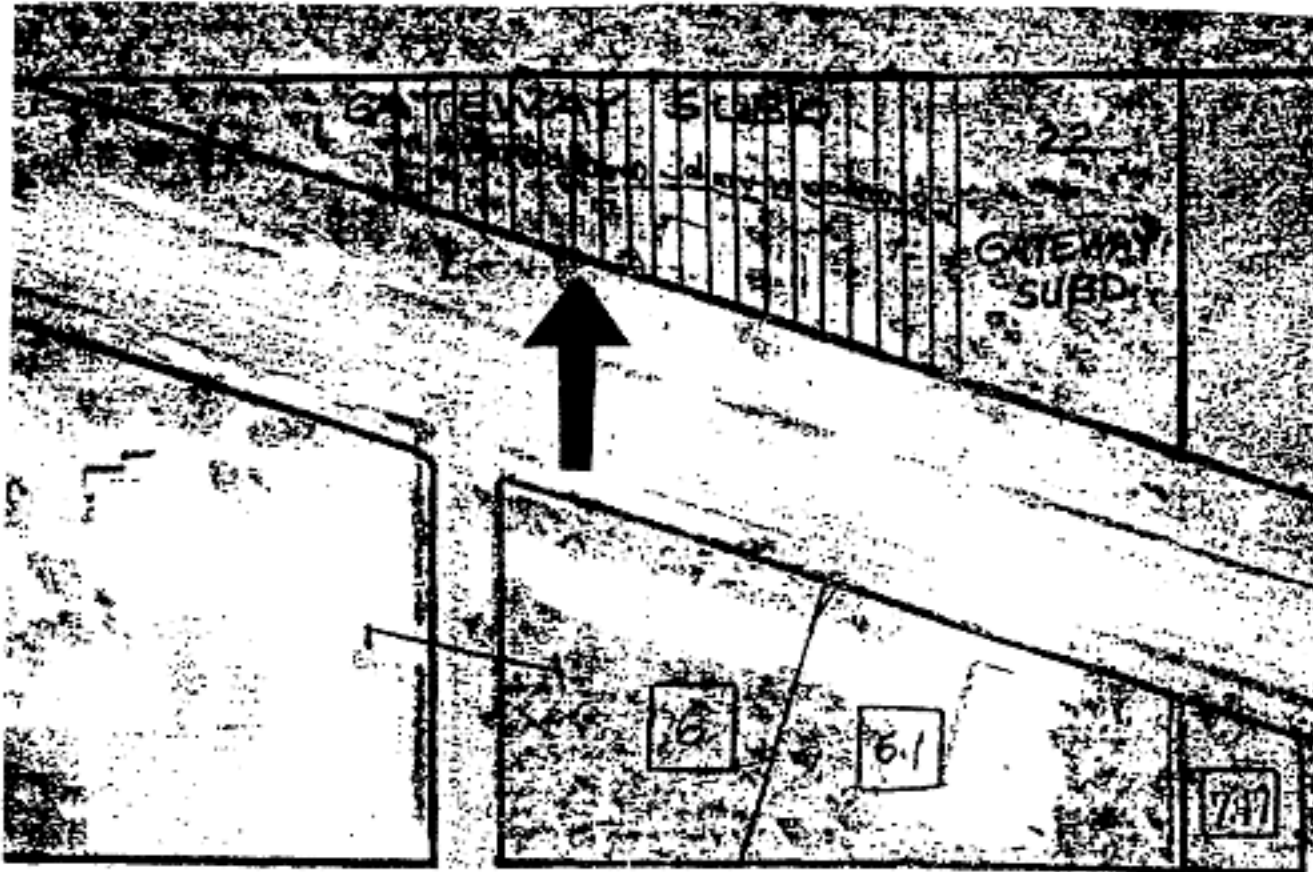
Source: Bay County Land Development Regulations, 1990.

Joint Access. Bay County has established joint access provisions for high priority corridors, including US 98. All developments requiring site-plan review are encouraged to provide joint parking, access, and circulation with adjacent properties. If properties agree to provide these coordinated access-ways, they shall be designed to accommodate two-way aisles and other features to demonstrate to patrons that joint access to the properties is available. According to staff, few property owners have pursued joint access. One reason is that many of the existing commercial frontages along Front Beach Road and US 98 are shallow and have only 50' of frontage with little room available for on-site parking. These dimensional constraints have precluded joint access along some portions of the corridor, but shared driveways remain a viable alternative for constrained lots.

County staff are receptive to strengthening their access management policies or procedures to alleviate congestion, and have considered requiring service roads or shared driveways along the US 98 corridor. The County has also supported FDOT decisions to reject driveway permits along these roadways in the past, due to access problems.

Private Roads. The Bay County Land Development Code, § 7.01.03 (8) Street Design Standards, states that, "Private streets may be allowed within developments that will remain under common ownership, provided that they are designed and constructed pursuant to the County's minimum standards." When a private driveway is needed to provide access from a County-owned roadway to residential properties, the responsibility to cover construction costs rests with the property owner(s).

Figure 3



These "bowling alley" lots with small lot frontages increase demand for individual highway access, and lead to closely spaced residential driveways that conflict with high speed travel on the highway. Problems such as this can be prevented through increased minimum lot frontage requirements, lot width-to-depth ratios, and requiring small subdivisions to be designed with shared access to and from the highway.

SUMMARY

Bay County has adopted the following land development regulations which support access management:

- ▶ a review process for minor subdivision activity;
- ▶ requirements for developers to provide stub outs for future connections to adjacent unplatted lands;
- ▶ provisions for joint access and shared parking;
- ▶ stipulations for driveway spacing

No regulations were identified that address:

- ▶ minimum lot frontage requirements and increased setbacks for developments along US 98;
- ▶ lot width-to-depth ratios;
- ▶ driveway design standards
- ▶ reverse frontage requirements for proposed subdivisions;
- ▶ outparcel requirements;
- ▶ standards to ensure adequate corner clearance;
- ▶ driveway throat length requirements; and
- ▶ restrictions on creation of flag lots

These regulations are more fully addressed in the recommendations found in the Conclusion of this report.

OKALOOSA COUNTY

STATUS OF PLANNING AND REGULATORY PROGRAM

The Okaloosa County Comprehensive Plan, completed in 1990, was amended and readopted by the Board of County Commissioners in December, 1992. The County's Plan does not currently comply with all of the established standards of the Department of Community Affairs, and a resubmission of the plan is expected to be complete later in 1995. The County's Land Development Code, developed in December 1992, was last amended in November 1994.

ACCESS ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

Along the US 98 Corridor, the County is experiencing problems with the creation of lots with small frontages. Regulations currently require only fifty feet (50') of frontage to remain on a county road during a minor land division. Inadequate minimum lot frontages along state highways have also constrained the ability of FDOT and the County to manage access along the US 98 Corridor (*see also Minimum Lot Frontages, in this chapter*).

Okaloosa County also noted issues in coordinating access permitting with FDOT. The current procedure to receive an access permit under Rule 14-96, requires the applicant to first send an application (and fee) to the District Permits Office. The District conducts a review and notifies the applicant of additional information needed or omissions or errors in the application.

During review of this application, the FDOT District sends a copy to the local government for concurrent review. Specific problems noted by the County were that:

- the permit applications identify the parcel by road marker, making it difficult for local officials to locate, and often do not include enough information for adequate review.
- the District does not always contact the local government prior to issuing a Notice of Intent to Permit, and occasionally these involve projects that have not received local development approval. Though this is not required by Rule, this coordination is desirable.

Suggestions for increased coordination include more complete permit applications and the need for the District to communicate with local staff on the proposed project prior to issuing a Notice of Intent to Permit access. In addition, the County indicated a desire to coordinate with the District on subdivision review to assure that proposed plats have adequate access in relation to state access management requirements. This will allow the District to address access issues early in the plat review process, thereby providing a greater opportunity for avoiding access problems.

CURRENT ACCESS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Access Management Policies

Okaloosa County includes several policies in its Comprehensive Plan which support access management practices. These are found in the future land use element; the transportation element; and the intergovernmental coordination element.

Policy 8.A.4.2 - Okaloosa County will limit new access points to arterial and collector roads by required distances for driveways and median cuts, in the Land Development Code.

[Status: adopted in Land Development Regulations, §6.03.09, Limited Access Roads: along portions of US 98 and other roadways designated as limited access roads, the County requires that, "access points shall be located no closer than 500' apart, measured from center line to center line of the driveway, unless a driveway connection permit has been approved by the FDOT; (and) median cuts shall be located no closer than 500' apart measured from center line to center line of the roadway."]

[Commentary: The state standards require connection spacing of 660 feet for class 3 arterials where the speed limit is greater than 45 mph, and 440 feet for class 3 arterials where the speed limit is under 45 mph. The state standards for median opening spacing require 1,320 feet for directional median, and 2,640 for a full median opening on a class 3 arterial.]

Policy 8.A.4.3 - When reasonable, a system of service roads will be required to be installed by developers for new development along arterial roads within the County. Reasonable is defined as any time a development project is approved and the needs of the development would require installation of access ways at distances less than 500 feet apart.

Policy 7.A.7.5 - Strip commercial development will be discouraged except at the intersections of arterial and collector roadways.

Policy 7.A.9.1 - Okaloosa County will encourage the use of innovative land development regulations including, but not limited to, planned unit developments, mixed use zoning, and business-tourism zoning to provide combinations of recreation, residential, and business for the tourist industry.

[Status: adopted in Land Development Regulations, §3.00.00 establishes special overlay or floating zones used to impose special development restrictions on identified areas; §3.01.00, Planned Unit Developments, are

defined and described as, "Detached single-family dwellings, townhouses, patio homes, atrium houses, multi-family dwellings, rental apartments, motels, hotels, projects of area wide impact, and condominiums."]

Policy 8.A.2.3. - All developments, including, but not limited to, planned unit developments, shopping centers, multi-family residential projects and other projects with internal circulation and parking needs shall be required to provide safe and convenient on-site traffic flow, transportation facilities and sufficient vehicular parking to accommodate the needs of the development.

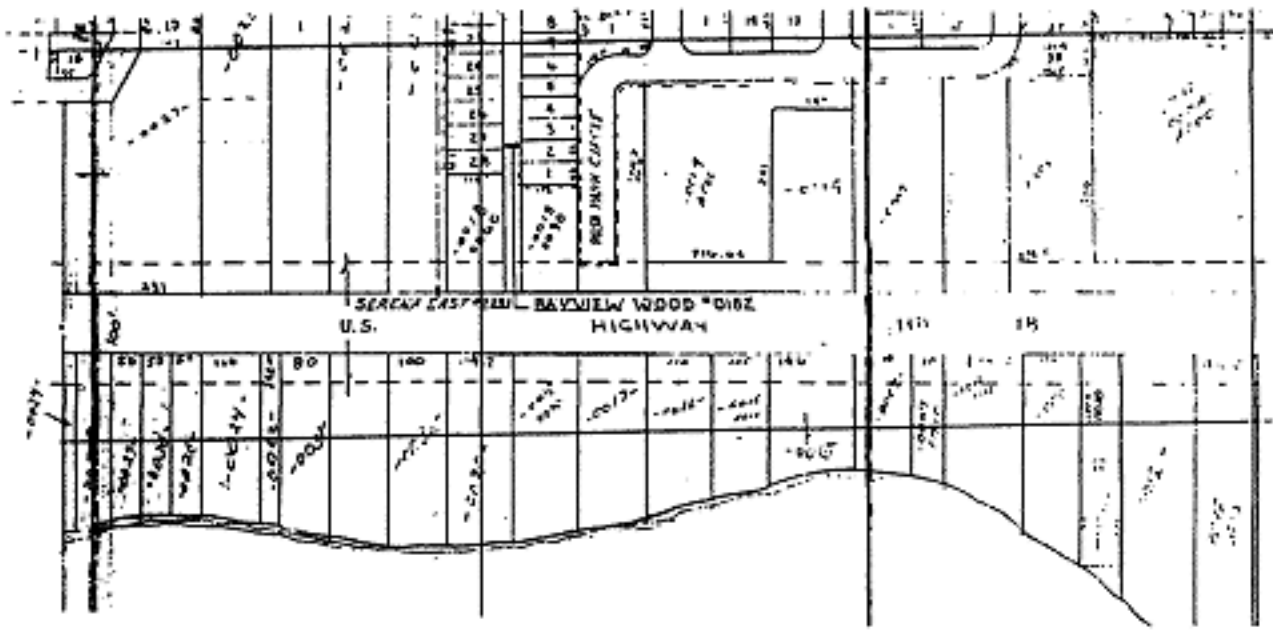
Policy 7.A.3.3 - Residential development shall be designed to include an adequate internal circulation system with peripheral lots buffered from major roads and adjacent land uses.

[Status: adopted in Land Development Regulations, §6.05.02.G, Buffer Standards: Landscaped buffer strips are required for all new development or redevelopment which creates a land use conflict, but the regulations do not require buffers based on a development's location along a major road.]

Zoning

Minimum Lot Frontage. The County's single-family residential districts require a minimum lot width which varies from 70 feet to 125 feet, depending on the number of dwelling units per acre. The County does not require a minimum lot width for its Planned Unit Development, Business Retail, Business General, Business Tourism, or Industrial districts (see Figure 4); however, the County has recently amended its Code to increase the minimum lot frontage requirements to 210 feet along US 98.

Figure 4



Inadequate minimum lot frontage requirements in Okaloosa County have allowed for the creation of lots with small lot frontages along US 98. The County has recently revised its standards to require a minimum lot frontage of 210 feet along US 98.

Land Division and Subdivision Regulations

Okaloosa County requires all subdivisions (defined as platting into three or more lots) PUDs, and other projects to conform to the procedures for platting and site plan review.

Minor Subdivisions. A streamlined review process is provided for minor land divisions under the following circumstances: 1) a parcel is being divided into two separate lots or parcels; 2) two lots or parcels are being *resubdivided*; and 3) where two or more lots or parcels of land are being combined into one lot or parcel. All lots must conform to the Schedule of Dimensional Requirements, except where combining lots would require vacating of easements, streets, or alleys. All lots are also required to abut a public or private street. A developer requesting a lot split or minor replat must submit, in addition to an application and related fees, a land description and square footage of the original and proposed site and a drawing done to-scale which depicts the intended division and any existing structures, as well as all easements for utilities and ingress/egress.

[Commentary: Allowances for resubdividing property outside of the platting process provide property owners an opportunity to circumvent local platting requirements by staggering lot splits over time.]

Access Controls

Connection Spacing. Okaloosa County has designated certain highways as “limited access roads”¹, including US 98 from its intersection with Old US 98 east to the Walton County line. On these “limited access” roadways, certain provisions govern ingress and egress, including:

- ▶ driveway spacing standards of 500 feet;
- ▶ median openings no closer than 500 feet;
- ▶ adherence to FDOT’s Standard Index for deceleration, acceleration, and stacking lane construction;
- ▶ no backing maneuvers into the right-of-way;
- ▶ no access will be permitted for individual private residential drives; and
- ▶ residential developments contiguous to “limited access” roads must gain access from collector streets 500 feet apart.

This policy also provides that it does not aim to deny *reasonable* access to existing lots, parcels, or tracts of land for which the sole means of access is the named limited access road. The spacing standard is 500' between access points along its limited access roads, unless a driveway connection permit has been approved by the Florida Department of Transportation; in such a case, the FDOT accepted standards will apply.

[Commentary: This spacing standard is inconsistent with the standards established by the FDOT for principal arterials. In some cases this would be more restrictive and therefore precluded along state highways under the 1992 amendments to the State Highway Access Management Act. In other cases it would be less restrictive, resulting in coordination problems. The County is currently amending its Limited Access Roads requirements to comply with the standards established by the Florida DOT.]

Private Roads. Private roads, constructed as the primary means of access to individually owned lots in subdivisions, are prohibited in Okaloosa County, unless a maintenance/repair agreement is established. The County requires lots or parcels which front on any private street to include particular language in the deed or conveyance of title, stipulating that access to the property is by private roads not maintained by the County. The provisions in the deed also indicate that private roads will not be maintained by the County, but by the homeowners association, unless the roads meet County standards and are officially accepted into the county maintenance system.

¹ This should not be confused with the FDOT definition of “limited access,” which means freeway or expressway.

SUMMARY

Okaloosa County has adopted the following land development regulations which promote access management:

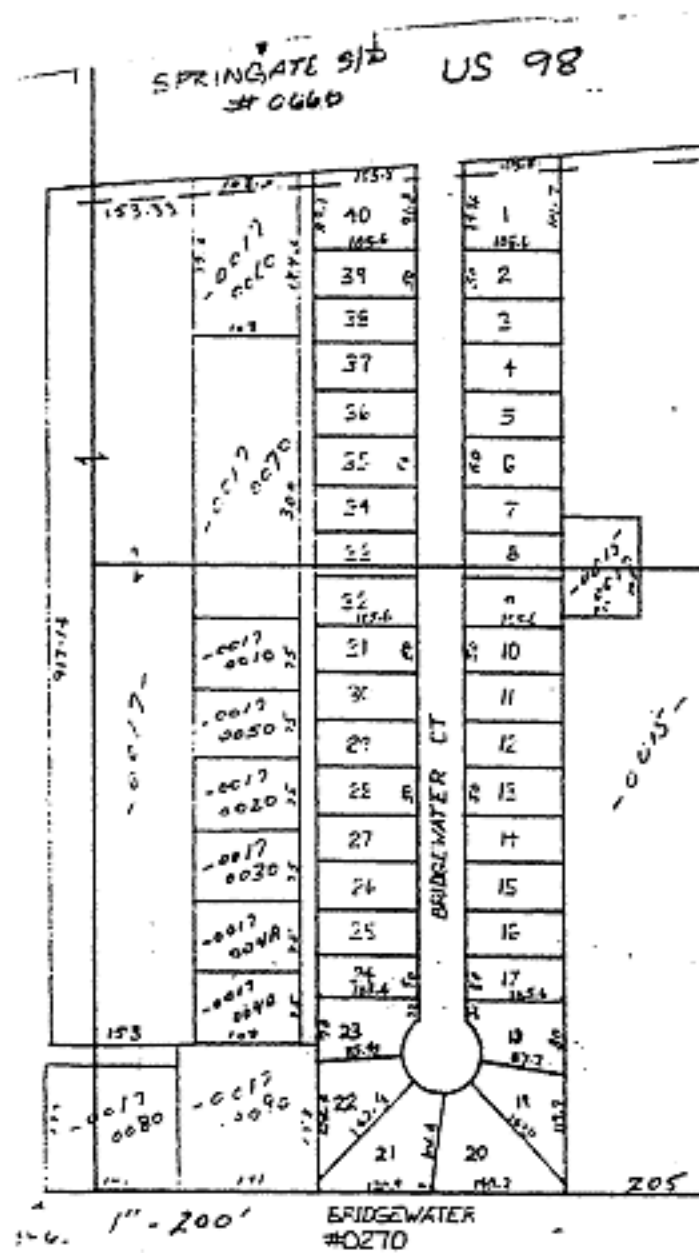
- ▶ a review process for lot splits or subdivision of land;
- ▶ a 210 feet minimum lot frontage requirement along US 98;
- ▶ requirements for private road construction and related maintenance agreements; and
- ▶ designation of certain roads in the County as Limited Access Roads.

No regulations were identified that address:

- ▶ regulations to prohibit the creation of flag lots;
- ▶ standards to ensure adequate corner clearance;
- ▶ width-to-depth ratios to dissuade the proliferation of irregularly shaped lots;
- ▶ provisions for internalized circulation for outparcels;
- ▶ requirements for reverse frontage along primary or collector roads; and
- ▶ driveway design.

These regulations are more fully addressed in the recommendations found in the Conclusion of this report.

Figure 5



Single access subdivisions ending in a cul-de-sac can result in emergency access problems and create congestion at the access point. Current practice calls for limiting the number of lots or dwelling units in such subdivisions to a maximum of 25, after which a second access point or subcollector loop should be provided

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SANTA ROSA COUNTY

STATUS OF PLANNING AND REGULATORY PROGRAM

In the mid-1980's, the governor of Florida appointed the Bay Area Resources Committee to review land development issues along the Florida Panhandle. Following committee review, Santa Rosa County adopted its first zoning map in 1986. In 1990, the County adopted its Comprehensive Plan, which has not yet been found in compliance with state growth management policy by the Department of Community Affairs. The Land Development Code, which was adopted in 1991, was most recently amended in 1994.

ACCESS ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

Due to a strong advocacy for property rights in this county, changes in land development regulation often meet with resistance. Many of the larger landowners in the rural northern portions of Santa Rosa County reject some of the mechanisms desired by the County to regulate access along major arterials. Another large population in the southern portion of the County advocated establishing zoning in the County and is a potential constituency for improved access management on US 98.

Currently, the coastal areas of Santa Rosa County, near Gulf Breeze, are experiencing rapid growth (a 47% annual increase in population). For example, in recent years four new golf courses have been constructed; this influx of recreational development attracts additional subdivision developments along US 98, as the retired populations migrate to the Florida Panhandle.

Recent traffic studies and surveys conducted in the Gulf Breeze area reflect peak hour congestion problems. Much of the study area is not deficient, but a rapid rate of growth, inadequate peak-hour levels of service, and high volume projections for this roadway all indicate the need for improvements.

Hesitancy to implement access management strategies along this corridor stems from the view that there is currently not enough growth on this portion of the highway to warrant instituting such measures. However, most of the land along the US 98 Corridor is zoned for commercial use with inadequate minimum lot frontages. Because much of the corridor remains largely undeveloped, the time for action is now. Access management requirements will assure well designed access systems to accommodate future development along US 98, while preserving the safety and capacity of the highway.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization's Long Range 2015 Plan, developed in 1989, identified needed improvements to US 98. Among these was a road-widening project along US 98, from the Pensacola Bay bridge to Hurlburt Field, increasing capacity from a four to a six-lane freeway. The

update to the 1989 plan makes the same recommendations. The MPO and FDOT also encouraged the development of an advisory committee to provide input on those improvements. The advisory committee was formed by a consulting firm, which has been working with the committee for the last year, reviewing and developing solutions to the traffic problems on US 98, in the *US 98 Project Development and Environmental Study*.

The MPO supports the study's recommendation that the only way to preserve the capacity on a critical roadway like US 98, is to widen it to an urban freeway with access via frontage roads. The fact that US 98 is the only east-west coastal thoroughfare from Pensacola to Panama City (Interstate-10 is twenty miles north of US 98) heightens the critical nature of this corridor.

CURRENT ACCESS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Access Management Policies

The Santa Rosa County Comprehensive Plan does not include a statement of purpose and intent which supports access management. The comprehensive plan does address some aspects of access management, however, through the establishment of policy statements in its Land Use and Traffic Circulation elements. The following policy statements support access management strategies:

Policy 8.A.1.8 - The Land Development Code shall address and regulate the control of connections and access points of driveways to arterials and collector roads to facilitate safe and efficient access. The distances shall be as follows:

<u>Functional Class of Roadway</u>	<u>Distance Between Access Points</u>
Principal Arterial	300 Feet
Minor Arterial	250 Feet
Major Collector	185 Feet
Minor Collector	140 Feet

[Status: adopted in the Land Development Code, §4.04.03 C: Access, Internal Circulation and Off-Street Parking, "In order to reduce turning movements on roadways, new access points to development sites or projects shall be as follows" (see aforementioned distances). For roads maintained by the State, the County adheres to the established spacing standards of the FDOT.]

Policy 8.A.4.2 - Except as otherwise provided by this ordinance, a system of service roads will be required for new development along arterial roads within the County. The service roads shall be required whenever new access points on principal arterials are required to

serve new commercial development and such access points are proposed to be at distances less than 330 feet apart.

[Note: these spacing standards are inconsistent with those established by the FDOT for road segments identified as part of the FHHS. Access points on principal arterials with a restrictive median, classified as a Class 3, are required to be spaced at a distance of 660 or 440 feet, depending on the speed limit.]

Policy 8.A.1.6. - All new developments, including but not limited to, planned unit developments, shopping centers, multi-family residential projects and other projects with internal circulation and parking needs shall be required to provide safe and convenient on-site traffic flow, transportation facilities and sufficient vehicular parking to accommodate the needs of the development.

[Status: adopted in Land Development Code, §4.04.03C. Access, Internal Circulation and Off-Street Parking. "Driveways and areas for the parking and internal circulation of vehicles shall be located, designed and controlled so as to provide for safe and convenient access from adjoining streets."]

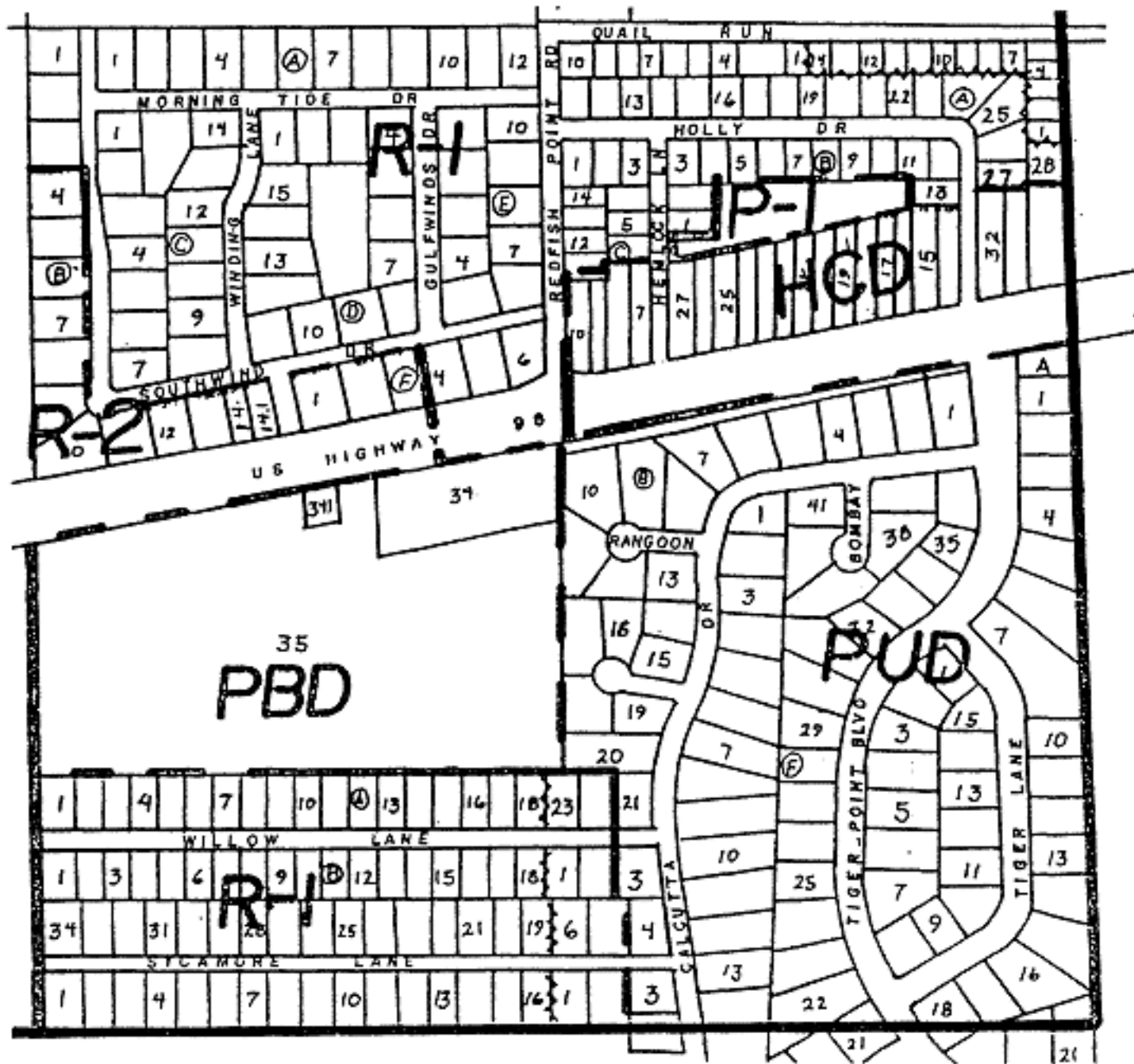
Policy 7.A.10.1 - The County shall continue to promote and encourage the use of the planned unit development technique enacted within the County Zoning Ordinance.

[Status: adopted in the Land Development Code, §6.05.11: Planned Unit Development District, "It is the purpose of this article to permit PUDs, which are intended to encourage the development of land as planned communities (and) encourage flexible and creative concepts of site planning."]

Zoning

Planned Unit Developments. Within § 4.03.03 (I), general design standards for subdivisions, the County establishes provisions for Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) (see Figure 6). These provisions articulate the specific requirements for submitting a comprehensive development plan and undergoing a project review with the County Engineer. This project review process may include: locations and dimensions of all rights-of-way for streets, pedestrian ways, utilities, water courses, green ways and easements, as well as proposed subdivision of land.

Figure 6

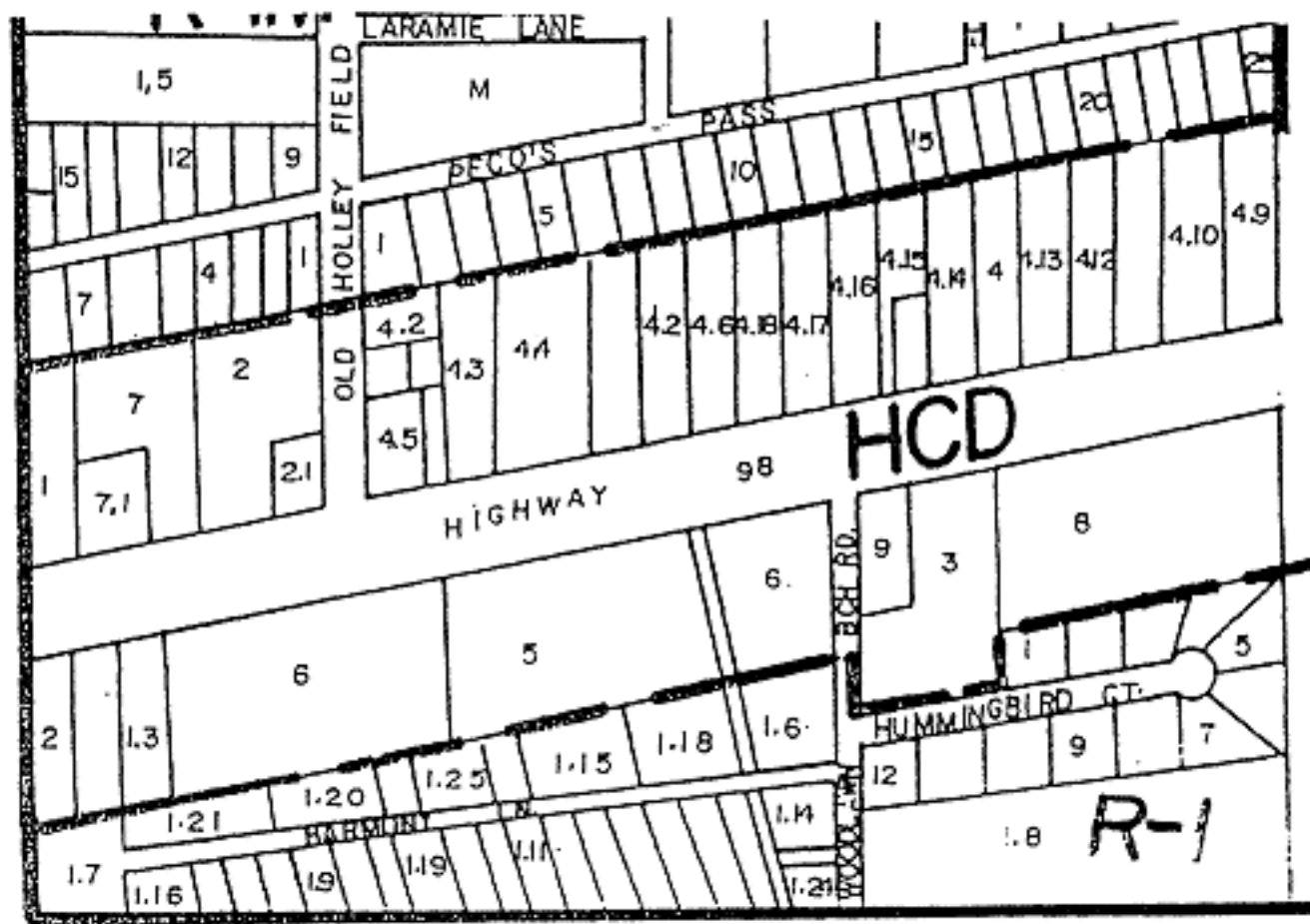


Planned unit development strategies provide opportunities for achieving better site design with shared access. Such solutions could be applied to areas where commercial development is desired, such as the PBD designation above, to improve access and enhance the quality of the business district. Alternatively, the highway commercial district (HCD) in the right corner of this figure creates access problems along the highway.

Minimum Lot Frontage. Santa Rosa County currently requires a minimum lot width of 100' in many of its commercial zoning designations. In the County's residential districts, the minimum lot frontage ranges from 40 feet at the street right-of-way line (in its R-2 medium density district) to 70 feet (in the mixed residential subdivision districts). The US 98 Corridor, all of which is

designated as part of the FIHS in Santa Rosa County, is zoned for highway commercial development (HCD) (see Figure 7), with some PUD and residential land uses (R-1 and R-2) interspersed along the way. These low minimum lot frontages will constrain efforts to achieve connection spacing standards along the FIHS.

Figure 7



Commercial strip zoning and inadequate minimum lot frontages have resulted in commercial strips with excessive curb cuts that eventually create access problems for individual businesses. The larger lots abutting the southern side of the highway present opportunities for well designed access that provides safe entry and exit to businesses from the highway.

Land Division and Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision is defined in the Santa Rosa County Land Development Code as, "the division or re-division of a parcel of land into two or more parcels except for modifications, exceptions and revisions provided for in this ordinance." Development projects must adhere to the County platting requirements as established in the Code, unless the subdivision is large enough to

constitute a self-contained neighborhood and developed in accordance with an overall development plan and associated restrictions. In such a case, the requirements may be varied.

The County requires subdivisions to connect to adjacent subdivisions via stub streets. Site plan review criteria also address access as follows: "Among factors to be considered shall be the number and location of access drives from adjacent streets, the location and width of driveways and access aisles to parking spaces, the arrangement of parking areas, and means of access to buildings for...emergency vehicles."

Minor Subdivisions. The Code defines Minor Subdivision as "any division of one parcel of land into two or more parcels in which all parcels have adequate existing public street or county-approved right-of-way frontage of not less than fifty (50) feet each and require no new streets or change in existing public streets." Minor subdivisions are not required to comply with the platting requirements of the Code, unless the parcel is situated on deeded county rights-of-way where the actual roadway has not yet been constructed.

[Commentary: The exemption of minor subdivisions from the platting process enables the development of residential strips by allow for the creation of any number of lots along arterials, as long as no road is created. Currently the only standard with which minor subdivisions must comply is the 50' of frontage on a public road. Such a provision is also inconsistent with Chapter 177 regarding subdivision of land, which provides that any land division into three or more lots requires compliance with platting requirements.]

Flag Lots. In September, when the Land Development Regulations are revised, County staff plan to add a restriction to prevent the "stacking" of flag lots during a subdivision. Flag lots are often the result of small or no minimum lot frontage requirements.

Access Controls

Connection Spacing. Santa Rosa County has adopted the FDOT driveway spacing standards by reference in its Land Development Code, but provides no spacing requirements for county roadways.

Joint Access. The County has encouraged the provision of joint access and shared parking within the county, in several instances. For example, two major chain restaurants located along the US 98 Corridor, east of Highway 87, agreed to provide a joint access easement between their properties. The County strongly endorsed this process, but coordination of shared access is not currently required.

Private Roads. Private roads were addressed only in relation to PUDs. Within the PUD, all roads must be curbed and paved. Additionally, the perimeter requirements on Planned Unit Developments indicate that for any proposed PUD which would have direct access to a major or

minor arterial, frontage streets and limited access ways are required, to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the motoring public.

SUMMARY

Santa Rosa County has adopted few land development regulations which support access management. Regulations currently in place include:

- ▶ platting requirements for subdivisions;
- ▶ a project review process for Planned Unit Developments; and
- ▶ required connections between adjacent subdivisions, via stub streets.

The County has no established provisions for joint access, shared parking, or flag lots, although these issues are under consideration during the rewrite of the County's land development code. Santa Rosa County will benefit from the implementation of additional access management techniques; the high growth rate in the County is a crucial element to consider during the development of these regulations. The County should consider the vast amount of undeveloped land zoned for commercial uses along US 98 when it develops its access controls.

The Santa Rosa County Land Development Code should include:

- ▶ driveway design standards;
- ▶ standards to ensure adequate corner clearance;
- ▶ regulations to prohibit the creation of flag lots;
- ▶ reverse frontage requirements for proposed subdivisions along arterials and collectors;
- ▶ width-to-depth ratios to prevent the proliferation of irregularly shaped lots; and
- ▶ restrictions on the number of lots that may be created outside of the subdivision process.

These regulations are more fully addressed in the recommendations found in the Conclusion of this report.

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WALTON COUNTY

STATUS OF PLANNING AND REGULATORY PROGRAM

Walton County's Comprehensive Plan, adopted in April 1993, does not currently comply with the planning requirements established by the Department of Community Affairs. The County is working to bring both its Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code, which was adopted in May 1991, into compliance by early 1996. This revision period provides a window of opportunity for Walton County to incorporate access management techniques into its regulatory program (*See Access Issues & Problems*).

In addition, the South Walton Land Conservation Trust was appointed by Governor Lawton Chiles to study growth management in the southern portion of the county. When the State of Florida purchased 19,000 acres in south Walton County from the Nature Conservancy, it became clear that a plan for managing this portion of the County was needed. The South Walton County Conservation and Development Plan was written to address future growth or potential developments of land in the southern part of the County.

The Conservation Trust's plan emphasizes neotraditional town planning techniques and has a strong emphasis on pedestrian-friendly environments. This planning effort complements existing development in the southern end of the county, which is home to the neotraditional development, Seaside Village. The Trust Plan also emphasizes neighborhood-based planning and encourages the development of citizen-based plans in its "Neighborhood" land use category. Walton County is currently incorporating the policies of the Conservation and Development Plan into the County Comprehensive Plan for consistency with State requirements.

ACCESS ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

Walton County benefits from the strong voice of the South Walton Community Council, a citizens group which is active in the planning efforts throughout the County. Currently, the Council is in support of another private, citizen-based movement to designate the US 98 Corridor as a Scenic Corridor. Several businessmen and residents in the South Walton communities have developed a draft scenic corridor ordinance which was submitted to the County Commission in October, 1995. This proposal has received great support from the Commission and is likely to be voted on for adoption by December 1995. The designation recommends strict access management and aesthetic criteria for US 98 in South Walton County.

The idea for the scenic designation developed among residents and businessmen who witnessed unplanned development along the US 98 Corridor in Destin, to the west, and in Panama City, to the east, and strived to develop a set of criteria which would preserve the largely unspoiled

character of US 98 in South Walton County. The overlay district would require a 400 foot driveway spacing standard and interconnected parking lots for businesses along the corridor. It is not yet clear what the land use designations will be along this area, as the plan is still in its revision stage; currently, the land use along the proposed scenic corridor is low density residential and low intensity commercial. Much of the remainder of the US 98 Corridor is zoned for conservation, silvaculture, or agricultural land uses.

CURRENT ACCESS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Access Management Policies

Walton County's Comprehensive Plan and the South Walton Conservation and Development Trust Plan (both currently being revised) include policy statements in support of access management. The plans describe the development of a local road network, establishment of on-site circulation provisions for commercial developments, and coordination of land use practices and regulations among different governmental agencies.

Walton County Comprehensive Plan: Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Policy 3.4.1 -The County shall regulate the provision of roadway access to the State Highway System for new residential subdivisions and new commercial development through the following management techniques:

- ▶ Limiting access to roads by controlling the number and location of sites, access driveways and other intersecting roads;
- ▶ Requiring shared driveways or cross-access easements for adjacent properties where the minimum driveway spacing requirements cannot be met; and
- ▶ Promoting the use of frontage/service roads to minimize the number of site access driveways and intersecting roads, where necessary to maintain the safe and efficient operation of the traffic circulation system.

[Status: adopted in Land Development Code, §5.04.03 Street Design Standards, "The street layout in all new development shall be coordinated with and interconnected to the street system of the surrounding area; streets in proposed subdivisions shall be connected to rights-of-way in adjacent areas to allow for proper inter-neighborhood traffic flow."]

South Walton Conservation and Development Trust Plan

The Conservation Trust's plan establishes several policies which further the goals of access management. These are the joint-access requirement and the arterial-access provision, which is similar to the Walton County policy statement:

Policy L-1.1.13 - The County shall require development to provide adequate parking based on professionally accepted standards. The Land Development Regulations, adopted by the statutory deadline, shall include standards for parking lot design and access management, including shared driveways, in order to promote safe traffic flow consistent with the access management policies in the Traffic Circulation Element.

Policy T-3.4.1 - The County shall regulate the provision of roadway access to the State Highway System for all new development through the following management techniques:

- ▶ Limiting access to the State Highway System by controlling the number and location of site access driveways and other intersecting roads according to the procedures and standards outlined in FDOT Rule Chapters 14-96 and 14-97;
- ▶ Requiring shared driveways or cross-access easements for adjacent properties where the minimum driveway spacing requirements defined in FDOT Rule 14-97 cannot be met; and
- ▶ Promoting the use of parallel roads to optimize the number of site access driveways and intersecting roads, where necessary to maintain the safe and efficient operation of the transportation system.

Zoning

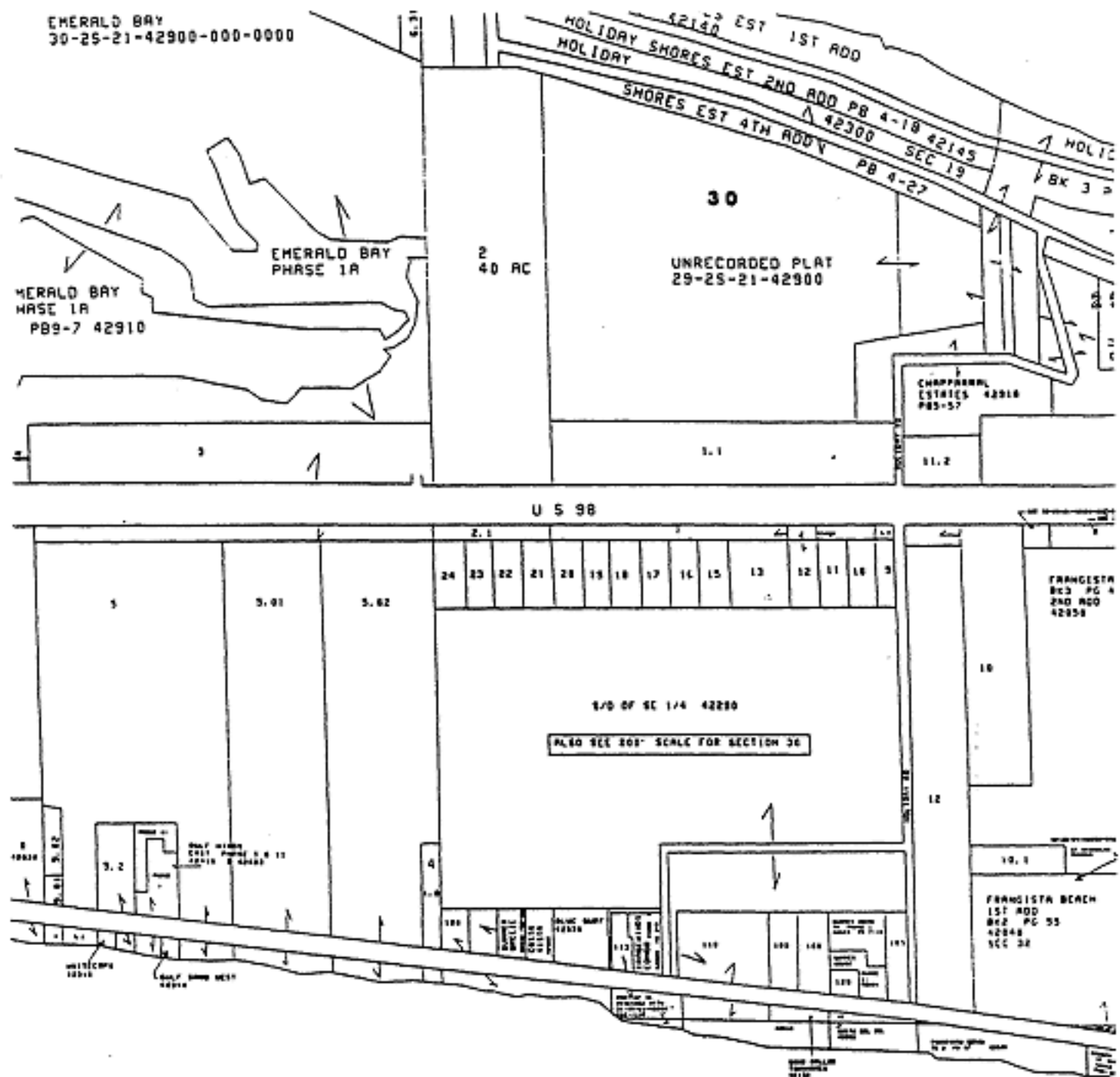
Minimum Lot Frontages. Walton County has no established minimum lot frontage requirements for any of its land use districts (see Figure 8). The only provision contained within the County's Code with regard to lot area states that, "all developments shall have a total land area sufficient to meet all development design standards in this Code including... land required to provide for all setbacks, buffers, storm water management, off street parking and circulation, protection of environmentally sensitive lands, and any other provisions which may require land area to be set aside." Much of the land along the US 98 Corridor is zoned for silvaculture, agriculture, or conservation land uses; portions of the Corridor permit low-density residential and low-intensity commercial uses.

Planned Unit Developments. Walton County includes policies for Planned Unit Developments to allow flexible zoning practices in appropriate locations. Part of the intent of this provision is to, "promote high standards of development layout, design and construction, reduce land consumption by roads, separate vehicular and pedestrian circulation systems," and generally provide for a compatible living arrangement between man and the environment.

Standards for PUDs stipulate that, "Access points shall be designed to provide smooth flow, controlled turning movements, and minimize hazards to vehicular and pedestrian traffic" and, "No streets or roads within a PUD shall connect to exterior streets in such a way as to encourage use of a minor local street for through traffic."

[Commentary: This provision is somewhat inconsistent with the County's efforts to achieve greater connectivity, as expounded in section 5.04.03 of the Land Development Code (see next page). Local governments must maintain a tenuous balance between enhancing connectivity and limiting excessive through-traffic in residential areas.]

Figure 8



Large lots and undeveloped areas provide Walton County with many opportunities to prevent access problems. Yet strips of lots with small lot frontages have already been created. This figure also reveals the presence of long shallow lots abutting the northern edge of the highway that are ripe for division into small lots.

Land Division and Subdivision Regulations

Walton County's Code defines *subdivision* as, "the platting of real property into three or more lots, parcels...or any other division of land." Any developer seeking to file for development plan review is required to meet with the Director of Planning and Zoning to discuss the review process.

All major and minor developments must undergo development review and must adhere to the site plan requirements established by the County in § 10.03.03 of the Code. These requirements do not specifically address access, but do require the site plan to show the land use designation(s) and densities of land areas adjacent to the proposed development and give an indication of the relationship of the transportation systems of the adjacent development to the proposed development.

In an effort to "reduce traffic congestion on the arterial and collector roads surrounding the development," Section 5.04.03 stipulates that all streets within a proposed subdivision shall be connected to adjacent rights-of-way to allow adequate inter-neighborhood traffic flow. Subdivision regulations encourage, but do not require that stub streets be provided for future connection of adjacent subdivisions, due to concerns by developers and residents about through-traffic in residential areas [*see Commentary: previous page*].

Minor Lot Splits. For minor lot splits, the developer is not required to undergo as thorough a review process. Instead, the developer has only to submit an application to the Department of Planning and Zoning, and attach materials graphically depicting the original and proposed lots and indicating whether or not water and/or sewer service is available to the property. All minor lot splits must adhere to the requirements within the County's Code, including the requirements that: each lot must abut a public or private street; if any lot abuts a street right-of-way that does not conform to the specifications of the Code, the owner may be required to dedicate one-half the required right-of-way width necessary to meet the minimum design standards. Additionally, the Code stipulates that no further division of a minor lot split is permitted until a development plan is prepared and submitted.

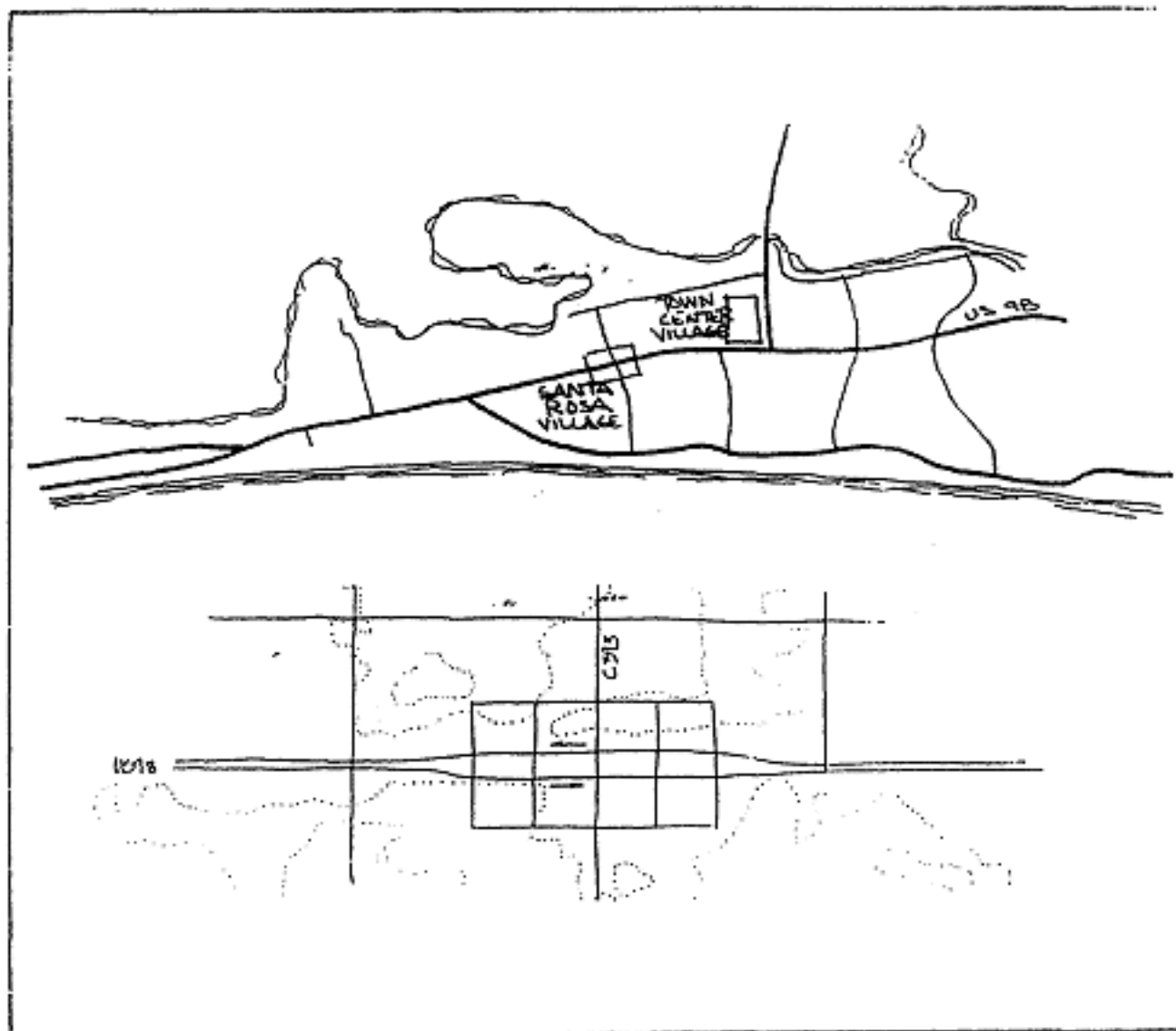
Reverse Frontage. Within the subdivision regulations in Walton County, there are no direct provisions for requiring reverse frontage. The current approach is to ensure appropriate design during the development review process. The County's Planning & Development department has an opportunity to recommend such design-changes to a site plan when the developer participates in the pre-application review conference.

Access Controls

No standards for driveway spacing, driveway design, or joint access were identified in the Land Development Code.

Road Classification System. Similar to Bay County, Walton County includes provisions in the Land Development Code for the classification of the County road system into a functional hierarchy. Local streets, collectors, arterial roads, and freeways are classified according to function and posted legal speeds. The general design standards which apply to the street system provide for road surface widths, minimum curb radii, and sight distance standards.

Figure 9: Village Locations and Village/Rural Transitions



A network of parallel roads will help protect the capacity of US 98 by providing alternative roadways for local traffic circulation. Source: South Walton Conservation and Development Trust Plan.

Sight Distance. The requirement for a clear visibility triangle at two intersecting streets was adopted from the Florida Model Land Development Code and is defined by the following distance restrictions placed on location of anything "erected, placed, parked, planted, or allowed to grow," which could be an impediment to vision (Table 3):

Table 3: Sight Distance

Road Classification	Distance from Street Center Line Intersection
Driveway or Residential Street	100 Feet
Collector	160 Feet
Arterial	200 Feet

Source: Walton County Land Development Regulations, 1991.

Private Roads. Section 5.04.04 stipulates that, "Private streets may be allowed within developments that will remain under common ownership, provided that they are constructed to the County's minimum standards." These standards include, among other provisions, the formulation of a homeowners association which will be responsible for maintenance of all streets within the development.

SUMMARY

Walton County has adopted the following policies and land development regulations which support access management:

- ▶ provisions for the establishment of Planned Unit Developments;
- ▶ a road classification system with standards for sight distance and minimum curb radii;
- ▶ requirements to provide connectivity between adjacent subdivisions;
- ▶ a review process for the subdivision of land; and
- ▶ plan policies which limit the number of access points for developments along the State Highway System.

Walton County could benefit from the implementation of additional access management techniques. The County's Land Development Code should include:

- ▶ driveway spacing standards for US 98 that are consistent with those of the FDOT and required adherence to spacing standards;
- ▶ standards to ensure adequate corner clearance;
- ▶ regulations which require reverse frontage and internalized access for proposed subdivisions abutting arterials;
- ▶ adequate minimum lot frontages on US 98;
- ▶ outparcel regulations to ensure internalized access; and
- ▶ width-to-depth ratios to prevent the proliferation of irregularly shaped lots.

These regulations are more fully addressed in the recommendations found in the Conclusion of this report.

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lot dimensional requirements in zoning strongly influence property access. Minimum lot frontage requirements set the minimum lot width or frontage on a public road. Lot width-to-depth ratios establish the depth of a lot in relation to its frontage, thereby precluding the creation of long narrow lots or other irregularly shaped lots that can lead to access problems. Setbacks help to assure clear views at corners, adequate emergency access, and protect buildings from the impacts of an abutting roadway (such as vehicles that lose control.) Setbacks should generally be higher along highways for these reasons, and also to protect the corridor from development in the event that it requires future widening.

Poor subdivision practices and inadequate minimum lot frontage requirements along thoroughfares are impediments to achieving access management objectives. Typical subdivision problems include inadequate attention to flag lots, outparcels, and internalized access to subdivisions along arterials. Constraints also arise in relation to small, nonconforming lots platted years ago or thoroughfare frontage that has been extensively subdivided into small lot frontages with no alternative access.

Rural and urban fringe areas frequently exhibit irregular or poorly designed subdivisions—a problem often attributable to subdivision exemptions in local land development codes. Exemptions are typically provided for dividing land into large parcels or splitting off a small number of lots, unless the property is being resubdivided or a street or alley is established. The purpose of such exemptions was to allow minor subdivision activity, such as transferring a lot to a family member, without incurring the expense of platting. Today, these exemptions are often used to circumvent platting requirements. The resulting subdivisions may rely heavily on private access easements or flag lots, resulting in inefficient use of land, easement disputes, and poor connectivity. More commonly they rely on existing roads and highways, creating residential strips rather than shared access subdivisions.

Based upon a review of the lot dimensional requirements and subdivision regulations of Bay, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Walton counties (*See Table 4: Current Access Management Practices, for a complete summary of techniques*), this study recommends the following:

- **Reinforce minimum connection spacing for commercial and residential developments along the US 98 Corridor.** Spacing standards limit the number of driveways on a roadway by mandating a minimum separation distance between driveways. Driveway spacing standards should be tied to the FDOT access classification and driveway permitting standards for the State Highway System and may be tied to posted speed limit or functional classification of the roadway on locally maintained roads. Counties along the US 98 Corridor should adopt the FDOT standards by reference in their land development code and implement them through the techniques described below.

- **Establish adequate minimum lot frontage and setback requirements along the US 98 Corridor.** Minimum lot frontage standards should be higher on arterials and collectors, than on local access roads, to allow for greater spacing between commercial or residential driveways. Lot frontage and dimensional requirements should be carefully coordinated with FDOT driveway spacing for US 98. Much of the US 98 corridor has already been subdivided into small lot frontages, and portions have been strip zoned for commercial use or already developed into commercial strips. These problems can be prevented in the future by requiring adequate minimum lot frontages along the highway. Setbacks and minimum lot size along US 98 should be adequate to allow for installation of shared service drives.
- **Adopt and enforce corner clearance standards at intersections.** Corner clearance refers to separation of driveways from intersections. It is the distance from an intersection of a public or private road to the nearest access connection. The required corner clearance along US 98 is established by FDOT connection spacing standards, as well as any local standards along locally maintained side streets. Corner clearance standards preserve good traffic operations at intersections, as well as the safety and convenience of access to corner properties. New connections at intersections should be consistent with corner clearance standards, unless no other reasonable access to the property is available, and the permitting department determines that the connection does not create a safety or operational problem. Traffic engineering analysis of the proposed connection by a registered engineer may be required of applicants for this purpose. Where no other alternatives exist, the permitting department may allow construction of an access connection along the property line farthest from the intersection. In such cases, directional connections (i.e. right in/out, right in only, or right out only) may be required. Another option is to require nonconforming corner properties to share access with abutting properties.
- **Establish a higher minimum lot size for corner lots to achieve corner clearance.** Corner lots should be required to have a larger minimum lot size than other lots in that district to achieve minimum driveway spacing for corner clearance. In addition to the required minimum lot size, all corner lots should be of adequate size to provide for required frontyard setbacks and corner clearance on street frontage. The minimum lot size should be coordinated with desired corner clearance. Safe and convenient access is an important part of a developer's location decision. Assuring an adequate lot size with appropriate corner clearance will protect the development potential and market value of corner properties. It will also help assure that these properties do not experience access problems as traffic volumes grow on the adjacent thoroughfare.
- **Implement joint access and parking lot cross access requirements along the US 98 Corridor.** Properties unable to meet connection spacing standards should be required to provide joint and cross access with adjacent properties, wherever feasible. Joint and cross access allows for more intensive development of a corridor while assuring safe and convenient access in accordance with connection spacing standards. These provisions should be applied

to new developments, as well as existing developments in the context of a retrofitting situation. In addition, circulation between adjacent major developments (such as abutting shopping plazas) should be provided through connecting front and/or rear service drives. A complete description of this technique, and associated requirements (including retrofitting standards) may be found in the *CUTR/FDOT Model Land Development Regulations that Support Access Management*.

- **Establish a Planned Unit Development (PUD) overlay along portions of the US 98 Corridor planned for commercial development.** One mechanism for achieving shared access along commercial corridors, or where land is not extensively subdivided, is to establish an overlay district which adds particular requirements beyond what is specified by the current zoning. Where commercial development is desired along portions of the US 98 corridor, a PUD overlay district should be established which contains development standards to achieve access management. Provisions should be incorporated into the PUD overlay requiring service drives or joint and cross access for all properties unable to meet spacing standards. This technique can be applied to areas that have already been subdivided, but are not yet extensively developed, and where development is expected to occur.
- **Require internalized access for outparcels.** Outparcels (or outlots) are lots on the perimeter of a larger parcel that break its frontage along the roadway. Such lots are often created along thoroughfare frontage of shopping center sites, and leased or sold to take advantage of the marketability of these highly valued locations. Outparcel regulations foster coordinated on-site circulation systems that serve outparcels as well as interior development, thereby reducing the need for driveways on an arterial. None of the counties in this study regulate access to outparcels. At a minimum, local codes should require all access to outparcels to be internalized using the shared circulation system of the principle development or retail center. Local regulations should also establish that development sites under the same ownership, or those consolidated for development, will be considered one property for the purposes of access regulation. The same should be required of phased development plans. The number of connections permitted should be the minimum necessary to provide reasonable access and not the maximum available for that frontage.
- **Provide an incentive for combining access points or relax parking and dimensional requirements where necessary to achieve shared access.** For example, some communities provide for reducing the minimum lot size and frontage requirement, as well as the required number of parking spaces, by 15% for adjacent property owners that agree to establish a common driveway. However, this *should not* be provided where it would create on-site circulation problems or create off-site access problems.
- **Advance access management strategies through development agreements and the site plan review process.** A development agreement is contract between a local government and a developer that establishes the rights and obligations of both parties regarding development of a parcel or site for a fixed period of time. The local planning and land development

regulation act, § 163.3227-.3243, Florida Statutes, provides local governments with the authority to enter into development agreements, but requires them to be consistent with the comprehensive plan and land development regulations. These agreements provide local governments with an opportunity to negotiate for certain public goals, such as dedication of right-of-way or creative access management strategies. In turn, developers may be afforded additional flexibility in meeting land development regulations. At the same time, site plan review offers opportunities to require changes in site design and layout to avoid access problems.

- **Regulate driveway design in relation to width and laneage, turning radii or flare, and throat length.** Driveway design standards specify how driveways must be constructed. They are used to control width, turning radius or flare, and throat (storage) length. Design standards may also require certain driveway improvements, such as channelizing islands or medians. Many of the counties along the US 98 Corridor are currently utilizing the FDOT Standard Index for roadway design, but have not adequately attended to driveway design or throat length. Throat length standards prevent vehicles from backing into the flow of traffic on the public street or causing unsafe conflicts with on-site circulation. The length of driveways or "throat length" should be adequate to handle anticipated storage of entering and exiting vehicles. Standards for throat length vary according to the projected volume of the driveway and whether it is the principle access or a secondary driveway. Generally adequate throat lengths are 40 to 60 feet for unsignalized driveways, 75 to 95 feet for smaller developments (< 200,000 GLA), and 200 or more feet for larger shopping centers (>200,000 GLA).
- **Require reverse frontage for subdivisions to preclude platting of residential lots needing direct arterial access or to provide stub streets for future connection.** Lots with frontage on two streets should be required to obtain access off the street with the lower functional classification, when reasonable. During the subdivision review process, applicant should also be required to design the site such that residential lots along US 98 obtain access from an interior street. In this way would use enter and exit the subdivision through the primary access drive of the subdivision rather than via individual driveways. Landscaped, berms or other techniques could be required to the rear of these properties to buffer them from the noise and traffic on the highway. These requirements are easy to administer and decrease traffic hazards associated with residential vehicular traffic entering and exiting a high speed highway.

Table 4: Current Access Management Practices²

Technique	Bay	Okaloosa	Santa Rosa	Walton
Joint Access	ENCOURAGED	ENCOURAGED	ENCOURAGED	NO
Driveway Design	NO	NO	NO	NO
•Throat Length	NO	NO	NO	NO
•Radius or Flare	NO	NO	NO	NO
•Width	NO	NO	NO	NO
Corridor Overlay	NO	NO	NO	YES ³
PUD Zoning	NO	YES	YES	YES
Stub Out Connections	YES	NO	YES	NO
Minor Subdivision Regulations	YES	YES ⁴	YES	YES
Reverse Frontage	NO	YES	NO	NO
Access Review Criteria ⁵	NO	NO	PARTLY	PARTLY
Access Classification ⁶	PARTLY	PARTLY	NO	NO
Driveway Spacing Standards	YES	YES	YES	NO
Outparcel Regulations	NO	NO	NO	NO
Flag Lot Standards	NO	NO	NO	NO
Corner Clearance	NO	NO	NO	NO
Visibility Triangles	YES	NO	YES	YES
Minimum Lot Frontage	NO	210	C=100', R=40-70' ⁷	NO
Private Roads Regulated	YES	YES	NO	YES
Lot Width to Depth	NO	NO	NO	NO

² Described in the Land Development Regulations.

³ Walton County is developing a scenic corridor overlay.

⁴ See "Subdivision Regulations" under Okaloosa County.

⁵ Requires applicants to include access information in site plans.

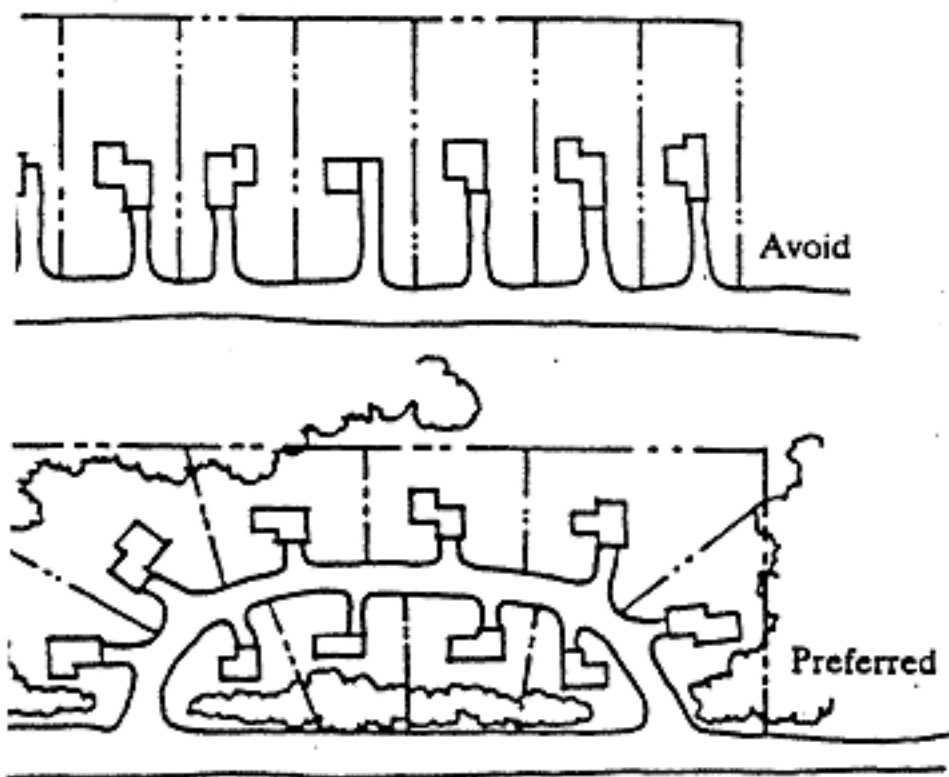
⁶ Prioritized certain corridors for access control.

⁷ C = commercial land use district; R = residential land use districts

ential developments along the US 98 Corridor to connect to the system. The street system of a proposed subdivision should be designed existing, proposed, and planned streets outside of the subdivision. development abuts unplatted land or a future development phase of the reet stubs should be required to allow access to abutting properties or to street system into the surrounding area. Future subdivisions should be ith these stub streets of adjacent subdivisions. (Note: concerns regarding be addressed through the use of traffic calming techniques, such as jogs iding excessively wide lanes, and stop signs, that slow traffic and raffic movement.)

subdivisions along the US 98 Highway Corridor to be designed with ct access to individual one and two family dwellings should be avoided er feasible. One way to accomplish this is to require subdivisions with o be designed into shared access points to and from the highway. A esses should be sufficient regardless of the number of lots or businesses provide for this is through the application of flexible zoning or Planned elopment zoning along portions of the corridor zoned for residential use

10: Shared Access on Major Thoroughfares



from the The Tug Hill Commission. Cheryl S. Doble and George M. McCulloch.
ies Manual. New York: The New York State Tug Hill Commission, January 1991.

- **Prohibit flag lots along the US 98 Corridor.** Although flag lot "plats" were not widely observed in the counties studied, flag lots were scattered along US 98. The potential of a problem remains due to the absence of flag lot regulation in any of the local codes reviewed. It is essential that each of the counties adopt regulations to prevent the creation of flag lots and to regulate private access easements. The counties should prohibit the platting of flag lots along US 98, with exceptions only for unique circumstances and through a variance or special exception process.
- **Adopt lot width to depth ratios.** Lot width-to-depth ratios prevent the creation of long and narrow or irregularly shaped lots that increase the number and length of private access drives. The resulting driveways can carve up environmentally sensitive areas or rural landscapes, and result in inefficient use of valuable corridor frontage. Rural areas may adopt a maximum width-to-depth ratio of 1:4, meaning that parcels with 100 feet of frontage may not be longer than 400 feet. Urban or suburban areas may use maximum ratios of 1:2.5 or 1:3. Width-to-depth ratios should be generally higher (1:5) along thoroughfares to allow adequate dimensions for shared access and future road widening. The same is true for coastal properties due to erosion.
- **Establish a concurrent review process with FDOT on access permitting.** State and local coordination is essential to effective access management along the US 98 Corridor. This should begin with a coordinated process of granting access permits along state highways. A concurrent state/local review process should be established and the District should require the applicant to send a copy of the complete permit application to the designated reviewing official in the affected jurisdiction. Applications should at a minimum include the contents described under Section 23.1 of the CUTR/FDOT model regulations (p. 2-35). Timing of review should be coordinated to allow for adequate local review and to meet state and locally mandated review periods. The District should communicate with the local government and discuss the permit prior to any decision or recommendation to the applicant. For a sample approach see the combined access review committee process, described in Section 23.6 of the CUTR/FDOT model regulations. The desired review process should be decided by each local government through dialogue with the FDOT District.
- **Coordinate review of subdivisions on US 98 with FDOT.** Local governments and FDOT should coordinate on review of proposed plats along the US 98 corridor to prevent access problems before they are created and assure conformance with the State Highway Access Management Act and the Department's administrative rules. For example, each local government should require applicants to copy the District with their platting proposal and require a response from the District prior to plat approval. This should occur early in the plat review process, preferably during conceptual review when the developer is more amenable to design changes. A dialogue should be initiated with the District regarding a procedure for coordinating on subdivision review.

- **Use intergovernmental agreements or resolutions to establish a foundation for coordinating with FDOT on managing access to US 98.** Intergovernmental corridor agreements and resolutions supporting access management establish a foundation for collaboration between FDOT and local governments on access management. These tools can be used to clarify the purpose and intent of managing access to US 98, areas of mutual agreement, and what each community and FDOT will do to advance these objectives. Agreements should include timelines for implementation, as well as criteria for when either side may nullify the agreement.
- **Develop a connected local road network of side streets and parallel roads to accommodate desired land development along the US 98 Corridor.** Counties along the US 98 Corridor must develop an adequate local network of roads with the capacity to accommodate traffic resulting from new developments. Side streets, internal subdivision roads, small blocks, and parallel access roads can all improve connectivity of the built environment and offset travel demand on major arterials. The layout of the local road network is not only crucial for effective traffic, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation; it is also an essential component of community design.
- **Access management strategies should not be adopted without extensive public involvement.** Special corridor committees should be formed to provide guidance on desired access management and corridor improvement strategies. These could include a technical committee of planners and engineers from each local government, and an advisory committee composed of planning and elected officials as well as business representatives and residents. These committees should address development trends and regulations, assess the viability of alternatives, and provide guidance on key policy issues. FDOT should actively participate and special meetings should also be held with each affected county commission, city council, and planning commission, as well as separate meetings with the public, at appropriate points in the process. At a minimum, special meetings should be held during analyses of existing and future conditions, analysis of alternatives, and selection of the desired access management approach. Newsletters could be prepared and distributed to keep citizens and local officials informed along the way.

GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS

Access Classification - A ranking system for roadways used to determine the appropriate degree of access management. Factors considered include functional classification, land use and zoning, subdivision of abutting properties, and existing level of access control.

Access Connection - Any driveway, street, turnout or other means of providing for the movement of vehicles to or from the public roadway system.

Access Management - The process of providing and managing access to land development while preserving the regional flow of traffic in terms of safety, capacity, and speed.

Access Management Plan (Corridor) - A plan illustrating the design of access for lots on a highway segment or an interchange area that is developed jointly by the state, the metropolitan planning organization, and the affected jurisdiction(s).

Arterial - A highway intended primarily for through traffic and where access should be carefully controlled.

Channelizing Island - an area within the roadway not for vehicular movement, which is designed to control and direct specific movements of traffic and which may be defined by paint, raised bars, curbs, or other devices.

Collector Roads - Roads intended to move traffic from local roads to secondary arterials. A collector road serves a neighborhood or large subdivision and should be designed so that no residential properties face onto it.

Connection Spacing - The distance between driveway connections, measured from the closest edge of pavement of the first connection to the closest edge of pavement of the second connection along the edge of the traveled way.

Corner Clearance - The distance from an intersection of a public or private road to the nearest access connection, measured from the closest edge of the pavement of the intersecting road to the closest edge of the pavement of the connection along the traveled way. (see Figure 1)

Corridor Overlay Zone - Special requirements added onto existing land development requirements along designated portions of a public thoroughfare.

Cross Access - A service drive providing vehicular access between two or more contiguous sites so the driver need not enter the public street system.

Directional Median Opening - An opening in a restrictive median which provides for specific movements and physically restricts other movements. Directional median openings for two opposing left or "U-turn" movements along a road segment are considered one directional median opening.

Driveway Flare - A triangular pavement surface at the entrance of a driveway that facilitates turning movements, and used to replicate turning radius in areas with curb and gutter construction.

Driveway Return Radius - A circular pavement transition at the entrance of a driveway that facilitates turning movements.

Easement - A grant of one or more property rights by a property owner to or for use by the public, or another person or entity.

Exception - Permission to depart from design standards in an ordinance due to unique circumstances of the site or project. This does not require the same findings of hardship as with variances, but does involve findings of fact to support the need for an exception.

Frontage Road - A public or private drive which generally parallels a public street between the right-of-way and the front building setback line. The frontage road provides access to private properties while separating them from the arterial street (see also Service Roads).

Full Median Opening - An opening in a raised median that allows all turning movements from the roadway and the intersecting road or access connection.

Functional Classification - A system used to group public roadways into classes according to their purpose in moving vehicles and providing access.

Highway, Controlled Access - A roadway designed for through traffic, and to which abutting properties have no legal right of access except in accordance with the requirements of the public authority having jurisdiction over that roadway.

Joint Access (or Shared Access) - A driveway connecting two or more contiguous sites to the public street system.

Lot Depth - The average distance measured from the front lot line to the rear lot line.

Lot, Flag - A large lot not meeting minimum frontage requirements and where access to the public road is by a narrow, private right-of-way or driveway.

Lot Frontage - That portion of a lot extending along a street right-of-way line.

Median - that portion of a roadway separating the opposing traffic flows. Medians can be depressed, raised, or flush.

Outparcel - A lot adjacent to a roadway that interrupts the frontage of another lot.

Raised Median - A physical barrier in the roadway that separates traffic traveling in opposite directions, such as a concrete barrier or landscaped island.

Reasonable Access - The minimum number of access connections, direct or indirect, necessary to provide safe access to and from a public road, as consistent with the purpose and intent of any applicable plans and policies. All lots under the same ownership shall be considered one property for the purposes of this definition.

Service Road - A public or private street or road, auxiliary to and normally located parallel to a controlled access facility, that maintains local road continuity and provides access to parcels adjacent to the controlled access facility.

Sight Distance - The distance of unobstructed view for the driver of a vehicle, as measured along the normal travel path of a roadway to a specified height above the roadway.

Stub-out (Stub-street) - A portion of a street or cross access drive used as an extension to an abutting property that may be developed in the future.

Waiver - Permission to depart from the requirements of an ordinance where required conditions are satisfied (see also Exception).

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APPENDIX A: COMMENTS FROM THE ACCESS MANAGEMENT SEMINAR

Below is a summary list of participant comments from the regional access management seminars held in Panama City, Fort Walton Beach, and the City of Gulf Breeze on November 27-29, 1995. These comments were made in response to two separate questions. The first asked for land division and access problems that participants have observed or are aware of in their area. The second asked participants to list strategies for improving coordination among the agencies and professionals involved in managing access to a major corridor.

LAND DIVISION AND ACCESS PROBLEMS

Too many (multiple) driveways to the same commercial site or parcel.

Closely spaced driveways.

Numerous outparcels increase individual demand for driveways and little attention to coordinated on-site circulation.

Problems with internal (on-site) circulation.

Use of major arterials as local residential access roads.

Too many closely spaced median openings lead to driver confusion and safety hazards.

Inadequate lot dimensions: narrow lots with small setbacks.

Problems of residential areas along major corridors transitioning to small office uses. Closely spaced driveways exacerbated by increased traffic volumes.

Little interconnection between subdivisions and increase in gated communities. Opposition to improved connectivity due to concerns over through traffic, crime, desire to remain "exclusive."

Inadequate turning radii for cul-de-sacs results in problems for school bus and emergency access.

Inadequate design of intersections, with inadequate storage length for turn bays.

Unlimited driveways for some corner convenience stores.

Dead end streets that now need a cul-de-sac, but are now constrained by development.

Walmart's site plan is inadequate when it comes to on-site circulation and driveway throat length.

"Cookie cutter" site designs for certain chains that don't fit the characteristics of the individual site.

Properties that don't connect to abutting side streets.

Inadequate use of shared driveways.

Poor visibility for turning caused by high landscaping.

Sight distance problems with driveways, such as driveways on a curve of a high speed roadway.

Lack of deceleration lanes for some larger developments.

Property rights issues and concerns.

Single-use developments (increase the number and length of individual trips.)

Uncontrolled left turns.

COORDINATION STRATEGIES

FDOT and local government representatives need to keep each other informed regarding connection requests or projects in the pipeline that require access to the state highway system. This would help allay the ping-pong effect caused when a developer attempts to use the Notice of Intent to Permit an access connection to obtain local approval.

Personal phone call to the affected local government regarding connection requests would be helpful.

A list of the District access management contacts should be provided to each local government (*See Appendix B*).

Require site plans on an 8 1/2 by 11 sheet so they are faxable. Notice of intent to permit: it is unclear where the project is located and the site characteristics from the information sent by the Districts to local governments.

Combined review committee for access requests on state highways or just on US Highway 98. This should include representatives from FDOT, local government, and advise developer on appropriate course of action.

Teleconferencing, chat line, bulletin board to enhance communication and/or computerized permit tracking system that enables government agencies and property owners/developers to track the status of their project in the system.

Incorporate access management into the revised Intergovernmental Coordination Elements required by the ELMS-III legislation.

FDOT, MPO and local governments should work together on a corridor plan and develop and adopt intergovernmental agreements establishing shared responsibilities for managing access to US 98 or other major corridors. This should be supplemented by a joint access review committee process.

Joint access: need for close coordination of the District with local governments on driveway permitting where the local government implements joint and cross access requirements on a corridor. Otherwise a ping pong effect could result between District feeling it has to permit a nonconforming connection and the local government attempting to carry out joint and cross access.

Need for better internal coordination within each local government, as well as within the District, between those involved with various aspects of access management (i.e., permitting, engineering, and project development.)

Establish a regional transportation authority.

Need more emphasis on the "big picture" - all trip types.

Include local government representatives in median opening committees.

More consistency of standards across local governments is needed.

Involve FDOT early in the site plan and subdivision review process. Consider establishing a joint development review process.

Who should address the adequacy of driveway throat length? Should it be addressed in the District driveway permitting process or during local site plan review? (most felt it should be addressed during local site plan review because it dealt with on-site design.)

Include developers and relevant special interest groups in future meetings and workshops on access management.

Do your "homework" in terms of informing the public

- Landowners/developers
- Driving public

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APPENDIX B: FDOT DISTRICT 3 - ACCESS MANAGEMENT CONTACT LIST

The following is a listing of access management contact persons at the Florida Department of Transportation, District 3.

Preston Toole, Permits Engineer
FDOT District 3
P.O. Box 607
U.S. Highway 90
Chipley, FL 32428-9990
(904) 638-0250/ Suncom 767-1240

Ronnie Finch, FIHS/Corridor Planning
FDOT District 3
P.O. Box 607
U.S. Highway 90
Chipley, FL 32428-9990
(904) 638-0250/ Suncom 767-0250

Charles Odom, Medians
FDOT District 3
P.O. Box 607
U.S. Highway 90
Chipley, FL 32428-9990
(904) 638-0250/ Suncom 767-1241

Joe Poole, Traffic Operations Engineer
FDOT District 3
P.O. Box 607
U.S. Highway 90
Chipley, FL 32428-9990
(904) 638-0250/ Suncom 767-1267

Local Maintenance Office Contacts

Charles Taylor, Permit Engineer
1651 E. Nine Mile Road
Pensacola, FL 32514
(904) 484-5005/ Suncom 690-8004
Escambia & Santa Rosa Counties

Grady Rushing, Permit Engineer
45 N. Park Street
DeFuniak Springs, FL 32422
(904) 892-8004/ Suncom 676-8004
Walton & Okaloosa Counties

Novie Johnson, Permit Engineer
1040 Highway 98 East
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548
(904) 892-8004/ Suncom 676-8004

Willie Martin, Permit Engineer
(904) 892-8004/ Suncom 676-8004
Fort Walton sub-office

Beth Townsend, Permit Engineer
(904) 892-8004/ Suncom 676-8004
Fort Walton sub-office

Dan Rogers, Panama City Maintenance
3633 Highway 390
Panama City, FL 32405
(904) 872-4490/ Suncom 777-4490
Bay, Gulf & Calhoun Counties

Faith Skipper, Marianna Maintenance
2956 Correctional Road
Marianna, FL 32448
(904) 482-9546/ Suncom 789-9546
Jackson, Holmes, & Washington Counties

Donnie Phillips, Tallahassee Maintenance
2612 Springhill Road
Tallahassee, FL 32310
(904) 922-5626/ Suncom 278-5626
Leon, Franklin, Wakulla, Gadsen, Jefferson & Liberty Counties

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