

May 30, 2018

The Honorable Priscilla Trace
Manatee County Government
1112 Manatee Avenue West
Bradenton, FL 34205-1000



Dear Commissioner Trace,

The Manatee Chamber of Commerce supports the proposed amendments to the County Comprehensive Plan. The recommendations submitted by County staff and S&ME Inc. bring forth the necessary changes that provide opportunities for creative solutions to address the affordable housing crisis, in addition to community revitalization through redevelopment.

The lack of affordable housing stock in our community and the obstacles this creates for our businesses to attract and retain talent has been a common theme at recent Chamber roundtables and the Chamber's Leadership Retreat. Advocating for diverse housing options for our community's workforce is a Chamber priority. The Chamber's Infill Committee, Downtown Redevelopment Committee and Attainable Housing Task Force continue efforts to address this critical issue, by facilitating dialogue between key stakeholders, elected officials, government staff, and business and organization leaders.

Similar to the award winning Urban Corridors Plan adopted by the Board of County Commissioners last year, the proposed changes will apply countywide and seek to increase density and mixed-use development at activity nodes while providing a shorter, less expensive, more predictable development review and approval process. The Chamber believes that this initiative supports the ULI report and the goals of the County for reinvestment in the urban areas of the County, in addition to providing workforce-housing solutions.

We understand it is not the responsibility of government to solve the workforce housing issue, however; government does play a key role. We believe that adoption of the proposed amendments to the County Comprehensive Plan is a necessary first step to begin the process to address this important issue.

Redevelopment will substantially increase tax revenue, and coupled with reinvestment through the Southwest County Tax Increment Finance District, will allow the County to leverage its resources to further spur revitalization efforts. We believe these efforts will contribute to the retention of our current and future workforce by creating economic opportunities and lifestyle choices through a diverse mix of housing options, infrastructure, multi-modal transportation, social and business opportunities.

As our land development code and comprehensive plan evolve, we encourage continued efforts to promote smart and responsible urban infill and redevelopment, this type of revitalization will enhance our community's quality of life and build a strong business environment.

The Chamber appreciates your consideration of our recommendation.

Sincerely,



Darci Duncan
Chairman of the Board