

# **CITY OF PANAMA CITY, FLORIDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**



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# INTRODUCTION

The City of Panama City, Florida's Comprehensive Plan is a foundational document and blueprint for the city's long-term growth, development, and resource management. Mandated by Chapter 163 of the Florida Statutes and the State of Florida's *Growth Management Act*, the plan ensures compliance with state planning objectives while fostering sustainable and orderly growth. The Panama City Local Comprehensive Plan is structured around several interrelated elements, each addressing a specific aspect of the city's development:

- 1. Future Land Use Element** – Establishes a framework for guiding land use patterns and development in Panama City, aligning with the Comprehensive Plan's goals, objectives, and policies. It defines Future Land Use categories, including Preservation, Residential, Mixed Use, and Industrial, with specific density, intensity, and allowable uses tailored to each category. The document includes detailed overlay districts, such as the Goose Bayou, Huckleberry Creek, and Naval Support Activity (NSA) Panama City Military Influence Overlay District, to address unique development needs, environmental protection, and compatibility with military operations. Policies emphasize sustainable development, energy-efficient land use, historic preservation, public access to waterfronts, stormwater management, and revitalization of blighted areas while balancing economic growth with environmental conservation and property rights. The plan ensures coordination with stakeholders, compliance with state regulations, and protection of natural and historic resources.
- 2. Transportation Element** – Outlines Panama City's plan for establishing and maintaining a safe, efficient, and multimodal transportation system to meet current and future needs. It emphasizes promoting compact, connected development with a mix of transportation options, including biking, walking, and transit, while reducing vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions. Key objectives include implementing a concurrency management system, encouraging urban infill and redevelopment, improving mobility through the Forest Park District Mobility Plan, and coordinating land use with transportation infrastructure. The plan also prioritizes pedestrian and bicycle facilities, regulates roadway access, and requires developers to construct paved streets and sidewalks. Coordination with the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) and adherence to FDOT standards are key strategies for achieving these goals.
- 3. Housing Element** – Outlines policies to ensure the availability of safe, sanitary, and affordable housing in Panama City for all income groups. It emphasizes fostering public-private partnerships, incentivizing affordable housing development, and promoting a mix of housing types, including accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and special needs housing. The element supports the elimination of substandard housing through rehabilitation, code enforcement, and redevelopment within Community Redevelopment Areas (CRAs). It also prioritizes public infrastructure improvements, sustainable housing practices, and energy-efficient construction standards. Additionally, the plan focuses on protecting stable neighborhoods, preventing blight, and coordinating residential development with adequate public facilities and services to accommodate future population growth.
- 4. Utilities Element** – Outlines Panama City's strategies for providing essential public facilities and services to meet current and future population demands. It addresses sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water, and natural groundwater aquifer recharge. Key objectives include maintaining adequate sewer and water capacity, ensuring compliance with concurrency

standards, promoting water conservation, and reducing stormwater pollution. The plan sets priorities for upgrading, expanding, and maintaining infrastructure, including stormwater management systems and solid waste facilities, while coordinating land use with utility availability to discourage urban sprawl. It also emphasizes protecting the Floridan Aquifer through land use restrictions in high recharge areas and encouraging sustainable practices like Florida-Friendly landscaping and water reuse.

- 5. Coastal Management Element** – Outlines policies to protect coastal resources, mitigate flood risks, and promote sustainable development in Panama City's coastal areas. It emphasizes regulating development to prevent damage to wetlands, marine habitats, and wildlife, while also improving stormwater management and shoreline protection. The plan prioritizes hurricane evacuation readiness, limits public expenditures in high-risk areas, and supports post-disaster redevelopment aligned with safety and environmental standards. It also promotes public waterfront access, coordinates with the Panama City Port Authority for sustainable port expansion, and encourages redevelopment of underutilized waterfront areas. Additionally, the element integrates strategies to address sea level rise, enhance flood resilience, and ensure intergovernmental collaboration for environmental protection and economic growth.
- 6. Recreation and Open Space Element** – outlines Panama City's commitment to providing equitable and adequate recreational opportunities and preserving open spaces. It emphasizes maintaining public access to recreational sites, water access points, and City-owned natural areas while ensuring facilities meet level-of-service standards. The plan encourages public-private partnerships, developer contributions for recreational spaces, and the acquisition of environmentally sensitive areas for passive recreation and preservation. Policies promote sustainable development practices, including low-maintenance designs, ecological restoration, and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles. Additionally, the element focuses on accessibility for all residents, including compliance with ADA requirements, and reinforces the City's commitment to conservation through initiatives like maintaining its "Tree City USA" designation.
- 7. Intergovernmental Coordination Element** – Outlines strategies for Panama City to collaborate with adjacent municipalities, Bay County, state and regional agencies, and the military to ensure efficient service delivery, resolve conflicts, and protect natural resources. It emphasizes coordination on land use, development planning, and levels of service through interlocal agreements, joint planning, and participation in regional forums. The plan prioritizes managing public facilities, protecting estuarine and groundwater resources, addressing stormwater and transportation issues, and ensuring public school capacity through collaboration with the Bay District School Board. It also includes disaster planning coordination with Bay County Emergency Management and supports compatibility with military operations at Naval Support Activity Panama City through land use regulations and joint initiatives.
- 8. Capital Improvements Element** – Establishes financial policies and a schedule for funding and constructing public facilities to meet Panama City's current and future needs while maintaining adopted level of service (LOS) standards. It prioritizes capital improvements based on public health and safety, capacity deficiencies, and growth needs, while ensuring developers contribute their fair share of infrastructure costs. The plan includes guidelines for managing public facility capacity, balancing concurrency, and coordinating with agencies on services such as transportation, water, sewer, drainage, and schools. It emphasizes maintaining fiscal responsibility through annual evaluations of capital needs, limited debt use, and funding mechanisms like impact fees. The element also incorporates school concurrency requirements and ensures coordination with the Bay County School Board to provide sufficient school capacity through a financially feasible 5-year capital improvement plan.

**9. Conservation Element** – Outlines strategies for the protection, conservation, and sustainable use of Panama City's natural resources. It emphasizes maintaining air and water quality, protecting wetlands, wildlife habitats, and marine ecosystems, and reducing soil erosion and stormwater pollution. The plan enforces strict development regulations, including wetland buffers, erosion control, and habitat management, while encouraging sustainable practices like water conservation, xeriscaping, and the use of reclaimed water. It promotes sustainable development through incentives for green building certifications (LEED or Florida Green Building Coalition) and clustering to preserve natural areas. Additionally, the element prioritizes collaboration with local and regional agencies to protect shared resources, reduce hazardous waste risks, and enhance public awareness of conservation efforts.

**10. Public School Facilities Element** – Establishes a framework for coordinating with the Bay District School Board to ensure the availability of adequate educational facilities for Panama City's current and future population. It outlines policies to manage development timing based on school capacity, promote the co-location of schools with parks and community facilities, and ensure safe and walkable access to schools. The plan emphasizes school concurrency requirements, joint planning for school sites and infrastructure, and sustainable design for educational facilities. It includes mechanisms for monitoring growth, assessing impacts on school capacity, and implementing mitigation strategies, such as proportionate share contributions from developers, to maintain adopted levels of service. Coordination between the City, School Board, and other agencies is prioritized to align school facility planning with residential development and community needs.

**11. Economic Development Element** – Focuses on fostering economic stability, creating job opportunities, and increasing per capita income in Panama City by supporting business growth, redevelopment, and workforce development. It emphasizes collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Alliance, and other partners to attract and retain businesses, promote tourism, and encourage infill development and redevelopment. The plan highlights providing necessary infrastructure, offering incentives, and developing industrial and commercial sites, including business parks. It also prioritizes environmentally responsible utilization of natural and water-related resources to support economic activities while protecting natural assets. Additionally, the City supports vocational and technical training to meet workforce demands and enhance entrepreneurial skills.

**12. Property Rights Element** – Ensures that Panama City respects judicially acknowledged and constitutionally protected private property rights in local decision-making processes. The policy emphasizes the rights of property owners to possess, control, use, develop, improve, and dispose of their property, as well as the right to privacy and the ability to exclude others. These rights are considered in accordance with state laws and local ordinances to maintain fairness and consistency in land use and development decisions.

These elements collectively address challenges and opportunities while ensuring Panama City can accommodate future development, provide essential public services, protect natural and cultural resources, and maintain a high quality of life for residents.

Serving as a roadmap for decision-making, the Comprehensive Plan shapes the city's physical, social, and economic landscape while integrating the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors. It reflects the city's commitment to balancing environmental preservation, economic development, and community well-being. Through careful planning and coordination with local, regional, and state

agencies, the plan promotes a resilient and thriving community that can adapt to changes in population, economy, and environmental conditions.

Ultimately, Panama City's Comprehensive Plan represents a shared vision for the future—one that protects private property rights, promotes economic opportunity, preserves natural resources, and fosters a vibrant, well-managed community for current and future generations. As a living document, it is regularly updated with public input to remain relevant and responsive to the city's evolving needs.