



Ocala

City Council: Work Session

Minutes

110 SE Watula Avenue
Ocala, FL 34471

www.ocalafl.gov

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

12:00 PM

RE: Vision 2050

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Roll Call**

Present: Mayor Ben Marciano
Pro Tem Jay A. Musleh
Council Member Kristen M. Dreyer
Council Member Barry Mansfield
Council President Ire J. Bethea Sr

Excused: Council Member James P. Hilty Sr

3. **Public Notice**

- **Public Notice for the February 10, 2026 City Council Work Session Meeting was posted on January 15, 2026**

4. **Topics for Discussion**

- 4a. Vision 2050

City Manager Pete Lee opened the workshop by noting that the Vision 2050 draft is a long-awaited update and an important step forward for the City. He explained that Vision 2050 serves as a recalibration of the previous Vision 2035 plan, which has been a critical tool in guiding priorities and implementing strategies over the years. Mr. Lee emphasized that the new vision will help maintain the community's desired character and set a blueprint for future growth.

Growth Management Director Jeff Shrum then provided a brief overview of the draft Vision 2050 plan. He introduced Planning Director Audrey Hill and consultant Ali Palmer from Kimley-Horn & Associates, who assisted in developing the plan. Mr. Shrum encouraged Council members to consider what their vision for 2050 looks like, posing questions about future development patterns, population and demographic changes, governance challenges, and transportation innovations. He stressed that while predicting 25 years ahead is difficult, the vision document provides essential guidance for shaping the City's future. Mr. Shrum concluded by turning the presentation over to planning staff for a detailed review of the draft Vision 2050.

Planning Director Aubrey Hale introduced the structure and purpose of the Vision 2050 document, explaining that it is divided into six sections, with the first five forming the

core of the plan. These sections include the story of the vision, citywide initiatives, focus areas, and key next steps for implementation. Mr. Hale noted that Vision 2050 builds upon Vision 2035, refining its principles and continuing its emphasis on economic diversification, vibrant neighborhoods, and a strong urban center.

He explained that the document identifies high-priority initiatives to be achieved within the next five years, followed by future considerations for six to ten years. Vision 2050 also introduces urban form opportunities, which focus on creating higher-density, mixed-use areas through context-driven, form-based codes rather than traditional zoning. State Road 40 was highlighted as a major corridor for connectivity and development.

Mr. Hale emphasized the community engagement process, noting that over 1,000 participants contributed input through outreach and focus groups. He also reviewed accomplishments from Vision 2035, including the consolidation of land use categories, adoption of form-based codes for downtown and midtown, and major updates to the comprehensive plan.

He concluded by stressing that Vision 2050 is a dynamic document that will require periodic updates. To support public access, he introduced a QR code that links to the plan and related resources.

Chief Planning Official Endira Madraveren focused on Section 2 of the Vision 2050 document, which addresses bringing the vision to life. She noted that many long-term goals from Vision 2035 have been accomplished and will continue to guide the City's future. Ms. Madraveren emphasized leveraging Community Redevelopment Agency funding before its sunset for projects such as the redevelopment of North Magnolia and streetscape improvements along major corridors. She also highlighted ongoing efforts to activate West Ocala through redevelopment of brownfield sites, including the Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place.

Ms. Madraveren described the extensive community engagement process, which included four citywide summits and 23 outreach sessions with strategic groups and departments. This input helped build consensus and shape the long-term implementation of Vision 2050.

Mr. Hale then discussed the role of consultants in the process, including Kimley-Horn and Urban3. Urban3 provided an analysis of land value economics and evidence-based design, revealing key insights such as the higher return on investment from mixed-use development compared to large single-use properties. Their findings showed that downtown mixed-use blocks generate significantly more value per acre than big-box retail sites, reinforcing the importance of infill development.

Mr. Hale also reviewed trends and projections, noting that Ocala's population is expected to grow by nearly 31 percent by 2050, reaching approximately 92,000 residents. He explained that Vision 2050 introduces four building blocks to guide growth: land use

and housing, mobility and connectivity, public and open spaces, and gateways. These components will shape citywide initiatives, focus areas, and opportunities for catalytic development and redevelopment.

Mr. Hale explained that the Ocala 2050 plan updates the earlier 2035 vision, keeping many of the same elements like complete streets, trails, land use, and the heat map. The major new feature is “urban form opportunities” marked by blue dots - areas where the city can encourage denser development to increase tax revenue. He then highlighted key action items, including updating the land development code, maintaining the capital improvement program, incentivizing infill development, refining special districts, using CRA tools for redevelopment, supporting workforce training, and evaluating annexation through ROI analysis. He also covered mobility priorities such as mobility fees, transportation project planning, expanding transit, supporting Rails-to-Trails, and improving pedestrian safety and complete streets.

Ms. Madraveren outlined actions for recreation, cultural spaces, gateways, and focus areas in the Ocala 2050 plan. She highlighted updating the parks master plan to assess park needs, identifying sites for new regional sports complexes, and creating a master plan for further improvements at Tusawilla Park. She described integrating open-space requirements into the development code and using mapping to guide future public art installations. She then covered gateway enhancements - developing a citywide plan, setting design standards, and improving key corridors like SR 40 and I-75. Finally, she reviewed four focus areas (East Ocala, Central Core, West Ocala, Airport), noting planned mixed-use development, catalytic sites, regional park opportunities, and trail connections, with emphasis on SR 40 as a major east-west corridor.

Mr. Hale reviewed the final focus areas in the Ocala 2050 vision. For the High-Intensity Central Core, he noted that earlier catalytic sites have already developed, so new potential redevelopment areas - especially Midtown, underused parking lots, and areas around Tusawilla Park - are now being identified. He emphasized strengthening connections along SR 40, extending complete streets into the hospital district, and updating older studies and the Tusawilla master plan.

In the West Ocala Focus Area, he highlighted MLK Avenue as the spine, with key catalytic intersections along SR 40 and US 27. Priorities include expanding the Heritage Trail, attracting essential industries like a grocery store, streamlining approvals, and using the CRA to support redevelopment.

For the Airport Focus Area, he described its industrial character, the need to activate city-owned airport industrial park property, improved roadway connections, and a strong community request for expanding SunTran fixed-route service to the airport.

He closed by outlining next steps: adopting the 2050 vision, amending the comprehensive plan, updating the outdated land-development code, aligning regulations with the new vision, and refreshing older master plans so they reflect current conditions

and future goals.

Council Member Musleh asked for clearer data on total city green space, noting that the public often confuses vacant land with parks, DRAs, and other open spaces. Mr. Hale said the 11% figure reflects only undeveloped land and does not include parks or DRAs. City Manager Lee added staff can calculate total green-space acreage and provide clearer reporting, which will be refined through the upcoming Recreation and Parks Master Plan update.

Mr. Lee emphasized that the vision is a guiding - not regulatory - document that helps prioritize the city's work program. He highlighted the importance of downtown, West Ocala, SR 40, the airport, and parks, and stressed aligning growth and redevelopment strategies with the Urban3 study, maintenance obligations, transportation planning, and careful annexation decisions. He added that refining permitting and inspection systems is essential for efficiency, and overall, the vision provides the tool needed to organize and advance these ambitious priorities.

Council Member Mansfield asked how the City can encourage redevelopment of privately owned downtown industrial properties. Mr. Lee explained that the updated vision identifies broader catalytic areas and that the City now has more tools, such as CRA programs and brownfield incentives, to help transition underused industrial sites. He said the City often works directly with property owners or through public-private partnerships to support redevelopment, noting similar approaches used for recent downtown projects.

Council Member Dreyer noted that the School Board is preparing to sell nearby surplus properties and encouraged the City to engage early so the sites can be redeveloped in ways that maximize value for the School Board and align with the City's vision.

Council Member Dreyer asked whether initiatives from the TDC's GAP Study were incorporated into the 2050 vision. Staff explained that while the study came in late and was not directly included, they were mindful of it during planning and can review it again to integrate any structurally compatible ideas. Mr. Hale added that some urban-form opportunity areas were influenced by earlier conversations related to the GAP Study, particularly in the southwest.

Mayor Maricano asked how the 2050 Vision should guide annual City priorities. Mr. Lee explained that the vision functions as a toolbox: some initiatives are ongoing, while others will shift in priority as projects are completed and community needs evolve. He noted that tools like the CRA, form-based codes, and corridor plans will continue to guide work, and priorities may change year to year. Mr. Shrum added that the Transportation Improvement Program and the Capital Improvement Program provide the annual mechanism to align capital projects with the long-term vision.

Council Member Dreyer asked whether any single city serves as a model for the 2050

Vision. Mr. Lee responded that no single place fits perfectly, but several cities offer useful components or best practices, such as Greenville (SC), Panama City, Huntsville, Winter Park, and Winter Garden. He emphasized that Ocala must adapt ideas to its own character, noting strong “bones” for continued downtown growth. He highlighted ongoing needs such as connectivity improvements across SR 40, enhanced walkability, and increasing downtown residents, workers, and visitors to support a more vibrant, 16-hour-a-day downtown.

Council Member Musleh praised the inclusion of both the airport and east-side areas in the vision, noting the airport district’s long-untapped potential and urging continued focus on activating the airport industrial park. Mr. Shrum said the vision is designed to align with the airport’s master plan and future passenger-service opportunities. Council President Bethea commented that recent West Ocala investments, such as West Oak, Water Recharge Park, and the Mary Sue Rich Center, show how vision work becomes tangible progress, and emphasized continuing efforts on connectivity, housing, and redevelopment in that area. Council Members noted that Ocala has drawn from other cities’ successful ideas and that this draft provides a strong foundation for moving into the 2050 planning phase.

Mr. Hale encouraged Council members to review the draft vision document, send any edits or suggestions within the next few weeks, and noted staff is preparing to bring a final version forward soon. Mr. Shrum added that the Planning Commission had just reviewed the draft and that public hearings are expected around April or May, with public feedback available through the posted QR code. Mr. Lee noted a few inaccuracies still need to be cleaned up before wider release. Council President Bethea requested a media effort to notify the public about the QR code and feedback opportunity, and staff agreed.

5. Adjournment

Adjourned at 1:08 PM

Minutes

Ire J. Bethea Sr.
Council President

Angel B. Jacobs
City Clerk