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TERRA FIRMA

YOUR GUIDE FOR SOLID LAND USE PLANNING

APRIL 2008

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WELCOME

Welcome to the debut issue of *Terra Firma*. We have created this newsletter to provide you with the very latest news and information about land planning trends and issues. Our goal is that you will use it as a resource to learn about breakthroughs and updates as well as how you can benefit from our unique brand of planning.

Celebrating our one-year anniversary last month, Land Planning Solutions focuses on comprehensive and current planning, rural land stewardship planning consultation, variances, rezoning, due diligence, land entitlement strategies, permitting and project management throughout Florida.

I hope you will find *Terra Firma* informative and enlightening - and most importantly, helpful in discovering your land planning solutions.

Allison D. Megrath, AICP
Principal

MEGRATH A FLORIDA CHAPTER DELEGATE AT NATIONAL APA CONFERENCE

Principal Allison Megrath will attend the American Planning Association's (APA) 100th national conference in Las Vegas, Nevada April 27 through May 1 as one of the Florida Chapter's eight delegates. More than 6,000 planners nationwide are expected to attend the world's premier planning event.

As a member of the Legislative and Policy Committee, Megrath and other planners nationwide have been charged with developing a policy guide on planning and climate change - a complex and important issue that elected officials at all levels of government are actively looking for practical ideas and proposals to address.

Chapters are allotted delegates based on their proportionate representation of APA membership. The input of chapter members is vital to the process of developing a policy guide. The guides form the foundation of advocacy work and outline core policy principles that guide APA and its work planners. Delegates are chosen based upon member recommendations. This is the second time in the past three years that Megrath has been selected for this important leadership position, having represented Florida's planner in San Antonio for the 2006 National APA Conference.

WMBE CERTIFICATION EARNED

Land Planning Solutions earned its Women & Minority Business Enterprise (WMBE) certification from the State of Florida Office of Supplier Diversity. The certification program was established to give minority businesses a competitive advantage in obtaining opportunities for government contracts.

The WMBE designation also enhances Land Planning Solution's partnership opportunities for consultant teams to contribute to a minority component while pursuing requests for proposals and qualifications.

Please contact us today for more information about how we can partner with you.

THE FUTURE OF FLORIDA'S HEARTLAND

The Florida Heartland is a region of Florida located to the north and west of Lake Okeechobee, composed of six inland non-metropolitan counties - Highlands, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, and Okeechobee counties.

The region is primarily rural in nature, with the primary economic driver being agriculture. Important products grown in this area include tomatoes, beef, milk, sugarcane, row crops and citrus. Tourism and fishing are also important to the area where the *12 Hours of Sebring*, an American Le Mans Series race is the largest tourist attraction and Lake Okeechobee and Lake Istokpoga attract fishers worldwide to the area.

But, the old face of the Heartland is changing, and not necessarily for the worse.

With the amount of land along Florida's coastline diminishing and the cost of development in those areas rising, developers are seeking alternative locations for future projects. Many current Florida residents and migrants coming to the Sunshine State are growing weary of the constant threat of hurricanes and the rapidly rising cost of homeowner's insurance. They too, are seeking a home in the interior of the state. There is still plenty of agricultural land and open space ripe for development in the Heartland.

Many people are anxious about their area being developed and resembling the continuous development patterns seen on both of Florida's coasts. This is an understandable concern. The key lies in balancing future development with the preservation and conservation of Florida's agricultural and natural resources. Programs such as Rural Land Stewardship, Sector Plans and creative Comprehensive Plan amendments that raise the bar from amendments of the past. Providing for the preservation of large corridors of land to enable large mammals and wildlife to move freely, affording farmers opportunities and incentives to remain in agriculture, and the responsible planning of entire communities, designed to be compact, walkable and sustainable are good things and *they can coexist*.

Let's not be so narrow minded to assume that if we don't plan for growth people will stop moving to Florida. That never happens. Instead, we have opportunities to *plan* for them to come, to *plan* for where they can live and work, to *plan* for preservation of natural resources and agriculture for the benefit of future generations.



MEGRATH TO PRESENT AT 2008 STATE PLANNING CONFERENCE

The Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association Conference Planning Committee awarded Allison Megrath and her team a presentation spot at the 2008 Florida Planning Conference in Miami. The conference, held in different communities throughout the state annually, is widely attended by planners from all over Florida.

The 2008 conference will be held September 10-13 at the Intercontinental Hotel in Miami. Megrath, together with colleagues Stacy Ranieri of Firefly Group, and Mel Meeker of Hesperidis Group, will present a session entitled "The Project Vs. Public Paradigm: What Piece is Missing from the Puzzle?" The session will outline how the success of a project depends largely on having the right team of consulting professionals.

Megrath and her team will help the attendees understand

how using a strategic outreach and education plan benefit your project and help it from being held hostage the public. Connecting with the community early in planning process saves time, energy, and money. Your success is our success. Visit www.floridaplanning.org learn more about the 2008 APA Florida Conference. Hope to see you there!

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