Acknowledgments

This plan was funded by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity through the Community Planning Technical Assistance grant program. The East Central Florida Regional Planning Council received the grant on behalf of the Town of Pierson to conduct the study. We would like to thank the following individuals who donated time and resources to help make the planning effort a success.

Samuel Bennett, Chairman, Pierson Town Council
Jim Smith, Planning Consultant
Rob Ehrhardt, Volusia County Economic Development
Pedro Leon, Volusia County Economic Development
David Griffis, Volusia Agricultural Center, UF/IFAS
Carmen Spelorzi, Pierson Town Clerk
Sue Elliott, Elliott Vineyards
Holly Baker, Farmworker Association of Florida
Linnie Richardson, Pierson Planning Commission
James Stansbury, Department of Economic Opportunity
Barbara Lencewski, Department of Economic Opportunity
Votran, Volusia Bus Transit Provider

ECFRPC Staff
Hugh Harling, Jr., Executive Director
Andrew Landis, Director of Policy and Planning
Tara McCue, Director of Planning and Comm. Dev.
Luis Nieves-Ruiz, Economic Dev. Program Manager
Pegge Parker, Executive/Office Assistant
Jessica Benn, Communications Specialist
# Table of Contents

Project Overview ................................................................................................................................................... 4

Existing Conditions Analysis ................................................................................................................................. 5
  Demographics .................................................................................................................................................... 5
  Natural and Recreational Resources .................................................................................................................. 6
  Land Uses and Commercial Core ....................................................................................................................... 7
  Transportation and Mobility ............................................................................................................................... 12
  Airport ............................................................................................................................................................ 14
  Public Utilities .................................................................................................................................................. 14
  Public Schools and Safety .................................................................................................................................. 16

Pierson’s Fern Industry ......................................................................................................................................... 16
  Regional Challenges in Agriculture ................................................................................................................... 17
  Labor Force ..................................................................................................................................................... 18
  Economic Profile .............................................................................................................................................. 18

Market Assessment ............................................................................................................................................ 21
  Study Area and Methodology .......................................................................................................................... 21
  Economic Agglomerations ................................................................................................................................ 22

Community and Stakeholder Outreach .................................................................................................................. 24

Crop Selections for Volusia County ..................................................................................................................... 27

Economic Development Map ............................................................................................................................... 31

Recommendations for Economic Development .................................................................................................. 31
  Land Use ......................................................................................................................................................... 31
  Wastewater Infrastructure ................................................................................................................................ 32
  Pierson Municipal Airport ................................................................................................................................ 32
  Transportation Infrastructure ............................................................................................................................... 33

Next Steps ........................................................................................................................................................... 36

Implementation Plan: Recommended Goals, Objectives, and Strategies ............................................................... 37

References ........................................................................................................................................................... 42

Appendix 1: Town of Pierson Basemap .................................................................................................................. 43
Appendix 2: Town of Pierson Businesses (based on utility records) ........................................................................ 44
Appendix 3: Five-Mile Assessment Area Industry Agglomerations ...................................................................... 47
Appendix 4: Stakeholder Outreach Advertisement and Minutes ............................................................................ 48
Appendix 5: Planning Commission Meeting Minutes April 14, 2015 ................................................................ 49
Appendix 6: Town Council Meeting Minutes April 14, 2015 ............................................................................. 53
Introduction

The Town of Pierson is a rural community located in northwest Volusia County with a population of over 1700 residents. Pierson, settled in 1876 and incorporated in 1926, is located approximately 60 miles north of the City of Orlando and 35 miles west of Daytona Beach. The primary industry is agriculture with a heavy emphasis on ornamental fern production. The fern industry has sustained the town for over a century and is complemented by the production of other ornamental foliage crops sold for use in flower arrangements that are shipped domestically and internationally. Pierson has branded itself for many decades as “The Fern Capital of the World”.

The fern industry is currently threatened due to anthracnose, a group of fungal diseases that affect a variety of plants in warm humid climates. The diseases are characterized by a wide range of symptoms including leaf spots, blotches or distortion, defoliation, shoot blights, and twig cankers and dieback. Anthracnose requires farmers to spray additional pesticides to combat the growing problem. These protections add significantly to the cost of fern production, and the industry may be reaching a tipping point where fern growing may no longer be economically viable. In addition to the concern regarding the financial feasibility of disease abatement, the fern industry’s future in Pierson is dependent on several other factors including climate, land values, the availability of a labor force, and international competition in the fern market.

As a result, many Pierson growers have begun to consider new opportunities in agriculture. Fertile soils attract new producers to the area, and niche operations in viticulture (grapes) and food production have sprung up across the town. There is an ongoing conversation among fern growers about diversifying crop selections to support a more diverse agriculture-based local economy.

In addition to its agricultural focus, Pierson is located in proximity to rich natural and recreational resources that make the town attractive to outdoor and rural enthusiasts. These assets are attractive to new residents, businesses, and visitors alike seeking an authentic Florida lifestyle or experience.

Project Overview

The East Central Florida Regional Planning Council was awarded a Community Planning Technical Assistance Grant from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity to fund an Economic Development Strategic Plan for the Town of Pierson. The plan is the result of community outreach
efforts that included public meetings, stakeholder interviews with economic development professionals and agricultural experts, dialogue with growers in the fern industry, and input from residents and elected officials including the Town Council and the town’s Planning Committee.

This report builds upon the goals, objectives, and policies contained in the town’s adopted Comprehensive Plan that was completed in 2012. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide growth and development activities in Pierson and has been a valuable document to inform the Economic Development Strategic Plan.

This report has been divided into several sections. The Existing Conditions Analysis includes data and information on current land uses, transportation facilities, water resources, natural systems, and the town’s economy. The commercial core has been identified and mapped to better understand the potential for economic activity in the town’s historic center. The Economic Profile and Market Assessment includes an evaluation of the town’s economic industries and discusses strategies to grow existing sectors and potential opportunities for new or complementary industries in Pierson. The report study also examines some potential crop selections suitable for west Volusia County. Lastly, the Implementation Strategy includes recommendations to diversify and strengthen the town’s economy, tax base, and community development efforts.

Existing Conditions Analysis

Demographics

According to the U.S. Census the population recorded for the 1990 U.S. Census for Pierson was 2,988 but was adjusted to 1,148 due to the erroneous inclusion of a resident group quarters facility. The reliability of the 2000 Census population data (2,596) was questionable and may have been based on the same erroneous information. The 2010 Census population decline to 1,736 residents (486 households) was drastic (33% decrease) and seems to confirm that both the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census reports were inaccurate. The town has encouraged The University of Florida’s Shimberg Center for Housing Studies demographers to investigate this error and to adjust their figures accordingly.

Pierson’s population is 57.5% white, 35% Hispanic, and 4.8% African American. Much of the Hispanic population is comprised of farmworker families that support the agricultural operations in the town. The Farmworker Association of Florida has an office in Pierson, one of their five locations throughout the state. There are still descendants of the original Pierson family living in and around the town, and many Pierson residents have deep roots in the community that go back five or six generations.

The median age in Pierson is 30.7 years, significantly lower than the statewide average of 40.3 years. The estimated median household income in 2012 was just $25,037, also lower than the state average.
Natural and Recreational Resources

Pierson is located in close proximity to rich natural resources including one of the largest lakes in the state, Lake George, the Ocala National Forest, Lake George State Forest, and the St. Johns River System and its tributaries. The town also contains three city parks, Pierson Town Park which includes Chipper Jones Family Sports Complex, Nixon Park, and the Pierson Municipal Park on Lake Pierson (see Map 1). The proximity of these natural and recreational resources to the town represents a significant asset for Pierson, and taking advantage of this unique location will be important to its future success.

Map 1: Natural and Recreational Resources
Land Uses and Commercial Core
The town consists of approximately 10 square miles of which .6 square miles is water. Pierson is elevated approximately 79 feet above sea level and is characterized by fertile soils suitable for crop production. The town is comprised primarily of agricultural and residential properties and includes a small commercial core of businesses that support the surrounding population (Map 4). Civic uses are also present in the commercial core including the Town Hall, which is co-located with BB&T Bank.
Pierson Family Restaurant
Pierson Church in residential neighborhood
Pierson Pharmacy
Pierson Church in residential neighborhood
Vacant property along U.S. Highway 17
Taqueria in Pierson
Pierson’s Comprehensive Plan is current and was last updated in 2012 after the completion of an Evaluation and Appraisal Report.

Six important principles drive the town’s Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Element:

**Comprehensive Plan General Guidelines and Principles**

1. The Town should continue to reflect a predominately agricultural and rural residential character.

2. Continuation and expansion of agriculture should be promoted. In support of agriculture as a legitimate business activity, all customary accessory uses, including farmworker housing, should be permitted in agricultural areas, Agricultural areas should not be permanently restricted from conversion to other uses; however, their conversion should be managed to ensure it is timely and appropriate.

3. Residential areas of a density greater than one dwelling per acre (non-agricultural areas) should be protected from encroachment by incompatible land uses. Whenever possible,
gradual transitions and/or buffers should be provided between such residential areas and agricultural or commercial activities. Side or rear lot lines are favored over local streets as boundaries between residential areas and incompatible land uses. A collector street is favored over lot lines as a boundary.

4. Except for agriculture and related development, new development should be focused toward designated areas closely surrounding the existing “town core” in support of the State’s policy to minimize urban sprawl.

5. Land use and development adjacent to sites of historic significance should be designed so that the scale, intensity, mass and height of buildings and newly introduced land uses are compatible with the surrounding area. Similarly the building footprints and orientation should be arranged to preserve and enhance the significant attributes of such historic sites.

6. Land use and development should occur in a manner that maintains the essential ecological systems, and particularly, preserves as much as possible of the significant attributes of the natural environment, including the undulating topography, the freshwater marshes, the clarity and purity of the surface water, and natural drainage and aquifer recharge functions of the land.

These guiding principles are reflected throughout the town’s plan. According to the Existing Land Use Profile, in 2012 57.62% (3,858 acres) of the total land area in Pierson was Agriculture or Timberland and 10.71% was categorized as Residential. Vacant and Undeveloped parcels accounted for 26.12% (1,749 acres) of the town’s land with commercial, industrial, and public/institutional uses combing for 5.5%. As shown on Map 4 (page 12), there are a number of vacant parcels in the town’s commercial core that could be attractive for development in the future.

Housing in Pierson is predominantly single-family homes. Approximately 25% of the housing stock consists of mobile homes. The table on page 11 (Figure 1) shows the projected maximum residential units that undeveloped land in Pierson could accommodate. In their Comprehensive Plan the Town states that a more realistic projection of the number of residential units that it can accommodate is 287.
Map 3: Future Land Use

![Town of Pierson - Future Land Use](image)

**Figure 1: Projected Maximum Residential Units**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future Land Use (FLU) Designations Accommodating Residential Development</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Maximum Density Allowed (units per acre)</th>
<th>Projected Maximum Residential Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture &amp; Rural Residential Use</td>
<td>3,794.17</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Density Residential Use</td>
<td>17.23</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Density Residential Use</td>
<td>156.73</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Density Mobile Home Use</td>
<td>726.44</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2,179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Density Residential Use</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Land Use</td>
<td>1,247.88</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Potential Maximum Threshold of Residential Units
For each FLU designation stated above multiply column 2 acreage by column 3 maximum density of units per acre to determine maximum units that can be accommodated within each FLU designation.

3,329 Units

Source: Town of Pierson Comprehensive Plan, 2012
Transportation and Mobility
The town is bisected by Highway 17 which runs north/south through the commercial core of Pierson. Much of the town has a gridded roadway network that includes multiple access points to Highway 17. Volusia Avenue/County Road 3 runs parallel to Highway 17 one block to the west and helps to define and anchor the commercial core. Volusia Avenue/CR 3 was the historic main street for Pierson, and many of the historic structures and civic uses were situated along this roadway. A multiuse trail is proposed for Volusia Ave. as part of the Rivers to Sea Loop trail system.

The town is served by the Votran bus transit system (Route 24). A railroad line weaves through the center of town from north to south between Volusia Avenue and Highway 17. This amenity was an important asset to the town’s early development and included passenger rail service, but in recent decades the line has only
accommodated freight traffic passing through Pierson. No stops or stations currently exist, and no passenger rail service is planned for the future. Map 5 below depicts the existing transportation system.

The town currently has limited bicycle and pedestrian facilities but hopes to improve this network in the coming years (Map 6). Sidewalks have recently been installed around Taylor High-Middle School in response to residents’ concerns. Highway 17 includes a sidewalk through a portion of the town’s commercial core. A multifunctional trail is planned for Volusia Avenue/County Road 3 adjacent to the commercial core.
Map 6: Bike and Pedestrian Facilities

Airport
The Town of Pierson owns and operates one of the few remaining grass strip airports in the country located off Highway 17 to the north of Taylor Middle-High School. Pierson Municipal Airport is a unique resource and is well used by aviation enthusiasts and glider operators from Central Florida and elsewhere.

Public Utilities
Public water lines exist throughout the majority of the town’s corporate limits (Map 7). The Town is the sole provider of water to its service area. The existing potable water system includes two wells located at the southwest corner of the Taylor Middle/High school property. The town is exploring funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for a third well and has retained a consultant to prepare a Water Facility Upgrade report that includes three alternatives for construction of a new well.

Pierson water usage is very low at an average of 55 gallons per day per capita. The town has accordingly amended their Level of Service (LOS) for potable water to 56 gallons per day per capita. The updated Comprehensive Plan concludes that the Town’s current Consumptive Use Permit (CUP) is of adequate capacity to meet future projected needs.
The City has no public sewer system, and all homes and businesses rely on individual septic tanks. According to the Comprehensive Plan “In past years, the Town has considered development of a central sewage collection and treatment system. However, studies have not recommended one because of the relatively small population and the scattered, large-lot pattern of development. The nearest existing regional sewage treatment plant is located in Deland — approximately 18 miles from Pierson — making it economically unfeasible to extend sewer lines to Pierson. As noted in the Future Land Use Element, future residential development is expected to continue in accordance with the existing pattern. Given this pattern of residential development, septic tanks are believed to be the only economically feasible sewage treatment alternative for the Town through the next 20 years. Provided that septic tanks are properly maintained and inspected, septic tanks are expected to serve future as well as existing residential development without problems.

Due to the size of tanks and drainfields normally required to serve some types of commercial development, particularly restaurants and other high occupancy uses, the use of septic tanks in many instances, is not the most feasible alternative for wastewater treatment. For new commercial development and redevelopment the most feasible alternative may be small scale central sewer systems that generally would serve more than one use and occupy significantly less land area than is normally required for septic tanks/drainfields. Recent advances in wastewater treatment technology include compact, modular wastewater treatment systems that can be easily expanded to serve...
additional uses and can generate treated effluent that can be used for landscape irrigation. The use of small scale, modular systems would be very suitable for commercial development along the US Highway 17 corridor and would allow for the development of commercial uses like restaurants, supermarkets and hotels/motels. In addition, the combination of master stormwater management and small scale central sewer systems, both serving multiple commercial uses could result in an even more efficient use of land and encourage new commercial development in the Town and reduce the need to travel outside the Town to meet shopping needs.”

Public Schools and Safety

Two schools exist in the town, Pierson Elementary and Taylor Middle-High School. Taylor is a new school located adjacent to the northeast of the commercial core and across Highway 17 from Pierson Town Park and Pierson Elementary. Although some sidewalk improvements have occurred, mobility challenges continue to be a problem for students walking and biking to school. A multipurpose trail is proposed to run along Volusia Avenue to the west of Highway 17 within the commercial core. This roadway is heavily traveled by student pedestrians and currently has no sidewalk facilities available on either side of the street. The proposed trail would accommodate pedestrian and bicycle traffic and would be part of the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop trail system.

Pierson’s Fern Industry

Pierson’s fern industry has sustained the town for over a century. Three brothers from the Pierson family of Cromwell, Connecticut moved to Pierson in 1876 and several years later embraced the family fern business by establishing a farm in Florida.

Growers in Pierson typically do not market ferns for landscaping or houseplants, but instead sell fern leaves to complement fresh cut flower bouquets. This niche has enabled Pierson to distinguish its fern industry from other floriculture endeavors in the region. Over the past ten years the industry has consolidated due to fallout caused by the severity of the national economic downturn (aka the Great Recession), and while some growers have benefited from less competition, other significant challenges remain. Today the industry faces an uncertain future due to several factors. The disease Anthracnose threatens fern crops and requires the continued application of pesticides which in turn reduces profit margins. The domestic
market for fern leaves is unstable due in part to a decline in consumers sending fresh cut flowers for special occasions such as anniversaries or funerals. There is a heightened concern among growers about the ability to maintain a labor force to support the industry, especially if a large employer were to site in proximity to the town. Another issue facing rural farming communities nationwide is the significant increase in the average age of farmers, and this includes Pierson’s fern growers. Many younger, educated residents in Pierson see no future in the fern industry or agriculture in general and plan to work and establish themselves in other communities instead.

Additionally, the market price for fern leaves is almost the same today as it was thirty years ago. While wages for farmworkers, taxes, land values, and infrastructure costs have all increased substantially, the price at which fern leaves are sold has remained virtually unchanged. Fern growers face competition not only from other growers in the United States, but also increasingly from overseas suppliers.

**Regional Challenges in Agriculture**

Agriculture is more vulnerable to the whims of nature than any other major economic pursuit. The physical environment in East Central Florida is relatively hostile to outdoor crops. Infertile soils, floods alternating with long dry periods, hot summers, hurricanes, occasional freezes, weeds, parasites, and numerous plant and animal diseases all create problems for agriculture. In peninsular Florida, these conditions discouraged the kind of family farms that developed in other parts of the country. Instead, plantation agriculture and later specialty agriculture thrived, intended to produce crops for sale rather than subsistence. In a 1965 report by the ECFRPC specialty agriculture was said to “offer great opportunities for economic development in the region.” Although the same is

---

2050 Regional Vision for Agriculture

“Agriculture is critical to the region’s overall economy and health and is a key component of the Central Florida 2050 Regional Vision. Agriculture and agriculture-related business generate jobs for thousands of workers and are a major employment sector in the region. Central Florida’s existing agricultural lands enhance the character of much of the open space surrounding our region’s cities and towns and ensure a way of life for many of our residents. These lands provide open buffers to urban areas, vital sanctuaries for birds, plants, and animals, and permeable surfaces for the natural recharge of underwater aquifers. Nearly one-third of the region is covered in agricultural land, most of which is open pasture. As the region’s agricultural economy advances, agricultural lands will serve an important function - to provide a greater variety and supply of locally produced fresh food to meet a growing demand.

Agribusiness in Central Florida ensures that the livelihoods of nearly 340,000 workers employed in the industry continue and that 1.2 million acres of farmland are available to future generations. The 2050 Regional Vision is for a future that supports a sustainable agriculture and food system as vital to the region’s overall health and economy.”

- East Central Florida 2060 Strategic Regional Policy Plan
true today, the selection of crops may differ as specialty agriculture must respond to consumer trends.

Historically, agriculture has changed and adapted not only to weather conditions, but also to the emergence of new markets in other states and overseas that force competitive change. The region was known for pineapple crops in the late 1800s, before large-scale pineapple production began in the Caribbean and Central and South America. Similarly, Sanford was hailed as the “Celery Capital of the World” before the establishment of new markets elsewhere made celery farming less viable. Pierson should consider how changes in the fern industry will impact the long term viability of the fern market. The diversification of crop selections and the development of new industries would benefit the town and in turn strengthen its economic resiliency in the face of a natural disaster, major plant disease, or economic downturn.

**Labor Force**

One of the primary concerns of fern growers that was echoed by many participants during the stakeholder meetings and interviews conducted for the project was the long-term stability of a labor force to support fern businesses. There is a genuine anxiety throughout the fern community that one large employer could significantly impact growers’ ability to retain farmworkers as competition for employees increases. For example, a large Walmart distribution center was recently considered for a site north of Pierson, and this potential new development highlighted the fear among growers that farmworkers may be attracted by competitive wages and benefits packages offered by other businesses. The fern industry is reliant on low wage laborers. Some ferneries have explored the possibility of mechanized harvesting, but due to the delicate nature of fern leaves used for bouquets and the expense involved this option does not appear to be feasible.

As previously discussed, Pierson’s economy is focused primarily on agriculture. There are a number of existing businesses in the commercial core including many that accommodate residents’ daily needs. A list of Pierson’s existing businesses is provided in Appendix 2.

**Economic Profile**

The purpose of the economic profile is to examine the Pierson’s economic structure, or the distribution of economic activity by industry. The analysis identifies the largest sectors of the town’s economy and also provides a brief overview of Pierson’s agricultural industry, which includes plant growers and associated industries.

For this analysis, the ECFRPC used Infogroup’s Reference USA business database, which provides a list of more than 35 million businesses. All businesses within the vicinity of Pierson were selected, and efforts were made to verify their existence. However, due to the rural nature and size of Pierson, business verification can be difficult.

According to Infogroup, over 200 businesses are located within and near the Town of Pierson. For the purpose of economic analysis, businesses are classified according to their production processes using the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). This numbering system is comprised of 20 industry sectors, which can be further aggregated into 11 economic super sectors to simplify the
analysis. Figure 2 shows the distribution of businesses by economic super sector. The dominant super sectors for the study area are Trade, Transportation and Utilities (TTU), Other Services, and Professional and Business Services.

**Figure 2: Number of Businesses by NAICS Super Sector**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Super Sector</th>
<th>Number of Businesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trade, Transportation, and Utilities</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional and Business Services</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Health Services</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure and Hospitality</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources and Mining</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Activities</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Infogroup, 2014

With more than 75 businesses, the TTU category accounts for about 40 percent of all the businesses within Pierson. This super sector encompasses wholesale and retail merchants, transportation, and distribution services. The second largest super sector is Other Services. This category is comprised of machine repair businesses, churches, and personal care establishments such as beauty salons and barbershops. There are 43 businesses within this super sector in the study area. The third largest category is Professional and Business Services. It includes businesses that provide legal, accounting, and consulting services to firms and private individuals. They also provide services that support businesses day-to-day operations such as clerical and cleaning services. Other super sectors with more than ten establishments include Construction (17), Education and Health Services (15), Leisure and Hospitality (14), and Natural Resources and Mining (13). These categories account for 27 percent of Pierson’s businesses.
This economic profile serves to pinpoint the largest sectors of Pierson’s economy. However, it is important to differentiate between economic structure and economic base. The economic structure describes the general composition of local businesses, while the economic base is comprised of the industries that drive economic growth. These industries sell their goods and services outside the region, and thus generate an inflow of income used to sustain industries that serve local consumers. Moreover, these export or traded industries tend to agglomerate into networks of interrelated businesses often referred to as industry clusters.

As discussed previously, the Town of Pierson is known for its ferns and other nursery plants which are exported across the United States and abroad. Most of these agricultural operations are classified as Flower and Nursery Merchant Wholesalers (NAICS 424930) and Nursery and Tree Production (NAICS 111421) facilities. In the agglomeration, these establishments are considered producers. The outside demand for ferns and plants generates an additional need for businesses to assist with the production and shipment of these products. These types of businesses are known as suppliers. In Pierson, these include several trucking companies that specialize in transporting plants, plant packing operations, and social service organizations that provide assistance to farmworkers.

In total, Pierson’s Fernery/Nursery agglomeration is comprised of 43 businesses (Figure 3). This represents about 20 percent of all the town’s businesses. This is the only industry agglomeration in the vicinity, which is not surprising since this is a very small rural area.
Market Assessment

Study Area and Methodology
The purpose of this market assessment analysis is to develop a regional economic profile of the area and explore if there are any business agglomerations (often referred to as industry clusters) present. The Town of Pierson could then focus on attracting similar types of businesses to complement the region’s strengths and diversify its economy. To perform this study, ECFRPC staff created a five-mile buffer based on the town’s boundaries using ARCGIS software. Besides the Town of Pierson, the final market area includes parts of the Astor and Seville Census-Designated Places (Figure 4). The buffer was then uploaded to Infogroup’s ReferenceUSA.gov database and used to select all businesses in the area.

According to Infogroup, there are about 900 businesses located within the five-mile study area. This number is small and reflects the study area’s rural character. Figure 5 depicts the number of businesses by NAICS industry sector. It shows that the area’s economy is dominated by establishments within non-basic industries including single-family housing contractors, convenience stores, and churches. There were also a large number of establishments within the Unclassified (99) category.

Figure 5: Concentration of businesses by industry in Five-Mile Market Assessment Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry (2 Digit NAICS Code)</th>
<th>Number of Businesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Utilities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Construction</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-33 Manufacturing</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44-45 Retail Trade</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48-49 Transportation and Warehousing</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 Information</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 Finance and Insurance</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 Real Estate and Rental and Leasing</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 Management of Companies and Enterprises</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 Educational Services</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62 Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72 Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81 Other Services (except Public Administration)</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92 Public Administration</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99 Unclassified Establishments</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Infogroup, 2015
It is important to note that there are no significant differences between the Town of Pierson and the five-mile area’s industry structure (Figure 5). Economic structure is measured by looking at the share of establishments by industry. Both the Town of Pierson and the five-mile area show high concentrations of establishments within Trade, Transportation and Utilities, Construction, and Other Services industries. There are also a large number of unclassified establishments, most of which are agricultural in nature including many with Spanish names.

These similarities imply that the market assessment area’s economy is driven by the same industries as Pierson. Indeed, the ECFRPC identified a fernery/nursery cluster centered in the vicinity of the town. Because of the area’s natural assets, there is also a smaller grouping of businesses in the tourism/recreation sectors. These economic agglomerations are explained in more detail in the next section. The document’s appendix also includes information about the number of establishments by NAICS code for each particular agglomeration.

**Economic Agglomerations**

The fernery/foliage agglomeration is comprised of about 100 establishments, most of which are located in the vicinity of the Town of Pierson. These businesses fall mainly within two distinct categories: fern growers and trucking companies. According to Infogroup, there are 82 fern growers within the five-mile area. Most of these companies produce primarily fresh cut ferns and flowers for the wholesale floral industry. These cuts are sorted, treated and packed onsite. They are then shipped throughout the United States mainly using
refrigerated trucks. Several of these nurseries have also diversified their activities. These include the import of plants from Central America and the onsite manufacturing of wreaths and garlands (Figure 7).

One interesting characteristic of the region’s fernery agglomeration is the lack of a large supplier base. The ECFRPC was able to identify 17 trucking companies that specifically serve the nursery industry, however, there were no other suppliers such as fertilizer companies, garden supply companies, or similar businesses. This could partly be due to the self-reliance of the fernery owners and the type of commodities produced by these companies. There could be opportunities to diversify and grow the local agricultural supply base to bring more jobs to the area.

**Figure 7: Examples of work done by Pierson Fern Growers**


The study area also encompasses parts of the unincorporated community of Astor and the St. Johns River. Because of its geographic location, the area has become a vacation center for fishing and water recreation enthusiasts. There are at least five fishing camps and RV campgrounds located in the area. There are also several marinas and pontoon boat rental establishments that cater to weekend visitors. Recreational opportunities are not limited to river activities. Further inland, the unincorporated community of Barberville also boasts several unique attractions including the **Pioneer Settlement** and the **Roadside Yard Art and Produce** (Figure 8). Finally, there are horse ranches in the area that provide overnight accommodations and trail rides.


Rural communities like Pierson are using cultural and heritage tourism to diversify their economies. To achieve this goal, the town would have to develop activities and experiences that complement the area’s current attractions. These include developing farm tours and fruit picking farms and utilizing some of the current facilities to host weddings and similar events. Tourism would not be a substitute for the fernery/nursery industry, but it can provide additional opportunities to generate income for the area’s farmers.
Finally, economic development in rural communities needs to follow a holistic approach that promotes collaboration among different stakeholders. While tourism provides a good opportunity for economic diversification, it should not be considered the only option. According to the Center for Small Communities, rural communities can also benefit from creating a successful entrepreneurial environment. This will be achieved by encouraging residents to turn their passions into successful businesses. East Central Florida has a strong entrepreneurial support system backed by local governments and educational institutions. The Town of Pierson could work with these partners to develop after-school entrepreneurship programs and to help identify a location to create a small business incubator focused on agriculture.

Community and Stakeholder Outreach

Windshield Tour
The project commenced in September 2014 with a windshield tour of Pierson led by Sue Elliott, local community leader and owner of Elliott Vineyards. Votran provided free transportation for the event. The group was joined by Pierson Town Council Chairman Samuel Bennett, Florida Department of Economic Opportunity representatives James Stansbury and Ashley Porter, ECFRPC Executive Director Hugh Harling, Town Clerk Carmen Spelorzi, and consultant Town Planner Jim Smith. The tour provided valuable insight into the town and helped kick off the planning effort. Ms. Elliott is well attuned to the needs and challenges facing Pierson and shared a wealth of information that helped to guide this study.

Meetings and Interviews
Two public stakeholder meetings were held on April 14, 2015 to obtain community input for the project. Both meetings were publicly noticed per state law and advertised throughout the town to make as many residents aware as possible. Each meeting included over an hour and a half dedicated to discussion of the project and provided community members and elected officials with a forum to strategize on community needs and opportunities to attract economic development. The Town Council meeting was especially well attended with many different ages and viewpoints represented. Three of the five Town Councilmen operate fern businesses and shared their views on the fern industry and community development needs in the commercial core. Many recommendations were considered during these meetings, and this valuable participation has helped to guide the recommendations included in this plan. Minutes for both meetings are attached as Appendices 8 and 9.
Stakeholder interviews were also conducted as part of the community engagement process. On April 6, 2014 a meeting was held with Volusia County’s Department of Economic Development staff to gather input into the county’s economic priorities. Project planners also met with the Director of Volusia County’s Agriculture Center and another staff member on April 2, 2014 to better understand the programs their organization (University of Florida’s Institute for Agricultural Sciences) can offer residents of Pierson and also to discuss new crops that are under cultivation in the county. The Center offers many educational courses and often free advice to novice and experienced growers on methods to sustainably grow various crops. Another group that was engaged was the Farmworker Association of Florida, which has one of its five state headquarters in Pierson, to gain an understanding of the needs of farmworker families that are employed in the fern industry. An effort has been made to connect the Volusia Agriculture Center with the Farmworker Association and the Town staff in Pierson to assist with their new community garden.

The community outreach component of the project yielded significant information that helped to shape the goals, recommendations, and strategies put forth in this plan.

**Figure 9: Stakeholder Group Meeting Summary Table/ April 14, 2015 Pierson Town Council**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Group Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Need for public wastewater system to attract new businesses</td>
<td>Research funding sources including state and federal grants for wastewater systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need for improved transportation infrastructure including widening of arterial primary roadway (US Hwy 17) and bike and pedestrian facilities</td>
<td>Secure grants from the River-to-Sea TPO to plan for multimodal improvements; work with TPO to add widening of US Hwy 17 to 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan projects list; consider adopting setback requirements for buildings fronting US Highway 17 in anticipation of future expansion of the roadway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capitalize on existing assets such as the town’s grass strip airport</td>
<td>Market this resource and consider an expansion to accommodate additional commercial and recreational uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of roadway connectivity</td>
<td>Establish a better street connectivity network to reduce local traffic on arterials in the town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use</td>
<td>No multifamily development currently exists in Pierson, and both</td>
<td>Consider changes to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Vision</td>
<td>The town lacks a clear shared community vision for the future.</td>
<td>Secure funding to conduct an inclusive community visioning process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The town’s identity not only includes the fern industry but also its rural heritage and main street charm.</td>
<td>Update the town’s branding and marketing campaign to capitalize on the area’s natural and recreational amenities and main street character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fear that more population will bring more crime to the community</td>
<td>Incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles where appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Events</td>
<td>Desire to see more community events in Pierson</td>
<td>Work with the Town Clerk, Town Council, and residents to develop new events that celebrate Pierson’s character, annual holidays, and the area’s recreational assets. The nearby an similarly sized Town of Astor could serve a model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of event space in the town</td>
<td>Consider construction of a covered arena for events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>Anticipate new opportunities in agriculture as the fern industry continues to be an important focus in Pierson</td>
<td>Work with fern growers and the farmworker community to encourage new agriculture based businesses that support the town’s rural heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need to attract higher wage jobs outside of agriculture to provide opportunities for a better educated new generation of Pierson residents</td>
<td>Work with economic development organizations to attract new industries that will provide future jobs to Pierson’s youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of commerce in Pierson</td>
<td>Improve infrastructure to attract new businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need for economic diversification</td>
<td>Attract new businesses and non-farming industries that will coexist well with the existing fern industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need for educational and vocational opportunities</td>
<td>Work with the Volusia County Agriculture Center – UF/IFAS to market their training programs; work with Volusia County Economic Development to attract a business incubator for farmers or other types of start-up companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General concern among growers that the fern industry could be threatened if major employer reduces necessary labor force</td>
<td>Work with farmworker community to identify incentives to retain workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Farmworker Community**

The Town of Pierson has relied for decades on farmworkers, typically from Mexico, to cultivate, prune, and harvest fern crops for market. For many decades Mexican farmworkers migrated to Pierson and then returned to their homes in Mexico during the off-seasons. Today, however, many farmworker families have made Pierson their permanent home, and this has resulted in a significant shift in the demographics of the town. While difficult to quantify exactly, it is clear that farmworkers and their families comprise up to half of the population of the town. A cultural divide is evident, and farmworkers are not currently represented in local politics. In other Florida farming communities farmworkers have begun to take interest in and participate in community decision-making. The Town of Fellsmere, another of the five small towns where the Farmworker Association has offices, offers one example where farmworkers have successfully engaged in local politics. One farmworker resident ran for a city commission seat and won the race, and today her daughter now occupies the same seat. This political representation is important to the farmworker community and gives their leaders an opportunity to have their needs and concerns heard and addressed. One significant action the Town could take is to appoint a representative of the farmworker community to their Planning Commission. While an invitation into the local political process is perhaps one opportunity to bridge a perceived cultural divide, there are other strategies the town can employ to further facilitate this effort. For example, holding more community events may be one starting point. Pierson only has two notable annual events, homecoming at the high school and the 4th of July fireworks display. The similarly sized Town of Astor nearby in Lake County has several annual events to entertain residents and foster community engagement among neighbors. Stakeholders at the community meetings and members of the Town Council were receptive to the idea of holding more events for Pierson residents and visitors.

**Crop Selections for Volusia County**

Volusia County contains a diversity of agricultural products, many of which may be appropriate for Pierson farmers. It is important to note that the infrastructure required for fern cultivation is easily translated to other crops including food production. Ferns are grown primarily under black shade cloth hung on wooden posts as opposed to inside greenhouses as often seen with other ornamental plants. Shade cloth allows for wind protection and for the extension of the growing season by several months. This
also means that fern growers are more subject to the whims of nature than farmers utilizing greenhouses.

The section below summarizes some potential crop opportunities for Pierson growers. The information is based upon conversations with Volusia County Agriculture Center staff which provides technical support to amateur and professional growers in the county.

Ornamentals

Although Pierson farmers primarily grow ornamental fern crops, many growers cultivate other complementary fresh cut foliage products for the same bouquet market. This is wise and should continue as the town maintains its niche of fresh cut leaves within the larger fern industry. Farmers should also explore new floral crops to diversity from ferns and to capture untapped markets. Because the infrastructure and network is already in place, maintaining and growing this economic sector is important. For example, one potential crop that grows easily in Pierson is sunflowers. Efforts should also be made to attract complementary businesses that support the floral industry with products such as packing materials or growing supplies.

Olives

“Florida farmers are taking the chance on olives because the consumption of olive oil is increasing in the U.S. and around the world, due to its healthy properties. U.S. consumption of olive oil increased from 22 million gallons in 1995 to about 80 million gallons a year today,” according to Richard Williams of Florida Olive Systems, Inc. in DeLeon Springs. “And 98 percent of the olive oil used in the U.S. is imported. California is the nation's largest olive oil producer, but that covers less than 2 percent of U.S. consumption”, Williams said. There is an opening for domestically produced olive oil.

Olive production is new to Central Florida, and Volusia County contains the largest farm in the state devoted to commercial olive production. The interest in olives has grown in part due to the loss of thousands of acres of citrus caused by the citrus greening disease. Greening has no known cure or treatment, and the disease threatens to destroy the entire citrus industry in Florida. While some olive operations in North Florida have proven to be viable businesses, it is still unclear whether this crop will be successful in the central part of the state due to the warm temperatures. Central Florida’s enterprises are less mature, mostly less than three years old. Olive trees do not begin to produce their fruits until at least three years of healthy growth, and even then the amount of olives harvested is minimal. Assessing the true potential for this new crop will not be possible until several years have passed. At least one olive farm is already operating in Pierson.
Muscadine and Hybrid Grapes

Muscadine and hybrid grape cultivation has proven successful across the region for many decades. Lakeridge Winery in Lake County is among the largest operations of its kind in the state with 127 acres in production. This is a growing market in Central Florida and several small operations are underway in Pierson. Grapes require care but grow easily in the region. One of the major constraints for grape growers in Pierson is the local laws that prohibit sales of alcohol on Sundays. Weekends are the time when most people are off work and spending money on hobbies and recreational pursuits, and the grape industry relies on events and tastings to market their products. Pierson should consider rethinking this ban on Sunday alcohol sales as it currently limits an expanding market that is already present in the town.

Cacti

One grower in Pierson has refocused much of its acreage on the pear cactus, a favorite food of Mexican farmworker families. In fact, the pear cactus is the sixth largest crop in Mexico. The small farm located on busy Highway 17 appears to be well established and the crops appear very healthy. In fact, several varieties of the pear cactus are native to Florida. Cacti require few inputs and seemingly grow with ease in the Pierson area. This crop represents a marketable food resource and is desirable to the local farmworker community that includes many residents that have relocated from Mexico. Additionally, cactus is a niche crop that has gained prominence throughout the US as many chefs have begun using them in their fine dining establishments. An article published in 2014 in Modern Farmer magazine titled *A Prickly Question: Could Cactus Be the Next Kale?* showcased the potential for the pear cactus. It is still too early to determine whether this crop will become as popular in foodie circles as kale has been for many years. Regardless, the operation in Pierson represents a shift away from ornamental crops that are typically shipped across the country or overseas to a food crop that is sold primarily locally. The reduced transportation costs to get the product to its sales destination results in a significant savings to the farmer.

Peaches

Peaches typically have grown well in Georgia and South Carolina as they require exposure to a certain number of chill hours to bear fruit, however in recent years the University of Florida’s Institute for Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) has hybridized several varieties with lower chill hour requirements that may be suitable for Central Florida. Small operations have sprung up in the northern portion of the region as growers experiment with the viability of commercial production. Uncle Matt’s Organics in Lake County has successful grown peaches without synthetic pesticides and currently has ten acres in production in Clermont. Peaches may prove to be viable in other parts of Central Florida as growers diversify their agriculture portfolios from citrus monocrops. However, peaches require delicate care and are prone to
diseases that require daily treatments to prevent crop loss. In areas where citrus infrastructure already exists, peaches may be a crop to consider for experienced growers.

Blueberries

A decade ago blueberries represented the future of agriculture in Florida, during the time when citrus greening began to take hold in the state. U-pick blueberry farms sprung up across the Central Florida region after the University of Florida developed and marketed new cultivars that required less chill hours to produce fruit. For almost three decades the University has hybridized blueberry cultivars to make the crop feasible in the relatively year-round warm weather that characterizes the region. Today, however, this market has become saturated and supply meets or exceeds regional demand. Shipping blueberries is possible for some less delicate varieties, however this approach also has limitations. Due to stiff competition from existing blueberry farms, the UF/IFAS Extension is likely to inform interested growers of the challenges with exploring blueberries as a commercial crop.

Aloe Vera

Extracts from Aloe vera are widely used in the cosmetics and alternative medicine industries, being marketed as variously having rejuvenating, healing, or soothing properties. Although aloe grows easily in Central Florida, no large scale commercial production was discovered during research for this project. However, this crop could be a niche agricultural product for Pierson farmers and warrants further study. Large scale aloe production moved south from Florida and Texas to Central and South America after severe freezes in the 1970s and 1980s. As climate change brings warmer temperature to the region aloe may be worth reconsidering for Florida growers. There are a number of skin care products companies in Volusia County as discussed later in the report, and establishing a connection with these businesses could be help to establish a local market for aloe.

Medicinal Herbs and Agriculture Byproducts

An emerging and rapidly growing sector of agriculture is medicinal byproducts of existing crops, and this area could be an opportunity for growers seeking to diversify in Pierson. For example, olive pits and leaves are used to make different types of medicinal therapy products. Grape seeds are now used in the U.S. to treat a number of diseases. Other crop byproducts provide aroma and skin therapies or act as antioxidants. This area could hold great promise for existing farmers and new growers alike. The rapidly developing interest in holistic treatments as opposed to conventional pharmaceutical medicines will spur the growth of new and sometimes unlikely opportunities in agriculture. As the baby boomer population ages and as cancers become more prevalent, many of those impacted will opt to avoid conventional treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation. And as science confirms or discovers the validity of holistic medicines which have often been untested or the results unquantified, farmers who follow and respond to this national shift may be well positioned to capitalize on the latest trends.
Economic Development Map

Recommendations for Economic Development

Land Use
An economic development map of the commercial core reflects the current adopted future land uses from the town’s recently updated comprehensive plan and the existing and proposed bicycle and pedestrian facilities. No immediate changes are recommended to the current Future Land Use Map within the commercial core. The town is well positioned in this regard.

One consideration the town may entertain with the next update of their comprehensive plan is permitting multifamily residential development within the commercial core. Pierson families generally consist of many generations that still reside in the town and the surrounding area. Older Pierson residents expressed
interest in the ability to age in place and access basic amenities without a car, while younger residents lamented the lack of opportunity in Pierson after completing college and wondered where they would live away from the family home. Allowing some multifamily residential could help to generate economic activity in Pierson’s downtown area. Oddly, the adopted comprehensive plan contains a land use category of High Density Residential that allows for three to ten dwelling units per acre, but no properties are designated as such on the Future Land Use Map. Permitting multifamily development within existing land use categories such as Medium Density Residential and in close proximity to the commercial core would help to accommodate aging residents seeking to downsize, singles, and young couples alike.

Another land use change that could accommodate residents in proximity to businesses and services would be to allow for live/work units in the existing Commercial land use category. This could be limited to two-story structures to retain the rural main street character of the community while offering residential space above shops and storefronts for business owners or for rental purposes.

Finally, changing regulations to allow alcohol sales in Pierson on Sundays is one barrier that could be easily removed to help grape producers better market their products.

Community Visioning
Pierson is in need of a clear community vision that reflects its history but also embraces the future direction of the town. This process should be inclusive and holistic and conducted by a professional facilitator or planner. The forums should be public and well-advertised to all segments of the population. Some of the important components of a community visioning process include a SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats), a visual preference survey, and a discussion of major issues including infrastructure improvements.

Wastewater Infrastructure
As previously discussed, the most immediate challenge for Pierson is the need for a wastewater treatment facility to serve the commercial core. Developing a wastewater treatment system or subsystem is essential to attract economic development. This single improvement alone will improve the town’s marketability to both developers and small businesses. The town is applying for grants to address this infrastructure need.

Pierson Municipal Airport
The Pierson Municipal Airport is a unique resource owned and operated by the Town. Expanding this facility could provide additional revenues to Pierson. However, due to the airstrip’s close proximity to the town’s commercial core and Taylor High/Middle School, any expansion would occur to the northeast of the existing site. The property is unfenced which adds to its rural appeal, and this should continue if current safety requirements permit. The Town should determine if this facility is most effectively utilized. An assessment of the fee structure for aircraft tie downs alone could result in a small boost to the town’s economy. The current storage rate of just two dollars a day seems intuitively low. Additionally, the town should determine how to best market Pierson Municipal Airport to sport aviation customers and consider whether expansion is prudent or feasible.
Another consideration is the development of a restaurant at the airport. This amenity could attract new patrons to the airport facility and would provide a second revenue stream. The Town could partner with an interested restaurateur to develop the site or take on the project itself and lease the commercial space.

**Transportation Infrastructure**

**Corridor Development and Main Street Revitalization**

The River-to-Sea Transportation Planning Organization’s (TPO) adopted the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan, which includes improvements within the town of Pierson. However, the only significant improvement the plan calls for is “Added Bus Service - Rural Northwest” in 2020 with the limits identified as Pierson to Crescent City. The capital and operating costs are identified as $1.29 and $15.02 million, respectively. These are “year of expenditure” numbers.

The plan also includes the 4-laning of SR 15 (US 17) from Ponce DeLeon Blvd (DeLeon Springs) to SR 40 in 2016-2020. The estimated cost reported in the plan is $44.8 million. Right-of-way acquisition is scheduled in the TPO’s Transportation Improvements Program (TIP) through FY 2017/18. Construction has not yet been programmed. However, these improvements are not currently scheduled to extend to the north of SR 40 to the town limits of Pierson.

Pierson residents are proud of their rural heritage and character and do not wish to see it compromised. At the stakeholder meetings most residents expressed a desire to see the town’s historic main street, Volusia Avenue/County Road 3, revitalized as the hub of the community. The need for basic neighborhood services was echoed by many. The town submitted two applications to the River-to-Sea TPO in March 2015 to further strengthen multimodal transportation connectivity and bicycle/pedestrian safety routes within the commercial core.

The first project (Figure 8) is a 3.5 mile proposed bicycle/pedestrian path along Volusia Avenue/County Road 3 through the commercial core from Menton Road on the north to Steadman Road on the south. Safety is a primary concern along this roadway. According to the town’s application, “Currently, there is no safe bicycle/pedestrian access along the CR 3 corridor. In fact there is not even a stabilized shoulder for most of the proposed project's length. Students and residents are forced to utilize a portion of the pavement within the travel lane. This is obviously far from a safe means to traverse this corridor, especially during peak use times when school is starting or ending. While there is only anecdotal data regarding the numbers of pedestrians/bicyclists that use this corridor on a daily basis, it only takes one person bicycling or walking in the travel lane to create a hazardous situation, especially considering the average age of the traveler. Volusia County Schools considers CR 3, within the proposed study limits, as a hazardous walk/bike zone.”

This multiuse trail will be part of the River-to-Sea Loop trail connects recreational amenities such as the Chipper Jones Ballpark with schools, businesses, and surrounding residential areas. Additionally, the proposed trail connects to the broader regional trail system. Enhancing this connectivity will bring pass-through bicycle traffic to the town and should attract consumers seeking cafés and bicycling supplies. Development of the trail could help to support small business growth along the town’s main street.
The second project (Figure 9) calls for multimodal improvements to the U.S. Highway 17 corridor, the major arterial route through the city. As with the first project, safety for commuters is the primary concern. A new elementary school is planned for a property directly to the north of this section of Highway 17. A multiuse trail along Highway 17 from Washington Avenue to Palmetto Avenue (approximately one mile in length) should be planned concurrent with other roadway and infrastructure improvements to conserve resources and for efficient planning and development.
Figure 9: Proposed Extension of US Hwy 17 Bicycle/Pedestrian Path

[Map showing the proposed extension of US Hwy 17 Bicycle/Pedestrian Path with annotations for specific areas and distances.]
Establishing Economic Connections

Building upon the opportunities already discussed in this report, Pierson should consider whether there is interest among farmers to explore new crop selections that take advantage of existing infrastructure and are suitable for Central Florida’s climate. It has been mentioned that medicinal herbs, medicinal agricultural byproducts, and aloe vera may be among the crops for growers to consider. Further research indicates that there is a small agglomeration of skin care products companies in eastern Volusia County primarily located near the coast. A table of these companies is provided below in Figure 10. This niche could represent a significant opportunity for Pierson farmers if connections can be made between growers and the skin products industry. Similarly, a growing market exists in the region for locally grown food products. Developing connections between farmers and restaurant chefs desiring local products is another opportunity worthy of study.

Figure 10: Volusia County Skin Products Companies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Products</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pevonia International</td>
<td>300 Fentress Blvd</td>
<td>Daytona</td>
<td>spa and beauty products</td>
<td><a href="http://find-a-spa.com">http://find-a-spa.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anew International</td>
<td>32 Cunningham Road</td>
<td>DeBary</td>
<td>cuticle products</td>
<td><a href="http://anewinc.com">http://anewinc.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aloevin</td>
<td>106 Community Drive</td>
<td>DeBary</td>
<td>aloe based products</td>
<td><a href="http://aloevin.com">http://aloevin.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical Seas</td>
<td>346 Flomrich Street</td>
<td>Holly Hill</td>
<td>skin products</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tropicalseas.com">http://www.tropicalseas.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQ llc</td>
<td>330 Carswell Avenue</td>
<td>Holy Hill</td>
<td>sun tan lotion and other creams</td>
<td><a href="http://productquestmfg.com">http://productquestmfg.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrated Aloe Corp</td>
<td>123 N Orchard Street</td>
<td>Ormond</td>
<td>aloe vera products</td>
<td><a href="http://conaloe.com">http://conaloe.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energizer Personal Care</td>
<td>1190 N US Highway 1</td>
<td>Ormond</td>
<td>former Hawaiian Tropics</td>
<td><a href="http://www.energizerholdings.com">http://www.energizerholdings.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Luis Beauty Products</td>
<td>600 S Yonge Street</td>
<td>Ormond</td>
<td>hair and body products</td>
<td><a href="http://luisluis.com">http://luisluis.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kool-Down</td>
<td>2706 South Ridgewood Avenue</td>
<td>South Daytona</td>
<td>sun burn soothing cream</td>
<td><a href="http://kooldown.com">http://kooldown.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agritourism and Events

Pierson should consider opportunities to market their agricultural heritage by encouraging farms to host visitors. U-pick operations are popular throughout the region, as are farm to table dinners, corn mazes, and other events that celebrate the rural farming lifestyle. Farm tours and harvest festivals are two types of events the town could explore to market agricultural resources.

Results and Next Steps

The work completed to date in Pierson has helped to start a community conversation about the identity of the town and the needs for a successful future. This conversation should continue and grow as the town pursues funding opportunities to address the recommendations in the plan. While it was hoped at
the outset of the project that quantifiable data could be obtained on the viability of niche markets and complementary agricultural business for Pierson, after meeting with many stakeholders it was determined that this information is not available in such a format. Instead much of the report relied upon anecdotal and qualitative data obtained through direct interactions with economic development agencies, agricultural experts, local businesses, and other stakeholders in the region including:

- Pierson Town Council, Planning Committee, and residents
- Volusia County’s Department of Economic Development
- River-to-Sea Transportation Planning Organization
- Volusia County Agriculture Center – UF/IFAS
- Farmworker Association of Florida – Pierson Office
- Volusia County Agriculture Property Appraiser
- Farm Service Agency
- Fern Growers

The Council intends to continue the work begun under this grant program and to stay engaged with the Pierson community as the town moves forward to implement the recommendations and strategies called for in this plan.

**Implementation Plan: Recommended Goals, Objectives, and Strategies**

This section summarizes recommendations and strategies intended to position the town to attract economic development. Recommendations have also been made where applicable to navigate the regulatory framework necessary to implement a given strategy where applicable. Additionally, background data and analysis was included or referenced for strategies where this information was relevant.

**Goal 1: Strengthen Pierson’s infrastructure to attract economic development.**

Objective: Enhance public facilities within the town’s commercial core and along the U.S Highway 17 and Volusia Avenue/County Road 3 corridors.

**Strategy 1: Identify funding sources to provide a wastewater treatment system or subsystem to properties within the commercial core.**

Regulatory framework: Obtain necessary permits from St. Johns Water Management District and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Work with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity and the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council to identify grant programs to fund the planning for this improvement.

Background Analysis: This infrastructure priority is identified in the town’s comprehensive plan. The need for a wastewater treatment system was also a focal subject of the stakeholder meetings and has been discussed by the Town Council and community leaders as the most important infrastructure improvement to attract new businesses.
Strategy 2: Work with the River-to-Sea TPO to plan and schedule U.S. Highway 17 roadway improvements concurrent with streetscape, lighting, fiber optics, potable water, sewer, and landscaping improvements.

Regulatory framework: The segment of Highway 17 that passes through the town is not currently scheduled to be widened to four lanes in the TPO’s adopted long range plan. The segment of 17 to the south of Highway 40 in Barberville is identified for widening and improvements in the TPO’S plan, however, and Pierson officials would like to see this occur through Pierson as well. According to the adopted Comprehensive Plan’s Transportation Element, all roads within Pierson are projected to operate within the adopted Level of Service in the year 2025 with the exception of US Hwy 17 from SR 40 to Washington Avenue. If funding for this segment is included in the TPO’s long range plan, the town wishes to prioritize and schedule other public improvements concurrent with roadway redevelopment. This will require significant interagency and intergovernmental coordination to achieve.

The town has recently submitted grant proposals to the TPO to fund bicycle and pedestrian improvements along this roadway. This project is paramount to the safety of residents and especially schoolchildren in Pierson and should occur as soon as funding permits.

Background Analysis: The town’s Comprehensive Plan recommends coordination between the Town of Pierson, Volusia County, the Volusia (River-to-Sea) TPO, and the FDOT to monitor the transportation needs through 2025 and mitigate for projected demand as development occurs within the area.

Strategy 3: Complete the Pierson section of the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop trail to encourage bicycle visitors to stop and support main street businesses in Pierson.

Regulatory framework: Some sections of the trail are completed, some are currently under construction, and other sections are still in a planning phase. Prioritizing the Pierson segment is a priority of the town and a grant application to begin the planning work on Volusia Avenue/County Road 3 is currently under consideration by the TPO and has so far received favorable reviews.

Background Analysis: The extensive trail network that comprises the River-to-Sea Loop has been underway for several years, but due to the scope of the project the plan will take several more years to fully implement. The loop system is a priority of the five counties and the municipalities included in the plan. Objective III-1.2 of the town’s Comprehensive Plan calls for “The needs of pedestrians and bicyclists shall be accommodated in all road construction and reconstruction projects whenever possible and appropriate.

Strategy 4: Explore opportunities to attract more business at the Pierson Municipal Airport including the option of expansion and the addition of a restaurant.
Regulatory framework: Work with the FAA to determine the potential for expansion of the grass strip airport and any limitations that may apply. Assess the fee structure for use of the airport and for storage to ensure the town is receiving fair market value for its resource.

Background Analysis: This recommendation resulted from a discussion led by a member of the Town Council during the stakeholder meeting.

**Strategy 5: Consider allowing multifamily residential development and live/work units within and in proximity to the commercial core.**

Regulatory framework: The currently adopted future land use chapter includes a land use category for high density residential (3 to 10 units per acre), however this classification is not assigned to any parcels on the future land use map. The town could consider allowing multifamily units in land use categories such as Medium Density Residential within or adjacent to the commercial core to provide options for aging seniors, singles, and younger residents. The comprehensive plan and land development code could also be amended to allow for live/work units in the Commercial land use category to further enhance the appeal of the commercial/main street district.

Background Analysis: There was a need expressed by many at the Stakeholder/Town Council Meeting for higher density development in proximity to basic services. The adopted Comprehensive Plan contains appropriate land use categories but could provide flexibility within these classifications for multifamily development and mixed use buildings.

**Strategy 6: Create a position within the town government focused on town grantwriting and grants administration.**

**Goal 2: Celebrate and market Pierson’s rural character and agricultural heritage.**

Objective: Promote the town’s agricultural history and proximity to rich natural resources.

**Strategy 7: Work with a professional planner or planning organization to conduct a community visioning process that includes a series of public and stakeholder meetings, a visual preference survey, and a SWOT analysis.**

Recommendation: The process should be inclusive and touch as many segments of the population as possible, including children, and should result in a clear shared vision for the future of the town.

**Strategy 8: Apply for grants to fund community visioning and infrastructure planning projects.**

**Strategy 9: Develop a marketing and branding campaign for Pierson that celebrates the town’s rural heritage and main street character.**

Recommendation: Work with farm owners to encourage them to host visitors.
**Strategy 10:** Organize community events to bring the town together on a regular basis.

**Strategy 11:** Explore opportunities for the town to engage the farmworker community.

**Goal 3:** Grow a more resilient economy through industry diversification.

Objective: Encourage economic diversification by maintaining and attracting businesses that complement the existing fern industry and by encouraging new industries to locate in Pierson.

**Strategy 12:** Maintain and grow the town’s existing fern industry.

**Strategy 13:** Determine opportunities for new agricultural businesses that support the existing fern agglomeration.

Recommendation: Work with the Florida Growers Association, the Volusia County’s Department of Economic Development, and the West Volusia Chamber of Commerce to best position the fern market for growth.

**Strategy 14:** Work with economic development organizations to identify and attract new non agricultural industries that complement the town’s existing and future workforce.

Recommendation: Work with Volusia County’s Division of Economic Development and the West Volusia Chamber of Commerce to attract no agricultural industries to Pierson.

**Strategy 15:** Consider opportunities to incentivize and build the capacity of the town’s workforce.

**Strategy 16:** Encourage food crop production to meet the growing demand for local products.

Recommendation: The growing local foods industry in Central Florida could complement Pierson’s existing agricultural focus and build upon the strengths and talents of its labor force. Many area growers have experimented with niche crops as they seek to diversify their agricultural pursuits. The Volusia County Agriculture Center is a good resource for advice and training on the feasibility and growth potential of specific crops in the area. The Farmworker Association of Florida is another good resource as many of their members are already skilled in food production and the development of local food systems. Florida Organic Growers based in Gainesville also offers training and support for organic farmers.

**Strategy 17:** Work with local and regional economic development organizations to develop a small business incubator program focused on agriculture.

Recommendation: Study farmer incubator programs to develop a model that will be a good fit for the town. The Dirt Works Incubator Farm in Johns Island, South Carolina is one model of an apprenticeship program that could be replicated in Pierson. The program not only includes hands on crop production training for farmers but also education on business acumen, product
marketing, and distribution networks. Another option is to develop a chamber of commerce focused on agriculture and based in Pierson.

**Strategy 18: Build a stronger connection between the Volusia Agriculture Center (UF/IFAS), the town staff, and the Farmworker Association of Florida so Pierson residents are able to take full advantage of the Center’s services.**

Recommendation: Work with the Volusia Agriculture Center to develop programs that meet the needs of Pierson’s growers. Consider holding educational events in Pierson to include as many residents as possible.

**Strategy 19: Explore niche opportunities in medicinal herbs and medicinal agricultural byproducts to help diversify Pierson’s crop selections and take advantage of a growing market.**

Recommendation: Research opportunities to develop a medicinal herbs and medicinal agricultural byproducts industry in Pierson. Work with the Volusia County Department of Economic Development to explore opportunities to provide these crops to skin care products manufacturers located primarily in the eastern part of the county.
References

Infogroup Reference USAGOV database. Data retrieved on December 12, 2014

Town of Pierson Comprehensive Plan, adopted 2012.

East Central Florida 2060 Plan - Strategic Regional Policy Plan, adopted 2011.

A Prickly Question: Could Cactus Be the Next Kale? Modern Farmer, May 2014.

Dirt Works Incubator Farm
Appendix 1: Town of Pierson Basemap
## Appendix 2: Town of Pierson Businesses (based on utility records)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company/Service Provider</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muller and Sons, Inc.</td>
<td>163 W. Washington Avenue Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built-Rite Construction</td>
<td>402 N. Center Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pantry, Inc. Store #20</td>
<td>239 N. Center Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countryside Auto Parts</td>
<td>303 N. Center Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald Jones Ferneries, Inc.</td>
<td>415 E. Washington Avenue Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Hagstrom Ferneries</td>
<td>774 E. Washington Avenue Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregory James Packing Shed</td>
<td>1067 E. Washington Avenue Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rusty Harper Ferneries</td>
<td>350 N. Pine Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Coast Ice</td>
<td>221 N. Center Street #A Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant (I DeBlasi)</td>
<td>221 N. Center Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia Food and Grocery</td>
<td>209 N. Center Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riki’s Fashion</td>
<td>213 N. Center Street, STE A Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant (B. Choki)</td>
<td>213 N. Center Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierson Disc Beverage and Grocery</td>
<td>184 N. Center Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Dollar #7953</td>
<td>103 N. Center Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollar General #9764</td>
<td>108 N. Center Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A &amp; M Floral, Inc.</td>
<td>248 S. Center Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierson Auto Parts</td>
<td>284 S. Center Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosby Realty, Inc.</td>
<td>287 S. Center Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierson Feed</td>
<td>307 S. Center Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierson Family Restaurant, LLC</td>
<td>302 S. Center Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierson Family Laundry, LLC</td>
<td>304 S. Center Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierson Supply Company</td>
<td>407 S. Center Street Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William H. Bittorf</td>
<td>808 E. Hagstrom Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albin Hagstrom &amp; Son, LLC</td>
<td>135 E. Hagstrom Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton E. Evans</td>
<td>560 S. Volusia Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Florida Community Services</td>
<td>592 S. Volusia Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Florida Fern Co-op</td>
<td>567 S. Volusia Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel L. Hanson</td>
<td>430 Western Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricky Hartley</td>
<td>202 S. Center Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raiford Hagstrom Ferneries</td>
<td>135 E. Third Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Floral Supply, Inc.</td>
<td>166 W. Echo Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Pierson, LLC</td>
<td>107 S. Volusia Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids Kampus, Inc.</td>
<td>172 Short Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierson Best Deal, Inc.</td>
<td>103 N. Volusia Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A G Bell</td>
<td>119 N. Volusia Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent Brandon</td>
<td>114 N. Volusia Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-Town Supply, LLC</td>
<td>130 N. Volusia Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Floral, LLC</td>
<td>152 N. Volusia Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierson Fern and Greens, Inc.</td>
<td>157 Fountain Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doug's Collision</td>
<td>128 Fountain Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Post Office</td>
<td>123 N. Volusia Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Washington Accounting Services</td>
<td>117 Fountain Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmworkers Association</td>
<td>111 Fountain Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellsouth Telephone 31644</td>
<td>112 Fountain Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A &amp; S Auto Brokers</td>
<td>110 Fountain Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Welding, Inc.</td>
<td>162 W. Second Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialty Service Solutions</td>
<td>145 W. Second Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell Stam</td>
<td>207 E. Second Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pierson, Florida 32180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Name</td>
<td>Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lars Hagstrom Ferneries</td>
<td>208 E. Second Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierson Medical Center</td>
<td>216 N. Frederick Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierson Community Pharmacy</td>
<td>112 E. First Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luigi's Pizza</td>
<td>205 N. Center Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debra Henning</td>
<td>162 W. First Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Environmental Containers, Inc.</td>
<td>117 W. Palmetto Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>629 N. Volusia Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Thompkins</td>
<td>629 N. Volusia Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soulicious Restaurant</td>
<td>213 N. Center Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D &amp; W Paving, Inc.</td>
<td>308 Sunset Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Power Rodding Corporation</td>
<td>PO Box 4782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P &amp; S Paving</td>
<td>3701 Olson Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County of Volusia Road and Bridge</td>
<td>2560 W. State Road 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierson Barber Shop</td>
<td>215 N. Center Street</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Five-Mile Assessment Area Industry Agglomerations

Fernery/Foliage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAICS Code</th>
<th>Number of Establishments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>111320</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111421</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111422</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111998</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115116</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115310</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>424930</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>444220</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>453110</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>453998</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>484220</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>484230</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>541910</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>999990</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recreation/Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAICS Code</th>
<th>Number of Establishments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>111998</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>441222</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>451110</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>487210</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>712110</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>713930</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>713990</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>721110</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>721211</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>721214</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: Stakeholder Outreach Advertisement and Minutes

Town of Pierson

Economic Strategic Plan Public Meetings

Date Location
Tuesday, April 14, 2015
5:00 p.m. Planning Commission
Pierson Town Hall
7:00 p.m. Town Council
106 S. Center Street
Pierson, FL 32180

The East Central Florida Regional Planning Council received a grant from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity to prepare a strategic economic plan for the Town of Pierson.

The Pierson Community is invited to participate in a public meeting to discuss this effort. Your feedback is very important!

For more information please contact:
Andrew Landis, CNU-A
Director of Policy and Planning, ECFRPC
andrew@ecfrpc.org
(407) 262-7788 ext. 310

Qualified persons with disabilities needing assistance so they can participate equally in the meetings should contact Jessica Benn at 407-262-7772 ex. 333 at least 48 hours before the meeting.
TOWN OF PIERSO
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES
PIERSON TOWN HALL -106 N Center Street, Pierson, FL 32180
TUESDAY, April 14, 2015
05:00 P.M.

1. Call Meeting – Chairman Robert Stone

Chairman Robert Stone called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM and asked Town Clerk Spelorzi to take the roll call.

2. Roll Call – Town Clerk Carmen Spelorzi

PRESENT:
Chairman Robert Stone
Vice Chairman - vacant
Commissioner Linnie Richardson
Commissioner Viola Roach
Commissioner Grey Leonhard – excused absent
Commissioner Jonathan Vickers

Also present was Town Planner Jim Smith.

3. Invocation And Pledge Of Allegiance

Chair Stone gave the invocation, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Appoint Chairperson Of The Planning Commission – Chairman Robert Stone

A motion was made to re-appoint current Chair Robert Stone. All agreed; motion passed.

5. NEW BUSINESS

   a. Resignation letter from Harold Carlisle from the Planning Committee - Chairman Robert Stone

Chair Stone summarized that Harold Carlisle had resigned and welcomed the newest member to the Planning Commission Jonathan Vickers and introduced the fellow Commissioners.
Chair Stone asked Town Clerk Spelorzi to contact Mr. Carlisle to collect his copy of the Land Development Regulations and to pass it on to Commissioner Stone.

b. Introduce Appointment By Town Council Of New Commission Member, Mr. Jonathan Vickers – Chairman Robert Stone

Chair Stone combined item 5. a. and b. and moved on to item 5. c.

c. Update on the 2015 application for project prioritization – Feasibility Study for a Bicycle/ Pedestrian Project for Highway US 17 in Pierson (1 of 2) and County Road 3 in Pierson (2 of 2) – James Smith, Town Planner

Town Planner Jim Smith gave updates on what staff had done in regards to submitting the applications for the Feasibility Study for the Bicycle/Pedestrian and County Road 3 Projects in Pierson. Mr. Smith stated that the projects were moving forward as staff had received some matching funding as well as numerous letters of support. Mr. Smith thanked Ms. Spelorzi for all of her assistance in putting together the application packets.

Mr. Smith continued that the Town of Pierson is now competing with Flagler County for the limited funds that are available, but feels hopeful that Pierson has a good chance of receiving some of those funds.

Commissioner Richardson felt that it was important to get funding for C.R. 3 and if somebody could be contacted. Mr. Smith thought that the schoolboard would be a logical candidate due to the enormous amount of school and it would be advantageous to partner with the school board.

A question was asked about FDOT and the sidewalk project. Ms. Spelorzi gave an update of FDOT’s proposed start time of July and informed the Commission that the Town had purchased property in order to re-route a waterline affected by this project.

Mr. Smith stated that it is a pleasure working with Ms. Spelorzi and that she is a great student of the Town’s Land Development regulations. Ms. Spelorzi offered her assistance to the Commission.

d. Presentation of the Economic Strategic Plan Grant received by Mr. Andrew Landis of the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council – James Smith, Town Planner

Mr. Smith asked to introduce Andrew Landis of the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council, who has been instrumental in receiving a grant from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity to prepare a strategic economic plan for the Town of Pierson. Mr. Smith elaborated on the purpose for this kind of a study and what he considers economic development.
Mr. Landis gave a presentation about who his organization is, what they do; the history on the grant; its eligibility requirements, as well as the progress he has made in getting input the Public in order to produce information for the strategic economic plan.

Discussion ensued about including the hookup to sewer and water component to entice new development and being proactive as a Town.

A Question and Answer session ensued about one weakness being lack of commerce and that Pierson needs to be able to offer residents a way to fulfill their basic needs. Positive community events include 4th of July celebration and Homecoming but more events should be planned.

Commissioner Vickers mentioned upgrading the Airport to be more private and he also touched on a stop for the railroad.

Commissioner Richardson felt that a covered arena would be beneficial and mentioned archery tournaments; using the Elementary school as a Town Center when the new school starts.

Mr. Landis felt the need to focus on visioning sessions and polling stakeholders and all segments of the population to get more quantitative information, but also focus on where to wisely invest any potential grant monies.

Discussion ensued about doing a visioning sessions to include large corporations and focus on public outreach. Mr. Landis stated that the key is to meet both ends of the spectrum between keeping the charm and making it exciting for the younger generation.

Mr. Landis suggested “playing up” all that Pierson has to offer and that the Town’s Comprehensive Plan is a great starting point. Mr. Landis encouraged everybody to contact him with comments and concerns.

Chair Stone suggested doing a study for set-back requirements along US 17 to be compliant to the potential widening of that roadway and that they had asked him to bring this suggestion to the Council’s attention.

**Commissioner Linnie Richardson made the motion to recommend doing a study for set-back requirements along U.S.17; all agreed, motion carries.**

### 6. ADJOURNED

Chair Stone asked Ms. Spelorzi to create an agenda item for the next meeting to elect a Vice Chair. Ms. Spelorzi noted that request.

- **Chairman –**
  - i. **Next Planning Commission Meeting:** TBA
  - ii. **Charter Review Committee Meeting:** TBA
Hearing no further business, meeting adjourned at 6:35 PM

Minutes prepared by: _________________________

Minutes approved by: _________________________

_______________________ __________________________
Carmen M. Spelorzi Robert Stone, Chairman
1. Call meeting to order

Chairman Samuel G.S. Bennett called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and asked Town Clerk Spelorzi to take the roll call.

2. Roll call

PRESENT:

Chairman Samuel G.S. Bennett
Vice Chairman James Peterson
Councilmember Herbert Bennett
Councilmember Robert Greenlund
Councilmember Thomas R. Larrivee
Mayor James Sowell

Also present were Town Foreman Louis Longo, Town Planner Jim Smith and representatives from the Volusia County Sheriff’s office.

3. Invocation and pledge of allegiance

Chaplain Danny Crosby gave the invocation, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Approval of Minutes – Chairman Samuel Bennett

   b. Council Meeting March 24, 2015

Chair Bennett read the date for the Minutes and asked if there are any changes/additions or deletions and hearing none he entertained a motion for approval of the minutes listed above.

Councilmember Tom Larrivee made the motion to approve the minutes listed above; seconded by Councilmember Herbert Bennett. All agreed; motion carries.

Chair Bennett stated that the Town is honored to have Chaplain Crosby to give the invocation.
and asked him to introduce himself. Chaplain Crosby stated that he is a Battalion Chaplain with the National Guard and has been wearing the uniform for over nineteen (19) years.

5. NEW BUSINESS

a. **Proclamation designating May 10th, 2015 as World Lupus Day 2015 as requested by the Lupus Foundation of Florida – Mayor James Sowell**

Chair Bennett turned the item over to Mayor Sewell who summarized the context and asked the Town Clerk to read the proclamation, which she did.

Chair Bennett commented on the devastating effects of the disease and was thankful that the Mayor put this on the agenda.

b. **Renewal of Airport Liability Insurance for 2015-2016 and to elect or decline terrorism coverage – Vice Chairman James Peterson**

Chair Bennett read the item and turned it over to Vice Chair James Peterson who gave a brief history.

**Councilmember Herbert Bennett made the motion to approve the renewal of Airport Liability Insurance for 2015-2016 and to elect terrorism coverage; seconded by Councilmember Tom Larrivee. All agreed; motion carries.**

c. **Discuss abatement received from IRS for $14,792.99 regarding 2011 W-2 forms not filed on time – Chairman Samuel G.S. Bennett**

Chair Bennett gave a brief history about a form that was not filed and thus penalties were incurred and proceeded to read the letter from the IRS which stated that the penalties were abated and the account had been adjusted to a zero balance.

The Council commended the Chair and the Town Clerk for their diligent work in this matter.

d. **Update on the 2015 application for project prioritization – Feasibility Study for a Bicycle/ Pedestrian Project for Highway US 17 in Pierson (1 of 2) and County Road 3 in Pierson (2 of 2) – James Smith, Town Planner**

Chair Bennett read the item and turned it over to Town Planner Jim Smith who gave updates on what staff had done in regards to submitting the applications for the Feasibility Study for the Bicycle/Pedestrian and County Road 3 Projects in Pierson. Mr. Smith stated that the projects were moving forward as staff had received some matching funding as well as numerous letters of support.
Mr. Smith continued that the Town of Pierson is now competing with Flagler County for the limited funds that are available, but feels hopeful that Pierson has a good chance of receiving some of those funds.

The Council was pleased and had no additional questions.

Mr. Smith informed the Council that during today’s Planning Commission meeting the Board suggested doing a study for set-back requirements along US 17 to be compliant to the potential widening of that roadway and that they had asked him to bring this suggestion to the Council’s attention.

Chair Bennett stated that this item could be discussed tonight and that he is in favor of doing such a study to be proactive. Mr. Smith stated that he would contact FDOT about their right-of-way requirements and that he would be able to get more detailed information.

The Council decided to make this an agenda item for the next Council meeting as per the recommendation from the Planning Commission.

Mr. Smith asked if the Council had any additional questions or comments, which they did not.

e. Presentation of the Economic Strategic Plan

Grant received by Mr. Andrew Landis of the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council – Chairman Samuel G.S. Bennett

Mr. Smith asked to introduce Andrew Landis of the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council, who has been instrumental in receiving a grant from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity to prepare a strategic economic plan for the Town of Pierson.

Mr. Landis gave a presentation about who his organization is, what they do; the history on the grant; its eligibility requirements, as well as the progress he has made in getting input from the Planning Commission (during their meeting just prior to this Town Council meeting) and the Public in order to prepare for the strategic economic plan.

Discussion ensued about including the hookup to sewer and water component to entice new development and being proactive as a Town.

Ms. Sue Elliott stated that she and Ms. McTeague learned how to write grants during a recent workshop and that they could produce a grant to apply for water and waste water funds that are being offered.

Councilmember Greenlund felt it was important for Pierson to invest in this type of infrastructure and an audience member (name not given) affirmed that he has paid for sewer hookup.
Mr. Landis felt the need to focus on visioning sessions and polling stakeholders and all segments of the population to get more quantitative information, but also focus on where to wisely invest any potential grant monies.

- Pierson is lacking until proper infrastructure is in place
- Great ecosystems
- Golf course – revenue making
- Transportation – 4 lane (council asked for Mr. Landis’ assistance in getting this quest accomplished; Carmen to give pertinent resolution to Mr. Landis)

Mr. Smith spoke on enhancing the Parks.

Discussion ensued about doing a visioning sessions to include large corporations and focus on public outreach.

Mr. Smith stated that Tallahassee has been a great help to rural communities, but recent restructuring of regional planning groups may have a negative impact.

Mr. Landis stated that the ECFRPC has been receiving State funding since the 70’s and that unfortunately they have lost this funding and that heavy-handed past practices by some planning councils may have tinted public and political opinion on the benefits of having these types of organizations.

Mr. Landis asked if change is required than what kind of changes should be made.

Councilmember Greenlund would like to see Pierson remain a farming community that coexists with non-farming industries.

Micah Bennett, an audience member, felt that something needs to be done to support the educational level of the younger generation to stay in Pierson and be able to find a job after graduation.

Ms. Sue Elliott commented that starter homes for young couples or apartments for seniors where needed in Pierson. Ms. Elliott also commented on the need for connectivity of roads so highway travel can be circumvented.

Ms. Roxanne McTeague suggested creating entertainment venues.

Councilmember Tom Larrivee stated that he was not born in Pierson but has lived there for over 50 years now and that the farming end needs to be nurtured and marketed to coexist with non-farming to increase Pierson’s population. He continued that any success again hinges on the proper infrastructure.

Discussion ensued about how similar communities are tackling issues; how more growth might make the fern growers pull out; how more population can mean more crime.
Mr. Landis suggested “playing up” all that Pierson has to offer and that the Town’s Comprehensive Plan is a great starting point. Mr. Landis encouraged everybody to contact him with any suggestions thanked everybody for their time.

The Chair called for a five (5) minutes recess.

f. Discussion on backup personnel for Town Hall as needed – Chairman Samuel G.S. Bennett

Chair Bennett stated that Town Clerk Spelorzi has informed him that the Utilities/Water Clerk, Ms. Ward, has to be absent for two (2) weeks for jury duty and that Ms. Spelorzi would like to bring in a resident to answer phones, take payments and greet the Public on an on-call basis during that time.

Ms. Spelorzi gave a brief history that this has been past practice in her other jobs and that she will need assistance during Ms. Ward’s absence.

Discussion ensued about what is stated in the personnel policy and the Chair felt that contract employees were not mentioned. Further discussion occurred about maybe creating a policy to limit the length of time an employee can be contracted and the Council agreed that the Chair can approve this kind of request without consulting the Council.

Micah Bennett suggested using High School Students from Taylor High School in a co-op intern program. The Sheriff’s office stated that Stetson College reaches out to them frequently for accepting interns.

Ms. Spelorzi thanked the Council for their input and consideration.

6. OLD BUSINESS

a. Re-announcement of the St Johns River Cleanup for 2015 - Chairman Samuel G.S. Bennett

Chair Bennett informed the Council about the clean-up event scheduled for 4/18/2015 from 8 – 11 a.m. and that the former Town Foreman is offering his boat to be used and encouraged everybody to assist.

b. Re-announcement of “Pop with a Cop” for April 23 2015 - Chairman Samuel G.S. Bennett

Chair Bennett informed the Council of an event called “Pop with a Cop” and encouraged everybody in the Community to attend this meet and greet.

c. Update on the Baseball Field Score Board – Water Committee Chairman / Councilman Robert F. Greenlund
Chair Bennett read the item and turned it over to Councilmember Greenlund who stated that if everything stayed on schedule, the score board should arrive before the next Council meeting at the latest.

d. **Update on Public Works Road Projects – Public Works Director/Councilmember Herbert Bennett**

Chair Bennett read the item and turned it over to Councilmember Herbert Bennett who updated the Council that the holes on CR 3 had been patched as well as the project on rerouting the water almost being finished. Discussion ensued about proper placement of the hydrant to avoid potential incidents with semi-trucks hitting the hydrant.

Councilmember Bennett stated that he would contact Mr. Meeks for cost to repair the street at Franklin and Cade and bring that info back at the next meeting if possible.

7. **OTHER BUSINESS**

a. **Council and staff reports**

Vice Chair James Peterson had no comments

Chair Bennett thanked Ms. Elliott and Ms. McTeague for attending the grant writing workshop. Ms. Elliott and Ms. McTeague stated that there are online options to find out what grants are available.

Councilmember Bennett had no comments.

Councilmember Greenlund stated that he was contacted by the Pierson Saddle Club to find out if Public Works could help them level out the rodeo area as holes are developing. Discussion ensued that the Town owned the property and the Council agreed to assist. It was further discussed that there may be some issues about overwatering the grounds and to notify the Lion’s Club that the Town will be grading the arena.

Councilmember Tom Larrivee stated that the abandoned house has been removed and the Town Foreman was asked to put down grass seed. The Council complimented Public Works for their diligent work.

Councilmember Larrivee asked for an update on the unsightly conditions of a property. The Town Clerk informed him that she had to research other offending properties in the area not to give the perception that the Town is targeting a single property and that letters will be sent out to several properties soon.
Councilmember Larrivee further inquired about an update on the berm on Braddock. Ms. Spelorzi stated that due to an entry error the work order was never received, but that this had been rectified and that the issue will be addressed next week.

Mayor Sowell stated that he had completed the required ethics training and presented his certificate. Chair Bennett asked Ms. Spelorzi to email the Florida League of Cities to get a written notification of when the next training session is.

Mayor Sowell informed the Council that he became a great-grandfather to a little girl. The Council extended their congratulations.

Town Clerk Spelorzi informed the Council of:

- an Agricultural survey and that student surveyors will stay on public roads and would not trespass on private lands,
- on the dates and times of Public meetings taking place for a Volusia Transit Connector Study
- Ms. Sue Elliott suggesting having a town-wide cleanup and to offer prices to the residents for participating.

Volusia County Sheriff’s office had no comments.

8. GOOD AND WELFARE (public participation)

Ms. Roach asked about the progress of the Charter Review. Ms. Spelorzi gave a history of the steps that have been taken to establish the committee.

Chair Bennett reminisced about the nice prayer delivered by Chaplain Crosby and asked that everybody please pray for the military but especially the local soldiers. Chair Bennett thanked all the Veterans that were present during the meeting for their service and they received an ovation.

Councilmember Larrivee stated that one of his sons is currently on deployment in the Middle East.

9. ADJOURNED

a. Chairman -
   i. Next Council Meeting: Tuesday, April 28, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.
   ii. RFQ Opening of submitted packets: Monday, April 27, 2015 at 2:00 p.m.

Hearing no further business, meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM

Minutes prepared by: Minutes approved by: