

# Lakeland Vision: Goals and Strategies

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## **ARTS, ACTIVITIES, AND ENTERTAINMENT**

### **Arts and Culture**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland provides a supportive arts environment that advances, promotes, and funds the arts community—including museums, performing arts, arts education, public art, and local artists—and results in active community-wide participation.

#### *Strategies*

1. Build alliances to strengthen public and private funding for the arts (e.g., City of Lakeland, Chamber of Commerce, Community Foundation of Greater Lakeland).
2. Establish appropriate zoning, funding, and incentives to create a supportive arts environment in Lakeland for all ages.
3. Form a collaborative, comprehensive marketing plan for the arts and arts organizations in Lakeland.
4. Work with state and local elected officials to advocate for continued arts funding in schools.

### **Entertainment and Attractions**

#### *Goal*

A variety of entertainment options, including large-scale family and tourist attractions, boutique shops, and restaurants, support a lively and fun community atmosphere.

#### *Strategies*

1. Create an ongoing, online calendar of events for Lakeland.
2. Develop a centralized tourism/ entertainment office that will enhance and promote Lakeland's entertainment and tourist attractions.
3. Work with Lakeland venues towards developing an entertainment mix that reflects the community demographic.

### **Events**

#### *Goal*

A diverse array of cultural events, festivals, and celebrations are developed and well promoted to draw people to the Lakeland area.

#### *Strategies*

1. Create a central website to promote all community events and provide information for event planning.
2. Expand community events to include a variety of cultural and artistic interests.

### **Youth Activities**

#### *Goal*

Youth organizations, programs, activities, and dedicated venues provide social/cultural opportunities for youth and teens that are safe, affordable, and fun.

#### *Strategies*

1. Develop interactive social/cultural venues and out of school activities geared towards youth and families.
2. Ensure safe and inviting venues throughout communities in Lakeland.
3. Survey teens for more information about their interests and needs.
4. Create a public-private partnership to promote youth activities in Lakeland.

## **DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY**

### **Communications**

#### *Goal*

Multi-media communication initiatives build an interconnected and informed community by providing information, sharing resources, and promoting events and activities.

#### *Strategies*

1. Promote programs and activities using a variety of techniques (e.g., local publication advertisements, billboards, mailers, radio ads, etc.)
2. Create a central website to promote all community events.
3. Establish a knowledge-sharing network that brings together like-minded charities and community organizations.
4. Develop a program to enhance communication and interaction among neighborhood groups in Lakeland through help from charities and community organizations.

### **Diversity**

#### *Goal*

Diversity and inclusiveness are actively advanced by Lakeland's leadership, businesses, and civic organizations, and celebrated through community events and activities.

#### *Strategies*

1. Develop programs with accountability to foster more leadership among minorities and encourage greater diversity at all levels of business, government, and community organizations.
2. Host an annual cross-cultural event that recognizes our differences and celebrates our community.
3. Recruit, hire, and retain a City workforce that accurately reflects Lakeland's demographics.

### **Sense of Community**

#### *Goal*

Institutions, organizations, and neighborhoods in Lakeland create and support a cohesive and engaged community that fosters intergenerational and geographic unity.

#### *Strategies*

1. Bring together churches throughout Lakeland to play a leadership role in establishing places and events to unify the community.
2. Build collaborations between neighborhoods and businesses in organizing and sponsoring community events.
3. Create more cafes, community centers, public squares and other places for intergenerational community gathering.

### **Volunteerism**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland supports and promotes coordinated, collaborative volunteer opportunities that allow all citizens to be actively involved in community service.

#### *Strategies*

1. Create and market an online database to match volunteers with volunteer opportunities.
2. Create and market a traveling "volunteer fair."
3. Cultivate a culture of volunteerism with local businesses to encourage their employees to get involved with community service activities.

## **DOWNTOWN AND NEIGHBORHOODS**

### **Beautification**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland is a clean, beautiful city centered around magnificent lakes, attractive streetscapes, quality architecture, fountains, and natural features.

#### *Strategies*

1. Enforce standards and codes to maintain and improve our lakes, protect and enhance natural features, and encourage attractive neighborhood environments.
2. Develop a citywide plan to promote, maintain, and increase public art and architecture.

### **Character of Development**

#### *Goal*

Effective land planning provides diverse housing options for all incomes, preserves green space and trees, and maintains Lakeland's character.

#### *Strategies*

1. Develop and communicate incentives and revise development codes to encourage a variety of housing options, including downtown residences and mixed-use developments.
2. Maintain the integrity of Lakeland's existing architecture.
3. Modify ordinances to promote higher density developments that promote walkability and preserve open space.
4. Incentivize new developments to dedicate a portion of land for public access (e.g., parks, public squares, or open space) and allocate funding for maintenance.

### **Downtown**

#### *Goal*

Downtown Lakeland is a walkable and vibrant city core encompassing a variety of housing options, restaurants, small businesses, green spaces, and venues for community gatherings and events.

#### *Strategies*

1. Communicate existing government incentives to developers to encourage development and redevelopment in downtown Lakeland.
2. Revise City procedures to simplify the process for permitting and planning for downtown redevelopment projects.
3. Promote legislative action to call for a comprehensive (statewide) rail plan that promotes passenger service in cities and diverts freight rail away from populated areas.

### **Preservation and Revitalization**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland celebrates its history and supports unique, strong neighborhoods through historic preservation and revitalization efforts, and community initiatives to clean up blighted areas.

#### *Strategies*

1. Create incentives to encourage preservation and appreciation of Lakeland's historic character.
2. Enhance code enforcement efforts throughout Lakeland by encouraging effective communication and collaboration between the City and neighborhoods.
3. Create and support neighborhood organizations encouraging interaction and involvement.

## **ECONOMY**

### **Business Development and Attraction**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland's diverse business environment attracts a wide variety of high-tech, high-wage businesses.

#### *Strategies*

1. Develop partnerships with businesses, community leaders, economic development organizations, and educational institutions to attract high tech, high wage businesses.
2. Establish a business incubator to assist entrepreneurs and promote start-up businesses in Lakeland.
3. Develop a plan to attract new firms and industries that will enhance Lakeland's economic diversity.

### **Jobs**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland experiences strong job growth, featuring higher wage jobs and careers for citizens of all ages, skill levels, and abilities.

#### *Strategies*

1. Encourage economic development partnerships to focus on increasing wages in Lakeland.
2. Prepare a strategic plan for existing and future internship programs to ensure success for both the businesses and the educational institutions.
3. Encourage lifelong learning opportunities that enable Lakeland residents to enhance their skills.

### **Prosperous Lakeland**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland is a prosperous, technologically advanced city that attracts and retains a young, innovative, and talented workforce within a creative environment.

#### *Strategies*

1. Identify factors that attract young professionals and the creative class to a city.
2. Market those factors that attract young professionals and the creative class to Lakeland.
3. Improve wireless internet access across Lakeland.

### **Marketing and Tourism**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland effectively promotes its local attractions, distinctive image, high profile events and sporting activities, creating a brand that attracts visitors from near and far.

#### *Strategies*

1. Establish public/private partnerships to bring more visitors to Lakeland.
2. Increase external marketing of Lakeland's local attractions and sporting events.

### **Retail and Small Business**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland supports small businesses, downtown retail, attractive malls, and shopping districts.

#### *Strategies*

1. Establish incentives to encourage small businesses to occupy vacant space.
2. Increase marketing of downtown events, shopping, and activities, in order to bring more visitors downtown.
3. Increase residential options in and around downtown Lakeland to help support local downtown retail.
4. Revitalize old malls and shopping centers to encourage business development outside of downtown.

(“Green Economy” next page)

## **Green Economy**

### *Goal*

Lakeland attracts and promotes green industries and local green markets to achieve a sustainable local economy.

### *Strategies*

1. Expand farmers markets to support local and organic agriculture.
2. Develop a program to attract green businesses to Lakeland.

## **EDUCATION**

### **Facilities**

#### *Goal*

A better use of resources creates an improved learning environment for Lakeland students.

#### *Strategies*

1. Establish smaller, neighborhood-based schools as a viable option for providing quality education close to home.  
Work with the elected officials and court system to refine the guidelines to allow neighborhood schools.
2. Work to reduce overcrowding, enhance security, and support smaller classroom sizes.

### **Funding and Community Support**

#### *Goal*

Quality education in Lakeland is a community endeavor, where funding, local support, and legislative delegation lead to increased teacher salaries, improved financial accountability, and effective collaboration between schools, businesses, and other institutions in the community.

#### *Strategies*

1. Work with local, state and federal elected officials to enhance school funding.
2. Work with the community organizations (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, United Way, Polk Works, etc.) to develop and enhance partnerships between local businesses and Lakeland schools.
3. Develop initiatives to ensure more parental involvement in their children's education.

### **Higher and Continuing Education**

#### *Goal*

Higher and continuing education programs in Lakeland are well-funded and create strong partnerships with the Lakeland community.

#### *Strategies*

1. Partner with USF Polytechnic to leverage the new campus for economic development and high wage job creation.
2. Enhance the level of funding for all higher education institutions in the region.
3. Create and market more innovative continuing education opportunities, including on-line courses.

### **Career Development**

#### *Goal*

The Lakeland educational community offers a variety of innovative career training opportunities that help Lakeland citizens develop skills for an ever-changing job market and achieve their desired quality of life.

#### *Strategies*

1. Provide training and retraining for a changing workforce in order to improve job skills for advancement and develop new job skills for growing industries.
2. Survey the community to determine current and future job needs and opportunities.
3. Develop career-training programs for students to leave high school prepared to enter the workforce and sustain an independent quality of life. (Strategy #4 next page)

4. Create career-training programs in concert with the business community, including incentives to participate in internship programs.

## **Programs and Curriculum**

### *Goal*

Lakeland students pre-K through 12 excel through quality curriculum, teaching, mentoring and hands-on experiences to prepare them to succeed in college, the workforce, and life.

### *Strategies*

1. Partner with and leverage existing organizations and programs to make early literacy a priority. Develop strategies and initiatives to ensure parental engagement in a child's early learning.
2. Support initiatives to increase the high school graduation rate to match or exceed the state graduation rate.
3. Expand programs for at-risk students (e.g., mentoring, vocational training, academic support, etc.)
4. Establish a committee to review school curricula to ensure schools reach beyond teaching to the FCAT.
5. Establish a target of 100% subject-certified teachers.
6. Enhance the quality of childcare and pre-school programs.
7. Provide more opportunities for more students to have access to advanced classes.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **Clean Lakeland**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland is a clean community that seeks to eliminate litter, reduce pollution, and protect the health of its lakes and other natural resources.

#### *Strategies*

1. Develop a City environmental department that encompasses a comprehensive approach to all environmental issues and enforcement within the city.
2. Expand the city's clean lakes initiative and enhance public outreach and education in order to clean up existing pollutants, reduce runoff into lakes, and monitor the health of lakes on an ongoing basis.

### **Green Lakeland**

#### *Goal*

A green Lakeland conserves natural resources, preserves green space, provides environmental education programs, promotes alternative energy sources and modes of transportation, and supports a sustainable quality of life.

#### *Strategies*

1. Develop a City environmental department that encompasses a comprehensive approach to all environmental issues and enforcement within the city.
2. Develop a City tree protection ordinance.
3. Ensure that zoning and development ordinances encourage sustainable growth, preserve open space, and incentivize green certified building.
4. Develop incentives to help Lakeland residents invest in energy efficiency (e.g., solar panels, fuel-efficient cars, water conservation, etc.)
5. Conduct a public education campaign to teach citizens about environmental issues and demonstrate how Lakeland can go green.

## **Recycling**

### *Goal*

Recycling is easy, expected, and becomes part of the daily habits of all citizens throughout Lakeland, including schools, businesses and public spaces.

### *Strategies*

1. Develop a City environmental department that encompasses a comprehensive approach to all environmental issues and enforcement within the city.
2. Develop a comprehensive, city-wide recycling program to include schools, businesses, and public spaces.
3. Conduct a public education campaign to inform the public about recycling benefits and procedures.

## **GOVERNANCE**

### **Government**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland benefits from accessible, capable leaders who are dedicated to the effective and equitable allocation of resources, and to providing a higher level of services to all Lakeland citizens.

#### *Strategies*

1. Keep citizens informed about the internal audit of City departments aimed at identifying and eliminating duplicative administrative functions.
2. Undertake a study to determine if partnering between City of Lakeland and other governmental entities can provide more efficient deliveries of services.
3. Educate citizens about the accessibility of City commissioners and administrative staff and increase awareness of existing programs and services provided by the City.

### **Public Involvement**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland citizens are well-educated and well-informed about government activities and are actively involved in decision-making.

#### *Strategies*

1. Improve the City website to better communicate the City's goals, outcomes, and information to the public.
2. Promote citizen education activities (such as Citizen's Academy and open houses), to encourage more widespread involvement from the public.
3. Educate citizens about the City of Lakeland Strategic Plan and identify ways to incorporate more public input into its development.

### **Safety**

#### *Goal*

Effective law enforcement coupled with community-based crime prevention activities contribute to safe and clean schools, neighborhoods, and streets.

#### *Strategies*

1. Develop effective partnerships with the community, neighborhoods, schools, and all other stakeholders to foster a safe and clean Lakeland.
2. Keep crime rates low by establishing direct police patrols that concentrate on "hot spots" and current crime trends.
3. Educate and empower neighborhoods and other stakeholders to take a proactive role in their safety, security, and cleanliness.
4. Hold quarterly meetings to strengthen the existing partnership between the Lakeland Police Department and neighborhood associations throughout the city.

## **GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Growth Management**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland's growth is well planned and managed to preserve green space, create vibrant mixed-use neighborhoods, encourage infill and redevelopment, and ensure that public infrastructure can keep up with the needs of a growing population.

#### *Strategies*

1. Revise codes to provide incentives for redevelopment and infill in existing developed areas, rather than on open lands.
2. Inventory critical natural resource areas and restrict development in those areas.
3. Encourage high density development in downtown Lakeland to position it as the vibrant urban hub of the community where people live, work, and play.
4. Encourage the development of higher density, mixed use nodes throughout Lakeland that preserve green space and are connected to transit and trail networks.
5. Facilitate the planning and development of existing DRIs (Developments of Regional Impact) and coordinate strategic infrastructure investments to meet the needs of these areas.
6. Develop a multi-use trail system that connects Lakeland's parks, lakes, and natural areas.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

### **Parks**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland builds, supports, and maintains a network of community and regional parks and trails that are clean, accessible, and provide a variety of active and passive programming.

#### *Strategies*

1. Ensure proper funding and community support is in place to maintain parks and to keep them available to the public.
2. Improve existing parks and develop new parks to ensure that all residents have easy access to high quality parks.
3. Extend park hours to include weekends and holidays.
4. Establish a dog park in Lakeland.

### **Recreation**

#### *Goal*

A healthy, active Lakeland is supported by affordable public athletic and recreation facilities and programs throughout all sectors of the city for residents of all ages.

#### *Strategies*

1. Seek additional funding (including dedicated funding sources) to support existing and new recreational facilities and programs.
2. Promote joint land acquisitions and recreational investments between public governmental agencies (e.g., a joint agreement for facility use with the City and the public school district).
3. Expand current recreational programs and better communicate recreational opportunities to the public.
4. Work with the Lakeland Parks and Recreation Department to ensure that all citizens have access to affordable facilities and programs.

## **SOCIAL INITIATIVES**

### **Family**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland sustains strong and healthy families by providing ready access to support services, including quality affordable childcare, assistance for families in need, and resources for teen parents.

#### *Strategies*

1. Ensure that high quality, affordable and accessible childcare is available to all families.
2. Establish a one-stop outreach center in all neighborhood areas that provides support services for families.

### **Health**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland is a healthy community that features education initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles and prevention, improved hospitals and medical facilities, and increased access to quality health care for people of all ages and income levels.

#### *Strategies*

1. Establish a program to improve accessibility and affordability of health care for all Lakeland citizens.
2. Conduct a public education campaign to encourage healthy lifestyle choices (e.g., exercise, nutrition, preventative care, etc.)
3. Conduct an evaluation of Lakeland's current health care systems to identify ways to use funding more efficiently, and provide more health care opportunities to the under-insured.
4. Expand and improve existing services for mental health.

### **Seniors**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland seniors experience a high quality of life in a variety of living situations, are involved in the community, and have good access to services including senior centers, health care, continuing education, and public transportation.

#### *Strategies*

1. Develop funding sources to offer more services to Lakeland's elderly.
2. Consult with seniors to identify their needs and wants in terms of expanded services.
3. Enhance public transportation options for seniors who are unable to drive, including expanded Handi-Bus routes and increased reliability of transport services.
4. Increase programs to enable frail elderly to remain in their own homes with adequate safety provisions.
5. Encourage and enable senior citizens to volunteer and participate in community programs.

### **Homeless**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland's homeless population is dramatically reduced through outreach shelters and housing programs that provide comprehensive support services including child care, education, and job placement.

#### *Strategies*

1. Establish a one-stop outreach center that provides a full range of services to the homeless.
2. Establish a task force made up of public and non-profit leaders to formulate a coordinated strategy to reduce homelessness.

### **Social Programs**

#### *Goal*

A collaborative climate among community organizations fosters more effective outreach and educational programs that prevent risky behaviors and better treat and serve special needs. (*"Social Programs" strategies next page*)

### *Strategies*

1. Establish a Task Force made up of public and non-profit leaders to formulate a coordinated strategy for social programs and reduce duplication of services.
2. Develop a comprehensive list of available services and communicate local resource availability to Lakeland residents.
3. Identify steps to address deficiencies in service provision (e.g., substance abuse, disabled citizens, prison rehabilitation, housing for mentally disabled, at-risk youth, etc.)

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Public Transit**

#### *Goal*

Public transportation improvements in Lakeland provide convenient, modern, safe, and efficient alternatives to driving that enhance livability and improve connections throughout the region.

#### *Strategies*

1. Educate the public on the benefit of public transportation as an alternative to the use of private vehicles for daily or special event trips.
2. Secure local, state, and federal funding for expanded transit services demonstrating economic benefits to the community.
3. Expand present bus service with improved schedules, extended hours, routes, and equipment.
4. Encourage regional rail service connecting Lakeland to Tampa and Orlando and, if possible, points beyond.
5. Pursue land use and development patterns that support public transportation.

### **Roadways and Traffic Movement**

#### *Goal*

Excellent street conditions, traffic management, and a highly connected road system help to increase roadway capacity and improve overall mobility throughout Lakeland.

#### *Strategies*

1. Assess Lakeland streets, complete needed improvements, and conduct targeted upgrades of key roads.
2. Develop and implement fully integrated ATMS (Automated Traffic Management System) to reduce congestion and improve traffic flow.
3. Increase capacity of roadways to improve connections throughout Lakeland, promote more efficient cross-town travel, and maximize the utilization of acquired rights-of-way.

### **Walking and Biking**

#### *Goal*

Lakeland citizens walk and bike throughout their city using a comprehensive, expansive, and well-connected network of sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails that integrate safely with roadways.

#### *Strategies*

1. Develop a system of safe, clearly marked, and well-connected bike lanes, trails, and shared roadways.
2. Develop a map of bike lanes and multi-use trails and promote activities such as “car-free days” to encourage more biking and walking.
3. Expand, connect, and improve the safety of a citywide sidewalk and bike network that is integrated with public parking and public transit.
4. Encourage local businesses to provide incentives for employee and/or customer use of alternative transportation such as walking and biking.