

# **ACCOMPLISHING ACCESS MANAGEMENT ON THE FIHS: THE US 27 CORRIDOR IN OCALA/MARION COUNTY**

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**Note to Users:**

Local governments are strongly encouraged to obtain professional planning and legal guidance and to coordinate closely with the Florida Department of Transportation when enacting any of the recommended regulatory techniques described in this report.

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continuous two-way left turn lane for 2.5 miles. The remaining portion of the study corridor is currently under construction and will have a grass median similar to the existing divided section of the study corridor. Outside the Ocala city limits, US 27 is being improved to a four-lane divided facility and is classified as a Principal Arterial in the Marion County Comprehensive Plan.

Commercial land uses dominate the urban area of the corridor, consisting of a mix of restaurants, motels/hotels and service stations. The majority of property is classified Retail-Service with a B-2 (Community Business District) zoning. The Marion County Future Land Use Map designates these lands as Rural Lands or Medium Density Residential with an allowable density of one unit per 10 acres along the corridor. Existing development consists of rural residential, agribusiness, and agricultural uses.

### ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT LOCAL PRACTICES

The FDOT, Marion County, and City of Ocala have a variety of policies and regulations governing land development and access along the US 27 corridor, as summarized in Table 1. A detailed analysis of these practices follows.

**Table 1: Local Practice Assessment**

Technique	Marion County	City of Ocala
Alternative Access	YES (Parallel Access)	YES (Shopping Centers, Retail)
Driveway Design	No throat length criteria	No throat length criteria
Interchange Area Access	NO	NO
Continuation of Streets	YES	YES
Minor Subdivision Regulations	NO	NO
Reverse Frontage	YES	YES
Access Classification (State)	YES (AC 3, AC 5 by interchange) <sup>1</sup>	NO
Access Classification (Local)	YES	YES <sup>4</sup>
Driveway Spacing Standards	YES	PARTLY <sup>2</sup>
Turn Lane Warrants	YES	YES
Limits on Driveways	YES	PARTLY <sup>2</sup>
Outparcel Regulations	NO	YES
Flag Lot Restrictions	PARTLY <sup>3</sup>	YES (prohibited)
Corner Clearance	YES	YES
Lot Width to Depth	NO	NO
Retrofit Requirements	NO	PARTLY <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Refers to FDOT requirements

<sup>2</sup> Only applies to shopping centers or large single retail store developments

<sup>3</sup> Addressed in the Comprehensive Plan, but not in the Land Development Regulations. However, staff noted that they are currently prohibited.

<sup>4</sup> Based on functional class as outlined in City of Ocala Comprehensive Plan.

<sup>5</sup> Nonconforming driveways or curb cuts must be retrofitted on property being platted, rezoned, developed or redeveloped as a shopping center or large single retail store development

## State of Florida Plans and Policies Affecting US 27

### Access Management Requirements for US 27

The FDOT classifies access on state roadways using a 7-tier access management system, established in Chapter 14-97, Administrative Rules of the Department of Transportation, State Highway System Access Management Classification System and Standards (Rule 14-97). The classification system ranges from Access Class 1, reserved for limited access freeways, to Access Class 7, assigned to lower priority state highways in areas that are already highly urbanized. This classification system assigns standards for driveway connections, spacing, median opening spacing, and signal spacing.

Because of its statewide importance, the FDOT's policy is to assign an access classification of 2 or 3 to FIHS highways that are not freeways. These classifications assign a more restrictive access spacing requirement to preserve the safety and efficiency of these important highways. Table 2 provides the standards for each classification.

**Table 2: FDOT Access Classification System & Standards**

Access Class	Medians*	Connection Spacing (feet)		Median Opening Spacing		Signal Spacing
		>45 mph**	≤45 mph**	Directional	Full	
2 (FIHS)	Restrictive w/ Service Roads	1320	660	1320	2640	2640
3 (FIHS)	Restrictive	660	440	1320	2640	2640
4	Non-Restrictive	660	440			2640
5	Restrictive	440	245	660	2640/ 1320	2640/ 1320
6	Non-Restrictive	440	245			1320
7	Both Median Types	125		330	660	1320

\* A "Restrictive" median physically prevents vehicle crossing. A "Non-Restrictive" median allows turns across any point.

\*\* Posted speed limit

Source: Florida Department of Transportation

All developments requesting access to the State Highway System must obtain a permit in accordance with Rule 14-96, Administrative Rules of the Department of Transportation, which governs access permitting. However, the FDOT may stipulate conditions or additional requirements that must be met by the applicant/property owner before an access permit is issued.

Presently, US 27 is an Access Class 3 roadway from the Marion/Levy County line east to 300 feet west of the I-75 interchange. The remainder of the study area is Access Class 5.

Provided below is a summary of FIHS standards and an assessment of how US 27 in the study corridor meets those standards.

### *Median Openings*

There are no full median openings in the Access Class 5 segment of US 27. The 8-mile segment running from CR 225 to CR 226 has recently been improved from a 2-lane undivided to a 4-lane divided facility. The remaining 8-mile segment from CR 226 to the Marion/Levy County line is a 2-lane undivided roadway. Improvements are expected to begin in the fall of 2002 to improve this section to a 4-lane divided facility. Full median opening spacing in this area are somewhat less than the median opening spacing criteria for an Access Class 3 facility. For example, some full median openings are within about 1,050 feet of other median openings.

### *Driveway Openings*

There are frequent driveway openings along US 27, particularly near the interchange. Immediately west of the interchange, there are numerous businesses having driveway access to US 27. US 27 currently does not meet the minimum driveway spacing standards for an Access Class 3 or 5 facility.

### *Signal Spacing*

There are four traffic signals along the 18-mile corridor. The first signal after the I-75 interchange is located approximately 4,224 feet west of the interchange at 44<sup>th</sup> Street. The second signal is located 2,112 feet west of 44<sup>th</sup> Street at the Golden Ocala entrance. The third signal is located at the 60<sup>th</sup> Street intersection, which is 6,864 feet west of the Golden Ocala entrance. The final signal before the Marion/Levy county line is located at CR 225a or 6,336 feet west of 60<sup>th</sup> Street. All signals meet the FDOT access management standards.

### ***FDOT Action Plan for US 27***

In 1996, FDOT District Five commissioned an action plan for the US 27 corridor to implement the recommendations of the *Final Negative Declaration* in 1977. The *Final Negative Declaration*, produced by the Federal Highway Administration and FDOT in 1976, was the first analysis of the study corridor. It introduced the concept of widening US 27 "to improve the economy along the corridor and hence provide additional employment." Planners believed this proposal would yield "a safe, modern, and efficient highway both for local use and as a vital link in the state highway system."

The purpose of the action plan was to recommend a capacity improvement plan for the study corridor that would meet FIHS standards. A number of deficiencies were identified, including:

- Inadequate future capacity (particularly on the two-lane section between the Levy County line and County Road 225a),
- Deficient access classifications (particularly in the interchange area),
- Too frequent median openings,

- Left-turn limitations, and
- Too frequent driveway connections.

These deficiencies jeopardize the ability of US 27, from I-75 to the Levy County line, to remain on the FIHS system. In order to prevent the removal of US 27 from the FIHS, a number of recommendations were made to meet the standards within a 20-year period. The recommendations included the following:

1. Widen sections of US 27 from the Marion/Levy county line to the urban boundary from the existing two-lane roadway to a four-lane divided rural highway with restrictive medians;
2. Within the urban area, reconstruct the four-lane divided roadway to eliminate the existing continuous two-way left-turn lane and install a raised median;
3. Relocate or modify driveway connections to meet FIHS spacing criteria; and
4. Reclassify the segment of US 27 from NW 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the I-75 West Ramps from Access Class 5 to Access Class 3. If this is infeasible, obtain an exception from the FIHS criteria for the corridor.

The widening of the corridor has been implemented; US 27 is in the process of being widened to a four-lane divided section with more restrictive median control. It is designed as an urban section in the City of Ocala and as a rural section in the County.

### ***Observations***

1. Recent improvements have reduced the number of existing driveways by reconstructing the roadway and eliminating driveways that were not being used.
2. The FDOT is improving US 27 to address the concerns noted in the FDOT Action Plan. One issue that has not been effectively addressed in the I-75/US 27 interchange area, is the closely spaced driveways that create conflicts in this critical area.
3. After reconstruction of the US 27/I-75 interchange, US 27 does not meet the current access classification standards for an Access Class 5 roadway for median openings and driveways.

### **Marion County**

#### ***Comprehensive Plan***

Marion County Comprehensive Plan (updated in 2001), which includes a policy for managing access to both county and state roadways. Transportation Element Policy 4.2 states that all access to state roadways must be consistent with Rules 14-96 and 14-97, F.A.C., which address access management and driveway permitting respectively.



In addition to Transportation Element Policy 4.2, there are several policies in the Future Land Use element addressing design considerations that can effect access. In particular, Policies 1.6, 1.13, and 3.19 provide guidance for the design of developments. Policy 1.6 requires the development of an internal road system channeling traffic from lower functionally classified roads to the higher functionally classified roads. Policy 1.13 stipulates that the County will control flag lots in the Land Development Regulations. Similarly, Policy 3.19 requires the inclusion of design criteria in the Land Development Code requiring properties in Rural Activity Centers fronting two roads to connect to the road with the lower functional classification. In addition, the policy requires developments not to interfere with the operation of intersections.

### ***Land Development Code***

The Marion County Land Development Code regulates the development and subdivision of property in unincorporated Marion County. Property owners seeking to subdivide their property must follow the County's development review process, outlined in Section 8.2.2.a, Marion County Subdivision Regulations and Chapter 177, F.S.

### ***Land Division and Subdivision Regulations***

The County defines a subdivision as "divisions of land into three or more lots, parcels, tracts, tiers, blocks, sites, units, or any other division of lands..." However, the Code includes a variety of exemptions from the subdivision regulations and stipulates in Section 8.2.2.e that these exemptions supercede and control any other provisions of the Code or other ordinances that are in conflict with them. These exemptions address issues such as consolidation of building sites, boundary adjustments between adjacent landowners, the conveying of a lot to a family member, and the conveyance of land between governmental agencies.

Exemptions of particular relevance to access management relate to those that serve as incentives to create lots along existing roadways outside of the subdivision process. These exemptions can contribute to access problems and include the following:

- Section 8.2.2.a (1) allows the dividing of a "parent tract" greater than 20 acres, as of February 13, 1992. The parent tract can be subdivided one time each year to yield one additional lot if the "parent tract" and newly created lot are at least ten acres in size.
- Section 8.2.2.a (8) allows the division of land in rural areas as long as "all parcels resulting from the division contain 10 acres of land or more." All parcels must have a *minimum of 330 feet* of roadway frontage.
- Section 8.2.2.a (2) provides an exemption to those wishing to divide their property to provide an immediate family member a primary residence. This is allowed one time per family member. An immediate family member is defined as a grandparent, parent, stepparent, adopted parent, sibling, child, stepchild, adopted child, or grandchild. In rural areas, both the newly formed lot and

remaining parent tract must be at least one acre. In urban areas, low-density residential property exceeding two acres may be divided, but the maximum allowable density is one dwelling unit per gross acre. Lots must be at least 40 feet wide and provide access by deed or non-exclusive easement.

*Traffic Impact Assessment*

The Marion County Land Development Code requires that a traffic impact evaluation be provided with the submittal of a master plan or preliminary plat. Article 11, Adequate Public Facilities Concurrency Management System, provides the traffic impact criteria for new development and redevelopment projects.

*Street Circulation System Design Criteria Requirements*

The Marion County Land Development Code, Section 8.2.5, provides the criteria for the development of street systems in private and public subdivisions. Residential subdivisions are required to provide local roads designed to accommodate the needs of the neighborhood and discourage truck traffic. Sections 8.2.5(a)(2)(c) ii and Section 8.2.5(a)(2)(d) ii require that necessary arterial and collector roads be constructed in accordance the Future Circulation Map as adopted in the Marion County Comprehensive Plan. If the roadway is not shown on the Future Circulation Map, the Development Review Committee can instruct developers to locate roadways along a ¼ section line. Private road subdivisions may substitute a perimeter road for the ¼ section-line road. Table 3 shows the future right-of-way standards and design criteria required for new construction, if required.

**Table 3: Road Width – Typical Section**

<b>Street Type</b>	<b>Right-of-Way*</b>	<b>Roadway Description</b>	<b>Width of Pavement</b>	<b>Shoulder</b>	<b>Sidewalk**</b>
Alleys	26'	1-18'	18'	4'	5'
Local Residential	60'	2-10'	20'	6'	5'
Residential Collector	80'	2-12'	24'	6'	5'
Local Commercial	60'	2-12'	24'	6'	5'
Collector	100'	2-12'	24'	6'	5'
Arterial	100'+	4-12'	48'	6'	5'

\* Arterial right-of-way will be increased in 10-foot increments where the design dictates.

\*\* Sidewalk widths shall comply with FDOT traffic and Roadway Design Standards, latest edition.

Section 8.2.5(2)(e) of the County’s Subdivision Regulations requires developers to install parallel access roads for developments along arterial and select collector corridors. Parallel access roads are required for parcels having at least 1,320 feet of frontage along an arterial or collector roadway, for roadways on the Future Traffic Circulation Map with an urban land use classification and for developments on collector roads designated as Rural Activity Centers, Rural Towns, Rural Village Districts, Specialized Commerce Districts, and Commercial Recreation. For parcels with less than 1,320 feet of frontage, the Development Review Committee can require a parallel access road or a cross access easement using the same criteria.

An internal roadway network must provide access to all residential development and individual lots within residential and mixed-use developments, direct access to any functionally classified roadway is prohibited. Additionally, an individual residential lot cannot directly access a section or ¼ section line road. However, the Development Review Committee can exempt parcels from the parallel access requirement if the committee determines that the adjacent parcels will not be developed within the next ten years and/or if requiring a cross access easement is “unreasonable or impractical.”

Section 8.2.5(6) and 8.2.5(7) of the Land Development Code establishes various design standards related to sight distance, acceleration/deceleration lanes, and signalization. When a subdivision right-of-way intersects a county road, major or minor collector, section line road, State road or Federal road the sight distance recommendations contained in AASHTO Policies and FDOT Site Impact Handbook must be met.

Section 8.2.5.a (12) establishes driveway corner clearance standards. Residential driveways on corner lots will be placed on a minor street and “no closer than the lesser of, ½ of lot width or 50 feet” by the County Engineer. The County uses the FDOT standards for isolated corner clearance to regulate commercial driveways near intersections, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Commercial Driveway Corner Clearance Standards**

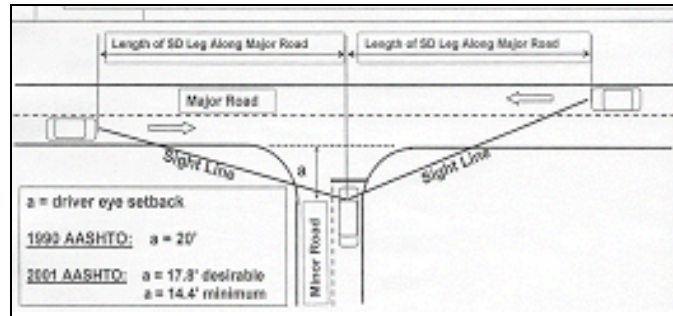
<b>Median</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Access Allowed</b>	<b>Minimum (Feet)</b>
Restrictive	Approaching Intersection	Right In/Out	115
Restrictive	Approaching Intersection	Right In Only	75
Restrictive	Departing Intersection	Right In/Out	230
Restrictive	Departing Intersection	Right Out Only	100
Without Restrictive	Approaching Intersection	Full Access	230
Without Restrictive	Approaching Intersection	Right In Only	100
Without Restrictive	Departing Intersection	Full Access	230
Without Restrictive	Departing Intersection	Right Out Only	100

Section 5.5 - Zoning, Special Requirements of the Land Development Code section, contains several additional requirements pertaining to access. Section 5.5.6 states that double frontage lots must have a designated front lot, chosen by the property owner, and that the remaining street frontage become a side yard and prohibits locating a driveway within an intersection’s sight triangle. Section 5.5.16, Article 5 - Zoning, Marion County Land Development Code, states that no obstruction to vision between 2.5 and 8 feet will be constructed or allowed within the sight triangle using the distances in Table 5. Illustration 1 shows how intersection sight distances are typically determined.

**Table 5: Sight Triangle Distance Requirements**

<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Distance (feet)</b>
Residential	25
Commercial	30
Industrial	40

### Illustration 1: Sight Line Illustration



Other requirements state that each developable lot, parcel, or tract is entitled to a driveway. For adjacent properties under the same ownership, the County considers these parcels as a single property during the driveway permitting process. However, the applicant may request the properties be reviewed individually.

The posted speed limit of the roadway determines the driveway spacing standards for non-residential properties. The standards listed in Table 6 apply to residential driveways, collector/arterial roadways, and to locations where alternative access is unavailable on minor non-state roadways.

**Table 6: Driveway Spacing Standards**

Speed Limit	Spacing (feet)
35 or less	245
36-45	440
Over 45	660

Section 8.2.5.a (12) also points out that roadways classified under the State Access Classification System shall meet FDOT Access Management Standards.

In addition, Marion County has a scenic road program that allows citizens to nominate sections of roadways to be designated as scenic roads. Any improvements on roads that have been designated as scenic roads must be brought before the Board of County Commissioner before construction.

### Observations

1. The County Land Development Code permits a number of exemptions from the platting and minor land division process. Too many subdivision exemptions can result in incremental land divisions that lead to irregular lots or poorly designed plats. The resulting “subdivisions” may rely heavily on highway access and often result in inefficient use of land, easement disputes, and poor connectivity. In particular, the exemptions for 10-acre lots can serve as an incentive for the creation of “bowling alley” lots with 330 feet of frontage on US 27 and other important arterial roadways. The exemptions for family members are difficult to enforce as family members may simply sell the property after the lot has been recorded.

2. Although the Marion County Comprehensive Plan prohibits the creation of flag lots, the County Land Development Code does not adequately restrict the creation of flag lots under certain conditions. However, County staff stated that they do not allow the development of flag lots during the review process.
3. The County's Land Development Code's access management requirements do not address outparcels, redevelopment or retrofit situations, limits on the number of driveways, or driveway throat length.
4. The current development along US 27 consists of large-scale residential developments, containing 500 or more units, scattered along the corridor outside the City of Ocala. Marion County anticipates similar large-scale residential developments in the future, which provides Marion County with an opportunity to ensure proper access management.
5. The County's requirement for the development of section line roads is beneficial to safety and mobility. This technique can enhance the development potential of interchange areas by opening up interior land to development. At the same time, they provide a safer, more predictable driving environment than areas with numerous driveways and signs, and preserve the function of the interchange and its crossroads.
6. The County's requirement for joint access is beneficial to safety and mobility. Although, requiring that joint access is provided can become a political issue. Marion County staff stated that they require joint access when they can get it. Marion County needs to maintain diligence in this area. This technique provides for the development of internal access roads in interchange areas. These roads can provide access to numerous businesses and allow for consolidated signage.
7. Although Marion County requires easements for future joint access, these developments may not be constructed for several years. The County discovered a problem with ensuring that all easements on abutting parcels are identified during the review process. To remedy this situation, the Marion County Right-of-Way Department has been included in the review process through the re-routing of site plans.

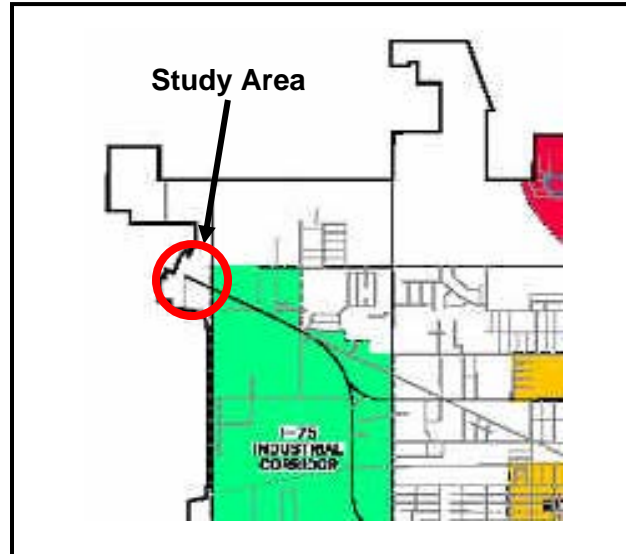
## **City of Ocala**

### ***Comprehensive Plan***

In December 2001, the City of Ocala updated its comprehensive plan. Many policies strive to improve roadway efficiency while discouraging inefficient development. For example, Policy 2.6, Future Land Use Element, calls for the clustering of new retail and business land uses at signalized intersections, instead of strip development. The City is striving to encourage new retail development in Activity Centers that are designated on

the Future Land Use Map. The closest activity center to the study area is the I-75 industrial corridor activity center (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**  
**I-75 Industrial Corridor Activity Center**



The Future Land Use policies affecting access include polices 3.6, 4.1.5, 4.1.7, 4.1.11, and 4.1.12. Policy 3.6 establishes criteria for design of traffic circulation and parking for multi-family and non-residential developments. Policy 4.1.5 requires all new subdivisions to provide internal circulation systems providing for collector streets connecting the residential areas to the major street network. Policy 4.1.7 requires all new high-density residential developments to be located within one-half mile of a major/minor arterial or collector street. Policy 4.1.11 states that new neighborhood businesses may only be located on arterial or collector streets in commercial activity centers designated on the Future Land Use Map. Policy 4.1.12 requires new professional services to be located on a major/minor arterial or collector streets or in commercial Activity Centers designated on the Future Land Use Map.

Objective 4 of the City of Ocala's Transportation Element requires the provision of appropriate access management techniques in order to regulate traffic capacity. Policy 4.1 stipulates that all development, redevelopment projects, and sites vacant for one year that are located on functionally classified roadways undergo an access management review for median openings, road frontage, reverse frontage, and cross access easements. Policy 4.2 establishes driveway spacing, median opening spacing, and joint use driveway standards for all new nonresidential development, redevelopment, and sites vacant for more than one year. Policy 4.3 sets forth the City's access classification system and standards (Table 7).

**Table 7: Access Management Standards**

Road Type	Direct Land Access	Joint Use Driveways	Driveways Spacing (ft)	Median Spacing
Principal Arterial	Limited-major generators	Required	300	660
Minor Arterial	Restricted-control driveways	Required	300	330
Collector	Safety controls-limited regulation	Required	150	300
Local Street	Safety controls-limited regulation	Required	150	150

Policy 4.4 requires developments that cannot adhere to the above spacing standards to develop joint use driveways, unless directed otherwise by the City Traffic Engineer. Policy 4.5 states that all single-family residential units on corner lots shall access the roadway with the lower functional classification. Table 8 shows the new road construction standards contained in the Transportation Element Policy 4.2.

**Table 8: New Road Construction Standards**

Road Type	Spacing (Miles)	Direct Land Access	Intersection Spacing	Parking
Arterial	1-2	Limited - Major Generators	.25 Miles	Prohibit
Collector	.5-1	Restricted - Control Driveways	.25 Miles	Limited
Local	.25 or less	Safety Controls - Limited Regulation	660 feet	Permitted

In addition to the access management and general transportation policies, the Transportation Element establishes a Transportation Concurrency Exception Area/Urban Redevelopment Area (TCEA/URA) within the City. The TCEA/URA is intended to discourage urban sprawl, maximize the use of existing facilities, and centralize commercial, government, retail, residential, and cultural activities. The TCEA/URA includes a one-mile segment of US 27 east of the study area.

Several policies related to the TCEA/URA address access management practices to improve roadway efficiency. Policies 1.5 and 1.10 require all plats and site plans within the TCEA/URA to show cross access easements between adjacent properties. Policy 1.7 ensures that improvements to the road network within the TCEA/URA facilitate traffic flow in a cost effective manner. Policy 1.8 requires the City to develop access management guidelines for all land uses within the TCEA/URA using the standards contained in the FDOT Access Management Plan. Finally, Policy 1.9 requires that any development project within the TCEA/URA utilize access management guidelines to reduce the number of curb cuts.

### ***Subdivision Regulations***

The City of Ocala regulates the subdivision and development of property in Chapter 114 of the Land Development Code. Chapter 114-3 defines a subdivision as follows:

- The division of any tract of land into three or more lots, sites, or parcels, any one of which contains two acres or less in area; or
- Any division of land where a new street or easement for street purposes or the establishment or dedication of a highway, street, or alley is involved.

During the subdivision process, the proposed street layout must conform to the “general city plan.” In the event the “city plan” fails to provide guidance, the developer must continue existing principal streets to surrounding areas or conform to a neighborhood plan approved by the City. In addition, Section 191-01 requires that existing principle streets be continued and that minor streets be designed to discourage through traffic. Where subdivisions abut arterials, the city may require reverse frontage, buffering using landscaping, and screening.

Double frontage and reverse frontage lots are to be avoided “except where essential to provide separation of residential development from traffic arteries or to overcome specific disadvantages of topography and orientation.” In these cases, a landscaped buffer along with a non-access easement is required along the higher classified roadway. The City Council can stipulate that a developer provide a marginal access street for subdivisions abutting an existing or proposed arterial corridor or limited access highway. The marginal access street would run parallel to and adjacent to the arterial. Lots located between the marginal access street and arterial road would access the lower classified roadway. Other treatments such as rear service alleys may also be required to ensure “adequate protection of residential properties and to afford separation of through and local traffic.”

Section 114-91(m)(1) establishes future right-of-way widths and minimum sight distances for roadways based on the road’s functional classification. Table 9 shows the future right-of-way width and sight-distance standards. The City also requires subdivisions abutting or containing corridors that are deficient in right-of-way width to provide “additional right-of-way” in conformance with Table 9.



**Table 9: Future Right-of-Way Width and Sight-Distance Standards**

<b>Street Type/Functional Class</b>	<b>Minimum ROW (feet)</b>	<b>Sight Distance (feet)</b>
Major arterial thoroughfare	150	1,600
Secondary arterial thoroughfare or section line road	80 (107.5 setback)	1,100
Collector	60 (80 setback)	1,100
Minor, Without curb and gutter	60	400
Minor, With curb and gutter	50	400
Marginal access	50	300

**Zoning Regulations**

The City of Ocala’s Zoning Regulations include extensive provisions regarding driveway spacing, service roads, and out parcels for shopping centers and large single-use retail facilities. The intent of these regulations is to ensure that shopping centers and large single-use retail facilities make efficient use of the land and to minimize the impacts on infrastructure, nearby properties, and the environment. By regulating the development of these uses through Section 122-902, the City hopes to prevent an excessive number of driveways, or driveways that will produce traffic hazards and unnecessarily increase the impact on the public road network.

The City of Ocala defines a shopping center as a multi-use retail facility in excess of 25,000 square feet. Property to be developed as a shopping center must be zoned shopping center (SC), unless otherwise approved by the City Council. The location and design requirements for shopping centers are also applicable to single retail stores in excess of 25,000 square feet. However, multiuse shopping centers must be at least four acres, and be developed and rezoned as an individual retail development.

Many regulations outlined in Section 122-906, City of Ocala Zoning Regulations, relate to driveway spacing, service roads, and out-parcels around signalized intersections. Property being rezoned as a shopping center or as an individual retail store must have at least 260 feet of uninterrupted road frontage on a public roadway and be within 300 feet of a signalized intersection. In addition, these lots are subject to the following requirements:

- Property within 300-foot of an intersection may be designated as an out parcel of the shopping center;
- Property within the 300-foot radius of an intersection may contain a driveway, provided that the driveway is not within 300 feet of the intersection;
- Property within the 300-foot radius may contain an ingress/egress point for a service road, when a service road is provided;

- Properties outside the 300-foot radius that abut a shopping center or single retail store development may be developed provided all motor vehicle access is from the abutting development. Service roads may be constructed provided one end of the service road is within the 300-foot radius or provides access to property that is within the 300-foot radius. However, there can be no more than two connections between the service road and each public road frontage; and
- Outside of this area, only one access point is allowed between the shopping center and the abutting roadway, excluding service road entrances and exits.

Section 122-913, Zoning Regulations, provides the driveway standards for shopping centers and single retail store developments connecting to the road network. The requirements for site design are as follows:

- Driveways are located at least 300 feet from the intersection. However, the City Engineer can approve a connection less than 300 feet from the intersection or require special design criteria based on the site.
- No more than one access point shall be provided between the proposed development and a fronting public road except in conjunction with a service road, unless additional access points are warranted based on the data from the traffic study.
- Where a service road is provided on an arterial road two connections (one for each end of the service road) are allowed, as long as a minimum distance of 1,320 feet is maintained between the two connections.
- Driveway access along arterial roads with service roads must restrict access to the service roads.
- New driveways must be aligned with existing driveways or roads. However, an exception may be granted by the City Engineer for safety concerns. If the exception is granted there must be a 300 feet between the centerlines of the offsetting driveways.
- In regards to right-turn-only lanes, the developer may need to provide a physical barrier preventing left-turns.
- Properties being newly platted, redeveloped, or expanding in the case of existing shopping centers must remove nonconforming driveways or curb cuts unless a waiver is granted by the City Commission.
- Shopping centers must include a service road when the development exceeds 40 acres or 400,000 square feet of leasable area.
- Shopping centers with an existing or planned service road shall only gain access to an abutting arterial roadway through the service road.

- Ownership of the service road must be transferred to the city.

Driveways must be located directly across from existing driveways or roads unless otherwise directed. In the event an exception is approved, a minimum spacing distance of 300 feet must be maintained between centerlines.

According to Section 122-914, Zoning Regulations, a shopping center or single retail store development must provide actual or potential driveway connection points between its internal driveways or parking areas and abutting properties. When the abutting property is vacant, at least one potential cross-access driveway or parking area connection point must be provided and shown on the plat. Out parcels must gain access via the service road from within the development.

**Driveway Policy**

The “City of Ocala Driveway Policy” provides location and design criteria including radii, width, angle, and throat length for commercial driveways and deceleration/acceleration lanes. The Policy includes a table entitled “Minimum Driveway Spacing” that establishes parcel specific site design spacing standards for the locating of driveways (Table 10). Please note that this is not the same as driveway spacing standards.

**Table 10: Minimum Driveway Spacing**

Type	Side Property Line	Street Corner	Within Same Property and Between Driveways
Residential	6 ft	30 ft	50 ft
Commercial	40 ft	75 ft	150 ft
Industrial	50 ft	100 ft	200 ft
Commercial/Industrial in excess of 50,000 ft <sup>2</sup>	100 ft	300 ft	900 ‘

The minimum median opening spacing distance is 300 feet and median openings are prohibited within 175 feet of an intersection. In addition, the Driveway Policy stipulates that nonconforming driveways may not be altered and that removal of the driveway will eliminate the nonconforming status of the site. If the use of any nonconforming driveway ceases for one year or more, then subsequent use of the driveway must conform to the policy.

**Observations**

1. The City of Ocala is experiencing development pressure at the urban boundary. New developments being annexed near the interchange are creating additional traffic and increased truck traffic at the interchange. City and County staff also noted that the development of a horse racing facility northeast of the I-75/US 27 interchange and of a major warehousing facility north of US 27 are of specific concern.

2. The City's definition of a subdivision appears to allow the unregulated creation of lots as small as two acres in size. This could contribute to access problems on major roadways.
3. The City has extensive regulations for the development of out-parcels for shopping centers. Currently, the retrofit requirements only apply to shopping centers and single retail establishments.
4. The access class 5 designation at the I-75/US 27 interchange does not meet FIHS standards, adversely impacting safety and operational efficiency in the functional area of the interchange.
5. The driveway and median opening spacing requirements are contained in the Comprehensive Plan, but have not been adopted in the Land Development Code. In addition, the spacing requirements in the Comprehensive Plan policy are not consistent with the City's driveway policy.

City Planning and FDOT Maintenance staff mentioned that there are occasions where developers have taken driveway permit applications to FDOT, District 5 in DeLand for the issuance of a Notice of Intent to Permit without the local maintenance office's review. Although the notice of intent to permit a driveway is not binding, developers have used it to pressure local governments for approval of driveways on state roads.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKSHOP**

On November 6, 2002, a workshop was held for corridor stakeholders. Twenty-nine planners, engineers, and plan reviewers from surrounding communities and the FDOT attended a day-long training seminar on the benefits of access management and approaches to improve access management in their communities. The communities represented include the City of Ocala, Marion County, Citrus County, Levy County, and representatives from FDOT (Ocala Maintenance Yard and District 5, in DeLand). The seminar included the identification of specific issues in the participant's communities and along US 27.

In addition, a group exercise was conducted. Participants were divided into groups of four people and asked to list potential strategies that could be used to better manage access along US 27. The main focus of the exercise was on intergovernmental coordination. Many of the strategies involved coordination between and within local and state agencies. The specific responses are provided below.

- Coordinating meetings between impacted jurisdictions,
- Presentations to local development boards,
- Increased public meetings and involvement,
- Regularly scheduled monthly access management meetings,
- Local purchase of access rights,

- The increased use of technology (webpages, local access television, video teleconferencing, etc.) to solicit comments,
- Statewide Annual Access Management Meeting to disseminate information to professional staff, and
- Development of region wide criteria for modifying roadway access class

## **CONCEPTUAL ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

US 27 is under the jurisdiction of FDOT. Marion County and the City of Ocala have jurisdiction over land use decisions. The use of uniform standards would assist efforts to promote comprehensive access management for the corridor. FDOT access management requirements provide a framework for a unified approach to access management.

Based upon the assessment of current practice and workshop results, several key issues have emerged that form the basis of a conceptual access management plan for the US 27 corridor. These are summarized below.

1. Change the access management class at the I-75/US 27 interchange from class "5" to class "3".
2. The City of Ocala and Marion County should adopt FDOT access management requirements by reference and reinforce them through the land development process. Below are some suggested guidelines:
  - For state roads, the LDR's and the comprehensive plan should reference the state highway system standards and that state roads will need to meet the state standards.
  - Establish interchange management requirements for interchanges in Marion County and the City of Ocala that meet FDOT access management requirements.
  - Reduce the number of exemptions from the platting process and institute a minor subdivision process for minor land division activity.
  - Adopt regulations that prohibit the platting of flag lots along US 27 and in other areas, with exceptions for specific circumstances as noted in the CUTR report *Model Land Development and Subdivision Regulations that Support Access Management*.
  - Strengthen bowling alley lot restrictions by widening the minimum frontage requirements.
  - Establish practices to restrict frequent driveways around the interchange area.

- Continue to reduce reliance on US 27 for access by encouraging alternative routes, parallel access roadways, interparcel connections, and side streets for local circulation.
  - Update driveway and intersection design requirements to assure that they provide adequate geometric standards for turning vehicles and do not result in traffic conflicts at the entrance. These may be based on FDOT standards.
3. Establish a process for routing FDOT access permitting with local governments for review and comment. FDOT and the local government need to agree on a routing procedure. In addition, the local governments need to educate reviewers that if the notice of intent to permit a driveway is issued they still can require design changes.
  4. By expanding the retrofit requirements to include all change in use activity the City of Ocala could create better access to the extent feasible, especially since much of the city is already developed.
  5. Establish a corridor management team made up of representatives of each local government, the FDOT, and other interested parties. The team would assure continued coordination and commitment concerning access management. Other responsibilities could include scenic byways designation, economic development, or other areas of interest on the corridor.
  6. Extend the point where the existing median ends to 44<sup>th</sup> Street. This will reduce the number of left turns along the corridor and improve the safety and efficiency of the roadway in the urban area.