Balm Community Plan
DRAFT Goals and Strategies
February 21, 2012

**Goal 1:** Balm residents, business stakeholders, and land owners strongly support the viability and profitability of agricultural businesses in order to provide a strong economic base for the community until it is no longer feasible then manage the development of our area to protect the open space and environment.

To this end, Balm community members recommend…

* Expansion of existing agricultural uses and the production of new, environmentally friendly agriculture uses including livestock management and ranching, farming of tropical fish, ranching, and ornamental horticulture. (examples of existing businesses: Goodson Farms, Jaymar Farms, Tampa Groves, etc.)
* Exploration of a locally run farmers market, which sells organic goods, and offers canning classes, compost demonstrations, rain barrel workshops
* Construction of an Agricultural Extension satellite office
* Maintaining the Urban Service Area until such time expansion criteria is met
* Promotion of agricultural industries (i.e. feed and farm supply, farming equipment services, sales, and repair)
* Promoting agricultural businesses
* Maintaining compatibility with existing and future agricultural growth
* Develop a master plan to manage the inevitable growth to preserve our quality of life.
	+ Specific areas of the community will be identified to encourage continued agricultural uses while ensuring that as inevitable development approaches, improvements are included that are compatible with the surrounding land uses.

**Goal 2:** The community will foster the establishment of partnerships between residents, local groups and government entities.

Thus, the local residents support…

* Developing a communication network that keeps all parties informed
* Building and expanding our partnership with The University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, and Mosaic.
* Creation and use of community liaisons to report on updates of pertinent research and discoveries.
* Opportunities that enhance adult education.
* Citizen-governmental realtionships that keep both parties informed of governmental regulations, zoning changes, code violations, and actions affecting the community at large (current and pending)

**Goal 3:** Balm supports the creation of alternative agricultural uses, activities, and industries that will provide healthier lifestyle choices for residents, bring in outside revenue, and diversify the community’s agricultural base.

To accomplish this, the community recommends…

* Introducing new, profitable businesses such as agricultural eco-tourism
* Creation of alternative agricultural uses such as organic farming, alternative energy production, harvesting and cultivation techniques, biofuel, etc., as alternative agricultural practices
* Utilizing sustainable agricultural techniques such as drip irrigation, green manure fertilization, crop rotation, etc.
* Cultivation of organic crops through permissible use of certified fertilizers and clean water, as well as appropriate harvesting techniques
* Establishment and participation of citizens in organizing and maintaining an effective farmer’s market and community garden.

The county will…

* Revise the LDC to allow for the establishment of profitable and effective famers markets and community gardens. Identify what if any restrictions will need to be removed.

**Goal 4:** Balm seeks the continued conservation of its rural and agrarian characteristics, atmosphere, and quality of life established by long standing community residents, which include leisurely activities, strong neighborhood ties, faith based organizations (?), and rural low density land use designations.

The community supports…

* Rural scale residential development that contains an eclectic and diverse mix of housing styles and lot sizes, while discouraging suburban scale density, conventional subdivision development, except as permitted by the adopted Future Land Use Map.
* Parcels that do meet the minimum land use designation lot size are recommended for a change in land use to match their lot size. (e.g. a 10 acre parcel in AM 1/20 would be recommended to change to AE 1/10)
* The upkeep and maintenance of existing properties and thus property values (e.g. requests additional and effective code enforcement, sweeps, inspections etc., no new additional open storage in residential areas, etc.)
* Rural, transparent fencing (possible LDC??)
* The protection of Balm’s natural assets including scrub lands, water bodies, wildlife, ELAPP, Palmettos, Pines, etc.
* The design technique of clustering buildings in order to preserve and protect open space and agricultural uses.

The county will…

* Maintain appropriate rural future land use designations that are compatible with the existing rural character and level of development in Balm. Specifically, maintaining the Comprehensive Plan definition of rural densities in the Rural Area as 1 unit per 5 acres or less. The county will not designate any further RP-2 land use categories unless due to split land uses on one parcel

*(Reference Future Land Use Element:*

* + *Policy 4.3: The Residential Planned-2 or Wimauma Village-2 land use category shall not be expanded outside of the Urban Service Area.*
	+ *Policy 8.8: For projects whose boundaries encompass more than one land use category, density and intensity calculations will allow for the blending of those categories across the entire project.  All portions of the project must be contiguous to qualify for blending. The combined total number of dwelling units and/or FAR possible under all the land use categories within the project will be used as a ceiling for review purposes.  This provides maximum design flexibility for those projects, because the location or clustering of those units on the project site need not conform to the land use category boundary on the site as long as the maximum number of dwelling units permitted for the entire project are not exceeded.)*
* Continue to prevent open storage in agricultural and residential zoning which includes, but is not limited to, furnishings, broken vehicles, boats and RV’s, excess debris, scrap metal, etc.
* Continue to allow neighborhood serving commercial intensity at sites that meet locational criteria to support the creation of a hamlet/ village center.

**Goal 5:** Balm stakeholders support the preservation of existing open spaces and acquisition of new open spaces so as to provide free and accessible areas to the public.

Balm stakeholders recommend...

* Preservation of vistas and panoramic views, both public and private, including Balm scrub lands, Lake Shelley, Palmetto and Pine trees, etc.
* Creation of a wildlife corridor connection (e.g. along the old Balm Railroad right-of-way) that will protect the area’s natural wildlife
* Minimizing light pollution and pervasive artificial light through nighttime lighting standards (e.g. ‘Dark Sky’ Initiative) LDC?? – I believe this has already occurred – so it might be “continue to…
* The Parks, Recreation and Conservation Department consider provision of:
	+ Public access for motor vehicles and pedestrians (including motorized scooters/wheelchairs) so the community may enjoy fishing etc.
	+ Additional parking spaces and/or the designation of a parking lot in Balm Scrub Park to reduce bicycle/vehicular traffic (two separate ideas?)
	+ A changing room/restroom facility and benches/tables at Balm Scrub Park

The County shall continue …

* Acquisition and purchase of approved ELAPP properties.

**Goal 6:** Balm citizens, both long-term and newer residents alike, hold great pride in their community’s assets and wish to see them prosper. Balm will striveto preserve and maintain its community landmarks in order to provide a continued sense of identity and build historical significance.

To accomplish this goal, the citizens support…

* Reconstruction of a “Balm gateway entrance signs” at appropriate locations as per LDC Part 7.05.00-Community Signs
* Restoration of Balm Civic Center and Recreational Park through community participation and funding efforts
* Greater usage of the Balm Civic Center for organization of various community events and expanded inclusive services to strengthen community relationships
* Establishment of additional athletic programs and/or youth recreational sports leagues (e.g. Soccer, Baseball, Football, etc.) – by whom?
* Reopening the original Balm Post Office
* Given Balm already has its “fair share” of liabilities (e.g. Balm Mountain landfill, Detention Center/Prison, borrow pits), the community supports proportionately locating undesired land uses in other communities.
* Providing cover of the landfill, “Balm Mountain”, with sod/grass to make more aesthetically pleasing – is this private or county?

**Goal 7:** The community seeks creation of a Hamlet and/or Village Center that has a central core of mix of uses meeting their daily needs. The mix may include convenience retail, food services, personnel and business service uses, community facilities including parks, schools, libraries, places of worship, and pedestrian linkages.

Community members recommend…

* Hamet/village centers limited to areas that meet locational criteria.
* Preference of locating a hamlet/village center near the existing Post Office, at intersection of Balm Rd and Lloyd Andrews Rd, and not at the intersection of Balm Boyette Rd, S.R. 672 and Shelley Lane.
* New village center(s) be limited to “commercial neighborhood” serving uses such as: a country store, bed and breakfast inn, beauty parlor/barber shop, and family owned cafes/dinners. Any new village center(s) be connected to adjacent uses. (e.g. trails, sidewalks, etc)

The County will…

* Provide minimal rural design standards including signs (e.g. non-neon, only back lit), façade requirements, lighting (limited), etc. LDC?- Consider adopted Rural Design Standards. Keystone-Odessa, Lutz.

**Goal 8:** Balm encourages Hillsborough County to make necessary improvements to, and provide continued maintenance of, new and existing infrastructure in order to keep Balm attractive, functional, and safe for visitors and local residents

To this end, Balm encourages the county to…

* Provide appropriate levels of service and infrastructure improvements along major collectors and arterials such as Sweat Loop Road which include designated bicycle lanes and/or widened roadway shoulders.
* Resurface, cover, and/or appropriately attend to maintenance needs such as potholes and ditches along roadways.
* Plan improved bicycle lanes to facilitate **long distance cyclists** and prevent roadside accidents between bicycle and vehicles.
* Maintain rural character in the design of any pathways, multimodal trails and bicycle lanes
* Maintain multi-modal accessibility to and from our town as the community develops.

**Goal 9:** Local citizens encourage the establishment of pathways such as multimodal paths, greenway corridors, and equestrian trails that allow for more convenient, accessible connections between residential, nonresidential and recreational areas and that conserve the natural environment.

Balm residents support…

* An interconnected multi-use trail network throughout the community that incorporates natural plant life and open space
* Creation of paths that connects Balm Civic Center and recreational park to surrounding neighborhoods
* Include interconnections to adjacent development as new development occurs especially at hamlet/village center
* Public greenway connections between adjacent planned clustered developments and the village center.
* Designation of multimodal trails that accommodate all activities, including bicycling, jogging, sightseeing, etc.
* Leveraging the use of surrounding neighborhood horse farming as an economic and recreational resource by creating destinations/pathways that encourage equestrian ridership, and establish connectivity among neighborhoods.

**Goal 10:** Local lawenforcement shall appropriate crime prevention methods, and apportion effective services to prevent the continued occurrence of crime throughout Balm and establish a safe, secure community.

The county will…

* Continue to maintain at least minimum adopted emergency response times to calls.

The community desires…

* Additional law enforcement presence for supervision and surveillance.
* More effective use of code enforcement sweeps/trips on a regular basis that will keep code violations at a minimal level.
* Addition of a sheriff substation.
* Development of a neighborhood watch program and /or liaison with sheriff department.
* Prevention of continued truck traffic infractions (I.E. speeding, illegal dumping, stopping) so that all modes of travel may become safer.
* Reduction in illegal dumping of garbage along right-of-ways