

NORTH RANCH SECTOR PLAN

SCOPING MEETING SUMMARY

The first public meeting to kick off the North Ranch Sector Plan process was held on January 7, 2014 between 3:30-6:00 pm at the Osceola County Council on Aging. The purpose of the Scoping Meeting was to present a wide set of information on existing conditions for the area within the North Ranch, and get feedback on additional issues to address. In order to notify stakeholders and residents of the meeting, the county employed a 4-prong, multi-media notification approach: direct e-mails were sent out to specified agencies with interest in the North Ranch; two newspaper advertisements were published in the Osceola Gazette; 620 postcards were mailed to residents within 300' of the property; and the North Ranch Sector Plan page on the Osceola County website was updated with materials and meeting information.

Over 60 people attended, representing a wide range of stakeholders. A short presentation and welcome at 4:30 pm from Jeff Jones (Osceola County) and Bruce Meighen (Logan Simpson) was the only pause in the steady flow and mingling of participants. The meeting was an open house format, with informational boards for participants to review and give feedback. The themes addressed Economic Development, Environmental Resources, Transportation Systems, and Infrastructure & Water. The comments and feedback from participants helped identify additional issues that the Sector Plan should address during the Long-Term Master Plan process. The primary themes are summarized below, with a full list at the end of the document:

Economic Development:

- Importance of agribusiness to the local and regional economy.
- Connect to technology, aerospace, manufacturing centers in Melbourne to UCF, Orlando Int'l Airport.
- Make the opportunity stand apart from similar, competing sites.

Environmental Resources:

- Environmental impacts: habitats for special status and T&E species, etc.
- Water impacts: water quality protection, groundwater, wetlands, St. Johns River and tributaries and watersheds.
- Need for regional greenway and wildlife corridor connections.
- Need for new reservoirs and water supply.

Transportation Systems:

- Multiple corridor alternatives were identified.

- Avoid impacts to St. Johns River, Econ, watersheds, wetlands, and wildlife habitat.
- Avoid impacts to established neighborhoods, esp. along Nova Road and Lake Ajay.
- Optimize the route of the Florida National Scenic Trail.

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE SUMMARY

To extend the reach of the Scoping Meeting to those unable to attend, the meeting information was also posted on the Osceola County website and through an online questionnaire. The survey included the same information and asked for the same kinds of feedback as the Scoping Meeting. Summarized comments from five respondents (received as of February 3, 2014) are below, with the full list of responses at the end of this document. The survey will be available online until the subsequent public meeting in March 2014.

Economic Development

- There should be flexibility in the types of uses by planning for adaptable buildings and mixed use areas.
- Is there enough projected growth to sustain a community of this scale, or should growth be focused on redeveloping existing communities?
- Implementation and phasing can be tied to build out of Northeast District development or construction of future roads.

Environmental Resources

- East to west significant wildlife corridors to connect the Econ River and St. Johns River systems.
- Impact on endangered species, water quality, forested areas, wetlands, the Floridian Aquifer, the St. Johns River and the Econlockhatchee River.
- Conservation areas, especially around wetlands and remaining forested areas.

Transportation Systems

- Consider enhancing existing roads such as US 192 and 520 rather than connecting to the east coast.
- Analyze multimodal and mass transportation opportunities, and avoid environmental impacts.
- Address regional connections, such as a new bridge over the St. John's River, as well as a local grid network for internal growth within the North Ranch.

Infrastructure & Water

- Investigate partnerships with surrounding counties.
- Need to identify alternative water supplies and water conservation practices.
- Balance growth with available resources to minimize unsustainable development.

ADDENDUM: WRITTEN PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING AND ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE COMMENTS

Economic Development

- Partner with Duke Energy and their ED team to market the site and close suitable projects
- What is the projected population growth in Central Florida vs. the amount projected for this area? What types of residents / businesses can this area attract?
- Don't forget importance of local agriculture in the region's economy
- Connecting to the tech centers in Melbourne is more relevant than purely tourism destinations
- How will we make this site stand apart from similar sites or others competing for the same industries?
- Impact of residential development on public school system (i.e. sites, facilities, transportation, maintenance, funding etc.
- Connect aerospace, space and mfg. in Brevard to UCF and other research areas
- Agribusiness commonalities
- Environmental impacts should outweigh purely short term financial gain
- How will we make this site stand apart from similar sites or others competing for the same industries?
- Consider impact on Lake Ajay long-time residential neighborhood
- Space
- Plan for flexibility in the type of use by designing buildings that can have multiple uses
- There should be restrictions on when the development can begin. It could be tied to available developable acreage within the current Urban Growth Boundary, the build out of the Northeast District development or the construction of the future road.
- Is there enough projected growth to sustain a community much larger than the rural center, Harmony? St. Cloud and Kissimmee seemed better poised for growth than an entirely new community of such a large size.
- Has there been any communication with the TND – Harmony? What about rural uses adjacent? How are compatibility issues going to be addressed?
- Simulation sector

Environmental Resources

- Protect Wood Stork nesting colony
- Will the Wood Stork rookery be disrupted/destroyed?
- Protect Florida Grasshopper Sparrow habitat and Eagle trees and habitat
- Save environmentally sensitive areas upland/wetland for parks/private but not building
- The project site may contain habitat for threatened species including: Audubon's Crested Caracara and Florida Grasshopper Sparrow
- Eastern Indigo Snake
- How can large tract remain protect in perpetuity?

- Tributaries to St. Johns River need protection. All this area is a major wildlife corridor
- Protect Indian River and mosquito lagoons!
- Where will the conservation areas be and who decides this?
- Protect the SJRWMD watershed
- Protect runoff to Indian River Lagoon feeders
- Save the Florida Grasshopper Sparrow as well as other species – habitat
- Regional greenway connection between Econ and Kissimmee River begins on western edge
- Preserve wildlife crossing areas that mimic natural movements as well as preserve aquifer recharge areas.
- Consider development supported agriculture:
<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2013/12/17/251713829/forget-golf-courses-subdivisions-draw-residents-with-farms>
- Please make sure there is a significant undisturbed environmental wildlife corridor of some size running east to west that will connect the Econ River System to the St. Johns River System.
- There needs to be a bridge across SJR.
- Impact of the area on Threatened and Endangered species such as but not limited to Sandhill Crane, Wood Stork, Gopher Tortoise, Black Bear, Florida Panther, Crested Caracara. Impact of the development on the water quality of the region. Impact of development on Climate Change specifically loss of the remaining forested areas that currently are acting as carbon sinks. Impact of development on the recharge of the Floridian Aquifer. Impacts to wetland resources associated with the St. Johns River and the Econlockhatchee River.

Transportation Systems

- Improve driving time on 192 to Kissimmee and north past Deseret to Lake Nona to airport. Can Nova Road handle it
- Impact to residents on Nova Rd?
- Protect the watersheds and water supply, SJWMD, Econ and the reservoir!
- Protect native plants especially rare and endangered plants.
- Don't lose the Florida Grasshopper Sparrow the way we did the Dusky Seaside Sparrow (built the Beeline and DDI)
- The Florida National Scenic Trail Corridor currently is designed to go through (N-5) along Deer Park Rd. Needs to be addressed as is or with an alternative
- Will the Poinciana Parkway connect with the North Ranch Sector?
- Look at transportation issues holistically. Local and regional
- Where will new road be located –north of Lake Ajay
- ECF Task Force needs to have all this info for planning –will be a key factor in vital connectivity needs
- Light Rail
- Keep designated Florida National Scenic Trail off of major road corridors. Provide alternative to current Deer Park Rd.
- All roads need to have wildlife crossings and/or be wildlife adapted.

- How will it affect bear and panther corridors?
- Connecting Viera growth area to Jobs in Medical City not using 528
- Involve FNPS to rescue Native Plants
- Compact high density should be the only allowed development pattern
- Grid street system
- Eastward extension of Nova Rd. would impact SJRWMD watershed
- Light Rail
- Create a grid network internal to the North Ranch Sector Plan, with roadways between 2-3 lanes. This will give the future residents options since the new road(s) developed for the Future Corridors study will be for longer/regional trips
- Use wildlife underpasses at the base of all highway bridges
- The main reason for this sector plan is in response to the Governor's request to connect to the east coast, but there seems to be very little interaction with coastal communities. Some consideration of funding to assist other major roads like US 192 and 520 need to be addressed.
- Need to analyze multimodal transportation opportunities including but not limited to, bicycle trails, walkable communities and mass transit.

Infrastructure & Water

- Can the aquifer handle the drain on potable water from projected population and use?
- Is there a plan for an additional landfill since the existing landfill only has 20+ years left for capacity?
- Stop fertilizer adopt and enforce strong fertilizer law to protect our water.
- Drainage to SJWD has effects on Indian River Lagoon –should be factored in
- Consider a reservoir to partner with Brevard Water Authority
 - Agree!
 - Yes!
- Where will the electric utilities be located?
 - On roofs!
- State of the art reuse for water is necessary... even sewage should be treated to potable water standards.
 - No fertilizer
- How can this area be developed in a manner that is infrastructure efficient?
- How much electric capacity is available today? How much will be needed for the industries in Osceola will target? Time frame?
 - Solar
- Only native plants and groundcover should be planted that require no irrigation
- Stop the sterile retention ponds. Plant with native plants to filter water
- Potable –ground water to surface water –existing supply not sufficient. Development agent should require DSM measures to minimize consumption (i.e. low use appliances)
- Wastewater –development should include requirements before new wastewater facilities as well as waste to energy in all new facilities

- Drainage – Wet retention alone will not be sufficient. County should require low impact design and development to emphasize, zero stormwater buildings (green lots, green walls, etc) and recharge-friendly road surfacing
- Septic tanks should be prohibited
- Why not partner with providers in Brevard County?
- Need to identify alternative water supply areas, identify and enhance water conservation practices. Utilize Low Impact Development principles.