

NORTH RANCH SECTOR PLAN

SECOND PUBLIC WORKSHOP SUMMARY: FRAMEWORKS AND BIG IDEAS

The second public meeting for the North Ranch Sector Plan process was held on March 4, 2014 between 4:00-6:00 pm at the Osceola County Council on Aging. The purpose of the Public Workshop was to present proposed frameworks for the plan. In order to notify stakeholders and residents of the meeting, the county employed a 4-pronged 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 30 people attended, representing a wide range of stakeholders. The meeting was open house workshop format, with informational boards for participants to review and give feedback. Four frameworks were presented to participants: Economic, Environmental, Transportation, and Urban Form Frameworks. By rotating small groups of participants through four stations, the County briefly presented the proposed frameworks and opened it up to small group discussion.

To extend the reach of the second Public Meeting to those unable to attend, the meeting information was also posted on the Osceola County North Ranch Master Plan webpage and through an online questionnaire. The survey included the same material presented at the public meeting and solicited open ended comments. The full list of comments from 15 respondents (as of March 28, 2014) can be found at the end of this document. The survey will be available online until the next public meeting in late spring/early summer 2014.

The verbal, written, and online comments and feedback from participants will help update the frameworks, which form the core of the plan. The primary themes are summarized below, with a full list at the end of the document:

ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

- The North Ranch offers a lot of potential for creating a high-tech corridor. Attracting the right investors and specialized educational facilities is crucial. Business incentives should be provided.
- Should the development be directed to Orlando and Orange County, such as the UCF/Cocoa triangle, instead of rural portions of Osceola County?
- Eco-tourism is an important economic sector in Osceola County and is not clearly represented in this framework. Making the North Ranch a worldwide destination for eco-tourism, great parks, etc. would be an important step in preserving what is unique about Florida.
- Osceola County already has difficulty attracting high paying companies. How can this new area ensure that the right kind of jobs are created?

- The economic framework, as presented, lacks details regarding how to attract industry and create a fiscally sustainable future.
- There were concerns that the economic framework appears short-sighted and serves as an unnecessary justification to encourage more housing development in a environmentally unique area that could otherwise benefit the region if more properly planned and preserved. It was noted that the sprawling development pattern fragments natural systems and will not ultimately attract or benefit residents or businesses alike.

TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK

- There is support for the mixed-use transit oriented approach for the North Ranch, though the transportation system and footprint of the developed areas could be reduced. The transportation system and centers could be consolidated to accommodate more conservation and agriculture areas.
- There was support for the rail systems and the concentration of growth along the transit corridors.
- It was suggested that the extension of Osceola Parkway should connect to Brevard County in the vicinity of US 192 instead of at Viera.
- There were concerns that the transportation network would fragment the natural environment, destroy native plants and habitats, create barriers to wildlife movement through the area, and result in noise that will affect the animals. There were concerns that the barriers to wildlife movement would result in animals being hit by vehicles and trains. It was noted that the plan should clarify the steps taken to facilitate the movement of wildlife and to avoid fragmentation.
- Some people believe that the area should be preserved intact and its habitat areas enhanced; and that there would be no need for new toll roads or rail systems if the area stays a ranch.
- While some comments recommended that the roads should be gridded to concentrate growth and hinder sprawl, others felt the criss-crossing of roads did not support conservation efforts due to the resulting fragmentation and barriers to wildlife movement.
- There was a question of how the Florida National Scenic Trail gap (north-south) within the North Ranch would be filled, preferably without requiring any or many major roadway crossings.

ENVIRONMENTAL FRAMEWORK

- Concerns were expressed that the North Ranch (as a whole and especially in certain areas) serves as a crucial wildlife corridor, particularly to migratory birds. It was noted that even with the cited intended "conservation areas", development proposed for this fragile mosaic region fragments the disparate "conservation areas" so as to be of no long-term value to wildlife---especially in such close proximity to dense urban uses and transportation grids. The extensive network of passenger rail, expressway, and street corridors would be detrimental to animal and plant habitat, and lead to wildlife mortality thereby undoing the viability of conservation areas as a long-term use to wildlife. Commenters recommended that the conservation areas should be wider and more connected. As one of the most important north/south wildlife corridors in the state, the north/south connections need to be better preserved.
- There were concerns regarding the planning for the Environmental Framework, which at 43,000 acres of "conservation areas," still equates to less than one-third of the land area. It was noted that the

Environmental Framework was fragmented; does not convey an understanding of conservation planning; and 43,000 acres that are deemed "conservation areas" include both expansive reservoirs and agricultural lands. One commenter asked: What natural systems will be displaced to accommodate new and expanded reservoirs? "'Agricultural lands,' however sustainably they are farmed or ranched, should not be grouped with 'conservation areas'... Conservation planning is not simply reserving the slivers of uplands that would be impractical to develop because they are so enmeshed in wetlands, nor is it building reservoirs designed to help accommodate future water needs."

- Concerns that the Environmental Framework isolates wetlands and natural resource areas, pointing out that wetland value comes from their connected functions, which appears to be lost to fragmentation. Further, wetlands cannot function correctly without healthy uplands which appear to house most of the developable areas.
- As wetlands are protected through Federal and state regulations, commenters pointed out that is misleading to show the largest wetlands and call it an Environmental Framework, as they are already protected. Commenters asked "What proportion of the 43,000 acres is true conservation once the wetlands, agriculture, reservoirs, and otherwise undevelopable areas are subtracted?" concluding that not enough land is preserved and it is not preserved in the right way.
- Commenters recommended an approach to water conservation utilized by initiatives in the Northern Everglades/Upper Kissimmee water shed - dispersed storage in natural wetlands, including large-scale wetland restoration. Concerns with the size and location of the Penny Wash Wolf Creek and Taylor Creek Reservoirs were expressed.
- Concern with the ramifications of sea level rise.
- Concern with groundwater withdrawal, especially drawing down the Floridian Aquifer. Golf course irrigation, as proposed, is a large consumer of water. Are golf courses necessary? If so, can they be created to use less water?
- Commenters recommended that the Master Plan's regulations should address the above, especially plant diversity; water quality; natural ecosystems; invasive plants; drought tolerant Florida native plants; natural retention ponds filtered by native plants; stormwater drainage into the Econ and St. Johns
- Concern with proposed water sources and continuous drawdown of the Florida Aquifer. Consider ocean water desalination or other sources that would not have as great an impact on Florida's natural resources. Also further explain aquifer/groundwater recharge.
- Recommendation that water conservation needs to have a larger role in the Sector Plan. Consider mandating that all irrigation be supplied by non-potable water; mandating allowable irrigation times/days; and reduce number of golf courses.

URBAN FORM FRAMEWORK

- Commenters recommend redevelopment within the UGB as a higher priority over greenfield development.
- Interest in ensuring a way to demonstrate long term job creation, to avoid housing development along a new highway. Job to housing ratio should be higher than 1:1. Further, the number of employment and urban centers seems unrealistic in the planning horizon.

- Recommendation to incorporate urban parks and natural areas within developments. As proposed, the pattern is too intense and austere.
- Concern over the significant environmental impacts that would be created through such large-scale transformation. Some commenters preferred using the land for natural conservations and eco-tourism because of the significant impact on environment from development. Recommendation that the Urban Framework further protects water quality, habitat quality, native plants, minimize lawn turf, encourage plant diversity, and wildlife especially bird species.
- Concern over the relationship between conservation and urban areas. For the full range of habitat communities to function, there must be a considerable transition between conservation areas and urban areas. The reasonable transition, shape, size and character of conservation areas and connectivity of the mosaic's systems need to be better represented.
- Many commenters indicated that the plan appears to replicate the same development pattern that the County has been trying to avoid. Further concentrate development nodes along primary corridors, surrounded by more open space. Incorporate mixed use development and multi-modal, transit oriented approaches; while also giving equal weight to land consumption and natural resource goals.

ADDENDUM: WRITTEN PUBLIC MEETING AND ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE COMMENTS

ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

- Why don't we just say 'no' [to future development]?
 - But then where does the growth go?
- Connections seem necessary, but we should avoid sprawl.
- Clustered centers sound good. No sprawl!
- If the land is available and property owners want/are willing to sell, let them!
- Growth is inevitable
- May be good place for big renewable energy facility
- If nothing happens for 50 years, why should we care?
- Why can't we focus growth north in Orange County? Makes more sense to connect UCF/Cocoa triangle instead
- Provide business incentives to attract industry
- There is a lot of potential for a high-tech corridor here –just make sure to do it right (education and investors that are innovative)
- A specialized tech school could be a big draw for the businesses you want. Has to have something special/unique, like attracting Space X's CEO, Elon Musk.
- How were the job centers determined? Just the proximity to Orlando? Seems strange that there are so many job centers near Orlando when there are other business clusters that have numerous companies with over 500 employees.
- It will not work in my life time. A waste of tax dollars.
- Where are the jobs going to be INSIDE Osceola County? This whole design still relies of people working OUTSIDE Osceola County. When will Osceola County obtain their OWN economic framework and STOP relying on other counties? You miss one of the largest and most important assets Osceola County has going for it and that is eco-tourism in the form of birdwatching and wildlife viewing. You count fishing but not the larger portion of eco-tourism birdwatching and wildlife viewing.
- First of all, I'm not convinced that we need ALL this new building in Osceola County. Second, I'm not convinced that "if we build it, they will come". Third, planning for it doesn't mean it should happen at the North Ranch. I understand connectivity, correct positioning and all the other buzz words, but this is urban sprawl at its worst. Economically, what you all want to do is to create new cities and all the trappings. We cannot attract enough high paying companies to Osceola now, with tax breaks, subsidizing, paying, (bribing) them to come, just like every other state, Creating this big a complex will add very little to our taxing foundation - with only people paying taxes, not companies. Economically, if we put all these minds to work for the current county needs, we would be better off.
- Rather than trying to provide an urban link I believe you should look at conserving the unique natural characteristics and building on that as an amenity to be enjoyed by those in the dense urban areas, Europeans and other visitors. This economic framework appears very short-sighted, unnecessary, and an excuse to encourage more housing development in a unique area that could be a boon to Osceola worldwide if properly planned, enhanced and preserved.

- I feel that development in the form of this massive, sprawling plan would have the opposite effect from that intended: once the beautiful, vital Econlockhatchee Mosaic is fragmented beyond repair, there will be no attractant to ANYONE, and the proposed plan area will be nothing but a grey concrete beehive of frenetic SHORT-TERM human activity with no coherent sense of place or proper quality-of-life to keep residents there for the long haul. The area would have lost all allure it ever had. Florida in general is teetering on the edge of killing the goose that laid the golden egg, and Osceola County will be at the forefront of this death knell if it pursues this sort of broad-swath urban development in the sensitive, priceless and irreplaceable Econ Mosaic. I OPPOSE DEVELOPMENT IN THE FORM OF THIS PROPOSED PLAN. The area should be purchased by the State for conservation, as was its original intention, to complete the wildlife corridor/greenway.
- It's not possible to comment on an economic framework that is so lacking in detail. Economic jargon and planner speak do not qualify as an economic framework.

TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK

- Need to concentrate growth
- Too much sprawl
- Roads are not gridded
- Concentrate on corridor
- Roads to the north and south?
- Question the 1:1 job/housing
- People want to get to Lake Nona and Melbourne –or is this the place for Air or OIA? Two airports
- Same driving time from center to OIA or Melbourne
- Too many roads crossing too many wetlands!
- One of the most damaging aspects of transportation systems is the fragmentation of ecosystems that inhibit the movement of birds and animals. What special steps are being taken to facilitate the easy movement of wildlife to prevent fragmentation?
- Where is the Federal Florida National Scenic Trail Proposed Trail proposed to traverse through this transportation framework without requiring any or many expensive major road crossings?
- I heard that the continuation of the proposed roads would flank the SJ River. Why would natural resources be allowed to be impacted by roads and rails?
- I'm loving the train system.
- Do not need new toll roads or rail to a ranch.
- Again, a train straight through a conservation area is a BAD idea. Animals will be run over constantly. Noise will affect the animals. Native plants and habitat will be destroyed during the construction. A train through a conservation area negates the area as conservation. How are you going to keep animals safe on these mega highways?
- Roads, rails, hubs, trails criss-crossing everything negates any "conservation" efforts. The fragility of this land will be undone with this proposal. It is chopped into too many pieces, thus will have too many bridges, too many fences, and too many other blockages for wildlife to negotiate.

- No transportation system should be disrupting the natural areas. It does not work. This area should be preserved intact and its habitat areas enhanced not degraded.
- Ugh. Criss-crosses the entire footprint, again neutralizing any positive intended conservation effect. There will BE no wildlife habitat left if these transportation corridors and systems, along with the urban-intense building, are put into place as proposed. I OPPOSE STRONGLY this idea for the Transportation Framework.
- I'm fully in support of adopting a mixed use, transit oriented approach to development of these lands; however, I believe this vision does not capitalize fully on the road network that already exists beyond the borders of the Ranch to minimize the need for all these new roads. The bottom line is that the footprint of the developed areas must be consolidated and densified to accommodate more conservation - which can only be accomplished by reducing the footprint of the transportation network.

ENVIRONMENTAL FRAMEWORK

- Road is perpendicular/bisects wetlands
- Conservation of water needs to be a greater factor
- Concern with drawing down the Floridian Aquifer
- Scrub areas are some of the most endangered animal and plant life in Florida
- Why so much water for irrigating golf courses?
- Why isn't the SJ River listed with a number like the Econ Swamp?
- Gold course irrigation is a big consumer. What were the assumptions leading up to continue the assumption that golf communities will continue and expand?
- Good. Go for it.
- A waste of tax dollars!
- A waste of water for St. Johns.
- There is not enough land being preserved in this proposal. Saving ranch land is NOT the same thing as saving preservation/conservation land. Saying you are saving conservation land and then running a train and trail straight through the middle of the same conservation area is NOT making it conservation. How many animals will be run over by the train? How many plants and habitat will be destroyed by the building of the train and trail? The conservation areas going East/West that are 1/2-1 mile wide between communities is too narrow to be considered wildlife corridors. You are not saving enough uplands to keep the wetlands viable. Wetlands cannot function correctly without healthy uplands.
- At the first meeting there were numerous references to the large woodstork rookery and saving it. At the second meeting no one admitted to there being a large woodstork rookery.....ominous beginnings for this project for a large woodstork rookery to have already disappeared.
- As communities are built and native plants and their ecosystems and communities are destroyed put them back by replanting the same native plants that were destroyed and NOT replacing them with non-native exotics or worse invasive plants. Make landscape ordinances that require 75-90% native plants and little to no lawn turf in order to replace lost native habitats and reduce water needs. Design innovative golf courses that use less of our precious water by using only native plants and using the most drought tolerant and pest resistant lawn turf available. Or better yet, reduce the number of golf

courses and increase the amount of conservation lands. Landscape ordinance requires that every pond have native plants around the littoral zone to filter nutrients from the water and provide wildlife habitat that was removed for buildings.

- Streetscaping-Plant a diversity of native trees, shrubs, and flowers and give them enough room and soil to grow. Avoid invasive species. Avoid lawn turn as much as possible.
- Will stormwater drain directly into the Econ and St John's? If so, Why? Be innovative. Have stormwater drain into retention ponds before draining directly into the Econ and St. John's and have these retention ponds aquascaped with Florida native plants to filter out the excess nutrients and provide habitat for wildlife that was lost during development. Then the stormwater can drain into the Econ and St Johns as cleaner water. What is meant by "emergent aquatic vegetation?"
- How large will Penny Wash Wolf Creek Reservoir be? Does this have anything to do with the disappearance of the woodstork rookery? How large is Taylor Creek Reservoir today? How large will it become exactly? Where exactly are they located? Stop using so much water for irrigation of lawns! Use more drought tolerant Florida native plants NOT Florida friendly NOT invasive plants. Put our Florida native plants back after you build!
- This land is THE north/south wildlife corridor through the state. Yes, it has some fences already, but nothing like the barriers it will have.
- The whole idea for having an urban growth boundary is to keep growth within certain guide lines, and this wipes that idea out. You are actively planning to destroy some of the most fragile lands in Osceola County. The 'environmental framework' you describe will be undone by all the roads, rails, and 'urban centers'. None of this would leave any place for wildlife or a real corridor. Wildlife, roads and people do not go together. The mosaic will be destroyed (according to your proposed urban framework). Changing the drainage ALWAYS changes what can and will live there. Wildlife will totally be crowded out. Nothing can negotiate the maze of roads, rails and urban areas.
- Creating such an intense maze of urban areas creates MORE need for water! Any way you look at it, planning for 350,000 more people, (if that is really the number) will take LOTS more water. Conserving is always a great idea - but people are people. We don't all conserve.
- The map shows urban areas, but not the agricultural areas. Where are they? Why so much water for ag and golf courses?
- As designed the environmental framework will likely [not] do anything to preserve wildlife areas and wildlife migration. Too small an area. Please rely on true natural sciences rather than what just looks like an effort.
- Do not know enough about protection of potable water to comment.
- The mosaic character of the sensitive Econlockhatchee River region makes it utterly inappropriate for development; Dense urban uses in this area is doubly undesirable to residents and citizens of the entire state because this proposed area sits smack in the middle of the greenway migration corridor, south to north, for important imperiled native species like Florida panther and Florida black bear. This corridor is also crucial to migratory birds. Developed, even with the cited intended "conservation areas", this fragile mosaic region would be then too fragmented for any of the disparate "conservation areas" to be of long-term use to wildlife---especially in such close proximity to dense urban uses and transportation

grids. I OPPOSE STRONGLY THIS PLAN AS PROPOSED, as ecologically so insignificant as to lead to unviability of the functioning mosaic systems and biota currently present there

- 43,000 acres is less than 1/3 of the land area, and the way it's broken up does not convey an understanding of conservation planning. It is also disconcerted to see that the 43,000 acres that are deemed "conservation areas" include both expansive reservoirs and agricultural lands is frightening. What natural systems will be displaced to accommodate those reservoirs? Some large wetland systems would apparently be included. It is an extreme misrepresentation to suggest that agricultural lands, however sustainably they are farmed or ranched, are conservation areas. There is much work to be done before this vision of natural resource protection is acceptable. Think about incorporating the same kind of approach to water conservation that is embraced by the ongoing initiatives in the Northern Everglades/Upper Kissimmee water shed - dispersed storage in natural wetlands, including large-scale wetland restoration. That is the only way to store water and honestly claim it as conservation. It is also a stretch to draw maps that show wetlands being preserved and treat it as conservation. Wetlands are rightly protected through regulation. What proportion of the 43,000 acres is wetland? What proportion is interstitial uplands closely associated with those wetlands that are not feasible to develop?
- Consider the ramifications of sea level rise on the St. Johns River system. Before the end of this century, much of the watershed will be a brackish lagoon. The only way to achieve any substantial development in this area is to use the freshwater in the ground, and on the surface, as a hydraulic barrier to salt water intrusion. These big ideas imagine there is still water to be withdrawn for human use by ignoring reality. We need to REDUCE water withdrawals - both groundwater and surface water - from where they currently are. This framework is based on shortsighted fantasy.

URBAN FORM FRAMEWORK

- Concentrate nodes on corridor with green space separating it
- Continuous development along corridor could create same traditional patten
- Safeguards to ensure jobs and correct development polluting; Ranch land needs to be true conservation
- Will do housing but who will ensure the jobs?
- Need long term planning to get jobs
- No jobs, just a big highway/passthrough
- How do you catalyze the urban center?
- Need to be higher than 1:1 job balance
- Urban parks and natural areas/parks
- Protect lake water quality through standards and keep natural
- Wildlife movement corridors under roads and rail
- East west corridors from lake should be wider
- Focus and address redevelopment with the UGB as well
- Will just get housing. Demonstrate job creation
- More open space and concentration
- Use the connection from Osceola Parkway to 192, not Viera
- Existing crossings.

- There seem to be quite a few employment centers, which seem unrealistic in the planning time horizon. Most employment centers are still near the megaregional or regional hubs.
- I'm very impressed.
- Will not work.
- There are not enough Florida native trees, shrubs, flowers in this design. There is too much lawn turf. What lawn turf there is should be drought tolerant, pest resistant and not need additional irrigation. I would like to see a wide diversity of native trees, shrubs, and flowers. I would like to see a LOT of native long leaf pine trees planted for the future of our bald eagles. Fewer buildings with reflective glass that confuse and injure birds. Less hardscape. More green areas but without lawn turf. Less use of palms, especially non-native palms and especially when landscapers do not know how to maintain them. Shade trees, long leaf pine trees. Wildlife proof garbage cans!
- "Greenway and trails system throughout...some of Central Florida's most important environmental lands....?" That about says it all! That is what NOT to do from a wildlife point of view. That leaves NO PLACE for wildlife! Wildlife really doesn't include people unless we can be unintrusive about it, and a trail system through it doesn't cut it at all.
- Environmental impact would be significant. Once again rather than building urban centers Osceola should plan for the use and enhancement of the natural land amenities. Make it a worldwide destination for eco-tourism, parkland, etc. Would be an important step in the preservation of what is unique about Florida.
- The proposed idea for the Urban Framework is to put entirely too dense a human use and population and too intense activity to be compatible with the nearby wildlife habitat areas the Environmental Framework claims to want to salvage under this proposal. Such diametrically antithetical uses---wildlife survival, foraging, nesting, migration etc immediately adjacent the above-pictured gigantic urban hub of mixed use and transportation grids---WILL NOT WORK. And Planners surely can see this. For true wilderness habitat of all community types to function, there must be a considerable transition between that wilderness belt and the human urban presence. That reasonable transition and the proper shape, size and character of "preserve" areas, and CONNECTIVITY of the mosaic's systems are utterly absent here. I OPPOSE STRONGLY this proposed idea for the "urban framework."
- This certainly appears to complete the picture. To elaborate a bit more on my previous comments, the protection of wetlands, and reserving for conservation the slivers and slices of interstitial uplands that would be impractical to develop because they are so enmeshed in wetlands, and reservoirs designed to help accommodate the future water needs of the new populations, appears to account for the core of the "conserved" areas. THAT IS NOT CONSERVATION PLANNING! It is the same way development has been accommodated throughout Florida's history. By all means incorporate mixed use development and multi-modal, transit oriented approaches; but this is entirely inadequate from a natural resource protection perspective.