

RURAL CLUSTERS OBJECTIVE AND POLICIES

FROM ALACHUA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, FUTURE LAND USE ELEMENT

OBJECTIVE 6.4 RURAL CLUSTERS

Rural Clusters are historic rural settlements outside of the urban cluster. These clusters serve as a focus for an existing rural community. They generally lack public services and facilities identified as necessary for more intense urban development. Policies and related development regulations for Rural Clusters shall preserve their existing rural character, ensure compatibility with the surrounding Rural/Agriculture areas, and protect the historic and natural resources which make these communities unique. The following communities are designated as Rural Clusters:

- Cross Creek
- Evinston
- Campville
- Grove Park
- Rochelle
- Windsor
- Lochloosa
- Island Grove
- Orange Heights
- Melrose
- Earleton
- Hague
- Santa Fe

Policy 6.4.1 The County shall initiate proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments to delineate parcel-based boundaries for Rural Clusters on the Future Land Use Map based on the following guidelines in (a) through (e). Until such time as those boundaries have been delineated, the guidelines in (a) through (e) shall be used to determine how the Rural Cluster land use designation and related policies apply to individual properties.

- (a) Rural Clusters shall generally include developed areas approximately 1/2 mile from the easily discernable focal point of the cluster. The focal point is usually the intersection of two rural roads or some other prominent feature around which the community seems to be centered.
- (b) The cluster shall be construed as containing all of the developed areas and undeveloped infill areas, but not undeveloped land beyond the extent of developed areas.
- (c) For the purposes of these guidelines, developed areas include areas with commercial uses, non farm residential areas where lot sizes are generally below five acres, and usually below one acre, and other specialized uses not normally found in a rural setting. Platted, undeveloped subdivisions or other pre existing developments where densities are higher than one unit per acre should be included, even if not developed, provided that the various lots or parcels are largely in different ownerships. The extent of non-conformity of these lots or parcels from County setback, access, and other regulations shall be considered in determining Rural Cluster boundaries.
- (d) The cluster may contain open space or conservation areas if these areas can be logically included given the other standards listed above. Such areas in the cluster shall be consistent with policies in the Conservation and Open Space Element.

- (e) Consideration may be given to natural features (including otherwise defined open space or conservation areas) or man-made features (such as jurisdictional boundaries, highways, railroads, or distinctive land use areas) that help form a logical boundary.

Policy 6.4.2 Residential development within Rural Clusters may be permitted with lot sizes of one acre or greater for development on private wells and septic tanks, or on lots as small as one-half acre for development on a central water system, consistent with Potable Water/Sanitary Sewer Element Policy 2.1.3.1 and Conservation and Open Space Element Policy 4.5.5(f).

Policy 6.4.3 Commercial or institutional development may be permitted within a rural cluster, subject to the following standards:

- (a) Commercial uses shall be limited to rural support services, retail sales, or personal services intended to serve the immediate population (such as farm implement sales, grocery stores, veterinarian services or clinics to serve the rural and farming community, pharmacies, medical or dental offices, hospitality uses supportive of agritourism and heritage tourism activities, or co-operative or farmers markets to promote the sale of locally grown products.
- (b) There shall be a maximum of up to 30,000 square feet of total commercial floor area for each Rural Cluster. The amount of commercial development appropriate for any Rural Cluster should be relative to the population being served. The size and scale of new commercial development or redevelopment shall be consistent with the size and scale of the existing land uses in the Rural Cluster.
- (c) Any new commercial land uses shall be located at the focus or center of the Rural Cluster, near the intersection of major roadways.
- (d) There shall be an interconnected, paved and internal traffic circulation system on dedicated local roads, and minimal development impacts on rural collector and arterial roads.
- (e) Industrial development shall not be allowed.
- (f) Institutional land uses may be permitted in accordance with Section 5.0 of the Future Land Use Element.

Policy 6.4.4 Zoning and development standards shall be established in the Unified Land Development Code to implement the objective and policies for Rural Clusters. Such standards shall include provisions for integration of any new non-residential development with existing uses in the Rural Clusters, including site and building design measures such as provision of open space, landscaping and buffering, parking lot design, building massing and scale, and limitations on signage and lighting, to produce development that is compatible with the surrounding rural land uses.

Policy 6.4.5 The County shall consider the development of special area plans for Rural Clusters, where necessary to address unique needs and circumstances that are not addressed through the generally applicable Comprehensive Plan policies. Any special area plans for Rural Clusters shall:

- (a) Incorporate the community's vision and goals
- (b) Protect the historic rural character of the community
- (c) Ensure compatibility of the Rural Cluster with the surrounding 'Rural/Agriculture' areas
- (d) Enhance the community's livability
- (e) Consider the need for community amenities
- (f) Protect natural resources
- (g) Explore opportunities for nature-based and heritage tourism
- (h) Consider opportunities to link Rural Clusters through the use of nature trails, bikeways, etc.

Policy 6.4.6 Any new residential subdivision proposed in a Rural Cluster shall be allowed only after delineation of the Rural Cluster boundaries on the Future Land Use Map pursuant to Policy 6.4.1.