

**STAFF-RECOMMENDED REVISIONS TO
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES ON RURAL CLUSTERS**

Text Formatting Key:

Plain Text is existing language adopted in the Comprehensive Plan.

Underlined Text is recommended new language or language that has been moved from another policy.

~~Struck-Through Text~~ is recommended for deletion or to be moved/merged into another policy.

Italics are explanatory notes relating to the recommended policy changes.

FUTURE LAND USE ELEMENT

Notes on Objective 6.4: Objective 6.4 would be expanded to better express the intent of the Rural Cluster land use designation. Much of the added language below would be moved from Policy 6.4.5 into Objective 6.4.

OBJECTIVE 6.4 - RURAL CLUSTERS

The Rural Clusters ~~are~~ land use designation recognizes ~~small~~ historic rural settlements outside of ~~an~~ 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 for Rural Clusters shall focus on preserving rural character, ensuring compatibility with the surrounding Rural/Agriculture areas, and protecting the historic and natural resources which make these communities unique.

Notes on Policy 6.4.1: The sequence of Policy 6.4.1 and 6.4.2 would be reversed. Also, the list of designated Rural Clusters that is currently in Policy 6.4.4 would be consolidated into Policy 6.4.1. The language recommended for deletion below relating to the sub area planning process would be addressed in Policy 6.4.5, which focuses on the process for delineation of boundaries for Rural Clusters and for optional special area plans.

Policy 6.4.21 ~~The Rural Clusters identified in Policy 6.4.4 are generally depicted~~ generally on the Future Land Use Map. The following communities are Rural Clusters: Cross Creek, Evinston, Campville, Grove Park, Rochelle, Windsor, Lochloosa, Island Grove, Orange Heights, Melrose, Earleton, Hague, and Santa Fe. ~~The boundaries of these Rural Clusters shall be updated as part of an evaluation of the designated Rural Clusters based on the sub-area planning process identified in Policy 6.4.5. The Rural Cluster policies shall be applied to individual properties in accordance with the~~ following guidelines ~~shall be used in evaluating the boundaries of a rural cluster:~~

- (a) Rural Clusters shall generally include developed areas approximately 1/2 mile from the easily discernible 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

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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.

Notes on Policy 6.4.2: This policy addresses new residential land uses that are allowed within Rural Clusters. The language relating to commercial land uses below would be relocated to Policy 6.4.3, which addresses non-residential land uses.

Policy 6.4.12 Residential ~~Development~~ in the 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). ~~Limited support commercial and support institutional land uses, appropriately designed, located, and scaled to serve the cluster market may also be considered.~~

Notes on Policy 6.4.3: This policy addresses new non-residential land uses within Rural Clusters. In accordance with the overall reorganization of this section, any policies relating to non-residential land uses in Rural Clusters, including those below and in Policy 3.11.1 of the Commercial section of the Future Land Use Element, would be relocated into Policy 6.4.3 below. The discussion of performance standards for Rural Clusters in sub-policy "(b)" below would be moved to Policy 6.4.4, which addresses zoning districts and development standards to be established in the Unified Land Development Code.

Policy 6.4.3 Commercial or institutional Non-residential 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, ~~or~~ medical or dental offices, hospitality industries uses supportive of agritourism activities or co-operative or farmers markets to promote the sale of locally grown products).
- (b) The amount and scale of new commercial land uses appropriate for any Rural Cluster should be relative to the population of the Rural Cluster and the surrounding Rural/Agriculture areas. There shall be a maximum of up to 30,000 square feet of total gross leasable commercial floor area for each Rural Cluster such ~~uses~~.

~~Performance standards shall be established to require integration of non-residential development within the rural area, including site and building design measures such as provision of open space, landscaping and buffering, parking lot design, building massing~~

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~~and scale, and limitations on signage and lighting, to produce development that is compatible with surrounding rural land uses.~~

- (c) The non-residential land uses shall be located at the focus or center of the Rural Cluster and preferably at 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 allowed in accordance with the Institutional policies in Section 5.0 of the Future Land Use Element.

Notes on Policy 6.4.4: The list of Rural Clusters in Policy 6.4.4 below would be consolidated into Policy 6.4.1

Policy 6.4.4 ~~The following communities are the rural clusters:~~

- ~~(a) Cross Creek~~
- ~~(b) Evinston~~
- ~~(c) Campville~~
- ~~(d) Grove Park~~
- ~~(e) Rochelle~~
- ~~(f) Windsor~~
- ~~(g) Lochloosa~~
- ~~(h) Island Grove~~
- ~~(i) Orange Heights~~
- ~~(j) Melrose~~
- ~~(k) Earleton~~
- ~~(l) Hague~~
- ~~(m) Santa Fe~~

Notes on Policy 6.4.4: Policy 6.4.4 below builds on the concept of former Policy number 6.4.3(b), which called for performance standards for non-residential development in the Rural Clusters; the policy below would broaden the performance standards concept to provide for establishment of zoning and related development standards in the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) to implement the Comprehensive Plan policies on Rural Clusters. The ULDC does not currently contain zoning districts with development standards that are unique to Rural Clusters. Such standards could address issues such as allowable land uses, residential density, lot sizes, development design, compatibility with the surrounding Rural/Agriculture areas, or protection of natural resources, if special protection is appropriate.

Policy 6.4.4 Zoning districts and related development standards shall be established in the Unified Land Development Code to implement the objective and policies for Rural Clusters.

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Notes on Policy 6.4.5: The recommended changes to this policy would simplify the boundary delineation process for Rural Clusters by separating it from the special area plan process. As provided in sub-policy (a) below, the amendments would provide for delineation of more precise Rural Cluster boundaries through individual County-initiated Comprehensive Plan Amendments. Staff would prepare draft boundary maps for each Rural Cluster in accordance with the guidelines in Policy 6.4.1, and bring these maps to the County Commission to initiate the process for a Comprehensive Plan amendment. The process for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment process is outlined in Florida Statutes and the Alachua County Land Development Code. This process includes at least one neighborhood workshop and three public hearings. All neighborhood workshops and public hearings required as part of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment process require newspaper advertisement, mailed notice to property owners, and sign posting.

As provided in sub-policy (b), Special Area Planning would be an optional process to address specific needs and circumstances for Rural Cluster communities. A cross-reference to currently-adopted Policy 7.1.28 of the Future Land Use Element, which refers to the Community and Neighborhood Planning program, would be added (see Policy 7.1.28 on Page 6). Policy 7.1.28 provides for geographically focused special area planning, which empowers communities and neighborhoods in urban or rural areas (including Rural Clusters) to develop plans that address the specific needs and circumstances of their area.

Policy 6.4.5 Rural Clusters shall be delineated with precise parcel-based boundaries on the Future Land Use Map based on the guidelines in Policy 6.4.1 as part of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment process as provided in (a) below.

(a) County staff shall apply the guidelines in Policy 6.4.1 to develop recommendations for precise parcel-based boundaries for Rural Clusters to replace the boundaries currently shown as circles on the Future Land Use Map. The recommended boundaries shall be presented to the Board of County Commissioners for consideration as individual amendments to the Comprehensive Plan to delineate such boundaries on the Future Land Use Map.

(b) The County may consider development of Special Area Plans to address specific needs and circumstances of Rural Cluster communities as part of the Community and Neighborhood Planning program described in Policy 7.1.28 of this Element. Such Special Area Plans shall incorporate the local neighborhood and community vision and goals, and shall include provisions to ensure consistency of the Rural Cluster with policies for the surrounding Rural/Agricultural area, and:

- 1) Enhances the community's livability.
- 2) Protects rural character.
- 3) Provides amenities for residents.
- 4) Protects natural resources.
- 5) Special consideration shall be given to linking these communities through the use of heritage or nature trails, bikeways, etc.
- 6) Explore the carrying capacities for appropriate levels of nature and heritage tourism.

~~As part of the evaluation and update of the designated Rural Clusters the county shall prepare sub-area plans to explore the carrying capacities for appropriate levels of nature and heritage tourism in rural clusters, including those with historic or natural resources which give them special attractiveness.~~

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Notes on Policy 6.4.6: This policy is recommended for deletion. The adopted Policy 6.4.6 prohibits new residential subdivisions in Rural Clusters until more precise boundaries have been delineated on the Future Land Use Map through the special area planning process (this prohibition has been in effect since 2005). The adopted policy also provides for the Board to establish a phased schedule of Special Area Plans, and provides for privately initiated Plans in advance of the phased schedule if the applicant bears the cost of preparing the Plan.

Based on recommended changes to the previous policies which would have the effect of making Special Area Plans optional, this policy would not be necessary. Staff will continue to apply the Rural Cluster boundary guidelines in Policy 6.4.1 until such time as more precise boundaries are delineated on the Future Land Use Map through the Comprehensive Plan Amendment process, as described in Policy 6.4.5.

~~**Policy 6.4.6** Any new residential subdivision proposed in a Rural Cluster shall be allowed only after update of Rural Cluster boundaries based upon a sub-area plan prepared pursuant to Policy 6.4.5. A phased schedule for preparation of sub-area plans for each Rural Cluster and the minimum requirements for sub-area plans shall be established by the Board of County Commissioners. Privately initiated sub-area plans may be prepared in advance of the phased schedule if authorized by the Board of County Commissioners; the applicant shall bear the cost of preparing the sub-area plan.~~

Notes on Policy 3.11.1: This policy from the Commercial section of the Future Land Use Element addresses non-residential land uses in Rural Clusters. The provisions of this policy would be merged into Policy 6.4.3 which addresses commercial land uses for Rural Clusters. Policy 3.11.1 would be deleted as shown below.

~~**Policy 3.11.1** The standards for the establishment of non-residential uses in rural clusters are as follows:~~

- ~~(a) Commercial uses within rural clusters shall be limited to retail and personal services intended to serve the immediate population.~~
- ~~(b) There shall be a maximum of 30,000 square feet of gross leasable area of retail and personal services uses for each rural cluster. The amount appropriate for any rural cluster should be relative to the population being served.~~
- ~~(c) Uses should be concentrated at the center of activity in a cluster and preferably at the intersection of major roadways.~~
- ~~(d) Typical uses are grocery, pharmacy, medical offices, and personal services.~~

Notes on Policy 7.1.28: The additional language in Policy 7.1.28 would clarify the intent of Special Area Plans and identify some of the possible outcomes of a special area plan (e.g. specific Comprehensive Plan policies for an area, Land Development Code provisions for special areas, identification of capital projects, or other initiatives by the County or public/private partnerships).

Policy 7.1.28 A planning framework that includes geographically focused special area plans shall be implemented to promote and provide cohesive communities. These plans shall include both rural and urban areas, and utilize neighborhoods (including village centers), districts (including activity centers), and corridors as basic planning components. This planning framework shall be implemented through a Community and Neighborhood Planning program, which empowers communities and neighborhoods to develop plans that address the specific needs and circumstances of their area. The County shall provide guidance to the program to assure that county-wide comprehensive planning goals are met. These plans shall incorporate the community and neighborhood vision and goals and shall include provisions to:

- (a) Enhance the community's livability
- (b) Protect the character of the neighborhood
- (c) Provide amenities for neighborhood residents
- (d) Plan for neighborhood traffic management
- (e) Protect natural resources

Special Area Plans may be the basis for policies in the Comprehensive Plan focusing on a particular geographic area, Land Development Code provisions for special areas, identification of capital projects to address specific needs and circumstances, or other initiatives by the County or public/private partnerships.