



# Options for Measuring Community Interest in Special Area Planning



May 27, 2014

Board of County Commissioners Meeting



## **Recap of February 25, 2014 Board Discussion**

*The Board authorized advertisement of public hearings on a Comprehensive Plan amendment to revise the Rural Cluster policies relating to the procedures for boundary delineation.*

**The Board also directed staff to return with recommendations on how to establish thresholds to measure community interest for a special area plan.**



# Measuring Community Interest in Special Area Plans

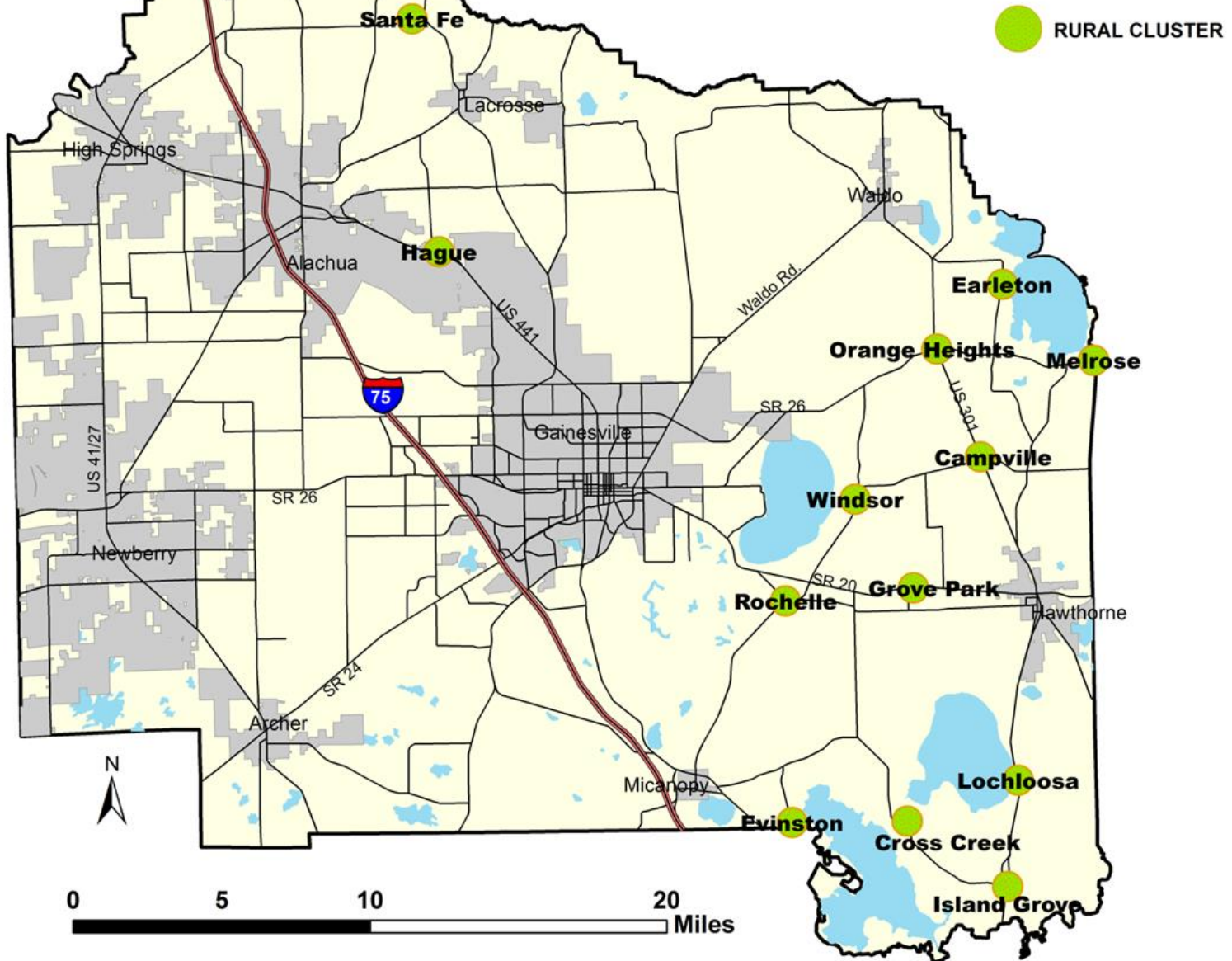
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## Presentation Outline

- ❖ Rural Clusters
- ❖ Special area plans in general and in Alachua County
- ❖ Approaches to measuring community interest
  - ❖ Alachua County's special assessment district process
  - ❖ Examples from other communities
  - ❖ Review and comparison of options for measuring community interest and selection of planning areas
- ❖ Board direction to staff regarding possible amendment to ULDC to include threshold for measuring community interest as part of special area plan process.

# Alachua County Rural Clusters





As designated in Alachua County Comprehensive Plan






# Campville Rural Cluster

## Existing Land Use and Draft Boundary


### Existing Land Use

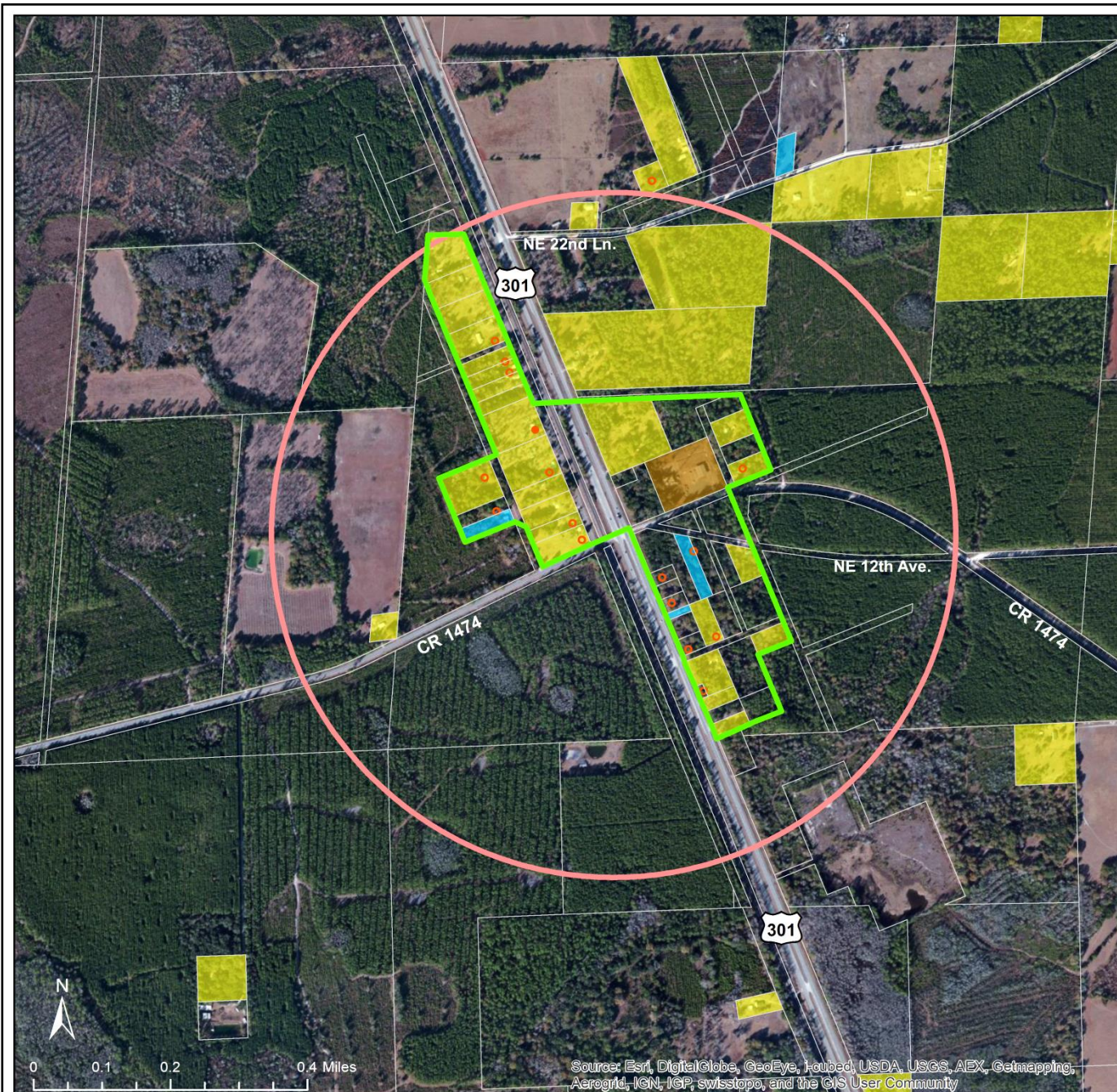
-  Residential
-  Industrial
-  Institutional
-  Undeveloped or Agriculture

### Historic Structures

-  Listed on National Register
-  Potentially Eligible for National Register
-  Not Eligible for National Register (potentially eligible for local historic designation)

 Draft Boundary as Recommended by Staff

 1/2 mile radius as adopted on the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

Alachua County Growth Management Dept.,  
April 2014



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## Special Area Plans

- ❖ Study and plan for unique needs and circumstances within specific areas of a community (e.g. neighborhoods, corridors, or districts)
- ❖ Recommendations and strategies to address issues
- ❖ May be regulatory or non-regulatory
- ❖ The Alachua County Comprehensive Plan provides for special area planning in the context of Rural Clusters, Strategic Ecosystems, Urban Activity Centers, and neighborhoods in general



## Special Area Plans Adopted in Alachua County Comprehensive Plan

- ❖ **Cross Creek Village:** Prepared in the 1980s to protect environmental, cultural, and historic resources
- ❖ **Idylwild-Serenola:** Prepared in the late 1980s to protect the environmental resources of this area (including groundwater, wildlife habitat, and Paynes Prairie) through special residential density standards and requirements for connection to central water and sewer systems
- ❖ **Plan East Gainesville:** Prepared in early 2000s to promote economic development and revitalization in the urban areas of East Gainesville. The guiding vision for Plan East Gainesville was adopted as part of the County's Comprehensive Plan



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## Alachua County Process for Special Area Plans (per ULDC)

May be initiated by the County, a property owner, or a group of property owners.

- 1. Pre-Application Meeting:** If initiated by property owner(s), a pre-application meeting is conducted to discuss the special area planning process and identify planning topics to be addressed.
- 2. Scope of Work:** Scope is developed in coordination with residents and considered by BoCC at advertised public hearing
- 3. Special Area Study:** Includes stakeholder workshops and a detailed analysis of existing conditions and the topics identified in the Scope.
- 4. Special Area Plan:** May include Comprehensive Plan policies or ULDC regulations; identification of capital project needs; or other initiatives as defined through the Scope and Study process.





## Resident-Initiated Area Plans: Examples from other Communities

- ❖ Methods used to measure community interest include:
  - ❖ **Petition by residents**
  - ❖ **Survey or poll conducted by local government**
- ❖ Other approaches used to select planning areas include:
  - ❖ **Periodic application cycle**
  - ❖ **Selection criteria based on need or purpose of the plan**
- ❖ Few local governments use numerical thresholds for resident-initiated area plans



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## Petition by Residents

- ❖ **Content of Petition:** Proposed planning area, general issues to be addressed, and commitment of signatories
- ❖ **Who is eligible to sign the petition?:** Property owners, registered voters, or other. Is Alachua County residency required?
- ❖ **How many signatures are required?** Minimum number, or a percentage of some factor such as total property owners, registered voters, or acreage
- ❖ **Significance of Successful Petition:**
  - ❖ Qualification for consideration by Board;
  - ❖ Prerequisite of decision to proceed; or
  - ❖ Informational



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## Survey Conducted by County

- ❖ **Method of Survey:** Mail; web-based; or phone
- ❖ **Area to be Surveyed:** How to define a geographic area
- ❖ **Who is Surveyed:** Property owners, registered voters, or other. Is Alachua County residency required?
- ❖ **Response Rate:** What percentage of those surveyed need to respond in order for the results to be meaningful?
- ❖ **Positive Responses Required:** What percentage of those responding need to respond positively in order to move forward?
- ❖ **Significance of Results:** Qualification for consideration by Board; prerequisite of decision to proceed; or informational?



# Measuring Community Interest in Special Area Plans

Neighborhood Petition		Survey by County	
Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resident-initiated = more likely to have community support</li> <li>• Little or no direct cost to County for staff time, mailing, or supplies.</li> <li>• More open process than survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burden on residents to get signatures</li> <li>• Difficult to frame the question(s) (e.g., do you want to participate in a special area plan?)</li> <li>• Does not account for those opposed</li> <li>• Difficult to target a geographic area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to ask more refined questions to determine degree of interest</li> <li>• Can provide more information to County in terms of those in favor or opposed, if response rate is adequate</li> <li>• Easier to target a geographic area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty getting people to respond; response rate may be inadequate</li> <li>• County cost for staff time, mailing, and supplies</li> <li>• County-initiated survey may cause concern among residents</li> </ul>



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## Periodic Application Cycle

- ❖ Application cycle is publicized, where interested neighborhoods apply to be considered for participating in a planning process; the local governing board then selects areas from those applications that are submitted
- ❖ Often linked to local government funding for neighborhood improvement projects
- ❖ Application provides general information about the proposed planning area and the issues or topics to be addressed
- ❖ Would often include criteria for use in selection of planning areas



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## Criteria for Use in Selection of Areas

- ❖ Some local governments establish criteria for use in the selection of areas for special area planning. Some examples of such criteria include:
  - ❖ Significant changes are occurring or anticipated in the area
  - ❖ Public infrastructure improvements need to be addressed
  - ❖ Opportunities exist to promote infill or redevelopment
  - ❖ Evidence of disinvestment or deteriorating housing
  - ❖ Opportunity exists to influence site selection, development or expansion of an activity generator
  - ❖ Need for additional protection of historic or natural resources beyond that which is provided under general policy



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## Alachua County Special Assessment District Process

- ❖ **Phase 1, Property Owner Petition for Creation of District:** Petition must be signed by owners of at least 50% of property to be specially benefitted by the proposed improvement (60% for unpaved road improvements)
  - ❖ Petition with estimated cost of proposed improvements is brought to the Board for a vote on whether or not to conduct an interest poll of affected property owners
  - ❖ Area to be included is defined
- ❖ **Phase 2, Property Owner Interest Poll:** Property owners responding to the poll indicate whether or not they are interested in creation of a special assessment district and imposition of an assessment to fund the proposed improvements
  - ❖ Poll includes estimated cost of improvements and allocation to each property owner
  - ❖ If at least 50% plus one of the affected property owners responding are in favor (for unpaved roads, a minimum 60% response rate is required with at least 75% of the affected property owners responding in favor), then the results are brought to the Board
  - ❖ The Board determines whether to advertise a public hearing to consider creating a special assessment district and imposing a non-ad valorem assessment



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## Special Area Plan Process with Neighborhood Petition

### STEP 1: PRE-APPLICATION MEETING

- Property owner/group of owners express potential interest in a special area plan.
- Discussion of process, proposed planning area boundary, and topics/issues to be addressed.

### STEP 2 (new): NEIGHBORHOOD PETITION

- Neighborhood petition form and list of property owners is provided by staff.
- Petition circulated among residents to document interest in developing a special area plan to address specified topics/issues.
- Minimum number of signatures may be required for consideration by BoCC as provided in Step 3.

### STEP 3: BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING

- Staff provides report and feasibility/cost analysis.
- Board votes on whether or not to proceed with preparation of a Scope of Work, for consideration at an advertised public hearing pursuant to Sec. 402.100 of the ULDC.





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## Special Area Plan Process with Neighborhood Petition

### STEP 4: SCOPE OF WORK

The Scope is developed in coordination with residents and considered by BoCC at advertised public hearing

### STEP 5: SPECIAL AREA STUDY

- Stakeholder/neighborhood workshops
- Analysis of existing conditions and planning issues
- Recommendations and strategies for further action

### STEP 6: DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL AREA PLAN

May include proposed Comprehensive Plan policies or ULDC regulations; identification of capital project needs; or other initiatives as defined through the Scope and Study process



# Measuring Community Interest in Special Area Plans

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## Recap

- Does the Board want to establish a method of measuring the community's level of interest for resident-initiated special area plans?
- Resident-initiated petition, County survey, or other?
- Who would be eligible to sign a petition or be surveyed? Property owners, registered voters, or other?
- What threshold constitutes sufficient community interest? Number of people or percentage of a group? For a survey, what is an acceptable response rate?
- Should results be a qualification for consideration by the Board, a prerequisite for a decision to proceed, or informational?



## Staff Recommendation

- ❖ Provide direction to staff on preferred methods and specific components for measuring community interest in resident-initiated special area plans.
- ❖ If directed by the Board, then staff will prepare draft amendments to the Unified Land Development Code Chapter 402 Article 16 to establish the process, and will return to the Board for review and authorization to advertise public hearings.