

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA**



**COMMISSION AGENDA
PUBLIC WORKSHOP**

FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 2006 - 2:00 P.M.

**County Commission Chamber
County Administration Building
1840 25th Street, Vero Beach, Florida, 32960-3365
WWW.IRCGOV.COM**

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

**Arthur R. Neuberger, Chairman
Gary C. Wheeler, Vice Chairman
Sandra L. Bowden
Wesley S. Davis
Thomas S. Lowther**

**District 2
District 3
District 5
District 1
District 4**

**Joseph A. Baird, County Administrator
William G. Collins II, County Attorney
Kimberly Massung, Executive Aide to BCC
Jeffrey K. Barton, Clerk to the Board**

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- 1. CALL TO ORDER 2:00 P.M.**
 - 2. INVOCATION** Stan Boling - Planning Director
 - 3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** Commissioner Thomas S. Lowther
 - 4. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**
Proposed New Town Policies. Proposed revisions to existing comprehensive plan New Town policies that allow development of "new towns" outside of the Urban Service Area under certain conditions.
 - 5. QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**
 - 6. PUBLIC COMMENTS**
 - 7. ADJOURNMENT**

NOTICE: All Proceedings before this Board are electronically recorded. Any person who decides to appeal any action taken by the Board at these meetings will need a record of the proceedings and for such purpose may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made. Upon the request of any party to the proceedings, individuals testifying during a hearing will be sworn in. Any party to the proceedings will be granted the opportunity to cross-examine any individual testifying during a hearing upon request. Anyone with a disability requiring accommodation to attend this meeting should contact the Indian River County General Services Director at (772) 226-1223 at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to the meeting.

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Board of County Commissioners

DEPARTMENT HEAD CONCURRENCE:

Robert M. Keating, AICP
Community Development Director

FROM: Stan Boling, AICP
Planning Director

DATE: February 24, 2006

SUBJECT: Consideration of Draft Revised New Town Policies

BACKGROUND

During the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) visioning process that took place in 2004 and 2005, the primary objective was to reach a consensus on the future growth and development of the county. As such, the visioning process focused on three broad development alternatives for the county. These alternatives were:

- Continuing the existing trend
- Reducing densities
- Establishing new towns and villages

As expected, the final result of the visioning process was a combination of the alternatives. While there was no consensus to reduce densities throughout the county, there was support for reducing densities at the fringe of the urban service area (USA). Similarly, there was opposition to villages outside of the urban service area but support for villages within the USA.

Consequently, the visioning oversight committee at its last meeting recommended that two major changes be made to the county's comprehensive plan. One change was to reduce densities along the fringe, but inside of, the urban service area from 3 and 6 units per acre to 1 unit per acre. The other change was to eliminate the comprehensive plan's allowance for new towns outside of the urban service area. Consistent with the oversight committee's direction, staff initiated the processing of both of those comprehensive plan amendments.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT ACTION

At its May 10, 2005 meeting, the Board voted not to transmit either of the two proposed amendments. With the density reduction amendment proposal, the Board felt that reducing densities would unfairly affect many landowners. Consequently, the Board decided not to transmit that proposed amendment to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

With respect to the proposed amendment to eliminate the comprehensive plan's allowance for new towns outside of the Urban Service Area, the Board also voted not to transmit the amendment to DCA. As part of its motion to remove the new town elimination section from the DCA transmittal resolution, the Board voted "to review it (the new town policy) at a later date." During discussion, the Board indicated that the subsequent review of the new town policy should address:

- Density incentives for new towns
- Recommendations expected from the then-upcoming Committee for a Sustainable Treasure Coast report
- Citrus industry needs/challenges

Currently, the 'old' New Town policies, including a density bonus, are in place and must be modified to address the Board's concerns.

RECENT STAFF WORK

Consistent with the Board's direction, staff has recently prepared revised draft new town policies. In developing these draft revisions over the past several months, staff has:

- Met several times with Indian River Citrus League representatives, and is meeting with other interested parties.
- Coordinated with Regional Planning Council staff
- Reviewed the Committee for a Sustainable Treasure Coast's report
- Researched new town issues, consulting the following sources:
 1. St. Lucie County Stewardship Area (SA) Overlay District Stewardship Receiving Area (SRA) Characteristic Chart, Adams Ranch Stewardship, Guster, Yoakley, Stewart & Wilson Miller
 2. Forms of Compact Development, Ave Maria, Wilson Miller, Collier County Rural Land Stewardship Area
 3. Urban Planning and Design Criteria Book by Joseph DeChiara and Lee Koppelman
- Reviewed GIS maps of western Indian River County
- Drafted revisions to the county's new town policies (Policies 1.34 and 1.35 of the comprehensive plan)

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Currently, Indian River County's comprehensive plan focuses growth and development within the Urban Service Area (USA). While most growth is directed within the USA, there are development allowances for those lands outside the USA. Although allowable development outside of the USA is limited to very low densities, there is, and has for 16 years been, an allowance in the comprehensive plan for creation of new towns outside of the USA.

- **Land Area**

Urban and suburban development, and the "urban services" necessary to support such development, are directed to the properties located inside the USA. Lands within the USA represent a small portion of the total county area. Most lands in the county are located outside the USA.

- **Urban Service Area (including municipalities):** 98,000 acres (28%)
- **Outside Urban Service Area:** 250,000 acres (72%)
- **Total County Area:** 348,000 acres (100%)

- **Land Use Plan Designations**

Outside of the Urban Service Area, property has one of four land use designations:

- AG-1 (Agricultural 1 up to 1 unit/5 acres)
- AG-2 (Agricultural 2 up to 1 unit/10 acres)
- C-1 (Conservation 1, 0 units per acre) Publicly Owned, No Density
- AG-3 (Agricultural 1 up to 1 unit/20 acres)

In the AG-3 areas, most agricultural uses are pasture and rangeland. Most agricultural uses in the AG-1 and AG-2 areas, however, are citrus groves. The citrus industry faces several new challenges, including citrus canker and "asian greening" diseases. These threats impact operating costs, productivity of existing groves, and the ability to re-plant and sustain groves. Consequently, a significant decline in citrus acreage in the AG-1 and AG-2 areas appears likely. This change to the landscape of AG-1 and AG-2 areas is coupled with a recent, dramatic rise in land prices and demand for buildable residential properties, including "ranchettes". The next few years may prove to be a critical time of transition in the AG-1 and AG-2 areas.

- **Options for Future Use and Development**

The lands located outside the USA can be used and/or developed in the future in a variety of ways under current policies and regulations, including:

1. Agriculture (groves, crops, pasture, rangeland)
2. Expanded conservation and/or stormwater management areas

3. Ranchettes (5 – 20 acre lots by subdivision or affidavit of exemption)
4. Agricultural PDs (planned developments with “clustered” 1 acre lots and large green space areas)
5. Traditional Neighborhoods (TND planned developments that straddle the Urban Service Area line, e.g. Pointe West)
6. New Towns (existing comprehensive plan future land use element policies 1.34 and 1.35, the subject of newly proposed revisions)

- **Development “threats” outside of the Urban Service Area**

The 6 options described above are exclusive only if the USA boundary remains in its current location. During the 2005 visioning process, the Board of County Commissioners stated that it will not expand the USA for more residential development. Nonetheless, there are potential future “threats” to holding the USA line. These include:

1. A future county board voting to amend the comprehensive plan to expand the USA for more residential development.
2. Annexation of land outside the USA into municipalities and conversion of such land into conventional suburban residential development.
3. State legislation pre-empting certain local controls or mandating approval of certain land use changes (e.g. “agricultural enclave” legislation).

In staff’s opinion, a viable New Town allowance could mitigate against such threats.

- **New Town Benefits**

New towns are intended to provide an alternative to the “threat scenarios” described above, and to a future “mono-culture” of ranchette development over vast areas of the county. Benefits of new towns include:

1. Establishing large areas of permanent, managed green space. Such green space may include permanent agricultural uses, conservation and stormwater management areas, and recreation uses.
2. Establishing town center or village center “nodes” that will provide places for community activities, institutions, and commerce for rural areas of the county. Such town or village nodes will provide an alternative to a ranchette-only pattern that would require all future rural residents to travel great distances into and within existing urban areas located in the eastern quarter of the county.
3. Establishing new areas that have, and can maintain, a desirable small town atmosphere. Establishing such areas can direct growth into a more desirable and sustainable “small town” development pattern within rural green areas, versus alternative patterns that essentially add large lot, de-facto ranchette suburbs to existing communities.

For these reasons, staff supports adoption of a set of viable new town policies.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO NEW TOWN POLICIES (“DRAFT 2/22/06”)

The existing new town policies have been in effect since 1991 and have never been updated. Based on the Board’s May 2005 direction, and recently conducted research and analysis, staff proposes changes to the new town policies as summarized below.

1. Minimum project sizes are increased to reflect currently accepted planning standards for minimum “new towns” sizes (must accommodate about 5,000 dwelling units and commercial, recreation, and institutional uses).
2. Potential new locations are related to the size and location of specific AG-1 and AG-2 areas. Current separation distance criteria are eliminated. New towns are eliminated from AG-3 areas.
3. Density bonuses are related to AG-1 and AG-2 land use designations. A higher bonus is proposed for the higher density AG-1 areas; a lower bonus is proposed for the AG-2 areas.
4. Maximum acreages for lands used for new towns are established, and are related to the AG-1 and AG-2 areas based on their size and potential for new town locations.
5. The maximum number of potential units from new towns is significantly reduced (see attachment #3).
6. Up to 25% of a new town project area is allowed to be non-contiguous “sending areas”. Such sending areas will have zero density and will become managed green space.
7. Required percentages of various land uses within new towns, and requirements for affordable and/or workforce housing, are modified to reflect currently accepted planning standards.
8. Requirements for common open space and greenbelt areas are increased and provided with more specificity to reflect currently accepted planning standards.

BOARD CONSIDERATION

The Board of County Commissioners is now to conduct a public workshop on the proposed new town policies and provide direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Excerpt from May 10, 2005 BCC Meeting Minutes
2. Proposed Revisions to New Town Policies (“Draft 2/23/06”)
3. Maximum Unit Tables