



Envision Alachua Phase II

Summary of Community Workshop #1

February 7, 2013

prepared by

MIG, Inc.

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in support of the Envision Alachua
process convened by Plum Creek



Background

Plum Creek hosted the first Community Workshop of Phase II of the Envision Alachua planning process on February 7, 2013 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. Approximately 110 community members attended. A buffet dinner was served an hour before the workshop, and child care was provided to make it more convenient for people to attend the meeting.

Envision Alachua is a community planning process to discuss future economic, environmental and community opportunities in Alachua County on lands owned by Plum Creek. Plum Creek is the largest private landowner in Alachua County, with 65,000 acres. Nearly 24,000 of these acres are permanently conserved. The company's holdings are located throughout northern and eastern Alachua County. Plum Creek is considering future uses for its lands that could be aligned with community needs. The Envision Alachua process will explore potential opportunities for lands in East County that are suitable for uses other than timber.

Plum Creek commenced the Envision Alachua planning process in June 2011 when it hosted the first meeting of the Envision Alachua Task Force. The Task Force met five additional times during Phase I, and incorporated the input from two Community Workshops in order to develop its *Vision, Goals and Planning Principles* for Plum Creek lands in Alachua County, which was the end product of Phase I of the process. Plum Creek has also hosted four educational forums as part of its Models of Innovation series.

Plum Creek began Phase II of the process in October 2012 in order to identify more specific future uses for its lands, including those that support economic development opportunities, environmental conservation and activities that meet community needs expressed during Phase I of the process. In Phase II, Plum Creek formed a Technical Advisory Group (TAG), composed of state and local agency representatives and some Task Force members, to provide advice on policies and regulations Plum Creek will need to address during the development of its Sector Plan application for the 65,000 acres it owns in Alachua County. So far in Phase II, the TAG has met twice, on October 4 and December 8. The Task Force has also met twice, on November 15, 2012 and January 24, 2013.

Envision Alachua Task Force meetings, Community Workshops and Educational Forums are open to the public. A complete schedule, meeting locations and other details can be found at www.envisionalachua.com.

The objectives for the second Community Workshop were to:

- Provide an update on the Envision Alachua planning process
- Encourage community members to identify potential opportunities for their community related to Envision Alachua
- Introduce the Envision Alachua Economic Progress Initiative

This document summarizes the general discussion and comments made by the facilitator, presenters and community members during the February 7th workshop; it is not intended as a transcription of the meeting. Meeting materials, information about the process and a videotape presentation of the meeting can be found at www.envisionalachua.com.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Todd Powell, Senior Director, Real Estate for Plum Creek, opened the meeting, welcomed participants and thanked everyone for attending. He gave a brief overview of the project so far and how it has been shaped by community participation. He appreciated everyone's participation and reminded them that Plum Creek is seeking additional feedback on the Envision Alachua planning process.

Todd introduced Daniel Iacofano, Principal, MIG and Lead Facilitator for the Envision Alachua planning process, who reviewed the agenda for evening.

II. Update on the Envision Alachua Planning Process

Daniel began the workshop by providing a brief overview of Plum Creek and reminding participants of the scale and reach of Plum Creek land holdings in the County and throughout the country. Plum Creek is the largest private landowner in the nation with approximately 6.7 million acres in 19 states. The company's core business is timber, but it also manages some of its lands for conservation, recreation, natural resources and community development. The company owns 590,000 acres in 22 counties in Florida. Nearly 95,000 acres of those lands are permanently conserved.

With 65,000 acres located throughout northern and eastern Alachua County, nearly 24,000 of which are permanently conserved, Plum Creek is the largest private landowner in Alachua County. Plum Creek is a publicly traded Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) and its practices are certified by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).

Daniel explained that the goal of Phase II of Envision Alachua is to create a long-range sector plan for Plum Creek's lands in East Alachua County. He used maps based on data from U.S. geological surveys to give an overview of historic development patterns in Gainesville from 1904 to the present day. He noted that, due to rail and road construction and other factors, development has mostly been concentrated in the western half of the County. There are many opportunities in East Alachua County, and we need to understand how to take advantage of them in a sustainable manner to create economic prosperity while still conserving key environmental resources and meeting community needs. He also showed a map demonstrating that Plum Creek's lands available for potential development in East County, such as the Windsor tract, are roughly the same distance from downtown Gainesville than more developed areas to the west. This is important to understand in terms of addressing transportation in the County.

Next, Daniel described the genesis of the Envision Alachua process and noted how the Task Force's vision for Plum Creek lands in East Alachua had been shaped by what they heard from the community during Phase I. He summarized the vision, goals and principles for the process, the activities conducted to date, and the emerging potential land use concepts and framework for Plum Creek's lands in East Alachua. He described the goals of Phase II of the process and the activities that are being conducted.

Daniel then introduced Albert White, local community advocate and consultant to Plum Creek. Albert, with assistance from Todd Powell, discussed what the benefits of Envision Alachua might be and who stands to benefit, including Plum Creek, East Gainesville and Hawthorne, Greater Gainesville and Alachua County, Santa Fe College and the University of Florida, and the entire North Central region and State of Florida.

III. Small Group Discussion: Creating Opportunities from East Gainesville to Hawthorne

To introduce the main workshop activity of the evening, Daniel gave a brief description of the five "Emerging Land Use Concept Areas" in East Alachua County, designated through feedback from Task Force members during Phase I as areas that may be suitable for economic development/job creation and conservation/natural resource protection. He talked about the potential opportunities in East Alachua in terms of the creation of diverse new job prospects for all educational levels – "from the GED to the Ph.D."

Daniel directed the participants to break into seven groups based on an assigned number on their nametag. Each group had 14-15 participants and a facilitator. After conducting self-introductions, the facilitators led each group through a discussion of the following questions, as they relate to opportunities for economic development, conservation and community activities on Plum Creek lands in Alachua County:

- What are the potential opportunities?
- What can we do to prepare for these opportunities (as individuals and as a community)?

Each small group was provided with a large copy of the map of Plum Creek lands in Alachua County to serve as a guide for their discussions. Participants were welcomed to make notes directly on the map regarding where specific opportunities might be located.

Participants were encouraged to share their ideas with the group. Comments were summarized on flip chart paper. Participants were not required to come to consensus on their comments, but were requested to summarize the main points of agreement in order to report back to the larger group.

IV. Group Reports and Follow-up Discussion

Following the discussion, each group was asked to select a reporter to share the highlights of the group's discussion. The following themes emerged from the group

reports and a review of the flipchart and map notes from each group. Note that responses to the two questions are combined since not all groups clearly separated their responses by question.

Economy

Participants saw many opportunities for creating a full spectrum of job types in East County. It was noted that many necessities for attracting new manufacturing industries are already in place, particularly in Area B, including appropriate zoning, key infrastructure, a high quality water supply, a rail line and a large existing workforce. Attracting large anchor industries would support the creation of smaller spin-off businesses as well. Areas C and D are equally ready and well-suited for agriculture, silviculture and associated processing, packaging and distribution. With agriculture and silviculture already taking place in the area, and the remaining infrastructure from the closed lumber plant, these opportunities wouldn't necessarily require a huge amount of investment.

The Highway 20 and 301 corridors, with their excellent connection to Jaxport, can be major arteries for commercial development of various kinds, which could also provide more jobs and options for existing residents. Retail, including basics like gas, grocery stores, clothing and office supplies, would help meet shopping needs in the community. There are many truckers and other travelers passing through on Highway 301 and few places to stop and eat, creating opportunities for restaurants ranging from truck stops to upscale. Other entertainment options, such as an art museum or galleries and movie theaters, would help fill in the lack of places to gather from daytime to later in the evening.

The availability of open space, and desire to preserve it, presents an opportunity to make East Alachua a destination for highly profitable sports and outdoor recreation tourism. A resort/retreat center located on the lake or nature parks could support eco-tourism.

A hospital or health complex would provide the needed expansion of healthcare into East County, and could also include more retail. Area A might be most suitable for this. The area is also ripe for the creation of a research park/technical center, possibly funded through a public/private partnership similar to those being formed around the state.

Residential

Attracting new businesses will also drive the need for more housing. Participants noted that innovative, energy-efficient residential development is an opportunity, but were concerned that locals not be outpriced as land values increase. It's crucial to supply housing for all incomes, including affordable housing.

Some participants felt that it would be best to build more houses where housing is already located. One group specified that, since the land between Highway 20 and 301 is so beautiful, it would be best to avoid disturbing it by keeping it residential,

with high quality, affordable homes. They felt that Area A was the best location for this.

Education

Several of the groups particularly emphasized the crucial importance of high quality education and of making that education available in East County. There is an obvious advantage to tying in with Santa Fe College and UF. Offering college classes in East County locations would make them accessible to those with limited ability to travel to downtown Gainesville. Santa Fe College has done this in the past by teaching classes at local churches in Hawthorne.

It's also important to prepare for future job development by providing education for East County residents in the full variety of job skills that will be needed. Vocational training is key since not everyone is a Ph.D. candidate.

Recreation

Many East Alachua County residents value the open space and outdoor recreation opportunities in the area – hunting, fishing, camping, hiking and biking, etc. – and would like to see them preserved. As previously discussed, creating a retreat conference center or nature parks and promoting outdoor-oriented tourism would help preserve and enhance these opportunities while supporting economic prosperity.

Environment

Participants noted that the “Emerald Necklace” should include an easement that runs through the middle of the property – this is important to preserve. It could be a site for the retreat center.

Also, it's important to create conservation areas on Plum Creek lands in context. Plum Creek lands are surrounded by other conservation areas. We should link them together to make sure we don't have hodgepodge conservation without connections to other conservation easements, and also integrate them with the O2O (Ocala to Osceola) conservation corridor.

Transportation

Improving transportation options was a subject discussed by all groups. There is a great need to improve connectivity between East and West Alachua. Public transit must be expanded so those who don't have cars can get to the new jobs that will be created. There should be a high speed rail or CSX stop in Hawthorne – the rail line is already there, but there hasn't been a stop in many years. The development of the 301 corridor through Hawthorne, and the new Highway 20, is also important.

One of the groups noted that the east side and west side are almost mirror images of each other – both sides have two ways to get into town. The west side needs to understand that the east side needs to get developed. We need to plan in advance and prepare the infrastructure to be ready for heavier traffic so that roads don't get

congested. This is particularly important with the four-lane highway intersection in Area B.

Infrastructure

Preparing adequate infrastructure for new industry and development was another concern expressed by many participants. Water is a particular concern; we must study the groundwater, water availability and reuse possibilities, and the area must develop its own systems for water supply and wastewater treatment. Other utilities such as sewers must be considered. It may be necessary to put pressure on the County Commission to make sure these get developed. Finally, it is important to plan to incorporate sustainability and energy efficiency, and consider how they can best be promoted by the position of houses and buildings. Appropriate power sources need to be considered – if there are energy-saving power sources available, those should be used instead of fossil fuels.

Community

Community members expressed concern that the heritage and character of East County communities be preserved as we move forward. They would like to bridge the gap between East and West Alachua County, but be mindful to avoid sprawl and control impacts on the rural way of life that many enjoy.

If this is truly going to be a community-driven process, we need to keep the conversation going, stay involved as individuals and communities, and continue to bring more people into the process. Plum Creek needs to continue to inform citizens so that they have the opportunity to plan proactively, and know they're positioning themselves and their community in the best way to build on what Plum Creek is doing. It's important to have a road map for 20, 30 or even 50 years ahead of where Alachua County is going so plans can be made comprehensively. It was also suggested that community centers should be part of the plan, to help build this better relationship with the community.

Participants embrace the idea of having the ability to look out for and control their own futures. They would like the community to have the ability to help set parameters on what can be done. It was noted that if needs are met in our communities, we will develop a sense of pride and love for where we live, and there will be less of the "brain drain."

Land use and political factors are also important considerations that affect the community. The scope of the project is such that many different stakeholders and public agencies are involved. Many of these agencies are working in isolation – given Plum Creek's position, this project provides an opportunity to bring them together so that many different groups can achieve their goals. The land, zoning and key infrastructure are in place, but the political environment needs to be considered. It's also necessary to understand the disposition of Plum Creek's lands and how it will arrange for development.

A request was made that a community workshop be held in Hawthorne to increase opportunities for East County residents to give input. Rose Fagler of Plum Creek agreed to work on scheduling a Hawthorne workshop in the near future.

V. Envision Alachua Economic Progress Initiative

For the final portion of the evening, Daniel introduced Dale Brill, economic development coach with *brill ink* and former President of the Florida Chamber Foundation, who provided a presentation on the Envision Alachua Economic Progress Initiative. This initiative, as Dr. Brill explained, is intended to make certain the long-term vision for local and regional economic prosperity will be implemented.

Dr. Brill noted that there are three different perspectives on any planning process – government, the private sector, and the community – and that all three are necessary for successful implementation. Most importantly, in order to benefit the community, this must be a community-driven process. Asking the right questions, and listening to the answers, is crucial. Dr. Brill made a distinction between “economic development” - which looks only at objective measures of economic growth, wages and jobs for jobs’ sake – and “economic progress,” which is also concerned with how economic growth affects the community's quality of life. It is important to ask questions such as: what kinds of jobs are being created? Who is getting these jobs? Will we all benefit?

He continued by explaining that this initiative is not beginning from scratch; rather, it is building on the legacy of 10 years of economic progress in Alachua County, with public/private efforts such as Innovation Gainesville and the Innovation Hub. The University of Florida, as a top tier research institution, and Santa Fe College, as a Top 10 Community College, are a centerpiece of the process. Envision Alachua is putting an exclamation point on the community-led aspect of the process. It brings in a factor the area has never had before – a large-scale landholder willing to work with the community to build economic progress.

Dr. Brill described the six steps in the “regional tool kit” that supplies a plan for implementing the vision. Stage 1 is a baseline economic analysis of the entire North Central Florida region, providing a sense of what industries have the most potential, and which are in decline and must be nurtured. Stage 2 is an analysis of educational assets, particularly at UF – the research and development that will be the engine for economic progress. Stage 3 will bring the baseline and asset analyses together to create a regional blueprint. Stage 4, the Marketing Plan, will communicate the region's assets, attract people and industries here (hopefully including UF graduates who have left the area due to lack of opportunity), and tell the story to those who are already here to stimulate growth from within. In Stage 5, the Marketing Platform, collateral material such as brochures, ads, factsheets and websites will be developed. Stage 6 will put metrics in place for a performance measure – as Dr. Brill pointed out, “you can't manage what you don't measure.” This will help keep the data at everyone's fingertips to track economic progress.

He concluded by restating the idea that “together we can do this,” and thanked the community members for being present and for continuing to be involved.

VI. Summary and Next Steps

Daniel closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their participation, and encouraged everyone to continue their involvement by doing the following:

- Attend the upcoming Educational Forum and Community Workshop
- Visit the website (www.envisionalachua.com) for more information and calendar of activities
- Encourage family, friends and colleagues to get involved in the Envision Alachua planning process!

A meeting wallgraphic is attached at the end of this document.

BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN EAST & WEST

ECONOMY

- ▷ POTENTIAL RESEARCH PARK
- PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP
- ▷ SPORTS REC TOURISM
- ▷ MFG
- ▷ AG/AG PROCESSING

← FULL SPECTRUM OF JOBS →

- ▷ RESORT DESTINATION

EDUCATIONAL

- ▷ TEACH CLASSES IN HAWTHORNE
- ▷ VOC TRNG.
- ▷ TIE INTO SANTA FE / UF.

RECREATION

- ▷ ENTERTAINMENT

ENVIRONMENT

- ▷ THE EMERALD NECKLACE
- ▷ RETREAT / CONF. CTR

TRANSPORTATION

- ▷ A GOOD SYSTEM
- ▷ COX STP
- ▷ 30' CORRIDOR PLAN
- ▷ NEED TRANSIT RAIL/H.S.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- ▷ WATER
- ▷ W. WATER...

COMMUNITY

- ▷ ACCELER
- ▷ PROACTIVE PLANNING/ SYSTEMS
- ▷ PRESERVE CHARACTER

HELPS HAWTHORNE

PPIDE

KEEP YOUNG PEOPLE HERE

STOP THE BRAIN DRAIN

WE NEED A ROADWAY

WEET BASIC NEEDS

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