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Envision Alachua Phase II

Summary of Hawthorne Community Workshop #4 December 7, 2013

prepared by

MIG, Inc.

December 2013

in support of the Envision Alachua
process convened by Plum Creek



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Background

This community workshop is one of two public workshops the County requires Plum Creek to host in advance of submitting its Sector Plan application to the County for a Long Term Master Plan (LTMP) for Plum Creek lands in Alachua County. Plum Creek conducted the required scoping meeting on September 23, 2013, and for two and a half years prior, has been working with the community to develop a vision for its lands in East County. The process yielded a document which presents the Vision, Goals and Guiding Principles that have been used to guide the development of the LTMP and related policies. Since Envision Alachua launched in June 2011, Plum Creek has hosted 11 meetings of the Envision Alachua Task Force, conducted 4 meetings of a technical Advisory Group (TAG), conducted six (6) community workshops, hosted four educational forums and provided tours of its lands. More than 1,500 people have participated in the Envision Alachua process.

This workshop, featuring the same format and materials as the workshop held on December 2nd, was held to help ensure that the public is informed about and aware of Plum Creek's Sector Plan application, and to provide an opportunity for participants to share their issues, questions and comments that will assist in the review process for the application. More than two thousand property owners located within 1,320 feet of Plum Creek's lands received notification about the pending application and an invitation to the meeting. To assist property owners, Plum Creek created an interactive land use map hosted on the project website at www.envisionalachua.com. The interactive map allows a person to enter their address on the map, see where they are in proximity to Plum Creek's lands, and learn the land use proposed in the LTMP for neighboring Plum Creek property.

To support proper notification of the public, in addition to mailing letters to property owners, Plum Creek placed ads in local newspapers (both print and on-line), sent e-mail notifications to more 1,500 people, used paid social media ads and publicized the meetings on its website.

The workshop was held on Saturday, December 7, 2013 at the Chester Shell Elementary School, 21633 SE 65th Avenue, Hawthorne from 11:00 am – 1:30 pm. More than 110 community members attended. The meeting sign-in sheets are attached as an appendix at the end of this document. A lunch buffet was served an hour before the workshop, and child care was provided to make it more convenient for people to attend the meeting.

This document summarizes the general discussion and comments made by the facilitator, presenters and community members during the December 7th workshop; it is not intended as a transcription of the meeting. The presentation duplicates what was presented on December 2 and the summary reflects that. 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 and provided a brief review of the activities leading up to the meeting. He described the County's request that Plum Creek prepare an LTMP. There was discussion of the possibility that significant lands be dedicated to conservation. Current zoning allows agriculture and rural residential housing. Any other land uses would require a change to the County Comprehensive Plan. Plum Creek figured that there was a better way to determine what was important to the community, and that served as the impetus for the Envision Alachua community planning process.

Todd then introduced Daniel Iacofano, Principal and CEO of MIG Inc. and lead facilitator for the Envision Alachua process. Daniel reviewed the agenda and meeting objectives which were to:

- Provide an overview of the Envision Alachua Planning Process
- Present the draft Long Term Master Plan that will be submitted to the County
- Solicit input from the community on topics that will inform the County's review process for Plum Creek's application

Plum Creek will continue the process with additional community engagement activities in the upcoming year.

II. Overview of the Envision Alachua Planning Process and Proposed Long Term Master Plan

Daniel opened the presentation by providing a brief description of Plum Creek. They are one of the largest private land owners in the country. Plum Creek is a publically traded Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT). Their primary business is timber with additional interests in land and real estate, manufacturing and natural resource management. Plum Creek's forestry practices conform to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) which requires third party audits to achieve and maintain certification.

He explained the genesis of Envision Alachua, which came about in response to a request from the County that Plum Creek prepare a master plan for the 65,000 acres its owns in Alachua County. Of these lands, 24,000 acres are in permanent agriculture as conservation and 41,000 acres are zoned agriculture for timber production. The current zoning also allows rural residential at one unit/five acres. Other land uses would require Plum Creek to request a change to the Comprehensive Plan. Plum Creek convened Envision Alachua to consider future uses for these lands that could be aligned with community needs.

The process identified several planning challenges. Some of these include responding to the disparity between West Gainesville and East Gainesville with respect to: income, jobs for all residents, access to quality education and availability of goods and services. Alachua County also faces growing competition from other regions of Florida and other areas of the country. Funds are lacking to complete the "Emerald Necklace" conservation vision.

Daniel then described how Plum Creek lands in East Alachua County offer a unique opportunity. The lands are in single ownership with Plum Creek. The County has a history of innovative planning and land conservation and is home to the University of Florida, one of the nation's top research universities, and Santa Fe College, one of the nation's top community colleges. The County has unique environmental resources which should be protected. Envision Alachua can play a role in responding to these opportunities.

Daniel briefly reviewed the activities conducted through Envision Alachua. Phase I was conducted June 2011 through February 2012 and included:

- Community Task Force (6 meetings)
- Community Workshops (2 workshops)
- Website (on-going)
- Educational Forums (4 events)
- Tours of Plum Creek Lands

Phase I resulted in the Vision Document entitled *Vision, Goals and Planning Principles for Plum Creek Lands in Alachua County*. Daniel reviewed a concept diagram that showed the current land uses allowed and described how the Task Force asked questions about the environment, jobs, and how opportunities could come to East Gainesville, Hawthorne and the communities in between.

Through the work of the Envision Alachua Task Force and input received through additional community workshops, the community described a vision that presented substantial environmental conservation while concentrating the footprint that accommodates economic development and education and community uses.

Daniel then provided a review of Phase II of the Envision Alachua process, which was conducted from September 2012 through December 2013 and included:

- Technical Advisory Group (4 meetings)
- Community Task Force (5 meetings)
- Community Workshops (4 workshops)
- Website (on-going)
- Educational Forums (1 event)
- Economic Progress Initiative
- East County Educators Committee
- Hawthorne Committee

The results of Phase II included:

- Long Term Master Plan document
- Detailed Specific Area Plans begun

Daniel then presented the Long Term Master Plan Framework Map and briefly reviewed the uses that would be allowed within the required four land use categories: employment oriented mixed use, rural, agriculture and conservation.

Daniel described the land uses in the Sector Plan process and how the community vision developed through the Envision Alachua process is reflected in the LTMP. The plan has three main elements and focuses on:

- **Economic Opportunity:** The Long Term Master Plan proposes 14 million square feet of space for office, research and development, agriculture, advanced manufacturing and related activities and targets 30,000 new jobs.
- **Environmental Conservation:** The Long Term Master Plan proposes 23,000+ acres of additional land for conservation purposes, allowing present uses of agriculture and silviculture while preventing future development in perpetuity.
- **Education and Community:** The Long Term Master Plan proposes partnerships with the University of Florida and Santa Fe College for job creation and workforce development. It also accommodates community development including no more than 10,500 housing units, schools, parks, recreation and open space, and related commercial activities.

This was followed by a video presentation that summarized the two and a half year planning process to date.

Following the video, Daniel returned to the subject of the LTMP, emphasizing how the LTMP correlated with the Vision and Goals for Envision Alachua. The overall balance of land use is 87% conservation, agriculture and open space and 13% employment oriented mixed use.

Daniel provided a brief description of how the LTMP accomplishes the Goals described in the Vision document, which was the end product of Envision Alachua Phase I.

Goal A: A Strong Jobs Focus

The LTMP reflects how a strong jobs focus will be achieved. The plan will direct economic development to the corridor between East Gainesville and Hawthorne, an area identified as the Economic Progress Corridor. The LTMP:

- Provides employment opportunities in advanced manufacturing, research and development, commercial activities and services
- Builds on local and regional assets:
 - University of Florida, Santa Fe College
 - Rail connections and highway infrastructure
- Attracts employers with quality jobs (from GED to PhD) due to conservation and quality of life features
- Provides jobs and opportunities for thousands of local residents previously bypassed by economic progress

- Targets economic opportunities, **not housing in the form of conventional single family subdivisions**
- Increases overall tax base of the area

Goal B: Agriculture and Silviculture

The LTMP maintains a strong emphasis on forestry and agriculture. The LTMP:

- Continues the legacy of SFI-certified silviculture in the County
- Sets aside large, viable acreage for efficient operations, thereby reinforcing the long term viability of the State's second largest industry
- Creates major partnership opportunity with the UF Institute for Food and Agricultural Science (IFAS)

Goal C: Large Scale Conservation

The LTMP achieves substantial large-scale conservation. The LTMP:

- Sets aside extensive conservation areas in perpetuity
 - Provides links to regional and State-wide green corridors
- Helps complete the Emerald Necklace
- Expands regional wildlife corridors, habitat linkages
- Includes wide buffer to protect Lochloosa Creek
- Doubles the amount of land the County has protected through Alachua County Forever at **no added expense to taxpayers**

Goal D: Water Resource Management

The LTMP includes policies that will shape a new water ethic for the area. The LTMP:

- Provides state of the art water conservation, treatment and delivery technology
- Includes large water storage facilities for water harvesting and capture
- Incorporates water reuse into delivery systems
- Requires highly efficient building and landscape design
- Prohibits use of potable water for residential irrigation purposes

Goals E, F, J, M: Efficient Utilities, Quality Community Services and Facilities

The LTMP addresses the needs for energy and infrastructure and explores new ways for them to be funded. The LTMP:

- Utilizes infrastructure that is already in place and already paid for by taxpayers
- Requires buildings and facilities to use state-of-the-art energy conservation measures
- Evaluates service options including City of Hawthorne, GRU, Clay Electric, Alachua County and private operations to achieve most efficient and quality services

- Provides expanded funding options

Goals G, K: Preservation of Rural Character and Culture

The LTMP emphasizes protecting the rural character of the area. The LTMP:

- Establishes buffers to protect rural character of historic communities – the “rural clusters”

Goal H: A Comprehensive Transportation Solution

The LTMP addresses all modes of transportation. The LTMP:

- Utilizes existing road infrastructure
- Supports:
 - Automobiles
 - High performing transit
 - Bicycle
 - Pedestrian
- Incorporates transit-friendly development patterns
- Makes strong connections to job centers

Goal I: A Tightly Integrated Mixed Use Development Pattern

The LTMP:

- Uses a connected compact development footprint that accommodates substantial economic development
- Prevents sprawl while achieving efficiencies in resource consumption – land, water, energy, fuel
- Sets a 50 year plan horizon and includes 15.5 million square feet of job-generating land uses:
 - 6 million square feet for research & development/offices
 - 8 million square feet for advanced manufacturing
 - 1.5 million square feet for commercial activities and services for employees and residents

Goal L: Wide Range of Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

A wide range of outdoor recreation opportunities will be provided. The LTMP:

- Designates 30-35% of the employment oriented mixed use area for parks, open space and trails
- Includes extensive network of pedestrian and bicycling trails
- Allows varying levels of access for new and continuing recreation uses to conservation lands (unless prohibited by environmental constraints)

Goal N: Continued Tradition of Civic Engagement

The LTMP policies emphasize maintaining a strong role for the community in the planning process. The LTMP:

- Builds on a strong tradition of community participation and local leadership to sustain community participation over the long-term
- Establishes a high threshold for:
 - Transparency
 - Inclusiveness
 - Information sharing
- Creates opportunities for collaboration between Hawthorne, East County and Alachua County communities as a whole

Goal O: Results Measurement

The LTMP includes a series of metrics that will help ensure the plan is being implemented consistent with the Vision. The LTMP:

- Establishes criteria for implementation and performance through the Detailed Specific Area Plan (DSAP) process
- Ensures that growth is directed along the corridor between East Gainesville and Hawthorne
- Helps the County and community keep the Vision on track
- Requires re-evaluation every five years

III. Review of the Proposed Long Term Master Plan and Identification of Key Issues to Address in the Plan Application Review Process: Small Group Discussions

Following the presentation, Daniel directed the participants to go to one of the ten breakout tables. Each table had a facilitator and about 8-10 participants. The facilitator led the group through a discussion of each of the three main components: Economic Development, Environmental Conservation, and Education and Community. During the breakout session, participants were asked to share their issues and concerns, ask questions, and identify information needs that would help them to better understand the Long Term Master Plan. Participants were encouraged to comment verbally and in writing using the comment card. The facilitators helped to manage the discussion and answer some of the questions. For those requiring more information than was available at the meeting, the facilitator noted their questions. All comments made in the meeting that were recorded on the flipchart notes and provided through the comment cards will be transcribed by Plum Creek, with additional answers provided via the website. For participants seeking follow-up for their comments and questions, Plum Creek committed to following up with these participants sometime after the meeting via e-mail or by telephone. About 45-50 minutes was allotted to the small group discussions.

IV. Group Reports and Follow-up Discussion

Each group facilitator provided a short report, highlighting 2-3 key points discussed by their group. Ten groups reported out and the comments are grouped by topic. The highlights of the questions and comments were as follows:

Economic Development

- Some participants believe the status quo is not acceptable. Hawthorne is at the hub of the four-county area and the wheel is breaking. Some were of the opinion that the County is overly restrictive on business owners and we are losing competitive advantage to other counties and regions.
- Some participants wanted to know what could be done to expedite bringing jobs to the area.
- In general people are starting to hear about IFAS coming out here and Santa Fe College expanding out here. Will this happen? There were questions about UF and Santa Fe having a presence and taking lands off the tax rolls.

Environmental Conservation

- Water is a key issue and more information is needed. Participants noted that we can't impact the wetlands and aquifer. Some participants questioned the benefit of city water versus a private well.
- Some participants noted there was a difference between preservation and conservation lands and noted that tree harvesting is not appropriate for all of the lands.
- There were questions about the impact of conservation lands on the tax base.
- Some participants want to ensure there are good buffers around the watershed area.
- There were also questions about how threatened and endangered species will be protected.

Education and Community

- Plum Creek's vision needs to be consistent with the community. There are many advocates for small communities in this area. They are concerned about impacts on rural life, and they don't want the rural lifestyle they enjoy disturbed.
- Participants expressed concerns about how the project could erode the area's "small town feel." Additional noise, light pollution and potential crime were added concerns.
- There was a request for more information about building and development standards. There were questions about the type of housing that would be built. Would it be Section 8?
- There were concerns expressed regarding the need for the schools to stay open.

- There were questions about recreation - the types of activities that would be allowed, the types of facilities that would be developed and where these would be located. For example, will horse trails be included?
- Participants asked: how are we going to protect historical and cultural resources?
- Some participants asked: will the project result in more restrictions on neighboring lands?
- Some participants suggested that Santa Fe College and others involved in job training and work force development provide opportunities closer to Hawthorne.
- It was noted that new economic development should use the most advanced technologies for energy production. Some concerns were expressed about this technology and what it might look like.
- Participants want to make sure we have technical education opportunities for high school graduates.
- There were also concerns expressed about how the project would impact existing two lane roads and questions about whether the project will bring more traffic and require these roads to be upgraded. Many participants like the unimproved nature and character of the roads.
- Participants noted that recreation opportunities should include entertainment and the arts so there is something to do during evening hours.

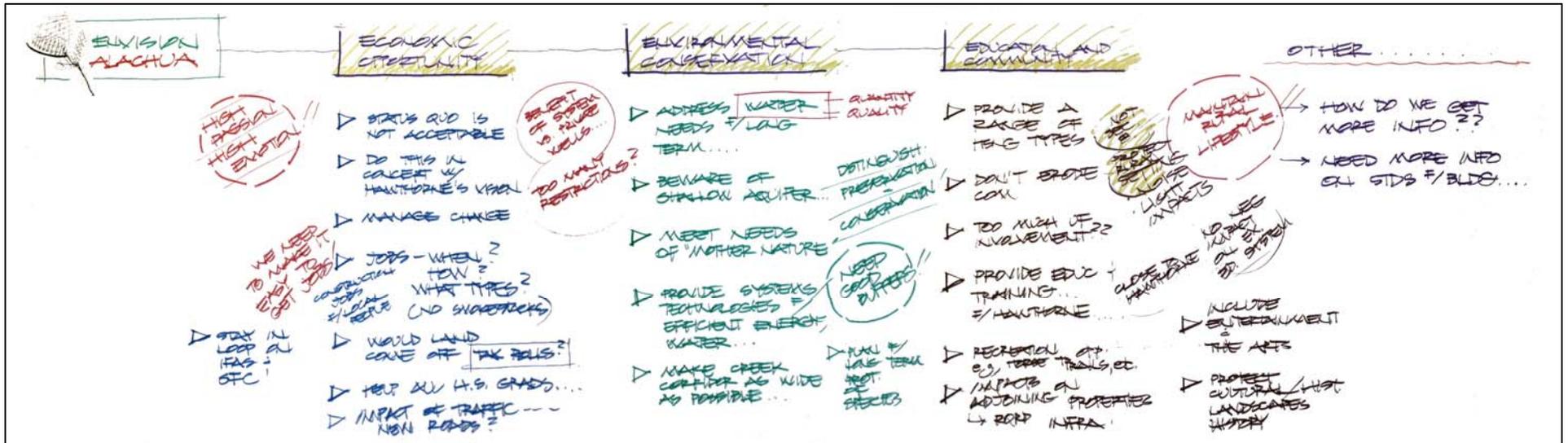
Other Topics

- There were questions about how performance measures will be established and monitored. Participants also wanted to know how commitments between all the partners would be memorialized.

A full transcription of the flipchart notes taken during the small groups and written comments provided at the meeting is included at the end of this document.

V. Summary and Next Steps in the Envision Alachua Planning Process

Daniel concluded by encouraging participants to submit their comment cards and go to the website to sign up to receive automatic e-mail updates so they could stay informed. He also invited participants to stay and speak with Plum Creek representatives if they had any questions. The meeting was adjourned at about 8:30 pm.



**Envision Alachua Phase II
 Hawthorne Community Workshop #4
 December 7, 2013**