

## **Revised Plum Creek plan still months away**

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*Editor's note: Alachua County may negotiate to swap or sell land at the Alachua County Fairgrounds in return for land owned by Plum Creek along State Road 26 west of the intersection with U.S. 301. A map accompanying a story published Saturday in The Sun misstated where the Plum Creek property lies.*

Plum Creek Timber Co.'s revised plan likely will be back in Alachua County officials' hands by March or April, company officials said this week.

Company officials had expected to resubmit the plan to the county this month or next, but they said they are working to gather information they hope will satisfy concerns raised by commissioners and residents about the massive planned residential and commercial development.

"It just takes time because of the size of this proposal," said Tim Jackson, the project manager. "We're looking at maybe two months from now, although that may slide a little bit."

The plan's scope is so large, covering about 60,000 acres in eastern Alachua County, that it has raised concerns.

Some worry the timber company will develop wetlands that the county's comprehensive plan — a state-mandated "blueprint" that governs where different types of developments can go — would not allow.

The plan's most recent iteration calls for up to 10,500 homes and 15.5 million square feet of non-residential development as well as some agricultural and conservation uses.

Company officials said Thursday they are mulling an idea proposed earlier this month by County Commissioner Robert Hutchinson, who suggested the county sell or trade a 98-acre chunk of industrial and residential land in the east Gainesville area to Plum Creek.

Hutchinson suggested the company could more easily develop the east Gainesville land without running into environmental roadblocks, and that the county could buy or receive in trade about 800 acres from Plum Creek that then could stay undeveloped.

Jackson said company officials "absolutely" are considering the idea.

"It's a perfectly reasonable thing for us to think about," he said.

County Manager Lee Niblock met with Plum Creek officials this week to discuss the idea. The Plum Creek tract is much larger than the one the county has to offer, he said, but the county-owned land — which includes the current fairgrounds site — would be more easily developed.

"We'd be looking for some kind of an equitable exchange, where they would get the existing fairgrounds site, which is near a four-lane road and certainly very appropriate for industry," Niblock said. "The county would then get a parcel we

could use for resource-based activities, and move more quickly to the new fairgrounds site, so it would accomplish multiple goals for Alachua County."

The company's answer to the county's sell-or-swap idea likely will not be part of the resubmitted plan, Jackson said, and a decision on that would come later.

Earlier this month, county officials voted to spend up to \$1.3 million to reroof and make needed repairs to the aging fairgrounds facility on Northeast 39th Avenue.

Seattle-based Plum Creek is one of the nation's largest corporate landowners, owning and managing about 6.8 million acres of timberland in 19 states.

In December, Fortune magazine reported that the company's longtime boss, Rick Holley, returned nearly \$2 million in stock to the company, saying he could not take the award unless company stockholders saw an increase in returns.