

## Scope of Work for East County Planning Guide

The East County Planning District (East County) comprises approximately 278,000 acres (65% of the land area of the County) consisting predominantly of improved or unimproved agriculture, extractive industry, or open space/conservation lands. In recent years, Charlotte County has experienced an increasing amount of inquiries about development possibilities within the East County area. During this time, the Babcock Ranch Overlay District was reviewed and approved, resulting in a new community of approximately 13,521 acres with a maximum of 17,870 units. Obviously, this recent event has resulted in very real concerns that the Babcock Ranch development may lead to increased development pressures on lands outside of the Urban Services Area.

While the residential housing market has come to a virtual halt in southwest Florida, demographic projections predict that Florida's population will double by 2060. That being said, it is anticipated that significant growth rates will return to Charlotte County. The development reprieve we are currently experiencing represents an ideal time for the County to assess development patterns experienced in the last 20 years, reflect upon lessons learned, and chart a new path for its future. The RWA team recognizes the need to proactively plan for growth and understands that failure to do so will result in unsustainable development patterns characterized by urban sprawl, inefficient delivery of public facilities and services, the loss of economically viable and productive agriculture, and the fragmentation of ecosystems and listed species habitat.

Charlotte County is embarking on several inter-related planning initiatives, including the development of a new long-term vision for the county through the development of the new Comprehensive Plan, *Smart Charlotte 2050*. The RWA team will be responsible for the initial development of the *East County Planning Guide* (Guide), which will build upon the results of *Smart Charlotte 2050* in order to address future growth in the rural areas of Charlotte County.

### Objective

The objective of this planning initiative is to develop a planning guide that will ultimately be comprised of two phases. The first phase, to be completed by the RWA team as outlined in this Scope, and will be a "How to Grow in East County" manual (Manual). The second part, to be completed as a future phase, will consist of ordinances and Land Development Regulations to implement the development guidelines.

The Manual will provide a regulatory blueprint for how future growth will occur and how numerous competing policy objectives will be balanced. The Manual will build on the information and ideas accumulated through the *Smart Charlotte 2050* initiative and provide more detailed direction on the following:

- Appropriate procedures to protect agriculture and predominantly rural land uses in order to maintain and enhance economic viability, rural character, and aesthetic and cultural values;
- Measures to protect private property rights through the use of incentive-based rather than exclusively using regulatory "control and command" tools.
- Ways to minimize conflicts between residential and rural uses such as farming, ranching, mining, and hunting;

- Appropriate protection measures for environmentally sensitive lands, including wetlands, natural waterbodies and other natural systems, and listed plant and animal species and their habitat;
- Recommendations on how to effectively manage existing conservation areas;
- The orderly and timely conversion of agricultural and rural lands to other uses in appropriate locations and sustainable forms, while discouraging urban sprawl and directing incompatible land uses away from important natural systems and listed species;
- Establishing a regulatory framework that will guide the development of new communities and ensure low impact, green development and the use of innovative decentralized utilities;
- The utilization of creative land use techniques, including but not limited to: the Rural Lands Stewardship Area (RLSA) program; transferable development rights (TDR's); urban villages, new towns, and satellite communities or hamlets; clustering and open space provisions; mixed-use developments; scenic corridors; transitional area development policies; and rural residential development standards;
- The use of Right-to-Farm provisions and taxation strategies to protect viable agricultural areas; and
- Fiscal impacts associated with the provision of adequate public facilities and the delivery of public services consistent with applicable Federal regulations, State statutes and rules, and with the County's Rural Area Vision.

The Manual will be clearly written and incorporate visual aids and illustrations, in order to be easily understood by people of diverse backgrounds. The guidelines outlined in the Manual will be translated into adoptable Goals, Objectives, and Policies (GOPs) that will lay the foundation for the ordinances and LDRs to be included in the second phase. These ordinances should include, but not be limited to, the following concepts:

- Types of uses to be developed;
- Densities and intensities of uses and open space requirements;
- Environmentally sensitive lands protection;
- Utility and infrastructure development standards;
- Requirements for coordination between land owner/developers for wildlife refuges and corridors, infrastructure provisions, commercial and industrial uses;
- Green building practices (water and power conservation techniques);
- Low impact development techniques for stormwater management;
- Development rules to prevent urban-rural conflicts;
- Development rules to prevent sprawl.