

Charlotte County
East County Planning Guide

Stakeholder Meeting Summary Results
December 9, 2008

RWA, Inc. conducted a series of stakeholder meetings on December 9, 2008 to provide an overview of the East County Planning Guide and receive input from interested parties. While the meetings were open to the general public, separate meeting notices were distributed to three distinct groups to encourage the greatest amount of participation. The three stakeholder group meetings were conducted as follows:

- ◆ 9:30am – 11:30am: Environmental Groups
- ◆ 1:00pm – 3:00pm: Large Landowners (500 acres)
- ◆ 3:00pm – 5:00pm: Landowners

The meetings included a brief overview of the East County Planning Guide and its relationship with other Charlotte County planning initiatives, including the *SmartCharlotte 2050* Vision Plan and comprehensive plan update. The majority of the time for each meeting was intended as an informal dialogue, where participants can ask questions, express their opinions, and discuss specific concerns and issues as it relates to East County.

A total of thirty-eight (38) people attended the meetings. Participants were also asked to complete and return a Survey and Comment Card. Twenty (20) comment cards were returned in various levels of completeness. A summary of each stakeholder group meeting is provided on the following pages. Survey results are located on Pages 7-10.

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP MEETING:

Eleven (11) individuals attended the group meeting. Eight (8) individuals completed the comment card/survey - seven (7) of which stated they live or work in East County; four (4) own land in East County. Survey results can be found on Page 7.

Comments Card Response Summary:

Things you like most about East County:

- Natural Elements/Wildlife (8)
- Boating and Fishing (2)
- Lack of Crowding/Quiet (4)
- Open Space (2)
- Rural Atmosphere (3)
- Agriculture

Things you like least about East County:

- Dirt Mines (2)
- Threats to Water
- Access to Preservation Areas
- Fire Ants
- Uncontrolled, Inappropriate Development (2)
- Lack of concern for natural environment
- Putting cost of development on property owners through MSBUs
- Ignoring the intent of Agricultural Estate zoning designation

Biggest issues facing East County in the next 40 years:

- Mining (3)
- Development (3)
- Water Resources (3)
- Funding
- Nature conservation
- Climate change
- Building Wildlife Corridors (2)
- Use of MSBU
- Proper placement of Commercial enterprises
- Not taking additional private property rights
- Infrastructure and new and expanded roads (2)
- Intensification of Agriculture
- Effective TDU program to move development to urban areas

Group Discussion Items:

The following bullet points are statements from individual participants and do not represent a consensus of the larger group

- Concerns regarding mining in the Agricultural and Rural lands;
- Habitat fragmentation;
- Urban vs. Rural areas;
- Any planning efforts should include the Lemon Bay Conservancy, which has two active land trusts;
- Potential for ecotourism in Charlotte's rural lands;
- Development should be located between US41 and I-75, which protects the rural/environmentally significant areas and keeps development away from coastline/hurricane zones;
- Global warming is a very real issue;
- Organic farming can be very successful;
- Concerns regarding mining's impact on waterflows;
- Charlotte County does not have "pristine" natural environment – much has been stripped for development and agricultural;
- Incentives are necessary to preserve things deemed valuable;
- Existing Transfer of Development Units (TDU) program in Charlotte County has a lack of adequate credits;
- Villages vs. Towns – villages, as opposed to New Towns, may be more appropriate for East County;

- Build-out concept: Currently, Charlotte County has 165,171 people and is expected to grow to 219,266 by 2030. The County has 134,000 vacant lots, which is more than adequate to accommodate the projected 2030 population;
- Mini-ranchettes are the typical residential development pattern in East County;
- Conservation subdivisions propose to keep the same number of lots but on a smaller footprint. The concern from landowners is that a 1-acre lot does not have the same value as a 10-acre lot;
- Wildlife corridors need to be provided. Specifically mentioned connection to Burnt Store area;
- Concern about TDU ordinance allowing density to be transferred to coastal high hazard areas and existing floodplain areas;
- 6-laning of SR 31 is an issue. General feel that FDOT looks at roads solely from a capacity standpoint and does not consider secondary impacts of increased urbanization, sprawl, and habitat crossings;
- Need to look at regional area as it relates to wildlife and watersheds;
- Potential for Solar Farming and alternative energy sources;
- 80/20 concept – 80% land for conservation, 20% developed;
- Concerns with how existing open space impact fee is being collected and spent;
- Idea of various degrees of “ruralness;”
- Need to monetize, or put an economic value, on environmental resources;
- Charlotte County currently has a significant amount of Conservation area;
- Encourage “gentleman farming” and horse ranching on new development – live lightly on the land;
- Do not like the use of MSBUs to fund infrastructure improvements;
- Concerns and discussion regarding future or expanded road from Babcock Ranch to I-75.

LARGE LANDOWNER GROUP MEETING:

Twenty-four (24) individuals attended the group meeting. Nine (9) individuals completed the comment card/survey – all of which stated they own land in East County; six (6) of which stated they live or work in East County. Survey results can be found on Page 8.

Comments Card Response Summary:

Things you like most about East County:

- Open Space (2)
- Ag Production
- Rural Character
- Isolation
- Wildlife
- Ability to raise livestock, garden (2)
- Decent road access
- Opportunity/Potential for development
- Beauty of land
- Natural resource protection
- Proximity to beaches and amenities

Things you like least about East County:

- Government
- Not able to develop
- Loss of habitat
- Density limitations
- Lack of community services
- Lack of retail
- Degraded water quality
- 4-laning 31 and 74
- Dump truck traffic
- Unauthorized off road vehicle use
- Ag/Residential conflicts
- Stormwater runoff effects of unauthorized digging

Biggest issues facing East County in the next 40 years:

- Growth (2)
- Threats to Agriculture
- Mining
- Citrus diseases r
- Overuse of groundwater
- Restrictions on future development (2)
- Fragmentation and sprawl
- Excessive traffic through wildlife corridors
- Need for commercial and industrial
- Funding for roads/expansion
- Easing restrictions on Class IV mines which can be used for agricultural water

Group Discussion Items:

The following bullet points are statements from individual participants and do not represent a consensus of the larger group

- Farming doesn't need protected – just needs regulations to not be over burdensome;
- Discussion on what is meant by Incentives for Agriculture, e.g., localized right-to-farm provisions;
- Improvements are needed to local roads (4-laning of SR 31);
- TDU system needs to have a more flexible framework
 - currently cannot send units to the rural area – only to urban areas;
 - should allow units from rural area to be kept in rural area
 - additional density should be available;
 - County should certify Receiving Areas to eliminate uncertainty (NIMBYism);
- Concerns with clustering requirements if there is no additional density – value of a 1-acre lot not the same as a 10-acre lot;
- Concerns with density cap limitations;
- Landowners should be able to develop how they choose and based on the market – a 5 to 10-acre lot may be desirable and serve a need;
- More economic development is needed in East County;

- SR 31 near Lee County line and Webb area has potential for many uses;
- Area off Cook-Brown Road, across from existing mines, is logical place for commercial and industrial development;
- Agriculture does not equal environmentally sensitive lands;
- Removal of mining/excavation as a permitted use in Agricultural lands has taken away property rights.

LANDOWNER GROUP MEETING:

Four (4) individuals attended the group meeting. Three (3) individuals completed the comment card/survey – all of which stated they own land in East County, but only one individual lived or worked in East County. Survey results can be found on Page 9.

Comments Card Response Summary:

Things you like most about East County:

- Elected Officials
- Funding for non-rural land
- Area is positioned well for future development

Things you like least about East County:

- Taxes on vacant land
- Lack of services
- Fear that government will interfere with private property rights

Biggest issues facing East County in the next 40 years:

- Infrastructure
- Properly balancing growth

Group Discussion Items:

The following bullet points are statements from individual participants and do not represent a consensus of the larger group

- The County needs to be more flexible;
- County officials/staff is unwilling to consider options for land development;
- Areas surrounded by Urban Service Area should be allowed to have zoning changed;
- There's no "life" here. I'm moving to Texas.

SURVEY RESULTS:

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Undecided
1	Future growth in Charlotte County should be located within the Urban Areas, where existing public infrastructure exists.			4	2	2	
2	East County should remain a rural environment				3	5	
3	There should be no additional density provided or created within East County.	1			3	4	
4	Future Development should be clustered to minimize development footprints in East County	1		2	2	3	
5	Land should be acquired or utilized to provide wildlife corridors, wildlife refuges and to connect existing conservation areas in East County.				1	7	
6	Greater opportunities for commercial and industrial development should be allowed in East County.	2		1	3	1	
7	Incentives should be provided in order to protect environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife corridors in East County.		1		1	5	
8	Incentives should be provided to protect the rural character of East County.				1	6	
9	Incentives should be provided to maintain viable agricultural land in East County				4	3	
10	New developments within East County should be fiscally neutral and be self sufficient, by providing public infrastructure and a mixture of uses to ensure that residents' basic needs can be met on site	1	2	1	1	2	
11	Future development within East County should primarily consist of larger rural residential lots with private utilities.		4		1	2	
12	Keeping land in active agriculture is an effective means to achieve conservation of environmentally sensitive lands.		2	2	1	2	

SURVEY RESULTS:

LARGE LANDOWNER GROUP

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Undecided
1	Future growth in Charlotte County should be located within the Urban Areas, where existing public infrastructure exists.	2	4	1		1	
2	East County should remain a rural environment	1	3	1	2	2	
3	There should be no additional density provided or created within East County.	6	2			1	
4	Future Development should be clustered to minimize development footprints in East County	2	2	1	2	2	
5	Land should be acquired or utilized to provide wildlife corridors, wildlife refuges and to connect existing conservation areas in East County.		2	2	2	2	1
6	Greater opportunities for commercial and industrial development should be allowed in East County.	1		1	1	5	1
7	Incentives should be provided in order to protect environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife corridors in East County.				2	3	
8	Incentives should be provided to protect the rural character of East County.		1		2	2	
9	Incentives should be provided to maintain viable agricultural land in East County			1		4	
10	New developments within East County should be fiscally neutral and be self sufficient, by providing public infrastructure and a mixture of uses to ensure that residents' basic needs can be met on site		1	1	3		
11	Future development within East County should primarily consist of larger rural residential lots with private utilities.	2	1	1	1		
12	Keeping land in active agriculture is an effective means to achieve conservation of environmentally sensitive lands.	1	2	1		1	

SURVEY RESULTS:

LANDOWNER GROUP		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Undecided
1	Future growth in Charlotte County should be located within the Urban Areas, where existing public infrastructure exists.	1	1			1	
2	East County should remain a rural environment		1	2			
3	There should be no additional density provided or created within East County.	2	1				
4	Future Development should be clustered to minimize development footprints in East County				1	2	
5	Land should be acquired or utilized to provide wildlife corridors, wildlife refuges and to connect existing conservation areas in East County.				2	1	
6	Greater opportunities for commercial and industrial development should be allowed in East County.				1	2	
7	Incentives should be provided in order to protect environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife corridors in East County.				2		
8	Incentives should be provided to protect the rural character of East County.		1		1		
9	Incentives should be provided to maintain viable agricultural land in East County		1		1		
10	New developments within East County should be fiscally neutral and be self sufficient, by providing public infrastructure and a mixture of uses to ensure that residents' basic needs can be met on site		1	1			
11	Future development within East County should primarily consist of larger rural residential lots with private utilities.		1		1		
12	Keeping land in active agriculture is an effective means to achieve conservation of environmentally sensitive lands.		1		1		

SURVEY RESULTS:

ALL GROUPS		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Undecided
1	Future growth in Charlotte County should be located within the Urban Areas, where existing public infrastructure exists.	3	5	5	2	4	0
2	East County should remain a rural environment	1	4	3	5	7	0
3	There should be no additional density provided or created within East County.	9	3	0	3	5	0
4	Future Development should be clustered to minimize development footprints in East County	3	2	3	5	7	0
5	Land should be acquired or utilized to provide wildlife corridors, wildlife refuges and to connect existing conservation areas in East County.	0	2	2	5	10	1
6	Greater opportunities for commercial and industrial development should be allowed in East County.	3	0	2	5	8	1
7	Incentives should be provided in order to protect environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife corridors in East County.	0	1	0	5	8	0
8	Incentives should be provided to protect the rural character of East County.	0	2	0	4	8	0
9	Incentives should be provided to maintain viable agricultural land in East County	0	1	1	5	7	0
10	New developments within East County should be fiscally neutral and be self sufficient, by providing public infrastructure and a mixture of uses to ensure that residents' basic needs can be met on site	1	4	3	4	2	0
11	Future development within East County should primarily consist of larger rural residential lots with private utilities.	2	6	1	3	2	0
12	Keeping land in active agriculture is an effective means to achieve conservation of environmentally sensitive lands.	1	5	3	2	3	0