



Planning for Little Manatee South Review & Recommendations

Hillsborough County, Florida — October 2016



WADETRIM

Spikowski Planning



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A historical map of Fort Myers, Florida, showing a grid of streets and a central square. The map is in a sepia or brownish tone. Labels on the map include "Royal", "Fort Myers", "Central", "Florida", and "Exchange".

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1. Introduction

1-a Report Background

The “Little Manatee South” planning area is at the far south end of unincorporated Hillsborough County, on the eastern shore of Tampa Bay from the Little Manatee River south to the Manatee County line. The planning area is predominately rural with extensive submerged and preserved lands. The boundary is shown on the cover of this report; it encompasses about 23,000 acres south of Ruskin, entirely beyond the county’s Urban Service Area.

This report provides recommendations about how to proceed with planning for the future of Little Manatee South. The focus is on vacant land west of I-75.

Significant planning has already been undertaken for Little Manatee South including extensive research, community involvement, and code development. Several substantive policy and fiscal questions remain:

- How should future growth in Little Manatee South be coordinated with pending county-wide updates to the Comprehensive Plan?
- What are the fiscal implications of growth into Little Manatee South and what models are available to pay for new infrastructure?
- Can form-based techniques be used to support compact development patterns during this early stage of planning?

Hillsborough County authorized the analysis described in this report through a planning contract with Wade Trim and Spikowski Planning Associates. Bill Spikowski served as team leader.

This report begins by summarizing the land-use regulations that currently apply to Little Manatee South; these regulations are contained in Hillsborough County’s Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code.

Four different planning approaches for Little Manatee South are then summarized, followed by an overview of “fiscal planning.” This overview describes analytical tools that are available to Hillsborough County and policy alternatives to full public funding of infrastructure.

This report concludes with recommendations to Hillsborough County on how to move forward with planning for Little Manatee South.

1-b Context for Little Manatee South Decisions

This analysis was conducted during a time when Hillsborough County leaders were confronting serious infrastructure backlogs with resources that will be far from adequate to resolve them.

Officials are confronting this challenge with a series of initiatives that will culminate in a new Comprehensive Plan to be guided by these core principles:

- **Quality of Life** – respecting the choices made by residents to live in urban, suburban, or rural areas while preserving environmentally significant land and maintaining viable agricultural lands.
- **Fiscal Sustainability** – prioritizing limited resources by leveraging private investments, capitalizing on existing infrastructure, and providing alternative mobility options.
- **Economic Prosperity** – protecting sites for future job creation and linking infrastructure spending to private capital investment.
- **Responsible Growth** – recognizing the difference between stable and transition areas, redeveloping declining commercial and industrial areas, and structuring mobility fees that incentivize economic objectives and productive development patterns.
- **Consistency of Action** – providing more certainty for the community and developers, aligning programs and investment decisions, and linking capital improvement program, land use, and development standards.

In the near future, Hillsborough County may be making critical decisions about urbanization south of the Little Manatee River. The way the choices are formulated could provide a model for prudent responses to requests for urban expansion in other areas. Many questions need to be answered before making these decisions:

- ▶ Would expanding urban infrastructure serve the larger public interest, be economically feasible, and avoid suburban sprawl?
- ▶ Could the costs of expansion be allocated in a different manner than prior methods that have resulted in major infrastructure backlogs?
- ▶ Would the new development pattern meet changing demographic trends and increasing interest in compact walkable neighborhoods?

Several aspects of these decisions are unique to Little Manatee South, but many others will reappear when expansions are considered in other parts of Hillsborough County.

A primary growth strategy in the Comprehensive Plan divides the unincorporated county into land inside an Urban Service Area and land outside. This dichotomy was established in early 1990s to discourage suburban sprawl. Within the Urban Service Area, the county commits to provide water and sewer service. Developers must connect to these services; if service isn't available at the property line, developers are required to extend water and sewer lines at their own expense.

Land outside the Urban Service Area is intended to remain rural (agriculture, preservation, mining, large-lot residential, and rural villages). Water and sewer service will not be provided outside the Urban Service Area; private wells and septic systems are suitable at allowable rural densities. Other urban services are provided at reduced levels.

Before the Urban Service Area can be expanded, ten criteria must be met. One is “full cost recovery ... for the services needed by the new development” (see Policy 2.2).

To allow any further urbanization south of Little Manatee River, the county commission would need to amend the Comprehensive Plan. The conventional method would be to formally expand the Urban Service Area and assign urban designations to land on the Future Land Use Map. An alternative might be a new comprehensive planning approach that does not expand the Urban Service Area and requires major infrastructure to be funded privately.

This report summarizes a series of thoughtful planning approaches for Little Manatee South that were formulated between 2007 and 2014. These summaries are not intended to advocate or challenge these approaches; the summaries show how these approaches are similar and how they differ as to the extent and type of urban development and how each addresses the present lack of urban infrastructure.

None of these approaches are simple implementations of the Little Manatee South Community Plan. Each is a specific concept that could move through the county's formal planning process in a single package, or incrementally under county leadership, or incrementally as county responses to individual landowner proposals for comprehensive plan amendments and rezonings.

1-c Capsule History of the Little Manatee South Area

Little Manatee South is midway between Bradenton and Gibsonton, equidistant by car from downtown Tampa and downtown St. Petersburg.

This area has a rich history. Great mounds of discarded shells were constructed 2,000 years ago by native Americans. Nomadic hunter/gatherers and fishermen lived in the area before and after Europeans arrived in the sixteenth century.

Access was primarily by water until recent times because trails and roads were interrupted by creeks and rivers. Gulf City was established in the 1880s but was eclipsed by Ruskin directly across the river. The present US 301 was the first continuous land route along Florida's west coast; at the beginning of the twentieth century, the present US 41 was still a shell trail.

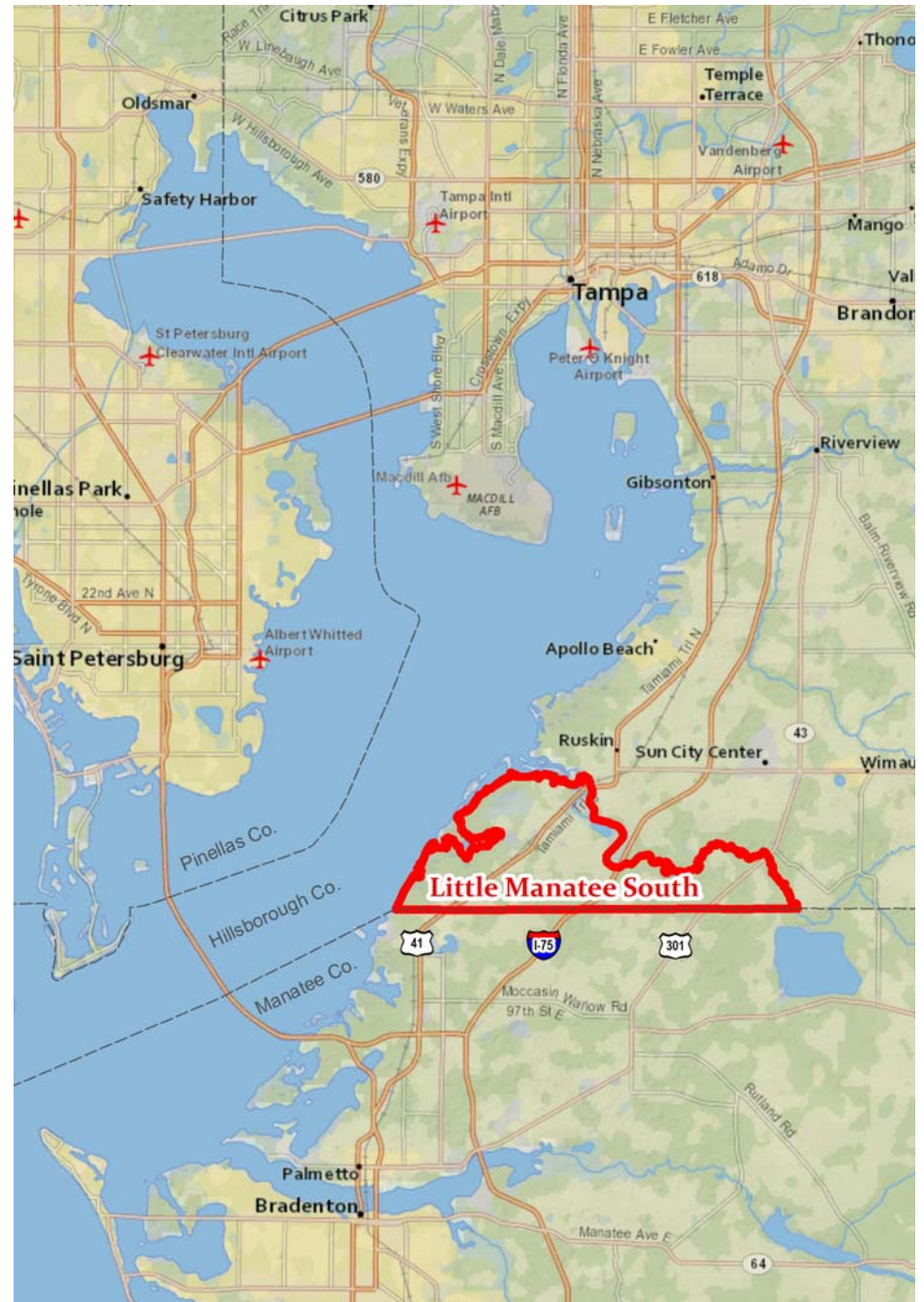
The Coast Line railroad, which by 1920 connected the area to Tampa and Bradenton, supported farming and spurred growth. A packing house and crate mill were built in Ross. In the 1920s Ross expanded and became Sun City, a fledgling town promising glamour, laid out around a movie studio. The pre-depression bust in 1927 halted further growth throughout the region.

After the depression, cattle, citrus, strawberries, and winter vegetables were produced on a commercial scale. Shell mining near Tampa Bay uncovered glimpses of the prehistoric animals that had roamed this area. Commercial fishing began yielding to recreational fishing and tourism.

Along the south banks of the Little Manatee River, homes were built in small subdivisions and on other lots that had been created earlier. Further to the east, the Sundance community was developed as an equestrian-oriented rural community. Riverside Club was developed as a retirement community with a golf course and marina. Lost River Preserve offered rural homesites around former shell mines, and the South County Career Center was built nearby.

Major natural tracts have become state parks (Little Manatee River and Cockroach Bay Preserve). Cockroach Creek Greenway Preserve is owned by the county, and the TECO tracts along Tampa Bay are protected by conservation easements. Port Manatee is located just beyond the Manatee County line.

Rising production costs have taken a toll on farming, and an outbreak of citrus canker led to the destruction of most citrus groves. The potential for urban development has caused land prices to rise, yet the area has a rural and natural feel that continues to attract residents and visitors. The rich ecological and environmental assets that supported settlement thousands of years ago are still vital characteristics of Little Manatee South.



1-d Current Comprehensive Plan Categories

The Comprehensive Plan adopted by Hillsborough County contains a “Future Land Use Map” that defines potentially allowable land uses and intensities. Categories on this map range from allowing almost no development all the way to heavy industrial uses.

All zoning districts approved by the county must be consistent with each property’s category on the Future Land Use Map. If the category limits residential densities to a fixed number of dwelling units (DU) per acre, approved zoning districts must be at or below that limit.

Densities in the Comprehensive Plan are “gross densities”: the total number of DUs divided by the total amount of raw land, including undevelopable land.

On the immediate south bank of the Little Manatee River, most land has been given a suburban or urban category. Existing subdivisions such as Gulf City, Sundance, Riverside Club, and the original Sun City have similar categories. Most other land west of I-75 is in Agricultural/Rural or Natural Preservation categories.












In addition to these categories, the Comprehensive Plan designates an Urban Service Area where connections to public water and sewer systems are required to contain sprawl from spreading beyond the availability of utilities. The Urban Service Area includes Ruskin but its boundary does not extend south of the Little Manatee River. The effect of this designation is easily apparent by comparing the recent development that surrounds Ruskin with the absence of new development across the river. Urban development south of the river either existed prior to the Future Land Use Map or was approved in accordance with strict rules that apply to rural areas; for instance, Lost River Preserve was developed recently within the gross density limitation of 1 unit per 5 acres for Agricultural/Rural land.

Hillsborough County’s Future Land Use Map is depicted on the following page. The Natural Preservation and Agricultural/Rural categories are outlined; the county’s other categories are shown with solid colors so that the extent of existing or allowable suburban/urban development can be easily seen.

Manatee County’s map is also depicted. Land in and around Port Manatee is in industrial categories. East of the port, an “Urban Fringe” category has been applied to indicate areas where future residential growth is projected to occur at some point in the future, following a logical expansion of urban services from west to east.

LEGEND

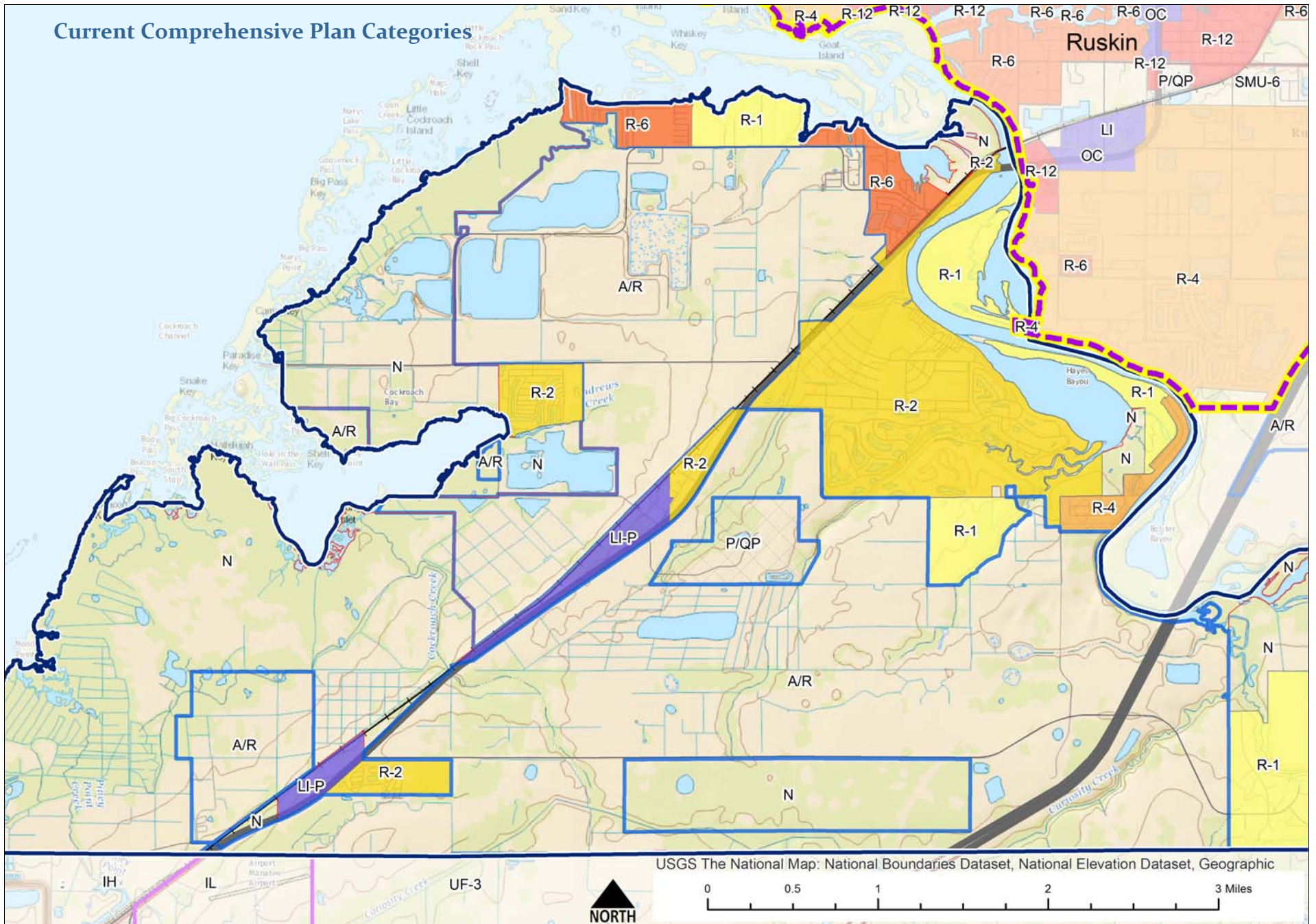
Hillsborough Co. Future Land Use Map

-  N (Natural Preservation)
-  A/R (Agricultural/Rural, 1 DU/5 acres)
-  P/QP (Major Public / Quasi Public)
-  R-1 (Residential, 1 DU/acre)
-  R-2 (Residential, 2 DU/acre)
-  R-4 (Residential, 4 DU/acre)
-  R-6 (Residential, 6 DU/acre)
-  R-12 (Residential, 12 DU/acre)
-  OC (Office Commercial)
-  LI (Light Industrial)
-  LI-P (Light Industrial - Planned)

Manatee Co. Future Land Use Map

-  IH (Industrial-Heavy)
-  IL (Industrial-Light)
-  UF-3 (Urban Fringe)
-  Edge of Urban Service Area
-  Little Manatee South Boundary

Current Comprehensive Plan Categories



1-e Current Zoning Districts

The Land Development Code adopted by Hillsborough County contains an official zoning atlas that divides all land in the unincorporated area into zoning districts. These maps occasionally cause confusion because there were adopted prior to the Future Land Use Map but are now subservient to it and to the entire Comprehensive Plan.

The relevant part of Hillsborough County's zoning map is depicted on the next page.

Many zoning districts include their density limit in the name of the district. For instance, the RSC-2 zone allows up to 2 dwelling units per acre.

















Approvals of PD (Planned Development) zoning districts usually contain an explicit density cap, which must be at or below the density cap shown on the Future Land Use Map at the time the zoning was approved.

There are several Planned Developments that have been approved in Little Manatee South, at the densities shown below (the higher-density developments pre-dated the Hillsborough County Comprehensive Plan).






- ▶ Gardinier Property: 1.0 DU per 5 acres.
- ▶ Lost River Preserve: 1.0 DU per 4 acres of uplands
- ▶ Winding Creek / Dooley Groves: 0.8 DUs per acre
- ▶ Sundance: 1.0 DU per acre
- ▶ Riverside Club / Maple Leaf Estates: 2.4 DUs per acre
- ▶ Manatee RV Park: 3.5 RV spaces per acre
- ▶ Hawaiian Isles RV Resort: 5.4 RV spaces per acre

LEGEND


Hillsborough County Zoning

-  AR (Agricultural Rural)
-  AS-1 (Agricultural Single Family)
-  ASC-1 (Agricultural Single Family)
-  PD-MU
-  RSC-2 (Single Family)
-  RSC-3 (Single Family)
-  RSC-4 (Single Family)
-  RSC-6 (Single Family)
-  RDC-6 (Duplex)
-  PD-H
-  RSC-9 (Single Family)
-  PD (Planned Development)
-  PD-C
-  CN (Commercial Neighborhood)
-  CG (Commercial General)
-  AI (Agricultural Industrial)

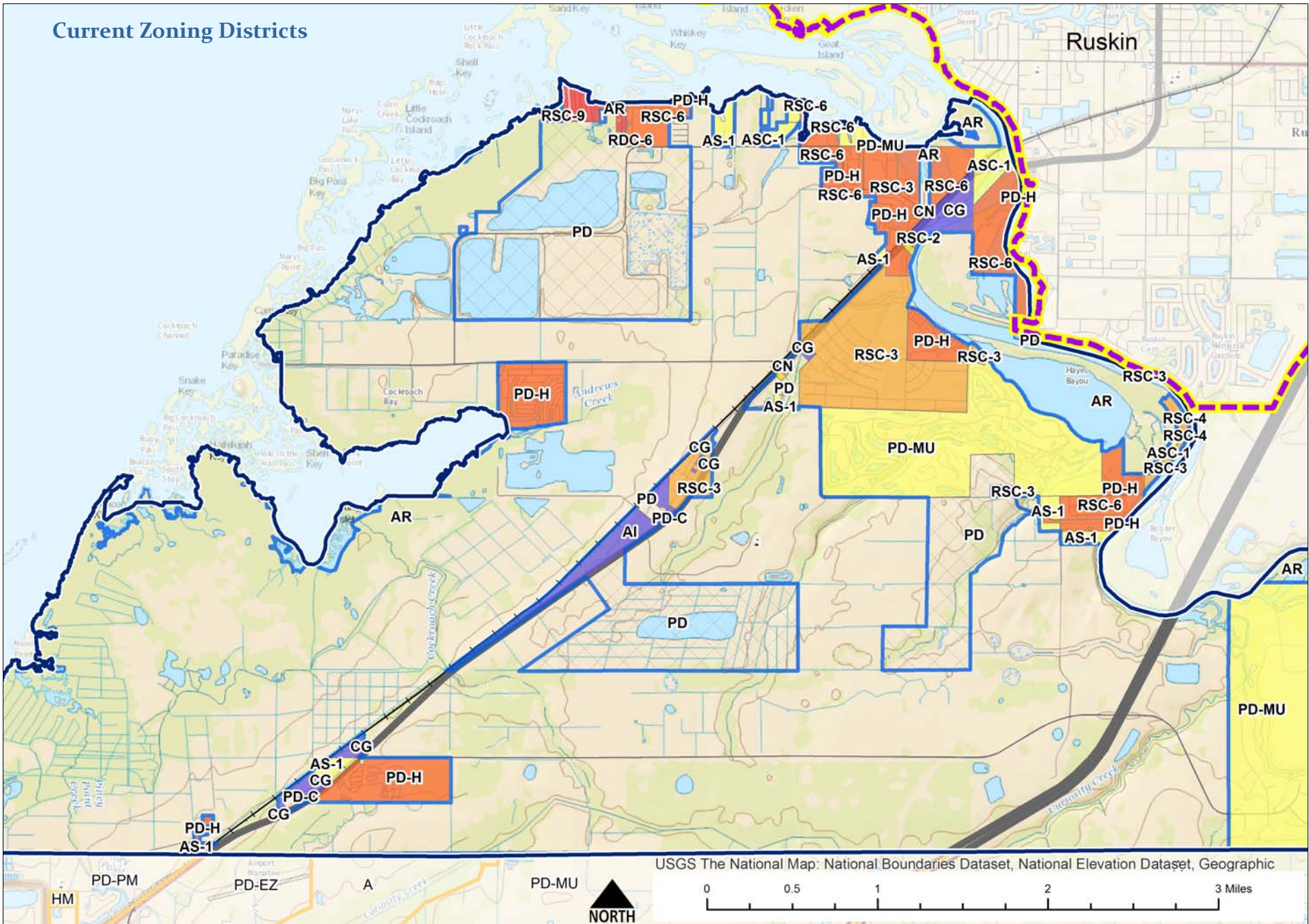
Manatee County Zoning

-  A (General Agriculture)
-  PD-MU (PD Mixed Use)
-  PD-PM (PD Port Manatee)
-  PD-EZ (PD Encouragement Zone)
-  HM (Heavy Manufacturing)

 Edge of Urban Service Area

 Little Manatee South Boundary

Current Zoning Districts



2. Prior Planning for Little Manatee South

2-a Little Manatee South Community Plan - 2010

The results of formal planning efforts in unincorporated Hillsborough County are compiled in the county's Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Code. The official zoning map, which predates both, is now a part of the Land Development Code, which by Florida law must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The same system is in place for each city. The Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission prepares comprehensive plans for the cities and the unincorporated county.

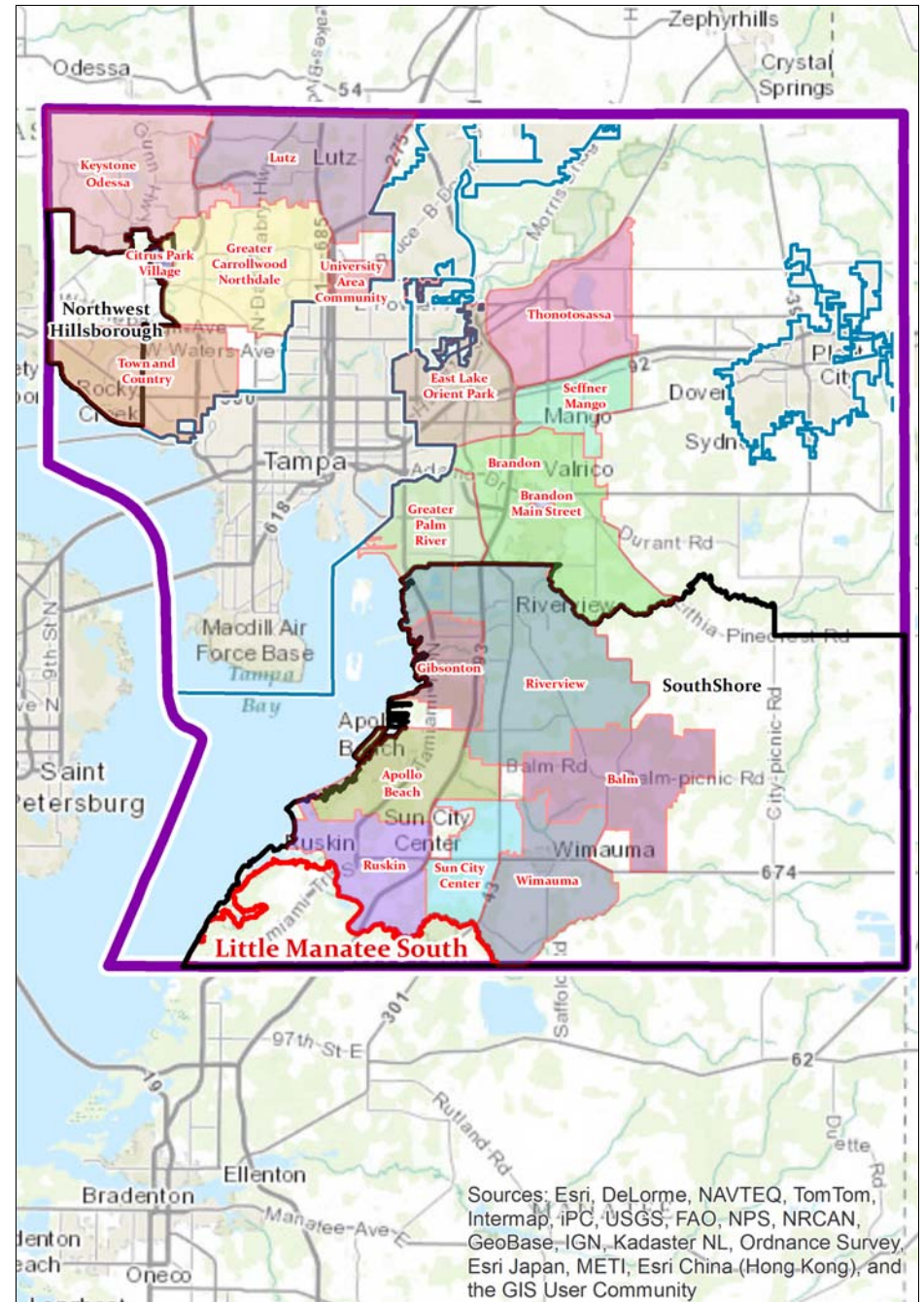
The county's Comprehensive Plan also includes "community plans" for much of the unincorporated county, as depicted on the map to the right. The community planning program began in 1998 to give citizens opportunities to chart their own course in shaping the appearance and function of their community through advanced input into land use and budget decisions that will affect them.

Community plans are formulated through formal consultation with residents and landowners. Staff support is provided by the Planning Commission and by Hillsborough County.

When completed, these plans are formally adopted into the Livable Communities Element. Because they are part of the Comprehensive Plan, they cannot be inconsistent with the remainder of the plan; for instance, they do not override the Future Land Use Map. Community plans are not regulatory in nature but offer guidance as to future amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, Land Development Code, and future rezonings. Community plans may call for future changes to other plans and regulations.

The Little Manatee South Community Plan is one of the most recent community plans. Its boundaries filled the gap between the Manatee County line and the community plans for Ruskin, Sun City Center, and Wimauma. Most land east of I-75 is committed to rural residential communities and the Little Manatee River State Park, so much of this plan contemplates the future of the mostly rural land west of I-75. This plan is supplemental to the SouthShore plan which was created in 2003 and covers a much larger area

The Little Manatee South Community Plan was adopted in 2010 after three years of community involvement. Key aspects of this plan are described on the following pages.



The Little Manatee South Community Plan begins with a vision statement, which like the remainder of the plan is broken into two parts, with the second part providing guidance for changes to the Comprehensive Plan that may occur decades in the future.

The first five goals address the following subjects: Community Character; Protect Environmental Areas; Plan for Growth; Infrastructure & Services; and Economic Development. These goals are relevant today.

A sixth goal provides “Long Term Development Options” that elaborate on the second part of the vision statement (as described to the right).

A “Concept Map” concludes the plan to help explain many of the strategies for the first five goals. A portion of the concept map for land west of Sundance is shown on the next ; the map’s legend is shown to the right.

The next several sections of this report summarize three subsequent proposals for urban development in Little Manatee South. Each proposal would require changes to the Future Land Use Map and expansion of the Urban Service Area west of I-75. The following excerpts are provided from the long-term part of the Little Manatee South Community Plan so they can be compared to the subsequent proposals:

- Development rights not used in support of the preferred development patterns shall be used as provided for under the Transfer of Development Rights section of this community plan.*
- *Encourage the location of a commuter rail station within the community planning area with transit oriented, pedestrian-friendly developments within 1/2 mile radius of the transit station location.*
 - *As part of the implementation of this plan, overlay district(s) should be developed for the residential area west of I-75 than include design and performance standards, to be developed when growth thresholds are met, and considered as a preplanned and pre-permitted process to ensure a unified development. Overlay district(s) could be developed by the County and/or could be initiated by the private sector.*
 - *The community encourages the development of areas targeting job creation and retention through specific efforts in business finance, marketing, neighborhood development, small business development, business retention and expansion, technology transfer, and real estate development.*
 - *The community has designated the area south of Cockroach Creek and east of the CSX Railroad lines as an Economic Development Area employment center, that can take advantage of the economic engine of the Port of Manatee. The objective is to create the opportunity for spin off activities from the Port activities.*
 - *Proposed performance standards for density consideration in order to achieve maximum density or additional density bonus [for residential area west of I-75] include: open space; public use of open space; public trails (pedestrian, bicycle etc.); use of green design standards; infrastructure improvement; affordable housing.*




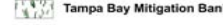







VISION STATEMENT:

- *The Vision for future "long term" residential development is primarily small lot clustered residential enclaves surrounded by open spaces and natural areas west of I-75.*
- *The Vision for future "long term" development near US 41 is to include employment opportunities centered around a modern walkable village/mixed-use center, a transit oriented development around a commuter rail station, a corporate park and economic development area.*
- *All future growth will occur in an orderly, timely fashion, preserving the unique qualities of the area, as established growth thresholds are met and Hillsborough County extends the Urban Services Area to provide utilities and other public support to the area.*

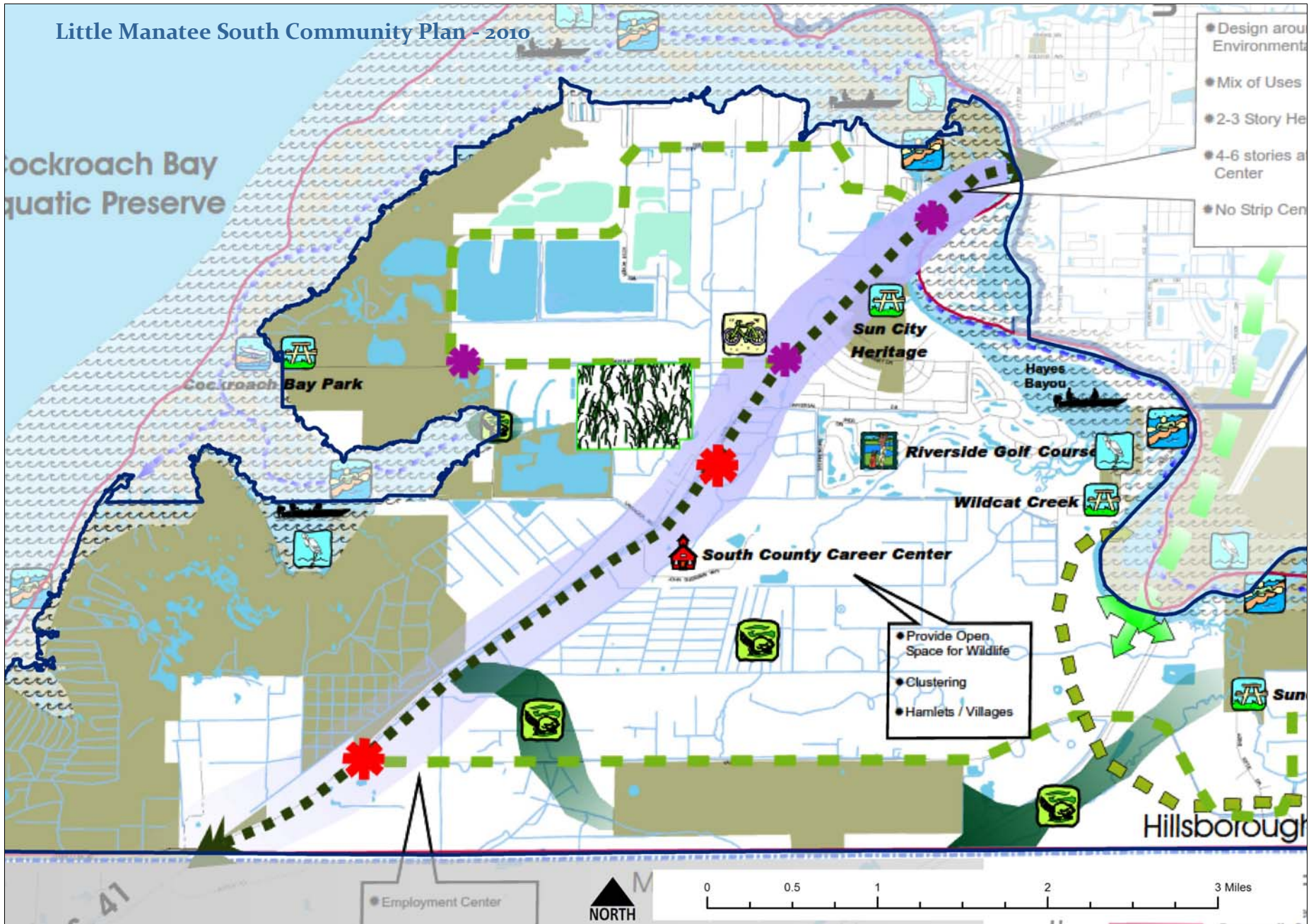
GOAL 6 – LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS:

- *New development along the corridor immediately west of I-75 should reflect the preferable development patterns of approximately 1 du/acre average. Future land density would increase, as development takes place moving towards the U.S. Highway 41 corridor, to include at a minimum those properties immediately adjacent to I-75.*

LEGEND

 Little Manatee South Community Boundary	 Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve	 Wildlife Corridors
 Existing On Road Bike Trails (Paved Shoulder)	 Kayak Canoe	 U.S. 41 Study
 Blueways Paddle Trails	 Boat Ramps	 Preservation/ Open Space
 Planned Off Road Bike Trails	 Fishing	 Tampa Bay Mitigation Bank
 Preferred Routes With Bike Lanes	 Biking	 Parks and Recreation
 Currently Meet Locational Criteria	 Horseback Riding	 Hillsborough County Fire Station
 Exception to Locational Criteria	 Golf	 Education / Resources
 Limited Locational Criteria		 Extension of Greenways Trails

Little Manatee South Community Plan - 2010



2-b Placemakers Approach - 2013

Hillsborough County contracted with the consulting firm Placemakers to create a zoning approach that would implement the long-term goals of the Community Plan. Funding was provided by the Uzita Shores Planning Group.

An on-site charrette was conducted in November 2013 and a draft form-based code was submitted by Placemakers in January 2014. Unlike conventional zoning which tends to separate land uses into different zones, form-based codes specify a range of mixed-use intensities that vary according to the look and feel desired by a community. The draft code presented by Placemakers was based on a well-known model for form-based codes called the SmartCode.

The draft map of zoning districts is shown on the next page. These districts do not exist today; they would be created and added to the county's LDC before land in Little Manatee South was rezoned in accordance with this map. (Existing neighborhoods designated as "opt-in" would not be rezoned initially.)

Zoning districts normally contain fixed density caps and can only be assigned to land when those densities are consistent with the Future Land Use Map.

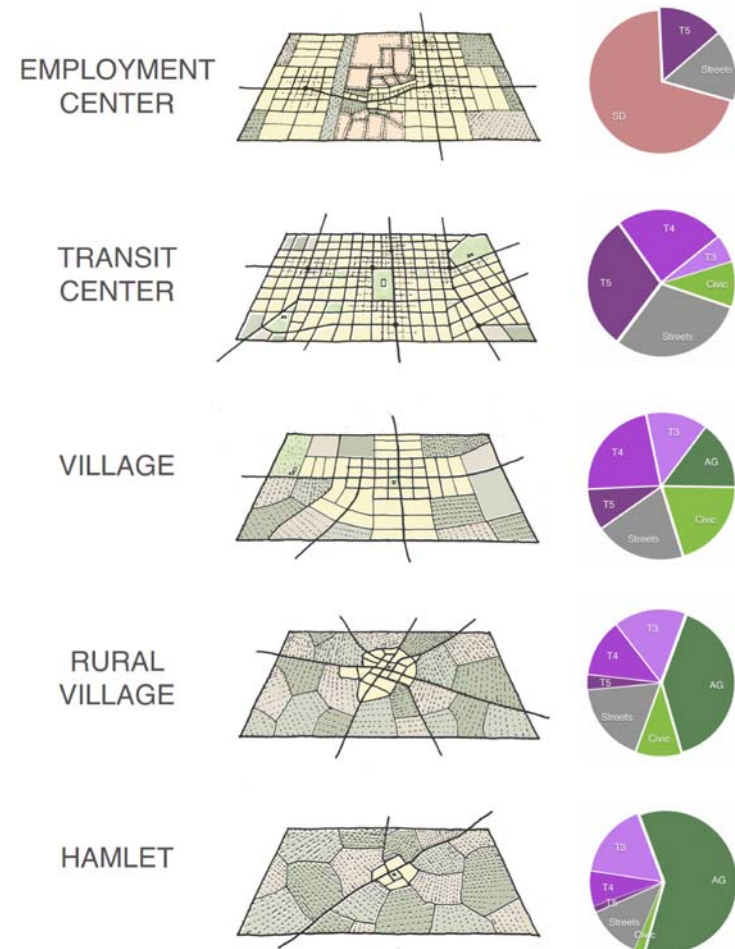
These zoning districts would function differently; they would be assigned to land in advance of changes to the Future Land Use Map. Allowable uses and densities would change if the Urban Service Area was expanded and if high-capacity public transit became available. Until that time, development would be restricted to rural villages and hamlets. This new planning/zoning concept would have to be enabled in the Comprehensive Plan because this approach hadn't been contemplated by Hillsborough County.

Five "community types" would be allowed in the new zones as follows:

COMMUNITY TYPES:	Zone I	Zone II
Hamlet	✓	✓
Rural Village	✓	✓
Village	✓ ¹	✓
Transit Center	✓ ²	✓ ²
Employment District		✓ ¹
¹ Only if Urban Service Area is expanded ² Only if Urban Service Area is expanded AND commuter rail or bus rapid transit service is provided.		

Detailed development plans would be approved by county staff upon submission of a "regulating plan" that assigns transect zones to all land in the new community. The regulating plan would also create a walkable block structure with public streets and public spaces, in accordance with detailed rules in the SmartCode.

This strategy would allow development at lower intensities without an expansion of the Urban Service Area, if landowners so choose; or allow development at higher intensities after expansion of the Urban Service Area. The five community types are illustrated below; the pie charts indicate the mix of transect zones in each type.



Placemakers Approach - 2013

SmartCode Zoning Districts

II - Opt-In

II

I - Opt-In

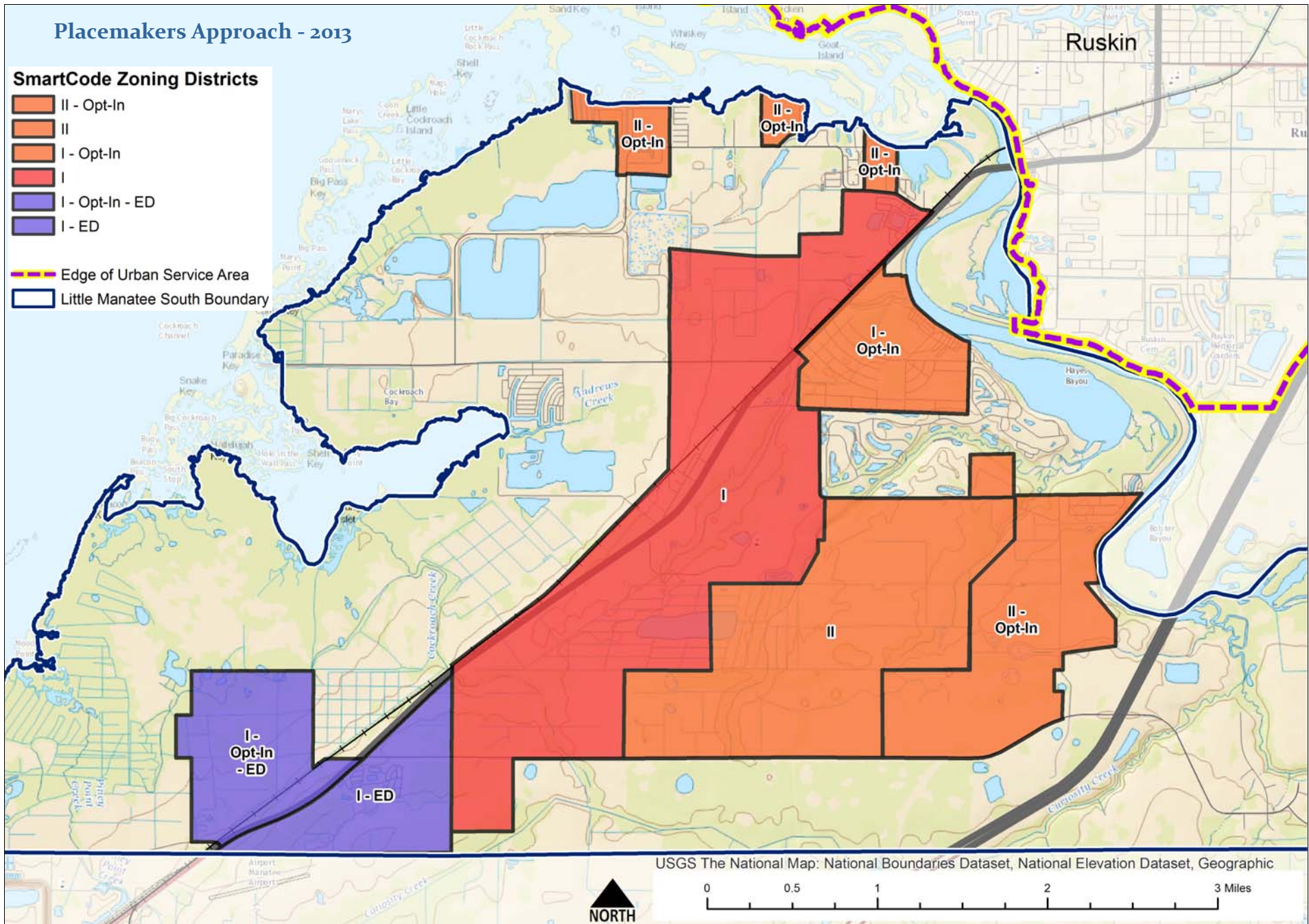
I

I - Opt-In - ED

I - ED

Edge of Urban Service Area

Little Manatee South Boundary



USGS The National Map: National Boundaries Dataset, National Elevation Dataset, Geographic

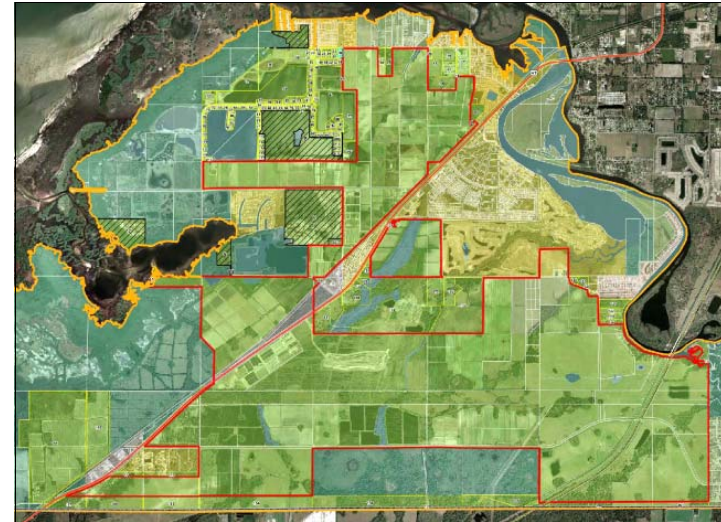


2-c Uzita Shore Planning Group Approach - 2014

An alternative approach was presented in 2014 by the Uzita Shores Planning Group, comprised largely of owners of the land outlined to the right in red.

The Uzita Shores approach included the zoning map displayed on the next page. Four new zoning districts would be created. Standards have not been specified, but the matrix below was included with the proposal to show how transect or context zones might correlate to zoning districts of this type. The following descriptions were provided with the matrix:

- **Urban Reserve:** A low intensity settlement pattern with the potential for a small mixed-use center. Agrarian settlements are separated from neighboring settlements by rural land in agricultural use and natural land.
- **Urban General:** A moderate intensity mixed-use settlement pattern principally residential in use. Neighborhood settlements are typically located adjacent to other neighborhoods, and can also exist adjacent to centers when context zone edges are compatible.
- **Urban Center:** A high intensity mixed-use settlement pattern in both size and intensity. Center settlements are typically areas of commerce/retail, business, and employment. Center settlements can be located adjacent to neighborhood when context zone edges are compatible.



	11 NATURAL ZONE	12 RURAL ZONE	13 SUB-URBAN ZONE	14 GENERAL URBAN ZONE	15 URBAN CENTER ZONE	16 URBAN CORE ZONE
Urban Reserve						
Hamlet	X	X	X			
Village	X	X	X			
Town	X	X	X	X		
Urban General						
Rural		X	X	X		
Traditional			X	X		
Urban				X	X	
Urban Center						
Town				X	X	X
Urban				X	X	X
City				X	X	X

The Uzita Shores approach is similar in many ways to the Placemakers approach, but there are key differences:

- Growth intensities would not be tied to incremental expansion of utilities. Expansion of the Urban Service Area to include the entire development area in the very near future is presumed by the Uzita Shores approach.
- Clustering would not be required.
- Transferable development rights would be an alternative but not required.

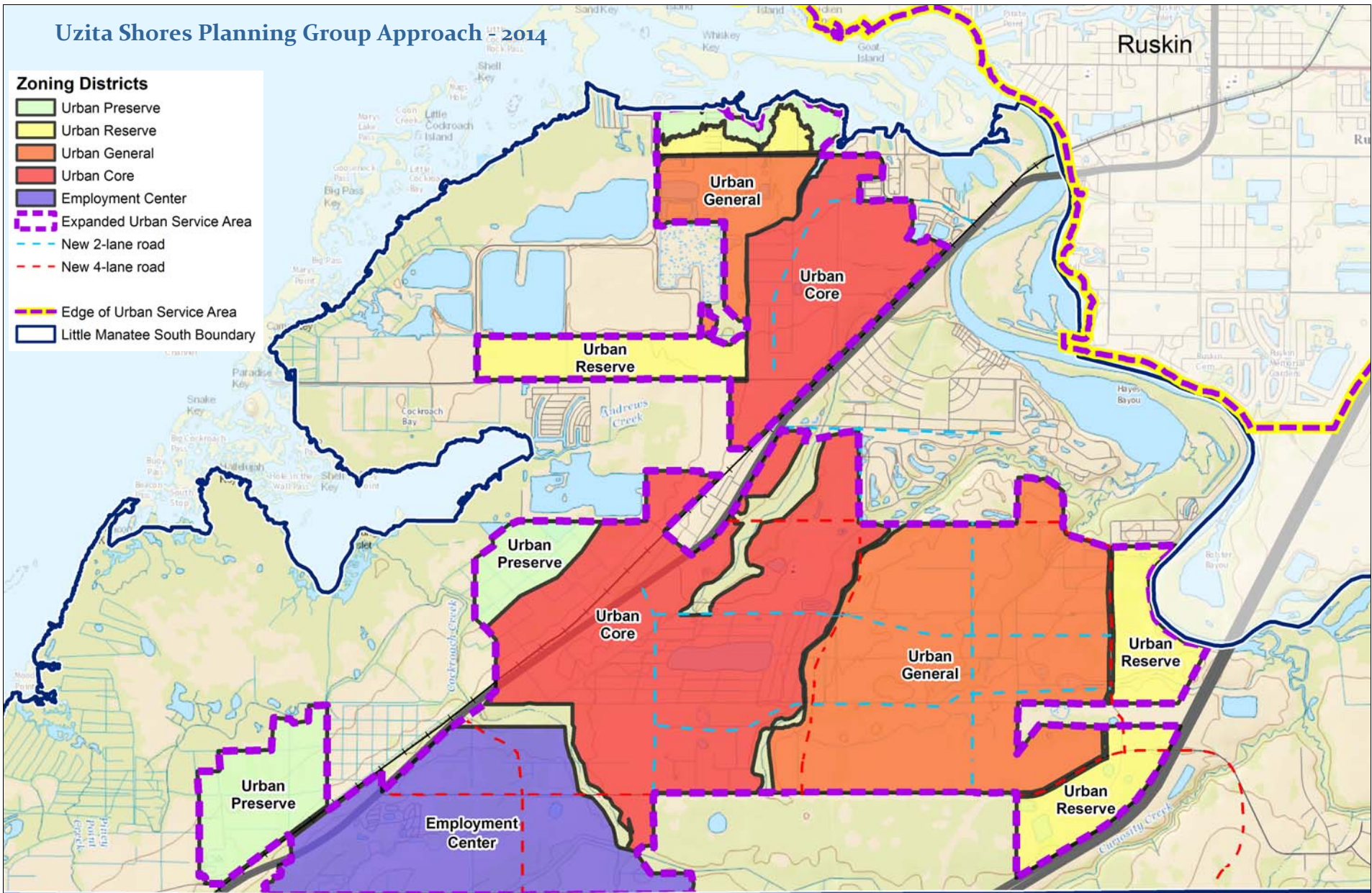
The new zoning districts were shown on a “base map” that includes several other important features, including a network of two- and four-lane roads. This network is fairly coarse and would have to be supplemented by an interconnected street network at a finer scale to meet the SmartCode street standards.

Substantial preservation areas were shown on the base map. Some, such as Cockroach Creek and Wildcat Creek, are shown on the map on the next page; others such as isolated wetlands are not shown to simplify this map.

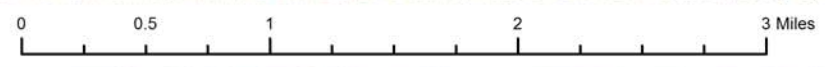
The approval process would require expansion of the Urban Service Area, changes to the Future Land Use Map to accommodate the requested development types and densities/intensities, changes to the Land Development Code to adopt the new zoning districts, and rezoning of land into the new zoning districts.

Uzita Shores Planning Group Approach - 2014

- Zoning Districts**
- Urban Preserve
 - Urban Reserve
 - Urban General
 - Urban Core
 - Employment Center
 - Expanded Urban Service Area
 - New 2-lane road
 - New 4-lane road
 - Edge of Urban Service Area
 - Little Manatee South Boundary



USGS The National Map: National Boundaries Dataset, National Elevation Dataset, Geographic



2-d Planning Staff Approaches - 2014

Two alternative approaches were prepared by staff from the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission and Hillsborough County and presented during community meetings in October and November 2014.

These approaches would be initiated through the changes to the Comprehensive Plan that are summarized on maps on the next two pages.

A new category would be created for the Future Land Use Map called “Little Manatee Village.” This category would be applied to most developable land west of I-75. The Urban Service Area would be expanded at the same time to include all of Little Manatee Village.

Land within “Little Manatee Village” would be divided into four tiers:

- **Urban Reserve:** This tier would experience little growth, with large rural buffers and hamlet designs limited to 1 unit per gross acre. This tier would not allow mixed-use, multifamily, or commercial buildings. Floor area ratios would be limited to 0.25.
- **Urban General:** This tier would accommodate lower densities and intensities than the Urban Core and would be limited to 4 units per gross acre. Neighborhood commercial uses would be permitted within walking distance of residential areas. Floor area ratios would be limited to 1.0.
- **Urban Core:** This tier would accommodate most growth in Little Manatee Village, with densities up to 8 units per gross acre. Higher densities would be achieved in vertically mixed use and multifamily buildings. Office and commercial building would be limited to 3 stories. Floor area ratios would be limited to 2.0.
- **Employment Center:** This tier would accommodate office and indoor light industrial uses. Some multifamily buildings would allow residents to walk to work. Floor area ratios would be limited to 2.0.

As the same time these designations would be made, a new “Little Manatee Village” special area plan would be created and adopted into the Livable Communities Element of the Comprehensive Plan. This more detailed plan would be a supplement to the existing Little Manatee South Community Plan, which addresses a larger geographic area and a broader array of issues.

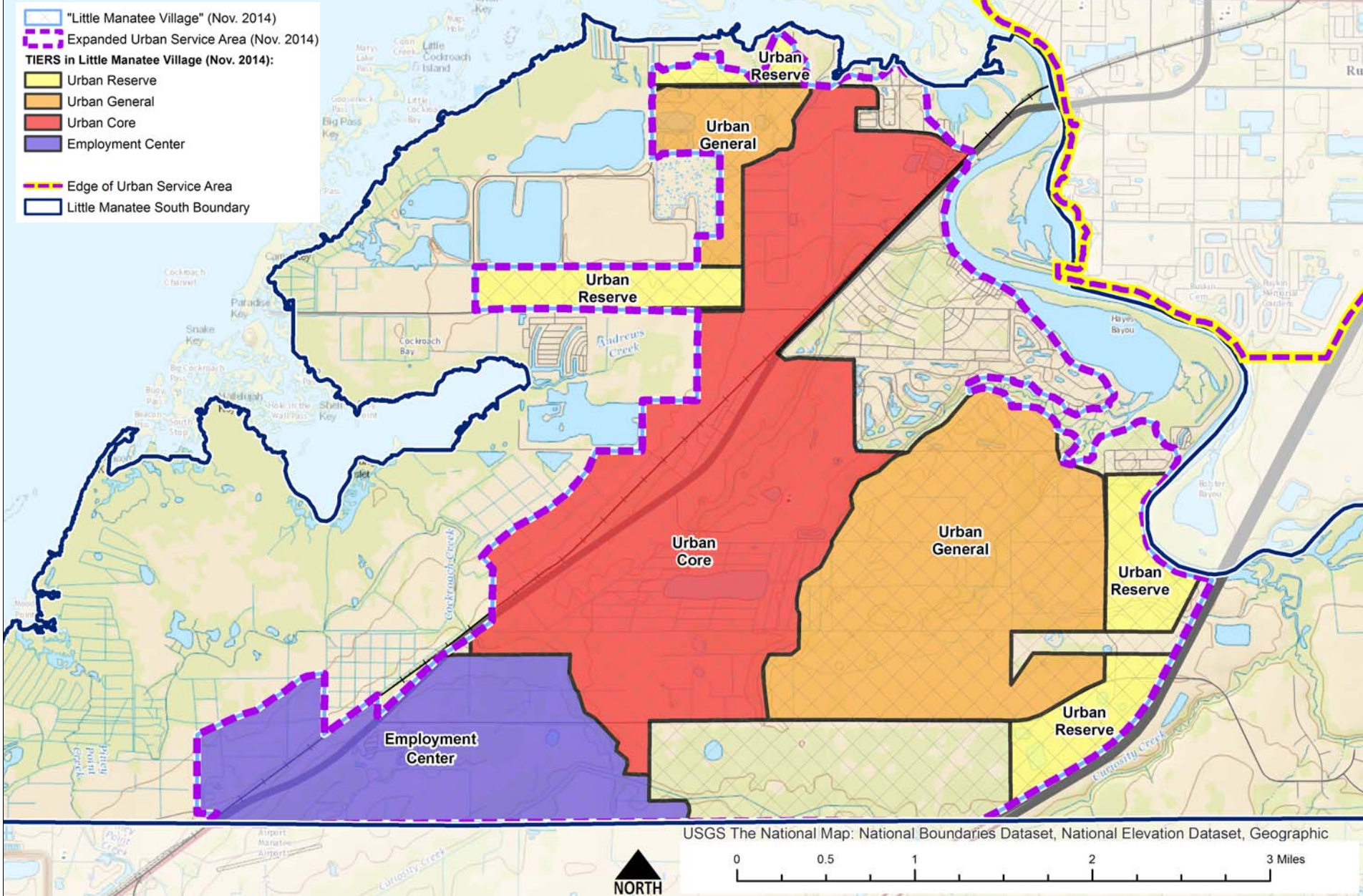
This special area plan would require that all urban development be served by central water and sewer service that would be paid for by developers. The plan would identify greenbelts including wetlands, upland forests floodplains, and public lands that provide significant wildlife habitat. Greenbelts would either remain undeveloped or would be allowed minimal development at existing densities of 1 DU per 5 acres.

To implement the new special area plan, the county would amend the Land Development Code to include a form-based code that would result in a compact walkable urban form. Anyone wishing to develop with the density and use allowances in the Little Manatee Village plan would be required use this new code. In addition to the size and placement of buildings on individual lots, this code would regulate:

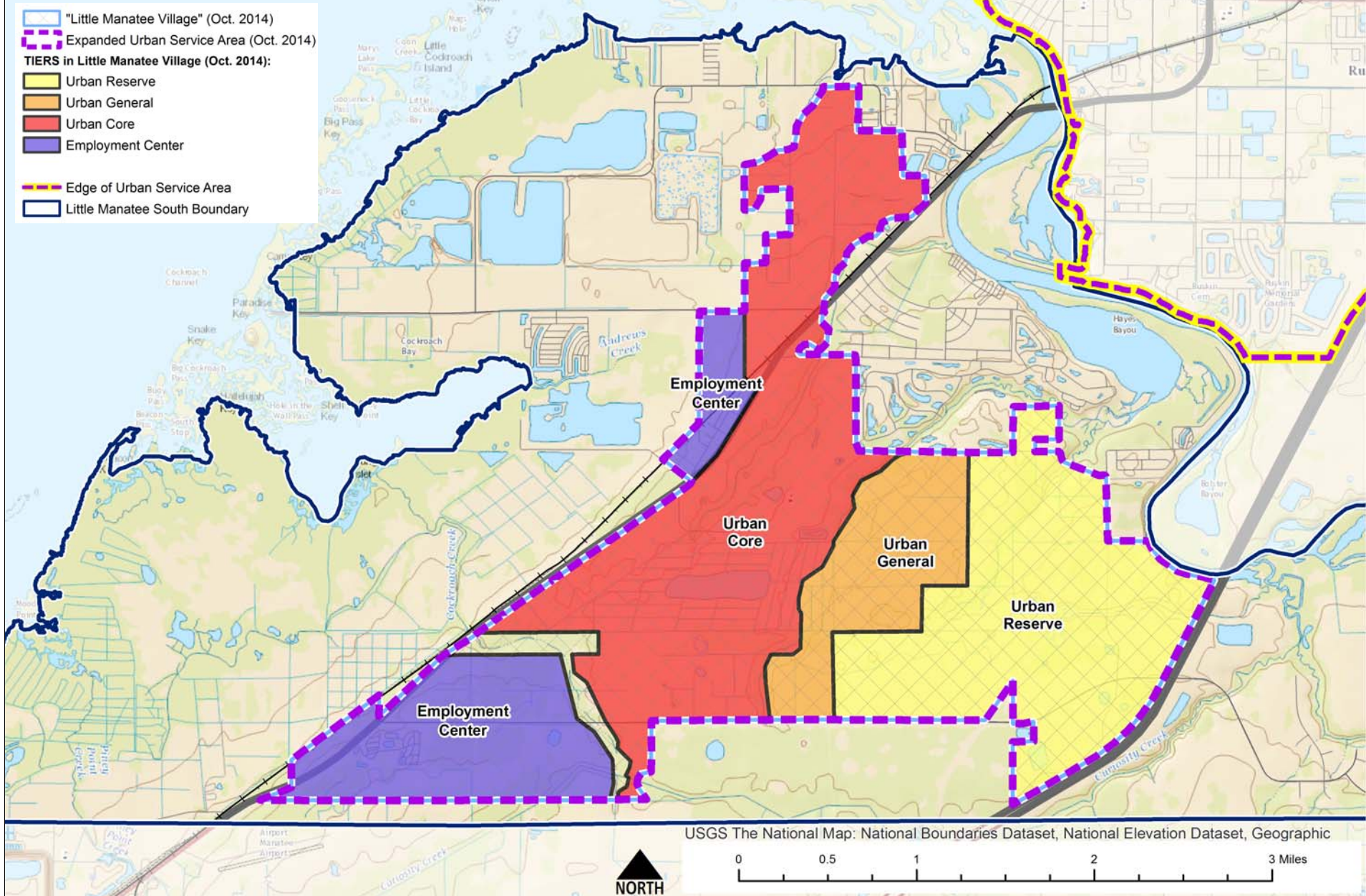
- ▶ Minimum block sizes and minimum levels of street connectivity; full connectivity would be required to existing and future neighborhoods.
- ▶ Street designs and access points; multi-way boulevards could be used as an alternative to wider arterial roads.
- ▶ The mix of land uses, so that residents could meet daily and weekly needs without using the arterial road system.

This approach was put forward when the Metropolitan Planning Organization was looking for areas that could accommodate 28,000 more residents by 2040 than the MPO’s analysis had assumed could be provided for in the existing Urban Service Area. The October version of this approach would accommodate somewhat fewer residents than the November version because a smaller the area would be urbanized.

Planning Staff Approach - November 2014



Planning Staff Approach - October 2014



2-e Stakeholder Interviews - 2015

The analysis presented in this report began with a series of group interviews with representative stakeholders who are knowledgeable about or may be affected by potential development in Little Manatee South. The purpose was to assess what has been accomplished in the Little Manatee South planning efforts to date and identify challenges and opportunities for achieving desired outcomes.

Each interview evolved into a rich discussion of the multiple factors at play. A summary of key points made by interview participants follows.

Uzita Shores Planning Group:

- *Our group is tremendously varied – owners of large vacant tracts; commercial producers of strawberries, turf grass, watermelon, citrus, and cattle; local residents; environmental and civic advocates; a mitigation bank operator.*
- *We thought the planning for Little Manatee South was going well; what happened? We understand that some “middle ground” is missing.*
- *Our highest priority is implementing the “base map” we submitted to the county; we cannot back off from it although many details are negotiable.*
- *A robust program of transferable development rights could protect sensitive lands, but this program should be an alternative and not a requirement.*
- *We should stick with the community plan that was built on consensus.*
- *The Urban Service Area needs to be expanded; planning in Little Manatee South shouldn't be organized around availability of utilities.*
- *Our group would like to create and manage wildlife corridors and preserves as our gift to the community.*

Sundance residents:

- *The charrette was guided by major landowners. We didn't object to the plan of development at the time, but we never formally supported it.*
- *Densities have kept increasing, especially along Valroy Road. At least some traffic, maybe most of it, would travel through Sundance on Lightfoot Road; our boat ramp and stable are across Lightfoot, which is a narrow rural road.*
- *A new east-west road in the power line easement along the county line would relieve traffic on Lightfoot but it would be in the back yards of our community; the new road should be routed to the south instead of east-west.*

- *We object to the overall loss of rural character; there are 150 horses owned by Sundance residents alone.*
- *Our community plan has specific bullet points, all of which must be met to expand the Urban Service Area.*

Planning Commission Staff:

- *During the Imagine 2040 process, the public supported two land-use scenarios, which were combined into the preferred scenario. The expected 2040 population was assigned according that scenario.*
- *We're working on a new vision map that would appear in the comp plan but not be formally adopted. It shows four potential expansions to the Urban Service Area (USA): Balm, Little Manatee South, I-4 corridor, Plant City. The 2040 population could probably be accommodated within the existing USA.*
- *The Little Manatee South community plan was prepared when commuter rail was being considered from Sarasota to Tampa.*
- *If the county isn't directly involved in formulating these decisions, large landowners may proceed with their own applications. Most private USA expansions are denied but some are approved. The community plan anticipated growth at some point but the public wasn't expecting to be left out of planning for where it should go.*
- *The codes we've been working on call for compact walkable development but some landowners may be less enthusiastic than we are about that pattern.*

County Planning & Economic Development Staff:

- *Many of our community plans haven't proven valuable in evaluating zoning applications or in maintaining communication between the community and the county.*
- *Florida DOT has questioned concentrating growth along US 41 because people would be trying to cross US 41 by car or on foot. The adjoining railroad makes US 41 an even greater barrier on foot. FDOT would prefer that streets be built parallel to US 41.*
- *Our overlays in the Land Development Code aren't performing as we had hoped. Most are along major arterials that are hostile to the overlay goals; some corridors may be hopeless for anything beyond moving vehicles. We should focus on transforming pilot areas, not entire corridors.*

-
- *The Amazon warehouse will probably expand but Amazon's choice of that site is more a fluke than a model for our economic development efforts. Most corporations are interested in being downtown, or in a corporate office park, or near an interstate interchange; remote locations are rarely sought.*

County Public Works Staff:

- *There are three potential road alignments running east to US 301. Lightfoot Road is the most direct but would have the greatest community impacts. The county-line alignment could be separated from Sundance residents because the power line is extremely wide. A third route directly to the south would be the least useful for transportation and would induce drivers headed northward to use Lightfoot. Lightfoot could be disconnected to prohibit that, but Sundance residents heading west would be inconvenienced.*
- *Florida DOT generally opposes new interchanges on I-75 because they don't want local traffic relying on the interstate. Sundance residents would probably object to an interchange because it would increase traffic through Sundance.*
- *Transportation impact fees are still at 1989 levels, There are over \$100 million outstanding in impact fee offsets; if impact fees are raised and offsets increase proportionally, the fee increase would raise less money than people think.*

County Public Utilities Staff:

- *Some utility capacity is available in Ruskin, but Little Manatee South would need its own systems, not a single-pipe extension from Ruskin.*
- *The county has purchased many failing private utilities that had old facilities that were not built to county standards and often not properly maintained. We don't want to repeat that experience in Little Manatee South.*
- *For potable water, landowners may be able to convert their agricultural water permits, then build new wells and an urban distribution system to county standards and donate them to the county to operate.*
- *For wastewater, landowners could build a collection system and treatment plant to county standards and donate them to the county to operate.*

Senior County Staff:

- *The Comprehensive Plan may need something new that would allow infrastructure outside the Urban Service Area if provided totally at private expense. This would include roads, water, sewer, schools, libraries, etc. The county could set the parameters and let the private sector meet them; that may be more practical than direct county involvement in each type of facility.*
- *New schools would be needed but the school board doesn't have money to build them.*
- *Urbanization of Little Manatee South would essentially be an expansion of the Bradenton metropolitan area; Manatee County may be able to extend utilities northward. There aren't many jobs in Manatee County compared to Hillsborough County.*
- *The consensus to urbanize this fairly remote area may be dissipating in light of infrastructure shortfalls. If development is approved, the village concept has great merit and shouldn't be lost.*
- *The only feasible transit service would be express buses. That service is expensive to provide because travel is a single direction during rush hour only; buses sit idle the rest of the day.*

3. Fiscal Planning & Infrastructure Funding

3-a Fiscal Planning

Hillsborough County leaders are currently searching for ways to address serious infrastructure backlogs. At the same time they are coordinating their planning and economic development efforts so that new growth doesn't continue adding to that backlog.

This is a daunting task because costs incurred by public agencies to serve new growth depend on many different factors:

- **Capacity of existing infrastructure** to handle increased demands
- **Location of growth** relative to existing infrastructure
- **Location of growth** relative to jobs, shopping, and entertainment
- **Physical pattern of growth**, which can either absorb some travel demand on local streets or can divert even local traffic onto county and state roads

Some costs of growth are paid in advance by developers or builders and passed through to new residents. Other costs are borne by agencies that may or may not recoup them through recurring revenue such as property taxes, sales taxes, gasoline taxes, and utility payments. Other costs are borne directly by residents, especially the ongoing costs of owning and maintaining vehicles.

This important subject, sometimes called "fiscal planning," is of urgent interest across the state and country, but it is of such complexity that analyses tend to focus on one or a few of the relevant factors and disregard the others.

Before describing specific analytical tools available to Hillsborough County officials, it may be helpful to understand the variety of fiscal planning approaches that are in use today.

Three broad approaches compare costs of growth without requiring a specific analysis of individual development projects:

- **"Cost of community services."** Land-use decisions can affect the economic sustainability of local governments if they alter the proportion and type of residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural uses. These uses provide different benefits and require different expenditures for public services.

"Cost of community services" studies are carried out for individual communities to estimate the fiscal impacts of three categories of land uses: residential; commercial/industrial; and agricultural/open space. Expendi-

tures and revenues in municipal budgets are allocated to those three categories, resulting in a ratio for each category. A ratio of 1.2 for residential uses would mean that \$1.20 is spent to serve residential uses for each \$1.00 in revenue from residential uses. These studies typically find the ratio is greater than 1.0 for residential uses and less than 1.0 for the other categories.

These studies have been conducted across the country for thirty years, originally by the American Farmland Trust but frequently by local governments themselves. These studies are unlikely to help Hillsborough County in the current situation because they estimate average ratios countywide, not the marginal cost and revenue for additional growth. These studies also do not examine important economic factors such as the location of new homes relative to existing infrastructure, jobs, and services, or the expected value of new homes.

- **"Cost of sprawl."** These analyses focus on the cost differences to serve a sprawling development pattern compared to more compact patterns. Some of these studies are specific to local communities, but most examine broader issues that would apply to a specific development project regardless of its location. For instance:
 - ▶ Lower densities mean that each foot of water or sewer pipe serves fewer households
 - ▶ Single-family residents uses more water than multifamily residents;
 - ▶ Segregated land uses are generally served by separate distribution and collection systems and separate streets, requiring greater costs to build and operate and then generating more traffic over time.

These factors generally hold true regardless of location so they don't need to be carefully analyzed for individual sites. This advantage is also a disadvantage because other important economic factors aren't taken into account by cost-of-sprawl studies, such as the location and value of new homes.

- **"Location Efficiency."** Location efficiency mapping can be seen as a complement to cost-of-sprawl studies; the location of development relative to the surrounding community becomes more important than the specific site plan for a proposed neighborhood.

No attempt is made to estimate these costs directly, but measures such as average trip lengths have a direct bearing on the costs to provide roads and public transportation to different locations and the ongoing cost to resi-

dents of continual lengthy trips. Location efficiency mapping is based on publicly available data from the US Census and other official sources.

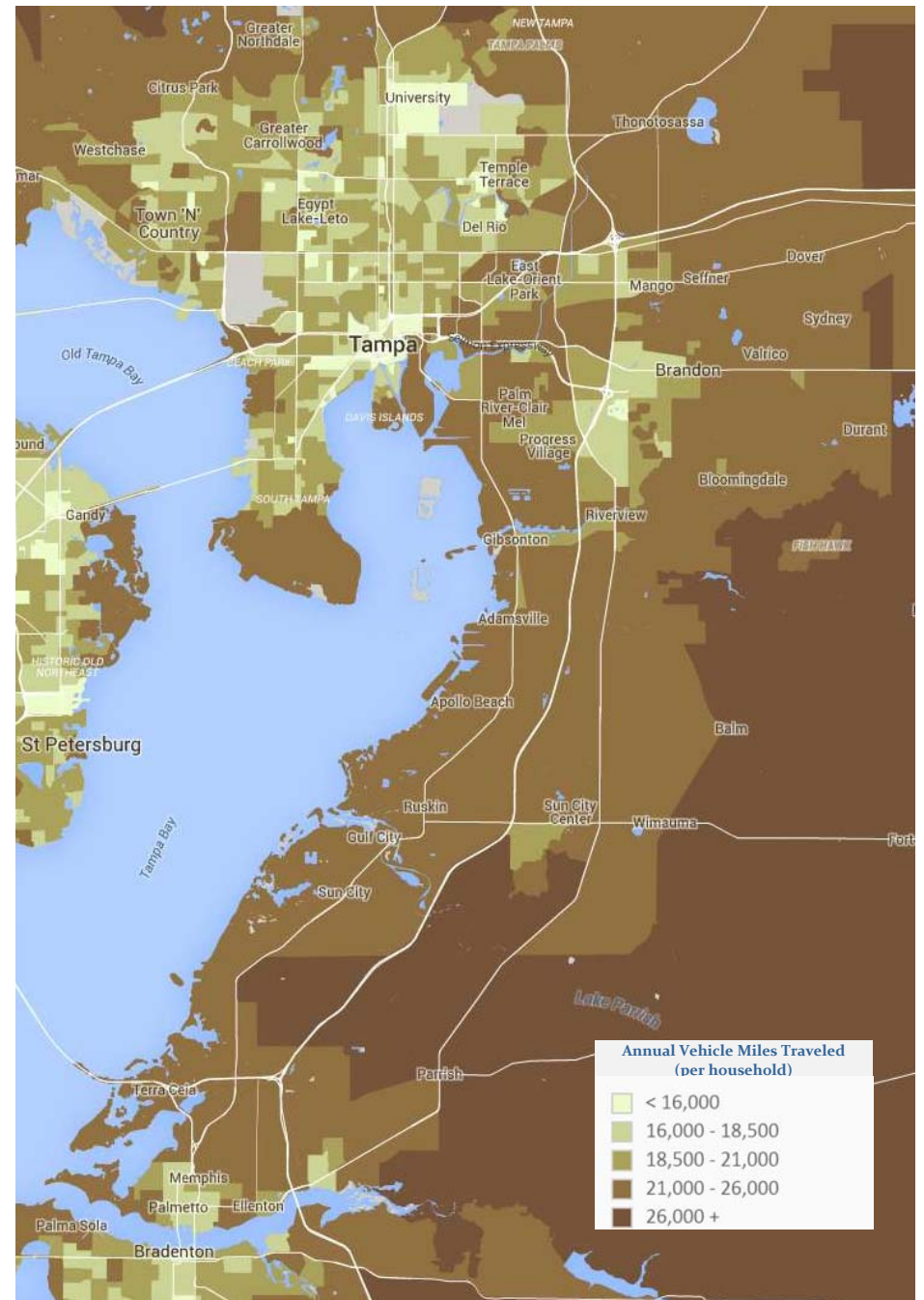
Three types of location efficiency mapping are now available:

- ▶ **Smart Location Database**, available on-line from the US Environmental Protection Agency. This database and mapping system includes location efficiency data as well as related data about existing development such as density, diversity, and street design.
- ▶ **Access to Jobs and Workers Via Transit Tool**, also available from the Environmental Protection Agency.
- ▶ **Housing and Transportation Affordability Index**, available on-line from the Center for Neighborhood Technology. This database was designed to measure “affordability of place” by combining the cost of housing, current income levels, and transportation costs for specific areas across entire cities and counties. A map from this index to the right shows average vehicle miles traveled per household; the darkest color means more than 26,000 miles per year and the lightest color means less than 16,000 miles per year.

More detailed analytical tools estimate the revenue that will be generated through taxes and impact fees and then compare that revenue to costs that will be incurred to meet adopted service levels. A major philosophical (and practical) difference is how these tools estimate the costs of public services:

- ▶ **Average-cost approach:** This is the most common approach which determines costs that would be incurred by taking the total cost spent for each type of service and dividing it by the number of users. This “average cost” is then assumed to apply to additional users of that service. This approach is most suitable for smaller developments in moderate growth areas where service capacity and demand are more likely to match.
- ▶ **Marginal-cost approach:** This is a more customized and complex approach for large and complex development scenarios, especially those with unique service demands (either able to use existing surplus infrastructure, or in areas where infrastructure is at capacity and will need to be expanded). This approach requires a case study to identify needed infrastructure, its timing, and estimated costs. Focused versions of case-study approaches are familiar because they are used for traffic impact studies, impact fee rate studies, proportionate share calculations, etc.

Two important models for analyzing fiscal impacts are described below.

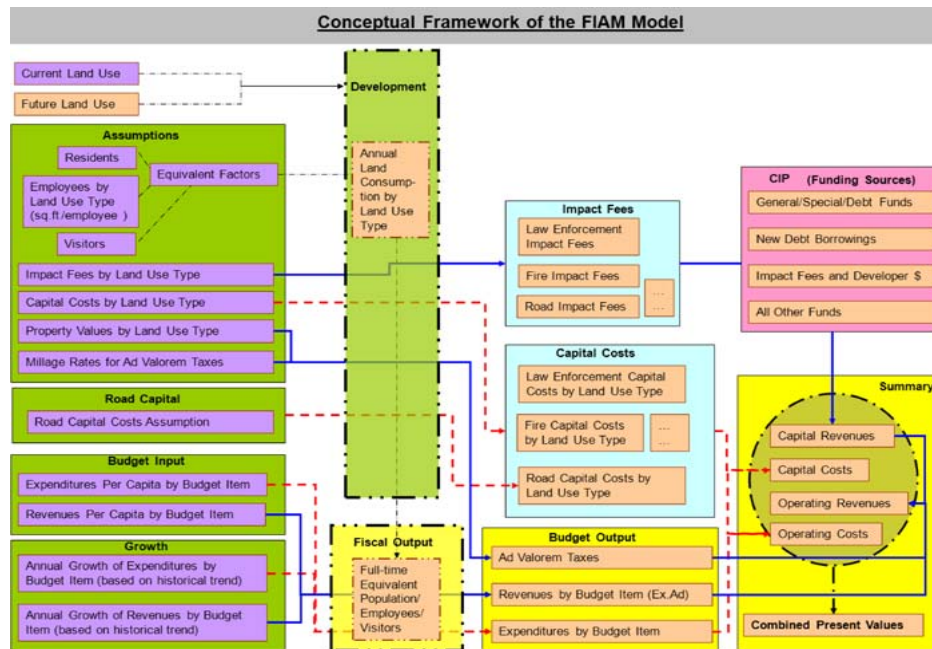


3-b Florida's Fiscal Impact Assessment Model

In the early 2000s the state of Florida created a Fiscal Impact Assessment Model (FIAM) as a fiscal and economic assessment tool for local governments. This model is a complex spreadsheet that provides estimates of the costs and revenues related to land use decisions, including long-range and near-term impacts on local operating and capital budgets and on school districts and the state road network. This model was calibrated for Hillsborough County; nine development projects were modeled in 2004, all yielding positive fiscal impacts.

The FIAM model starts with an average-cost approach, taking the total cost for a service and dividing it by the number of users. For high-cost services such as roads, police, fire, EMS, parks, and schools, the model can use a unit-of-capacity approach similar to the way impact fee rates are determined; the model's default levels-of-service can be replaced by locally adopted levels. Capital costs can be adjusted for different locations where service costs vary (e.g., activity center; within an urban service area; outside the urban service area).

The FIAM model can be used by local governments to evaluate the fiscal performance of long-term development scenarios. This model is also used by developers to demonstrate that a project will more than pay for itself over time.



3-c Planning Commission's Hillsborough Models

Between 2002–2004, the Planning Commission contracted to create its own fiscal impact model. A demonstration project was analyzed, showing serious fiscal deficits for the county and the school board.

In 2006 the Planning Commission created another fiscal model known as FIELD (Fiscal Impact Estimates of Land Development). This model was designed to evaluate the financial feasibility of the comprehensive plans for Hillsborough County and its cities; it was not designed to analyze individual developments.

An initial use of FIELD was to determine the costs and revenues that should be expected from new development allowed by the Comprehensive Plan for the unincorporated county. Conceptually, the FIELD model was similar to FIAM in using an average-cost approach. The model allowed adjustments to critical factors such as impact fee rates, property tax millages, and level-of-service standards so that the fiscal effects of potential changes could be observed.

For instance, in 2007 the model showed a \$3.3 billion shortfall over the next twenty years from the growth anticipated by the Comprehensive Plan. Three alternative scenarios were then evaluated:

- ▶ The shortfall would be reduced to \$2.9 billion by lowering the acceptable level of service for roads from “D” to “E” or by adding a half-cent sales tax.
- ▶ The shortfall could be reduced as low as \$1.5 billion by lowering the level of service and by doubling growth rates in the cities (reducing unincorporated growth accordingly).
- ▶ The shortfall could be eliminated entirely by raising impact fees to near the legal maximums (in 2007 impact fee rates were 14% of those rates).

Neither model is in use today; input data and assumptions are no longer valid.

3-d Fiscal Impacts of Unanticipated Development

Each of these models were designed to link land-use decisions to budgeting. Both are fundamentally analytical tools, not regulatory tools.

When used strictly for analysis, professional judgment can be used as to fundamental questions such as whether to use an average-cost approach or a marginal cost (case study) approach. A marginal cost approach is more complex but more likely to be accurate when new development will require major capital expenditures, or conversely may be able to take advantage of underutilized infrastructure.

3-e Experiences With Fiscal Mitigation in Rural Areas

Hillsborough County officials can learn from other Florida communities that have experimented with fiscal neutrality and other fiscal mitigation policies.

Sarasota County

The best-known example is in Sarasota County, where comprehensive plan amendments in 2002 offered greatly increased densities outside their urban service area if developers met certain requirements. Many of the requirements were physical, such as building compact villages and protecting land outside the villages with conservation easements. One was financial, requiring new development to pay the full costs of all public facilities and services to support the development including capital costs and ongoing costs for operations and maintenance. New development was required to be “fiscally neutral or fiscally beneficial” to county government and the school district. This program is known as “Sarasota 2050.”

To demonstrate fiscal neutrality, a developer must submit a professionally prepared fiscal neutrality analysis which is then reviewed by county financial staff and an outside peer reviewer. The analysis must demonstrate a neutral or positive fiscal impact before a development project can proceed.

Very little development took place under the Sarasota 2050 program even during the boom years. Developers blamed the cumbersome approval process, unfamiliar development types, and the cost and uncertainty of fiscal neutrality.

A 2008 amendment to the county charter strengthened the rules underlying Sarasota 2050, now requiring a unanimous vote of the county commission to expand their urban service area, to increase densities outside the urban service area, or to eliminate the fiscal neutrality requirement. The urban service area can only be eliminated through a voter referendum.

The Sarasota 2050 program remains in place today but many of its key requirements are being softened or eliminated. A county-commissioned study in 2013 attacked the county’s smart-growth policies, recommending that the fiscal neutrality requirement be eliminated entirely and that as many zoning regulations as possible be eliminated. A second county study focused on critiques of the fiscal neutrality program from firms that had conducted analyses for developers, resulting in new guidelines for prepare these studies.

Some local governments have embedded fiscal requirements into their comprehensive plans explicitly requiring certain types of development to “pay for themselves” or at least to require that fiscal impacts be considered during the development approval process. These requirements are often applied to future development that would not otherwise be permitted in rural areas, especially if it has the potential to create infrastructure burdens on local government. In recent years, these requirements have become known as “fiscal neutrality” policies.

In practice, these policies have been extremely difficult to sustain over time:

- ▶ A fiscal analysis is technically very complicated. Even the best professional analysts disagree among themselves as to which methodologies will produce accurate results. Parties with a large stake in an outcome have strong incentives to experiment with model inputs to see which produce the results they desire.
- ▶ The regulatory context for approving large-scale development in rural areas is often very controversial. Adding fiscal neutrality may make approvals more palatable, but there is no guarantee that the neutrality requirements will remain in place, and there is considerable evidence from other communities that they will not.
- ▶ Two major influences greatly affect the conclusion of a fiscal neutrality study. What is the age of future residents – will they be sending students to public schools? What is the value of their housing – will high property values generate large revenues to local governments? These factors can be predicted by developers but may or may not be borne out over time. To government, the obvious solution is to require a reanalysis at fixed times in the future, but this can create debilitating uncertainty for developers and investors.
- ▶ This uncertainty motivates developers to develop property at other locations and wait to see if the neutrality requirements will be softened or repealed by future elected officials who may not share the original commitment to fiscal neutrality. Repealing the neutrality requirement can be fairly simply; repealing the development entitlements that accompanied those requirements is complicated by Florida’s Bert Harris Act and hasn’t been reported to date.

Although the density bonuses authorized in 2002 had been conditioned on full compliance with all Sarasota 2050 requirements, each density bonus remains in place today. It is difficult to conclude that the fiscal neutrality requirement will make a significant difference in infrastructure financing despite its initial importance in the Sarasota 2050 program.

Lee County

In 1989 Lee County established a series of “privately funded infrastructure” overlays in its comprehensive plan that allowed urban densities in certain outlying areas only because most infrastructure would be provided by developers.

This concept was implemented in one area, along Corkscrew Road east of I-75, where developers had been unable to proceed because of complex mitigation conditions in their DRI development orders. Lee County established a municipal service taxing and benefit unit to replace those conditions. The unit was authorized to fund roads, public transit, recreation, water supply, drainage, fire protection, and law enforcement.

The county commissioned a detailed study of the “Corkscrew Road Service Area” to determine capital improvements that would be needed for each of these services. The following funding shortfalls were identified using a case-study analysis:

- ▶ \$8.0 million for roads
- ▶ \$0.8 million for law enforcement
- ▶ \$0.6 million for libraries

Two funding actions were made through the MSTU/MSBU:

- ▶ A special assessment was made to widen 1/2 mile of Corkscrew Road (\$1.2 million).
- ▶ An additional impact fee was assessed to widen 2 1/2 more miles of Corkscrew Road. (This fee is still being collected but will not generate sufficient funds due to rising construction costs and less development than had been anticipated.)

The other shortfalls were absorbed by county government.

Because fire protection is provided by an independent fire district, major landowners entered into individual agreements with the fire district to pay their share of a new fire station to serve that area (less the amount they would ultimately pay in fire impact fees). The extra payments amounted to a total of \$0.8 million.

Collier County

Collier County has two programs that allow some urban development in rural areas. Both include fiscal neutrality requirements.

In Collier’s “Rural Lands Stewardship Area” (RLSA), an evaluation of fiscal impacts is required by the county every five years until a development is 90% complete. If the analysis identifies a negative fiscal impact, landowners must either pay the shortfall for the past five years or accede to a special assessment to cover the shortfall.

The new town of Ave Maria was built south of Immokalee in Collier’s RLSA. The Florida FIAM model was used for the first five-year assessment in 2010. The developer’s consultant reported a net positive impact to Collier County of \$10.9 million for capital costs during that period and \$0.4 million annually for operating costs. For the school district, the capital impact was positive at \$4.2 million and the operating impact was also positive at \$0.7 million annually. Collier commissioners voted to seek independent assessments of Ave Maria’s fiscal impacts but ultimately accepted the consultant’s report.

Collier County’s “Rural Fringe” area requires a fiscal neutrality assessment before development begins. The required assessment is comprehensive and requires identification of funding mechanisms, but does not require that those mechanisms be in place or committed.

Volusia & Brevard Counties

A recent example of fiscal neutrality is contained in the Farmton Local Plan which became effective in 2012. The Farmton plan covers 47,000 acres in southeast Volusia County and 12,000 acres in northern Brevard County. The Volusia County comprehensive plan includes a requirement that each increment of development in Farmton must be fiscally neutral or beneficial to the county, the school district, and nearby municipalities. Services to be measured include roads, public transit, schools, potable water and sewer service, solid waste, and drainage. The county will hire independent advisors to review fiscal measurement procedures. The intended funding source for infrastructure in a Community Development District under Chapter 190 of the Florida Statutes, which is practical because the land is owned by a single entity.

3-f Advance Payments for Infrastructure

Local governments often require advance payments to offset routine costs of providing infrastructure. Instead of requiring detailed analyses on a project-by-project basis, most use standardized formulas that apply to all new development, such as:

- ▶ **Water and sewer service:** one-time connections fees when service is initiated to pay a share of the capital costs to provide the service. Because most municipal water and sewer providers are run as self-supporting businesses, connection fees are generally intended to recover the full cost of building and replacing capital facilities.
- ▶ **Roads, parks, schools, fire protection, EMS service:** one-time impact fees when building permits are issued to pay a share of the capital costs to provide each service. Impact fees are frequently set at rates well below the full costs of providing these facilities.

To avoid negative fiscal impacts from individual new developments, some local governments use methods that compute actual costs on a case-by-case basis. The most common are for building roads, including proportionate share payments and concurrency mitigation.

Special advance payments can be required when new development would require infrastructure to be expanded beyond what was anticipated by routine fee schedules. This is most common when large new developments are proposed outside established urban service areas that would require capital investments to serve unanticipated growth.

This section of the report has provided examples from other Florida counties that have attempted to do so. The final section examines methods that Hillsborough County could use to recover some of the extra costs that would be triggered by urban development in Little Manatee South.

4. Little Manatee South Recommendations

Hillsborough County can make choices other than simply approving or denying proposals to expand the Urban Service Area south of the Little Manatee River.

A third option should be created within the Comprehensive Plan that would become a template for Little Manatee South and other potential outward expansions of the Urban Service Area. This option would require major infrastructure to be provided by benefitting landowners and would incorporate prior planning within Little Manatee South that would improve the physical pattern of development by creating a mosaic of compact walkable neighborhoods, agricultural land, and preserved land.

This third option would include strategies for infrastructure financing and for maintaining rural and natural lands.¹ Those strategies are described in the next two sections, which are followed by a composite planning strategy that would apply the third option to Little Manatee South.

4-a Infrastructure Financing Strategies

Complex fiscal models such as FIAM and FIELD have many valuable uses in long-range planning. However, the experience with relying on these models as regulatory tools inspires little confidence in that role.

Some of the problems could be resolved with a clearer understanding of the limitations of the models and selecting the best model for a particular application.

Other problems are more difficult:

- ▶ **What is the proper time period to analyze?** These models can assess when and whether revenues and costs “break even.” Long planning horizons are more likely to be positive than short horizons because infrastructure costs are paid early while taxes are paid continuously over time. Yet local governments must provide infrastructure during the short-term horizon, even when they lack the financial means to do so.
- ▶ **Is it reasonable to determine “fiscal neutrality” by lumping revenues and costs for different services into a single balance sheet?** If some services have surplus capacity, it is reasonable to be patient for tax revenue

¹ This new option would not preclude conventional expansion of the Urban Service Area in more central locations when it is clearly in the larger public interest, for instance to further the county’s economic development goals.

generated over time to replenish that capacity. However, that luxury isn’t available when a facility is needed soon, such as a new road or school.

- ▶ **How confident should anyone be about predictions of future costs and revenues, and predictions of market absorption and sales prices?** Predictions are necessary for long-term planning, but they are generally adjusted as time moves forward rather than being assumed to hold true over long periods.
- ▶ **How could the results of a single model be applied to multiple landowners who have different financial means and development expectations?** Some of the legal mechanisms described below are not suited to obtaining simultaneous commitments from multiple landowners. There is no single technique that will work for all or even most situations.
- ▶ **Is it realistic to assume that future elected officials will interpret and uphold unduly complex fiscal neutrality requirement imposed by their predecessors?** Florida experiences that rely on complex computer modeling are not encouraging.

URBAN SERVICE:	SERVICE PROVIDER:
ROADS	Hillsborough County
	Florida Dept. of Transportation
	Manatee County
PUBLIC TRANSIT	Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART)
	Manatee County (MCAT)
WATER & SEWER	Hillsborough County Public Utilities
SCHOOLS	Hillsborough County School District
FIRE PROTECTION	Hillsborough County Fire Rescue
EMERGENCY MEDICAL	Hillsborough County Fire Rescue
LIBRARIES	Hillsborough County
PARKS & RECREATION	Hillsborough County
	Florida Park Service
	Manatee County
LONG-RANGE PLANNING	Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission

A more prudent approach for Hillsborough County would be to determine if fiscal mitigation is needed and if so to authorize the next steps toward development only when landowners formally agree to shoulder those specific costs. If landowners believe the mitigation requirements are unfair or simply too expensive to make development financially feasible at a given time, the landowners can proceed under pre-existing rules as to density and urban services (generally limited to rural development patterns).

This prudent approach will require a case-study fiscal analysis of infrastructure costs to support the proposed amount, location, and timing of development. Average-cost models cannot be expected to determine the marginal costs of building new infrastructure in an area that had been expected to remain rural.

The remainder of this section suggests concepts and methods that could be used in Little Manatee South so that future development can be considered without it becoming a financial burden on service providers or their constituents.

Potable water

Within the Urban Service Area, an effective system is already in place to provide potable water. One-time connections fees must be paid when service is initiated to cover a fair share of the capital costs for wells, treatment plants, and the water distribution system. However, existing facilities cannot support urban development in Little Manatee South. To keep this cost of expanding the facilities from falling on existing utility customers, Little Manatee South landowners could convert their agricultural water permits to municipal permits, then build new wells and an urban distribution system that meets Hillsborough County standards. These facilities would be donated to the county to operate. Residents and businesses would become customers of the Hillsborough County Public Utilities Department.

Wastewater

Conventional funding for wastewater service is similar to potable water service. Little Manatee South landowners could build a wastewater collection system and treatment plant to Hillsborough County standards and donate them to the county to operate, in the same manner as potable water.

Transportation

Transportation is undoubtedly the most difficult and expensive challenge for Little Manatee South. Transportation funding is complicated by these factors:

- ▶ It will be difficult to predict where Little Manatee South residents would travel for regional activities such as jobs and education. Will they travel north toward Tampa, or south toward Bradenton, or west to St. Petersburg?
- ▶ Three major highways pass through Little Manatee South (I-75, US 301, and US 41). All three are owned and maintained by the state and are intended primarily for regional travel. To reach I-75, drivers at present must also travel north through Ruskin or south to Mocassin Wallow Road or I-275. Those detours are typical for rural communities but not satisfactory for the amount of traffic that would be generated by urban development.
- ▶ The location of the Little Manatee River constrains every possible additional north-south route and it makes east-west routes very difficult to provide, given existing development in Sundance. Cooperation with Manatee County could help, but a new east-west road traveling through Manatee County would not be optimal for meeting travel demand.
- ▶ Hillsborough County's impact fees for roads are set at very low levels, which has contributed to significant shortfalls in infrastructure even to meet current demands.

The county's Land Development Code already requires developers to build local streets at their own expense. In addition, impact fees are charged when building permits are obtained; these fees help Hillsborough County construct the major arterial network, the wide straight roads designed for longer trips. Even if the county raised impact fee rates substantially, the proceeds would not provide sufficient funds to build roads to serve urban development in remote locations.

A combination of approaches would be needed to pay for transportation improvements in Little Manatee South. The road network can be divided into these three components, with a separate financing strategy for each component:

- Local streets should continue to be built by developers as they are today throughout Hillsborough County.

- The major arterial network will be heavily used by future residents of this area because of its remoteness from jobs, entertainment, and civic activities. Typical trips will be longer than trips originating nearer Tampa or Bradenton; the effect of this difference is illustrated by the map on page 22 of this report which compares “vehicle-miles traveled” for locations throughout Hillsborough County. Longer trips cause disproportionate impacts on the arterial network.

Hillsborough County should replace its outdated and under-funded impact fee program with a modern mobility fee program. The rates should vary based on the costs to serve travel demand from different locations and the fee levels should reflect current infrastructure costs. A mobility fee would be much fairer than the current system; the current system charges the same fee regardless of anticipated travel demand, in effect subsidizing development in more remote locations.

- A third mid-level component of a healthy road network also needs to be provided:
 - ▶ **Minor arterials** are typically found between major arterials such as US 41 and US 301. Minor arterials provide continuous paths to intermediate destinations and alternate routes for longer trips. Minor arterials can follow less direct routes than major arterials and they typically have only two lanes (but may have four lanes if necessary).
 - ▶ **Collectors and minor collectors** are typically found between minor arterials to provide for frequent interconnections between neighborhoods. Collectors can follow less direct routes than minor arterials. In many cases collectors are indistinguishable from local streets; the only difference is that they are part of a larger network that provides multiple continuous paths for travel.

Minor arterials and collectors sometimes travel along the edges of individual developments but they often run through developments as well. However, if these streets are gated or overly circuitous, they will not serve any network functions.

An important design goal for minor arterials and collectors in Little Manatee South would be to manage traffic speeds to levels that are compatible with walking and bicycling. This can be accomplished because these roads will not have the high volumes of traffic that the arterial network must accommodate.

If this mid-level component is not provided, all through-traffic is forced onto the major arterial network which will already be burdened with

regional trips and new trips generated in this area. Serious congestion is inevitable if major arterials are forced to shoulder all regional and local trips.

Developers of land in Little Manatee South should be financially responsible for constructing this mid-level network south of the Little Manatee River in a similar manner as they provide local streets inside their developments. The new east-west road that would run east to US 301 is one such road. Impact fee offsets would not be provided for the construction of these roads.

Schools

The only school in Little Manatee South is the South County Career Center. The nearest regular public schools are north of the Little Manatee River:

- ▶ Ruskin Elementary School, in Ruskin
- ▶ Shields Middle School, just north of Sun City Center
- ▶ Lennard High School, in Ruskin

The following improvements are in the five-year work program of the Hillsborough County School District:

- ▶ The highest priority has been the expansion of Lennard High School by 500 additional students to relieve overcrowding at East Bay High School.
- ▶ A new middle school will be built on Balm Road east of US 301 near the end of the five-year period.

In the next ten years, a new K-8 school and a new high school are needed in southern Hillsborough County, even without urban development in Little Manatee South.

The school district receives about \$14 million each year from impact fees, in addition to local property taxes and state funds. School impact fees are based on the amount of living area in a new home; fees range from \$1,207 for less than 500 square feet to \$5,200 for over 4,000 square feet of living area.

A formal interlocal agreement between Hillsborough County, the School Board, and the Planning Commission states a clear preference for schools, particularly high schools, to be located inside the Urban Service Area. The Interlocal Agreement outlines criteria that must be met for the siting of new schools outside the Urban Service Area. That agreement would have to be modified to address the unique situation posed by urban development in Little Manatee South and formalize a conclusion as to school needs there and how the schools would be funded.

Fire protection and emergency medical service

Fire protection and emergency medical services are provided by Hillsborough County Fire Rescue. The nearest stations are on Lightfoot Road in Sundance and on East College Avenue in Ruskin. It is not clear whether an additional fire station would ultimately be needed to serve development south of the Little Manatee River and west of I-75.

Libraries

Hillsborough County operates the South Shore Regional Library on 19th Avenue NE just north of Sun City Center and a branch library in Ruskin. The Sun City Center Community Association operates a private library which serves as a branch library for association members.

Parks

Hillsborough County operates the Sun City Heritage Park on the south side of the Little Manatee River, along with various parks and recreation centers north of the river in Ruskin. The entire area is rich with preserved land and public boat ramps. Much of the Little Manatee River State Park is in the Little Manatee South planning area (on the north side of Lightfoot Road near US 301).

Potential Legal Mechanisms for Fiscal Mitigation

Many different agencies provide critical infrastructure; each has its own legal requirements and funding sources.

In some cases, one legal mechanism may be capable of planning and paying for a majority of infrastructure:

- ▶ The rarest example is an independent special district authorized directly by the legislature, such as the Reedy Creek Improvement District which governs the Walt Disney World area. That district has governing authority typically reserved for cities or counties (including broad taxing powers) over 25,000 acres in Orange and Osceola Counties.
- ▶ Much more common is a Community Development District authorized under Chapter 190 of the Florida Statutes. About 75 of these independent districts have been formed in Hillsborough County, the highest concentration in the state. Through these districts, developers can issue tax-free bonds to build and maintain infrastructure; property owners in the district repay the bonds over time.

Neither of these legal mechanisms are likely to be useful in Little Manatee South because the developable land is owned by many different parties, each with its own investment timeframes and development expectations.

When land ownership is fragmented, many of the functions of a community development district can be performed directly by county government by creating a dependent special district and levying taxes for a specified geographic area to pay for municipal services in that area. Hillsborough County uses this technique frequently, generally referring to them as special districts, dependent districts, or service districts. Other counties sometimes call them 'municipal service taxing units' (MSTU) when they levy ad valorem taxes and 'benefit units' (MSBU) when they levy special assessments. These districts can also establish service charges such as a per-dwelling-unit surcharge on impact fees to pay for extra costs to serve that geographic area.

County governments are also authorized by Florida law to enter into development agreements, which are formal contracts between a county and private parties. These agreements are not imposed unilaterally like a law or regulation, but through mutual agreement they can impose binding financial obligations on government and private parties and can commit government to future regulatory actions.

Special financing requirements can also be imposed through comprehensive plan amendments or as conditions on planned development rezonings. However, these are typically policy statements denoting intention, not financing mechanisms themselves, so they are not self-implementing. Such statements are most useful if they establish clear standards that must be met before the next level of development approvals will be granted.

For Little Manatee South, Hillsborough County could end up using a combination of development agreements and dependent special districts. However, the strategy recommended here would not commit the county to taking responsibility for building infrastructure even if it would be repaid through taxes or assessments; the history of land development in Florida is littered with failures as well as successes and the county should use extreme caution in obligating itself to participate financially in speculative development.

The recommended approach is to determine if fiscal mitigation is needed and then to authorize development only when landowners formally agree to shoulder those specific costs, either through one of these mechanisms that the county deems fiscally prudent at the time or through other approaches such as unilateral commitments by developers.

4-b Maintaining Rural and Natural Lands

Maintaining Rural Land

There are several methods for maintaining rural and agricultural land in Little Manatee South:

- ▶ An effective (but not permanent) method is to exclude rural land from any eligibility for urban development. Land would remain for now at existing rural densities (1 DU per 5 acres); urban services would not be provided.
- ▶ A potentially permanent method would be to formally transfer development rights from rural land to land with development potential. Development rights would be permanently extinguished on the rural land through a perpetual agricultural easement. This method is fairly easy when development rights are being moved within an area owned by a single entity. If the rights are being moved between landowners, it is usually carried out through a county program that authorizes the 'transfer of development rights' (TDR).
- ▶ A simpler but more costly method is public acquisition of development rights, often referred to as 'purchase of development rights' (PDR). Certain governmental programs acquire development rights while leaving land in private ownership and management. One active program of this nature is the state's Rural and Family Lands Protection Program (RFLPP), established by the Florida Legislature in 2001. This program focuses on agricultural land that contains important natural resources and is under development pressure. Landowners are compensated for agreeing to keep their land in agriculture permanently. The program is entirely voluntary for landowners but quite competitive because funding is limited to specific appropriations from the legislature.

Maintaining Natural Land

The methods for maintaining natural land in Little Manatee South are similar to those for maintaining rural and agricultural land:

- ▶ An effective (but not permanent) method is to exclude potential natural preserves from any eligibility for urban development. Eligibility for urban development drives up the value of land, making acquisition by public agencies or private land trusts much more difficult.
- ▶ Transferring development rights would work in a similar manner as for rural and agricultural lands, except that conservation easements are used in place of agricultural easements. Conservation easements do not permit most types of farming.
- ▶ A simpler but more costly method is direct public acquisition of land. An example of outright acquisition is Hillsborough County's Environmental Lands Acquisition and Protection Program (ELAPP) which acquired land for the Cockroach Creek Greenway and the Cockroach Bay Preserve. In another example, the Southwest Florida Water Management District acquired bayfront land from TECO in 2003, the site of the ongoing Rock Ponds Ecosystem Restoration. The Florida Forever program also remains active, having replaced the state's earlier Preservation 2000 program. Nonprofit organizations like the Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land also acquire natural lands, but typically as intermediaries for state or federal agencies.
- ▶ Florida Forever sometimes purchases just the development rights from land (PDR), leaving land in private ownership and management. Public agencies can sometimes obtain conservation easement through other means such as mitigation requirements or charitable donations.
- ▶ Citizens can establish a local land trust to acquire natural land directly or to acquire conservation easements through purchases or donations. Funding for purchases and for enforcement of conservation easements must be arranged privately. Some local land trusts also act as intermediaries like the Nature Conservancy. There are about twenty local land trusts already operating in Florida; the closest is the Tampa Bay Conservancy.
- ▶ In some circumstances, natural land can also be protected through special comprehensive plan designations, zoning restrictions or zoning conditions, dedication requirements, etc.

4-c Composite Planning Strategy

The previous sections have described financing and land protection strategies that should be incorporated into a third option in the Comprehensive Plan that falls between approval or denial of a proposal to expand the Urban Service Area.

This third option would also address the extent and physical form of future development, specifically calling for a series of compact walkable neighborhoods that would allow a considerable amount of land to remain in agricultural use and as natural preserves. This is different than the more recent pattern of development in Hillsborough County which often takes place at lower but more uniform densities, consuming more land to accommodate the same number of people and usually eliminating agricultural land.

Planning Approvals for the Third Option

The new third option would be created through an initial amendment to the Comprehensive Plan that would be initiated by Hillsborough County. This amendment could be included in this year's major update to the Comprehensive Plan or it could be a separate amendment. The same Comprehensive Plan amendment would add a conceptual planning area map that shows what land the county deems suitable for this third option.

Landowners wishing to use this option would be expected to perform conceptual planning for a mosaic of compact walkable neighborhoods, agricultural land, and preserved land. Conceptual plans would include a generalized street network to support the proposed intensity and location of development, with particular emphasis on future interconnections of streets, trails, and flowways across tracts under different ownership. Hillsborough County could assist landowners and local residents in creating these conceptual plans or could even take primary responsibility for preparing them.

A second amendment to the Comprehensive Plan would then adopt a conceptual plan for an entire conceptual planning area.

A third amendment would authorize the provision of urban services upon demonstration that arrangements are in place to provide infrastructure. This authorization could take place three, five, ten, or even twenty years in the future when development is imminent and infrastructure costs and financing methods have been determined. The Future Land Use Map would be amended during this third amendment to allow urban services and specified levels of urban development outside the formal Urban Service Area. This third amendment could be made incrementally by individual landowners provided each increment is in accordance with the previously approved conceptual plan.

Conceptual Planning Areas Within Little Manatee South

The initial plan amendment would identify conceptual planning areas within Little Manatee South. Section 2 of this report includes maps that show several prior proposals for urban development in Little Manatee South. Based on an analysis of those proposals and other planning and fiscal considerations, it is the recommendation of this study that the map on the following page be used by Hillsborough County to identify two undeveloped portions of Little Manatee South as conceptual planning areas in the initial amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.

Each area contains enough contiguous developable land that adjoins existing neighborhoods so that together they can become a larger diverse community.

Area A is in the northwest quadrant of Cockroach Bay Road and US 41. Area A is immediately south of the historic riverfront neighborhoods of Gulf City and is the closest undeveloped land to public services in Ruskin. This land is severed from neighborhoods to the east by the wide US 41 right-of-way and the railroad tracks. Area A includes 720 acres of land; most of it is at least 10 feet above sea level, except for the portion along Gulf City Road.

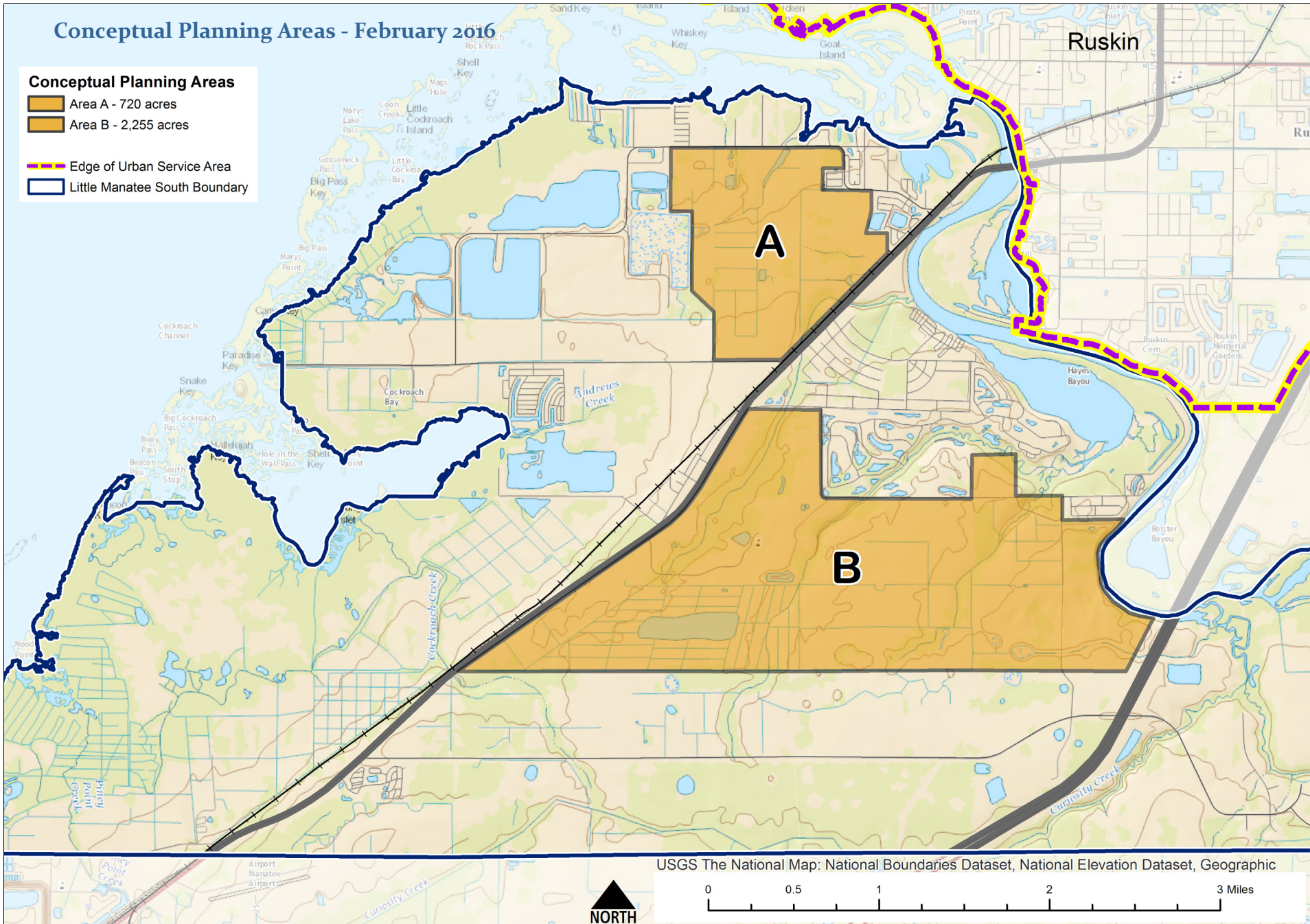
Area B is on the east side of US 41 immediately south of Riverside Club and directly across from the historic Sun City community. Area B includes the 225-acre campus that now hosts the South County Career Center. It also includes an approved rural development just to the south that is currently being mined for fill material. Area B includes 2,255 acres of land at considerable elevation.

Area B extends eastward to the banks of the Little Manatee River and to I-75. The community plan calls for lower densities immediately west of I-75. To implement that concept and to avoid higher-density development along the banks of the Little Manatee River, the conceptual plan for Area B should set a strict cap on future densities east of G7 Ranch Road.

The southern edge of Area B runs along a section line a half-mile north of Valroy Road (which near the river is the northern edge of a TECO transmission corridor). With this boundary, the Valroy Road corridor itself would remain rural and its agricultural and environmental assets would not be threatened by development. The rural land strategies described in this report would be applied to the Valroy Road corridor: maintaining rural densities; transferring development rights to land with development potential; acquiring development rights from farmland; and purchasing land for environmental preservation/restoration, particularly land near Curiosity Creek, Cockroach Creek, and Wildcat Creek.

Conceptual Planning Areas - February 2016

- Conceptual Planning Areas**
- Area A - 720 acres
- Area B - 2,255 acres
- Edge of Urban Service Area
- Little Manatee South Boundary



USGS The National Map: National Boundaries Dataset, National Elevation Dataset, Geographic

0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles



Farmland west of US 41 near the county line is not recommended for conceptual planning due to its remoteness from public services, its inability to be integrated with surrounding neighborhoods, and its low elevation (which is mostly below 10 feet and about half of which is below 5 feet).

The Little Manatee South community plan suggests a major employment center in the southeast quadrant of US 41 and Valroy Road based on its proximity to Port Manatee. That land is not suggested for conceptual planning at this time because it is unlikely to be needed during the planning timeframe, especially given the amount of land closer to Port Manatee that Manatee County has designated for port-related industrial and employment centers.

Conceptual Planning Guidelines

The initial amendment to the Comprehensive Plan would include guidelines for the conceptual planning stage, addressing the following subjects:

Land anticipated to remain rural

- ▶ The conceptual plan would designate land anticipated to remain rural, if any; uses might include commercial agriculture, community farms, mitigation banks, etc.
- ▶ If that land is not intended to remain rural indefinitely, the conceptual plan would indicate potential points of connectivity for streets, trails, and stormwater flows.

Land anticipated to remain in its natural state

- ▶ The conceptual plan would designate land anticipated to remain in or be restored to natural conditions. In addition to wetlands and riverbanks, this land would include natural creeks and artificial flowways that could serve as stormwater conveyances, wildlife corridors, and a network of trails.
- ▶ This land may also include other valuable uplands and unique features such as historic and archaeological sites.

General patterns of land anticipated to be urbanized

- ▶ The conceptual plan would identify land anticipated to be urbanized and which portions of that land would follow these two acceptable patterns:²

Compact urban pattern - a physical pattern of towns and cities where public streets form an interconnected network that surrounds traditional city blocks. Blocks are subdivided into lots for individual buildings that can accommodate a variety of land uses and building types. Parking is placed to the side or rear of buildings and may be reached by mid-block alleys.

Connected suburban pattern - a physical pattern that replaces traditional gridded city blocks with irregular blocks while maintaining a connected network of public streets that are spaced at quarter-mile intervals.

Anticipated intensities of development

- ▶ The conceptual plan would identify likely centers of activity, pedestrian sheds, and anticipated transect zones. Each non-rural transect zone would allow a mix of residential and non-residential uses.

Anticipated street network

- ▶ The conceptual plan would identify a generalized network of interconnected streets that matches the intended physical pattern and levels of intensity. For instance, more intense transect zones such as T4 and T5 will require smaller blocks and a higher level of connectivity.
- ▶ The conceptual plan would be more specific for streets that will allow through traffic, including all collectors and minor arterials, and must be precise along boundaries between tracts under different ownership or control.
- ▶ The conceptual plan would also indicate potential points of future connectivity to surrounding land (except for land being permanently designated as rural or natural land).

² Characteristics of these patterns are described in *Strip Commercial and Mixed-Use Development in Hillsborough County*, September 2014, Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission. That report can be downloaded from this link: www.spikowski.com/details/HillsboroughCountyPlanCommission.html

Connections to major arterial network

- ▶ In addition to the anticipated street network just described, the conceptual plan would show new minor arterials that would be extended outside the conceptual planning area to connect to the major arterial network.

These conceptual planning requirements do not require maximum gross densities as is typical for Florida comprehensive plans. Gross densities are used in infrastructure planning because a maximum number of dwelling units can be easily calculated; however, if these gross densities are then applied through zoning to every parcel, they impose an artificial uniformity on newly developing areas. Cities, towns and even rural areas are not built at uniform densities. Cities have neighborhoods of detached homes as well as apartments and a downtown; suburbs have office parks and shopping centers along with neighborhoods of ranch homes; rural areas have pockets of homes on small or large lots and some places to shop or work, all surrounded by undeveloped land.

The application of broad density caps would dissuade rather than encourage these healthy development patterns. However, conceptual plans adopted through the second amendment could include special density caps in certain areas where needed to resolve site-specific planning conditions.

4-d Summary

Hillsborough County should continue to implement the Little Manatee South Community Plan and should capitalize on the cooperative spirit among local residents, large landowners, and county officials that has continued since the community plan was adopted in 2010.

Recent implementation efforts stalled when it became apparent that they didn't include a transparent and workable process for Hillsborough County officials to make essential decisions that are precursors to urbanization. The most important decisions were how much land should be considered for urbanization and who would pay for the required urban services.

This report recommends a slightly different approach to implementing the community plan, one that uses the comprehensive planning process to make those decisions in a deliberate manner and guide each step of conceptual planning.

Codes that manage the block-by-block and building-by-building details would follow rather than precede this more general level of planning. Critical planning decisions would not be embedded in detailed codes or made without a full awareness of their consequences.

Hillsborough County leaders have inadequate resources to meet today's serious infrastructure backlogs. It would be imprudent to expand the urban service area without exploring methods of allocating costs to parties that benefit. This report suggests viable methods to do so.

Development patterns must adjust to meet changing demographic trends and increasing interest in combining compact walkable neighborhoods with expanses of rural and natural lands. Both interests can both be accommodated if they are planned together from the outset. The planning strategies recommended in this report have been formulated to that end.