

STAFF REPORT

Planning & Zoning Commission: December 13, 2004

Local Planning Agency: January 12, 2005

Board of County Commissioners: January 12, 2005

Board of County Commissioners:

APPLICANT: WCI Communities **FILE NUMBER:** CPAM-05-01

PURPOSE: Comprehensive Plan Amendment to amend the Future Land Use Element of the Hernando County Comprehensive Plan, specifically, to amend the policies of Objective 1.07D, World Woods Planned Development District.

GENERAL

LOCATION: Countywide

LEGAL

DESCRIPTION: County wide

FILE STATUS: All the requirements necessary to conduct the public hearing have been satisfied.

CITIZEN RESPONSE: FOR: 0 AGAINST: 0

STAFF FINDINGS:

The applicant, WCI Communities, is proposing to amend Policies 1.07D(1), (2), (4) and (5) of the World Woods Planned Development District. The proposed changes to the policies would modify policy guidelines related to density and building setbacks to allow a more efficient development of property in the District adjacent to the World Woods golf course complex.

According to the applicant's narrative, the World Woods Planned Development District consists of approximately 2,100 acres located on the north side of US 98 near the current terminus of the Suncoast Parkway. The district is bordered on the east by CR 491, on the south by US 98 and on the north by Citrus County. The western portion of the District is located in the Candler sand ridge and is the location of the World Woods golf complex. The eastern portion of the District consists of hardwood hammock and is the western most extent of the area generally referred to as the Annutteliga Hammock. The District is located within the Chassahowitzka recharge basin. The Chassahowitzka Spring group is classified as first magnitude.

The applicant's narrative further explains the District is presently developed with the golf complex, consisting of two 18 hole golf courses, a nine hole par 3 golf course, and an extensive practice facility consisting of three practice golf holes, driving range, and large putting area, and an interim clubhouse. The facilities are open to the public. Plans for the remaining undeveloped land

belonging to World Woods includes a clubhouse, a resort hotel, condominiums, resort residential dwellings, residential housing, and ancillary facilities. According to the applicant, the purpose of the proposed amendment is to accommodate those plans, while ensuring the provision of open space and preservation.

Major residential vested DRI developments are located adjacent to the District to the west and northwest (Sugarmill Woods) and southwest (Seville). Both of the aforementioned developments are part of the two-County, Orange Meadow development, which is a Florida Statute Chapter 380 vested development. The Seville portion of the development is vested for over 3,000 dwelling units and is located entirely within Hernando County. A small portion of the Sugarmill Woods project lies within Hernando County, but the vast majority is located in Citrus County.

The easternmost 930 acres of the District was purchased in 1999 as part of the CARL program. Consisting primarily of hardwood hammock and wetlands, the property is under the management of the Florida Division of Forestry and will not be developed as part of the World Woods plans.

The proposed policies for the World Woods Planned District are as listed below in strikethrough / underline format:

Policy 1.07D(1): Establish a Planned-Development Land Use Category on the Future Land Use Map which allows for a mixture of the following land uses: Golf Courses, Clubhouse, Resort Residential Dwellings, Condominiums, Residential Dwellings, Resort Hotel and Ancillary Facilities (including but not limited to restaurant, pro shop, tennis club, parking, interim sewage treatment plant, etc).

Policy 1.07D(2): Locate residential units, resort hotel, clubhouse, paved parking, interim sewage treatment plants and other buildings toward the interior of the district, no closer than ~~300~~ 100 feet from abutting privately owned parcels or from US 98 or CR 491.

Policy 1.07D(4): The following are usage guidelines for the Master Plan, Residential density shall be a maximum of one (1) unit per ~~3.18~~ 1.25 gross acres of land within the planned development district, with residential land use of no greater than ~~15~~ 25 % of the land area. Public access shall be from US 98 and CR 491 only. The approved residential density shall include resort residential dwellings, condominiums, residential dwellings and the resort hotel.

Policy 1.07D(5): At least ~~60~~ 70 % of the total land area shall consist of open space, a category which includes the golf courses and practice areas. ~~In areas where the natural hardwood hammock vegetative community exists, at~~ At least ~~23~~ 50 % of the hammock shall be preserved. Wherever possible, areas of preserved hammock shall be connected by a corridor of natural hammock vegetation which may be crossed by golf cart paths. In the site planning of the property, the hammock preservation shall be established in such a fashion

that at least 210 acres of upland shall be retained in the southern portion of the property, with Horse Lake and a 150 acre tract of upland hammock contiguous to the lake being retained as a continuous tract with only a boardwalk, or walking or jogging trails allowed. Walking and jogging trails shall be designed so as to preserve the habitat and wildlife species. The additional 60 acres of upland must at least be inter-connected by corridors. The connections may only be broken by cart paths, walking trails and one entrance road.

The proposed amendment to the policies for the World Woods Planned Development District result in significant changes to the potential development within the District. The change contained in Policy (1) would allow “Residential Dwellings” which will be a new category for the District. It is assumed that the term refers to permanent owner occupied dwellings similar to any subdivision located within the County.

The change proposed in Policy (2) would reduce the setback from 300 feet to 100 feet for any portion of the development abutting privately owned parcels or from US 98 or CR 491. Since changes to other policies will result in a significant increase in the number of units, the reduction in setbacks would correspond to more development on the property.

The change proposed in Policy (4) is the most significant of the those proposed. The current policy allows one unit per 3.18 gross acres. For an approximately 2,100 acre District, there are approximately 660 residential units allowed. It is the Planning Staff’s understanding that the number of total units was determined by the potential development expected from the land as both Rural and a portion which was within the Sugarmill Woods project. The proposed language is to allow one unit per 1.25 gross acre of the District. For the approximately 2,100 acre District, that would yield a revised total of approximately 1,680 units or an increase of 1,020 units.

The Planning Staff is of the opinion that the density calculation should be looked at on the basis of the privately owned lands and not consider the CARL purchase of 930 acres as part of the analysis. The existing policy and the proposed change considers the entire property in the density calculation. If one considers only the privately held lands in the density calculation, the density will be approximately 1.45 dwelling units per gross acre (1,680 units / 1,170 acres). The proposed policies indicate that the developed residential area will not exceed 25 % of the land area in the District. This will amount to approximately 525 acres of residential land. The density considering the residentially developed area will be approximately 3.2 dwelling units per acre (1680 dwelling units / 525 acres). This density is not significantly different than other urbanized areas of the County and is similar to the estimated density of the Seville project located nearby to the southwest.

Proposed Policy (4) also adds the use of “residential” and even though it is not defined, it probably means owner occupied dwelling rather than resort dwellings. Since the original approval of the District was as a resort facility, it is the Planning Staff’s opinion that the original 660 units approved in the project be developed as resort dwellings in the resort residential and resort hotel categories. The Planning Staff proposes amending proposed Policy (4) to read as follows:

Policy 1.07D(4): The following are usage guidelines for the Master Plan, Residential density shall be a maximum of one (1) unit per ~~3.18~~ 1.25 gross acres of land within the planned development district, with residential land use of no greater than ~~15~~ 25 % of the land area. Public access shall be from US 98 and CR 491 only. The approved residential density shall include resort residential dwellings, condominiums, residential dwellings and the resort hotel. Development of the residential land use within the planned development district shall include at least 660 dwelling units in the resort residential dwellings and resort hotel categories.

The applicant has indicated that the character of the area has changed since the original approval of the World Woods Planned Development District. The application indicates that the Suncoast Parkway has been constructed and terminates near the entrance to the District off of US 98. There is the potential that the Parkway will be continued to the north with US 98 interchange becoming a major focal point for development. The application also indicates that the Sugarmill Woods project has continued to develop and that the Seville project will be constructed in the future. In addition, the applicant has indicated that the County will be constructing a major sanitary sewer line to the Glen Subregional Wastewater Treatment Plant to serve the Seville project, the County's landfill on the south side of US 98 and potential development in the World Woods District.

The applicant has submitted the following data to show the net increase that may be expected from development in the District consistent with the proposed policies. The estimated difference in impact on the public facilities are as follows: Week Day PM peak hour trips - 707; Solid Waste - 8, 105 pounds per day; Potable Water - 285, 000 gallons per day; Sanitary Sewer - 228, 000 gallons per day. With the improvements to the water and sewer system in the area, the facilities should be adequate to handle the proposed increase. The current volume to capacity ratio on US 98 is .4 and with the addition of the project traffic, it is estimated that sufficient capacity will exist on the road to accommodate the increase. The County's landfill has sufficient land for expansion and will have sufficient capacity to accommodate the increase in solid waste.

The change to proposed policy (5) addresses the amount of land that will be preserved as open space. The current policy says that at least 60% of the total land area in the District will consist of open space. The revised policy will increase the amount to 70% of the total land. Also the present policy indicates that 23% of the hammock located within the District will be preserved. The proposed policy increases that amount to at least 50%. As was pointed out by the applicant, 930 acres of the District was acquired by the CARL program for preservation and a substantial portion of the District's hammock lands have been preserved in that holding. That acquisition will prevent the hammock lands from being further developed.

The applicant has indicated that the proposed amendment is consistent with several goals of the State Comprehensive Plan, specifically, (8) Water Resources, (10) Natural Systems and Recreation Lands, (16) Land Use, and (18) Public Facilities. The Planning Staff has reviewed the aforementioned goals from the State Comprehensive Plan and agrees with the applicant's assessment.

The applicant has indicated that the proposed amendment is consistent with several policies of the Withlacoochee Regional Planning Council's Strategic Regional Policy Plan. The application sites policies 2.11.5, 4.1.1, 4.9.1, 5.5.6, and 5.5.9. These policies deal with the issues of siting of economic development projects, providing an adequate supply of water while not diminishing resources for other committed developments, preservation of habitat, maintain LOS on regionally significant roadways, and coordinate land use planning with transportation projects so improvements are complimentary. Planning Staff has reviewed the aforementioned policies of the WRPC Strategic Regional Policy Plan and agree with the applicant's assessment.

The applicant has indicated that the proposed amendment is consistent with several Future Land Use policies of the Hernando County Comprehensive Plan. These include Policy 1.01A(9), mixed use developments; Policy 1.01G(5), access to multi-family projects; Policy 1.01G(8), coordination of access and facilities in mixed use developments; Policy 1.01G(9), medium and high density multi-family developments provide adequate open space; and Policy 1.01Q(1), single family developments with a density greater than .4, shall be located proximate to existing development. The Planning Staff has reviewed the aforementioned and generally agrees with the applicant's assessment.

The Planning Staff acknowledges that the conditions in the general area have changed substantially since the original approval of the World Woods Planned Development District. Road access has been substantially improved, Public facilities, including potable water and sanitary sewer have been made available or have been scheduled to be brought to the area. Substantial amounts of environmentally sensitive lands have been acquired by the State for preservation purposes.

However, the proposed changes to the policies will result in a substantial increase in the number of potential dwelling units for the World Woods District. There are two major issues to consider. One is the provision of adequate public facilities to serve the development and the other is the land use compatibility and timing issues. The applicant has demonstrated the public facilities are being brought into the area that may accommodate urban type development. With regard to the provision of sanitary sewer, the Utilities Department has indicated that a proposed force main from the landfill to the Glen Subregional Wastewater Treatment Plant will have adequate capacity to accommodate the additional units proposed in this amendment. When originally approved, the development was going to be primarily a golf resort facility with limited permanent residents. The project would be a destination location and its proximity or lack of proximity to other development would not be of substantial importance as most of the services to the visitors would be self-contained. Now the project is becoming both a golf destination and residential development, not unlike the land uses found in other golf course communities. One could argue that the World Woods project is but one part of a three component urbanizing node with Seville and Sugarmill Woods the other two. Regarding land use compatibility, the CARL holdings do provide a buffer to the more rural nature of property to the east. The timing questions for the continued development of the area really depend somewhat on the prospects for the extension of the Suncoast Parkway through Citrus County. Its construction may enhance the viability of continued or accelerated development in the area. These are issues which should be discussed during review.

Besides the above discussed issues, there is a major issue that has recently come to light with regard to the land located within the World Woods Planned Development District. A karst feature has been located on the World Woods property that may have significant implications for the use of the property and needs to be considered as part of the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment. Generally located on the eastern end of the property, the karst system lies in an area where development has been anticipated, but it has not yet been thoroughly investigated. Additional intensity allowed through the proposed policy changes will create potential conflict with the viability of the karst system. There has been discussions between the owner of the World Woods property and those with an interest in maintaining the integrity of the subsurface geologic feature, including the Nature Conservancy (TNC) and a geologist from the University of South Florida. The discussions have been preliminary and no conclusions from them have been drawn. According to members of a Tampa Bay organization, who are involved with the discussions with the World Woods owners, Florida protection laws cannot affect impacts which may occur from development, so the protection/preservation of the subsurface geologic feature will need to be a negotiated circumstance. TNC negotiations for purchase of the karst area have reached an impasse.

Among many, there are two issues of development and karst features. Karst that is sealed under pavement or buildings usually receive less infiltrating water and may become barren. Without any moisture from above the karst features could sustain substantial loss of “life” in the system. The second issue is the infiltration of significant nutrients. Such contaminants from land development, such as lawn fertilizers, could substantially undermine the diversity of the species found within these types of systems and reduce their numbers.

Planning Staff is proposing the following policies to address the issue of the preservation and protection of the subsurface karst geologic features. The policies will provide guidance to help insure that the extent of the karst features can be examined prior to significant construction and that development will not cause substantial degradation to the karst features.

Policy 1.07D(7): Prior to development approval, the County shall request a geologic assessment of the project by the Florida Geological Survey (FGS) to be used in development review.

Policy 1.07D(8): In areas above subsurface karst geologic features in the Planned Development District, development approvals will not be issued until scientific information is provided to assure that the subsurface karst geologic features and floral/faunal species will not be adversely impacted. A naturally vegetated surface setback shall be formulated to conserve the karst system underlying the property. Subsurface geologic features and their karst connections shall be studied and reviewed by appropriate state agencies with their recommendations and findings used to develop and manage the property.

Policy 1.07D(9): Floral and faunal surveys shall be conducted by appropriate state agencies and qualified scientists within subsurface geologic features. Protection shall be afforded new species.

Policy 1.07D(10): Development of the property within the District shall adhere to green industries Best Management Practices (BMPs), including Integrated Pest Management (IPM) (FDEP & FDCA, 2002. Protecting Florida Springs - Land Use Planning Strategies & Best Management Practices). Florida Yards & Neighborhoods (FYN) education shall be provided for individual lot owners.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning Staff recommends that the Planning and Zoning Commission review and recommend approval to the Local Planning Agency and the Board of County Commissioners of the transmittal to the Department of Community Affairs of the proposed amendment consisting of revisions to policies 1.07D(1), 1.07D(2), and 1.07D(5) as proposed by the applicant, 1.07D(4) as revised by the Planning Staff and the addition of policies 1.07D(7)-(10) as prepared by the Planning Staff.

P&Z RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning and Zoning Commission voted 5-0 to recommend that the LPA / BCC transmit CPAM 05-01 to the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for review and comment. The Planning and Zoning Commission also suggested that policy language be added to tie the requirement for the naturally vegetated surface setback in proposed Policy 1.07D(8) to the assessment required by proposed Policy 1.07D(7).

STAFF DISCUSSION:

In order to address the issue about tying the requirement for a naturally vegetated surface setback to the assessment required by the proposed policy, the Planning Staff is proposing the following language for Policy 1.07D(8):

Policy 1.07D(8): In areas above subsurface karst geologic features in the Planned Development District, development approvals will not be issued until scientific information is provided to assure that the subsurface karst geologic features and floral/faunal species will not be adversely impacted. A naturally vegetated surface setback, if warranted by the results of the study conducted by the requirement in Policy 1.07D(7), shall be formulated to conserve the karst system underlying the property. Subsurface geologic features and their karst connections shall be studied and reviewed by appropriate state agencies with their recommendations and findings used to develop and manage the property.

LPA/BCC ACTION:

On January 12, 2005, the LPA/BCC voted 4-1 to not transmit the requested comprehensive Plan Amendment to the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for review and comment.

DCA ORC REPORT:

STAFF DISCUSSIONS:

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

BCC ACTION: