

ALACHUA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES ON RURAL CLUSTERS

FUTURE LAND USE ELEMENT

OBJECTIVE 6.4 - RURAL CLUSTERS

Rural clusters are small settlements outside of an urban cluster. These clusters serve as a focus for an existing rural community. They generally lack public services and facilities identified as necessary for more intense urban development.

Policy 6.4.1 Development in the rural clusters may be permitted with lot sizes of one acre or greater for development on private wells and septic tanks, or on lots as small as one-half acre for development on a central water system, consistent with Potable Water/Sanitary Sewer Element Policy 2.1.3.1 and Conservation and Open Space Element Policy 4.5.5(f) Limited support commercial and support institutional land uses appropriately designed, located, and scaled to serve the cluster market may also be considered.

Policy 6.4.2 The Rural Clusters identified in Policy 6.4.4 are generally depicted on the Future Land Use Map. The boundaries of these Rural Clusters shall be updated as part of an evaluation of the designated Rural Clusters based on the sub-area planning process identified in Policy 6.4.5. The following guidelines shall be used in evaluating the boundaries of a rural cluster:

- (a) Rural Clusters shall generally include developed areas approximately 1/2 mile from the easily discernable focal point of the cluster. The focal point is usually the intersection of two rural roads or some other prominent feature around which the community seems to be centered.
- (b) The cluster shall be construed as containing all of the developed areas and undeveloped infill areas, but not undeveloped land beyond the extent of developed areas.
- (c) For the purposes of these guidelines, developed areas include areas with commercial uses, non-farm residential areas where lot sizes are generally below five acres, and usually below one acre, and other specialized uses not normally found in a rural setting. Platted, undeveloped subdivisions or other pre-existing developments where densities are higher than one unit per acre should be included, even if not developed, provided that the various lots or parcels are largely in different ownerships. The extent of non-conformity of these lots or parcels from County setback, access, and other regulations shall be considered in determining Rural Cluster boundaries.
- (d) The cluster may contain open space or conservation areas if these areas can be logically included given the other standards listed above. Such areas in the cluster shall be consistent with policies in the Conservation and Open Space Element.
- (e) Consideration may be given to natural features (including otherwise defined open space or conservation areas) or man-made features (such as jurisdictional boundaries, highways, railroads, or distinctive land use areas) that help form a logical boundary.

Policy 6.4.3 Commercial or institutional development may be permitted within a rural cluster, subject to the following standards:

- (a) Commercial uses shall be limited to rural support services, retail sales, or personal services intended to serve the immediate population (such as farm implement sales, grocery stores, veterinarian services or clinics to serve the rural and farming community, pharmacies or medical or dental offices, hospitality industries supportive of agritourism activities or co-operative or farmers markets to promote the sale of locally grown products. There shall be a maximum of 30,000 square feet of total commercial floor area for such uses.
- (b) Performance standards shall be established to require integration of non-residential development within the rural area, including site and building design measures such as provision of open space, landscaping and buffering, parking lot design, building massing and scale, and limitations on signage and lighting, to produce development that is compatible with surrounding rural land uses.
- (c) The non-residential land uses shall be located at the focus or center of the Rural Cluster.
- (d) There shall be an interconnected, paved and internal traffic circulation system on dedicated local roads, and minimal development impacts on rural collector and arterial roads.
- (e) Industrial development shall not be allowed.

Policy 6.4.4 The following communities are the rural clusters:

- (a) Cross Creek
- (b) Evinston
- (c) Campville
- (d) Grove Park
- (e) Rochelle
- (f) Windsor
- (g) Lochloosa
- (h) Island Grove
- (i) Orange Heights
- (j) Melrose
- (k) Earleton
- (l) Hague
- (m) Santa Fe

Policy 6.4.5 As part of the evaluation and update of the designated Rural Clusters the county shall prepare sub-area plans to explore the carrying capacities for appropriate levels of nature and heritage tourism in rural clusters, including those with historic or natural resources which give them special attractiveness. Such sub-area plans shall incorporate the local neighborhood

and community vision and goals, and shall include provisions to ensure consistency of the Rural Cluster with policies for the surrounding Rural/Agricultural area, and:

- (a) enhances the community's livability.
- (b) protects rural character.
- (c) provides amenities for residents.
- (d) protects natural resources.
- (e) Special consideration shall be given to linking these communities through the use of heritage or nature trails, bikeways, etc.

Policy 6.4.6 Any new residential subdivision proposed in a Rural Cluster shall be allowed only after update of Rural Cluster boundaries based upon a sub-area plan prepared pursuant to Policy 6.4.5. A phased schedule for preparation of sub-area plans for each Rural Cluster and the minimum requirements for sub-area plans shall be established by the Board of County Commissioners. Privately initiated sub-area plans may be prepared in advance of the phased schedule if authorized by the Board of County Commissioners; the applicant shall bear the cost of preparing the sub-area plan.