

Future Land Use Element

Objective 15:

Blue Head Ranch **Sustainable Community Overlay**

Please note this is a new objective and supporting policies proposed to be added to the Future Land Use Element of the Highlands County Comprehensive Plan.

In an effort to promote ease of review, underlining for proposed language has not been provided since this entire objective and policies is new.

Objective 15: Blue Head Ranch Sustainable Community Overlay

The objective of the Blue Head Ranch Sustainable Community Overlay is to provide a framework for the County by identifying a suitable location on Blue Head Ranch for a compact, sustainable urban center to which a portion of the County’s future population and employment growth can be guided in order to relieve development pressures on natural resources in the environmentally-sensitive Lake Wales Ridge.

Policy 15.1: Urban Development Principles and Guidelines

A. Compact Urban Development

Development shall occur in a compact urban form based on the following specific meaningful and predictable guidelines:

	Blue Head Ranch Compact Urban Development Area Phase 1 (2030)		Blue Head Ranch Compact Urban Development Area Maximum Potential
Compact Urban Development Area (CUDA)	3,000 acres (maximum)		7,500 acres (maximum)
Land Use	Minimum	Maximum	Maximum
Dwelling Units	7,500 dwelling units	12,000 dwelling units	27,000 dwelling units
Retail	1,500,000 s.f.	2,500,000 s.f.	4,500,000 s.f.
Office	1,000,000 s.f.	1,500,000 s.f.	4,000,000 s.f.
Industrial	250,000 s.f.	500,000 s.f.	1,500,000 s.f.
Public/Quasi-Public	300,000 s.f.	400,000 s.f.	1,000,000 s.f.
Hotel	100 rooms	250 rooms	900 rooms
Open Space	15% minimum		15% minimum

B. Land Use Standards

The following standards shall be met in the Blue Head Ranch Compact Urban Development Area:

B.1. Town Center

A mixed-use, urban town center shall be the heart of the new community. The highest density and intensity of uses shall be located in the town center. The town center shall consist of the following elements:

1. A diverse mix of multiple land uses including residential, retail (including restaurants), professional offices, services (such as salon/barbershop), religious institutions, cultural, civic and public other uses, structurally located either horizontally or vertically. Retail, services and public spaces shall be permitted at the street level. All other uses shall be located on the upper floors.
2. A pedestrian-oriented environment. Sidewalks shall be provided on both sides of all streets in the town center. Buildings shall be located close to the street to attract pedestrian activity and interaction.
3. Building height. Building height shall be permitted up to four (4) stories or 50 feet, whichever is more, excluding ornamental, non-habitable structures or such portions of habitable buildings.
4. A mix of public amenities such as parks, open space, gathering places, information kiosks or when applicable, public transit stops.
5. A focal point. The town center shall have at least one (1) iconic landmark such as a fountain, clock tower, a church, a public plaza or square. Such landmarks shall be exempt from the height limitations as outlined in Section B.1.3. above.
6. Parking. Parking shall be located on the street, in parking structures or off-street behind the town center buildings to provide increased pedestrian access to buildings at the street level.
7. Shared parking shall be required within the town center.
8. Street furniture such as controlled lighting, benches, trash receptacles and public art.

9. Street blocks shall be a between 250 and 500 feet in length. This will promote increased business frontages and provide for efficient traffic circulation.
10. Neighborhood arterial road access. The town center core shall be oriented at the intersection of neighborhood collector arterials to provide for easier access to residential areas. The town center core shall not be located on the principal arterial roadway of the town designed for faster through-traffic.

B.2. Neighborhoods

A series of compact predominantly residential neighborhoods shall surround the town center. Each neighborhood shall consist of the following elements:

1. A pedestrian-friendly environment. Residents shall have easy access to a non-vehicular circulation system including a variety of sidewalks, bicycle or other paths, and walkways of varying widths.
2. Neighborhood Center. Each neighborhood shall provide a limited amount of non-residential land uses to meet the immediate every day needs of the residents within a neighborhood center. Such commercial land uses shall be located toward the center of each neighborhood and shall include gathering points such as a post office, transit stop, when applicable, a convenience store, a gas station or other similar commercial uses. As neighborhoods are assembled, they can provide patronage for larger-serving uses, such as supermarkets that are often supported by two or more adjacent neighborhoods.
3. A minimum of eighty percent (80%) of all dwelling units shall be within one-quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) mile (5 minute walk) of an activity area (neighborhood center, town center, park, plaza or civic space). This distance shall be measured in a straight line from the boundaries of the neighborhood lot to the nearest boundary of the activity area.
4. Housing. A wide range of housing types, accommodating diverse income levels, age groups and housing needs shall be provided within each neighborhood. Each neighborhood shall proportionately accommodate the needs of very low, low and moderate-income households reasonably expected

to be needed by employers within the CUDA, based on an appropriate balance of rental and ownership units. The land development regulations for the implementation of the new town shall include design standards to shall ensure that the external appearance of affordable and workforce housing shall be harmonious with market-rate housing throughout the remainder of the CUDA.

5. Education facilities. Each residential neighborhood shall be strategically located in relation to the education facilities that will be provided within the CUDA. Schools shall become a focal point of any neighborhood in which they are located. Provision of schools shall be coordinated with the Highlands County School Board with regard to appropriate range, size, location and timing of construction of all public schools. Coordination with the Highlands County School Board shall include exploring opportunities to build school facilities on a smaller footprint than seen in less urban areas. To the extent possible, schools and parks shall be co-located and be sized and located to enable students to walk or bicycle to them. Nothing shall prohibit private, vocational or other schools from locating within the town.

B.3. Alleys

The use of alleys shall be encouraged throughout all areas of the Blue Head Ranch CUDA. An alley shall be located to the rear of lots, shall contain no sidewalks or setbacks, and shall be designed as the service route for the lots it abuts. Within residential neighborhoods, secondary or accessory dwelling units that are either freestanding or are above garages shall be permitted and encouraged along alleys.

B.4. Economic Development and Employment

To promote economic development, diverse employment opportunities and to contribute to the sustainability of the new Sustainable Community, industrial parks and office parks shall be required. Such parks shall consist of the following elements:

1. Industrial Parks:

- a. All industrial parks shall be of adequate size to provide for lands for buildings, landscape plantings,

and infrastructure and internal transportation and traffic circulation.

- b. Mixed-use industrial parks are encouraged and may consist of a combination of manufacturing and support facilities, office and office support and research-related uses. Small-scale retail uses, such as restaurants or small hotels, shall also be permitted in industrial parks; however, they should locate near the periphery of the park site so as to not hinder traffic flow.
- c. All industrial parks shall be located in close proximity to regional or state highway transportation systems or be connected to them by an efficient system of local roadways and, when applicable, provide for public transit opportunities. Industrial parks shall be permitted near airport and related facilities.
- d. All industrial parks shall be adequately buffered with landscaping pursuant to Highlands County land development regulations.

2. Office Parks:

- a. Office parks permitted within the new town may either be campus style or urban style in design.
 - i. Campus style office parks shall primarily consist of office space, and may include limited retail uses such as restaurants, convenience stores, services and small hotels, as well as limited residential uses. Campus style office parks shall be located toward the edge of the community away from the town center to create a secondary-center atmosphere within the community.
 - ii. Urban style office parks shall primarily consist of office space, and may include residential development, entertainment venues, retail, restaurants, hotels as well as outdoor recreational amenities. Urban style office parks shall be located closer to the

town center and may serve as an anchor for town center development.

- b. All office parks shall be proximate to the regional transportation network and, when applicable, provide for public transit opportunities.
- c. All office parks shall be adequately buffered with landscaping pursuant to Highlands County land development regulations.

B.5. Efficient Delivery of Essential Services

The CUDA shall be designed in such a way to provide for the efficient delivery of essential services, such as fire, police and emergency medical services, as well as parks, schools and other civic uses. The location of essential services shall be designed in such a way so as to comply with nationally acceptable response times.

B.6. Balance of Land Use by Phase

If the Sustainable Community Overlay is developed in a phased manner, each phase of the CUDA shall provide for a balance of residential and non-residential uses to create a sustainable community as required by Policy 15.1.A.

B.7. Public Space

Public spaces shall be provided throughout the community in order to create a sense of place. Such civic and cultural spaces such as plazas, squares, libraries, dance venues, theaters and music halls/amphitheatres.

B.8. Open Space

The CUDA shall provide a minimum of 15 percent open space within the CUDA shown on the Master Conceptual Plan. Open space shall include but not be limited to all public passive and active recreation areas and parks, playing fields, golf courses, public plazas, courtyards and squares, off-road pathways, other areas available for recreation and the community's greenbelt.

B.9. Rural Viewsheds and Vistas

Scenic rural view sheds and vistas that signal the transition from urban to rural lands shall be considered during site design. Such scenic views and vistas shall be protected through such measures as the appropriate location, concealment or control of the location of utilities and infrastructure.

B.10. Adequate Public Facilities

All development within the CUDA shall be served by adequate public facilities as required by law. Public facilities may be financed, constructed, operated, or maintained by any governmental entity allowed by law, including but not limited to independent special districts, one (1) or more property owners associations, or homeowners associations, or any combination of such entities.

A capital improvements plan shall demonstrate how the provision of water supply, potable water, wastewater treatment, solid waste, drainage, parks and recreation, transportation, and public schools will be addressed. Such public facilities shall be available to accommodate the impacts of development as required by law.

B.11. Water Use and Conservation

All development within the CUDA shall be required to minimize water use and employ water conservation methods and generally follow the principles of the Florida-Friendly Planting Program. Water use and conservation techniques shall include:

1. Installation of low-volume plumbing fixtures in all new residential and non-residential buildings
2. Use of drought-tolerant plants
3. Use of reclaimed water for irrigation, when available
4. Timed irrigation to minimize losses from evaporation
5. Installation of rain-sensor devices or automatic switches to override irrigation systems when adequate rainfall has occurred

6. Protection of potential public water supply wellfields within the Blue Head Ranch Sustainable Community Overlay as identified in the County's Water Supply Plan

B.12. Central Water and Wastewater Facilities

The Blue Head Ranch CUDA shall be served by central water and wastewater facilities. Development within the CUDA will comply with the potable water and wastewater requirements as follows:

1. Central water and wastewater facilities shall be located on-site or immediately adjacent to the Blue Head Ranch CUDA and the site shall be designated on the Master Conceptual Plan and in the Detailed Community Public Facilities Plan.
2. Central water and wastewater facilities may be located immediately adjacent to the community greenbelt, provided the facility is adequately and appropriately buffered from view with berming and extensive landscaping, and such location does not adversely impact any natural resources.
3. All development within the Blue Head Ranch CUDA shall connect to a center water and wastewater facility except where isolated uses such as a guardhouse, golf course facility or guesthouse is located in a remote area, individual wells and Performance Based Septic Systems may be used.
4. Interim wells and aboveground holding tanks may be utilized during development for construction and / or sales trailers and model homes.
5. No connection to central water and sewer services outside the Sustainable Community Overlay shall be allowed unless such areas are added to the Blue Head Ranch Sustainable Community Overlay by means of a comprehensive plan amendment or as otherwise allowed by comprehensive plan amendment even though such services may run through external areas.
6. Water connections from within the Blue Head Ranch Sustainable Community Overlay to areas outside the Sustainable Community Overlay shall be permitted only for the purpose of providing fire protection services to surrounding areas.

B.13. Surface Water Management

The surface water management system for the Blue Head Ranch CUDA incorporates the functions of the natural on-site system, including seasonal hydro-periods (surficial aquifer/ water table elevations), continuity of conveyance systems and consistency with state water quality standards. The surface water management system shall incorporate all appropriate design and management practices (BMPs) recommended in the South Florida Water Management District's Environmental Resource Permit Information Manual in effect at that time, including any changes adopted by the District as part of their Northern Everglades initiative, to improve water quality and enhance environmental performance.

B.14. Transportation Network

The transportation network within the Blue Head Ranch CUDA addresses vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle and other modes of transportation as follows:

1. All streets within the CUDA shall be designed along a grid pattern to allow for circulation, ease of orientation, pedestrian safety and connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods.
2. Streets and intersections shall have adequate turning radii for emergency vehicles and shall have mountable curbs.
3. Identifies future transportation corridors for public transportation leading to and from the town center.
4. Identifies a location for a future satellite transit facility in the town center (2 acres maximum) to accommodate public transportation service, when available.
5. Requires shared parking for residential and non-residential uses in the town center.
6. Creates a pedestrian-friendly environment that supports walkability, including sidewalks, compact street intersections, street furniture, street and sidewalk landscaping with native canopy trees for shade.
7. Encourage the use of innovative and alternative forms of personal transportation.

8. Promotes and encourages internal capture of vehicular trips through the efficient placement of building and uses which facilitate shopping and employment that users can walk to, maximize non-motorized mobility, provide a connected pathway, bikeway and multi-use trail system, and create an interconnected network of roads to allow for trip dispersion and reduced trip lengths.

B.15. Separation

To provide a clear separation and definitive edge between the urban land uses and sustainable green assets, there shall be a greenbelt around the perimeter of the Blue Head Ranch CUDA that is a minimum of 150' and on average 300' in width.

B.16. Intergovernmental Coordination

Coordination between Highlands County and any local governments adjacent to the Blue Head Ranch Sustainable Community Overlay shall be required at the time of Planned Development approval.