Memorandum #3

DATE: February 21, 2017, Revised 11/13/17  PROJECT NO.: 527116088
TO: Lisa Barrett, Planning Manager
FROM: Christopher Dougherty, AICP, Planner
CC: Patricia Tyjeski, AICP, Senior Planner
SUBJECT: Urban Fringe 3 (UF-3)

S&ME has been tasked to review the Urban Fringe (UF-3) future land use category in the Manatee County Comprehensive Plan (Plan) and recommend Plan and LDC amendments to minimize reliance on Planned Development rezoning. The Urban Fringe is located outside the urban area and is an area of transition between the urban and rural lands. Manatee County has experienced large amounts of suburbanization in this transition area characterized by pockets of disjointed residential development. This memorandum contains analysis and recommendations for the creation of new zoning categories for the UF-3 future land use category intended to guide the development of lands outside the Urban Service Boundary but within the Future Development Area Boundary (FDAB).

Background:

The UF-3 land use category, which currently represents approximately 11% (51,655 acres) of the County’s future land use map and approximately 33% of the unincorporated area west of the FDAB, was established to facilitate logical urban expansion from the western urbanized area to the east as utilities became available. While the Plan provides for development in UF-3 to be low density urban or clustered low-moderate density urban, no zoning districts, aside from PD, were established to implement UF-3.

Future Land Use Element:

Policy 2.2.1.11 establishes the UF–3 future land use category. Policy 2.2.1.11.1 states that the intent of the category is to allow for the gradual (as urban services become available) and responsible expansion of development from the urban area to the Future Development Area Boundary. The UF-3 area has been transitioning from rural to low density urban or clustered low-moderate density urban, primarily residential subdivisions implemented through Planned Development zoning. Community serving non-residential uses are allowed in small quantities.

Policies 2.2.1.11.3 through 5 list the range of potential uses and the density/intensity ranges to be allowed. The types of uses mentioned include residential, neighborhood-serving retail wholesale and office, short-term agriculture, agriculturally compatible residential uses, farm-worker housing, public and semi-public uses, schools, low intensity recreation, and water-dependent uses (note that according to the definition of regional and community serving commercial, wholesale retail is deemed to be a regional-serving type of use).

The gross and net densities allowed in UF-3 are 3 and 9 units per acre, respectively. Non-residential intensity is limited to 0.23 (0.35 for mini-warehouses), and the size of neighborhood commercial uses is limited to 150,000 square feet for medium size and 300,000 for large size developments. Community-serving non-residential uses may be located at the intersection of an arterial and a collector (Policy 2.2.1.22.5). Mixed-use developments,
community-serving commercial uses, projects with a density of more than 1 unit per gross acre or 3 units per net acre, and projects exceeding 30,000 square feet require Special Approval.

**Zoning:**

Currently, there are 22 Manatee County zoning districts assigned to the land designated UF-3. To highlight a few of the trends, of the 51,655 acres of UF-3 land, 29,042 acres (56%) are zoned PD, 21,759 acres (42%) are zoned either A, General Agriculture (17,430 acres) or A-1, Agriculture Suburban (4,328 acres), and 785 acres (2%) are zoned for single family homes (RSF), see Figure 1. This does not include pending or recently approved rezoning applications.

Most of the agriculturally zoned properties are located on the eastern and northern periphery of the UF-3. If developed under their agricultural zoning designation (A and A-1), the most development that could be accommodated on those sites would be 7,814 dwelling units. However, if rezoned to Planned Development, those same lands would have the potential to generate approximately 65,277 dwellings yielding a projected population of 164,498 (assuming all uplands, 3 units per gross acre, and 2.52 persons per household).
Figure 1: Zoning within UF-3
Analysis:

**Growth and Development within UF-3:**

Reviewing the development that has occurred in the UF-3 area, it is clear that three distinct areas have formed with different characteristics. For purposes of this report, these areas have been called the North, Central, and South Districts, as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Example of Character Areas in UF-3**

North District is the area of UF-3 that is north of Erie Road/Wauchula Road (SR 62), Central District is the area between Erie Road/Wauchula Road and SR 64, and South District is the area south of SR 64. The North District alone is approximately 18,400 acres, which is nearly 5,500 acres larger than the cities of Bradenton and Palmetto combined. The North District includes the Parrish community and is still largely undeveloped. However, recent development approvals in the North District will change the complexion of the area as those developments begin to break ground. Many of the approved developments consist of low density single family residential units with a smattering of non-residential. One development (Robinson Gateway) is proposed to be a traditional neighborhood development (TND) and includes a mixture of uses.
Extending eastward from Bradenton, the Central District encompasses the Manatee River with the majority of the development in that area serving as a transition between the urban and rural areas. However, most of the development that has been approved through the PD process consists of disconnected low density single family residential subdivisions and golf course communities, causing urban sprawl. Urban sprawl is characterized by auto-dependent, low density development that requires the extension of infrastructure and services in an inefficient manner.

Similar to the Central District, the South District is characterized by existing low density single family residential subdivisions and golf course communities. This area was planned and developed largely through the Lakewood Ranch DRI.

**Future Roadway Network/Connectivity:**

Roadway access and connectivity are concerns for the UF-3 area. An indicator of urban sprawl includes the form and function of the roadway network. Much of the current development lacks meaningful connectivity. See Access and Connectivity memo for more detailed analysis on this subject. Many of the single family subdivisions are rife with cul-de-sacs, misaligned roads (and missed opportunities) and were developed without a clear future planned roadway network. For example, Figure 3 shows two examples of developments, one located on the south side of Golf Course Road and west of North Rye Road and the other south of Old Tampa Road. Red circles displayed on the maps show missed opportunities to connect to roads within or outside of the development. The development (pictured on the left), south of Golf Course Road, has nearly 20 cul-de-sacs and fails to connect to Mulholland Road (ends just beyond the bridge over the creek), which could potentially provide an important future east west connection over Gamble Creek. The other development has a single entrance, multiple cul-de-sacs and fails to connect to three adjacent developments to the west and south. Cul-de-sacs may be necessary, in some instances, to avoid natural features and provide for future road connections, but an overabundance of cul-de-sacs leads to disjointed developments with minimal connectivity. The development pictured on the right incorporated multiple cul-de-sacs, but also missed three opportunities to connect to roadways outside of the development all of which are nearly the same single family residential density.

**Figure 3: Example of Suburban Form in UF-3 and Missed Connections**

As with most urban sprawl, developments that lack sufficient connectivity limit the amount of opportunities to disperse traffic across the overall roadway network and tends to force traffic on to primary corridors that can only handle a finite amount of traffic. It should also be noted that this type of suburban design increases overall
trip lengths, which effectively make motorized vehicles the only viable way to make any type of utilitarian or recreational trip. Greater internal connectivity and cross connectivity should result in more efficient trips, reduce adverse impacts of forcing all residential traffic through limited connections to the thoroughfare network, and increase the viability of non-motorized modes.

On the other hand, through a master planned development, the South District has a future roadway framework that provides an opportunity for significant future connectivity provided the subdivisions are not designed with gates and cul-de-sacs. Similarly, although the North District is largely undeveloped, it has an opportunity through the planned future roadway network to include a much better system of connectivity than the Central District.

**Utilities:**

*Figure 4* shows existing sewer and water lines and building footprints in the UF-3 area. In the Central District, water lines have been extended from the west of the county all the way to the future development area boundary, and in some cases, beyond the boundary, which was established in the Potable Water/Waste Water Utilities Map of the Comprehensive Plan. Sewer service has also been extended east almost to the FDAB line. In the South District, the area south of SR 70 shows water and sewer lines extended beyond the future development area boundary, which are privately owned and operated. The area north of SR 70 shows service extending east to Lorraine Road. The North District is still very rural in nature. Water and sewer service covers the area between Eerie Road and Moccasin Wallow Road. The area north of Wallow Road does not appear to have any water or sewer lines yet.

The current Plan policies have not prevented suburban sprawl from spreading throughout the UF-3 area.

Existing agricultural land to the east of I-75 is at risk of continuing to be redeveloped into isolated single-family home developments as utilities (water, sewer and power) are mostly present.

Looking at parcel size for properties within the UF-3 area, it can be observed that the largest land holders are located in the North District and the eastern portion of the Central District (see *Figure 5*). Much of that land is zoned agriculture, but has recently been transitioning to PD as growth pressure continues to push outward from the urban centers of Palmetto and Bradenton.

**Land Use and Density:**

Density and land use are key contributors to urban sprawl. The term “urban sprawl” was coined in the late 1930s due to the effect the modernization of transportation options (cars) and increasing incomes had on development preferences. As incomes increased, families were able to afford cars and moved away from city centers for their own open residential plot of land. Sprawl is generally characterized by low-density, low-intensity development and typically lacks urban amenities, urban form and multiple transportation options.

Depending on the setting, low density residential development can mean a range of densities from 1 dwelling unit per acre (du/a) to 8 du/a. In the Manatee County setting, UF-3 is considered a low density residential category due to its 3 du/a gross residential density allowance. Although UF-3 allows 9 du/a net density, the effect of UF-3 has caused low density single family. Since its inception, the resultant development within the UF-3 category has been largely homogeneous single family, due to the lack of diversity in land use, density and intensity within the policies directing the development of UF-3.

Sprawl tends to emanate from areas that are dominated by a single urban center, similar to the Bradenton/ Palmetto epicenter. This is known as the monocentric city model, which is an economic theory that espouses the travails of suburban development, which explains that land rents decline, lot sizes increase, and population density decrease the further away we get from an urban center. Brueckner (2000, 2001) identified three potential factors of the monocentric city model that many developers fail to realize: traffic congestion (and air pollution), loss of the social value of open space at the urban fringe, and high costs of inefficient infrastructure associated with new low-density development.
Low density areas can still be developed in an efficient and sustainable manner if there is a mix of uses, housing diversity and services and facilities within reach. For example, the Smart Code recognizes that the Sub-Urban Zone (T-3), will generally consist of low density residential areas, but they are typically adjacent to higher zones that have some mixed use. It also recognizes that roads in the T-3 area tend to be irregular to accommodate environmentally sensitive lands. This zone may be lower in density, but through a design that emphasizes transportation connectivity, proximity to higher intensity areas, housing type mixture and urban form, it lessens the effects of sprawl.

Low density is not the only culprit of urban sprawl. To achieve a more diverse development pattern and to reduce reliance on major thoroughfares, higher densities and intensities should be incentivized. These higher densities/intensities would be conditioned upon connectivity, land use mixture, urban form, and housing type mixture goals. Density should not, however, be uniformly increased across the entirety of UF-3 without requiring certain criteria for the density/intensity bonus. Increases in the baseline density and intensity should only be available to activity nodes, or developments displaying the connectivity and urban form qualities, which offset, to a degree, the negative effects of urban sprawl.

This development type creates efficiencies in providing essential County services. Compact, mixed use development reduces utility, roadway, and infrastructure costs to install and maintain. The lengths of roadways and utility lines will be reduced, and the sizes of stormwater facilities will decrease. These efficiencies add to the sustainability of the County as a whole.
Figure 4. Map of Water and Sewer throughout Manatee County
Figure 5. Map of Utilities and Agricultural Land by Size in UF-3
Research:

Three counties dealing with similar urban fringe development pressures - Collier, Hillsborough and St. Lucie - were researched for this report. Each county deals with this issue in a different manner.

Collier is unique due to its large expanses of state and national wildlife preserves and very small amount of incorporated area. Collier County developed a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program that allows the Rural Fringe Mixed Use lands to receive development rights from sending lands (valuable environmental areas). TDR programs are great tools for setting aside large areas of preservation lands. However, TDRs are cumbersome and generally difficult to develop and administer. The TDR program applies to the Rural Fringe Mixed Use district (RFMU). The RFMU densities range from 1 du/5 ac to 3 du/ac with a maximum 0.45 FAR.

St. Lucie County has dedicated an entire element in their comprehensive plan, called Towns, Villages and Countryside (TVC), to serve as a more detailed plan for specific unincorporated areas of the county. The TVC element, similar to Collier County, establishes a TDR program. To achieve a desired development form within the specific areas, the TVC provides incentive-based options. For example, large developments over small incremental development, compact development, setting aside environmentally sensitive lands are all incentivized. This element also provides development form/design guidance for different aspects of each special area. The North St. Lucie County Special Area Plan includes 10 land use categories with densities ranging from 1 du/ac to 9 du/ac. However, the TDR program allows greater densities and intensities, but capped at a maximum development program.

Hillsborough takes a similar approach to urban fringe planning. Hillsborough County also developed an optional element of their comprehensive plan that provides special area aspirational goals that largely focus on community character and urban design qualities unique to each area. All areas address connectivity as a high community priority. The Comprehensive Plan provides county-wide guidance, while the Livable Communities Element provides additional guidance for specific areas within the county. Each area has its own vision, mini comprehensive plan, and LDRs. The advantage to having multiple community plans is that each area has a community-driven and coordinated vision that maintains the ideals and character that each community desires. The disadvantage is the long and sometimes contentious process of consensus building for each specific area and maintaining the goals of each area. Densities and intensities vary from one community to the next. For example, the Citrus Park Village has 11 land use categories with densities ranging from 4 du/ac to 24 du/ac and intensities ranging from 0.25 to 1.0 FAR.

Recommendation:

The lack of assigned zoning districts to implement the UF-3 future land use category is the reason why this area has developed through PD zoning. Most of the development that has occurred through PD could be developed using traditional zoning districts.

Typically, PD zoning districts are utilized for developments that are not contemplated by the code due to the unique characteristics of the development (e.g. lot sizes, setbacks, mixture of uses, etc.). The current form of development within the UF-3 is not unique and should not warrant a PD for every development. However, under certain circumstances PD rezoning would still be appropriate (e.g. development not anticipated by the code, innovative design, unique environmental conditions, etc.).

Due to the similarity in density, intensity and desired development pattern, it seems logical to establish similar zoning districts for the UF-3, MU-C (AC-3 and R), and MU future land use categories (see MU and LDC/Plan Consistency memos). The zoning districts would provide the necessary regulations to help establish potential neighborhood nodes within the UF-3 with residential support uses, which it lacks throughout. Additionally, the standards proposed in the Clustering memorandum would also apply to this area.
As noted above, the area with the most development potential is the North District. Due to its size, growth pressure and current lack of existing development, a specific area plan should be developed for the North District. This area stands to be the next major growth area within the County. Although the County has prepared a future road network, approved multiple rezonings, and engaged in discussions of the future of this area, a more consolidated approach would provide a more predictable development pattern and create an interconnected community rather than many disconnected quarter-acre lot subdivisions.

Additionally, to achieve a more diverse development pattern and to reduce reliance on major thoroughfares, higher densities and intensities should be incentivized, if the development achieves connectivity, land use mixture, urban form, and housing type mixture goals. Increases in the baseline density and intensity should only be available to developments displaying the connectivity and urban form qualities, which offset, to a degree, the negative effects of urban sprawl. We recommend adding the ability to increase the density and intensity in the UF-3 land use category. Criteria should be developed in the zoning districts that will be applied to UF-3. We recommend allowing a maximum density of 9 du/ac and a maximum FAR of 0.5 at nodes/activity centers, if certain development criteria are met (see Mixed-Use memorandum).
Appendix:

The following research and analysis addresses efforts of neighboring counties in guiding development along urban fringes.

A. Collier County

Collier County created the Rural Fringe Mixed Used District (RFMUD) to discourage urban sprawl through careful land use planning. A major component of the RFMUD is a transfer of development rights (TDR) program. The RFMUD is divided into three types of lands: Sending, Neutral and Receiving, which account for environmental sensitivity and value.

https://www.colliergov.net/home/showdocument?id=61991

1. Sending Lands

Sending lands are the most environmentally sensitive which is reflected in a narrow list of permitted uses.

Maximum density: 1 DU/ 40 AC

2. Receiving Lands

Receiving lands are the most appropriate for development and where residential development units can be transferred (through the TDR program) from Sending Lands. These lands also allow Rural Villages which allow for different densities.

Base density: 1 DU/ 5 Gross AC;
Maximum density: 1 DU/ 1AC

Village minimum density 2 DU/ AC and maximum density 3 DU/ AC [2016 white paper recommends increasing minimum density to 4 units per acre and maximum density to 7 units/ acre].

3. Neutral Lands

Receiving lands are designated for limited semi-rural residential development away from existing native vegetation and habitat.

Maximum density: 1 DU/ 5 Gross AC

B. St. Lucie County

St. Lucie County has devoted an entire comprehensive plan element to Towns, Villages and Countryside (TVC). The following excerpt from the TVC element provides the purpose and intent of this element.

The principles set forth in the Towns, Villages and Countryside Element (TVC) constitute a pro-active plan for future growth in St. Lucie County. The planning approach outlined in this element contains a strategy for development in the existing rural agricultural areas that will ensure that future growth is sustainable, predictable, protects and enhances the natural environment, and improves the citizens’ quality of life. The TVC preserves and enhances existing private property rights while providing incentive-based options to landowners intended to achieve these goals.

The TVC encourages a pattern of development that will preserve the rural character while still providing for future growth. Using the principles of Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND), the
strategy for new settlement in the undeveloped areas requires a sustainable growth pattern characterized by a mix of uses, building types and income levels as well as a pedestrian-friendly block and street network. The TVC preserves a significant amount of public open space, promotes strategies for viable agriculture, and helps mitigate the environmental impact of new development in the area. The TVC Element applies only to the Special Area Plan for North St. Lucie County.

The TVC element provides Special Area Plans (SAP) for specific areas throughout the unincorporated area. In the SAPs there are identified convenience center, neighborhood center, and village center nodes at specific intersections. To achieve varying densities, this element established a transfer of development rights program. Additionally, this element provides design guidance for different urban development patterns.

C. Hillsborough County

Livable Communities Element

Hillsborough County developed an optional element of their comprehensive plan that provides special area aspirational goals that largely focus on community character and urban design qualities unique to each area. All areas address connectivity as a high community priority. The Comprehensive Plan provides county-wide guidance, while the Livable Communities Element provides additional guidance for specific areas within the county.

A community or special area study provides more detailed specific recommendations on issues in a particular area of the county. Each community area goes through steps in the preparation of each study, including defining community boundaries, preparing a citizen participation plan, data collection, analyzing data and citizen input, providing community driven priorities and recommendations. Citizen participation is continued throughout the planning process.

Each special area study consists of the three following components:

1. Appropriate comprehensive plan amendments based on the community input;
2. Amendments to the land development regulations (LDR’s) to address the unique issues and character; and
3. Improvements necessary to achieve the vision.

Essentially, each special area has its own comprehensive plan, LDRs and capital improvements program. This type of planning takes considerable amounts of time and effort to develop and maintain. The advantage with establishing multiple community plans is that each area has a community-driven and coordinated vision that maintains the ideals and character that each community desires.