



## Agenda Item Summary

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**File #: 23-00594**

**Agenda Date: 10/10/2023**

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**Agenda Item Name:**

**Pine Hill Forest Strategic Ecosystem Special Area Study Scope of Work**

**Presenter:**

Ben Chumley, Principal Planner, Growth Management Department, (352) 374-5249

**Description:**

Request for approval of a Scope of Work for the County to initiate the process for a Special Area Study and Plan for the Pine Hill Forest Strategic Ecosystem in accordance with Section 402.100 of the Alachua County Unified Land Development Code (ULDC). Pursuant to Section 402.100(b) of the ULDC, the Scope of Work for a Special Area Study and Plan shall be presented to the Board of County Commissioners, and the Board may approve, deny, or approve it with modifications.

**Recommended Action:**

Approve the Scope of Work in accordance with Unified Land Development Code Section 402.100(b).

**Prior Board Motions:**

N/A

**Fiscal Note:**

Staff anticipates a maximum of \$100,000 will be needed for consultant services for this project. These costs will be covered under the adopted budget for the Growth Management Department (Fund #008-65-6500-554-34.00). Consultant services will be secured through the County's procurement process following approval of the Scope of Work.

**Strategic Guide:**

Environment

**Background:**

The Alachua County Comprehensive Plan calls for the development of Special Area Studies and Plans for areas designated as "Strategic Ecosystems". Strategic Ecosystems are ecologically sensitive areas that are identified in the KBN/Golder Associates Report, "Alachua County Ecological Inventory Project" (1996). These areas are designated in the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan, Conservation and Open Space Element.

Policy 4.10.2 of the Conservation and Open Space Element provides that strategies shall be implemented through the land use planning and development review processes to ensure that each strategic ecosystem is evaluated and protected based on the integrity of the ecological unit. The policy

further provides that the County shall create special area plans in cooperation with landowners to establish specific guidelines for strategic ecosystems prior to approval of land use change, zoning change, or development approval.

The Pine Hill Forest Strategic Ecosystem is located within the northwestern portion of the Urban Cluster. Urban development has occurred around much of the perimeter of this Strategic Ecosystem. The Strategic Ecosystem represents the largest area of contiguous undeveloped land remaining within the Urban Cluster, and as such, the special area study and plan is a proactive planning measure that is needed in order to set a framework for future development in this area that will also ensure that the Strategic Ecosystem resources are identified through ground-truthing and protected in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan. The study and plan will also address infrastructure considerations including extension of key roadways, utilities planning in coordination with service providers, and stormwater management.

The Unified Land Development Code Chapter 402 Article 16 spells out the process for special area planning. The process involves 3 steps: (1) Scope of Work, (2) Special Area Study (current step), and (3) Special Area Plan. The Scope of Work (current step) must identify the geographic areas included in the Special Area Study/Plan and the issues and process to be used for the Study. Pursuant to the Code, the Scope of Work must be presented to the Board of County Commissioners, and the Board may approve, deny, or approve it with modifications.