

ARTICLE XVI. - SPECIAL AREA PLANS

Sec. 402.96. - Purpose.

Special area plans are established as one mechanism to protect unique environmental, historic, or cultural resources within strategic ecosystems, significant habitat areas, and listed species habitat areas, or to address unique issues and circumstances that are not addressed through the generally applicable comprehensive plan policies and unified land development code. Special area plans may be utilized to enhance the livability of an area, protect the character of a neighborhood, plan for infrastructure and public facility needs, or facilitate joint planning with other jurisdictions. Special area planning is a collaborative planning process based on broad participation by members of the community.

(Ord. No. 05-10, § 2, 12-8-05; Ord. No. 2015-17, § 2, 12-8-15)

Sec. 402.97. - Applicability.

A special area plan may be appropriate for the following areas and circumstances:

- (a) Strategic ecosystems, as identified within the KBN/Golder Associates report, "Alachua County Ecological Inventory Project" (1996), and mapped generally on the KBN/Golder Ecological Inventory Map adopted in the comprehensive plan; except as provided in Article 4, Strategic Ecosystems, of Chapter 406.
- (b) Areas specifically identified by the board of county commissioners as part of a community and neighborhood planning program effort to address specific needs and circumstances.
- (c) Addressing unique issues and circumstances identified by residents or property owners of a particular geographic area, where such issues and circumstances are not otherwise addressed in the general comprehensive plan policies or unified land development code.
- (d) Properties containing significant habitat areas or listed species habitat areas if required by Chapter 406, Article III and Article IV.

(Ord. No. 05-10, § 2, 12-8-05; Ord. No. 2015-17, § 2, 12-8-15; Ord. No. 2016-10, § 2(Exh. A), 6-28-16)

Sec. 402.98. - Special area planning process.

The special area planning process shall be initiated by the board of county commissioners. Property owners, residents, or community organizations may request that the board of county commissioners initiate the special area planning process for a particular geographic area in accordance with Section 402.99.

The special area planning process consists of the following basic components:

- (a) A scope of work that identifies the geographic extent of the study; the unique issues or circumstances to be addressed as part of the study; the existing conditions, infrastructure, and natural resources relevant to an analysis of these issues or circumstances; the potential outcomes of the planning process in terms of the kinds of actions that would be implemented to address the issues or circumstances that have been identified; and the public participation process for the development of the study.
- (b) A special area study that includes an analysis of the existing conditions, infrastructure, and natural resources relevant to the issues or circumstances identified in the scope of work and recommendations for potential strategies or actions, such as comprehensive plan amendments, unified land development code amendments, capital improvement needs identification, or other

initiatives by the county or through public/private partnerships to address the unique issues or circumstances identified in the scope of work.

- (c) A special area plan that provides for implementation of the recommended strategies or actions identified as part of the special area study.

(Ord. No. 05-10, § 2, 12-8-05; Ord. No. 2015-17, § 2, 12-8-15)

Sec. 402.99. - Requests by residents, property owners, or community organizations for the county to initiate a special area plan.

Residents, property owners, or community organizations that wish to request that the county initiate a special area plan, shall submit a letter to the growth management department describing the reasons for requesting the special area plan and identifying the geographic area for which the special area plan is proposed. Upon receiving this request, growth management staff shall schedule a meeting with the requestors to discuss the purposes and procedures for special area plans, the specific issues to be addressed, and the desired outcomes of the special area planning process. The request shall then be forwarded to the board of county commissioners by staff for direction regarding preparation of a formal scope of work, in coordination with the interested persons, to be brought to the board for consideration in accordance with section 402.100(b).

(Ord. No. 05-10, § 2, 12-8-05; Ord. No. 2015-17, § 2, 12-8-15)

Sec. 402.100. - Scope of work components and procedures.

A scope of work is the first step in the special area planning process, and should be a collaborative effort between the county, property owners, and the public. The components and procedures for a scope of work shall be in accordance with the following:

- (a) *Specific elements of a scope of work.* The scope of work shall specify the following information, where relevant to the specific issues or circumstances proposed to be addressed as part of the special area study and plan:
 - (1) The geographic extent to be covered by the special area plan. A special area plan may be conducted for all or for portions of one or multiple adjacent strategic ecosystems, or for other areas of natural, cultural, community, or historic significance as specifically designated by the board of county commissioners. The defined area for study shall be sufficient to understand the nature of system values and function and relevant historic resources and infrastructure.
 - (2) Basic information concerning all properties within and immediately abutting the strategic ecosystem(s) or other planning area, including the acreage, current uses and owners for each parcel.
 - (3) Identification of the important ecological functions for the strategic ecosystem(s), or an inventory of the natural resources within other planning areas, based on available historical and digital map data, and other information sources.
 - (4) For strategic ecosystem special area plans, the type, extent, and schedule for ground-truthing to be conducted, identifying opportunities for verification of results by the county and affected owners within the strategic ecosystem(s) .
 - (5) Description of relevant infrastructure and public facilities that serve the planning area, including transportation facilities.
 - (6) Detailed description of the planning process that will be used to develop the special area plan. This shall include a description of the public participation requirements including community workshops and process for engaging stakeholders and the public in the

development of the special area study and plan, and the format of the outcome to be provided in the special area plan.

- (7) The specific planning issues that will be addressed through the special area planning process and their relationship to county-wide comprehensive planning goals and/or the vision of the community or neighborhood.
 - (8) For strategic ecosystem special area plans, the minimum qualifications of the environmental professionals that will be participating in the study.
 - (9) A work plan for development of the components to be completed as part of the special area study, as required under section 402.101.
- (b) *Consideration of scope of work by board of county commissioners.* The proposed scope of work for a special area study and plan shall be presented to the board of county commissioners. Upon receiving the proposed scope of work, the board of county commissioners shall take one of the following actions:
- (1) Approval;
 - (2) Approval with modifications; or
 - (3) Denial.

(Ord. No. 05-10, § 2, 12-8-05; Ord. No. 2015-17, § 2, 12-8-15)

Sec. 402.101. - Special area study.

After the scope of work is approved, the special area study shall be conducted in accordance with the approved scope of work. The study shall include data and analysis relating to land use, natural resources, and infrastructure that will be a basis for the recommendations and strategies to address the issues or circumstances that are the focus of the study, as detailed in sections 402.101(b) through (e). This process shall be a collaborative effort between the County, property owners, and the public, and shall involve the following steps.

- (a) *Stakeholders workshop.* All property owners within the area defined by the scope of the special area study, as well as other registered stakeholders, shall be notified in writing of the intent to conduct a study for the area, and shall be encouraged to participate in the process. As part of the development of the special area study the county shall conduct a minimum of one stakeholders workshop in accordance with Article 4, Neighborhood Workshops, of this chapter.
- (b) *Ground-truthing of site.* Where relevant to the specific issues or circumstances identified as part of the scope of work, site-specific ground-truthing of natural resources shall be conducted to evaluate critical system functions and values in accordance with the requirements of the natural and historic resources assessment (see Chapter 406, § 406.04). For special area studies within strategic ecosystems, site-specific ground-truthing shall be conducted using the KBN/Golder report, background mapping and historical data, and other specific factors identified in Article 4 of Chapter 406, as a guide to develop a current scientific assessment of the systems involved. The location and extent of specific natural resources, as well as higher and lower valued portions of the strategic ecosystem(s), shall be delineated within the study area, and with respect to surrounding ecosystems. Those areas found not to contain strategic ecosystem resources shall be eligible for consideration for development as part of a development plan or special area plan provided the ecological integrity of the strategic ecosystem as a whole will be sufficiently protected.
- (c) *Public infrastructure and services.* The study shall identify potential access to public infrastructure and services, and issues and needs related to public infrastructure and services.
- (d) *Land use analysis.* The study shall analyze the existing and future land uses within the study area. For strategic ecosystem special area studies, the study participants shall identify one or

more scenarios for the future uses of land within the area of study and identify the most appropriate locations for various types of land use, including as applicable, agriculture or silviculture activities, conservation areas, and development areas. Parcel ownership and management considerations shall be evaluated in order to develop a scenario that balances protection of the natural and historic resources with ownership interests and protection of private property rights.

- (e) *Recommendations and strategies.* The study shall include recommendations and strategies for follow-up action to address the specific issues or circumstances that have been analyzed as part of the study. Such recommendations and strategies may include, but are not limited to, proposed comprehensive plan amendments, proposed unified land development code amendments, proposed capital improvement needs identification, or other initiatives by the county or through public/private partnerships.
- (f) *Presentation to board of county commissioners.* The draft special area study shall be presented to the board of county commissioners. The board shall consider whether to accept the study and whether to authorize any specific follow-up recommendations or strategies that have been identified as part of the study.

(Ord. No. 05-10, § 2, 12-8-05; Ord. No. 2015-17, § 2, 12-8-15)

Sec. 402.102. - Special area plan.

Once completed, the special area study shall form the basis for a special area plan. The special area plan may include actions such as proposed comprehensive plan amendments, proposed unified land development code amendments, proposed capital improvement needs identification, or other initiatives by the county or through public/private partnerships that have been identified in the special area study. The special area plan may address topic areas such as land use, development standards, natural and historic resource protection, economic development and infrastructure planning. The special area plan shall be consistent with the overall goals, objectives and policies of the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan.

(Ord. No. 05-10, § 2, 12-8-05; Ord. No. 2015-17, § 2, 12-8-15)

Sec. 402.103. - Adoption of special area plans.

A special area plan shall be adopted through public hearings, as amendments to this ULDC, in accordance with article VIII, Unified Land Development Code Text Amendments, of this chapter. The comprehensive plan may require map or text amendments in connection with the adoption of a special area plan, in order to permit the land uses and development types. Such amendments shall be processed in accordance with article VII, Comprehensive Plan Amendment, of this chapter. Once adopted, the special area plan will govern all subsequent development requests within its boundaries.

(Ord. No. 05-10, § 2, 12-8-05)

Sec. 402.104. - Implementation of special area plans.

Development plan applications within established special area plans shall be submitted and processed in accordance with Article X of this chapter, Development Plan Review. If a special area plan has been adopted that applies to the parcels proposed for development, the applicant shall be required to demonstrate compliance with the adopted special area plan.

(Ord. No. 05-10, § 2, 12-8-05; Ord. No. 07-07, § 2(Exh. A), 4-27-07)