

Rural Concerns Advisory Committee Meeting
May 20, 2025
Information for Agenda Item 8. Staff Updates (if time permits)

Proposed Changes to Alachua County Unified Land Development Code (ULDC)
Related to Agritourism Substantial Offsite Impacts

At their regular meeting on April 22, 2025, the County Commission authorized the advertisement of public hearings to consider proposed standards to mitigate substantial offsite impacts from agritourism activities, considering public health, safety, and welfare of the community. The draft standards, proposed under existing ULDC Section 404.09 Agricultural Uses (attached), address potential offsite impacts from lighting, parking, and traffic associated with agritourism activities. Public hearings are tentatively planned for May 27th and June 24th.

Statutory Background

Florida Statutes section 570.86 defines “Agritourism activity” as “any agricultural related activity consistent with a bona fide farm, livestock operation, or ranch or in a working forest which allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes, to view or enjoy activities, including farming, ranching, historical, cultural, civic, ceremonial, training and exhibition, or harvest-your-own activities and attractions. An agritourism activity does not include the construction of new or additional structures or facilities intended primarily to house, shelter, transport, or otherwise accommodate members of the general public. An activity is an agritourism activity regardless of whether the participant paid to participate in the activity”.

Florida Statutes section 570.85 promotes agritourism “as a way to support bona fide agricultural production by providing a stream of revenue and by educating the general public about the agricultural industry”. It prohibits local jurisdictions from adopting or enforcing “a local ordinance, regulation, rule, or policy that prohibits, restricts, regulates, or otherwise limits an agritourism activity on land classified as agricultural land”. The statute specifically “does not limit the powers and duties of local government to address substantial offsite impacts of agritourism activities”.

A and A-RB Zoning Districts

The attached ULDC Section 404.09 references County zoning districts Agricultural (A) and Agricultural rural business (A-RB). Both zoning districts implement the rural/agriculture land use designation on the Future Land Use Map. The A district implements Comprehensive Plan policies to allow rural and agricultural areas to be developed in a manner consistent with the retention of agriculture, Open Space, and rural character; preservation of environmentally sensitive areas; and the efficient use of public services and facilities. The A-RB district implements Comprehensive Plan policies to provide for certain commercial or other uses on a limited scale serving or ancillary to agricultural activities.

ALACHUA COUNTY UNIFIED LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE
CHAPTER 404. - USE REGULATIONS
ARTICLE III. - AGRICULTURE

Proposed additions are underlined; proposed deletions are ~~struck-through~~

Sec. 404.09. Agricultural uses.

Agricultural uses are permitted by right in the A and A-RB districts and are allowed as limited uses in all other districts only on properties of one acre or more, except as otherwise prohibited in Section 404.13 for raising of poultry and livestock on less than five acres. Growing and processing of all other agricultural products for personal use is permitted on any property. Agritourism and ecotourism activities may be allowed subject to the following to mitigate substantial off-site impacts:

~~(a) — Agritourism and ecotourism activities.~~

~~(1a)~~ Agritourism and ecotourism activities such as tours, farm meals, classes, wildlife observation, workshops, and other educational activities are permitted as accessory to an ongoing agricultural use.

1a. An operation offering such activities must have direct access to a public road meeting County standards for sufficient right-of-way, minimum width, stabilization requirements, and maintenance.

2b. Any related site alteration or construction of temporary or permanent structures not otherwise required for the ongoing agricultural operation shall be subject to building permit and development plan approval and all applicable development standards in Chapter 407 of this ULDC and with the following standards for that portion of the site proposed for use as part of the agritourism or ecotourism activity to mitigate substantial offsite impacts:

i. Lighting levels for necessary security and safety are permitted. Lighting associated with agritourism activities shall minimize light trespass to adjacent properties. Maximum maintained illumination measures within 25 feet of the property line shall not be more than one half (.5) footcandles.

ii. The property must have adequate space for on-site parking outside of public rights-of-way.

iii. Agritourism activities that result in more than 50 weekday peak hour trips will require a traffic impact analysis to determine if any improvements are needed.

~~(2b)~~ Restaurants and tasting rooms may be allowed as accessory to an ongoing agricultural use subject to the standards of Section 404.67.5 of this Chapter.

~~(3c)~~ Bed and breakfast facilities may be allowed as accessory to an ongoing agricultural use subject to the standards of Section 404.70 of this Chapter.