

**PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE  
MARTIN COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

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**REQUEST NUMBER:** CPA 24-26, Rural Lifestyle TEXT

Report Issuance Date: March 18, 2025

**APPLICANT:** Martin County Board of County Commissioners

**REPRESENTED BY:** Paul Schilling, Growth Management Director

**PLANNER-IN-CHARGE:** Clyde Dulin, AICP  
Comprehensive Planning Administrator

<b><u>PUBLIC HEARINGS:</u></b>	Date	Action
Local Planning Agency:	April 3, 2025	
Board of County Commission Transmittal:	April 22, 2025	
Board of County Commission Adoption:	TBD	

**APPLICANT REQUEST:** This request is for an amendment to the text of Policy 4.13A.18 Comprehensive Growth Management Plan, Martin County Code (CGMP) regarding the proximity of the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation to the Secondary or a Freestanding (industrial) Urban Service District.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the proposed change to the text of Policy 4.13A.18(A)(1) CGMP because the proposed change will affect a minimum number of properties in proximity to the Freestanding Urban Service Districts (USD) and the Secondary Urban Service District (USD).

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The proposed text amendment would only permit the future land use designation to be sought for properties with a minimum 1,000 acres that are adjacent to the Primary USD or properties with a minimum 3,000 acres within 6,000 feet of the Primary USD. As drafted, the Rural Lifestyle future land use would not be permitted adjacent to the Secondary USD or a Freestanding USD in the future. The amendment proposed herein would be applicable prospectively.

**BACKGROUND:**

As of the date of this staff report, three Future Land Use Map amendments have occurred assigning the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation to 6,613 acres. The text of the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation was adopted by Ordinance 1185 on September 13, 2022 and amended by Ordinance 1222 on April 30, 2024. It was further amended by Ordinance 1232 on October 22, 2024.

Currently, a Future Land Use Map amendment may be sought for properties with a minimum 1,000 acres adjacent to the Primary, Secondary or a Freestanding USD and such properties may seek a maximum density of one residential unit per five acres. However, seeking a density of more than one unit per 20 acres also requires setting aside one acre off site for every two acres assigned a Rural Lifestyle future land use. The offsite acreage must be stripped of development rights and protected with an easement. A Future Land Use Map amendment may also be sought for properties with a minimum 3,000 acres located within 6,000 feet of a Primary or Freestanding USD. However, properties within 6,000 feet are limited to a maximum density of one residential unit per 20 acres.

**STAFF ANALYSIS**

The staff analysis that follows will consider the future land use designations that are adjacent to the Secondary and Freestanding (industrial) USDs and whether owners of properties totaling either 1,000 acres or 3,000 acres could potentially seek a future land use change in compliance with the existing Plan text and the proposed Plan text. However, it is not possible to know if property owners adjacent to the Primary, Secondary or a Freestanding USD would seek such a change or if such a change would be adopted through an amendment to the Future Land Use Map. Such amendments are legislative decisions and are subject to the “fairly debatable” standard of review. No attempt to replicate the in-depth analysis of a Future Land Use Map amendment has been done for any property or any general area as part of this text amendment.

The italic text below is the full text of Policy 4.13A.18. CGMP describing the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation. The changes to Policy 4.13A.18 are shown with strike and underline. No other changes to this policy are proposed. Please see the staff analysis below.

*Policy 4.13A.18. Rural Lifestyle. The Rural Lifestyle future land use designation is intended to guide development of self-supporting, self-contained and rural communities including affiliated recreational amenities with an emphasis on maintaining and enhancing natural and manmade open space and promoting sustainability and stewardship of the land and water.*

- (A) In order to be eligible for the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation the following ~~size and locational~~ criteria is required:*
  - (1) Be located within unincorporated Martin County and outside the Primary Urban Service District and satisfy one of the following:*
    - (a) be comprised of a minimum of 1,000 contiguous acres and a portion of the 1,000 contiguous acres must be adjacent to the Primary Urban Service*

~~District, the Secondary Urban Service District or a Freestanding Urban Service District; or~~

**Staff Analysis:** The existing text permits a property owner (with a minimum 1,000-acre property) to seek a Rural Lifestyle future land use designation when it is adjacent to the Primary USD, the Secondary USD, or a Freestanding USD. The text shown stricken above would require a minimum 1,000-acre property to be adjacent to the Primary USD. Owners of properties adjacent to either a Secondary or a Freestanding USD would no longer be able to seek a Future Land Use Map amendment to Rural Lifestyle.

*(b) be comprised of a minimum of 3,000 contiguous acres and, a portion of the 3,000 contiguous acres must be within 6,000 feet of the Primary Urban Service District; or a Freestanding Urban Service District.*

*(c) have an existing Rural Lifestyle future land use designation on [insert date of adoption], 2025; or*

*(d) be adjacent to a Rural Lifestyle future land use to expand a Rural Lifestyle Planned Unit Development existing on [insert date of adoption], 2025.*

**Staff Analysis:** The text change shown above would require a minimum 3,000-acre property to be within 6,000 feet of the Primary USD. Owners of properties (with a minimum 3,000 acres) within 6,000 feet to a Freestanding (industrial) USD would no longer be able to seek a Future Land Use Map amendment to Rural Lifestyle. Paragraphs (c) and (d) were added to provide consistency for existing Rural Lifestyle projects.

- (2) For purposes of this policy, adjacent property is the same as "abutting" or "adjoining" or "immediately adjacent" property and shall refer to property with a shared property line regardless of easements on the abutting properties. Properties separated by an existing road right-of-way shall be considered adjacent and contiguous.*
  - (3) Properties adjacent to or located within 6,000 feet of the urban service districts within or adjacent to the Village of Indiantown municipal limits are not eligible for the Rural Lifestyle land use designation.*
  - (4) To minimize the potential impact on public facilities and services, no property eligible for the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation may have a density of more than one unit per twenty (20) acres unless the property satisfies the size and locational criteria under Section 1(a) above and satisfies all other standards established herein.*
- (B) Approval of an amendment to the Future Land Use Map changing the future land use designation on a specific parcel to Rural Lifestyle shall be required.*
- (C) Development of a specific parcel with the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation shall be implemented through a Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning agreement and concurrent rezoning approved pursuant to the requirements of the Land Development Regulations and the standards established herein.*
- (1) Within a specific parcel designated as Rural Lifestyle on the Future Land Use Map, development shall not exceed a maximum building height of four-stories or 40 feet and a minimum of 70 percent of the gross land area shall be established*

*and maintained as open space. Wetlands, landlocked water bodies, upland habitat and land used for agricultural production may be used in calculating open space.*

- (2) Blended densities, as described in Chapter 4, Future Land Use Element, shall be permitted.*
- (3) Within the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation, gross residential density, including employee dormitory housing, shall not exceed the maximum density of the PUD.*
- (4) Employee dormitory housing shall be allowed, otherwise only detached single-family dwellings are permitted. Duplex dwellings and multi-family dwellings are prohibited.*
- (5) Development proposed at a density of one unit per 20 acres or less shall be required to comply with all minimum preserve area, habitat protection and open space requirements in the Comprehensive Plan. Development proposed at a density of more than one unit per 20 acres shall be required to exceed the minimum habitat protection and open space requirements and provide proportionally more of the type of public benefits listed in subsection (16) below.*
- (6) Development proposed at a density of more than one unit per 20 acres, but not exceeding the allowed maximum of one unit per five acres, shall provide open space preservation outside of the specific parcel designated as Rural Lifestyle on the Future Land Use Map. A minimum of one acre of open space shall be provided off-site for every two acres assigned the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation. The open space provided off-site shall be located within unincorporated Martin County and maintained in perpetuity. The following forms of open space may be provided off-site:
  - Native upland habitat,*
  - Wetland habitat,*
  - Lands in agricultural production,*
  - Areas of restored habitat,*
  - Water farming.**
- (7) The off-site open space shall be encumbered by a perpetual conservation or agricultural easement conveyed to at least one governmental organization and a 501 (c)(3) conservation organization, to be specified within the PUD Zoning Agreement. The property shall not be designated as Rural Lifestyle on the Future Land Use Map and shall not be rezoned, but shall be governed by the PUD Zoning Agreement and identified therein by legal description. The perpetual easement shall restrict future use of the property in perpetuity to open space, prohibiting development of the property inconsistent with this policy and the terms and conditions established within the PUD Zoning Agreement.*

*Amendments to the Future Land Use Map should consider the potential for on-site open space and off-site open space to create contiguous open spaces and corridors with other adjacent open spaces and preserves.”*

- (8) *Golf cottages are permitted as an accessory use to a golf course as long as the golf cottages remain owned, controlled and operated by the owner(s) of the golf course for the exclusive use of members and their guests. Golf cottages shall not be counted toward the maximum gross density. One golf cottage per hole of each regulation 18-hole golf course shall be allowed up to a maximum of 54 golf cottages with a maximum of 324 bedrooms. Each golf cottage shall be limited to one or two stories with 2 to 12 bedrooms per golf cottage.*
- (9) *Dormitories provided for permanent or temporary employee housing shall comply with all requirements of the Florida Building Code. A maximum of 6 employee dormitory beds shall be permitted per 100 acres of a specific parcel with a Rural Lifestyle future land use designation. The maximum number of single-family dwelling units permitted in the Rural Lifestyle future land use shall be reduced by one unit for every six employee dormitory beds.*
- (10) *One accessory dwelling unit shall be allowed on the same lot as a single-family dwelling unit. The accessory dwelling unit shall meet the following requirements:*
- An accessory dwelling unit shall not have more than one-half the square footage of the primary dwelling.*
  - It shall not count as a separate unit for the purpose of density calculations.*
  - Construction of an accessory unit shall require recordation of a unity of title prohibiting the conveyance of the accessory dwelling unit separate from the primary dwelling unit.*
- (11) *Notwithstanding the prioritization of public services and any prohibition to the extension of services outside the Primary Urban Service District, described in Chapters 4, 10 and 11, the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation may receive potable water and sanitary sewer service through facilities provided by a regional utility.*
- The extension of utility services from or through the Primary Urban Service District, the Secondary Urban Service District or Freestanding Urban Service District to a specific parcel with a Rural Lifestyle future land use designation and a Planned Unit Development zoning classification shall not serve any other property outside the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation.*
- All costs associated with the extension, ongoing service and maintenance of utility services serving a specific parcel with a Rural Lifestyle future land use designation and a Planned Unit Development zoning classification shall be paid by the Planned Unit Development. The following additional requirements shall also be applicable:*
- (a) A utility plant for a regional sewage system shall not be constructed within the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation.*
  - (b) Package water and wastewater treatment plants, as defined in Chapter 2, shall not be permitted in the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation.*
  - (c) Where the extension of wastewater utility service is not cost feasible for the regional utility or the applicant does not choose to connect to sanitary sewer*

*lines, enhanced nutrient-reducing onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems (as defined in Section 373.802 F.S.) may be used.*

- (d) A specific Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU) may be established for all costs associated with the extension, ongoing service and maintenance of utility services within each Planned Unit Development within the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation.*
- (12) The applicant for a PUD shall plan and appropriately fund public facilities consistent with Policy 14.1B.2. which requires that future development shall pay for the full cost of the capital improvements needed to address the impacts of such development. The PUD Agreement shall include conditions that address public facilities, infrastructure and the timing of development to be adopted prior to or concurrent with final site plan approval.*
- (13) An economic analysis prepared by a qualified economic analyst shall evaluate the PUD's impact on the availability of public services and facilities, and the benefits provided by the PUD, to show a net positive fiscal impact to the County.*
  - (a) Physical improvements made within the PUD shall have a taxable value that far exceeds the value of physical improvements typically found in the Agricultural future land use designation (1 unit per 20 acres). The gross density permitted within the Rural Lifestyle future land use shall not exceed one unit per five acres.*
- (14) PUD Zoning Agreement. All development within a specific parcel designated as the Rural Lifestyle on the Future Land Use Map must be developed in accordance with a Planned Unit Development (PUD) Zoning Agreement.*
- (15) Approval of a PUD agreement and master plan shall occur concurrently with a Future Land Use Map amendment becoming effective. The PUD master plan must include the entire acreage receiving the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation. If approval of a final site plan does not occur within five years, the Board of County Commissioners may initiate an amendment to the Future Land Use Map to cause the property to revert to its prior future land use designation or the most appropriate designation and rezone the property to a consistent zoning district.*
- (16) At a minimum, the PUD Zoning Agreement shall require the following public benefits:*
  - (a) The offset of biological and ecological impacts of new development through low impact development and environmentally beneficial practices including community farming, water and energy conservation techniques and innovative stormwater management systems that restore and enhance native habitat.*
  - (b) Enhanced water quality above the minimum requirements established in the Martin County Land Development Regulations through retention, detention and on-site irrigation prior to discharge into receiving waters and ultimately discharging into the St. Lucie River, the Loxahatchee River or the Indian River Lagoon.*

- (c) Protection and management of natural lands in perpetuity over and above minimum wetland and upland preserve area and open space requirements. The PUD Zoning Agreement shall require the perpetual management and/or maintenance of off-site lands encumbered by an agricultural or conservation easement and establish a funding mechanism for the required management and/or maintenance.*
- (d) Compatibility with adjacent agricultural uses and surrounding rural development through site design and location of open space.*
- (e) Foster healthy lifestyles by creating an interconnected trail system providing access to managed natural areas, open space, parks and civic spaces.*
- (f) Minimize greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled by providing a mix of transportation alternatives including multi-modal paths, alternative powertrain vehicles and equipment, on-site charging stations, etc.*
- (g) Provide for self-supporting project elements such as first-aid, private security, recreation amenities, residential multi-slip docking facilities, community store and/or land use restrictions to reduce traffic impact and dependence on the lands within the urban service districts. A community store shall be restricted to utilization by only the residents, guests and employees of the PUD and shall not exceed 6,000 square feet.*
- (h) Provide private or public recreation uses and events that support or complement sustainable rural or agricultural lifestyles and local charities or that provide direct environmental benefit, employment or economic opportunities.*

**Staff Analysis:**

There are four Freestanding USDs shown on Figures 1, 2 and 3. Each will be considered in the following analysis.

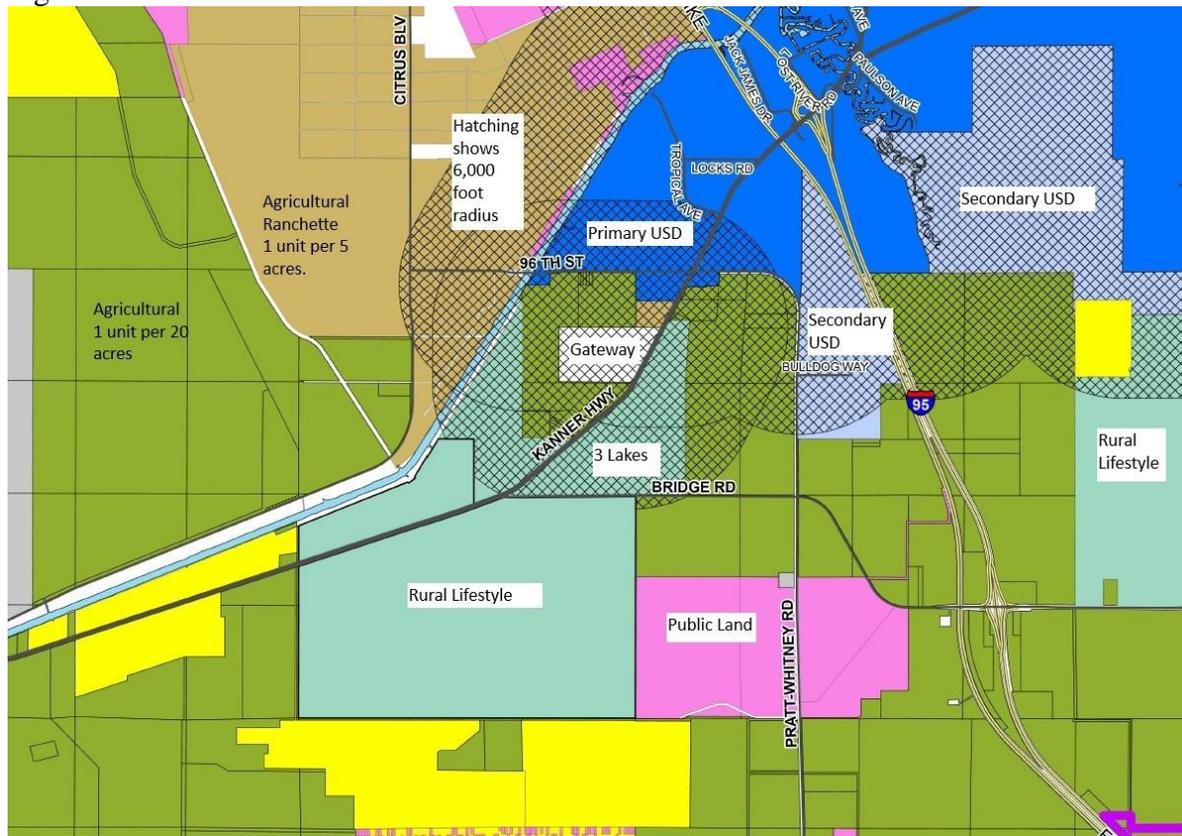
## Gateway

The Gateway Freestanding USD has the Three Lakes Rural Lifestyle property adjacent on one side. Other properties in the area with an Agricultural future land use designation are either less than 1,000 acres or already have adjacency to the Primary USD. Except for The Ranch (which has a Rural Lifestyle future land use designation) there are no properties with a minimum 1,000 acres that are adjacent to the Gateway Freestanding USD.

The 6,000-foot radius (shown with cross hatching) does extend west of the Okeechobee Waterway (C-44 Canal) however that land has an Agricultural Ranchette future land use designation, allowing one unit per five acres. A property owner seeking the Rural Lifestyle future land use within 6,000 feet of an urban service district would be limited to a maximum of one unit per 20 acres. Agricultural Ranchette property owners in the hatched area west of the Gateway Freestanding USD would be asking for a substantial density decrease in exchange for the recreational uses permitted by the Rural Lifestyle future land use and the potential for centralized water and sewer service.

The hatching pattern east of the Gateway Freestanding USD covers property that is also adjacent to the Primary USD and would still be able to seek an amendment following the proposed text change. Please see the following Figure 1, based on the Agricultural Land in Private Ownership map.

Figure 1.



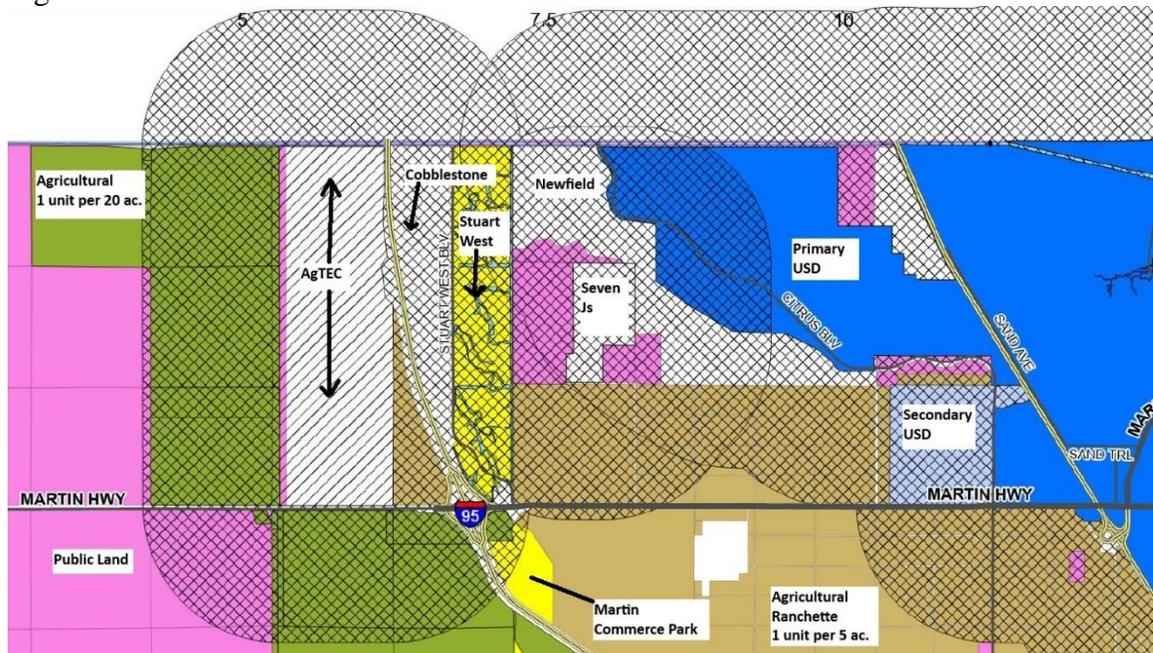
Seven J's

The Seven J's Freestanding USD has public land on the north and west and the Mixed-use Village future land use (Newfield) to the east. Private property to the south does not appear (at this time) to have ownership equal to 1,000 acres. The land to the south also has the Agricultural Ranchette future land use designation with a density of one unit per five acres.

When a one unit per five-acre density is sought for land with a Rural Lifestyle future land use, one acre must be set-aside under an easement for every two acres of Rural Lifestyle land. This creates an overall density that is less than one unit per five acres. The Agricultural Ranchette lands adjacent to Seven J's can cluster density at one unit per five acres without the special set-aside of land required by the Rural Lifestyle future land use. The higher density of the Agricultural Ranchette future land use must be compared by a landowner to the potential for recreational uses and centralized water and sewer service.

Agricultural Ranchette property owners (not adjacent) in the hatched area south of the Seven J's Freestanding USD would be asking for a substantial density decrease in exchange for the recreational uses permitted by the Rural Lifestyle future land use and the potential for centralized water and sewer service. Density cannot exceed one unit per 20 acres when the Rural Lifestyle future land use is within the 6,000-foot hatching. It would appear there is a very low probability a landowner adjacent to or within 6,000 feet of the Seven J's Freestanding USD would seek a Rural Lifestyle future land use. Please see Figure 2 below.

Figure 2.

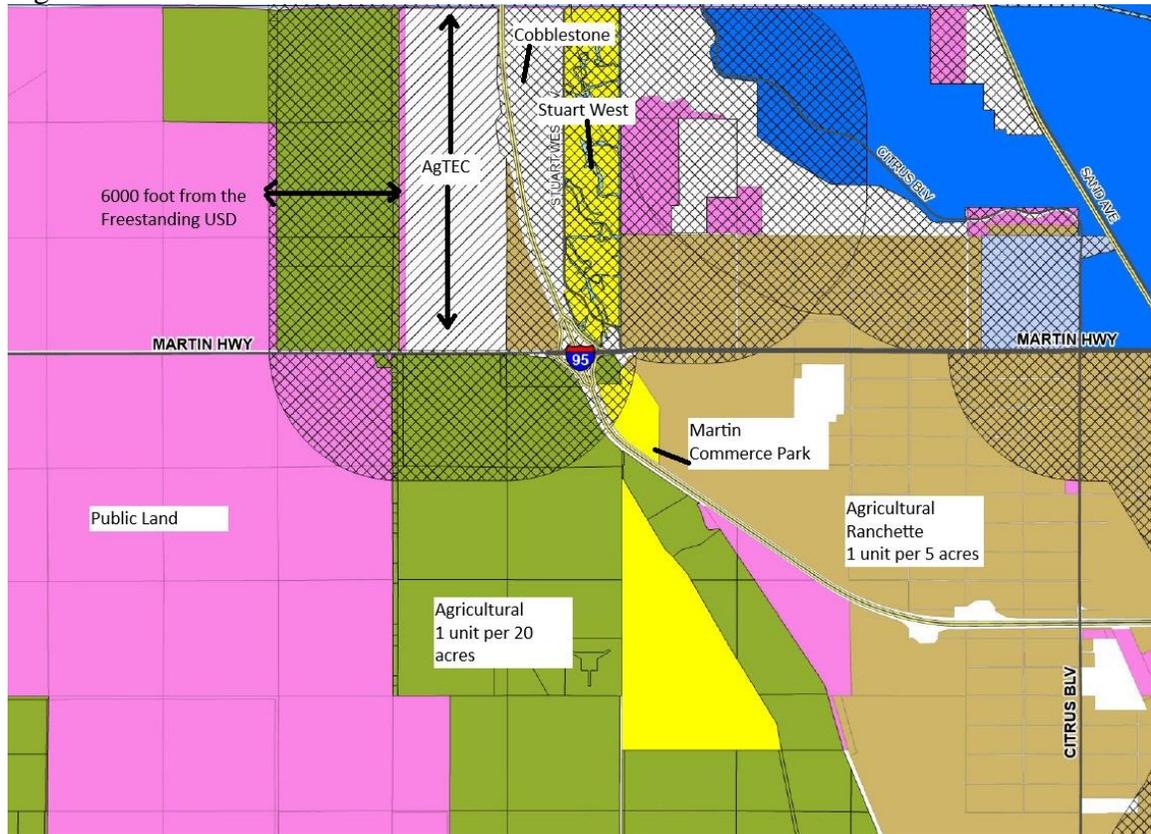


AgTEC and Martin Commerce Park

The AgTEC and Martin Commerce Park Freestanding USDs are both near the SW Martin Hwy./ Interstate 95 interchange. Like the Seven J's Freestanding USD, the lands east of Martin Commerce Park have the Agricultural Ranchette future land use designation with a density of one unit per five acres. It would appear there is a low probability a landowner east of the Martin Commerce Park Freestanding USD would seek a Rural Lifestyle future land use. The area south of the Martin Commerce Park Freestanding USD (west of Interstate 95) has the Agricultural future land use and is the same 1,000 plus acre area that is adjacent to the AgTEC Freestanding USD.

Properties to the west and south of the AgTEC Freestanding USD have the Agricultural future land use designation and the ownership in both cases appear to exceed the minimum 1,000 acres. Based upon current ownership these properties appear to have the necessary acreage and adjacency to Freestanding USD to apply for a Rural Lifestyle future land use designation. Seeking a Rural Lifestyle future land use would not result in a density decrease that would be necessary on other areas where the Agricultural Ranchette future land use is assigned. Properties to the west and south of the AgTEC and Martin Commerce Park Freestanding USD appear to be the properties most affected by the proposed text change. Lands farther to west and southwest are in public ownership.

Figure 3.



### Secondary Urban Service District

Currently, a 1,000-acre minimum Rural Lifestyle future land use designation may be sought on a property adjacent to the Secondary USD. There are three separate areas of unincorporated Martin County where analysis of the Secondary USD should be reviewed.

### Palm City

The Canopy Creek subdivision occupies most of the Secondary USD in Palm City. The lands on two sides have higher densities or are in public ownership. The lands on the west and south sides have the Agricultural Ranchette future land use designation. However, much of these lands are divided into five- or 10-acre parcels in the Palm City Farms Plat and assembly of 1,000 acres for a Rural Lifestyle community may be a challenge. As discussed previously in this report, seeking a Rural Lifestyle future land use designation over the Agricultural Ranchette future land use would not permit equal density and would require acreage to be set-aside under an easement that is not required in the Agricultural Ranchette future land use. No properties adjacent to the Secondary USD in Palm City should be affected by the proposed text amendment.

### Tropical Farms

The Highpointe subdivision, South Fork High School and the Foxwood subdivision occupy much of the Secondary Urban Service District in Tropical Farms. Current ownership of properties that have a minimum 1,000 acres and are adjacent to this urban service district are also adjacent to some portion of the Primary USD. Due to the adjacency of these properties to the Primary USD, no properties adjacent to the Secondary USD in Tropical Farms should be affected by the proposed text amendment.

### West of Hobe Sound

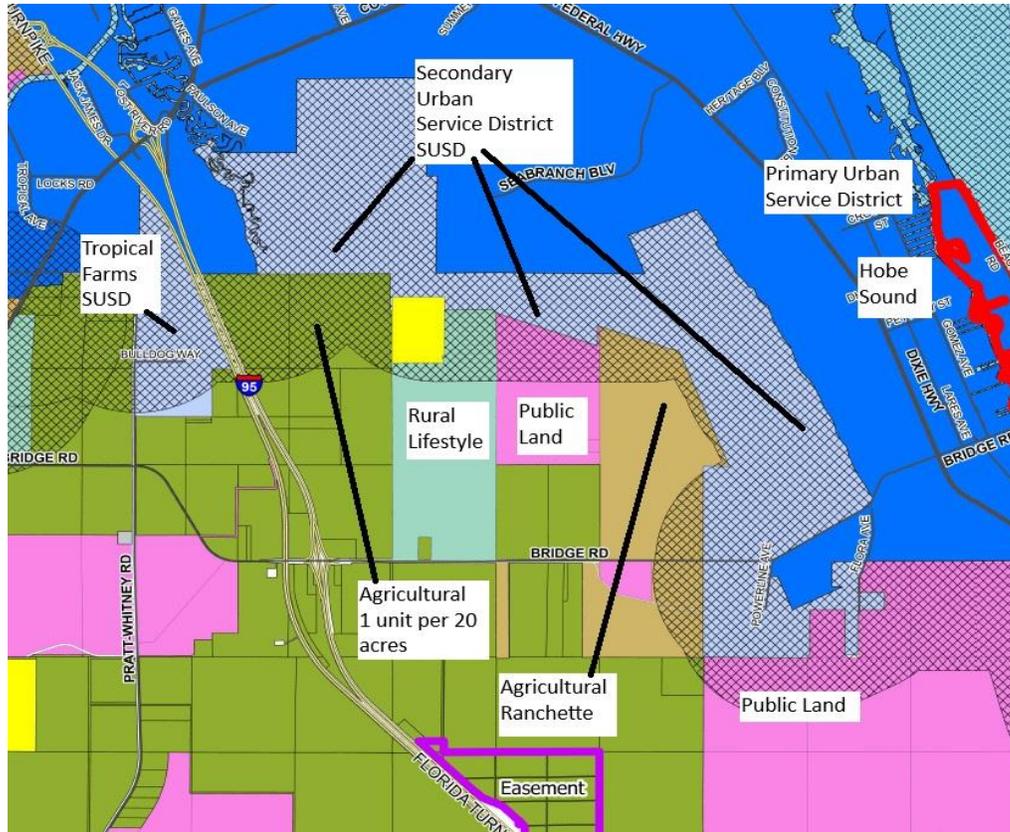
The Secondary USD west of Hobe Sound is shown in Figure 4 below. That portion of Agricultural land east of Interstate 95 appears to exceed 1,000 acres and is adjacent to both the Primary and Secondary USDs. Based upon the current land ownership, adjacency to the Primary USD would permit this property to be considered for the Rural Lifestyle future land use designation. The proposed text change would not appear to affect a potential application on this property.

Looking farther east of Interstate 95, and along the edge of the Secondary USD, a ±250-acre parcel (shown in yellow) does not meet the 1,000-acre minimum. Farther east, a ±1,400-acre property already has the Rural Lifestyle future land use. Farther east are public lands shown in pink. Looking farther east and south along the edge of the Secondary USD are lands with the Agricultural Ranchette future land use designation allowing a maximum of one unit per five acres. As discussed previously in this report, the Agricultural Ranchette lands can cluster density at one unit per five acres without the special set-aside of land required by the Rural Lifestyle future land use. The higher density of the Agricultural Ranchette future land use must be compared by a landowner to the potential for recreational uses and centralized water and sewer service.

The proposed text change does not prevent the possibility of seeking a change from Agricultural Ranchette to Rural Lifestyle within 6,000 feet of the Primary Urban Service District in Hobe Sound. As discussed previously in this report, that would also require a

density decrease from one unit per five acres to one unit per 20 acres. Properties in proximity to the Secondary USD in Hobe Sound should have a very low probability of being affected by the proposed text amendment. Please see Figure 4 below.

Figure 4



**CONCLUSION**

Staff recommends approval because the proposed text amendment will affect a minimum number of properties in proximity to the Freestanding USDs and the Secondary USD.

**3. FIGURES/ATTACHMENTS**

- Figure 1, Gateway Freestanding USD
- Figure 2, Seven J's Freestanding USD
- Figure 3, Martin Commerce Park and AgTEC Freestanding USDs
- Figure 4, Secondary USD, west of Hobe Sound
- Agricultural Land In Private Ownership (Large Acreage)
- Figure 4-2 Urban Service Districts.
- Resolution 24-12.18 initiating the text amendment.
- Notice