

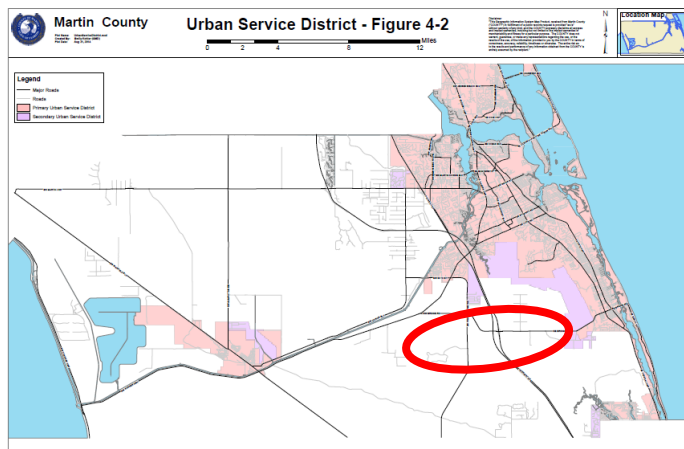


Executive Summary of Guardians Position on Proposed Rural Lifestyle Amendment

The Guardians are opposed to the Rural Lifestyle Zoning (RLZ) Amendment as currently proposed.

As described in greater detail in the following Position Statement, the Guardians would support the Amendments, provided:

1. The spatial extent of the RLZ is limited to the area shown below (~14,000 acres);
2. A minimum of 50% of the new ad valorem taxes generated by RLZ projects will be committed for acquisition of conservation lands;
3. A task force is created to study and develop a plan for western lands;
4. Consideration is given for planning of corridors;
5. A commitment is made for permanent protection of a 1,500' corridor frontage along the Bridge Rd./Discovery project as open space (excepting existing impermeable surfaces);
6. Water quality monitoring is obligatory and modifications are required if discharges are harmful;
7. Analysis of site-specific geology/geohydrology and monitoring ensures that chemicals from the golf course and polo fields do not contaminate the surficial aquifer;
8. A commitment is made to conform with Best Management Plans for golf courses;
9. Potential use of "Advanced Water Treatment Systems" as necessary to ensure that heavy metals, herbicides, pesticides, pharmaceuticals, PFAS and/or other carcinogens will not be introduced into the environment;
10. Analysis is undertaken to identify impacts on County "levels of service" (e.g., access to beaches, emergency services, law enforcement, etc.);
11. The Amendment sets a maximum intensity standard, establishes meaningful and predictable standards for the future use and development of land and provides meaningful guidelines for more-detailed land development and use regulation; and
12. The Amendment stipulates that any "open space" within the bounds of an individual subdivided house lot is excluded from the required 70% on-site open space; development rights on the off-site preserved open space are retired upon project approval; and the 501(3) (c) conservation organization should be long-standing and experienced in open space management and not created specifically for, or under the control of, the development.



The Guardians of Martin County support the proposed Rural Lifestyle Zoning if it is limited to the area outlined in red (~14,000 acres) and the previously described stipulations are adopted.



Position Paper on proposed Rural Lifestyle Zoning Amendment to
Martin County's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan

The Guardians Board of Directors, donors and staff consultants have been in frequent discussion with the Martin County Growth Management staff since the proposed Rural Lifestyle Comp Plan Amendment was first considered by the County Local Planning Agency on January 20, 2022. We believe that, if approved by the Martin County Commission as currently drafted, the adoption and implementation of the new Rural Lifestyle Zoning (RLZ) would have far-reaching deleterious impacts on the future of Martin County. **Accordingly, the Guardians do not endorse the RLZ Amendments as currently drafted and presented.**

The Guardians are willing to support the RLZ Amendments, however, if the spatial extent of their application is restricted and approved now only for the roughly 14,000 acres, (approximate boundary identified on the last two pages of this paper) and a variety of related issues (e.g., protection of water quality, establishment of a fund for acquisition of environmentally valuable lands, among other objectives, including the potential expansion of subsequent amendments to other areas, etc.) that are identified and described hereafter are accepted as stipulated provisions of the Approval.

If the RLZ is to be made available to an area larger than what is shown on the last two pages of this memo, we request that consideration of the RLZ Amendments be deferred for a period of 6-12 months during which time a Martin County Environmental Initiative is undertaken, with a County Commission appointed Task Force of stakeholders engaged in extensive meetings to further refine details of the proposed new zoning category. We suggest that the Task Force be composed of a diverse group of stakeholders representing different constituencies that are interested in the future of western lands in the County, and that the Task Force be supported by County staff and operated in full compliance with the Florida Sunshine Law. This Initiative would stimulate the development of a thoroughly considered strategy to permanently protect our unique Martin County difference, that which makes our county such a desirable place to live and work.

If these additional steps are not taken, and for the reasons described hereafter, the Guardians will not endorse the current RLZ Amendments as they are presently proposed.

Of utmost importance to the Guardians, is that, in spite of two County-sponsored Public Hearings (i.e., LPA Hearing on January 20, 2022 and Board of County Commission (BOCC) hearing on

February 22, 2022), a Workshop facilitated by the Guardians on March 23, and an open meeting by the Martin County Conservation Alliance (MCCA) on March 29, 2022, many questions remain un-answered and critical wording in the proposed Amendment remains un-refined.

On numerous occasions, the Guardians have met with proponents of the Becker/Discovery Lands project and County staff to learn details of the project. We believe that:

1. Previous uses of the ~1,500-acre Becker property have nearly totally eliminated significant natural resources from the site. It is unfortunate that the spread of diseases in the citrus industry has ruined the agricultural profitability of the land. The current lack of natural resources, however, makes these 1,500 acres considerably different than many other large tracts of land in Martin County that are zoned agricultural and which could potentially be available for development pursuant to the RLZ Amendments as currently proposed and shown in the County's Figure depicting "Agricultural Land in Private Ownership (Large Acreage)" dated March 16, 2022.
2. Restoration of approximately 120 acres in the NE corner of the property is likely to have a beneficial effect on the ecology of the Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park (ARPSP), and possibly the South Fork of the St. Lucie River, so we support this aspect of the project.
3. Donation of the existing stable and a corridor along the east side of the Becker property to create a future equestrian access to ARPSP is a potential public benefit of the project. We are aware, however, that the State of Florida has been working on updating the Unit Management Plan for ARPSP, and that an alternative point of access from the Becker property is not included in the plan for the current ten-year planning period. Access to ARPSP, and even use of the stable area is constrained by the presence of a high water table and nearby wetlands, which may explain to why this area has not been selected by the State as either the primary or secondary point of access to the Preserve. Given these constraints, while the Guardians do see some public benefit in the proposed donation, it is of limited value if this parcel is not accepted for management by ARPSP.
4. The Guardians support the offer by the applicant to return the historical train station to "downtown" Hobe Sound for the benefit of the public.
5. The Guardians are aware of previous long-range planning studies that included western areas of Martin County. The Sustainable Visioning process conducted by a consultant working on behalf of the County in the 1990s included a genuine community engagement component, a process that was not employed as part of the current Comprehensive Plan Amendment process. Multiple well-advertised workshops held in different areas of the County engaged a cross-section of the community, which resulted in a product that, while

not perfect, represented the views of the stakeholders and members of the public who chose to become involved.

The impacts of the current proposal (which would amend the Comprehensive Plan in a way that was expanded from an initial proposal for applicability to a single property owner to agricultural owners throughout areas outside the urban services districts), have not been fully studied. Many residents were not unaware of the breadth and scope of the Amendment, and requests to the County to “slow the process down” to allow more public participation have not been accepted. As a consequence of this history and an on-going lack of transparency, there is a lack of confidence that decision-makers are acting in support of the majority of their constituents in a way that is best for Martin County while protecting the private property rights of landowners, now and in the future.

6. The Guardians support the Commission’s suggestion to assign 50% of the “new” ad valorem taxes that would be generated by developments approved pursuant to the RLZ Amendment to acquire environmentally valuable lands. We are concerned, however, that there are a variety of factors outside the control of a property owner/developer that could prevent the achievement of the owner’s economic analysis targets

The Amendment currently under consideration does not include this provision, and inclusion of such a binding commitment is a significant and critical component that must be developed and refined before the new Amendments are considered for adoption. We understand that fiscal analyses will vary with other future development(s) and that economic benefits may be different. Furthermore, the stated “inability to bind future commissions” gives pause that, what might be negotiated to satisfy current opposition, cannot be assured to continue in a manner that is beneficial to residents unless such protection can be negotiated to be part of the Amendment.

7. The Guardians believe that preventing degradation of surface waters and groundwater resources is critical. We are concerned that neither the proposed Becker/Discovery Land proposal, nor other potential developments under the future RLZ Amendment are currently being required to conduct water quality monitoring of off-site discharge (i.e., surface discharge and through percolation into the surficial aquifer). We believe that any project to be developed pursuant to the RLZ must be required to meet state water quality standards *and* not cause degradation to the receiving waters. We believe that the Amendment must include continuous in-stream monitoring, which would include nutrients, metals, herbicides, pesticides and their breakdown products, pharmaceuticals and PFAS. Further, we believe that the Amendment must include a provision that if monitoring documents that discharges are having adverse impacts, that the owner/developer is required to upgrade/retro-fit the system to prevent further degradation, for the life of the facility.

8. The Guardians are concerned about the protection of groundwater resources. Presently neither the Amendment nor the Planned Unit Development step of the process require that site-specific geologic/hydrogeologic analyses be performed prior to approval. Requiring these studies prior to consideration of a proposed project is particularly critical when a project includes the creation of lakes that will be used for surfacewater management and which have the potential to interact with a sub-surface confining layer.
9. Similarly, the Guardians are concerned that the inclusion of “advanced wastewater treatment system(s) consisting of individual treatment units that treat domestic waste to secondary standards may be utilized as permitted by the State of Florida” will not prevent nutrients, heavy metals herbicides, pesticides, PFAS and other potential carcinogens from entering the aquatic environment where they could pose a threat to the health and safety of our residents, visitors and the environment.
10. The Guardians are concerned about a potential lack of regulation on the number, size and potential effects of worker housing and “small-scale service establishments necessary to support rural and agricultural uses”. Without regard to the extent to which these structures may be currently allowed on agriculturally-zone lands under the Comp Plan, the construction and occupation of these ancillary facilities will potentially require County services (e.g., utilities, law enforcement, emergency/fire rescue, schools, use of roads, beaches, parks and other “Level of Service” commodities) all of which are more expensive for the County to provide based on the distance from the Urban Service District boundary. We concur with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity’s comments dated March 31, 2022 regarding a lack of data and analysis, which indicated that the Amendment, as presently written, “does not: a) Set a maximum intensity standard; or b) Establish meaningful and predictable standards for the use and development of land and provide meaningful guidelines for the content of more detailed land development and use regulations”.
11. The Guardians are concerned that provisions that offer/commit to creating and maintaining private open space may offer little genuine benefit to taxpayers as currently proposed. Potential improvements to address this shortcoming are possible, but not within the expedited schedule under which the current process is being driven.
12. The Guardians believe that financially-viable agriculture should be an on-going component of Martin County’s economy. We are concerned that adoption of the proposed RLZ Amendment on the initially proposed >130,000 acres (and a somewhat reduced acreage) may have unintended adverse impacts on agriculture that have not been adequately evaluated. Concerns that should be considered are the acreage in

different types of agricultural production (e.g., citrus, row crops, sod etc.), use of abandoned citrus for solar facilities), impacts on infrastructure, land values etc.).

13. The Guardians share the concerns voiced by others in the community, that provisions associated with this Amendment, and potentially all future PUD Agreements and conservation easements, are subject to change by a majority of a future County Commission.

14. The Guardians believe that additional time is also necessary in order to address comments/suggestions raised by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity and other state commenting organizations.

Based on these, and a myriad of other unknowns, it is the Guardians position that approval of the proposed Rural Lifestyle Amendment should be postponed until such time as a Martin County Conservation Initiative Task Force has been created to evaluate the future development potential of the lands outside the USB, further discussions are held within the community, and details of the current proposal are further discussed and refined.

In accordance with “the precautionary principle” (a decision-making tool to assist in dealing with highly uncertain risks), if consideration of the proposed amendment is to proceed, it is the Guardians recommendation that the spatial applicability of the RLZ be restricted to the area shown on the following figures. The boundaries of the limited polygon shown hereafter are proposed based on the adjacency to the existing boundary of the Urban Service District (and therefore at a location where providing public services is more cost effective than more distant areas), the presence of abutting properties on the north, south, east and west that are not conducive for urban lifestyle development, and the desire to provide an incentive to preserve a higher proportion of open space and habitat protection in the critical headwaters of the South Fork of the St. Lucie River than would likely be otherwise proposed.

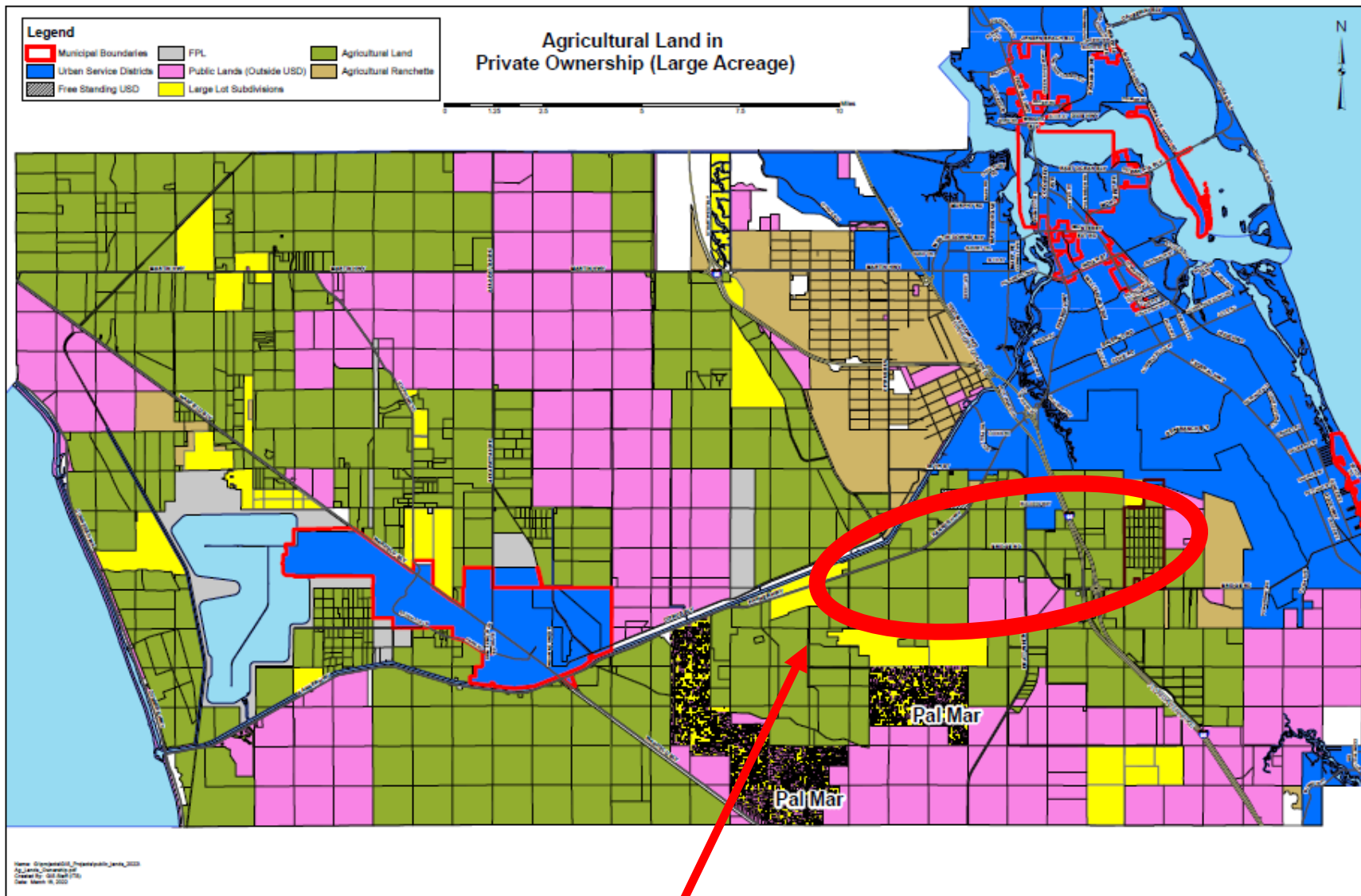
In summary, reducing the potential spatial extent of this zoning designation by approximately 90% below what was initially proposed, and integrating the protective covenants identified previously and those that address comments by state agencies could:

1) Allow the Becker/Discovery Land project to move forward;

2) Create a new permanent, non-taxpayer funded income stream for acquisition of environmentally valuable lands by allocating 50% of the new tax revenues that would be generated as a direct result of construction of a project pursuant to the RLZ. The Fund would be created through a yet-to-be written and BOCC-adopted ordinance and used for acquisitions in the four key areas of projects within the boundary of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, the Loxa-Lucie/Atlantic Ridge Ecosystem. Pal-Mar and the Indian River Lagoon Blueway; and

3) Give owners of other agricultural lands adjacent to the Urban Service District boundary an additional opportunity to use their land in an economically-profitable way, while ensuring permanent protection of a minimum of 70% of open space.

Potential expansion of the spatial limit of the applicability of the Rural Lifestyle zoning could be considered in the future, based on the results of the Martin County Conservation Initiative Task Force and the degree of success of a limited number of trial implementations.



Base map Source: Martin County

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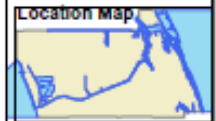
Martin County

Plan Name: UrbanServiceDistrict.mxd
Created By: Emily Foster (2011)
File Date: Aug 25, 2014

Urban Service District - Figure 4-2

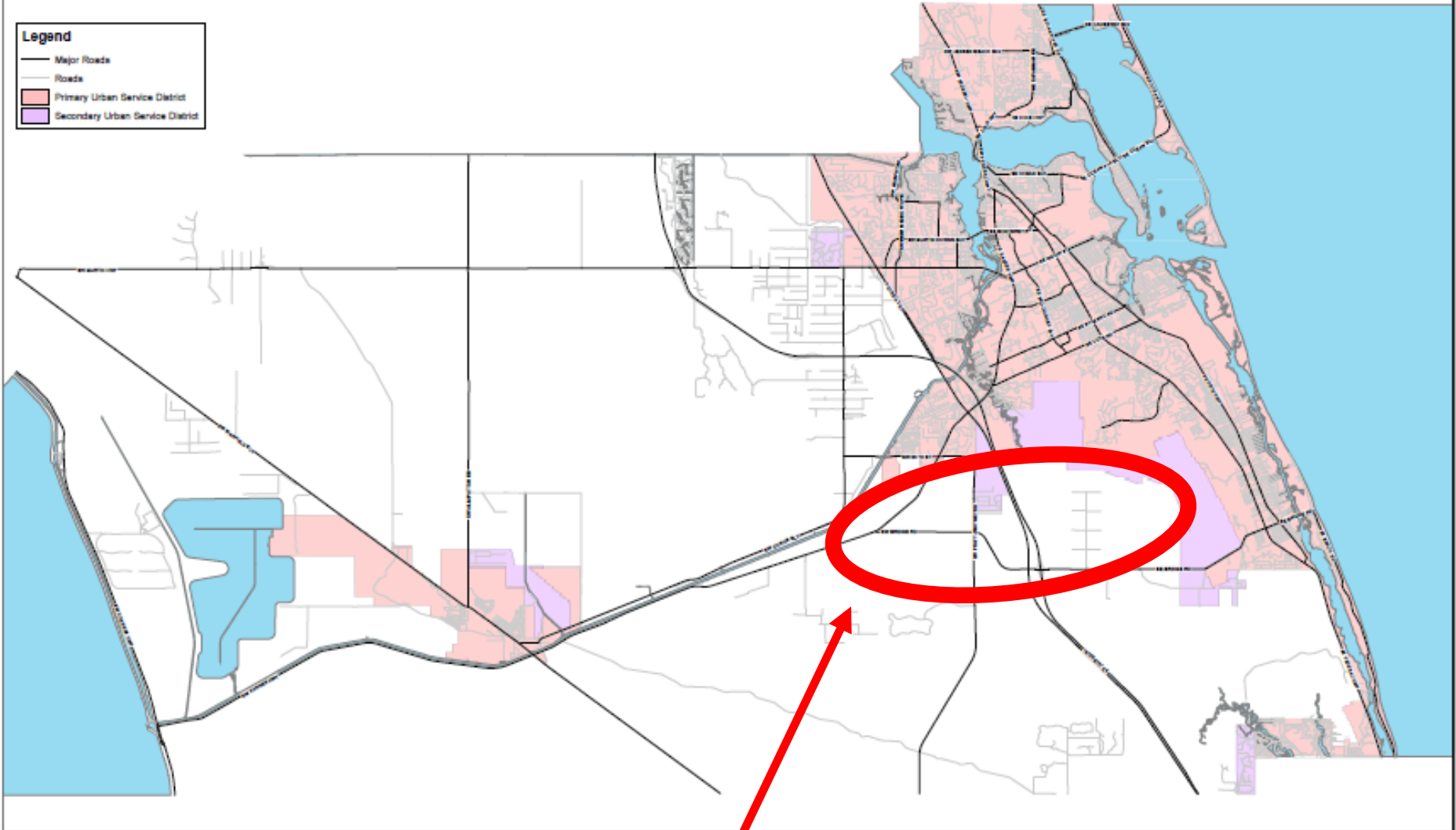


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Legend

- Major Roads
- Roads
- Primary Urban Service District
- Secondary Urban Service District



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