



Position Statement
Fellowship Rural Activity Center Expansion

Horse Farms Forever® **supports** the application by Meridian Land Holdings, LLC. to expand the Fellowship Rural Activity Center (RAC) by 19.2 acres for a farm supply store because it accomplishes the main goal of the RACs to allow small, mixed use commercial islands within the rural areas to help residents and businesses meet some of their daily needs and to reduce trips to the urban areas.

This project is also compatible with the goals in the Comprehensive Plan for the Farmland Preservation Area (FPA) because this commercial development helps preserve the rural, equestrian and farmland character of the FPA by focusing compatible commercial development at designated RACs. The proposed design of the new store is also compatible with the FPA.

Meridian Land Holdings, LLC.

Meridian Land Holdings, LLC, (Mrs. Laura Del Zotto), owns the 34 acres on the southeast corner of the intersection at US Hwy 27 and NW Hwy 464B in Fellowship. Meridian is represented by Austin Dailey, an attorney with the Klein & Klein law firm, which has submitted three applications to expand the existing Fellowship Rural Activity Center (RAC) by 19.2 acres for a new farm supply store.

Fellowship Rural Activity Center (RAC)

The Rural Activity Center (RAC) classification in the County's Comprehensive Plan allows for limited commercial and residential development in the Rural Area outside of the Urban Growth Boundary to allow residents and businesses meet some of their daily needs and to reduce trips to the urban areas.

The Fellowship RAC encompasses about 33 acres on all four corners of the intersection at US Hwy 27 and NW Hwy 464B. The size of the RAC can be expanded to extend no greater than one-quarter (1/4 mile) or 1,320 linear feet from the center of the RAC for a maximum of 96 acres. The Flemington RAC is eligible to be expanded.

Proposed RAC Expansion

The 34-acre Meridian parcel has split land use and zoning classifications with 3.2 acres designated as RAC at the corner, 17.6 acres zoned as B-2 Community Business along US Hwy 27 frontage, and the remainder 13.2 acres zoned as A-1 General Agriculture.

Meridian has submitted three applications to expand the RAC. The first two applications are to change the land use and zoning on 19.2 acres to the RAC classification, as the land use and zoning must match. The Growth Services Staff recommends approval of these two applications



because the existing RAC is eligible to be expanded and it meets the goal of the Comprehensive Plan and the Farmland Preservation Area for compatible land use.

The third application is to rezone the 17.6 acres of B-2, Business Commercial to RC-1, Rural Commercial. This application was submitted as an alternative to the RAC expansion, in the event that the RAC expansion was denied. The Growth Services staff recommends denial of the third application because, even though the request for RC-1 is permitted on a portion of the property, the RC-1 zoning with RAC land use would create a conformity issue as these two are not compatible with one another.

Farm Supply Store Design

While the proposed farm supply store is compatible with the FPA goals, there are no design guidelines for the RACs to help protect the rural character of the FPA.

However, Meridian has made a substantial effort to maintain the rural character of the Fellowship RAC as the Architectural Rendering that was submitted with their application includes several design elements to help protect the character and culture that horses and horse farms create in the FPA.

Horse Farms Forever agrees with the recommendations from Growth Services that this application to expand the Fellowship RAC by 19.2 acres be approved and asks our County Commissioners to approve the RAC expansion.

Horse Farms Forever® Mission

The mission of Horse Farms Forever® is to inspire conservation of horse farms through education, awareness, and idea exchange so as to preserve the character and culture that horses and the Farmland Preservation Area make unique to Marion County. We are watchful of government and others to preserve and protect horse farms and farmland for future generations, especially in the Farmland Preservation Area. We are neither anti-growth nor anti-development, rather encouraging urban growth to remain inside the Urban Growth Boundary.

Horse Farms Forever® is registered with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services as a charitable organization and approved as a tax-exempt 501 (C) (3) corporation by the Internal Revenue Service. Horse Farms Forever does not have a political mission. Our status as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization does not allow us to participate or intervene in political activities. The organization will neither advocate on behalf of political candidates nor advocate for the passage of legislation.