



Position Statement Moore Development - Rural Activity Center

Horse Farms Forever® **OPPOSES** the applications by Thomas R. Moore to change the Future Land Use and Zoning from Rural Land/Agriculture to Rural Activity Center on a 23.6 acre parcel located at 6853 W HWY 326 in northwest Ocala.

The Applications - Proposed Land Use and Zoning Changes

Thomas R. Moore owns the 23.6 acre parcel directly east of an existing Rural Activity Center located at the intersection of NW Hwy 225A and NW Hwy 326 in Ocala. Like most parcels in the Farmland Preservation Area, the Moore parcel has an existing Future Land Use of Rural Land and an existing Zoning classification of Agriculture. Mr. Moore, through his representative, Tillman & Associates Engineering, has submitted applications to change the Future Land Use from Rural Land to Rural Activity Center and the Zoning from Agriculture to Rural Activity Center.

The Potential Threat - Why it Matters

Mr. Moore proposes using the parcel as a “Landscape Contractor Yard, Farm Building Sales, Service and Storage”. However, this proposed use is non-binding as once the future land use and zoning are changed, the Rural Activity Center designation would allow the current owner, or any future owner, to conduct over 35 different types of commercial activity on the parcel, many of them very intense uses. For example, the Rural Activity Center classification would allow a 350,000 square foot commercial building on the parcel. Examples of allowed uses would include a cold storage plant, or a fuel oil storage facility or a complex of storage warehouses. They would even allow a convenience store and/or gas station.

The Comprehensive Plan & Land Development Code

The Comprehensive Plan makes protecting and preserving the rural and equestrian character of the Farmland Preservation Area a priority. Thus, the County strictly governs the Rural Activity Center use as the classification allows intense commercial activity in a rural setting. The main goal of the Rural Activity Center classification is to provide limited commercial and residential development in the Rural Area to allow residents and businesses to meet some of their daily needs and to reduce trips to the urban areas.

Marion County Growth Services Planning & Zoning Staff Report

As documented in the Staff Report, the Moore parcel does not meet the guidelines to change the Future Land Use and Zoning from Rural Land/Agriculture to Rural Activity Center because it is inconsistent with multiple provisions of the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code and it is not compatible with surrounding properties.



According to the Staff Report, the existing RAC encompasses about 73.4 acres and 9 parcels on all four corners of the intersection of NW Hwy 225A and NW Hwy 326. As of today, the RAC has a very low utilization as only 2 parcels and 7 acres are developed for commercial uses. Thus, the existing Rural Activity Center has sufficient acreage to allow growth and to serve residents of the surrounding rural area.

The Staff Report enters competent substantial evidence into the public record that recommends the County Commission **DENY** the proposed Future Land Use and Zoning changes because the applications are inconsistent with the Marion County Comprehensive Plan, do not comply with the provisions of Florida Statute Section 163, and are not compatible with the surrounding uses.

The Role of Land Use, Zoning and Private Property Rights

The role of the County's Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code is to ensure a well-planned community by reducing land use conflicts. Land use and zoning classifications are critical components that inherently protect private property rights. They do so for the greater common good to efficiently plan for growth and the related infrastructure needs.

Land use and zoning are the result of the County exercising its sovereign power to govern the use of private property for the common good of all citizens. One way to think of land use and zoning is to compare them to speed limits on roads. While your car can go very fast, the speeds you can drive have been governed for both your own safety and the safety of others.

That is, just because you own a fast car doesn't mean you can drive it as fast as you want. In the same regard, just because you own private property doesn't mean you can do whatever you want on it. The land use and zoning classifications control what can be done on the parcel.

The private property that Thomas R. Moore purchased in 2021 is entitled to the land use and zoning that came with the parcel, Rural Land and Agriculture. The neighbors to the north, south and east who purchased rural land bordering rural land are entitled to an expectation that it would remain as such. The role of land use and zoning is to provide predictability.

The proposed expansion of commercial development on this parcel would constitute sprawl in a rural area and create land use conflicts. It would introduce commercial uses incompatible with the rural character and agricultural viability of the surrounding farms and residential parcels.

Horse Farms Forever agrees with the recommendations from the Staff Report that these applications should be **DENIED**. We ask our County Commissioners to say **NO** to these applications and **YES** to protecting the Farmland Preservation Area.



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.