

## **UCF Team Working Paper**

### **Horizons West**

Horizons West (HW) represents a mixed use, village concept, master planned community located in Southwest Orange County. Formerly an area consisting orange groves that were hard hit by freezes in the 1980's, HW is comprised of 38,000 acres, 20,000 of which are developable. In 1993, a group of landowners formed Horizons West, Inc., and hired the firm of Miller, Sellen, Conner and Walsh, to assist them in planning the entire area.

Early in this process the village concept was favorably received by the landowners. A key initial issue was the distance landowners/residents wanted their children to travel to school. Overwhelmingly, the choice was siting schools so that children could walk to school. Using capacity formulas provided by Orange County School Board, it was determined that if the walking distance was one quarter mile, the resulting density of housing would be 8 units per acre; if the walking distance was one half mile, the needed density would be 5 units per acre with 45% of residential units in attached housing.

From these initial calculations, HW will consist of six or seven villages, each comprised of 1,000 to 3,000 acres. Each village consists of 2-4 neighborhoods that comprise approximately 500 acres each. Each neighborhood will have an elementary and middle school that will be the focal point for the community. The village center will be 60 acres; 20-30% of the center will be zoned commercial space. Residential units will be a mix of single family homes, townhomes, villas, and apartments. In 1995 the Orange County Commission approved the HW plan.

In 1997, Lakeside Village was the first village approved. It contains three neighborhoods and a village center, encompassing 5194 acres. The Village of Bridgewater was approved in 1999, comprising 3 villages on 4022 acres. To date, over 1600 single family residences and townhomes have been built in HW, accomodating over 2000 residences. When completely built out, HW will be home to more than 60,000 residents.

### **Land Assembly**

Because there are many landowners in the area, there had to be a mechanism to assemble the land to produce neighborhoods and villages. HW represents an overlay district. Existing zoning permits one dwelling unit per ten acres. Landowners are permitted to build according to this zoning standard. If they wish to develop their land using any other approach, they must adhere to the HW village concept.

For each village, a Specific Area Plan (SAP) is created that identifies and sites all physical infrastructure—e.g., schools, parks, water and sewer plants, and fire stations—that is needed. Known as adequate public facilities (APF), the land for this infrastructure is donated prior to the approval of any planning. No development can occur within a

village until the APF lands have been donated. Land goes to the County, not to the school board, because perhaps the school isn't needed if fewer students than anticipated. In this case, the building could be used for a YMCA or other community needs.

### **APF land mechanism**

Orange County administers an APF lands mechanism for Lakeside Village. In theory, the APF works in the following manner:

- if a landowner has 100 acres, and another landowner has 800 acres, need another 100 acres to create a village or no development will be approved. So APF provides incentives for the two landowners to buy 100 acres from someone else.
- If a landowner has 100 acres, approximately 15 must be set aside for APF. For example, if a road is needed through those 100 acres, then the 15 can count towards the road. If there is no APF scheduled for that area, then the landowner pays the county 15 acres times \$22,500 per acre.
- If the reverse exists, and APF requirements are 30 acres for a landowner that has 100 acres, then that landowner is paid for 15 of those acres.

In reality, very little money has changed hands, since as part of the development process for a neighborhood or village, developers will buy all of the land and donate what is needed for a given area, or there will be agreements among the landowners regarding what land is needed for APF's.

Agreements for planned development with Orange County will include land transferred to the County for all APF's. This occurred, for example, with the Lake Reams neighborhood, part of the Lakeside Village. On May 24, 2005, the Orange County Board of Commissioners approved the Lake Reams Neighborhood Planned Development Zoning Application. As part of this agreement, 31.76 acres are designated road right of way; 15 acres are set aside for an elementary school, and 5.24 acres for a community park. (Agenda, Orange County Board of County Commissions, May 24, 2005, p. 256)

(for more information see "Horizon West, Orange County Florida" by two Orange County Planners: Chris Testerman and Alissa Barber Torres, at <http://www.terrain.org/unsprawl/14/>)