



ENVIRONMENTAL NARRATIVE

**SJMR Property
NEAL COMMUNITIES RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
CITY OF VENICE, FL.**

Prepared for:
NEAL COMMUNITIES

Prepared by:

ECo CONSULTANTS, INC.
1523 8th Avenue West
Suite B
Palmetto, FL 34221
941.722.0901 fax 941.722.4931

RECEIVED

OCT 06 2017

PLANNING & ZONING

INTRODUCTION

The applicant is proposing development of a residential subdivision within the approximate 290.70-acre project area located south of Laurel Road in eastern Venice, Florida Sections 35 and 36 , Township 38S South, Range 19 East. Currently, the subject parcel is undeveloped and contains a mix of pine flatwoods, open land, an upland-cut cattle pond, and freshwater marsh wetlands and is utilized for agricultural activities such as cattle grazing and apiculture. Approximately 12.9 acres of this property consists of open lands with scattered slash pines (*Pinus elliotti*), cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*), and pasture grasses. Pine flatwoods habitat comprise approximately 195 acres of the project area. The remaining portion of the property consists of approximately 78.6 acres of freshwater marsh. Onsite jurisdictional wetlands and other surface waters (OSW) were delineated and flagged by E Co Consultants, Inc.(E Co) pursuant to the 62-340, Florida Administrative Code, F.A.C.

The project proposes to preserve all jurisdictional wetlands. Wetland buffers will be provided in accordance with the requirements of the Southwest Florida Water Management District. The wetland buffers are in good condition with native upland vegetation. The project is likely to impact upland cut ditches which have drained uplands for agriculture purposes. Wetlands, OSW and upland habitats on-site are categorized below using the Florida Department of Transportation "Florida Land Use, Cover and Forms Classification System (FLUCCS)":

WETLAND AND OTHER SURFACE WATERS

FLUCCS Code 510 Agricultural Ditches

Vegetation: Excavated agricultural ditch with sandy bottoms containing various amounts of herbaceous vegetation.

Impacts: These are all upland excavated features associated with historical agricultural activity.

Hydrology: Agricultural ditches most likely flow in response to rain events.

Wildlife: The onsite agricultural ditches provide very limited habitat for wildlife.

FLUCCS Code 524 Lakes Less than 10 Acres

Vegetation: There is one excavated pond less than 10 acres within project. This pond is largely open water with small areas containing cattails (*Typha* sp.) and primrose willow (*Ludwigia peruviana*). These excavated ponds are agricultural ponds possibly utilized for the cattle.

Impacts: These are excavated ponds.

Hydrology: These ponds have a permanent hydrology.

Wildlife: The ponds may support a small population of reptiles, amphibians and fish.

FLUCCS Code: 641 Freshwater Marsh

Vegetation: Freshwater marshes within the project area include are of very high quality and exhibit good plant species diversity . These wetlands are mostly vegetated with marsh St. John's Wort (*Hypericum fasciculatum*), sawgrass (*Cladium jamaicense*), fragrant water-lily (*Nymphaea odorata*), arrowhead (*Sagittaria* spp), pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*), cordgrass (*Spartina* spp.), buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), maidencane (*Panicum hemitomom*), along with scattered individual native species typically found within freshwater marsh ecosystems. Nuisance exotic plant species were limited to minor amounts of melaleuca (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*) saplings and Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) at the margins of the wetland areas.

Impacts: No wetland impact are proposed in conjunction with the proposed project.

Hydrology: Freshwater marshes on the subject parcel exhibit permanent and semi-permanent hydroperiods.

Wildlife: These freshwater marshes support wildlife function that may include wading bird foraging and a population of common amphibians, reptiles and fish during the wet season.

WETLAND BUFFERS

Twenty-five foot average width wetland buffers will be maintained for all post development wetlands withing the project area.

UPLAND HABITATS

FLUCCS Code: 411 Pine Flatwoods

Pine flatwoods containing a canopy of slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) and an understory dominated by saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) and areas of gallberry (*Ilex glabra*) comprises the majority of the uplands within the project area. The project proposes to preserve a series of Upland Preservation areas as open space. The location and size of these areas will be determined with the final design of the project.

PROTECTED SPECIES

Environmental Scientists have reviewed online listed species databases including the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Eagle Nest Locator and Florida Native Areas Inventory (FNAI) for species known within the project's geographic area. These searches revealed no significant utilization of the subject parcel by listed species. In addition, during a preliminary on-site evaluation no state or federally listed species were observed nesting or denning within on-site habitats. Although no gopher tortoise burrows were observed within the project boundaries, pine flatwoods areas may support a population of gopher tortoise. A formal gopher tortoise survey will be conducted on the parcel within 90 days of the commencement of construction activities. If potentially occupied gopher tortoise burrows are identified within the proposed development areas, the clients Authorized Gopher Tortoise Agent will obtain a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) gopher tortoise relocation permit. The gophers will then be captured and relocated to an approved off-site long term protection recipient area prior to the initiation of construction activities.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONSISTENCY

The proposed Neal Communities SJMR Property' residential project located east of Jacaranda Blvd. between Laurel Road and Border Road in the City of Venice has been designed to adhere to the Goal and all of the Objectives stated within the Conservation & Open Space Element of the City of Venice Comprehensive Plan. A review of the SJMR Property site plan clearly demonstrates how, via the avoidance of all wetland systems and preservation of a series of upland habitat areas as open space results in the protection of wildlife corridors and adheres to the City of Venice Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives.

Each "Goal" is presented below with comments relative to the "policies" identified to support the subject "Goal" and whether/how the SJMR Property project will adhere.

Goal: Protect, maintain and conserve open spaces and natural resources for the sustainability of the community.

Obj. #1 Sustainable Environmental Practices

The proposed SJMR Property project:

- Policy 1.1: minimizes impervious surface areas by proposing extensive open space areas; proposes the removal of all nuisance veg. species in upland areas and the planting of native Florida species;
- Policy 1.2: proposes to place all wetland habitats being preserved under appropriate conservation easements; has conducted a listed species survey over the entire parcel which verifies the absence of any other known listed species and will undergo an updated listed species survey prior to site development; will adhere to all necessary protective regulations relative to any identified listed species
- Policy 1.3: proposes to protect all trees as per the Tree Protection Code

- Policy 1.4: proposes landscaping that will be performed with native Florida and Florida friendly vegetative species and will save individual and clusters of trees wherever possible
- Policy 1.5: proposes to preserve all wetland habitats and as series of native habitats areas throughout the project area; development of the property; proposes the preservation of the only significant native upland forested habitat on the property
- Policy 1.6: continues with Neal Communities tradition for "Green Building Strategies" by innovative site planning, and use of resources
- Policy 1.8: proposes low impact development through innovative stormwater management system design and permitting through the SWFWMD, while minimizing impervious areas by designating large open space areas
- Policy 1.9: proposes a site plan preserving all of the wetland systems and associated upland buffers creating significant wildlife corridor systems throughout the project area
- Policy 1.10: proposes a development plan which protects all recharge areas though wetland preservation
- Policy 1.11: protects water resources through the coordination with all utilities
- Policy 1.12: promotes the wise use of water resources, and the conservation of water resource through the use of native Florida vegetation
- Policy 1.13: will design the surface water management system to maintain existing surface water flow patterns

Obj. #2: Open Space Corridors

The SJMR Property project will:

- Policy 2.1: designate significant open space areas as conservation easements reserved for passive recreational uses such as wildlife observation, and where appropriate
- Policy 2.2: protect open space corridors for wildlife utilization in perpetuity
- Policy 2.3: protect corridor systems comprised of native wetland habitats, surrounded by upland buffer habitats
- Policy 2.4: assure all recreational activities within native habitat areas are compatible with the particular habitat system in which they are proposed

Obj. #3: Native Habitats, Conservation Lands and Natural Resources

The SJMR Property project proposes to:

- Policy 3.7: protect all jurisdictional wetlands and associated wetland buffers on site. Additionally, the project proposes to protect native habitats within a corridor system to assure wildlife function is preserved as well
- Policy 3.8: assure the protection of all "listed" species by adhering to all protective measures associated with such species and by performing additional updated listed species surveys prior to site construction activities
- Policy 3.9: remove all nuisance and exotic species from native habitats in all areas where it is economically feasible and environmentally advisable to do so
- Policy 3.10: enhance and restore native habitats (wetlands and wetland buffers) in all areas in which it is feasible, and preserve and protect all habitats critical to any known listed species found to be utilizing the site for nesting or for breeding purposes
- Policy 3.11: protect all wetland systems found on the site and designate the wetlands areas as a conservation easement while assuring the continued viability of functional wetland systems, restoring the hydro period of lower functional wetlands via the stormwater management system design and permitting through the SWFWMD, and protecting the wetlands from secondary impacts through the preservation/ enhancement of upland wetland buffers
- Policy 3.12: coordinate any and all proposed wetland impacts through the SWFWMD via the SWERP permitting process which would include providing all appropriate wetland mitigation if required
- Policy 3.13: all waters being directed to wetland systems will first be "pretreated" to assure proper water quality treatment has occurred as per SWFWMD and City criteria
- Policy 3.14: protect the ground water resources through appropriate permitting of any wells proposed within the project area
- Policy 3.15: assure no hazardous materials are found on the site via an appropriate hazardous materials review of the entire parcel

Obj. #5: JPA/ILSBA Planning Areas.

- Policy 5.2: The SJMR Property project boundary is not located within 220 feet of the Myakka River.

In this fashion the Neal Communities SJMR Property project adheres to the Goal and all the policies presented the Conservation and Open Space Element of the City of Venice Comprehensive Plan.

