

POLK COUNTY DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE STAFF REPORT

DRC Date:	February 12, 2026
Planning Commission Date:	April 1, 2026
BoCC Dates:	April 21, 2026, and June 16, 2026
Applicant:	Polk County Land Development Division
Level of Review:	Level 4 Review, Comprehensive Plan Map Amendment
Case Number and Name:	LDCPAL-2026-1; Office Center Text Amendment CPA
Request:	Modify policies under Objective 2.113-C Office Centers to add Personal Services as an allowable use, allow Office Centers adjacent to multiple non-residential Future Land Use designations and existing non-residential legally established development, remove a reference to Policy 2.404-A1, remove the limitations on offices within a two-mile radius, and remove development criteria regarding frontage on local roads.
Location:	N/A
Property Owner:	N/A.
Parcel Size:	N/A
Development Area/Overlays:	N/A
Future Land Use:	N/A
Nearest Municipality	N/A
DRC Recommendation:	Approval
Planning Commission Vote:	Approval (7:0)
Florida Commerce	No comment by the Florida Department of Commerce amendment No.26-01ESR
Case Planner:	Chanda Bennett, AICP, Comprehensive Planning Administrator

The changes to the Comprehensive Plan Section 2.113-C are:

The request is a Comprehensive Plan text amendment as follows:

- Policy 2.113-C1 Characteristics - to add Personal Services;
- Policy 2.113-C3. b Location Criteria -to add more Future Land Use designations that Office Center can be located adjacent including Linear Commercial Corridor, Rural Cluster Center, Tourist Commercial Center, High Impact Center, Business Park Center, Industrial, Institutional, Employment Center, Mixed Use, Professional Institutional, Interchange Activity Center, and Town Center;
- Policy 2.113-C. c Location Criteria – to remove reference to Policy 2.404-A1 in the Economic Element, and to add adjacent to existing legally established non-residential development.
- Policy 2.113-C. d Location Criteria – remove limitation on percent of office within a two-mile radius;
- Policy 2.113-C. d Location Criteria – clarify current list of items when considering a new Office Center or an expansion.

Summary:

This is a County-initiated Comprehensive Plan text amendment to Section 2.113-C Office Centers (OC). OCs were originally adopted into the Comprehensive Plan in 2000 with mid-block location criteria for low-volume non-residential uses which reserved intersections for more high-volume uses in commercial activity centers. However, the Board directed staff to reevaluate the OC location criteria due to a few OC requests along County Road (CR) 540-A. After a community involvement effort with residents and business along CR 54-A, the OC policies were amended in 2012 as directed by the Board of County Commissioners to have a different set of criteria for locating Office Centers (CPA 12A-03). OCs are currently permitted at the intersections of roadways or adjacent to Activity Centers such as Convenience Centers (CC), Neighborhood Activity Centers (NAC), Community Activity Centers (CAC), Regional Activity Centers (RAC) and Commercial Enclaves (CE).

Since this time, staff have been asked over the years about mid-block Future Land Use designations for non-residential uses including legally established non-conforming non-residential uses. With the update to the Comprehensive Plan, staff is recommending this amendment to allow OC designations adjacent to legally established non-residential uses at mid-block locations. Potential location examples include adjacent public safety offices, religious institutions, or older agricultural related structures.

Data and Analysis Summary

Staff considered the current Location Criteria for OCs and situations where offices adjacent to existing legally established non-residential uses are consistent with other Comprehensive Plan policies. The Comprehensive Plan directs development in nodal patterns. In addition, offices, as part of Transitional Areas (Section 2.125-C) are allowable use within 660 feet adjacent to all Activity Centers except Convenience Centers (CC) and Rural Cluster Centers (RCC), Linear Commercial Corridors (LCC), Commercial Enclaves except in the SDA, Industrial and Utilities.

Staff have reviewed the Comprehensive Plans of 12 similar or abutting counties and Polk's two largest cities to identify which jurisdictions have a Future Land Use designation with "office" in the title. Only two (2) of the jurisdictions surveyed have a Future Land Use designation with "office" in the title, and they are for larger office parks with mixed uses but may be permitted in non-intersection locations. However, staff did not evaluate engineering land development regulations that would impact mid-block. In all jurisdictions, offices were always allowed in mixed use districts.

Findings of Fact

- *The request is a Comprehensive Plan text amendment as follows:*
 - *Policy 2.113-C1 Characteristics - to add Personal Services;*
 - *Policy 2.113-C3. b Location Criteria - to add more Future Land Use designations that Office Center can be located adjacent including Linear Commercial Corridor, Rural Cluster Center, Tourist Commercial Center, High Impact Center, Business Park Center, Industrial, Institutional, Employment Center, Mixed Use, Professional Institutional, Interchange Activity Center, and Town Center;*
 - *Policy 2.113-C. c Location Criteria – to remove reference to Policy 2.404-A1 in the Economic Element, and to add adjacent to existing legally established non-residential development.*
 - *Policy 2.113-C. d Location Criteria – remove the limitation on percent of office within a two-mile radius;*
 - *Policy 2.113-C. d Location Criteria – to clarify current list of items when considering a new Office Center or an expansion.*

- *Office Centers are permitted the Transit Supportive Development Area (TSDA), the Urban Growth Area (UGA), Suburban Development Area (SDA), Utility Enclave Area (UEA), Rural Development Area (RDA), and the Neighborhood Utility Service Area (NUSA).*

- *Section 2.125-C Transitional Areas of the Comprehensive Plan permits offices as a transitional use with approval of a Planned Development within 660 feet adjacent to all Activity Centers except Convenience Centers (CC) and Rural Cluster Centers (RCC), Linear Commercial Corridors (LCC), Commercial Enclaves except in the SDA, Industrial and Utilities.*

- *The Office Center policies were amended in 2012 as directed by the Board of County Commissioners to have a different plan for locating Office Centers (CPA 12A-03) which at that time permitted isolated or spot zones of OC along collector or arterial roads based on a community involvement effort with residents and business owners along CR 540-A.*

- *Planning staff have reviewed the Comprehensive Plan of 12 central Florida counties that bear commonalities with Polk and the two largest municipalities in the County. Staff found that two (2) of the 14 jurisdictions had Future Land Use categories with Office in the title with none specifically permitting the category in isolated or spot patterns. All jurisdictions permitted offices as part of mixed-use categories and as transitional uses.*

Development Review Committee Recommendation:

The Land Development Division, based on the information provided with the proposed text amendment application, finds that the proposed text change request is **CONSISTENT** with the Polk County Land Development Code and the Polk County Comprehensive Plan. Staff recommends **APPROVAL** of LDCPAL-2026-1.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

On April 1, 2026 in an advertised public hearing, the Planning Commission voted 7:0 to recommend **APPROVAL** of LDCPAL-2026-1.

Department of Florida Commerce Objections, Recommendations, and Comments Report (ORC):

In an Objections, Recommendations, and Comments Report, issued on May 22, 2026, by the Florida Department of Commerce, no comments have been reported.

Analysis

Demonstration of Need for the Amendment

Office Centers (OC) were created after the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan in 2000. At that time it permitted isolated or mid-block zones of OC but only along collector or arterial roadways. Since 2012, Office Centers (OC) have been required adjacent to activity centers. This was the result of input from a community planning effort directed by the Board of County Commissioners with residents and business owners along CR 540-A. This led to changes in Activity Center expansions beyond the current acreage limits in the corresponding Activity Center policies and the current location criteria for OC. The current location criteria is as follows:

POLICY 2.113-C3: LOCATION CRITERIA - The establishment of a new Office Center designation shall be located according to the following:

- a. at the intersection of a local and collector/arterial road, or at the intersection of two collector roads; or at the intersection of two arterial roads;*
- b. Along a collector or arterial roadway adjacent to and existing Activity Center or Commercial Enclave that contains 10% or less in land area developed with professional offices.*
- c. Policy 2.404-A1; and*
- d. the total acreage for Office Center Districts within a two mile radius shall not exceed ten (10) acres unless one of the following can be met:*
 - 1. the total land area of the existing Office Centers within the two mile radius are 60 percent (60%) developed and the total land area of the existing Activity Centers within the two miles radius are also at least 60 percent (60%) developed with less than 10 percent (10%) of the land area developed as professional office uses; or*
 - 2. the remaining undeveloped acreage of the Office Centers within the two mile radius are owned by a single interest or have final, valid engineered construction plans (with building-permit application) or have a valid CU/PD approval; or*
 - 3. when item b above is met.*

When considering the establishment of a new Office Center designation or the expansion of an existing Office Center consideration shall be given to maximizing access to a collector or arterial road and to the guidelines outlined in Policy 2.404-A1. Polk County shall seek to minimize the routing of office traffic through residential areas.

There are many non-residential mid-block uses throughout the County including public safety structures such as fire stations, religious institutions and long age constructs associated with the agricultural industry. Due to the current location requirements for Office Centers, an OC Future Land Use designation is not consistent with these isolated locations and cannot be located adjacent to an existing legally established non-residential use.

This is something staff have noticed since 2012. This staff initiate text amendment is to address this issue as well as add additional location criteria for OC adjacent to existing non-residential Future Land Use designations. Since offices are considered transitional uses (Section 2.125-C), offices adjacent to existing legally established non-residential uses can add to the compatibility of these nodes of uses. In addition, allowing the clustering of non-residential uses is consistent with the direction of the Comprehensive Plan to plan for non-residential nodal development especially Activity Centers.

Recommended Changes

Based on the current example along CR 540-A, staff recommend that OC be permitted adjacent to existing legally established non-residential uses as well as other Future Land Use designations including - Linear Commercial Corridor, Rural Cluster Center, Tourist Commercial Center, High Impact Center, Business Park Center, Industrial, Institutional, Employment Center, Mixed Use, Professional Institutional, Interchange Activity Center, and Town Center. Moreover, the OC policies are also recommended to add personal services as permitted uses and to make offices located within two miles of a proposed OC Future Land Use designation a consideration for the approval rather than a requirement. These changes allow more locations for OC throughout Polk County and add more flexibility in the consideration of the change.

Limits of the Proposed Ordinance

This amendment applies to only the Office Center (OC) Future Land Use designations in unincorporated Polk County including some Selected Area Plans and the Green Swamp Area of Critical State Concern. This amendment will be reviewed by the State Department of Florida Commerce as a coordinated large scale comprehensive plan amendment.

Comparisons to other Jurisdictions

Staff commonly survey counties along the I-4 corridor for regulatory comparisons because they are most closely similar to Polk. Some of the abutting counties are reviewed along with the two largest cities within the County (Lakeland and Winter Haven). Alachua and Duval counties are also reviewed because of similar demographic and urban-rural mixtures to Polk County. This method of selection creates a survey of 14 total local jurisdictions. Polk County has a rare form of land use regulation with its direct connection between the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map and the zoning of use and structure types.

Table 1

Jurisdiction <i>(Code citation)</i>	Which jurisdictions have Office in the title of their Future Land Use designations in their Comprehensive Plan?	How does any Comprehensive Plan Development Criteria permit offices?
Alachua County <i>Objective 3.9</i>	There are no Future Land Use designations with Office in the title.	All office uses are allowed in the Future Land Use designations that permit multiple uses.
Brevard County <i>Policy 2.5; 2.7; 2.11.B</i>	There are no Future Land Use designations with Office in the title.	All office uses are allowed in the Future Land Use designations that permit multiple uses.
Duval County	There are no Future Land Use designations with Office in the title.	All office uses are allowed in the Future Land Use designations that permit multiple uses.
Hardee County	There are no Future Land Use designations with Office in the title.	All office uses are allowed in the Future Land Use designations that permit multiple uses.
Highlands County <i>Policy 1.2. D</i>	There are no Future Land Use designations with Office in the title.	All office uses are allowed in the Future Land Use designations that permit multiple uses.
Hillsborough County <i>Objective 2.2</i>	The Future Land Use categories with Office in the title include Office Commercial (OC).	Many of Future Land Use categories permit offices as part of the allowable mixture of uses.

Table 1

Jurisdiction <i>(Code citation)</i>	Which jurisdictions have Office in the title of their Future Land Use designations in their Comprehensive Plan?	How does any Comprehensive Plan Development Criteria permit offices?
Lake County	Only two Future Land Use categories with office in the title include Regional Office and Office Employment Center.	The mention of office throughout the Lake County Comprehensive Plan is intended for categories permitting multiple uses.
Manatee County <i>Table 2-1</i>	The categories with Office in the title include Low Intensity Office, Medium Intensity Office, and Retail/office/residential.	The Low Intensity Office includes a mixture of uses including medium density residential and public/semi-public, recreation and schools. The other categories are high intensity uses.
Orange County <i>Policies under Goal FLU1</i>	The Future Land Use category with Office in the title is Office (O).	This category is meant for individual offices and office parks. Siting criteria is lead by the general commercial and office criteria which is at nodes and along major roadways with compatibility standards.
Osceola County	There are no Future Land Use designations with Office in the title.	Offices are uses within other Future Land Use designations.
Seminole County <i>Policy FLU 1.3.3</i>	The Future Land Use designation with Office in the title is Office.	This category permits residential development as a support function to the office development, allows schools, with special exceptions for hospitals, funeral homes, medical clinics, banks, and public utilities and to encourage the conversation of existing homes into office uses. It is to be located along collector and aerial roadways.
Volusia County Future Land Use Element, E.	There are no Future Land Use designations with Office in the title.	Office development is to conform with commercial use guidelines and locate at intersections of major roads developed with commercial uses and provide for a mixture of uses.
City of Lakeland Table FLU-3	There are no Future Land Use designations with Office in the title.	Offices are uses within other Future Land Use designations.
City of Winter Haven	There are no Future Land Use designations with Office in the title.	Offices are uses within other Future Land Use designations.
NOTE: 1) A table or policy is listed where the Future Land Use designations were listed together. No policy number is provided where the designations were spread throughout the Comprehensive Plan. 2) Some jurisdictions have special area plans for specific developments with office as a land use category. This was not considered due to the this request not directly applicable to a specific development.		

Planning staff have reviewed the Comprehensive Plan of 12 central Florida counties that bear commonalities with Polk and the two largest municipalities in the County. Staff found that two (2) of the 14 jurisdictions had Future Land Use categories with Office in the title with none specifically permitting the category in isolated or spot patterns. All jurisdictions permitted offices as part of mixed-use categories and as transitional uses.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

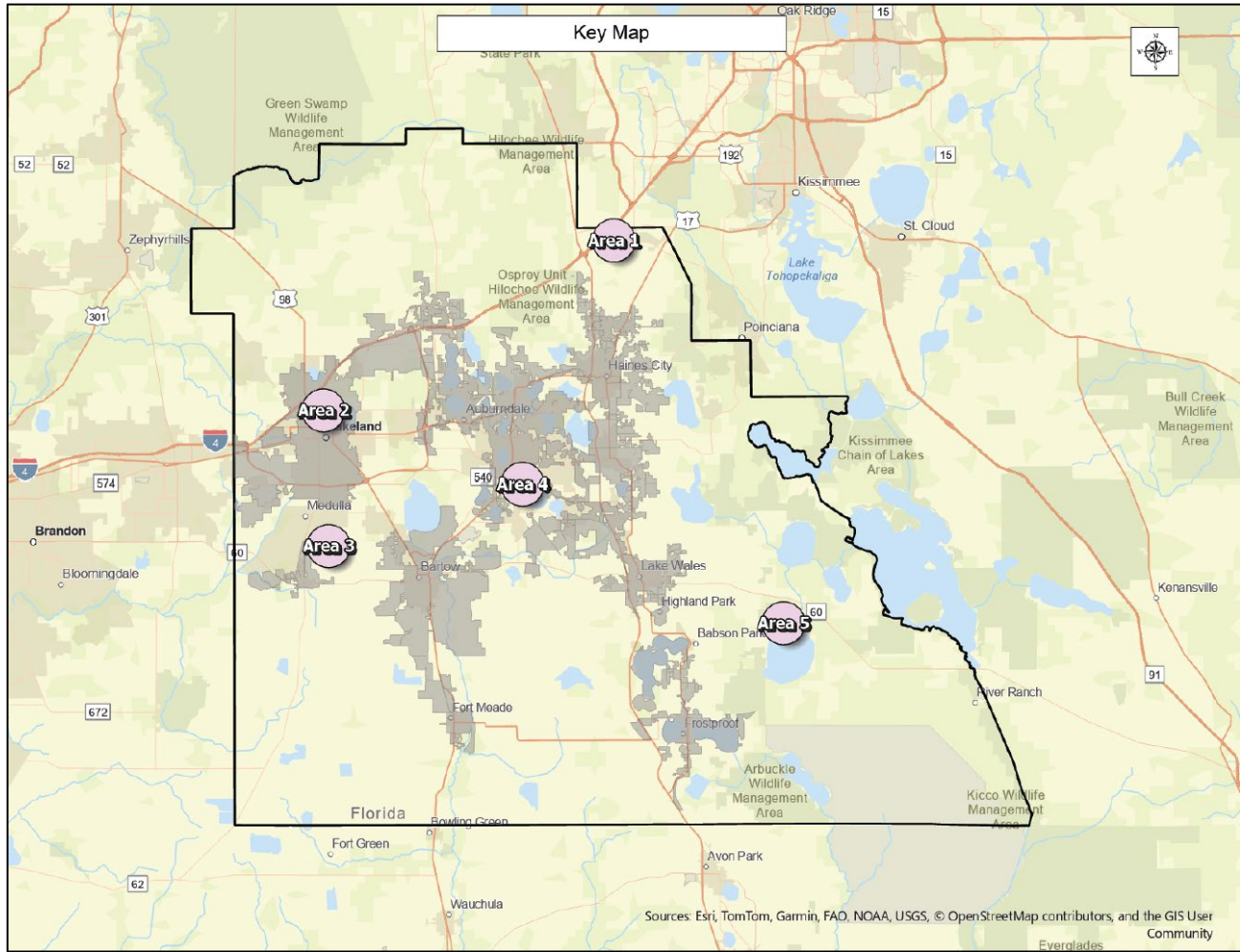
This amendment is consistent with the first level of the Comprehensive Plan as stated in Section 2.101 where Polk County uses “multi-nodal, urban-cluster” concepts for development in the sense that locating OC adjacent to an existing legally established non-residential development creates a node of development is similar to locating Activity Centers and other FLU designations at intersections. In addition, this text amendment is consistent with Section 2.125-C Transitional Uses that allow offices to be adjacent to more intense non-residential uses in certain designations.

Comments from Other Agencies: None.

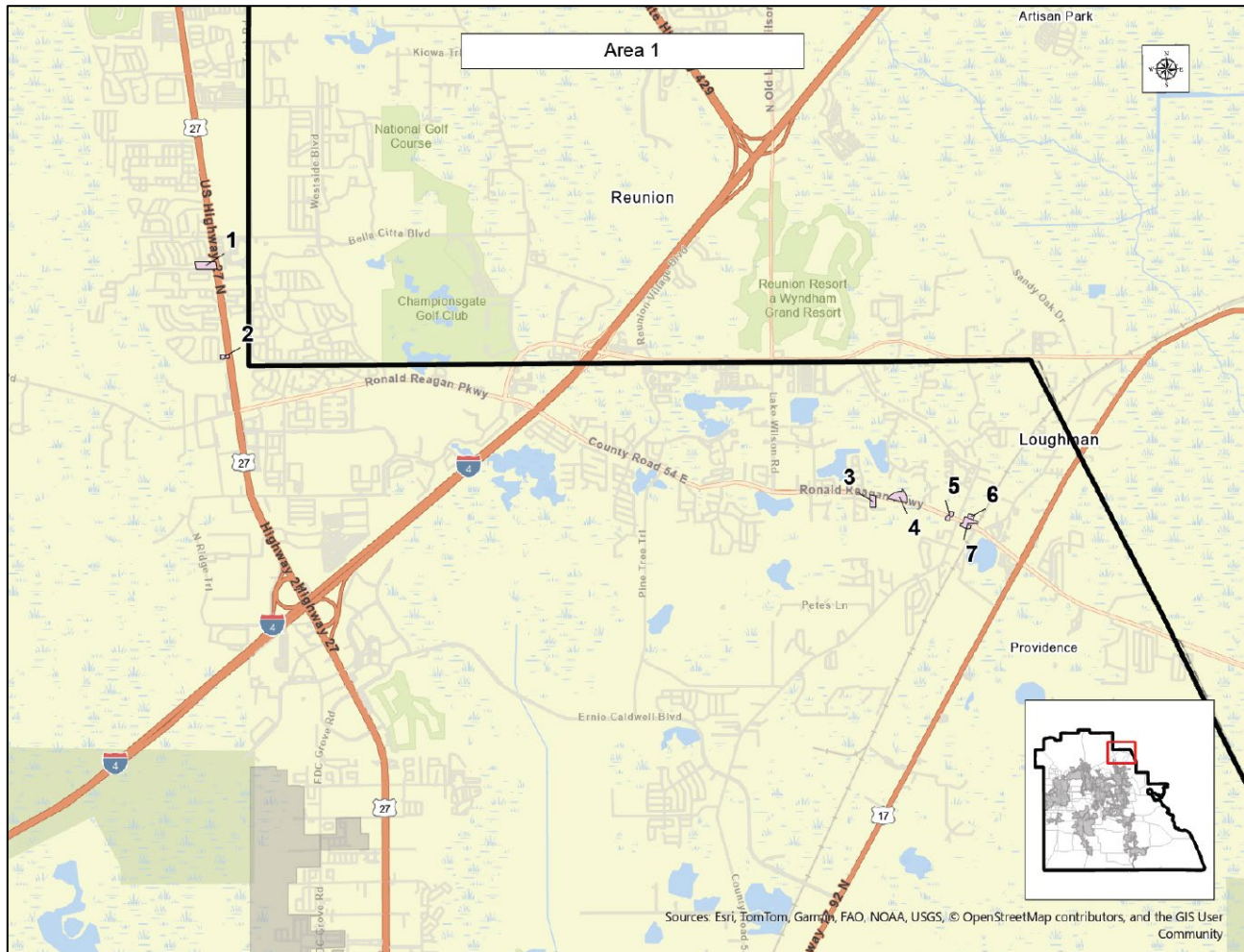
Exhibits

Exhibit 1a – 1e – Office Center locations in incorporated Polk County

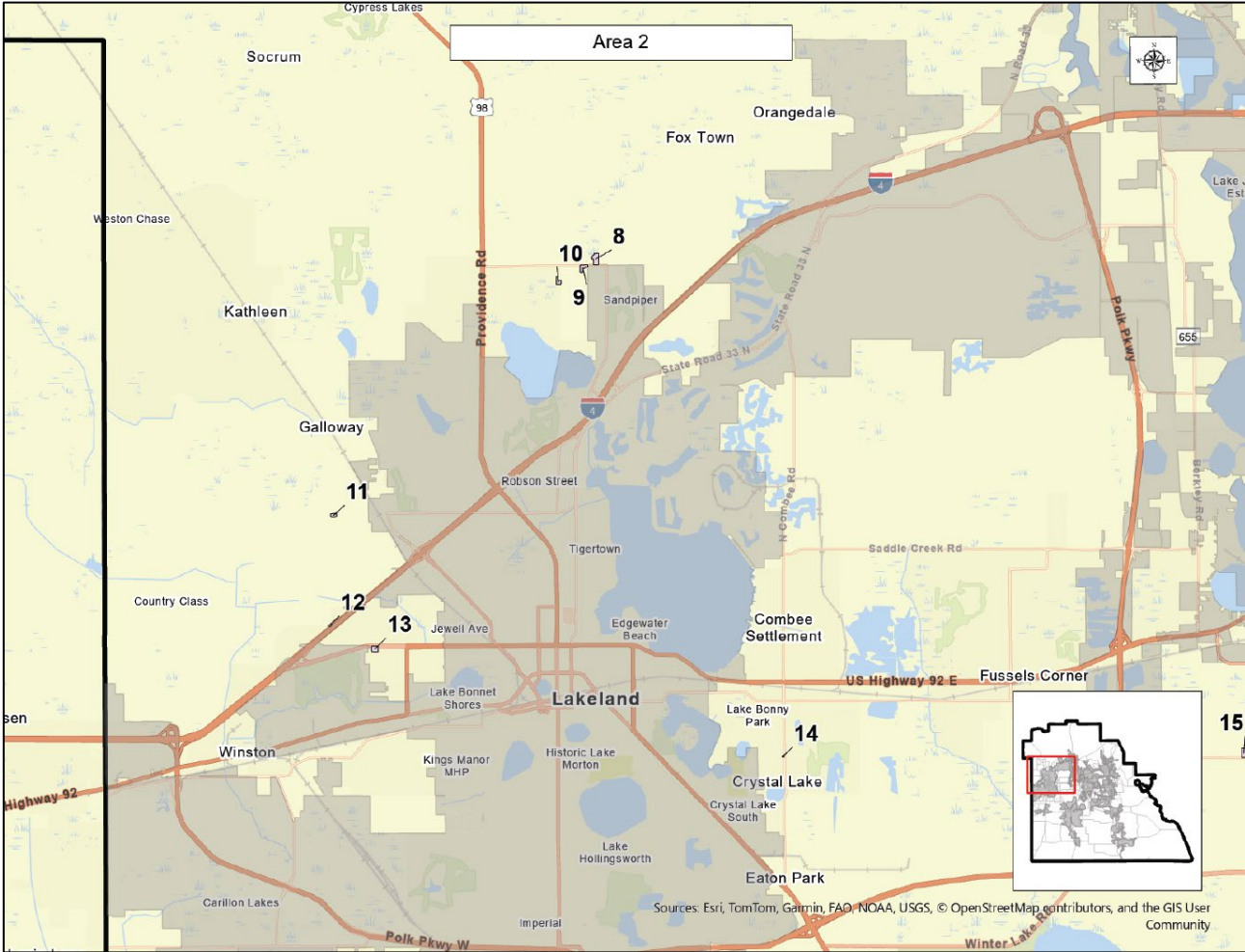
Draft Ordinance: under separate attachment



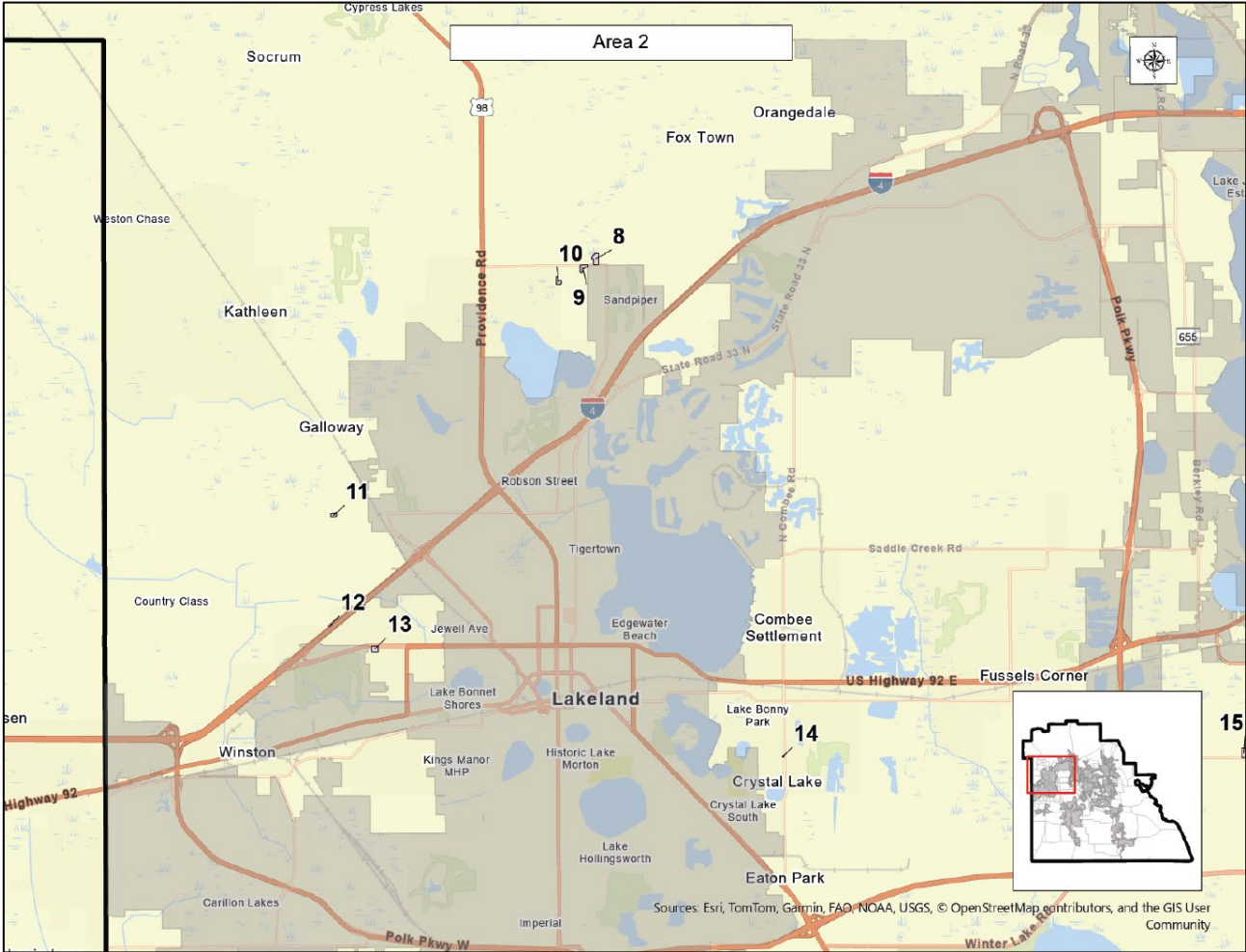
Office Center Future Land Use Designations



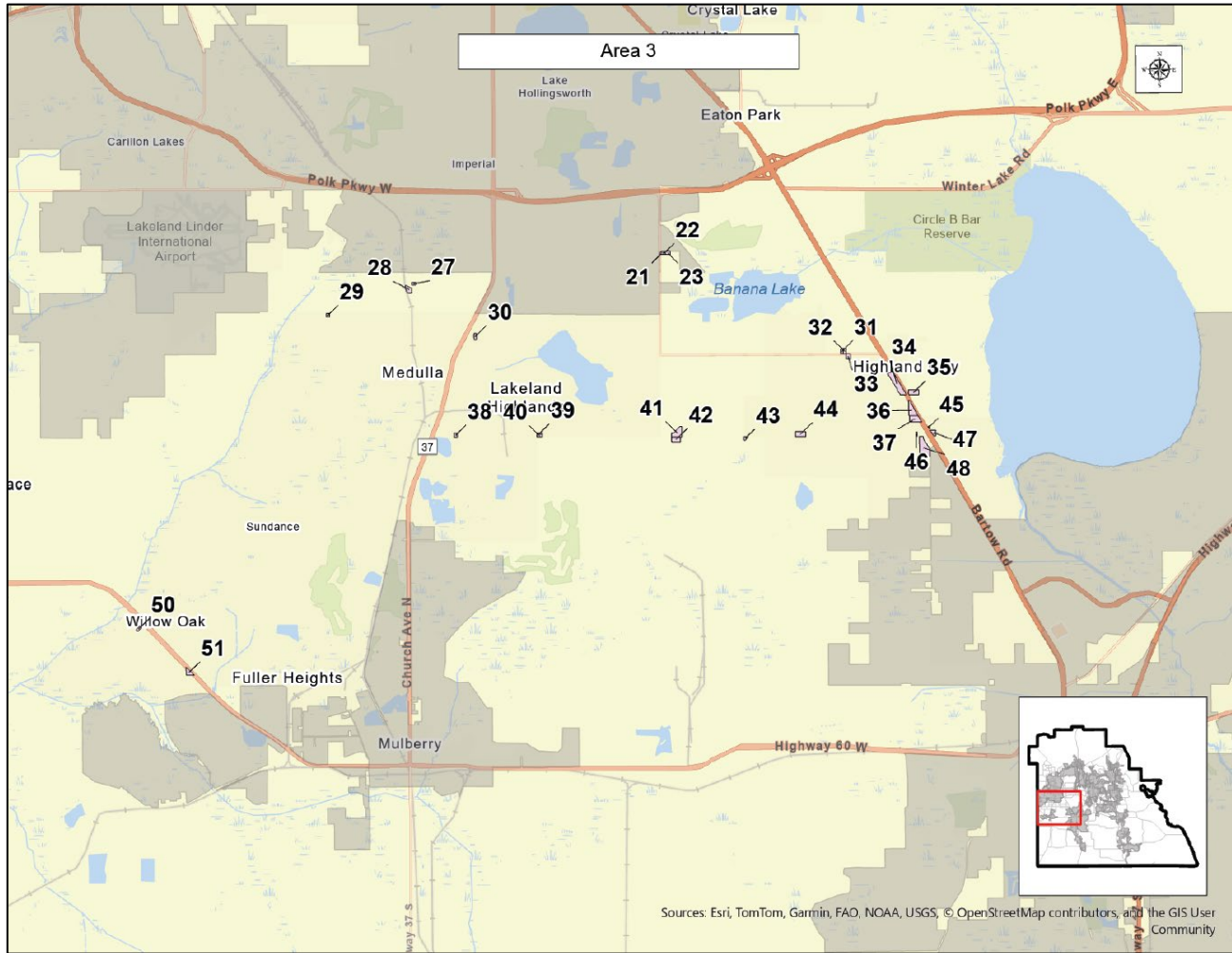
Area 1 Office Center Designations



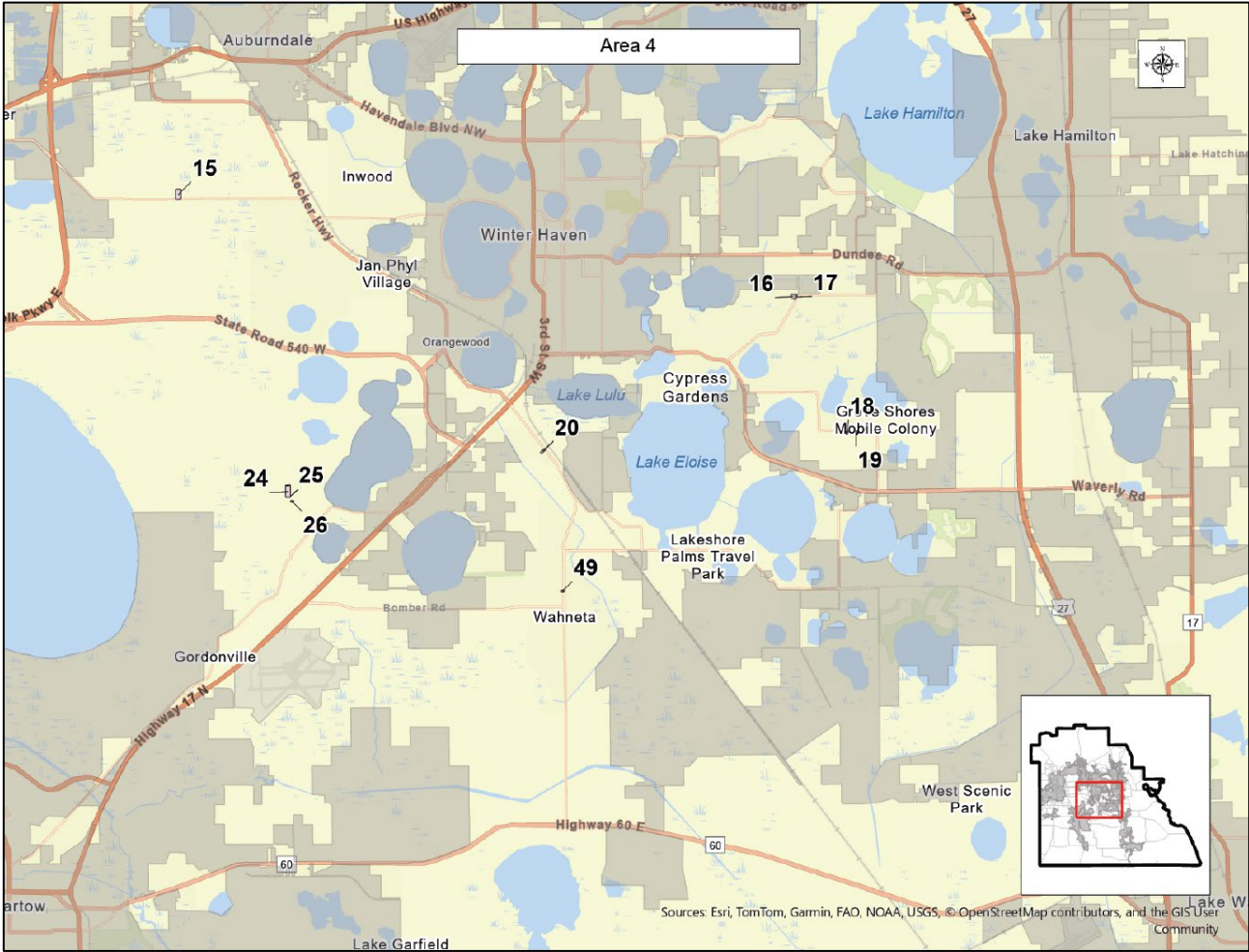
Area 2 Office Center Designations



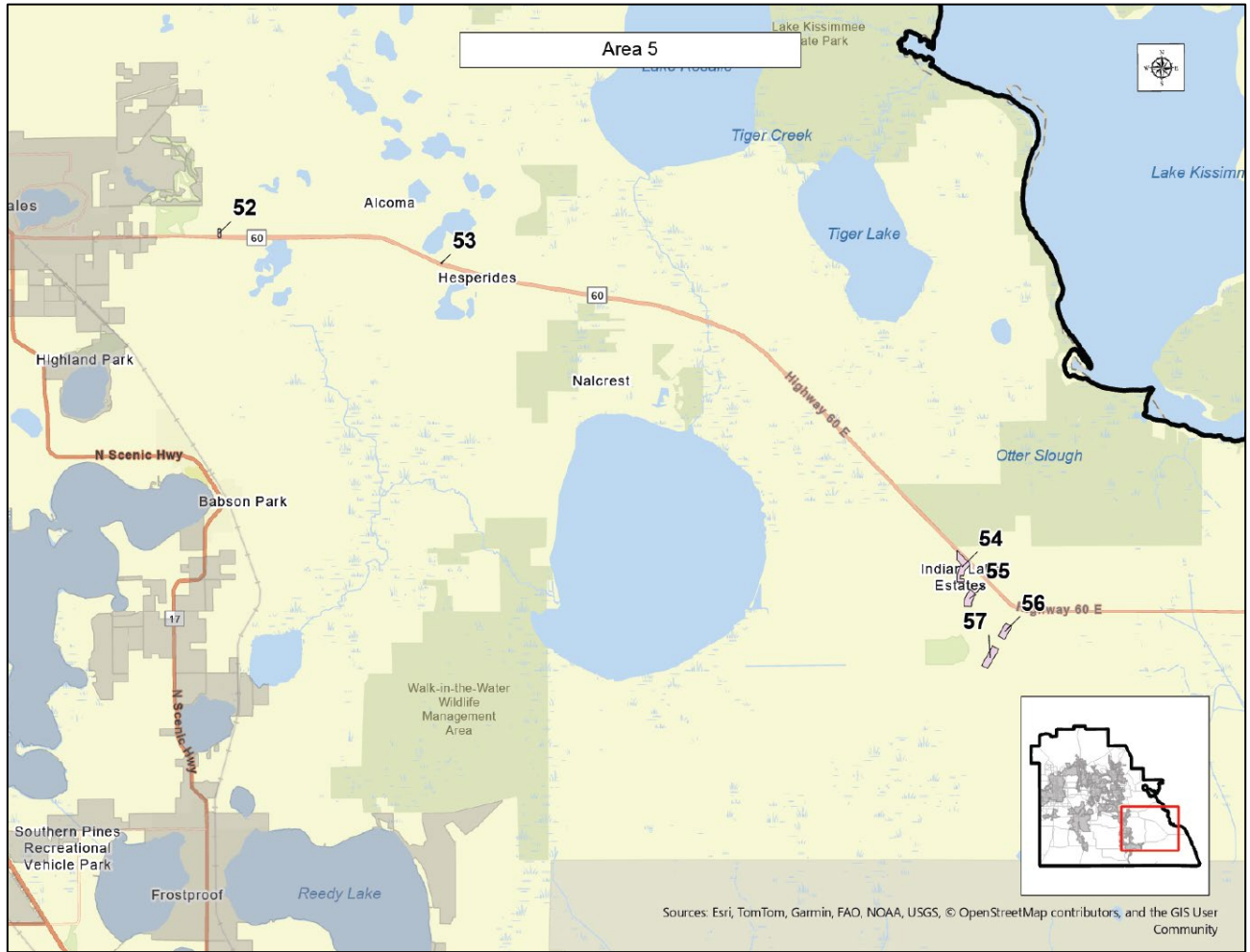
Area 2 Office Center Designations



Area 3 Office Center Designations



Area 4 Office Center Designations



Area 5 Office Center Designations