

## LDCPAL-2024-13 • LDCD-2024-7

Polk County Planning Commission • Wed. April 2, 2025 • 9:00am

My name is LaNae Luttrell. I live at 4708 Charlie Taylor Road in Unincorporated Hillsborough County, just along the Polk County border.

What you have before is a proposal from a developer who wants to put a warehouse in the middle of a long-existing, rural community, and an environmentally-sensitive area. Your Commission had the wisdom to deny this project on July 10, 2024 (just nine months ago) due to its incompatibility, and yet, here the developers come again with “tweaks” to their plan in an attempt to sucker you into an approval.

The owners of this property want to sell their land for top dollar, and I understand that. However, if a landowner, in a rural community wants to sell, it is YOUR responsibility to ensure that the **BUYER** develops it in a manner that is compatible with the existing neighborhoods and development codes.

### **THERE ARE FOUR MAJOR REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD DENY THIS PROJECT:**



#### **1. IT IS NOT COMPATIBLE WITH ANY OF THE SURROUNDING RURAL NEIGHBORHOODS**

This project is surrounded on three sides by large-acre, rural residents and “hobby farms” on picturesque, small-acre lots that are worth substantial amounts. People chose to live in this area SPECIFICALLY because it afforded us the space and protection of agricultural zoning. I built an 18-acre, horse boarding business and depend on my pastures for my livelihood. Neighbors have invested our lives, our

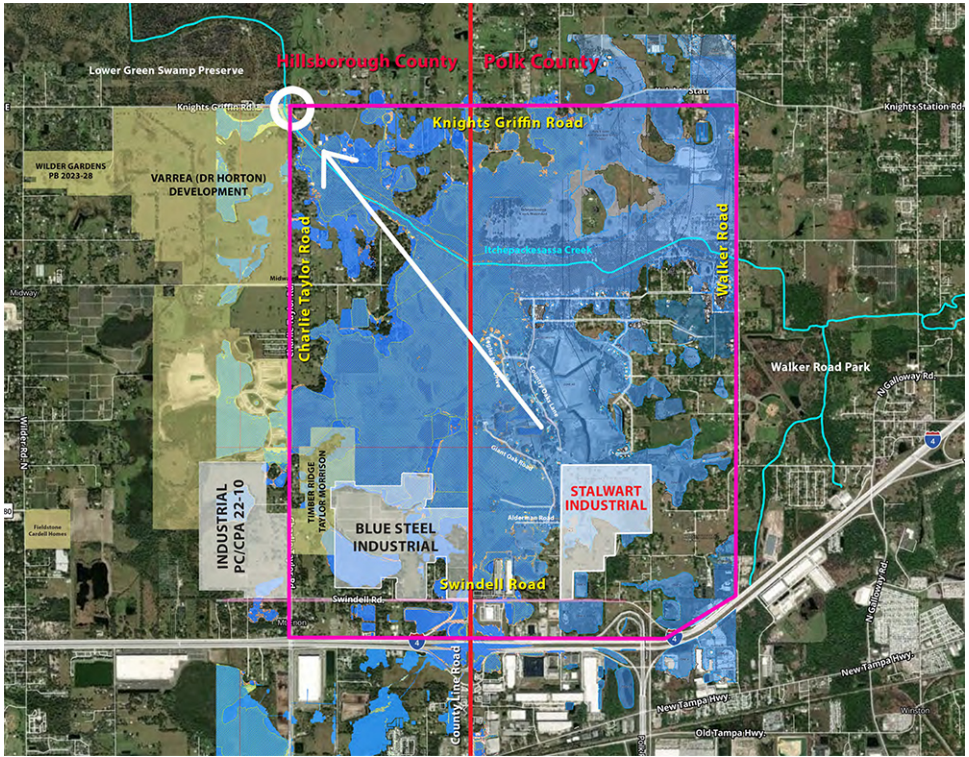
businesses, and our financial security in our homesteads based on the land development codes that protected us when we purchased our homes. It is irresponsible to change them or ignore them in favor of a developer over the population who currently lives there...many, for decades.

#### **2. IT IS A WILDLIFE CORRIDOR THAT MUST BE PROTECTED**

This area serves as home to many endangered and threatened species. I have seen (and have photos) of most of these species on my land alone! (see attachment on last page) Neighbors who directly abut the project site can testify to this as well. I believe if you ask the current land owners, they would be forthcoming and tell you the same thing. Because of Plant City’s irresponsibility, there is an ongoing over-development crisis in this area that has forced much wildlife to be displaced. Therefore, the predators are seeking refuge and food on our lands and are killing our animals. My sister, who lives near me, has lost four goats to coyotes and bobcats in the last month alone! The location of the Alderman project is in a critical wildlife corridor that must be preserved.







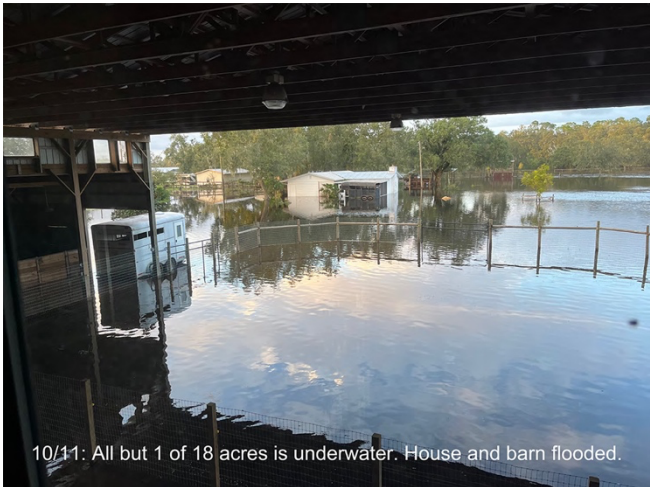
**3. IT INCREASES THE RISK OF FLOODING FOR RESIDENTS DOWNSTREAM AND IS PUSHING OUR HOMES FARTHER INTO THE FLOODPLAIN.**

This map shows the 100-year floodplain according to SWFWMD and FEMA. NOTICE, roughly 80% of their land is in the 100-year floodplain! Residents downstream are “trapped” by four roads and sit lower topography. When it rains, water surges into this “swimming pool” and hits a choke point at the bridge under Knights Griffin Road.

We have been shoved farther into the 100-year floodplain due to over-development, **with NO improvements** to the Itchepakesassa Creek Watershed’s functionality. Because of this, our insurance rates have skyrocketed, if we’re lucky enough not to be dropped altogether.

To make matters worse, developers are swallowing up all available land surrounding our homes. No matter how the developer’s engineers “spin” the data, **water flows to the lowest point, and that will certainly not be their elevated warehouses.** The Alderman property is located a critical junction of the Itchepakesassa Creek watershed. Their land was underwater – as we all were after Irma, Debby, Helene and Milton. If you allow them to build this, you are taking away a huge area that is desperately needed to absorb floodwaters. Impervious surfaces cannot do that. No matter how many ponds they build, it will not be enough to contain the absorption ability of the ground they will pave over – please do not fall for this engineering fallacy. Surrounding residents have years of data to support otherwise.

Many families in this low-lying area lost their homes to Hurricane Irma, and now Milton. We were fortunate when our home survived Irma, but my husband, Travis, and I lost our home, barndominium and our horse-boarding business to Milton. Only one of my 18 acres did not flood. I had two feet of



10/11: All but 1 of 18 acres is underwater. House and barn flooded.

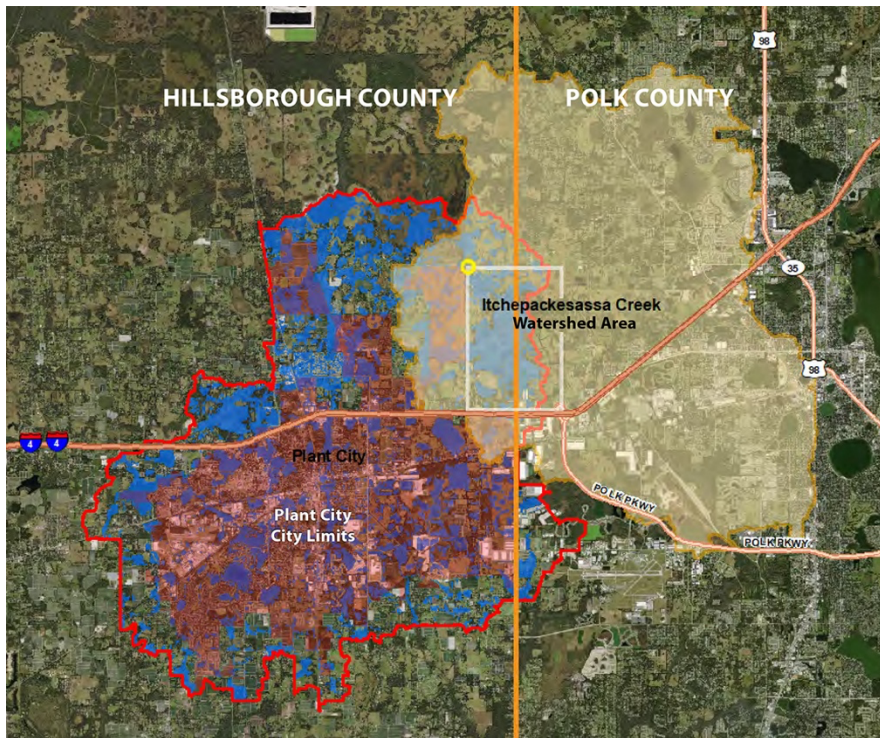
water in my house and a foot in the barn. The house is now uninhabitable, and we have been displaced since October while we still continue to fight with our flood and homeowners insurance companies. They each point fingers at the other, and neither has come through yet to give us the funds to rebuild or elevate our home. It has been the greatest tragedy of our lives and I am telling you this, not to gain “sympathy votes,” but for you to understand **that this is a real threat, not hollow scare tactics.** I may have lost everything, but I am fighting for my neighbors so that they won’t have to go through this same nightmare.



I cannot speak to other areas, but the ugly truth about the flooding of our home and others from Milton is that – in this area – IT WAS A MAN-MADE event. Our pastures were underwater at 5:00pm the night before the storm even hit! Some entity was either pushing a massive amount of water into our area or someone downriver was holding it back. Until the cause is found, approving another massive project in this watershed is irresponsible.



#### 4. SWFWMD IS IN THE MIDDLE OF AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF THE ITCHEPACKESASSA WATERSHED



The 1995 study by the Army Corps of Engineers clearly stated that this area was not suitable for large-scale development. The SWFWMD study done by Keith & Schnars in 2005 concluded the same thing. Despite hundreds of thousands of dollars on these studies, nothing has been done to increase the capacity of this watershed, and Plant City has flat-out chosen to ignore them.

Due to the proven failure of this watershed, SWFWMD has hired Jones Edmunds to conduct an in-depth study of the Itchepakesassa Creek watershed. Until this study is completed, and improvements are implemented, there should be a moratorium on development in this area. It is both negligent and holds Polk County and Lakeland liable to approve a project of this scale BEFORE ENGINEERS HAVE THE DATA to understand the issues of stormwater in this area. Once the data is complete, all entities will have the answers they need to build appropriately.

**Please support your staff's findings and DENY this project. There is nothing about it that is compatible with the surrounding residents. It will adversely affect our homes, lives, livelihoods forever.**





# Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Imperiled Species Observed on/around Project Site



**LIMPKIN**

Native Imperiled



**LITTLE BLUE HERON**

Native Imperiled



**FLORIDA SCRUB-JAY**

Native Imperiled



**OSPREY**

Native Imperiled



**SOUTHERN FOX SQUIRREL**

Native Imperiled



**AMERICAN KESTREL**

Native Imperiled



**ROSEATE SPOONBILL**

Native Imperiled



**SNOWY EGRET**

Native Imperiled



**BLUETAIL MOLE SKINK**

Native Imperiled



**EASTERN INDIGO SNAKE**

Native Imperiled



**GOPHER TORTOISE**

Native Imperiled Keystone Species



**BURROWING OWL**

Native Imperiled



**WHITE IBIS**

Native Imperiled



**WOOD STORK**

Native Imperiled



**KEY RINGNECK SNAKE**

Native Imperiled



**SANDHILL CRANE**

Native Imperiled



**BALD EAGLE**

Native Federally Protected



**SUWANNEE COOTER**

Native Imperiled