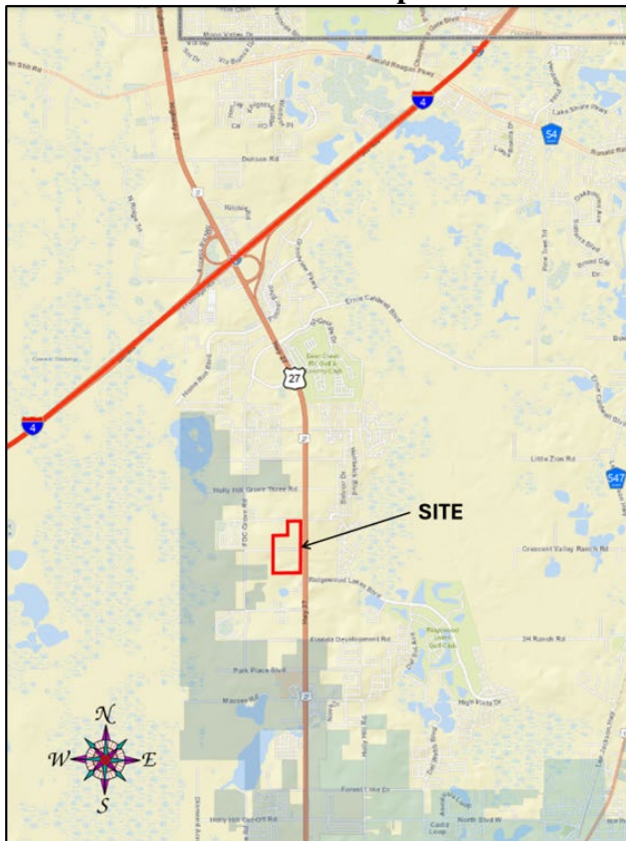


# POLK COUNTY DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE STAFF REPORT

<b>DRC Date:</b> April 30, 2026	<b>Level of Review:</b> Level 3 Review
<b>PC Date:</b> June 3, 2026	<b>Type:</b> Planned Development Modification
<b>BoCC Date:</b> n/a	<b>Case Numbers:</b> <b>LDPD-2026-7</b>
<b>Applicant:</b> Cristian Mendez, CPH	<b>Case Name:</b> U.S. Hwy 27 Retail Center Modification
	<b>Case Planner:</b> Erik Peterson, AICP

<b>Request:</b>	Planned Development to modify sign plan specifications for an existing Conditional Use approval of a large retail center with gas stations and a sign plan in the ECX district.
<b>Location:</b>	West side of U.S. Highway 27, South of Holly Hill Grove Road #2, north of Ridgewood Lakes Boulevard, south of I-4, east and north of Haines City, in Section 30, Township 26, Range 27.
<b>Property Owners:</b>	Walmart Stores East LP and Sams East Inc.
<b>Parcel Size (Number):</b>	±56.71 acres (272630-707510-010100 and 272630-000000-012010)
<b>Future Land Use:</b>	Employment Center-X (ECX), Green Swamp Area of Critical State Concern, Ridge Special Protection Area, Northridge Selected Area Plan
<b>Development Area:</b>	Transit Supportive Development Area (TSDA)
<b>Nearest Municipality:</b>	Haines City (325 feet)
<b>DRC Recommendation:</b>	Pending Review
<b>Planning Commission Vote:</b>	Pending Public Hearing

**Location Map**



**2024 Satellite Photo**



## Summary:

On October 2, 2024, the Planning Commission approved LDCU-2024-25 which was a conditional use (CU) approval for retail over 65,000 square feet and gas stations in an ECX district. The applicant also received approval for an exception to the district sign standards through a comprehensive sign plan. The sign plan approved with LDCU-2024-25 was for four multi-tenant signs and two free standing signs that are larger and taller than the code permits in the ECX district of the North Ridge SAP. This is a request to modify that sign plan in two ways: 1) adjusting the copy area on two of the proposed free-standing signs by shifting total area from one to another and 2) adding a fuel reader to one of the hybrid monument signs in the plan.

The sign plan approved includes five (5) plaza signs and two free-standing signs for the major retailers in exchange for pole or monument signs on the nine outparcels on nearly 57 acres. While this seems like a rather minor change for such a large sign plan, the previous conditional use approval was very specific. To avoid the potential for another adjustment that requires a public hearing and Planning Commission approval, a condition is recommended that provides some leeway for future minor adjustments. (*see condition 10 highlighted on page 6*)

The Employment Center (ECX) district is a hybrid land use designation in the North Ridge Selected Area Plan “intended to accommodate the employment and functional needs of the urbanizing northeast area of the County.” The ECX generally contains office and support facilities, college and university use, commercial, light assembly, and limited warehousing use. Large retail outlets (*Big Box Retail*) and gas stations are not the norm in this district, which was why Conditional Use approval was necessary. Gas stations are also listed as C3 conditional uses in Table 4.16 Use Table for Standard Land Use Districts of the North Ridge Selected Area Plan. LDCU-2024-25 was approved for approximately 489,500 square feet of retail and two gas stations. This is not changing, just rolling the previous approval into a Planned Development (PD) designation. PDs are CUs that are mapped on the County’s Geographical Information System (GIS). With this mapping, the sign plan and other conditions of the past approval will be easier to track in the future.

There were weaknesses in key infrastructure to serve the site identified at the time of the original approval which included both transportation facilities and utilities. However, these deficiencies have been worked out. There is more interim capacity in the wastewater system while it is undergoing expansion. Traffic analyses have been reviewed, improvements have been identified, and the applicant has entered into an infrastructure agreement for the necessary improvements.

There are few environmental limitations onsite, and it will be developed to some of the highest environmental standards in the County because it is located in the Green Swamp Area of Critical State Concern. There are no wetlands or floodplains onsite, and the soil is well drained. The applicant has conducted an endangered species study to demonstrate compliance with the Florida Wildlife Commission (FWC) rules.

## Findings of Fact

- *This is a request for Planned Development approval to modify the sign plan of a previous conditional use approval for retail above 65,000 Sq. Ft (489,500 SF) and Gas Stations in an ECX district along with a Sign Plan per LDC Section 760.K and time extension from the standard three (3) years in Section 906.G to five (5) years.*
- *The site is located in the Transit Supportive Development Area (TSDA), which is the area “where the availability of infrastructure and other community facilities and services, including, but not limited to mass transit and other transportation alternatives, utilities, public safety, recreational and educational services,” according to POLICY 2.104-A1 of the Comprehensive Plan.*
- *The property is designated Employment Center (ECX) on the Future Land Use Map, is located in the North U.S. Highway Selected Area Plan, and the Green Swamp Area of Critical State Concern, Ridge Special Protection Area.*
- *Comprehensive Plan POLICY 2.131-Q4.M of the North Ridge SAP states that ECX districts are “designed to allow office parks, light assembly, commercial, and other business uses to serve the needs of the growing population in the northeast area of the County.”*
- *Comprehensive Plan POLICY 2.131-Q4.M.b(c) states that Typical Tenants in ECX districts are “office parks, colleges and universities, research parks, services to offices, light assembly, distribution centers, research firms, development firms, convenience stores, restaurants, professional offices, financial institutions, recreational uses, communication facilities, medium density residential development, hotels and uses that support or directly relate to the college campuses and the development of a research park, including small-scale retail stores and other commercial uses.”*
- *Retail and commercial uses are limited to 30 percent of the ECX district, according to POLICY 2.131-Q4.M.c(i), but the district is eligible for a greater percentage if approved by the Planning Commission.*
- *Land Development Code (LDC) Section 401.06 The North Ridge Selected Area Plan, Table 4.16 Use Table for Standard Land Use Districts, states that retail greater than 65,000 square feet in the Employment Center (ECX) district requires a Level 3 Review Conditional Use approval by the Planning Commission.*
- *LDC Section 401.06 The North Ridge Selected Area Plan, Table 4.16 Use Table for Standard Land Use Districts, states that gas stations in the Employment Center (ECX) district requires a Level 3 Review Conditional Use approval by the Planning Commission.*
- *Section 303, Gas Stations and all Gasoline Sales state that the following standards apply to this site:*
  1. *A minimum of 30 feet of stacking lane is required between a curb cut and the nearest gasoline pump.*
  2. *Gasoline pump islands and canopy supports shall be set back from the edge of the road right-of-way shall be 25 feet on both principal arterial and collector roads. The centerline setback shall be 85 on principal arterial roads and 55 feet on urban collector roads.*
  3. *Interior side and interior rear setbacks shall be the same as required for the principal building. No part of any canopy may extend into the right-of-way.*
  4. *Gasoline sales adjacent to residential property shall be limited to six pumps and five outdoor speakers.*

- *LDC Chapter 7, Section 760.K Signage Plans states “Unique mixed-use developments that have been planned to create a strong sense of place and community may have signage plans. Signage plan shall be permitted subject to the appropriate review, that implement a signage system that sets forth a strong identity for the overall development while at the same time allowing each business to communicate with the public in a consistent, community-building, coordinated manner. A balance of sign size to the overall environment, and overall enhancement of the development is a desired result of signage plans. To achieve this goal, a system of prescriptive and variable sign elements may be designed as part of a signage plan.”*
- *LDC Chapter 10 Definitions categorizes Gasoline Stations as establishments “where gasoline and diesel fuel is supplied and dispensed at retail and where no servicing or repair of vehicles is permitted. Convenience goods may be sold at such facilities, but the sales shall be accessory to the sale of gasoline or diesel fuel.”*
- *LDC Chapter 10 Definitions categorizes Gas Pumps as “any mechanism used for the dispensing of fuel for motor vehicles. For the purposes of this Code, a gas pump may have up to six dispenser nozzles.”*
- *The surrounding Future Land Uses are Employment Center (ECX) and Professional Institutional (PIX). Both are primarily non-residential land use designations.*
- *This site abuts single-family residences on lots between 0.95 and 1.34 acres in size in a PIX district on the west and ECX district on the north. The site abuts a townhouse development of 40 units on originally five acres to the north.*
- *The nearest public school is approximately 2½ miles from the site.*
- *Fire and EMS response to this project is from Polk County Fire Rescue Station 38 located at 126 Cottonwood Drive which is less than ¼ mile from the site.*
- *There is no fire hydrant within roadway frontages but there are water lines with adequate pressure and size There is a 24-inch potable water distribution line on the opposite side of U.S. Highway 27. On the southeastern corner of the site, an 8-inch potable water line extends underneath U.S. Highway 27 connecting to the 24-inch distribution main.*
- *The site is served by the Polk County Sheriff’s Office Northeast District Command at 1100 Dunson Road, approximately 3½ miles driving distance from the site.*
- *Polk County serves potable water, wastewater, and reclaimed water to this site through its Northeast Regional Utility Service Area (NERUSA). There are lines in the right-of-way of U.S. Highway 27 and Holly Hill Grove Road #2.*
- *The site has approximately 2,400 linear feet of direct frontage on U.S. Highway 27 a six-lane principal arterial, and approximately 590 feet of frontage on Holly Hill Grove Road #2, a two-lane urban collector.*
- *Holly Hill Grove Road #1 has been vacated through the property.*
- *According to the Transportation Planning Organization and FDOT, the generalized capacity of U.S. Highway 27 has exceeded the County’s adopted level of service standard. A major traffic study based on current data will be required with any development approval on this site.*
- *Mass transit service is provided by roaute 20X, The Haines City/Davenport Express, and passes by the frontage of the site. A bus sto is included in the applicant’s site design.*
- *There are no wetlands or floodplains on the site. The closest surface waters of any significance are in the Green Swamp Conservation Core to the west.*

- *The site is comprised of Candler Sand, a soil that has slight limitations to shallow excavations and small commercial buildings, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, Polk County Survey.*
- *The site was within a mile radius of an endangered animal species sighting according to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory of 2002 but there has not been a nearby sighting in 2006 or later. Source: Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).*
- *The site is not within the flight path and height restriction buffer zones of a public use airport. There is a heliport at the Heart of Florida Hospital approximately one mile to the south.*
- *There are similar large retail businesses (over 65,000 square feet) approximately five (5) miles to the south and two miles to the north.*
- *The closest gas station is approximately 1½ miles to the south and north. The Planning Commission recently approved a gas station on the ECX property opposite Holly Hill Grove Road #2 from the site.*
- *There has been a sign plan approved at the Posner Center 1 ½ miles to the north. No others have been approved on U.S. Highway 27 south of I-4 in Polk County.*

**Development Review Committee Recommendation:** Based on the information provided by the applicant, recent site visits, and the analysis conducted within this staff report, the Development Review Committee (DRC) finds that with the proposed conditions the request **IS COMPATIBLE** with the surrounding land uses and general character of the area and **IS CONSISTENT** with the Polk County Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code. Therefore, the DRC recommends **APPROVAL of LDPD-2026-7.**

### **CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL**

Based upon the findings of fact, the DRC recommends APPROVAL of LDPD-2026-7 with the following conditions:

1. The subject property is approved for 489,500 cumulative square feet of retail, personal service, and restaurant uses and two gas stations in an ECX district [PLG]
2. If a portion of Holly Hill Grove Road #1 is vacated, the property owner shall dedicate a utility easement from the eastern terminus of Holly Hill Grove Road #1 to U.S. Highway 27 that is a minimum 20 feet in width and the shortest practicable route between the beginning and end.
3. The property owner shall provide a cross-access easement to the abutting property to the south.
4. The number of access points directly connecting to U.S. Highway 27 may be reduced through a minor modification to the Conditional Use.
5. Prior to the submittal of any development approvals, a site walkover and protected species study shall be conducted by a registered environmental professional. The outcome shall be reported to the Florida Wildlife Commission, and their approval of proper avoidance, mitigation, and relocation procedures shall be enacted.
6. The site plan included herein together with the conditions of approval shall be considered the “Binding Site Plan.” Any modifications to LDPD-2026-7, except for those listed in Section 906.E of the LDC, shall constitute a Major Modification to this approval and require a Level 3 Review before the Planning Commission. [PLG]

7. A sufficient Level 2 Review application for at least 65,000 square feet of retail commercial uses shall be submitted prior to the end of business on October 2, 2029 (5 years), or this approval shall expire. Level 2 Review on at least 65,000 square feet of retail shall be completed by end of business on December 2, 2031 (approximately 5½ years), or approval of retail above 65,000 square feet in the ECX district shall expire.
8. A sufficient Level 2 Review application for at least one gas station shall be submitted prior to the end of business on June 2, 2031 (5 years), or this approval shall expire. Level 2 Review on at least one gas station shall be completed by end of business on December 2, 2031 (approximately 5½ years), or the gas station approval shall expire.
9. The duration of the sign plan approval shall run with the approval of the first 65,000 or more square feet of retail development. Once construction commences on the first retail building above 65,000 square feet, the sign plan will be vested for the entire project.
10. Measurements depicted in the sign plan in Exhibits 7 and 8 and may be modified at building permit approval by up to five percent (5%) in area and height. Sign placement may be adjusted within the same right-of-way frontage. Individual tenant sign area may vary on multitenant signs.
11. This approval replaces and supersedes the conditions in LDCU-2024-25.

#### **GENERAL NOTES**

*NOTE: This staff report was prepared without the benefit of testimony and evidence submitted by the public and other parties at a public hearing.*

*NOTE: Approval of this request shall not constitute a waiver or variance from any applicable development requirement unless specifically noted in the conditions of approval and consistent with the LDC.*

*NOTE: All written comments made in the application and subsequent submissions of information made during the application review process, which are on file with the Land Development Division, shall be considered to be binding upon the applicant, provided such comments are not at variance with the Comprehensive Plan, LDC or other development regulations in effect at the time of development.*

*NOTE: Approval of this request is only for Level 3 Review and only for those development decisions within the Planning Commissioners' jurisdiction. Building permits will be required for improvements to structures in accordance with Chapter 553 of the Florida Statutes.*

*NOTE: Issuance of a development permit by the county does not in any way create any rights on the part of the applicant to obtain a permit from a state or federal agency and does not create any liability on the part of the county for issuance of the permit if the applicant fails to obtain requisite approvals or fulfill the obligations imposed by a state or federal agency or undertakes actions that result in a violation of state or federal law.*

## Surrounding Land Use Designations and Current Land Use Activity

The following table provides a reference point for notable and pertinent Future Land Use Map districts and existing land uses upon them.

**Table 1**

<p><b>Northwest:</b> Residential High Density (RHX) Large townhome development ECX – small townhome development and large lot single-family</p>	<p><b>North:</b> Employment Center (ECX) Vacant former citrus grove planned for gas station two quick-serve restaurants and a self-storage facility (LDPD-2023-7)</p>	<p><b>Northeast:</b> Professional/Institutional (PIX) Heavy Equipment Sales and Service (non-conforming) Retail store, vacant former citrus grove</p>
<p><b>West:</b> ECX, RHX, PIX, City Vacant, former citrus grove, large lot single-family, and small lot single family</p>	<p><b>Subject Property:</b> ECX Walmart Retail &amp; Sam’s Wholesale Club with gas stations under construction (LDNON-2925-41)</p>	<p><b>East:</b> PIX, Neighborhood Activity Center (NACX) Religious Institution, vacant forested and former citrus lands</p>
<p><b>Southwest:</b> PIX, City, RMX Self-storage, vehicle storage, large lot single-family</p>	<p><b>South:</b> PIX, Self-storage facility</p>	<p><b>Southeast:</b> NACX, RMX, RHX Ridgewood Lakes 55+ community, townhomes, mobile home, single-family, vacant commercial properties</p>

Compact single-family and multifamily developments are covering what used to be citrus groves on properties that extend from U.S. Highway 27. Commercial developments are in the process of claiming the last available acreage along the U.S. Highway 27 corridor. Land is developing at a rapid pace in this area. The existing residential development on the west side of the site is how residential development settled in this area before the County began making substantial infrastructure investments to enable dense urban development. As a result of the market factors combined with the County’s investment, this area is one of the fastest growing in the entire state.

### Compatibility with the Surrounding Land Uses, Infrastructure, and Environment:

This development is the largest retail request on U.S. Highway 27 since the Posner Center on the southeast corner of the I-4 interchange was approved in 2003. The property location is approximately equidistant between Haines City’s northern highway commercial developments and the interstate. The surrounding area has seen some of Polk County's most rapid residential growth in the last 10 years. The market for large-scale retail is quickly catching up with the residential surge. The site has above average marketing presence with some environmental and infrastructure challenges that have been overcome. This modification is a relatively small change to the current site plan approval that can easily coexist with surrounding uses so that no use is unduly negatively impacted by it either directly or indirectly. In the site plan approved for construction (LDNON-2025-41), the immediate compatibility challenges with nearby existing residential development have been overcome through design, grading, buffering and screening.

**The LDC defines compatibility as “A condition in which land uses or conditions can coexist in relative proximity to each other in a stable fashion over time such that no use or condition is unduly negatively impacted directly or indirectly by another use or condition.”**

#### A. Land Uses:

The greatest land use compatibility conflict with existing development was with the townhouses to the immediate northwest corner of the site. Suitable landscape buffering and an opaque fence or wall

is proposed consistent with the requirements in Section 220 of the LDC. Existing uses to the west are rural homesites of one acre or more. Ironically, these are designated for the same non-residential district as the subject property. The intent of the Future Land Use Plan for this area has been for those units to be redeveloped into office park uses. With the closure of their direct access to U.S Highway 27 through the applicant's vacation of Holly Hill Grove Road #1, there will need to be a reassessment of the highest and best use of these properties since the road has been closed to the east with a cul-de-sac terminus. The properties no longer have the same development potential under the ECX Future Land Use Map designation because it cut off their direct access to U.S. Highway 27. Some of the properties have been changed to Residential High (RHX).

The subject property is approved for an exception to the 65,000 square foot limitation on retail commercial development in the Employment Center (ECX) district of the North Ridge Selected Area Plan, gas stations, and a specialized sign plan. This request is to modify the sign plan which will convert the designation to a Planned Development. This way these approvals will be designated on the GIS system for easier recognition by the public and permitting staff.

The ECX district is *“intended for office parks, light assembly, commercial, and other business uses to serve the needs of the growing population in the northeast area of the County.”* Typical tenants include: *“office Parks, colleges and universities, research parks, services to offices, light assembly, distribution centers, research firms, development firms, convenience stores, restaurants, professional offices, financial institutions, recreational uses, communication facilities, medium density residential development, hotels and uses that support or directly relate to the college campuses and the development of a research park, including small-scale retail stores and other commercial uses.”* This site was approved to deviate from these parameters to allow a 489,500 square foot shopping plaza on 36.5% of the current ECX district under case #LDCU-2024-25. The Planning Commission realized the ECX district has not performed as intended in the North Ridge Selected Area Plan. This amount of retail commercial is needed in this location in the next 10 years at our current rates of growth. This land use district is the only option for this property that allows retail commercial uses within it. The North Ridge Selected Area Plan has not undergone evaluation since it was adopted over 20 years ago. The needed mix of land uses today have outgrown the earlier vision of the area. The previous planning efforts may have missed the mark on the amount and type of retail commercial needs that would be present at the end of the plan's term as the planned residential development comes closer to full buildout.

The gas stations are located fronting the U.S. Highway 27 corridor in the most optimal places. One is at the intersection of Holly Hill Grove Road#2 and the other is on the southern end of the property and will be an exclusive fueling site for club members. These locations and their conceptual sketches on the site plan appear to meet all the requirements of the SAP and Section 303 of the LDC. The approved sign plan was for a greater number and sizes of plaza signage in exchange for no other ground signage on the out parcels. This modification is for a slight deviation from the original plan and provides some flexibility so future modification of this type are not needed. Overall, this plan achieves a more consistent theme, reduces sign clutter, and achieves the intent of Section 760.K that is to create *“a balance of sign size to the overall environment, and overall enhancement of the development.”*

#### B. Infrastructure:

There were some infrastructure weaknesses in this portion of the County that affect the immediate development of the site. Fortunately, these have been overcome since the initial approval. Wastewater capacity is scheduled to be adequate to serve the site by the opening in 2027. The primary roadway connecting is under construction for a new signalized intersection design at Holly Hill

Grove Road #2 and U.S. Highway 27 with multiple turn lane additions both on U.S. Highway 27 and Holly Hill Grove Road #2/ Cottonwood Drive. This improvement will enable more efficient entrance and exit to the site, but it may also lower traffic capacity on U.S. Highway 27. If it coincides with other intersection improvements along U.S. Highway 27, it may only result in a subtle decline in capacity. Alternative roadway connections such as FDC Grove Road may draw more traffic off the highway, especially if there is a flyover connection across I-4 to the North Ridge Trail in the future which is currently under design.

Public safety services are excellent for this site since the fire rescue station is on Cottonwood Drive opposite U.S. Highway 27. Law enforcement services are relatively high with a command center just 3½ miles away. Schools and parks are not in conflict with this site in any way.

C. Environmental Limitations

Most environmental factors are favorable for the development of this property. There are no substantial limitations such as wetlands and 100-year flood zones that might limit the use of the site and pose site drainage problems. The grade changes are more than typical in Florida which is why the right-of-way closure was a necessity. In order to accommodate the size of the retail, structures proposed (±200,000 square feet each), The undulating grade will be flattened. This made rerouting the right-of-way to its continuing grade far too challenging. The only other environmental limitations were the standard species mitigation that often comes with the redevelopment of former citrus groves. These properties often contain Sand Skink and Gopher Tortoise habitats that have to be avoided, mitigated, or relocated. A species study was conducted prior to construction.

**Sign Plan Comparison of Permitted and Proposed Request**

The LDC requires Ground Sign area and height to be reduced by 15%, if the subject site is located in a Selected Area Plan (SAP). Table 2, below, identifies how the original approval and the new request deviates from the sign requirements outlined in Section 760 of the LDC.

**Table 2 Applicant’s Proposal**

±56.71 acres ECX 2 parcels >5 acres 8 parcels < 5 acres	North Ridge SAP 15% reduction Area and Height for Free Standing Signs	Proposed Request	Percentage of Standard
<b>Multi-Tenant</b>			
Height	30’ & 5’	21’, 15’, 15’, 11’ & 44’ <b>12.5’</b>	208% <b>212%</b>
Face Area	240 & 120 sq. ft.	370, 136, 136, 91, & 94 <b>114</b> sq.ft.	229% <b>236%</b>
Number	2	5	250%
<b>Free Standing Signs (on parcels &gt;5 acres)</b>			
Height	25½’	25’	98%
Face Area	212½ sq.ft.	<del>288</del> <b>312.5</b> & <del>225</del> <b>100</b> sq.ft.	<b>147% &amp; 47%</b>
Number	2	2	100%
<b>Free Standing Signs (on parcels &lt;5 acres)</b>			
Height	17’	0’	0%
Face Area	127½ sq.ft.	0’ square feet	0%
Number	8	0	0%
<b>Monument Signs</b>			
Height	5’ (exclude base up to 3 feet)	0’	0%
Face Area	80 square feet	0 square feet	0%
Number	10	0’ maximum	0%

The location and dimension details are shown in Exhibits 7 & 8. Table 2 shows that the applicant is sacrificing individual signage on the outparcels for consolidation on larger multitenant signs. While it allows much larger signage than the standard, it reduces potential sign clutter along U.S. Highway 27. Staff find this to be a beneficial trade-off and deserve an exception to the standards. Staff finds it is consistent with Section 760.K because it provides a “*A balance of sign size to the overall environment*” as the intent describes. The proposed changes to the original approval are minor but not minor enough to be a minor modification and avoid a new hearing since these specifics are part of the conditions of approval. New conditions of approval are proposed so that these minor modifications do not require a public hearing before the Planning Commission in the future.

### Nearest and Zoned Elementary, Middle, and High School

School capacity is not a concern for non-residential uses. Proximity and traffic conflicts are a concern. Fortunately, the activity on this site is far from any location that could have potential conflicts with any school’s operation. Listed in the table to follow are the three closest schools to the site.

**Table 3**

Name of School	Average driving distance from subject site
Horizons Elementary	±2½ miles driving distance
Ridgewiew Global Studies Academy Middle School	±3½ miles driving distance
Ridge Community High School	±3½ miles driving distance

Source: Polk County School Board GIS

This location for a large shopping plaza poses no potential adverse impacts upon any nearby schools. A new elementary school is planned and approved for construction in Haines City at the corner of Park Place and FDC Grove Road. This will be within 1½ miles of the site. The area is seeing such rapid population growth that the school zones in this portion of the County are over capacity and so are adjacent school zones.

### Nearest Sheriff, Fire, and EMS Station

Fire Rescue and EMS response to this project is from Polk County Fire Rescue Station 38, located at 126 Cottonwood Drive which is almost across the street (US 27). The travel distance is approximately ¼ mile from the main entrance on Holly Grove Hill Road #2, and response times can average three or more minutes depending on the type of call. More fire hydrants are being added with the construction of these retail buildings. There is a 24-inch potable water distribution line on the opposite side of U.S. Highway 27. On the southeastern corner of the site, an 8-inch potable water line extends underneath U.S. Highway 27 connecting to the 24-inch distribution main.

**Table 4**

	Name of Station	Distance	Response Time*
Sheriff	Northeast District Command (1100 Dunson Road)	±3½ miles	6 minutes
Fire	Station 38(126 Cottonwood Drive, Davenport)	±¼ mile	3 minutes
EMS	Station 38(126 Cottonwood Drive, Davenport)	±¼ mile	3 minutes

Source: Polk County Sheriff’s Office and Public Safety

\*Response times are based on when the station receives the call, not from when the call is made to 911.

The nearest Sheriff’s substation is the Northeast Command Center on Dunson Road, 3½ miles to the north. Sheriff response times are not as much a function of the distance to the nearest sheriff’s substation, but more a function of the overall number of patrol officers within the County. However, the closer to the command center increases the number of patrol officers available in the area. Polk County’s law enforcement staffing is highest in the northeast part of the County.

**Water and Wastewater Demand and Capacity:**

The proposed sign modification plan will not change the water and wastewater demand for the development that has been approved. Since the original approval there have been significant changes in the utility capacity. There will be wastewater capacity to serve the full buildout of the development by the time the stores are ready to open, the current plant will have completed its planned and funded expansion. All water needs can be met, both now and in the future. Additionally, the lines that serve the site will need to be relocated when the transportation system improvements are constructed.

**A. Estimated Demand and Service Provider:**

Polk County provides potable water, wastewater, and reclaimed water to this area. The site has direct access to an 8-inch water line in the right-of-way of Holly Hill Grove Road on the north side of the property along with a 6-inch wastewater line under the pavement and a 6-inch reclaimed water line on the opposite side of the right-of-way. Along the frontage of U.S. Highway 27, there is a 16-inch wastewater force main and a 16-inch reclaimed water line in the abutting right-of-way. There is a 24-inch potable water distribution line on the opposite side of U.S. Highway 27. On the southeastern corner of the site, an 8-inch potable water line extends underneath U.S. Highway 27 connecting to the 24-inch distribution main. Table 5, to follow, provides an estimate of the water and wastewater demands of the proposed development at full buildout.

**Table 5**

Subject Property	Estimated Impact Analysis		
	Demand as Currently Used ECX	Maximum Permissible in the district ECX administratively	Proposed Plan
56.71± acres ECX			
Permitted Intensity	Vacant (former citrus grove)	1,664,201 SF Office 65,000 SF Retail	489,500 SF Retail and 2 Gas Stations (34 fuel sites)
Potable Water Consumption (GPD)	0 GPD	399,408 + 14,300 = 413,708 GPD	107,690 + 720 = 108,410 GPD
Wastewater Generation (GPD)	0 GPD	330,966 GPD	86,728 GPD

*Source: Polk County Concurrency Manual & Polk County Utilities: Retail: Department stores 0.22 GPD/sq.ft. Office 0.24 GPD/sq.ft., Gas Stations 1 ERC (360 GPD), wastewater=80% water consumption*

It may take approximately 10 years for the proposed development to fully build out. Also, the estimates above may likely be on the high side if there is adequate capacity in the reclaimed water system to serve the development. A significant amount of water used in any development is landscape irrigation. The above numbers do not consider the County’s dynamic reclaimed water system and the potential reduction in potable water use.

**B. Available Capacity:**

The Northeast Regional Utility Service Area is permitted for 12,940,000 GPD of water capacity. As of June of 2026, the current projected flow is approximately 11,175,000 GPD leaving approximately 1,765,000 GPD in system capacity. The system growth rate is approximately 962 gallons or 3.2

equivalent residential connections per day. There is still an adequate amount of potable water capacity remaining and connection to the PRWC is on the horizon.

The Northeast Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant is now permitted to treat 7,000,000 GPD. As of June of 2026, the flow was approximately 5,683,000 GPD leaving 1,317,000 GPD of capacity. The system growth rate is approximately 409 gallons or 3.1 equivalent residential connection per day. Based on the rate of growth, there is estimated to be an adequate amount of wastewater treatment capacity remaining until the planned improvements are completed in 2027.

Reclaimed water capacity is not tracked for concurrency. The capacity to serve reclaimed water is directly proportional to the amount of wastewater treatment. As more homes are connected to wastewater service, more are connected to reclaimed water for irrigation. This reduces demand for the potable water system which extends the capacity of the potable water facilities. If this request for expansion is not approved, there will be less water for expansion of the reclaimed water system.

#### C. Planned Improvements:

The Northeast Regional Wastewater Treatment plant is planned for expansion from 7,000,000 GPD to 9,000,000 GPD to be completed by 2027. The reclaimed water system production will expand as the plant flow increases. This will enable more development to use reclaimed water for irrigation that is currently being supported by the potable system.

The water system will be connected to the Polk Regional Water Cooperative (PRWC) in the near future. As master planned, one well field of the PRWC will eventually deliver up to 30 MGD of high-quality potable water to member governments. The first phase of construction, expected to begin in late 2024, will consist of a 7.5 MGD reverse osmosis treatment facility, 5 raw water wells, and 61 miles of transmission pipeline.

### **Roadways/ Transportation Network**

The impact of the proposed development on the area transportation network will be substantial and the major roadway fronting the site is overly constrained according to generalized data at this time. Many improvements under construction at the intersection of Holly Hill Grove Road #2 and U.S. Highway 27 including new turn lanes and signalization. A traffic study was approved by both Polk County and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) that called out for the improvements that have been designed and are now under construction.

#### A. Estimated Demand:

This modification to the sign plan will not significantly change the currently approved development plans. There will be a significant increase in traffic volume from once the stores open, and many improvements needed to accommodate it are underway. Some of it will not occur immediately because it is estimated that the full buildout of all the outparcels will take at least 10 years to accomplish.

The traffic volume of the proposed use is approximately 76% of the highest potential use that the district will allow by right. On the one hand this is less than what might be, but the demand for that type of use in the potential quantity is highly unlikely in this market. Table 6 below shows the predicted Average Annual Daily Trip (AADT) rates and how much traffic to expect during the PM peak hour (highest hour between 4PM and 7 PM).

**Table 6**

Subject Property	Estimated Impact Analysis		
	Demand as Currently Used ECX	Maximum Permissible in the district ECX administratively	Proposed Plan
56.71± acres ECX			
Permitted Intensity	Vacant (former citrus grove)	1,664,201 SF Office 65,000 SF Retail	489,500 SF Retail and 2 Gas Stations (34 fuel sites)
Average Annual Daily Trips (AADT)	0	18,421 + 1,588 = <b>20,009</b>	11,960 + 3,393 = <b>15,353</b>
PM Peak Hour Trips	0	1,991 + 168 = <b>2,159</b>	1,265 + 360 = <b>1,625</b>

Source: Polk County Concurrency Manual  
 Shopping Center = 24.43/1,000SF AADT, 3.4/ 1,000SF @peak (76% new)  
 Office = 11.07/1,000 SF, 1.3/1,000SF @ peak (92% new)  
 Gas Station =99.77/ fuel site AADT, 13.91/fuel site @peak (76% new)

A major traffic study was conducted by the applicant and analyzed by Polk County Land Development staff, the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) and FDOT. Over 400 vehicles could be exiting northbound through the intersection at Holly Hill Grove Road #2 within an hour during peak. That could be as many as seven (7) vehicles per minute waiting to turn left of U.S. Highway 27. That is why intersection improvements and alternate travel routes such as FDC Grove Road are key to the success of the development.

Once the stores open, the amount of traffic entering the site during the peak hour will also be substantial (48% of peak), but it will be drawing some of the existing traffic off U.S. Highway 27 because of its ability to attract passerby traffic. Nearly 400 vehicles could be attempting to turn left into the site during the peak hour. Not only will new signalization be installed at the intersection of Holly Hill Grove Road #2 and Highway 27, but lengthy turn lanes to absorb the stacking in order to maintain traffic flow on U.S. Highway 27 will also be added.

**B. Available Capacity:**

The site has direct access to U.S. Highway 27, a six-lane major arterial roadway. According to 2025 trip counts by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), approximately 75,225 vehicles travel that portion of the roadway each day on average. Approximately 38,365 are driving northbound and 36,860 southbound. There are approximately 3,456 northbound vehicles and 3,321 southbound vehicles passing through during the PM peak hour, but the estimated capacity is only 3,020 in either direction. Table 7, to follow, provides a good snapshot in time of the capacity on the surrounding road network. I-4 and U.S. Highway 27 are constrained facilities. I-4 is scheduled for improvements. U.S. Highway 27 is being reassessed for its predicted capacity. It is likely that this link (5110) will be split at Citrus Ridge Drive/Minute Maid Ramp Road #2 and the counts will be redistributed. This may improve the generalized capacity for a short period of time. But the current rate of growth will soon consume any surplus.

**Table 7**

Link #	Road Name	Current Level of Service (LOS)	Available PM Peak Hour Capacity	Minimum LOS Standard
5110N	U.S. Highway 27 From: CR 547 To: I-4	F	-436	D
5110S	U.S. Highway 27 From: I-4 To: CR 547	F	-301	D
8222E	Interstate-4 From: CR 557 To: Osceola County Line	C	1,194	D
8222W	Interstate-4 From: Osceola County Line To: CR 557	D	1,006	D
4053E	CR 547 From: US Highway 27 To: Lee Jackson Highway	C	285	E

**Table 7**

Link #	Road Name	Current Level of Service (LOS)	Available PM Peak Hour Capacity	Minimum LOS Standard
4053W	CR 547 From: Lee Jackson Highway To: US Highway 27	C	305	E
8322E	North Boulevard From: US Highway 27 To: Holly Hill Road	C	601	E
8322W	North Boulevard From: Holly Hill Road To: US Highway 27	C	594	E
6906E	Ernie Caldwell Boulevard From: Heller Brothers Road To: Pine Tree Trail	C	1,336	D
6906W	Ernie Caldwell Boulevard From: Pine Tree Trail To: Heller Brothers Road	C	1,317	D
8406N	FDC Grove Road/Park Place Boulevard From: U.S. Highway 27 To: Heller Brothers Road	B	608	D
8406S	FDC Grove Road/Park Place Boulevard From: Heller Brothers Road To: U.S. Highway 27	B	613	D
8408E	Heller Brothers Road From: FDC Grove Road. To: U.S. Highway 27	B	1,493	D
8408W	Heller Brothers Road From: U.S. Highway 27 To: FDC Grove Road	B	1,488	D

Source: Polk County Transportation Planning Organization, Concurrency Roadway Network Database April 13, 2026

Polk County Roads and Drainage Division cannot control state and federal facilities, but it can control the roadways that feed them and improve alternative routes such as FDC Grove Road to lessen the local demand on the state thoroughfares. The lateral links that consumers will feed into U.S. Highway 27 to reach the proposed shopping plaza are operating above the minimum level of service standards. As traffic increases, there will be longer wait times at the signalized intersections. This will reduce their level of service. Intersection improvements are necessary to maintain capacity. Additional turn lanes enable more vehicles to enter and exit U.S. Highway 27 in shorter duration.

#### C. Roadway Conditions

Roadway conditions are vastly improving in this area. This project will have direct impacts upon U.S. Highway 27, Holly Hill Grove Road #2, and FDC Grove Road. U.S. Highway 27 is maintained by FDOT and is in above average condition. Holly Hill Grove Road #2 has recently been improved to standard pavement width funded by the developer of Brentwood (Highlands-Cassidy) to the northwest. FDC Grove Road is also seeing pavement width and intersection improvements incrementally as residential developments are coming online throughout the length of the corridor.

#### D. Planned Improvements:

The North Ridge Trail has recently received funding in the upcoming budget year to begin construction on some of the legs between Dean Still and Florence Villa Grove Road. The state legislature has directed FDOT to prioritize the I-4 Expansion bringing the I-4 Ultimate buildout to the intersection of U.S. Highway 27. This will remedy the current traffic delays that stem from congestion between the Osceola County line.

**Table 7**

Road	Fiscal Year CIP (Construction)	Project Description
North Ridge Trail	final design completed Construction underway	New roadway Dean Still Road to Legacy Park Boulevard (Florence Villa Grove Road connection)
Interstate 4 "Beyond the Ultimate"	2028	This project is part of FDOT's "Beyond the Ultimate" plan for improving I-4 which includes widening the Interstate to 10-Lanes from West of US 27 to Champions Gate at the Osceola County Line. The project will consist of three general use lanes, auxiliary lanes, and two special use lanes.
FDC Grove Road	Under construction	Intersection improvements between Masseur Road and Minute Maid Ramp #2.
Citrus Ridge Drive @ US 27	Under construction	Intersection turn-lane additions and Signalization improvements (developer funded)
Minute Maid Ramp #2 @ US 27	Under construction	Intersection turn-lane additions and Signalization improvements (developer funded)

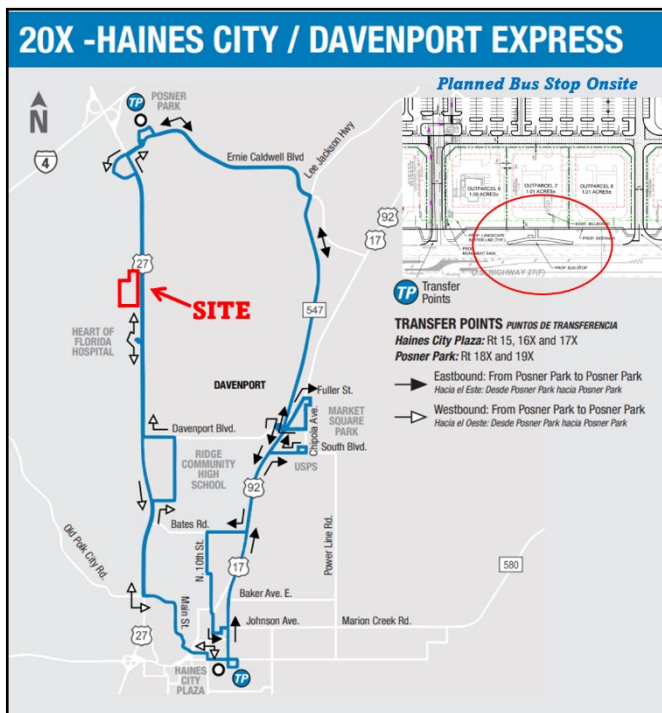
Numerous intersection improvements and new traffic signals are being installed on the U.S. Highway 27 corridor between Haines City and I-4. While these improvements are necessary to mitigate the adverse traffic impacts of various developments along the corridor, they will diminish the average trip speeds within the transportation links and their segments. This will reduce the capacity of U.S Highway 27. That is why County staff is focusing County resources on FDC Grove Road improvements to create an alternative for local travel on U.S. Highway 27. The County is also designing the connection of FDC Grove Road to the North Ridge Trail via a flyover to bridge I-4 and connection of Grandview Parkway east of the Posner Center to Dunson Road via flyover bridge which is funded through the "I-4 Beyond the Ultimate" plan.

**E. Mass Transit**

The Haines City/Davenport Express passes by the frontage of the site. The applicant proposes a bus stop to accommodate mass transit riders (see Exhibit 5). This route has one-hour-20-minute headways and runs weekdays from 5:45 am to 7:05 pm and Saturday 7:15 am to 4:05 pm. This level of service can accommodate the casual rider but is insufficient for fulltime employment usage in the retail of restaurant sector. As the area population grows routes and times will improve which will make it more functional. It does connect to two separate transfer points that enable connections to five other mass transit routes. These routes can connect riders to Poinciana, Kissimmee, Winter Haven and Lake Wales. A bus stop is proposed in the development plans.

**F. Sidewalks**

The area currently lacks an adequate sidewalk network. This development and the ones to the west will provide sidewalks along their frontage. It will be up to the County to provide the missing



sidewalks that should have been provided by past development approvals. The townhouse development immediately to the west was required to install sidewalks and showed them on the approved plans but failed to construct them. Although the other multifamily development to the west was permitted after annexation into Haines City, the sidewalks are being constructed as required. Eventually, there will be a complete sidewalk network constructed along the entire length of Holly Hill Grove Road #2.

### **Park Facilities:**

Non-residential development does not produce demand for parks and recreation facilities. However, they can benefit from them. There are many recreation and sports equipment products sold within the proposed uses.

#### **A. Location:**

The closest public park facilities are over seven (7) miles away in Davenport. The closest County facilities are in Loughman or north of Sand Mine Road on U.S. Highway 27 and over eight (8) miles to the north. There are no facilities within walking distance. Haines City and Davenport have several park facilities within easy driving distance.

#### **B. Services:**

There are six lighted soccer/football fields, five lighted baseball fields, basketball, tennis, and racquetball courts, concession facilities, boat access to Lake Davenport, as well as playground facilities for children and dog walks.

#### **C. Environmental Lands:**

The Lake Bonnet Marsh is to the west of the site. There is public access at the end of Sanders Road 2½ miles to the south.

#### **E. Planned Improvements:**

There are no further recreation improvements scheduled for this area by the County. However, with the number of annexations in the area, there may be City facilities in the near future.

### **Environmental Conditions**

Conditions are ideal for commercial development on this property. There are few environmental limitations onsite. And it will be developed to some of the highest environmental standards in the County because it is located in the Green Swamp Area of Critical State Concern. No wetlands or floodplains onsite. The soil is well drained. The site will be designed to avoid discharge into any nearby wetlands or water bodies. There are no public use wells within 500 feet that would pose conflicts with the proposed gas stations. There are no conflicts with nearby airport facilities. There is no evidence of endangered species sightings but there are circumstances onsite that are consistent with some local habitation, but a species study was conducted and no mitigation was required.

#### **A. Surface Water:**

The closest surface waters of any significance are in the Green Swamp Conservation Core to the west. There are several manmade lakes created from sand mining in the 1990's and early 2000's The

site is likely to be graded such that the drainage flows towards stormwater retention ponds on the western and southern boundaries. Since this development is in the Green Swamp Area of Critical State concern, these ponds will be designed to hold a 25-year, 24-hour storm event for up to 14-days as a standard requirement. This provides ample time for absorption into the aquifer and evaporation prior to any outfall discharge in nearby waterbodies. Water collected on this site will reach nearby surface waters through the percolating into the aquifer rather than direct surface drainage systems.

**B. Wetlands/Floodplains:**

There are no wetlands or flood hazard areas onsite. Much of this site sits upon a hill. The closest wetland is in a depression to the west of the site. The site is likely to be graded such that the drainage flows towards stormwater retention ponds on the western and southern boundaries. Since this development is in the Green Swamp Area of Critical State concern, these ponds will be designed to hold a 25-year, 24-hour storm event for up to 14-days as a standard requirement. This provides ample time for absorption into the aquifer and evaporation prior to any outfall discharge in nearby wetlands.

**C. Soils:**

The entire site is comprised of Candler Fine Sand, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, Polk County Survey. Candler Sand is very porous and well drained. Soil additives will be needed for road base stabilization and building foundations. Connection to reclaimed water for irrigation will assist in maintaining vegetation. The applicant plans to use xeric species in the landscaping to ensure sustainability.

**Table 9**

<b>Soil Name</b>	<b>Septic Tank Absorption Field Limitations</b>	<b>Limitations to Dwellings w/o Basements</b>	<b>% of Site (approximate)</b>
Candler Sand	Slight	Slight	100%

*Source: Soil Survey of Polk County, Florida, USDA, Soil Conservation Service*

**D. Protected Species**

According to Polk County Endangered Habitat Maps, the proposed PD is not located within a one-mile radius of an endangered species sighting. (Source: Florida Natural Areas Inventory, 2002, 2006 & 2011). However, given the nature of the soils onsite, a species study should be conducted prior to any land disturbance. Gopher Tortoises and Sand Skinks are rather common inhabitants of present and former citrus groves due to their malleable soils and abundant food supplies. A species study was conducted and no mitigation was required.

**E. Archeological Resources:**

According to the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, there are no archeological sites listed in the Florida Master Site File for Section 30, Township 26, Range 27. This is supported by the fact that it has been under citrus cultivation for the last 83 years, according to the 1941 aerial photos.

**F. Wells (Public/Private)**

There is a public use wellfield to the east just over 1,500 feet away from the development boundary. This is a significant distance, and the site drainage flows in the opposite direction towards the center of the property and U.S. Highway 27. This development will not conflict with those well sites. Gas

stations must be setback 500 feet from this facility, this is three times that distance. There are no other uses proposed at the site that could adversely affect this or any other public or private well.

G. Airports:

The site is not within the flight path and height restriction buffer zones of a public use airport. There is a heliport at the Heart of Florida Hospital approximately one mile to the south. This development will not conflict with it.

**Economic Factors:**

The northeastern corner of the County has been planned for urban growth since the early 1990s. Substantial investments have been made in water supplies and distribution networks (potable and reclaimed), wastewater treatment systems, roadway and sidewalk improvements, public safety (fire rescue, law enforcement, EMS), floodplain mitigation, parks and recreation facilities. There has also been a significant amount of job creation in the area. All of these investments, both private and public, have combined to enable a rapidly growing housing market for both single and multifamily developments. The result of which has created one of the fastest growing urban areas in the state. With all this residential growth comes the need for retail products and services. There was a time when the commercial land use needs were met with developments such as the Posner Center at I-4 and US 27 and around the greater Haines City area near US 27 and US 17/92. However, today those areas are fully built out and the demand for retail goods and services continues to grow at the same rapid rate as housing development.

The intent of the ECX district was to continue efforts to provide land uses that would stimulate local employment and bridge the gap in retail and residential needs by allowing small percentages of both to accompany employment uses. Based on more recent development patterns both in the state and nation, there is less demand for office space than the designers of the ECX district had envisioned. The rise in work from home professions and decline in office labor demands that have evolved over the last decade was not anticipated. Today staff have found a need for the ECX to provide for more retail and service needs than for places to work in offices because not only are their more workers in the residential areas, the retail and service establishments themselves contain much of the employment opportunities needed by the local population. This has been evident in the last four commercial use requests in the other ECX districts located throughout the planning area. While many have included such uses as quick-serve restaurants, gas, convenience, self-storage, and carwashes, there have also been other labor-intensive uses such as grocery stores, health clubs, personal services, and medical facilities developed within the districts creating more employment demands.

This property was the only one available that is suited for large-scale retail in the entire U.S. Highway 27 corridor from south of Haines City to U.S. Highway 192 (a distance of over 20 miles). With the closure of Holly Hill Grove Road #1 (underutilized substandard local road), the property is over 57 acres. There were no other commercial properties of that size under one ownership fronting U.S. Highway 27 from Lake Wales to the County line. There are none that can be found above 20 acres under one ownership, and the largest undeveloped commercial district falls short of what is demanded by over 10 acres. The policies within the Comprehensive Plan are too rigid to enable this property to have the proper land use category. Therefore, it was necessary for the applicant to request an exception to the ECX district at this location.

## Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, LDC, and Other County Ordinances:

The site is located in the Transit Supportive Development Area (TSDA), which is the area “*where the availability of infrastructure and other community facilities and services, including, but not limited to mass transit and other transportation alternatives, utilities, public safety, recreational and educational services,*” according to POLICY 2.104-A1 of the Comprehensive Plan. There are public water and wastewater services available for the proposed development. There is a mass transit route in the area. While there is limited traffic capacity on the most affected roadways, the applicant is designing an intersection improvement that will address how this may be mitigated. Public safety facilities are at urban service levels and within close proximity to the development.

The guidelines for developing this property are found in SECTION 2.131-Q of the Comprehensive Plan, the North Ridge Selected Area Plan (SAP). According to POLICY 2.131-Q4.M of the North Ridge SAP, Employment Center (ECX) areas are “*designed to allow office parks, light assembly, commercial, and other business uses to serve the needs of the growing population in the northeast area of the County.*” Typical Tenants are “*office parks, colleges and universities, research parks, services to offices, light assembly, distribution centers, research firms, development firms, convenience stores, restaurants, professional offices, financial institutions, recreational uses, communication facilities, medium density residential development, hotels and uses that support or directly relate to the college campuses and the development of a research park, including small-scale retail stores and other commercial uses*” according to POLICY 2.131-Q4.M.b(c). Retail and commercial uses are limited to 30 percent of the ECX district according to POLICY 2.131-Q4.M.c(i). However, the conditional use process provided the Planning Commission with the ability to allow more retail within the district as needed at this location based on the criteria in Section 906.D.7.

Chapter 4, Section 401.06, Table 4.16, Use Table for Standard Land Use Districts in the North Ridge Selected Area Plan lists “Retail above 65,000 square feet” as a conditional use requiring a Level 3 Review. Section 401.06.E of the SAP standards for various uses specifies that there is a 30% limitation on commercial uses in the ECX, and that Level 3 Review is required to surpass it. The applicant is approved for a number of retail and restaurant uses on this site totaling approximately 489,500 square feet which is a 753% increase above the standard provided in the district. Chapter 3, Section 303, Criteria for Conditional Uses for “Retail” offers no specific development conditions or standards for retail in this location.

The current ECX district measures approximately 155.33 acres according to the County’s GIS system. The approved 56.71-acre retail development encompasses 36.5% of the current ECX district. Other plans were approved within the ECX district for 8.38 acres to be developed under LDPD-2023-7 for a gas station, restaurant, and self-storage facility on the north side of Holly Hill Grove Road #2 opposite the entrance of this proposed retail outlet. Approval raised the percentage of commercial within the district to 41.85%. While this may seem like a significant deviation from the plan and code requirements, staff agreed with the applicant that there were no better locations available in the North Ridge SAP for such a retail facility that is needed by the surrounding existing, developing, and permitted residential growth in the area.

The Planning Commission, in the approval of development plans, considered the following factors listed in Table 10 in accordance with Section 2.102 Growth Management of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Table 10**

Comprehensive Plan Policy	Consistency Analysis
<p>POLICY 2.102-A2: COMPATIBILITY - Land shall be developed so that adjacent uses are compatible with each other, pursuant to the requirements of other Policies in this Future Land Use Element, so that one or more of the following provisions are accomplished: a. there have been provisions made which buffer incompatible uses from dissimilar uses; b. incompatible uses are made to be more compatible to each other through limiting the intensity and scale of the more intense use; c. uses are transitioned through a gradual scaling of different land use activities through the use of innovative development techniques such as a Planned Unit Development.</p>	<p>Staff found the proposed retail plaza design provided for buffering incompatible uses through landscaping, screening, use of stormwater management facilities, and grade separation. Its location along a major travel corridor is essential to the success of such a retail product and service delivery plan.</p>
<p>POLICY 2.102-A1: DEVELOPMENT LOCATION – Polk County shall promote contiguous and compact growth patterns through the development process to minimize energy costs, conserve land, water, and natural resources, minimize the cost of services, and prevent development patterns where tracts of land are by-passed in favor of development more distant from services and existing Communities.</p>	<p>There are infrastructure and services available in this area to support the more urban development. There is a significant amount of surrounding residential development that is in need of the commerce that this proposed retail plaza will provide. This site is one of the last remaining of its size along the U.S. highway 27 corridor between Haines City and I-4. These proposed large retail outlets need a large property to develop.</p>
<p>POLICY 2.102-A3: DISTRIBUTION - Development shall be distributed throughout the County consistently with this Future Land Use Element so that the public utility, other community services, and public transit and transportation systems can be efficiently utilized; and compact, high-density and intensity development is located where urban services can be made available.</p>	<p>This site has potable water, wastewater and reclaimed water services, fire rescue is very close by, and mass transit services will be stopping at the proposed use where the stop is indicated on the site plan.</p>
<p>POLICY 2.102-A4: TIMING - The development of land shall be timed and staged in conjunction with the cost-effective and efficient provision of supporting community services which, at a minimum, shall require compliance with the Plan's Level of Service requirements and the County's concurrency management system.</p>	<p>The site is located within an area that surrounding residential development and a higher level of public services. While there is currently limited capacity on the roadway network, offsite improvements are planned to accommodate this development and the projected growth.</p>
<p>POLICY 2.102-A15: ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES - The County will direct new growth to areas where adequate public facilities exist or are planned; and ensure that essential services are in place to provide for efficient, cost-effective response times from the Fire Department, Sheriff's Department, and Emergency Management Service (EMS).</p>	<p>The subject property is located within an area of the County that has adequate public safety services. There is a fire rescue station less than ¼ mile driving distance from the retail site.</p>

The Planning Commission, with the approval of development plans, considered the following factors listed in Table 11 in accordance with Section 906.D.7 of the Land Development Code.

**Table 11**

<p><b>The Planning Commission, in the review of development plans, shall consider the following factors in accordance with Section 906.D.7 of the LDC:</b></p>	
<p><b>Whether the proposed development is consistent with all relevant requirements of this Code;</b></p>	<p><i>Staff found this this request is consistent with the LDC, specifically Sections 303,401.06, 706.K, and 906.D.</i></p>
<p><b>Whether the proposed development is consistent with all applicable policies of the Comprehensive Plan;</b></p>	<p><i>Yes, POLICY 2.131-Q4.M of the North Ridge SAP, states that Employment Center (ECX) areas are "designed to allow office parks, light assembly, commercial, and other</i></p>

**Table 11**

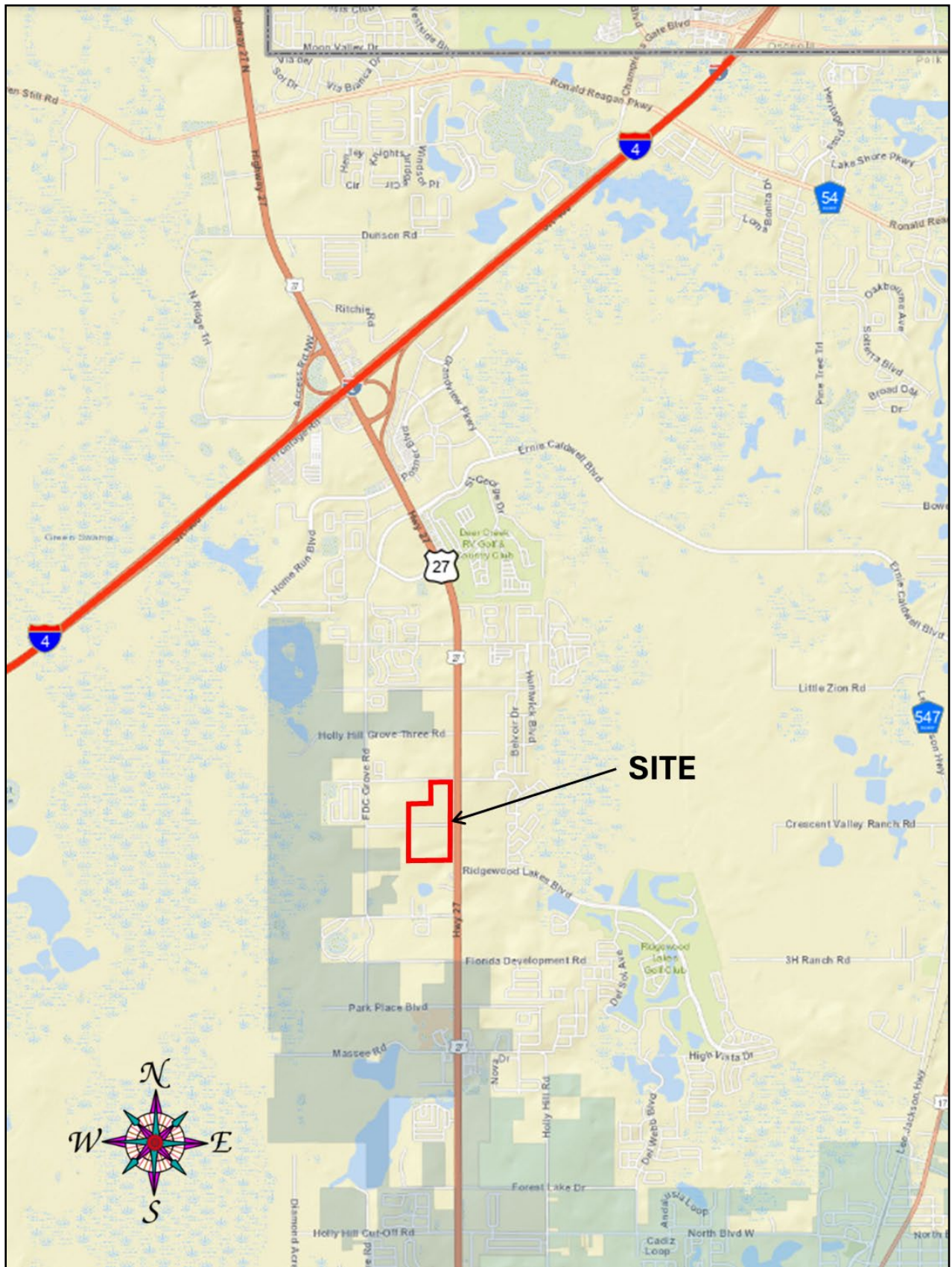
<b>The Planning Commission, in the review of development plans, shall consider the following factors in accordance with Section 906.D.7 of the LDC:</b>	
	<i>business uses to serve the needs of the growing population in the northeast area of the County.”</i>
<b>Whether the proposed use is compatible with surrounding uses and the general character of the area, including such factors as density, height, bulk, scale, intensity, traffic, noise, and appearance; and</b>	<i>Yes, the request is compatible with surrounding uses and the general character of the area. See Pages 7-9 of this staff report for data and analysis on surrounding uses and compatibility.</i>
<b>How the concurrency requirements will be met, if the development were built.</b>	<i>There are currently deficiencies in transportation and wastewater concurrency. However, the applicant has requested an extension of the effective dates of the conditional use to allow more time for improvements to be designed, programmed, and constructed.</i>

The previous conditional use approval met all the conditions in Section 303 of the LDC for gas stations. These included: a minimum of 30 feet of stacking lane between a curb cut and the nearest gasoline pump. Gasoline pump islands and canopy supports are set back from the edge of the road right-of-way by 25 feet or more on both principal arterial and collector roads. The centerline setback meets 85 on principal arterial roads and 55 feet on urban collector roads. Gasoline sales were not adjacent to residential property. There is an intervening entrance road and drainage tract shown on the site Plan (See Exhibit 5). The request meets all the conditions Section 706.K Sign Plans. The plan and the requested modification creates a strong sense of place and a balance of sign size to the overall environment, and overall enhancement of the development.

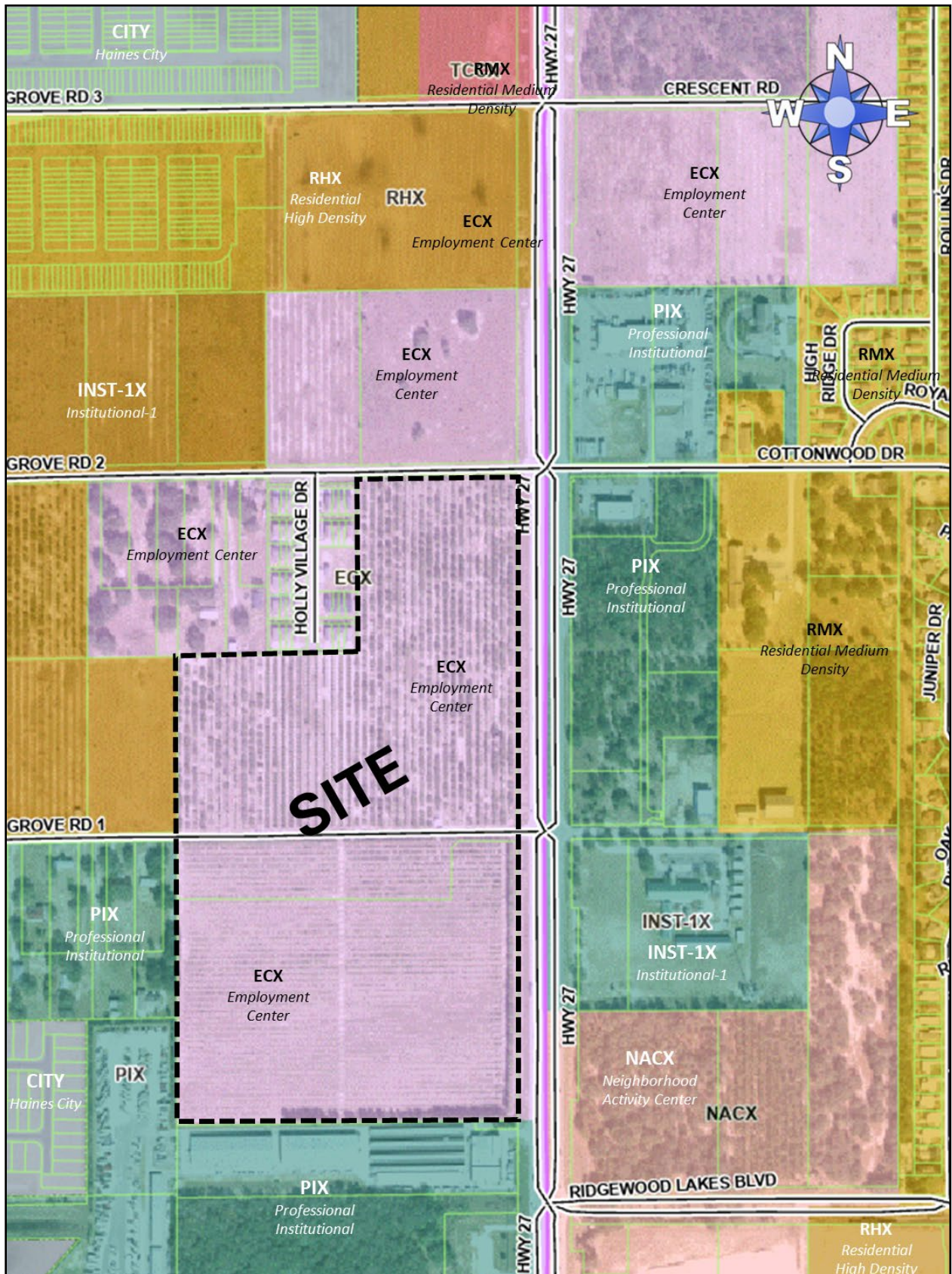
**Comments from other Agencies:** Polk County Land Development Engineering and the Polk County Public Safety Division contributed to the drafting of this report.

**Exhibits:**

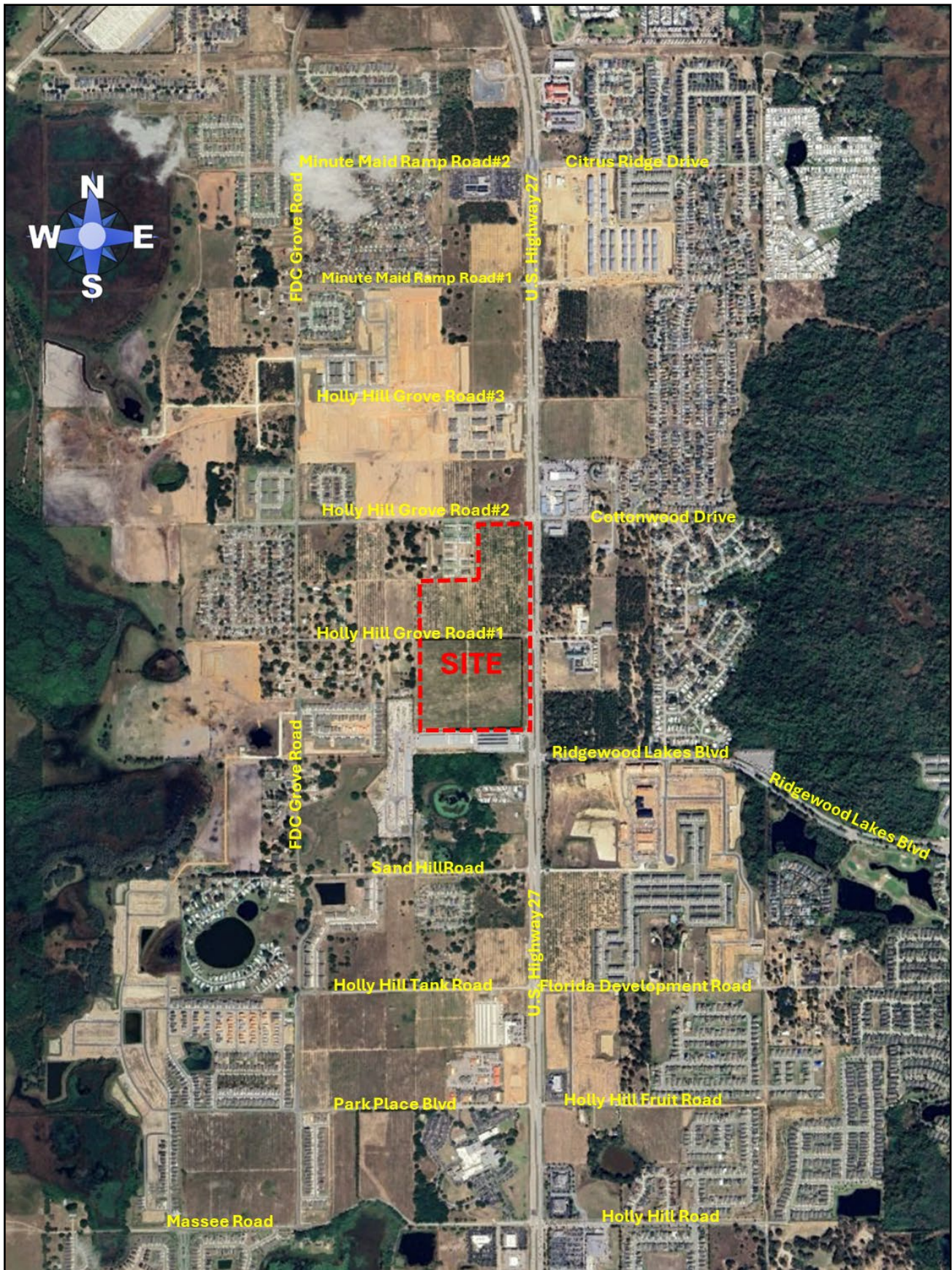
- Exhibit – 1 Location Map
- Exhibit – 2 Future Land Use Map
- Exhibit – 3 2024 Satellite Photo (Context)
- Exhibit – 4 2024 Satellite Photo with Site Plan Silhouette
- Exhibit – 5 Site Plan
- Exhibit – 6 Site Plan Details
- Exhibit – 7 Sign Plan
- Exhibit – 8 Sign Types



Location Map



Future Land Use Map



2024 Satellite Photo (Context)



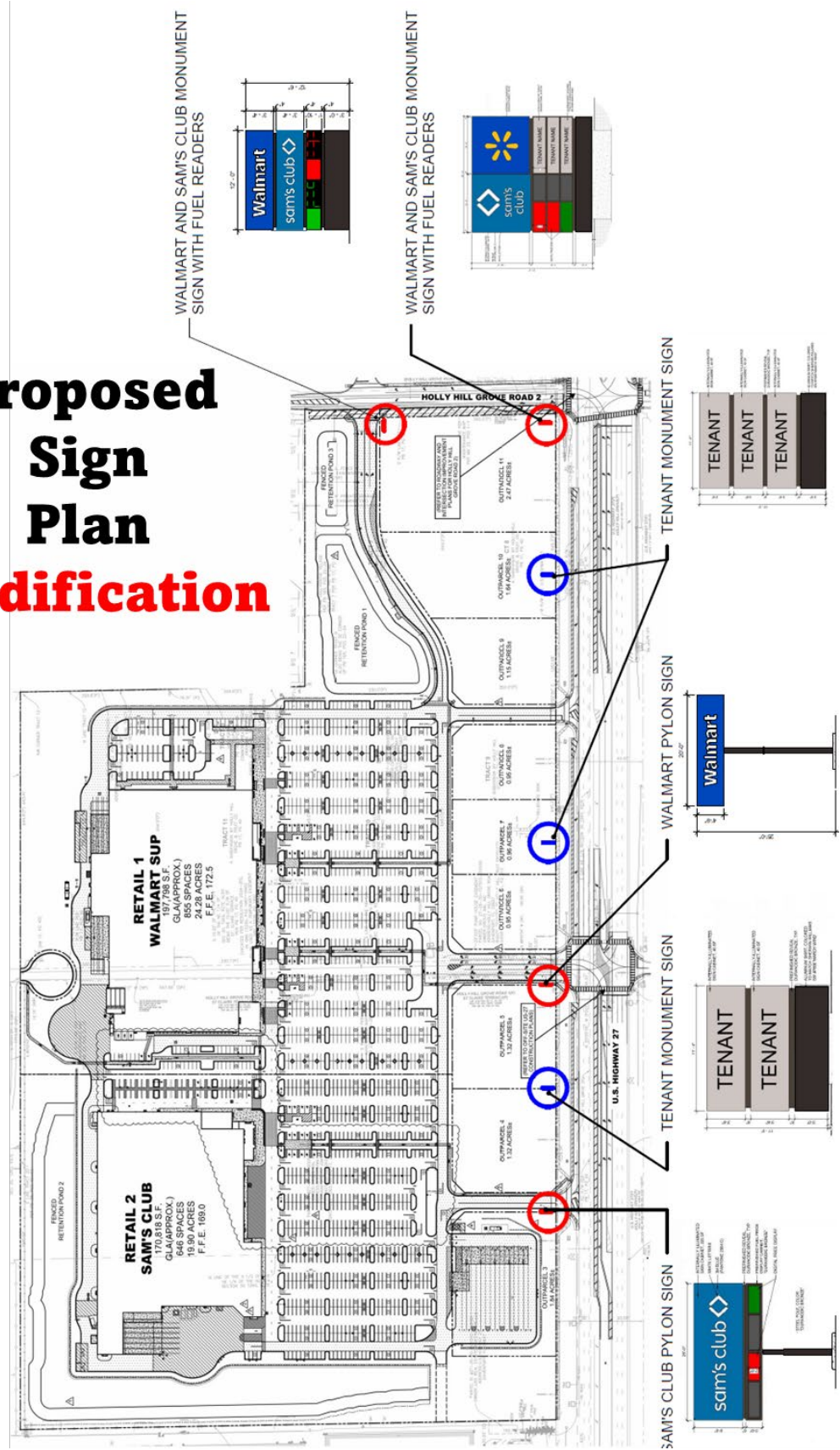
2024 Satellite Photo with Site Plan Silhouette



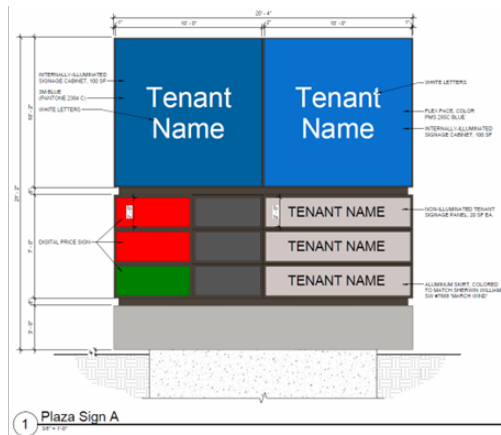
<p><b>SITE DATA INFORMATION:</b></p> <p>PARCEL NUMBER: 27263000000012010              CURRENT LAND USE: EMPLOYMENT CENTER (ECX) &amp; PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONAL (PI)              PROPOSED LAND USE: EMPLOYMENT CENTER (ECX)              AREA OF IMPROVEMENTS: 50.41 AC.±              FLOOD ZONE INFORMATION: ZONE X - AREA OF MINIMAL FLOOD ZONE HAZARD              IMPERVIOUS SURFACE RATIO: 70% (MAX.)              PROP. DEVELOPMENT USE: RETAIL MORE THAN 65,000 S.F.              SITE AREA RETAIL 1 &amp; 2: 43.81 AC.</p> <p><b>BUILDING INFORMATION:</b></p> <p>RETAIL 1: 197,798 S.F. (252,000 S.F. MAX.)              RETAIL 2: 170,818 S.F. (189,000 S.F. MAX.)</p> <p>BUILDING HEIGHT: 75' (MAX.)</p> <p>NUMBER OF STORIES: 1</p> <p>MAX. FAR: 0.70 (0.7 x 58.28 x 43,560) = 1,777,073 S.F. FOR TOTAL DEVELOPMENT</p> <p><b>PARKING INFORMATION:</b></p> <p>RETAIL 1: 851 SPACES (INCLUDING 29 ADA SPACES)              RETAIL 2: 686 SPACES (INCLUDING 21 ADA SPACES)</p> <p>BICYCLE SPACES: 60</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>LANDSCAPE BUFFERS:</th> <th>REQUIRED</th> <th>PROPOSED</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>NORTH: EMPLOYMENT CENTER</td> <td>10'</td> <td>10'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>EAST: US-27 / PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONAL</td> <td>25'</td> <td>25'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>WEST: EMPLOYMENT CENTER / PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONAL</td> <td>10' W/ 6' SCREEN WALL</td> <td>10'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SOUTH: PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONAL</td> <td>5'</td> <td>5'</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>NOTES:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DEVELOPMENT CONSISTS OF TWO BIG BOX RETAIL BUILDINGS, TWO FUEL STATIONS, AND SEVEN OUT PARCELS.</li> <li>PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN, LOCATION OF BUILDINGS SUBJECT TO CHANGE PENDING FINAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN.</li> <li>NRCS SOILS MAP INDICATES SITE IS PRIMARILY COMPOSED OF CANDLER SANDS WITH A HYDROLOGICAL SOIL GROUP: A. STORM WATER RUNOFF TO BE DIRECTED TO THREE PROPOSED DRY RETENTION PONDS ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE SITE WHICH WILL BE DESIGNED TO CONTAIN 100YR-24HR STORM EVENT.</li> <li>ONE FULL ACCESS AND ONE RIGHT IN / RIGHT OUT ACCESS REQUIRED ALONG COUNTY ROAD HOLLY HILL GROVE ROAD 2. ONE MULTIDIRECTIONAL ACCESS AND TWO RIGHT IN / RIGHT OUT ACCESS REQUIRED ALONG STATE ROAD US-27. EXISTING POTABLE WATER AND SEWER LINES ALONG US-27.</li> <li>DEVELOPER TO COORDINATE WITH CITRUS CONNECTION ON THE LOCATION OF A FUTURE TRANSIT STOP AT THE TIME OF FINAL SITE PLAN APPROVAL.</li> <li>LIGHTING TO BE IMPLEMENTED SUCH THAT NO LIGHT WILL SPILL OFF SITE. LIGHTING FIXTURES WILL DIRECT LIGHT DOWNWARD.</li> <li>PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN, LOCATION OF MONUMENT SIGNS SUBJECT TO CHANGE PENDING FINAL SITE PLAN.</li> <li>RETAIL AREAS 1 AND 2 ISR INCLUDES AREA WITHIN FENCED RETENTION PONDS 1, 2, AND 3.</li> </ol>			LANDSCAPE BUFFERS:	REQUIRED	PROPOSED	NORTH: EMPLOYMENT CENTER	10'	10'	EAST: US-27 / PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONAL	25'	25'	WEST: EMPLOYMENT CENTER / PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONAL	10' W/ 6' SCREEN WALL	10'	SOUTH: PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONAL	5'	5'
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<p><b>OUTPARCEL 3:</b></p> <p>SITE AREA: 1.85 AC.              USE: FUEL STATION W/ KIOSK              BUILDING AREA: 500 S.F., 16 VFP              ISR: 70% (MAX.)</p> <p><b>OUTPARCEL 4:</b></p> <p>SITE AREA: 1.40 AC.              USE: RESTAURANT W/ DRIVE-THRU              BUILDING AREA: 5,000 S.F.              ISR: 70% (MAX.)</p> <p><b>OUTPARCEL 5:</b></p> <p>SITE AREA: 1.41 AC.              USE: RESTAURANT W/ DRIVE-THRU              BUILDING AREA: 5,000 S.F.              ISR: 70% (MAX.)</p> <p><b>OUTPARCEL 6:</b></p> <p>SITE AREA: 1.00 AC.              USE: FINANCIAL INSTITUTION              BUILDING AREA: 6,000 S.F.              ISR: 70% (MAX.)</p> <p><b>OUTPARCEL 7:</b></p> <p>SITE AREA: 1.01 AC.              USE: RETAIL              BUILDING AREA: GREATER THAN 5,000 S.F.              ISR: 70% (MAX.)</p> <p><b>OUTPARCEL 8:</b></p> <p>SITE AREA: 1.01 AC.              USE: RETAIL              BUILDING AREA: GREATER THAN 5,000 S.F.              ISR: 70% (MAX.)</p> <p><b>OUTPARCEL 9:</b></p> <p>SITE AREA: 1.12 AC.              USE: SIT-DOWN RESTAURANT              BUILDING AREA: 10,000 S.F.              ISR: 70% (MAX.)</p> <p><b>OUTPARCEL 10:</b></p> <p>SITE AREA: 1.58 AC.              USE: SIT-DOWN RESTAURANT              BUILDING AREA: 10,000 S.F.              ISR: 70% (MAX.)</p> <p><b>OUTPARCEL 11:</b></p> <p>SITE AREA: 2.51 AC.              USE: FUEL STATION W/ STORE              BUILDING AREA: 2,000 S.F., 24 VFP              ISR: 70% (MAX.)</p>																	

# Site Plan Details

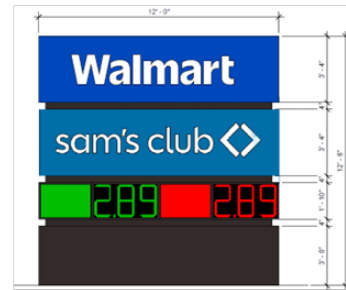
# Proposed Sign Plan Modification



## Sign Plan



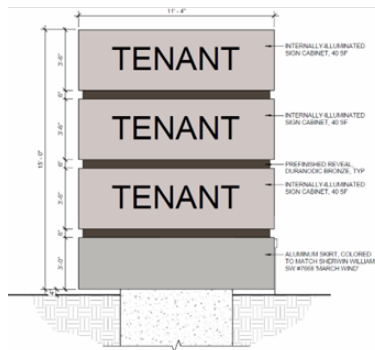
**Plaza Sign A (Multi-Tenant)**  
21' 2" high x 20.4' wide (copy = 370 SF)



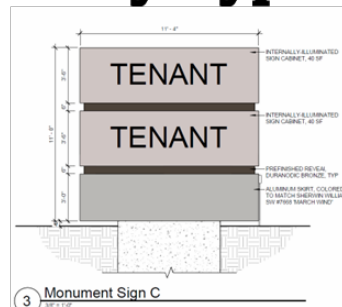
**Monument Sign with Fuel Readers**  
12' 6" high x 12' wide (copy = 114 SF)

**New**

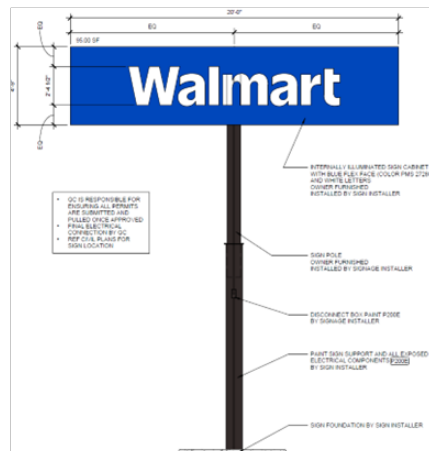
## Proposed Sign Plan Measurements By Type



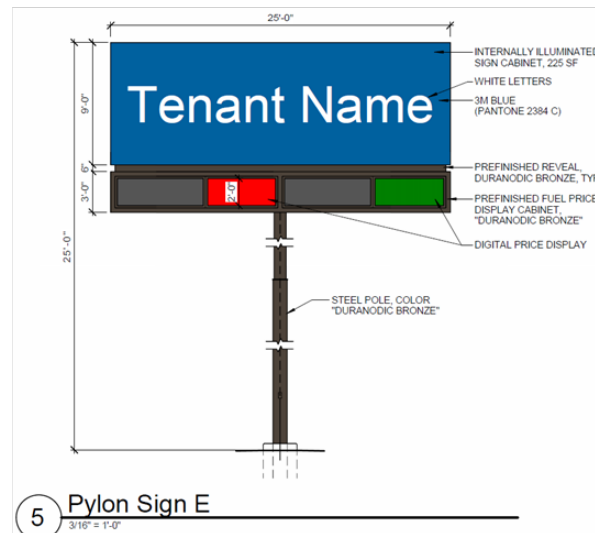
**Monument Sign B (Multi-Tenant)**  
15' high x 11.4' wide (copy = 136 SF)



**Monument Sign C (Multi-Tenant)**  
11' high x 11.4' wide (copy = 91 SF)



**Pylon Sign D (Free-Standing)**  
25' high x 15 wide (copy = 225 SF)  
25' high x 20 wide (copy = 100 SF)



**Pylon Sign E (Free-Standing)**  
25' high x 25 wide (copy = 288 SF)  
25' high x 25 wide (copy = 312.5 SF)

## Sign Types