

Part II. Project Narrative and Justification of Request

The property owner, Grenelefe Resort Development, LLC (the “Applicant”), is pursuing a series of applications to facilitate the implementation of entitlements established in the original development approvals for the subject property. The Applicant acquired the golf course property and the utility system in 2022. Since that acquisition, the Applicant has worked to develop a plan to revitalize portions of the golf course and associated amenities and to develop other areas with complimentary uses to the existing development. The applications include a future land use map amendment, sub-district change, and text amendments to both the Polk County Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Code. Each change will be discussed in more detail below. The cumulation of these changes will result in a partial redevelopment of the underutilized open space (former golf course) and provide an injection of new energy into the Grenelefe community.

By way of brief history, Grenelefe was originally approved in 1973 as a Development of Regional Impact (“DRI”). At that time, Polk County issued a development order approving the DRI for 1,935 dwelling units, two clubhouses, a conference center, three 18-hole golf courses, racquetball courts and yacht club, 12-15 tennis courts, stables, and a marina on 1,847 acres. The original intent of the Grenelefe DRI was to provide a resort style/short-term rental community. Over the years, the DRI and the development order have been amended several times over the decades and the use of the property has moved to a more permanent/traditional residential community. In addition, portions of the property have fallen into disrepair due to hurricane damage and a lack of investment by prior owners.

In 2008, Grenelefe Resort, LLC, owned the property and intended to break from the original design by incorporating a more contemporary design of resort community that included an urban style village center with retail and restaurant uses and resort amenities beyond golfing. The residential development proposed was more vertically oriented and compact to promote a more pedestrian oriented environment. At the time, the then property owner, Polk County, and the Department of Community Affairs (now known as the Department of Commerce) negotiated “Built Out Agreement.” The effect of the “Built Out Agreement” was the recognition of the types and amount of the existing development, acknowledge the compliance with all applicable terms and conditions of the DRI development order, explicitly including all infrastructure and physical improvements, and to recognize the development remaining within the Grenelefe DRI.

The remaining development potential of the DRI reflected in the “Built Out Agreement” was incorporated into the Polk County Comprehensive Plan, see Section 2.130-E1 Grenelefe Utility Enclave Area, which acknowledges the specific density limitations that apply to “new development” after the adoption of CPA 08-14. These limitations are not applied to existing platted vacant lots within the boundary of the Grenelefe UEA. Moreover, the Grenelefe UEA was adopted to recognize the existing development and the “revitalize the community by allowing for redevelopment and growth.” The Comprehensive Plan policies and Land Development Code provisions recognized the potential and likelihood of redevelopment of the golf course and the expansion of the utility service. Specifically, Policy 2.130-E1.1B assigned the DR1X land use to the golf course and stated “the applicant may request to change the land use for those portions of the designated DRI” when the utility plant can support additional development.

Since 2008, little to no new investment or development has occurred in the Grenelefe DRI (also referred to as the Grenelefe UEA). In 2002, the prior golf course operator and owner filed for bankruptcy and the property was heavily damaged by hurricanes in 2004 and 2005. Subsequent ownership did not result in significant improvement. However, the east side of Polk County has thrived with development and has transformed the character of the area. The growth in the Poinciana area and the City of Haines City has pushed development in this direction. Moreover, the prospects for the future expansion of the Polk Parkway and Power Line Road increase the accessibility to this part of Polk County. The site is no longer appropriate for redevelopment or new development for resort focused activities, as the golf courses are no longer viable.

However, the property has previously been established for future redevelopment by the original approvals in 1973, the amendments to the Polk County Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code in 2008, and the “Built Out Agreement.” The instant request respects existing development adjacent to the course by locating like development adjacent to like development. For instance, single family residential development (Residential Low-4X) is adjacent to existing single family development. Likewise, townhome (Residential Medium) is adjacent to similar product. In addition, the applicant is seeking to introduce a non-residential node at the intersection of Kokomo Road and CR544 by establishing Neighborhood Activity Center (NACX) and Office Center (OCX) land uses. This will allow the opportunity to bring neighborhood level retail uses closer to the community (i.e. grocery, restaurant, personal services, etc.) and office type service (dentist, eye doctor, etc.), which has transitioned away from the tourist activity over the years. A summary of the applications and requests are as follows:

1. Comprehensive Plan Text Amendment
 - a. Amend existing policies and objectives to reflect a transition away from only a “resort” development.
 - b. Add NACX and OCX to the allowable mix of uses
2. Large Scale Future Land Map Amendment (Large Scale)
 - a. Future Land use changes summarized below.

Future Land Use Classification	Existing Acreage	Proposed Request
Tourist Commercial Center	185 acres	-
Development of Regional Impact (DRIX)	343 acres	-
Residential Low	-	442 acres
Residential Medium	22 acres	90 acres
Neighborhood Activity Center	-	10 acres
Office Center	-	5.0 acres
Total	550 acres	547 acres.

**The acreage differences are likely a result of differences between 2008 staff reports and more recent survey data.*

3. Sub-District Change

- a. Reflect Change from RLX to RL-4X.

4. Land Development Code Text Amendment

- a. Amend existing code provisions to reflect a transition away from only a “resort” development and to implement development *standards for RL-4X, NACX, and OCX.*

One of the primary considerations given in this request relates to minimizing the opportunity for potential impacts with neighboring residential properties surrounding the proposed changes. In addition, the proposed change is a significant reduction in intensity from the TCCX on almost 200 acres. The off-set of these impacts has not been precisely quantified as part of this initial application. The proposed project contains landscaping, buffering, and separation of uses far exceeding those of the minimum code requirements and other similarly situated projects in Polk County to ensure a proper transition from the higher intensity uses and the nearby residential, while allowing a logical and timely redevelopment of the golf-course areas to bring new investment into the area.