

SOUTHEAST POLK SELECTED AREA STUDY

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The Polk County Long Range Planning Division is conducting a “Southeast Polk Selected Area Study.” The proposed study area has been generally defined as the area bounded by the City of Frostproof on the south; the City of Lake Wales on the north, US Highway 27 on the west; and the Tiger Creek Preserve on the east. The exact study area will be defined as part of the planning process.

The Polk County Comprehensive Plan defines Selected Area Studies as *“enhanced planning tools for future detailed planning of areas that warrant special review and/or planning of greater specificity than that included within the general guidelines of the Plan's objectives and policies or the Land Use Map Series.”*

The purpose of the Southeast Polk Selected Area Study (SAS) is to develop a vision and supporting plan for the future that recognizes and protects existing community resources while establishing a framework for quality growth. This planning process will:

- Protect existing property rights and land use options under the Comprehensive Plan;
- Protect and preserve natural and community resources;
- Recognize the unique characteristics of the subject area – the current “sense of place”;
- Support continued agricultural operations;
- Provide additional land use options and establish minimum standards for quality growth;
- Provide voluntary, incentive-based options to conserve open space, wildlife habitat and other natural resources;
- Direct and encourage growth to occur in appropriate areas;
- Promote infrastructure investments and policies that support growth in targeted areas; and
- Encourage the creation of a viable connected system of natural lands and working agriculture.

To ensure the success of this study effort, the Long Range Planning Division will partner with landowners, community groups, other stakeholders, and the Cities of Frostproof, Lake Wales, Hillcrest Heights, and Highland Park. Staff will form a Focus Group comprised of stakeholders to guide the study efforts.

The Focus Group Meetings will be advertised, and the public will be encouraged to attend and participate in these meetings. Staff will attempt to build consensus during the development of the Southeast Polk SAS. The ultimate goal is to build broad-based community support for the study recommendations and to receive the endorsement of the affected jurisdictions. This will help to ensure the successful implementation of the SAS.