
NORTH RANCH MASTER PLAN

A LONG-TERM PLAN FOR GREAT NEW PLACES TO GROW JOBS

Osceola County and Deseret Ranches of Florida, Inc., are proposing a master plan for 133,000 acres of Deseret's North Ranch in Central Florida. Deseret Ranches has been an important part of Osceola County and Central Florida for more than 60 years. A balanced master plan for these lands will create great new places in Osceola with new high-value jobs while assuring continued ranching and farming and conservation of natural systems in an area that lies squarely in the path of growth.

This master plan for the North Ranch Planning Area is the product of Osceola County's collaboration with a landowner willing to make unprecedented commitments to grow the economy. This plan will:

- Promote economic development in Osceola with a new multimodal transportation corridor that, if approved by transportation agencies, will connect emerging job centers at Medical City in southeastern Orlando and Osceola's planned Northeast District with the existing high-technology job centers in Melbourne and southern Brevard County.
- Put in place a landscape-scale master plan—on a scale never before achieved in Florida—to protect natural systems, prevent the congestion and fragmentation of resources caused by piecemeal development, ensure livable communities, and create more new jobs than houses.
- Designate 320 acres for a new higher-education campus, with road and rail connections, to prepare a well-trained workforce. The campus will be located next to a research park in the planned central business district to facilitate incubation of spin-off businesses in Osceola County.
- Protect 38,600 acres of wetland and upland habitat, including natural systems identified by *myregion.org* in its Naturally Central Florida plan, to benefit wildlife, water quality, and other natural values. Additional lands for long-term agriculture, reservoirs, and open space bring total protected lands to 82,300 acres, or 62 percent of the North Ranch Planning Area in Osceola.
- Organize development in mixed-use centers based on the planning principles of the "How Shall We Grow?" regional vision of *myregion.org* and Osceola County's mixed-use place types. These land use controls will create places with a lively street life and easy access to shopping and civic activities.
- Provide residents with choices for all modes of travel—cars, buses, trains, bicycles, and walking—to reduce automobile use and avoid the gridlock prevalent in other urban areas.
- Meet water needs with on-site water sources and allow room to accommodate the 5,500-acre Pennywash / Wolf Creek Reservoir, a potential alternative water source, if approved by regulators.
- Protect extensive acreage for continued ranching and farming.

The North Ranch Master Plan identifies 55,700 acres, or 42 percent of the planning area, for long-term protection by perpetual conservation or agriculture easements; with another 19,500 acres planned for greenways and trails, parks, and open space. In all, 45,800 acres, or 34 percent, is net acreage for urban development. Development on the North Ranch will be phased to facilitate build out of other areas currently approved or planned for development inside Osceola's Urban Growth Boundary. It will

accommodate some of the 10 million people expected to live in the seven-county Central Florida region by 2080 while protecting natural features and accommodating continued ranching and farming.

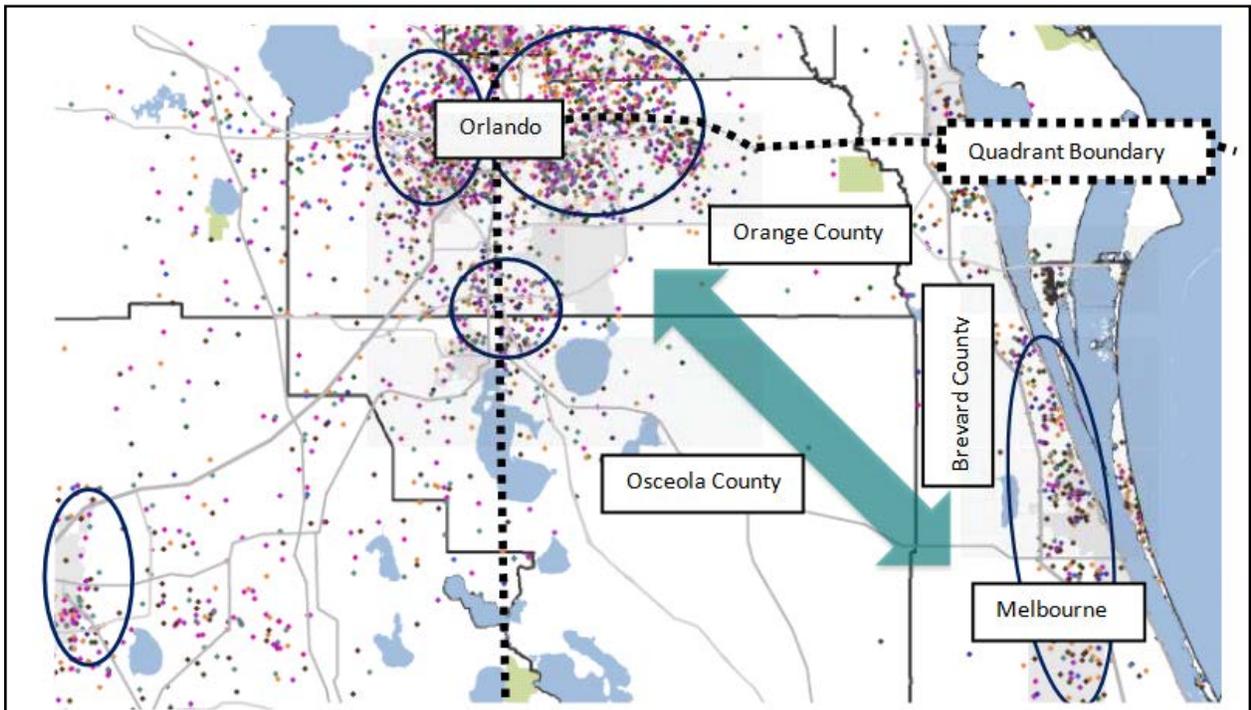
A CATALYST FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND JOB CREATION

The North Ranch Master Plan responds to the Governor’s request in 2013 for local and regional stakeholders to join with the State of Florida in preparing a transportation-based strategy to accelerate economic growth and job creation in Central Florida while ensuring mobility for decades to come.

In 2013, the Governor established the East Central Florida Corridor Task Force to recommend new or enhanced transportation corridors to meet the region’s needs for at least 50 years. He asked the task force to propose ways to close the “regional connectivity gap” between emerging job cores in southeastern Orlando and Osceola County’s planned Northeast District and the existing job core in Melbourne and southern Brevard. See Figure 1. He also asked Osceola County and Deseret Ranches—whose North Ranch constitutes most of the vacant land between these important economic centers—to collaborate on a master plan for Deseret’s unplanned ranchlands.

In 2014, the task force recommended four study areas for new multimodal corridors to connect Central Florida. All four corridor study areas included portions of the North Ranch; all four are now reflected in the North Ranch Master Plan.

Figure 1 – “Regional Connectivity Gap” Between Concentrations of High-Value Jobs¹ in Central Florida



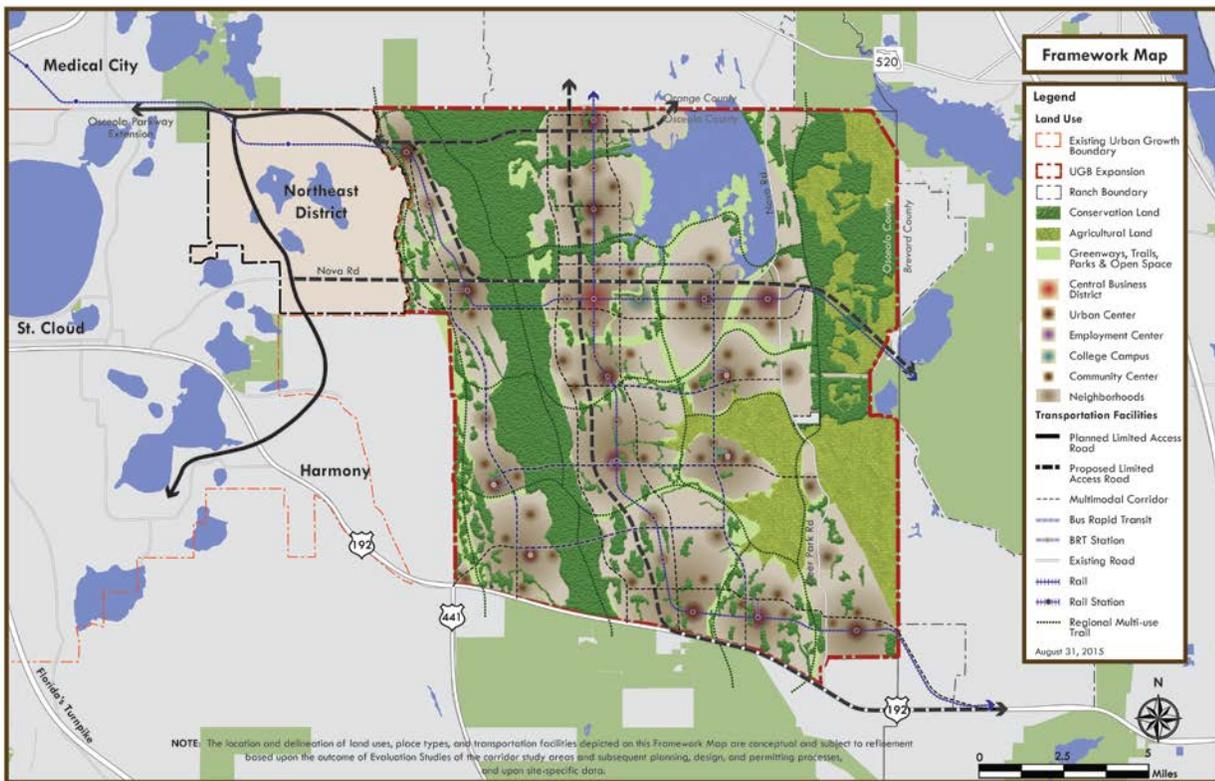
¹ High-value Jobs include computer/math, life/social science, and architecture/engineering occupations and professional / technical service, information, manufacturing, finance/insurance, transportation, and wholesale trade industry jobs

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

The North Ranch Master Plan is a conceptual plan that responds, on a landscape scale, to the Governor’s request and builds on the work of the East Central Florida Corridor Task Force. The plan sets an aspirational goal of a 1.4:1 jobs/housing ratio, significantly higher than Osceola’s current jobs/housing balance. Major features of this plan to propel economic development and job growth in Osceola include:

- **Promoting a diverse and dynamic range of primary employment opportunities** in growing industries. The North Ranch Master Plan is designed to facilitate emerging and expanding industry clusters for the life sciences and allied health services; information technology; tourism, entertainment, and recreation; chemical and plastics manufacturing; food production; and defense and security. Reduced travel times between existing and emerging “job cores”—the places where most high-value jobs locate in urban areas, usually along high-speed, limited-access roads—to the east and west of the ranch will promote economic growth in Osceola and throughout the region.

Figure 2 – Framework Map for North Ranch Master Plan in Osceola County



Source: Logan Simpson Design; Renaissance Planning Group

- **A potential transportation corridor across the North Ranch** to connect the life-sciences and high-technology job cores in southeastern Orlando and Osceola’s planned Northeast District with the high-technology job core in Melbourne and southern Brevard. See Figure 2. Connecting these job cores will further official economic development plans, such as the 2012 “Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy” prepared by the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council. This potential corridor was recommended for study by the East Central Florida Corridor Task Force to close the “regional connectivity gap” between some of the region’s most important economic centers. The others are enhancements of the U.S. 192 corridor between Osceola and southern Brevard; a new corridor across

the northern portion of the ranch, connecting to SR 520 in Orange County; and a new north-south corridor to connect Osceola to Orange County. All are reflected on the North Ranch Master Plan.

- **Organizing urban development in high-intensity, mixed-use centers** like those recommended by *myregion.org* in its “How Shall We Grow?” vision. These centers will be located on the North Ranch at regular intervals along planned roads and rail lines, consistent with the pattern of existing job cores along the I-4 Corridor in Orlando and those emerging at the University of Central Florida, in Orange County’s Innovation Way and Medical City, and in Osceola’s planned Northeast District.
- **A new higher-education campus** on 320 acres—a half-section of land—located near the North Ranch’s central business district and adjacent to a research park to incubate spin-off businesses. A higher-education campus on the North Ranch will prepare a well-trained workforce for existing and new businesses. At this location, it will have road and rail connections throughout the region and can serve as a “bridge” between job cores on either side of the North Ranch.

PLACES AND TRANSPORTATION CHOICES TO REDUCE AUTO-DEPENDENCE

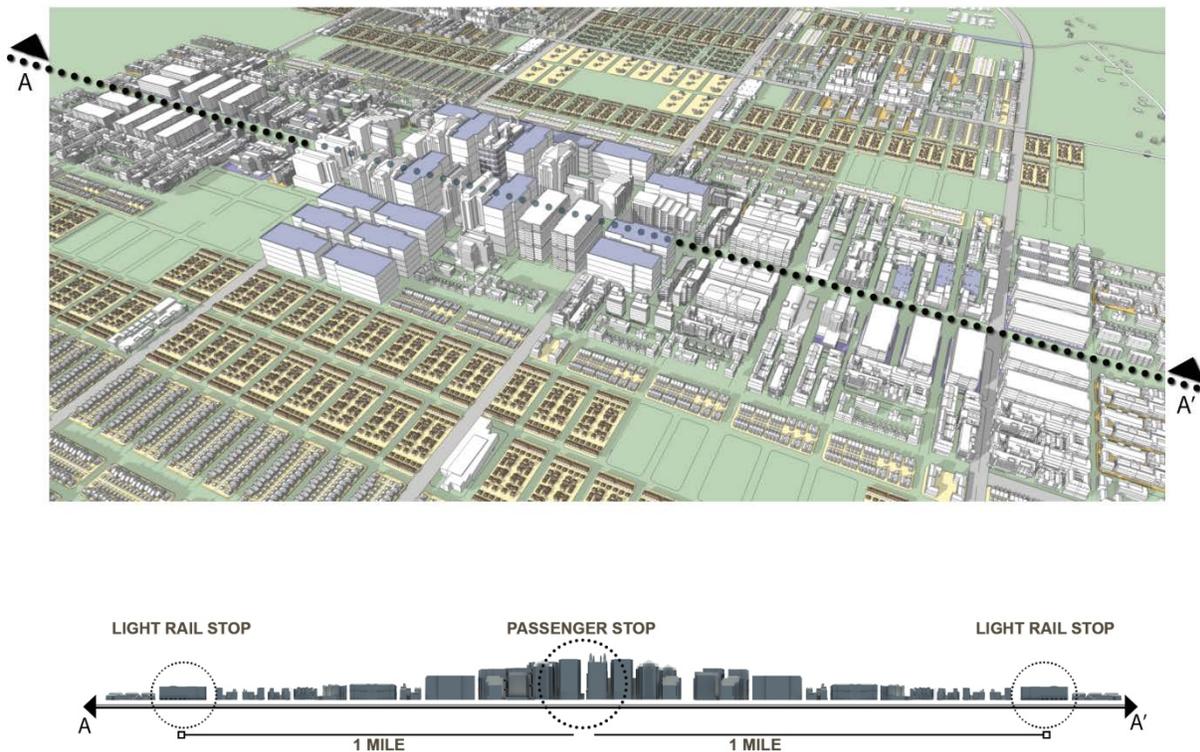
The North Ranch Master Plan will create great new places to live, work, and play. It is based on the six planning principles of *myregion.org*’s “How Shall We Grow?” vision for Central Florida:

- Encourage a diverse, globally competitive economy.
- Preserve open space, recreational areas, farmland, water resources, and natural areas.
- Provide a variety of transportation choices.
- Foster distinct, attractive, and safe places to live.
- Create a range of obtainable housing opportunities and choices.
- Build communities with educational, health care, and cultural amenities.

The urban form for eventual development on the North Ranch is consistent with these principles. It relies on seven place types authorized by Osceola’s current Mixed Use District land use policy and will meet the Florida Department of Transportation’s guidelines for transit-oriented development. *See Figure 3.* The urban form and transportation system prescribed by the North Ranch Master Plan will:

- **Reduce dependence on automobiles.** Organizing development in a hierarchy of centers and neighborhoods within half-mile pedestrian walksheds will focus the most intensive development near rail and bus rapid transit (BRT) stations. This development pattern will promote travel by walking, biking, and transit while providing fewer and shorter auto trips and better air quality and enhancing public health. This development pattern also will reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), a key measure of urban sprawl and inefficient use of land.
- **Create new places for future economic growth.** Closing the “regional connectivity gap” between existing and emerging job cores on either side of the North Ranch will facilitate interactions among researchers, manufacturers, suppliers, service providers, and associated institutions in important industry clusters. The potential new east-west transportation corridor will connect these job cores; North Ranch land along such a corridor will provide the location for new job cores in Osceola as existing and planned centers elsewhere reach their capacity.

Figure 3 – Planned Densities Along Passenger Rail Line in North Ranch Planning Area

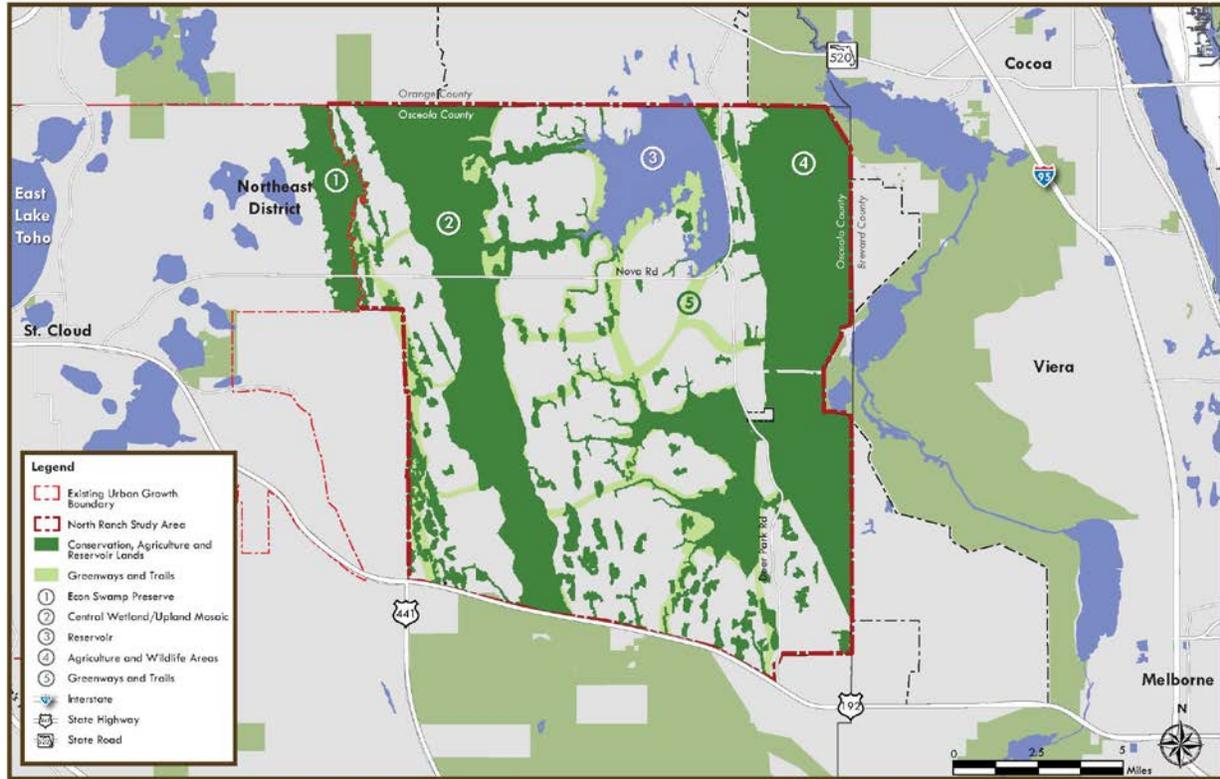


Source: Logan Simpson Design

- **Enhance connectivity to promote access to job cores and neighborhoods** by locating them along or near north-south and east-west transportation corridors. Each corridor will include an expressway, a regional road, and commuter/passenger rail. A high-intensity, mixed-use central business district will be located where these two corridors cross. Job cores will be spaced five-to-seven miles from this focal point. Retail and town centers will be located between the central business district and planned employment centers.
- **Facilitate transportation plans in the works for decades.** In 1966, Deseret conveyed land to the State for a road to connect Osceola and southern Brevard. That road, then identified as SR 536, was never built. The East Central Florida Corridor Task Force in 2014 recommended an evaluation of this corridor as an addition to the regional transportation network. If recommended in further studies and then approved, it will address Central Florida’s “regional connectivity gap”. In addition, the North Ranch Transportation Plan reflects an organic extension of existing expressways and those already planned by local and regional officials.

To protect planned development in Osceola’s Urban Growth Boundary, the North Ranch Master Plan includes land use controls that will promote an orderly progression of development. In light of the County’s policy to promote job creation in targeted industry clusters, these controls will allow early construction of new transportation corridors, if approved and funded, so they can link existing and emerging job cores in the region and, by doing so, promote long-term job growth in Osceola County.

Figure 4 – North Ranch Environmental Plan in Osceola County



Source: Logan Simpson Design; Breedlove, Dennis & Associates

PROTECTION FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

The foundation for the North Ranch Master Plan is an Environmental Plan that was designed with the science-based planning principles of the “How Shall We Grow?” regional vision and its Naturally Central Florida plan. These principles were applied to a landscape that is 70 percent improved pasture, rangeland, or in other forms of agricultural production.

Many data sources were evaluated, including the Critical Lands and Waters Identification Project (CLIP) statewide database. They were supplemented by years of on-the-ground studies. The result is a complete plan for permanently preserving agricultural and natural resources that will:

- **Protect 55,700 acres of natural systems and agricultural lands**, including regionally significant resources identified by *myregion.org* as the most important for future generations. These lands will be protected by perpetual restrictions which must be implemented within one year after the plan becomes effective. The 17,000-acre Central Wetland/Upland Mosaic includes an important mix of habitat types and will be larger than Disney’s Wilderness Preserve. The Central Wetland/Upland Mosaic was designed in conjunction with east-west linkages to foster continued wildlife movement to the St. Johns River.
- **Buffer the St. Johns and Econlockhatchee systems, one of the region’s “seven jewels.”** In all, some 20,700 acres of land in Osceola bordering the St. Johns River—including interconnected wetlands,

floodplains, tributaries, and uplands—will remain in ranching and farming. Large forested strands in that area will be managed as they presently are. Upland buffers will guard major tributaries of the St. Johns River. To the west, a 250-foot upland buffer will protect the headwaters of the Econlockhatchee River.

- **Contribute to maintenance of wildlife populations and their viability.** Protected lands will provide habitat and serve as conduits for dispersal and gene flow among wildlife populations. Designated Additional Wildlife Areas, including rangeland and agricultural lands west of the St. Johns, and the Central Wetland/Upland Mosaic will provide habitat for forest-dependent species. Forested wetlands, freshwater marsh, wet prairies, and emergent aquatic vegetation at Taylor Creek Reservoir will continue to provide habitat for wading birds, waterfowl and other resident wildlife.
- **Minimize environmental impacts from future roads and bridges.** Principal roads will include wildlife crossings, based on designs to be prepared in collaboration with federal and state wildlife agencies. As proposed for further study, a new east-west transportation corridor would cross the St. Johns River at its narrowest point, with a 1,000-foot bridge to protect wetlands and floodplains and allow continued wildlife movement through this area.
- **Ensure viability of long-term ranching and farming.** The plan ensures that ranching and farming will continue on the North Ranch indefinitely. Coupled with 14,000 acres in Brevard that Deseret plans to continue ranching, this commitment will ensure continued agriculture on the North Ranch. These agricultural and other conservation lands will form an urban-defining greenbelt.
- **Promote an adequate water supply for future needs** by requiring water conservation in future development, protecting forested wetlands, freshwater marsh, and wet prairies around an enlarged Taylor Creek Reservoir. In addition, the master plan identifies 5,500 acres available for the potential Pennywash/Wolf Creek Reservoir that, with approval by local, state, and federal regulators, will provide additional water supply for this thirsty region. Alternatively, these 5,500 acres will remain in agriculture.

WHY MAKE THESE DECISIONS NOW?

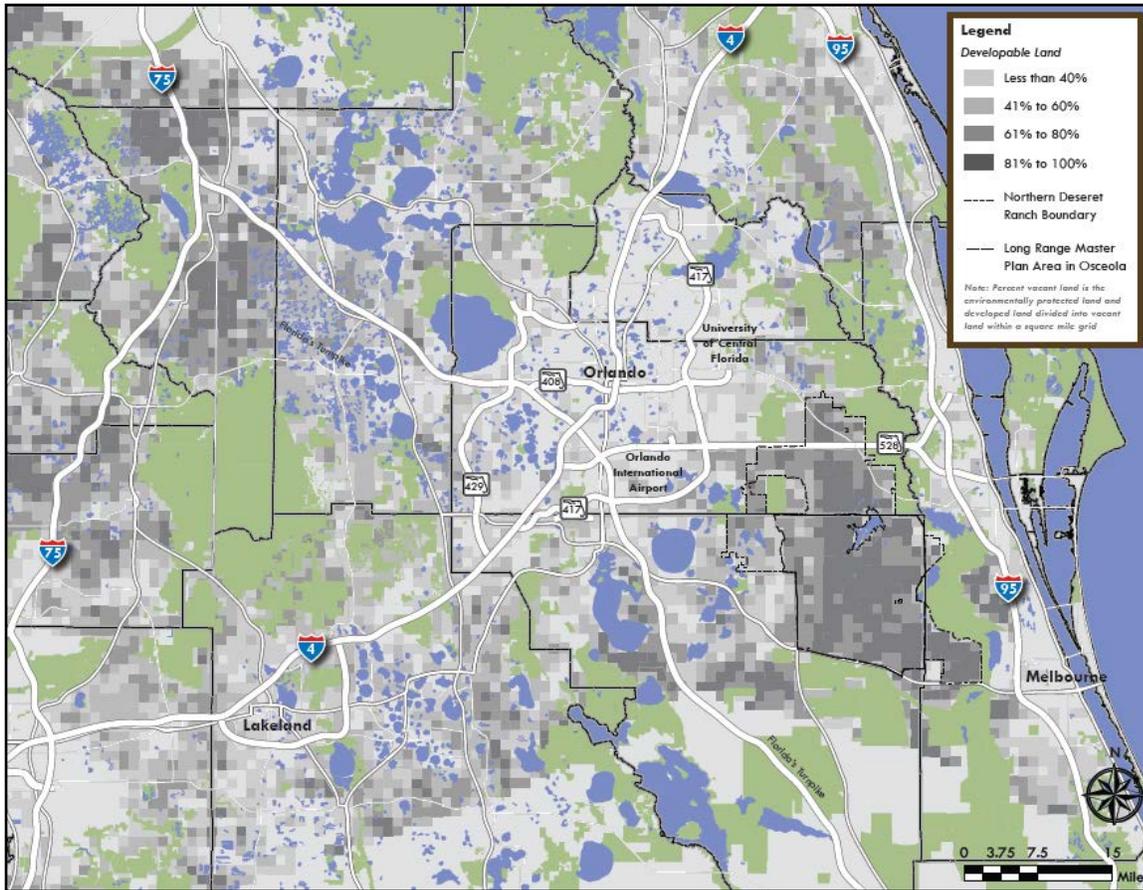
Because tomorrow will be too late.

By 2080, Central Florida is expected to add approximately 6 million residents. Demographic trends show growth shifting from north of the I-4 Corridor to southeast Orlando and the emerging job core anchored by Orlando International Airport and Medical City. With growth headed in this direction, Osceola County is poised to increase its relative share of the region's population and jobs. By 2060, current projections show Osceola could have 865,000 residents compared to 280,000 today.

For practical reasons, any future growth strategy for Osceola County must include the North Ranch. In fact, all four future scenarios considered by *myregion.org* for its "How Shall We Grow?" regional vision assumed varying but substantial amounts of growth on the North Ranch. While other vacant lands will absorb much of the expected growth, and redevelopment will absorb more, a substantial amount of the region's new homes and businesses will locate on the North Ranch. Accordingly, this master plan is based on a reasonable but conservative population projection of 490,000 persons by 2080.

Figure 5 shows vacant developable land in Osceola and the region, after deducting already-developed lands, wetlands, and other environmentally sensitive lands recommended for protection by

Figure 5 – Vacant, Developable Land in Central Florida



Source: Renaissance Planning Group

myregion.org. The greatest amount of vacant, developable land—the darkest shades of grey—is on the North Ranch. In fact, the North Ranch includes more than 80 percent of the vacant developable land in the region’s fast-growing southeastern quadrant, where demographic and economic forces are propelling an increasing share of the region’s population and job growth. The North Ranch’s location in the path of economic growth, with better transportation to cut travel times between existing and emerging jobs cores, makes it the best location for Osceola to share in the region’s growing economic bounty.

By making long-term plans now, Osceola County can avoid the mistakes that were made when Central Florida began to boom 50 years ago. In the decades that followed, Central Florida experienced piecemeal development that failed to protect important natural resources, made everyone overly dependent on the automobile, and did not create as many great places as were needed. The results can be seen today.

With so many new jobs and residents expected in coming decades, Osceola County would be wise to put a planning framework in place now to address that growth, capture its economic benefits, and avoid the mistakes of the past. Such a plan should protect important natural systems; promote alternative ways to travel; and create great new places to live, work, and play. A plan like that will create the kind of future foreseen in the “How Shall We Grow?” regional vision. The North Ranch Master Plan is such a plan.