

Comments Received at Meeting of Ag Reserve Interested Citizens: August 22, 2014	
Topic 1:	Future Vision of the Agricultural Reserve
Adopted Comprehensive Plan:	<p>OBJECTIVE 1.5 The Agricultural Reserve Tier</p> <p>Objective: Palm Beach County shall preserve the unique farmland and wetlands in order to preserve and enhance agricultural activity, environmental and water resources, and open space within the Agricultural Reserve Tier. This shall be accomplished by limiting uses to agriculture and conservation with residential development restricted to low densities and non-residential development limited to uses serving the needs of farmworkers and residents of the Tier. The Agricultural Reserve Tier shall be preserved primarily for agricultural use, reflecting the unique farmlands and wetlands within it.</p>
Comments:	<p>What is your vision for the Ag Reserve. The Ag Reserve should remain as is. No further development should be allowed. Any permits for development should be revoked. Any businesses or homes currently in the Ag Reserve other than agricultural related business should be taxed with the funds used to buy more land to be forever used for agricultural or environmental purposes. In 20 or 30 years there should be no more development and no less agriculture than there is today. Any further development in the Ag reserve will devastate our economy, devastate our environment and make agriculture almost certain to disappear in Palm Beach County to the detriment of all of us and future generations. Any further development would be a sell out to the wealthy and politically connected and a total disregard of the people of Florida. From a religious perspective, any further destruction of agriculture and our environment is a sin against creation and the worst form of sacrilege.</p>
	<p>A thriving agricultural center of farmlands, with places to buy locally grown fruits and vegetables. Many small farmers who want to try an ag business on a small parcel and living on it. The ag reserve has signs that portray the local fruits + veggies. Advantages of this unique area to the community and why the ag is for the whole county as local crops support our community. This county is supporting our small growers. Or preserved open land supporting our climate with parks and outdoor activities. Scripps was supposed to be our biomedical hub. The ag could be a marijuana hub.</p>
	<p>My 20yr vision is for as much green space be preserved as possible. No increase in development. Increase in financial + technical support for new farm uses. We should have immediately an appraisal of the land based on the economics of new types of farming.</p>
	<p>Question: What do you wish to see in your vision 10 to 20 years from now in the Ag Reserve. Maintain adequate open space with residential development. Avoid overdevelopment of remaining lands to preserve water supply, wildlife, wetlands, agriculture, + open space.</p>
	<p>In the future there will be a real need for more commercial and light industrial. In the study of the Ag Reserve there was a recommended that the quadrant of the turnpike be designated commercial and light industrial. This could work very well and not affect the Ag Reserve too much. Since the hospital was built, it has put a need to open the reserve for more roof tops.</p>

	<p>Keep this objective. Farming is a sustainable enterprise.</p>
	<p>(SUBMITTED BY 4 INDIVIDUALS) It is the official position of the Audubon Society of the Everglades that the mandate of the Agricultural Reserve Tier to restrict residential development to “low densities” has already been violated by allowing GL Homes to build 3,399 homes, with another 1,176 approved for construction, for a total of 4,575 homes, in a dense configuration around the Canyon Town Center – a facility they own and operate and collect lease rents on, effectively creating a GL Homes Town. This area is at the northern end of the Ag Reserve. GL Homes has received approval from the BCC to build another “GL Homes Town” just south of Atlantic, to adjoin their existing Saturnia Isles development of 356 homes. Their approved plans call for an additional 2,297 homes for Hyder, Seven Bridges and Bridges, bringing just their current total to 2,653. But GL Homes wants a change in our Comprehensive Plan to allow more commercial building and thousands of additional homes built three to an acre with no further preserved land under 60/40. These massive brick and mortar developments at the north and south end of the Ag Reserve will function as blockade bookends to what is left of the interior farmlands, sending a message to farmers that up-scale gated communities and shopping areas are taking over and they need to make plans to farm elsewhere. As we heard at the BCC hearing on March 25 of this year, the owner of Thomas Produce at the corner of 441 and Clint Moore is considering moving his operation because he has been pigeon-holed between The Oaks gated-community and the Delray Town Center, has no room for expansion, and can grow his crops in the more-welcoming farmland areas of Hendry county. ASE asks that a moratorium be imposed immediately on all future residential building in the Ag Reserve, including on approved, but not yet built, residences.</p>
	<p>Signs proclaiming this is Palm Beach County Ag Reserve making our Ag Reserve as popular as Indian River Citrus. Informing the general public about how great the Ag Reserve is and how it provides winter vegetables for our nation. Promote “buy locally grown”. Preserve the ag reserve “as is”. No more residential + revoke what has been approved for “new residential build”. My vision is that as I drive thru the ag reserve it look as it does today.</p>
	<p>Preserve existing agriculture and preservation. Keep agriculture as it is. Do not permit development west of state road 7. Keep development to the level it currently is at. No more commercial. Commercial increases traffic. We do not want more commercial and more traffic. Agriculture is crucial to the future of Palm Beach County. We cannot survive without agriculture in Palm Beach County. We cannot permit the continued development in the agriculture reserve.</p>
	<p>I want commercial + residential to stop now! I want the Ag Reserve to remain agriculture + conservation which is why I voted for the bond issue. Give incentives to farmers to ‘stay’.</p>
	<p>Per section 163.3177(6)(a)2, Florida Statutes, the future land use plan and plan amendments must be based upon surveys, studies, and data regarding the area, as applicable, including:... the availability of water supplies, public facilities, and services. I think that to determine the value of land in the Ag Reserve to the tax payers of PBC, both an Ecosystem Services Valuation</p>

	<p>Study, and a study examining comprehensive water management in the county as impacted by sea level rise: specifically, the salt water intrusion line impacting the placement of wells farther west in the county as wells in the eastern county are no longer useful due to salt water content. I would like to see these studies done, and the ability to price the land in the Ag Reserve to reflect the results. In the Ag Reserve in the future, I would like to see Agricultural Activity, very low density development, and effective use of the Ag Reserve to help mitigate climate change impact to water supply per the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Action Plan recommendations AG-1 and AG-2 and AG-4. All development required to be LEED certified buildings. 15-20 years I would like to see the land in the Ag Reserve that is owned by the county taxpayers to be appropriately priced.</p> <p>My vision in the Ag Reserve in 20 years from now is to see signs that read welcome to the AGR where foodstuffs grow to provide food for the state and the country. I see citizen gardens in and surrounding the Ag Reserve + nurseries producing herbs + flowers like the gladiolas that once grew in the Ag Reserve. I see cow pastures and horse farms of all sizes. I see surrounding developments flood free + coastal areas secured from tidal intrusion because of the open land in the Ag Reserve. I see proud citizens of the preserved areas due to the 2014 commissioners to have wisdom + the good sense to look into the betterment of the county.</p> <p>What is your vision of the Ag Reserve in 20 years? I hope that Ag reserve's produce will be known as PBC produce the way that Indian River citrus means something. Large signs should be posted entering the PBC Ag Reserve - Winter Vegetable Basket for the USA"</p> <p>No less land for Agriculture than today! Already too many homes.</p> <p>10 years from now: (1) no additional development (from that existing) (2) Loxahatchee nat refuge will include the Struzulla tract and w/information kiosks to explain the interface between wetlands and ag (3) a critical sustaining of farming will evolve toward "high value crops". At present that includes horticulture, local organic, mulch farming, horses. (4) no new schools, hospitals, or urban-support facilities will have been added. (5) packing, farm equipment repair, and supplies will be located in commercial areas on the east border outside the boundaries of the reserve (6) A "public-purchase" fund shall be established to buy-out property rights of willing seller</p>
Topic 2:	Commercial Land Uses
Adopted Comprehensive Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited to those which serve the needs of the farmworker community, existing residents, and future residents of an AgR-PDD • In the form of an AgR-TMD • Within 1/4 mile of the intersections of Lyons Road with either Boynton Beach Boulevard or Atlantic Avenue. • Maximum of 80 acres and 750,000 square feet for the entire tier • County TDR program is limited to residential development rights • Ag Reserve is a Sending area for TDRs (one unit per acre) • Receiving areas within the Urban/Suburban Tier
As presented at March 2014 BCC Workshop:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional 200 acres along main corridors • Require one TDR per acre of development area • Make necessary changes to TDR program

Comments:	<p>The County Commission should reject all zoning changes and this will cause the price of the land to go down. Anyone who no longer wishes to farm should be permitted to sell their land to other farmers or the workers who currently work the land and the County should provide financial support to the workers, when necessary, to help the workers acquire this land. When a person sells his home he must sell to another homeowner and has no right to sell his home to a corporation to place a factory there, and then demand that the zoning be changed to accommodate the buyer.</p>
	<p>The 80 areas developed into the 2 market places do not resemble what was proposed. If any commercial is proposed, it should be very very very small and relate to agg businesses to serve the agg reserve.</p>
	<p>No change. No new development rights, no new development. No import of TDR's into the Ag Reserve. No new commercial development.</p>
	<p>Limit commercial development to smaller type of shopping centers + shops. No hi rise or super centers like Costco or Walmart's.</p>
	<p>Already gone beyond what was originally planned - no more acreage not 200 acres</p>
	<p>No additional commercial development should be permitted. Preserve as much land as possible for agriculture. We are done with the allowable commercial in the Ag Reserve. The response for more commercial use must be met with a firm *NO*.</p>
	<p>(SUBMITTED BY 4 INDIVIDUALS) Commercial development should be restricted to expansion or addition of Packing Plants for large scale farming that exists within the Ag Reserve as an incentive to bring in new farmers and retain those who are already here. They should not be permitted for farmers who grow row crops outside of Palm Beach County. An appropriate buffer distance should be required between Packing Plants and residential areas. Packing Plants should be incentivized by the County to locate in the same areas west of 441 where Pero and other Packing Plants are currently located.</p> <p>There should be no commercial development that would allow for potential contamination of farmland soil such as Gas Stations. The Wellington Mall is within a short drive of the northern edge of the Ag Reserve and abundant shopping is available in Delray Beach and Boca Raton. There is no further need for shopping areas.</p> <p>No more building in the ag reserve. There is no "need" for more commercial building. The maximum 80 acres has been built on and see attached forms.</p>
	<p>Do not move forward on anything that promotes development. What is the true purpose of this suggestion? All changes should enhance preservation. There is no need for commercial developments.</p>
	<p>Stop - No more should be rezoned to allow for development either commercial or homes. We must not give additional 200 acres more away.</p>
	<p>There should not be additional commercial development. However, if developers are able to convince the BCC that development must take place then, any additional acreage to be developed should have LEED certification requirements or the equivalent, with the majority of certification points clustered in the water management and landscaping features that assist with storm water storage (such as cistern systems) and runoff (such as native</p>

	landscaping and permeable ground treatment for parking).
	Say no to home development and commercial development.
	The provisions of the “adopted comprehensive plan” have been ignored/totally ineffective, i.e. 80 acres max. Which has already been exceeded. So has proposed 200 acres. Why limit TDR to residential rights. The commercial land use doesn’t work now + the proposal for 200 won’t work because its already been exceeded.
Topic 3:	60/40 PUD Development Area Size, Location and Density
Adopted Comprehensive Plan:	<p>Development area must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a minimum of 100 acres • be located east of State Road 7 • have frontage on either State Road 7, State Road 806 (Atlantic Avenue), State Road 804 (Boynton Beach Boulevard), Clint Moore Road, Lyons Road extending north of Boynton Beach Boulevard or Lyons Road extending south of Atlantic Avenue and Acme Dairy Road extending south of Boynton Beach Boulevard to the L-28 canal. (Other roadways may be added by Plan amendment)
As presented at March 2014 BCC Workshop:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce development area from 100 acres to 35 acres • Allow 60/40 PUDs anywhere in the Ag Reserve • Eliminate frontage requirement
Comments:	These changes do not enhance the agg reserve, they benefit a few land owners at the expense of other land owners in the agg. This also hurts farmers who want to farm.
	No change in zoning, density, development rights. No new development.
	No reduction to development area below 100 acres. No elimination of frontage requirement.
	60/40 only works for large land owners the smaller land owners were left out. The new recommendation will help the smaller land owners.
	You need a mass of land to successfully farm. Reducing the acreage requirement will make farming more difficult or impossible. Find ways to help farming & enhance agriculture. Use a sophisticated marketing program to educate the public about the attributes of our Ag Reserve, locally grown produce, winter vegetable, etc
	(SUBMITTED BY 4 INDIVIDUALS) Halt all future residential development per reasons cited in Topic 1.
	“No more development allowed”. Revoke building plans that have not been started. Also see forms attached.
	Keep it as it is in the current plan. This will make it more difficult to farm land.
	No more development.

	Do not change the development size. (250 acre project minimum) Do not allow 60/40 PUDs anymore. Do not eliminate frontage requirement. Agriculture will be better supported with large tracts unencumbered by development.
	100 acres is misleading clarify terms in writing. No it will not enhance farming. No benefit.
	“Development areas” (i.e. commercial shopping) should not be permitted at intersections of N-S and E-W roads - hazards and defeat the transportation goals. No “development areas” should be in reserve - defeats the concept of “reserve for farming” - farm acreage should have specific access/ingress + egress to property. The 60/40 ratio does not seem to have worked to curtail development of land needed for agriculture + conservation of water.
Topic 4:	Preserve Area Size/Location Criteria
Adopted Comprehensive Plan:	<p>Preserve area parcels for 60/40 PUDs must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contain a minimum contiguous area of 150 acres; or, • have a common boundary with other lands that aggregate to a total of 150 acres and 1) have a future land use designation of Conservation; and/or 2) that are designated as an Agricultural Reserve Preserve; and/or 3) that have had the development rights removed and remain in some type of open space
As presented at March 2014 BCC Workshop:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eliminate minimum size/contiguity requirement
Comments:	This will create small wastelands that do not enhance the rest of the agg reserve, the climate, the images of the agg.
	No change in zoning or density.
	No elimination of size of property. Maintain contiguity requirement.
	We need to provide mass & continuity for farming. Find ways to economically assist smaller property owners to stay in business without granting additional development ability.
	(SUBMITTED BY 4 INDIVIDUALS) Halt all future residential development per reasons cited in Topic 1.
	No more building on ag reserve land. See attached forms.
	Keep it as it is. Need to keep the larger parcels intact.
	No you may not eliminate min size or contiguity requirement.
Do not eliminate the minimum size/contiguity requirement.	
If “preserves” are to be retained and confer “rights” to develop land that would otherwise be excluded from such rights then: minimum size and contiguity requirements should apply.	

Topic 5:	Preserve Area Uses
Adopted Comprehensive Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be utilized for crop production, pasture, equestrian purposes, retained as fallow land or, if designated by the South Florida Water Management District as a Water Preserve Area, or to serve regional water management purposes as certified by either Lake Worth Drainage District or South Florida Water Management District, or for water management purposes not directly related to the 60/40 AgR-PDD if approved by the Department of Environmental Resources Management, managed for environmental resource values. • Accessory agricultural structures such as barns and pump structures shall be permitted. • Agricultural support uses such as processing facilities, grooms' quarters, and farm worker housing may be accommodated provided that certain criteria are met.
As presented at March 2014 BCC Workshop:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow more uses such as landscape maintenance, mulching, and the production of products that serve as accessory to the agricultural industry. • Eliminate current (code) size restrictions for packing houses
Comments:	<p>The words production of products reminds me that fast food is not considered service, they are manufacturing hamburgers. Very small amounts of land of a preserve might be possible. Such as 1 acre for mulching on a 50 acre tree farm. We need to help the farmers without creating loopholes that will hurt farming and agriculture.</p> <p>Need to address needs of new farm types but only to extent that overall pressure is maintained.</p> <p>Maintain preserve area uses as currently in place.</p> <p>Look into the potential for cannabis growing in the Ag Reserve, both for medicinal purposes and in the eventuality that general use is approved. Cannabis in Florida will be a large cash crop which will also benefit the state in terms of cash from tax revenue.</p> <p>(SUBMITTED BY 4 INDIVIDUALS) A comprehensive study should be conducted to determine what is an appropriate maximum size for a Packing Plant. An abundance of Packing Plants could also drive out vegetable farmers and nurseries and negatively impact home prices.</p> <p>See attached forms. No more building allowed on ag reserve.</p> <p>Only a commitment to continuance of farming. This must be part of a plan to protect farming.</p> <p>I don't want to allow anything to be put on "preserved land".</p> <p>Do not allow these activities in preserve areas.</p> <p>No to any change unless the definitions are clear. This is too open + too vague. We need figures + studies before any change is taken.</p>

	Agriculture should be allowed in “preserved” areas. The definition of “agriculture” should include related support structures. Residences for workforce that has 24/7 responsibilities should be appropriately sized - grooms quarters are examples, temporary labor required for harvest should not be housed on “ag reserve” land / but should be allowed in commercial areas of “developments” just as motels, hotels
Topic 6:	Single Farm Residence/Caretaker's Quarters
Adopted Comprehensive Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard density of one unit per 5 acres applies; not permitted in preserve areas • Caretakers' quarters limited to 1,000 sq. ft. (code)
As presented at March 2014 BCC Workshop:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow a home to serve as a farm residence in preserve areas on less than five acres, provided that majority of property is in uses permitted by conservation easements, to allow for sale of development rights on the additional lands • Eliminate restriction on size of caretakers' quarters allowed in preserve areas
Comments:	This is confusing. I believe a change should allow a person who buys a 5 acre preserve to farm, should be able to build a small home, but larger than a caretakers quarter. This should not allow a 5-1000sqft mansion built on a preserve that doesn't farm.
	No changes should be made except in support of farming.
	Maintain current density requirements per unit. Do not eliminate caretaker's quarter's size restriction.
	We should be looking for ways to enhance and support agriculture, not looking for ways to destroy it through increasing development.
	(SUBMITTED BY 4 INDIVIDUALS) There should be no construction at all on preserve areas. This is an obvious ploy by developers who have already encroached dramatically on open space in the Ag Reserve.
	See attached forms. I disagree - no more building allowed on ag reserve.
	If they commit to continue farming. Must be active farming operations. Don't move forward on this proposal it opens up the door to development.
	Change caretakers quarters square footage to 3,000 sq ft, but disallow other changes. A study should be done to determine if the larger homes would be supportive of family farms, or other agricultural development.
	A homeowner should be able to build a house up to 3000 sq ', no change in density unit.
	This leaves too much room for bending the zoning and the original plan/ It is bad. No.
Residences for ag workforce that is required on 24/7 basis should be allowed in “preserve” - grooms, caretakers. Harvest labor should be allowed in commercial zones - as in hotel, motels. A landowner operating a farm op should be allowed to build residence to live on the farmed area.	

Topic 7:	Create TDR Residential Overlay Option
Adopted Comprehensive Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ag Reserve is a Sending area for TDRs (one unit per acre) • Receiving areas within the Urban/Suburban Tier
As presented at March 2014 BCC Workshop:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create overlay option for undeveloped lands allowing for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a base potential density of 1 du/ac • a minimum requirement to purchase a TDR per acre from County TDR bank • an option to purchase an additional TDR • elimination of 60% preserve requirement • max of 3 du/ac on development area • Cap units transferred to Ag Reserve at 7,000 • Make necessary changes to TDR program
Comments:	No to everything. This is terrible and will destroy the ag reserve. The main point must be to promote farming and agriculture, and keep the land prices low. Farmland that gets developed becomes non-farmable. In the future with droughts on the west coast and potential conflicts with other countries we need to protect farmland and advertise it.
	No change should be allowed.
	No changes to the adopted comprehensive plan needed.
	It's time for change and this is a start.
	We need to enhance ag, help farmers. No to changes.
	(SUBMITTED BY 4 INDIVIDUALS) These ideas should be rejected out of hand by the BCC. This would complete the final race to the bottom in the Agricultural Reserve.
	No more building allowed on ag reserve. No TDR's. See attached form.
	Don't move forward with this proposal.
	Do not allow these changes.
	Absolutely not.
The concept of "overlay" seems to be that to confer rights that would otherwise not be allowed. Ag Reserve should remain a sending area. Privately owned land in the Ag Reserve should be eligible for conservation, flowage, and similar perpetual-use easements; that should include "payment for environmental services" easement and grant programs.	

Topic 8:	Other Ag Reserve Concepts, Ideas, Issues
<p>Support agriculture, equestrian, and conservation. Develop new support for new kinds of farming, eco + farm/food tourism, farm to table. Money support. Appraise the land based on every available type of ag + eco uses.</p>	
<p>Approve only changes that promote continuation of farming opportunities.</p>	
<p>I would like to see a shift in the conversation toward working with and assisting farmers & other agricultural businesses. This includes building an understanding of their needs & challenges & working with them to solve the problems. Smaller property owners/operators need specific help to stay in business. Develop a formal marketing campaign, including signage, district labeling, specialty items, and positive advertising for the Ag Reserve. Make sure our local residents & visitors know about and have access to our locally grown produce. Work with grocery stores & markets to utilize & sell properly labeled Ag Reserve products. Pump it up! We are proud of our producers, growers, and workers in the Ag Reserve. The public deserves to know how special the area is, and have clear access to its tasty treasures. Turn this conversation around. It may be a good time to explore the possibility of another bond referendum in the near future.</p>	
<p>(SUBMITTED BY 4 INDIVIDUALS) Based on extensive research conducted by the Audubon Society of the Everglades, we make the following recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="186 863 1429 1062">(1) An immediate moratorium on any further building approvals, variances, conservation easement swapping or changes to our Comprehensive Plan until a thorough study is undertaken by an outside, independent agricultural researcher at the University of Florida (which has conducted research on farming in the Everglades Agricultural Area for more than half a century) to determine what can be salvaged from what is left of the Ag Reserve and how best to salvage it. <li data-bbox="186 1062 1429 1199">(2) An independent review by an outside law firm hired by the Nature Conservancy (but paid for by Palm Beach County) to determine if the manner in which the 60/40 development was carried out, which resulted in densely developed contiguous land of 4,575 homes, schools and a commercial center, was, in fact, legal. <li data-bbox="186 1199 1429 1297">(3) An independent study by a University researcher, appropriately credentialed in the business of farming, into obstacles in the path of successful farming in the Ag Reserve, based on personal interviews with every farmer with 10 or more acres in production in the Ag Reserve. <li data-bbox="186 1297 1429 1465">(4) Since numerous farmers providing public testimony over the past two years have indicated they are unable to get further credit at the "bank," we need a qualified researcher examining why Farm Credit of Florida and the Florida Farm Bureau are not being utilized for loans by local farmers. We may need to consider a Palm Beach County Farmer's Bank if these other resources are under-funded. <li data-bbox="186 1465 1429 1703">(5) We need the BCC to provide us with an understanding as to whether grant requests have been submitted to the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to obtain funds for purchasing conservation easements. NRCS has the ability to contribute up to 50 percent of the fair market value of agricultural land easements. Where NRCS determines that lands of special environmental significance will be protected, the agency may contribute up to 75 percent of the fair market value. If such grants have not been attempted in the past, we should ask the BCC to hire a professional grant writer for this purpose. 	
<p>The authors of Holding Our Ground, Protecting America's Farms and Farmlands have noted that "all too often, local governments focus on the tools to protect farmland without understanding the business of farming . . . it makes little sense to protect farmland if farmers cannot make a living."</p>	
<p>I want to tell you why it is absolutely critical that we create a Farming Technology Enhancement Zone in the Agricultural Reserve and put an immediate halt to further residential building.</p>	

We have heard, at these hearings, grown men choke back tears explaining how NAFTA and CAFTA pitted our farmers, who must abide by labor safety standards and food inspectors against the anything-goes farming and labor practices of competing foreign countries.

We have heard testimony from:

- The nurseries in the Agricultural Reserve who lost their Northeastern markets for live indoor plants when the financial crash came and people had to decide between food and foliage;
- The landscape nurseries who must compete against pricing wars from our own farming neighbors in Homestead;
- The farmers who cannot get further credit from the banks to sustain their operations or expand in order to compete;
- The Alderman Farm trucks that have to dodge charter school students along Boynton Beach Boulevard; the sound of real terror in the owner's voice that this is a tragedy waiting to happen.

Then, on March 25 of this year, the young owner of Thomas Produce came before the Commissioners to present what was clearly a painful and difficult message. His business was now confined between a ritzy gated-community on one side and a shopping center on the other side catering to all these glitzy gated-communities sorely misplaced in our Agricultural Reserve. I was so distressed by the predicament that we have put this young man and his family into that I went to the farm's web site to learn about their history. This is what I learned:

The Thomas family has been farming for three generations, starting out clearing farm land in Buffalo, New York with dynamite at the turn of the century. During World War II, John Sr.'s role as a farmer was so vital to national interests that the government exempted him from military service.

The Thomas family moved to Florida and founded the Thomas Produce Company in 1958, farming vegetables on 800 acres. Today, the firm employs hundreds of workers and is recognized as the largest vegetable-growing operation in the state of Florida with 13,000 acres in Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie and Hendry counties. And we're going to lose this business if we don't wake up.

We can estimate the economic loss to Palm Beach County if we put brick and mortar over another 6,000 acres of prime farm land. We can estimate the economic loss of open space on area home prices. What we cannot estimate is the economic loss of losing the intellectual capital of people who have farmed for three generations. Once we lose it, we'll never recapture it. And it is not just a Palm Beach County tragedy; it's a national tragedy to the food security interests of our country.

We must establish a Farming Technology Enhancement Zone that serves as a model to the nation in providing our farmers with cutting edge technology, early research into promising new techniques, rational land usage, ability to expand and compete, and practical policies that help our farmers keep pace with both foreign and domestic competition.

Turning their fate over to developers who arrive at our public hearings in the cloak of a Trojan Horse would be the final milestone in the race to the bottom.

And we need to seriously consider a Palm Beach County Farm Bank to make sure these farmers are not subject to predatory lending that drives them out of business and into the waiting arms of developers.

Stop building now!

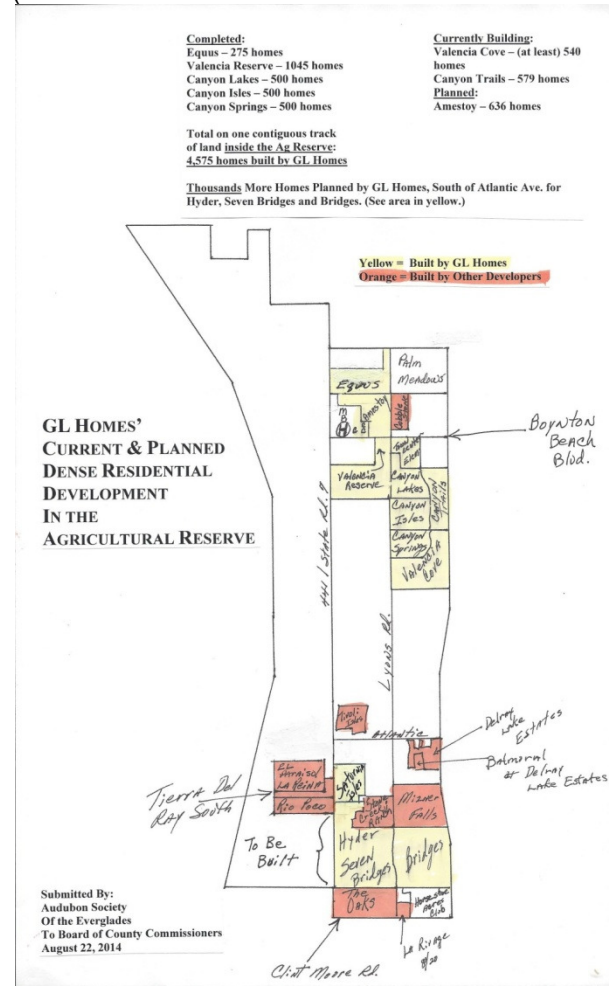
(SUBMITTED BY 2 INDIVIDUALS) If a developer had come to the Board of County Commissioners with a proposed building project that would place 4,575 densely packed homes on one large block of land inside the Agricultural Reserve, plus two Charter Schools (6th grade through 12th) for 2100 students, an elementary school and a large Town Center with a supermarket, restaurants, post office, commercial offices etc., the Commissioners would have sent that developer packing.

But this is exactly what GL Homes has done inside the Agricultural Reserve. On one large contiguous piece of farmland, GL Homes has built almost all of the above and the rest has been approved for construction. It has avoided detection for this monster development by giving separate names to each gated community and getting approvals over a number of years. (Also, we needed to look at a Google Earth view of the developments to comprehend that it was all attached.)

Having gotten this plan approved under the radar, GL Homes now hopes to build even more massive developments south of Atlantic Avenue and inside the Ag Reserve on one contiguous piece of farmland. It has already built two gated-communities there called Saturnia Isles and Bridges and it is seeking approvals to build thousands more homes in two additional developments called Hyder and Seven Bridges, all on adjoining land. Just as it built the equivalent of a town around its Canyon Town Center -- which it owns and operates -- it is planning to do the same at the south end of the Agricultural Reserve.

Development interests are also seeking approval to eliminate the 60/40 building requirement, want the ability to build 3 homes on one acre with no preservation land involved and to create commercial zoning inside the Ag Reserve. This is exactly what was captured on the video of the presentation made before the Board of County Commissioners on March 25 of this year. We must say no to this outrageous destruction of critical farmland.

(MAP/IMAGE SUBMITTED BY 2 INDIVIDUALS)



See attached form. Find ways to save the farmers. Protect them here in Palm Beach County. Palm Beach County needs to promote the Ag Reserve as to "how great it is".

This process is insulting to those of us who wish to protect the farming operations. We need to establish a funding mechanism to keep the properties in farming.

I did not comment on a few issues because I find each question leads to more urbanization of our Ag Reserve and conservation lands and personally I want that to stop. I agree that we should pass legislation which will promote farmers and if need be a special banking condition that will assist them to continue in business. We need to further promote local produce and avoid the importing of our fruit + veg. We must stop concreting over our land. We must respect our need to preserve our natural resource "water"! The Ag Reserve is the place to do just that.

Look at the value of the Ag Reserve in terms of expenses that taxpayers will have to bear if it is densely developed, to possibly include at least: \$(1) reverse osmosis/de-sal plants \$(2) toilet-to-tap wastewater system that connects the wastewater treatment plant to the water purification plant \$(3) drilling wells in the western part of the county & running pipes eastward \$(4) pumps installed on currently gravity-fed drainage canals to accommodate runoff from paved areas \$(5) additional energy grid build-out to support the pumping required to handle runoff and storm water. People who buy in the Ag Reserve should be required to receive succinct information regarding the development restrictions that pertain to the Ag Reserve.

Because of the influx of products from outside the county and the state, we need to keep farming in the Ag Reserve where there is the potential to provide food for the county and state (case in point California farms can't sustain in the drought that exists). We need to encourage farming in the Ag Reserve for the future. There is already too much urban sprawl. Farming promotes the general good. School age children need to see where food comes from.

The county and/or state, regional, or municipal style district should establish and fund a program for buying land and land-associated rights from willing sellers. Public ownership is the only reliable mechanism for protecting land and water resources for common use.