



**Marion County
Board of County Commissioners**

Growth Services

2710 E. Silver Springs Blvd.
Ocala, FL 34470
Phone: 352-438-2600
Fax: 352-438-2601

**PLANNING & ZONING SECTION
STAFF REPORT**

P&Z Date: 05/28/2025	BCC Date: 06/17/2025
Case Number	25-L01
CDP-AR	32571
Type of Case	Comprehensive Plan Large Scale Text Amendment: Request to amend Policy 2.1.28 – World Equestrian Center, Table 2-1 – Summary of Future Land Use Designations, and Policy 10.5.1 – Golden Ocala, Map 15.H – Golden Ocala;
Owner	Golden Ocala Equestrian Land, LLC, et. al.
Applicant	Gooding & Batsel, PLLC c/o W. James Gooding III
Street Address/Site Location	Multiple Address and/or No Addresses Assigned
Parcel Number(s)	Multiple
Property Size	Various
Future Land Use	World Equestrian Center (WEC)
Existing Zoning Classification	Various
Overlays Zones/Special Areas	Urban Growth Boundary, Secondary Springs Protection Zone, Opportunity Zone, portions of the land within FEMA Flood Plain Zone and Flood Prone Area
Staff Recommendation	APPROVAL
P&Z Recommendation	TBD
Project Planner	Christopher Rison & Xinyi Cindy Chen
Related Cases	Concurrent cases: 25-L02 Comprehensive Plan Large-scale Map Amendment, 25-DM01 Developers Agreement, 250606ZP PUD Amendment

I. BACKGROUND

Applicant, W. James Gooding III, on behalf of the Owner, Golden Ocala Equestrian Land, L.L.C., has filed a Comprehensive Plan Large-Scale Text Amendment application (CPA 25-L01) requesting amendments to the Marion County Comprehensive Plan related to the World Equestrian Center (WEC) future land use designation (Attachment A). The application proposes the following amendments: 1) Amend Future Land Use Element (FLUE) Policy 2.1.28 - World Equestrian Center Definition, including FLUE Table 2-1: Summary of Future Land Use Designations to reflect the changes to the WEC definition; and 2) Amend FLUE Policy 10.5.1 - Golden Ocala DRI Policy, replacing the existing policy in its entirety, and update Map 15.h - Golden Ocala to reflect the amendments. There are three concurrent applications: 25-L02 Comprehensive Plan Large-scale Map Amendment, 25-DM01 Developers Agreement, and 250606ZP PUD Amendment.

The Golden Ocala World Equestrian Center is a multi-use community including a regional attraction providing equestrian-related facilities, residential uses, commercial uses, and community amenities. Previous policies have defined the use and restrictions of the WEC and its designated properties. The proposed amendments intend to expand the scope of uses to include indoor/outdoor sports/event (expo) facilities and clarify land use policies with updated maximum project entitlements.

II. STAFF SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Staff is recommending the **APPROVAL** of the Large-Scale Future Land Use Map Series (FLUMS) amendment because it **is conditionally consistent** with Land Development Code Section 2.3.3.B, which requires amendments comply and be consistent with the Marion County Comprehensive Plan as well as the provisions of Chapter 163, Florida Statutes.

III. NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice of public hearing was mailed to all property owners within 300 feet of the subject property on May 9th, 2025. A public hearing notice sign was also posted on the property on May 18th, 2025. A public hearing notice for the Planning & Zoning Commission hearing was published in the Star Banner on May 12th, 2025. As of the date of the initial distribution of this Staff Report, no correspondence in support of or in opposition to the amendment has been received. Evidence of the public hearing notices are on file with the Growth Services Department and are incorporated herein by reference.

IV. PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENT:

The Comprehensive Plan Large-Scale Text Amendment 25-L01 is submitted to modify the existing Marion County Comprehensive Plan for the following requests:

1. FLUE Policy 2.1.28:

The applicant proposes to revise the definition of WEC land use, adding 'sport facilities' to the allowed uses. It also provides examples of 'sport facilities' to further define the

uses that can be categorized as sport facilities. (See Figure 1) The Table 2-1 in this Policy is also updated to reflect the revised WEC land use definition. (See Figure 2)

Figure 1 – Proposed Text Amendment in FLUE Policy 2.1.28

Policy 2.1.28: World Equestrian Center (WEC)

This land use is intended to provide for the development of the Golden Ocala World Equestrian Center, a regional attraction consisting of equestrian-related improvements (including indoor and outdoor arenas, barns, show rings, etc.), [sports facilities](#) and other improvements to support the horse community and community in general. This designation also allows for commercial uses (including retail, hotel, office, community uses and business opportunities), recreational uses, residential uses, recreational vehicle parks (“RVP”) and mixed uses. Any commercial uses on World Equestrian Center (“WEC”) designated lands in the Rural Area (i.e., outside the UGB) shall be limited to equestrian-related uses associated with the World Equestrian Center. Any hotels or other commercial uses that are not permitted in the Rural Lands Future Land Use designation shall be prohibited on WEC designated lands in the Rural Area (i.e., outside the UGB); provided, however, Recreational Vehicle Parks and clubhouse spaces may be allowed if expressly permitted by a FLUE Policy applicable to a parcel of real property assigned the WEC designation. As used herein, the term “equestrian-related use” shall mean a land use that is principally rural and equestrian in character and associated with and supportive of equestrian sports. Examples of equestrian-related uses include polo fields, equestrian arenas, equestrian instruction facilities, veterinary clinics, farriers (non-mobile), stables and barns, and feed stores and tack shops. Any and all accessory uses to equestrian-related uses shall be directly ancillary and incidental to such equestrian related use and shall be located on the same lot or parcel as the principal equestrian-related use. [Examples of sports facilities include softball fields, soccer fields, indoor and outdoor arenas, and other recreational uses.](#) The maximum density for residential uses (i) within the Urban Area shall be four (4) dwelling units per one (1) gross acre; and (ii) within the Rural Area shall be one (1) dwelling unit per ten (10) gross acres. The maximum intensity for non-residential uses (i) within the Urban Area (inside the UGB) shall be a Floor Area Ratio of 0.5, as further defined by the LDC; and (ii) within the Rural Area (outside the UGB) shall be a Floor Area Ratio of 0.35, as further defined by the LDC. This land use designation is allowed in the Urban and Rural Area and is limited to the lands: (1) described in Exhibit “C” to Ordinance No. 20-36 dated December 16, 2020 (as may be subsequently amended); all such lands shall be developed under a single-unified Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning district classification on and over such land, consistent with Marion County’s Land Development Code (LDC); and (2) described in Exhibits “A1” and “A2” to Ordinance No 22-26 dated ~~June 21, 2022~~ [June 21, 2022](#); all such lands shall be developed under a single-unified Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning district classification on and over such land, consistent with Marion County’s Land Development Code (LDC).

Figure 2 – Proposed Table 2-1 in FLUE Policy 2.1.28**Future Land Use Element Table 2-1: Summary of Future Land Use Designations***

FLU	DENSITY	FAR	USES
RURAL AREAS (Outside UGB)			
AGRICULTURAL USES			
Rural Land (RL)	0 – 1 du/10 ac	N/A	Agriculture, residences associated with agriculture, or Conservation.
NON-RESIDENTIAL / MIXED USES			
Rural Activity Center (RAC)	0 - 2 du/ac	0 – 0.35	Office, Commercial, Public, Recreation, Residential
URBAN AREAS (Inside and Outside UGB)			
RESIDENTIAL USES			
Low Residential (LR)	0 - 1 du/ac	N/A	Residential, Public, Recreation, Conservation
Medium Residential (MR)	1 - 4 du/ac	N/A	Residential, Public, Recreation, Conservation
High Residential (HR)	4 - 8 du/ac	N/A	Residential, Public, Recreation, Conservation
Urban Residential (UR)	8 - 16 du/ac	N/A	Residential, Public, Recreation, Conservation, Commercial (accessory)
NON-RESIDENTIAL / MIXED USES			
Commercial (COM)	0 – 8 du/ac	0 – 1.0	Office, Commercial, Public, Recreation, Residential, Campgrounds, Recreational Vehicle Park (RVP)
Employment Center (EC)	0 - 16 du/ac	0 – 2.0	Office, Commercial, Industrial, Public, Recreation, Residential, Campgrounds, RVP
Commerce District (CD)	N/A	0 – 2.0	Office, Commercial, Industrial, Public
ALLOWED IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS (Inside or Outside UGB)			
NON-RESIDENTIAL / MIXED USES			
Public (P)	N/A	0 – 1.0	Public, Office, Commercial, Recreation, Golf Course
Preservation (PR)	N/A	N/A	Preservation, Conservation
Municipality (M)	N/A	N/A	Municipality
World Equestrian Center (WEC)**	<i>Rural Area (Outside UGB)</i>		
	0-1 du/10 ac (Rural Area)	0 – 0.35 for Rural Areas (outside the UGB)	Residential, World Equestrian Center with equestrian-related uses per FLUE Policy 10.5.1 for property depicted on FLUMS Map 15h- (for Golden Ocala) Residential, World Equestrian Center with equestrian related use (RVP) and clubhouse per FLUE Policy 10.6.1 (for Jockey Club)
	<i>Urban Area (Inside UGB)</i>		
	0-4 du/ac (Urban Area)	0 - 0.50 for Urban Areas (inside the UGB)	World Equestrian Center, <u>Sports Facilities</u> , Office, Commercial, Public, Recreation, Residential, Recreational Vehicle Park (RVP)

2. FLUE Policy 10.5.1:

The applicant proposes to complete replacement of the existing Golden Ocala DRI Policy, clarifying land use entitlements, density, and concurrency management to include 'sport facilities. (See Figure 3) The Map 15.h in this Policy is also to reflect the expanded WEC designated areas (concurrent application 25-L02 Comprehensive Plan Large-Scale Map Amendment).

Figure 3 – Proposed Text Amendment in FLUE Policy 10.5.1

REVISED FLUE POLICY 10.5.1: GOLDEN OCALA "DRI" POLICY

Future Land Use Element Policy 10.5.1: Golden Ocala

[Editor Note: Prior Policy 10.5.1 is deleted in its entirety, being replaced and superseded by this "new" policy.]

This concerns the following Future Land Use Map Amendments - (a) Future Land Use Map (FLUM) Amendment 2016-L04; (b) Future Land Use Map (FLUM) Amendments 2017-L02 and 2017-D05; ~~and~~ (c) FLUM Amendment 2020-D01 and FLUM Amendment 2020-L02; (d) FLUM Amendment 2024- and FLUM Amendment 2024- concerning ~~approximately 4,276.21 acres~~ (the "Project" or "Golden Ocala"). The land use and development potential of the Project is hereby limited and governed by the following conditions:

1. The Golden Ocala project general land uses and boundary are identified as part of the Marion County Future Land Use Map Series (FLUMS) as identified on Map 15.h.
2. Golden Ocala is a mixed-use development composed of single family, multi-family (includes condominiums), commercial, hotel, recreation, RV units, equestrian facilities, sports facilities, and other uses to support the horse community, the Golden Ocala project and the community in general.
3. The maximum project entitlements are as follows:

RESIDENTIAL HOUSING	
Low Residential	400
Medium Residential (including original Golden Ocala PUD)	1103
Equestrian Estate	300
High Residential	408
Condominium	170
Rural	16
Total Housing Units	2,397
NON-RESIDENTIAL	
Commercial	4,000,000 square feet
Equestrian Facilities	43,500 seats <u>210 acres</u>
<u>Expo and Indoor Sports Facilities</u>	<u>30 acres</u>
<u>Outdoor Sports Facilities</u>	<u>90 acres</u>
Hotel	1,365 50 rooms
Recreational Vehicle	280 units (does not include unoccupied parking areas)

4. The commercial and other non-residential entitlements may be used for any of the non-residential uses permitted by Marion County in the Commercial and World Equestrian Center future land use categories. A land use tradeoff mechanism will also be included within the County's PUD approval for this Project, and will apply to the entire Project boundary. The land use conversion table will allow for a land use to exceed the Project entitlements above as long as another land use is reduced through the conversion matrix to ensure there is no increase in development impacts. The conversion table will also allow for conversion of the uses identified above through local approval and thus, without the requirement for a comprehensive plan amendment.

5. Concerning the Marion County's Concurrency Management System:
 - A. The portion of the Project that was the subject of FLUM Amendments 2016-L04 and 2017-D05 is subject to the provisions of a Development Agreement Concerning Concurrency, Impact Fee Credits And Other Matters for Golden Ocala as recorded in OR Book 8791, Page 105, public records of Marion County, Florida (the "2018 Concurrency Agreement").
 - B. Concerning the portion of the Project that is the subject of FLUM Amendments 2020-D01 and 2020-L02, [FLUM Amendments 2024-_____ and 2024-_____](#) neither the approval of this development project's site for future land use designation, or the approval of this policy shall be deemed a final local development order and the development is not considered, or entitled to, being certified for concurrency under Marion County's Concurrency Management System (LDC Article 1, Division 8). The developer shall address and comply with Marion County's Concurrency Management System, including providing for proportionate share for transportation improvements consistent with Sections 163.3180 and 380.06, Florida Statutes, upon proceeding through Marion County's subsequent development review process as contained within the Marion County Land Development Code (LDC Article 2, etc.). Such compliance may be evidenced by an amendment to the 2018 Concurrency Agreement.
6. No Equestrian Estate lot created shall be less than three (3) acres in size measured exclusive of any right-of-way or access easements (except to the extent such access easements provide access between lots and platted streets, are designed to permit the use of shared driveways to provide such access, or are designated easements for utilities or equestrian trails).
7. The commercial, common and non-residential areas, World Equestrian Center and individual lots and homes shall utilize water conservation techniques. Such techniques may include indoor, irrigation and landscaping practices as selected by the Developer, required certifications for irrigation contractors working within the development, wastewater contribution for municipal reuse, maximum irrigable areas, or other landscape and vegetative requirements.
8. Development of:
 - A. Commercial, condominium, RV, low density residential lots ~~north of US 27~~ (other than those developed as Equestrian Estate Lots [north of US 27](#)), medium density residential lots ~~and~~, the Equestrian Facility developments, [and the sports facilities](#) shall be served by central potable water and central sanitary sewer service.
 - B. Equestrian Estate lots:
 - 1) Located South of US 27, shall be served by central potable water or central sanitary sewer services; and
 - 2) Located North of US 27, may, at the option of the developer, be served by (a) wells or on-site sewage treatment and disposal systems (OSTDS) provided that the PUD for any such lots that are served by OSTDS shall contain provisions designed to reduce total nitrogen effluent concentration; or (b) by central potable water or central sanitary sewer services to the foregoing provisions concerning wells and OSTDS are to provide a transition from the urbanized area to rural, which are exceptions to Future Land Use Element Policies 3.1.1, 6.1.3 and 6.1.5, Sanitary Sewer Element Policies 1.2.6, 1.4.1 and 1.4.7 and Potable Water Element Policy 1.7.1.; and other provisions of this plan requiring central water and sewer.
9. Direct vehicular access to NW 100th Avenue south of the northwest quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 11, Township 15 Range 20 is prohibited.
10. This Policy supersedes, amends, restates and replaces historic Objective 6 and Policy 10.6.1 adopted pursuant to FLUM Amendment 2017-L02 and Policy 10.5.1 adopted pursuant to FLUM Amendment 2017-D05 (as modified by the Settlement Agreement concerning Golden Ocala Approvals dated February 20, 2018 and approved by Marion County on such date-) [and FLUM Amendment 2022-L02](#).

V. ANALYSIS:

A. ANALYSIS OF FLUE POLICY 2.1.28:

Policy 2.1.28 defines the World Equestrian Center (WEC) as a regional destination focused on equestrian activities, recreational uses, residential development, and limited commercial uses. The proposed amendment revises this policy to allow additional use 'Sport Facilities' in the Urban Area. This change seeks to expand the range of uses while maintaining the WEC's identity as an equestrian-focused destination.

The allowance for Sport Facilities aligns with the WEC's existing recreational and hospitality functions. However, by requiring explicit FLUE Policy approval, the County retains control over these uses, ensuring they are compatible with the rural character. Moreover, the amendment retains the restriction that commercial uses in the Urban Area must be equestrian-related, which is critical to preventing urban sprawl and maintaining rural integrity.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends **APPROVAL** of the amendments to Policy 2.1.28. The changes maintain the WEC's character while providing flexibility for compatible uses.

B. ANALYSIS OF FLUE POLICY 10.5.1 (GOLDEN OCALA DRI POLICY):

Policy 10.5.1 provides a comprehensive framework for the development of the Golden Ocala World Equestrian Center. The proposed amendment replaces the existing policy in its entirety, establishing new entitlements, including:

- Equestrian facilities and sports facilities with defined capacities by 210 acres, in replace of 13,500 seats.
- Adding Expo and indoor sports facilities with up to 30 acres.
- Adding outdoor sports facilities with up to 90 acres.
- Hotel uses with up to 1,650 rooms, in replace of 1,350 rooms.

The amendment introduces a land use conversion table, allowing flexibility in development while maintaining overall limits. This approach enables market-responsive development without compromising infrastructure capacity or community character. The updated concurrency management provisions ensure that any new development must demonstrate compliance with the County's infrastructure standards, protecting public services.

However, according to the DRC Traffic Review (Attachment D.2), the proposed changes are expected to significantly increase traffic volumes in the surrounding area. Specifically, the introduction of sports facilities and event uses would result in an estimated increase of 2,926 external daily trips (a 131% increase) and 494 external PM peak hour trips (a 223% increase) compared to what is currently allowed under the Low Residential land use. These additional trips would adversely affect seven roadway segments along SR 40 that already exceed or are close to exceeding their LOS thresholds under existing conditions.

Further, County Traffic raised methodological concerns regarding the use of acreage-based entitlements for sports and equestrian facilities. The ITE Trip Generation Manual does not support estimating traffic impacts based on acres; it uses metrics such as number of seats (for horse racetracks) or number of fields (for soccer complexes). The reliance on acres introduces uncertainty into traffic projections and complicates the evaluation of operational impacts.

Additionally, the request to increase the cap on hotel rooms from 1,350 to 1,650 was not supported. At present, only 642 rooms have been constructed, and 708 additional rooms remain under the current entitlement. County Traffic recommends addressing any need for further hotel expansion through a future amendment, once current capacity is utilized.

Lastly, the proposal to remove existing restrictions on concerts - including the special event permit and traffic management plan requirements - was not supported due to the inability to quantify traffic impacts. The current Development Agreement allows up to four concerts per year with conditions that help manage traffic impacts. County Traffic is not opposed to increasing the number of concerts but maintains that the special event permit and traffic plan requirements must remain in place to protect public safety and transportation infrastructure.

Based on this analysis, the proposed amendment is **not consistent** with TE Policies and FLUE Policies. County Traffic recommends denial of the amendment due to the projected increase in traffic, the lack of reliable trip generation methodology, and concerns regarding impacts to already-constrained roadway segments and concurrency. Without modifications to reduce or offset the proposed entitlements, the amendment poses substantial operational and safety risks to the transportation network.

Staff notes that this Large-Scale Comprehensive Plan Text Amendment is subject to a 60-day review period by State and Regional agencies, followed by final action, which will occur within 180 days of receipt of agency comments. This extended timeline is expected to provide an opportunity to resolve and complete the submitted Traffic Methodology and complete the Traffic Study for the Amendment, wherein at that time this consideration is also due to be accompanied by the consideration of a Development Agreement Modification that will outline how need transportation improvements identified by the study will be addressed and coordinated by the developer in conjunction with FDOT and Marion County. As such, staff is currently recommending approval of this Amendment in anticipation of the currently identified issues being resolved, or mechanisms established to address how short- and long-term transportation system needs and improvements will be properly addressed and mitigated, before final consideration of this request.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends **Approval** of the amendments to Policy 10.5.1, **contingent upon** the traffic concerns and concurrency issues will be addressed before the final consideration of this request is made.

VI. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) enter into the record the Staff Report and all other competent substantial evidence presented at the hearing, adopt the findings and conclusions contained herein, and make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to **APPROVE** the proposed large-scale text amendment number 25-L01, because the application is **consistent** with:

- A. The Marion County Comprehensive Plan, specifically with:
 - 1. FLUE Policies 5.1.2;

And **conditionally comply with and conform to:**

- A. The Florida Statutes, specifically with:
 - 1. F.S. Section 163.3177(6)(a)8.
- B. The Marion County Comprehensive Plan, specifically with:
 - 1. TE Policy 2.1.4;

VII. ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS

- A. Enter into the record the Staff Report and all other competent substantial evidence presented at the hearing, adopt the findings and conclusions contained herein, and make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to **APPROVE/APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS** the large-scale Comprehensive Plan Text amendment.
- B. Enter into the record the Staff Report and all other competent substantial evidence presented at the hearing, adopt the findings and conclusions contained herein, and make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to **DENY** the large-scale Comprehensive Plan Text amendment.
- C. Enter into the record the Staff Report and all other competent substantial evidence presented at the hearing, identify any additional data and analysis needed to support a recommendation on the proposed Ordinance and make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to **TABLE** the application for up to two months in order to provide the identified data and analysis needed to make an informed recommendation on the proposed Ordinance.

VIII. PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

To be determined.

IX. BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ACTION

To be determined.

X. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

- A. Application Package AR32571
- B. Proposed Text Amendment - Policy 2.1.28 (1. Redline version; 2. Clean version)
- C. Proposed Text Amendment – Policy 10.5.1 (1. Redline version; 2. Clean version)
- D. DRC Comments Letter AR32571
- E. DRC Comments (Traffic)
- F. Site Photos