

Lady Slipper / Alfalfa / Lorri Circle Area Proposed Zoning Changes

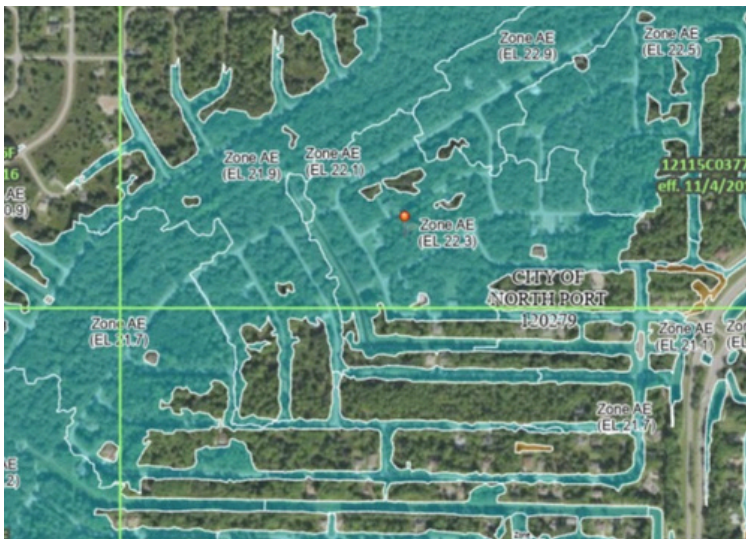
Q: Why was the Lady Slipper / Alfalfa / Lorri Circle area south of I-75 and west of Sumter redesignated to Corridor?

A: This area is highly susceptible to flooding due to its location along Myakkahatchee Creek and low-lying topography, as experienced during Hurricane Ian shown in the photos below.

Lady Slipper Flooding



Lorri Circle Flooding



About half of this area is designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as a high-risk Special Flood Hazard Area (see Flood Map, left).

Lady Slipper / Alfalfa Flood Map

This area was platted into single-family lots in the 1960s by General Development Corporation (GDC), a land development company that subdivided and sold most of the land in North Port during the 1960s through 1980s. GDC created thousands of single-family lots, paved streets, and dug canals but did not plan for adequate stormwater and flood control to serve the area once houses were built on these lots.

In contrast, when development occurs in newer master-planned residential neighborhoods or in a non-residential zoning district, a master stormwater plan (MSP) is required. An MSP requires design and construction of a system that not only manages the stormwater runoff created by the development but can also improve drainage and flooding in the surrounding area. As a result, these newer neighborhoods and non-residential developments rarely, if ever, experience flooding.

By redesignating the Lady Slipper / Alfalfa, Lorri Circle area as Corridor zoning, any new development will be required to create stormwater ponds and other improvements to prevent stormwater from spreading throughout the area as it currently does, while also helping to improve the quality of water that eventually filters to the Myakkahatchee Creek.

Additionally, the four corners of the Sumter Boulevard and I-75 Interchange, adjacent to the Lady Slipper / Alfalfa / Lorri Circle area are part of an Activity Center where the most intensive development in the City is being built, as evidenced by the construction of the 9-story Sarasota Memorial Hospital. The southwest corner of Sumter and I-75 is anticipated to develop with high-intensity commercial uses—such as restaurants, hotels, and shopping. This expected commercial development, combined with the opportunity to create a comprehensive stormwater system adjacent to the Myakkahatchee Creek, makes the Corridor zoning a more appropriate designation.

Q: Doesn't more development in this area just create more flooding?

A: It depends on the type of development. Currently only 15% of the lots in the area are developed, and there are 447 vacant lots. If the area remained designated as single-family, the City could not prevent homes from being built on those pre-platted lots.

There would be no requirements for stormwater mitigation and flooding would continue to get worse as more single-family homes were built. However, with the area now zoned as a Corridor district, any new development must comply with a master stormwater plan requiring stormwater ponds and other improvements to reduce flooding.

Q: Why can't the City just stop allowing more homes to be built?

A: Florida laws prohibit local cities and counties from enacting moratoriums on building. Since Hurricane Ian, the Florida State Legislature passed laws specifically prohibiting building moratoriums. There are other state laws, such as the "Bert J. Harris, Jr., Private Property Rights Protection Act," that also restrict a local government's ability to prohibit development.

Q: With this area now designated as Corridor, doesn't that mean a commercial use could be built right next door to me?

A: It depends. Any future development would be required to comply with regulations for stormwater retention, open space, buffers, parking, and other requirements, including design regulations that provide a transitional buffer and compatibility between uses. Also, it is more likely that multiple lots will be purchased and assembled to create parcels large enough to accommodate new development. Developers will often buy existing houses and redesign/relocate streets to amass the land area they need, meaning the area would eventually have fewer, if any, single-family houses remaining.

Q: If I already have a home in this area, what happens to my home?

A: Any existing single-family homes may continue to be lived in, sold for single-family use or another allowed use, or be rebuilt in the event of a fire or other disaster.