

## **Bern Creek Improvement Association**

c/o Pinnacle Community Association Management  
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Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners

Chairman Al Maio  
Vice Chairman Ron Cutsinger  
Commissioner Mike Moran  
Commissioner Christian Ziegler  
Commissioner Nancy Detert

RE: Opposition to Lakewood Ranch Southeast Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Dear Chairman Maio and Sarasota County Commissioners:

The Board of the Bern Creek Ranches Homeowners' Association is writing to express great concern about and opposition to the Lakewood Ranch Southeast proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments. The Bern Creek Board is very concerned about the negative impacts this proposed development will have on our community. It appears this proposed development will surround the long-established rural community of Bern Creek Ranches on three sides by development with densities of 10- to 20-times greater than that of the homesteads in Bern Creek and of the underlying established zoning for most of the land in the proposed development. The 400 dwelling units in the Lakepark Estates hamlet, previously approved by the County and which adjoins Bern Creek along its south and east boundaries, is already a significant density increase in development in this area. Lakepark Estates is now proposed to be merged with the proposed Lakewood Ranch Southeast and have even greater density than previously approved.

Bern Creek homeowners as well as other 5- and 10-acre homesteads in the immediate vicinity will suffer significant negative impacts to our quality of life, safety on the roadways, increased flooding, noise and light pollution, and many other assaults on the rural life we have sought and enjoyed. We understood that some changes would occur with the 2050 Plan; however, we were also promised that our rural lifestyle would be preserved and respected. The Lakewood Ranch Southeast proposal will not protect our rural area and homes but will instead endanger the peaceful enjoyment of our properties and damage our quality of life and properties.

The "Neighborhood Workshop" held by STANTEC on April 7, 2022 was inadequate in terms of ease of access by the public, insufficient in terms of information provided and lack of responses to questions, and did not comply with the requirements of Sarasota County Resolution No. 2021-165. There were numerous Bern Creek residents unable to access the workshop via the Teams platform, other residents that were able to attend but were repeatedly dropped out of the meeting, a number of residents that did not receive mailed notice of the workshop, and the questions submitted by attendees were primarily "answered" with the unsatisfactory response of "we haven't studied that yet". Specific information on residents that did not receive notice, were unable to access the meeting, or were

dropped off the meeting can be provided. By this letter, the Bern Creek Board respectfully requests that the applicant be required to hold at least one additional neighborhood workshop focused on the concerns and questions of Bern Creek and nearby residents at a time when the applicant is able to provide adequate responses. The purpose of the neighborhood workshops is to provide a forum for addressing concerns of the neighboring community. The April 7<sup>th</sup> workshop failed to provide such a forum and was insufficient.

By this letter, the Board of the Bern Creek Homeowners' Association is stating in writing the failure of the April 7<sup>th</sup> neighborhood workshop by Stantec on behalf of Lakewood Ranch Southeast to meet County standards for such workshops as provided in paragraph C of Resolution No. 2021-165. The deficiencies of the April 7<sup>th</sup> workshop under the requirements described in Resolution No. 2021-165 include, but are not limited to, the following: the chosen electronic format was insufficient in accessibility and apparent capacity to handle the number of attendees/attempted attendees (people unable to sign in and others dropped from access to the online meeting), the County Planning staff member did not explain the review and hearing process to the public, the presentation did not include the currently applicable land use densities but rather assumed that all land would be rezoned to Hamlet as a minimum density, there was no discussion of current permitted maximum height and density (under existing zoning) versus the proposed maximum height and density, no maximum height was discussed at all, there was no discussion of the impact of moving the Countryside Line, and there was no discussion of major changes to current 2050 requirements such as buffers and greenbelts along Fruitville Road and adjacent areas.

The Lakewood Ranch Southeast Comprehensive Plan Amendment application is proposing a number of changes that will negatively impact Bern Creek and other rural homestead residents. In addition, the Lakewood Ranch Southeast proposal is to basically excise over 4,000 acres from the 2050 Plan without any analysis of the impact this will have on the 2050 Plan itself or the long-range impacts for Sarasota County. Changes of this magnitude to the 2050 Plan should go through the process used for publicly initiated plan updates with significant analysis of impacts to the entire County and multiple public workshops. With a privately initiated amendment, the neighborhood workshop format is the only opportunity for a public discussion of the proposal and to ask questions in a public format. The later public hearings before the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners do not generate any answers to questions from the public and are only a venue for the public to testify about the proposal.

For all the above reasons, the Bern Creek Homeowners Association is requesting further public input on this proposed change to the 2050 Plan and a workshop with residents of Bern Creek and nearby rural homesteads. We look forward to having a meaningful opportunity to be informed about and comment upon this proposed amendment.

Sincerely,

Bern Creek HOA Board

By its President, Michael Hutchinson

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Hutchinson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned at the bottom right of the letter, below the typed name.