

## County picks profit over preservation

Last week's treatment of the Hi Hat Ranch Comprehensive Plan Amendment by the Sarasota County Commission reveals how long-range planning has fallen into disrepute before this Commission ("The 10,000-acre Hi Hat Ranch plan advances," June 10).

After a comprehensive process of expert, public and interest group evaluation and compromise on how to simultaneously facilitate growth and protect existing communities, a set of 2050 land use designations and policies were adopted years ago.

The county established a transition zone to protect the century-old Miakka community from the advance of urban sprawl. A set of land uses was designated - high density villages, low density hamlets and rural lands - and 12 standards and policies were agreed to as the official Sarasota County plan to control sprawl.

But then Hi Hat Ranch proposed to put high density villages next to the traditional rural community east of Verna Road. Instead of applying the 2050 land use designations, the County Commission abandoned them to provide flexibility to react to changes in the market.

That sounds the same as flexibility to change the land use if it would make more money for the developer. This commission has put community preservation behind short-term profits. More is possible and more should be expected of our elected representatives.

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