

State GOP flexes muscle with DeSantis win

By Zac Anderson
GateHouse Florida

Florida Republicans and Democrats found themselves in familiar territory after the dust settled on Tuesday's big midterm election.

For the GOP, it's total control of the key levers of power in Tallahassee. For Democrats, it's political crumbs and plenty of consternation.

Republicans proved they still can dominate Florida politics in the Trump era. They won the all-important governor's race despite talk of a blue wave this year and notched victories in two other statewide races, while maintaining control of the state House and Senate.

Democrats were left to pin their hopes on recounts in the U.S. Senate, agriculture commissioner and a handful of legislative races and console themselves with a pair of congressional pickups and a modest gain in state House seats.

In a year when there was lots of talk about Democratic enthusiasm, the Florida GOP flexed its muscle and showed that President Donald Trump remains a potent political figure in the state.

"Clearly it's a victory for President Trump in the state," said Matthew Corrigan, a political science professor at the University of North Florida.

Trump campaigned aggressively in Florida and gave a boost to two of his closest allies. Ron DeSantis beat Democrat Andrew Gillum to succeed GOP Gov. Rick Scott, while Scott is leading in his bid to unseat U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, with the race seemingly headed for a recount.

Both outcomes stung for Democrats, while Republicans gloated about their continued dominance.

Nelson is the Democrats' last remaining statewide elected official and a party stalwart who has held office for decades. Gillum appeared to be a rising star who energized the progressive base. Defeating one and having the other on life support during a year that was supposed to favor Democrats was a big accomplishment for the Florida GOP.

"I think it's an affirmation of the success" Republicans have had running the state said Sarasota GOP Chairman Joe Gruters, who claimed a state Senate seat Tuesday to add to a long list of titles that includes co-chair of Trump's Florida campaign and former vice chair of the Republican Party of Florida.

Gruters pointed to the strong economy, reduced state debt, lower taxes and fewer regulations as key accomplishments under GOP leadership in Florida. He added that Republicans also simply are better at turning out their voters.

Despite public polling repeatedly showing both Gillum and Nelson ahead, the much-hyped blue wave failed to materialize in the state. Instead, the GOP's reliable contingent of older, whiter suburban and rural voters overwhelmed an uptick in midterm turnout among Democratic-leaning

voters.

Voter turnout was up across the state. It hit 62 percent, up from 51 percent in the 2014 midterm and the highest for a midterm since the 66 percent turnout in 1994.

And despite early indications that the Democratic base was energized, the Republican base — rallied by Trump's appearances in Fort Myers and Pensacola — proved to be just as fired up. Turnout in GOP strongholds rose significantly, countering the turnout increase in big, urban counties that give Democrats a lot of votes.

"It's surprisingly similar to the patterns that we've seen (in past races) which is, whether or not Democrats can amass enough votes in the South Florida counties to overcome Republican strength" in other areas of the state, said Florida Atlantic University political science professor Kevin Wagner.

Southwest Florida helped anchor the GOP's strong performance again this year.

Compared to the last midterm election, voter turnout was up eight percentage points in Sarasota County, 10 points in Manatee County, eight points in Charlotte County, 13 points in Lee County and 12 points in Collier County.

"There's no question that Southwest Florida's the rock for Republicans in Florida now," Gruters said.

All five coastal counties south of Tampa Bay are full of older white voters who tend to vote Republican.

The GOP's continued show of force in state politics makes Florida look less like a real swing state and more like a GOP-leaning state that has produced a few outliers over the last two decades, notably Nelson's three Senate victories and President Barack Obama's two victories.

Democrats have failed in every attempt to win the governor's mansion since 1994, first with a series of moderate candidates and now with a strongly liberal candidate in Gillum. They are now left to ponder whether there is any scenario that can bring together the coalition they need to claim the top job in state government.

"It's really a hard question for Democrats, they've come so close," Corrigan said, adding he suspects the party will continue moving in a more liberal direction.

"My gut is the Democratic Party's energy is with the progressive wing and that's where it's going to go," Corrigan said.

Charlotte County Democratic Party Chair Patrick Hurley said he does not believe that Gillum was a bad candidate, noting he came "within a whisker" of beating DeSantis.

"I would not second-guess our candidate," Hurley said. "I think Andrew Gillum is the model for what candidates for the Democratic Party should look like."

Hurley said the party has "a lot of soul-searching to do" but one thing he'd definitely like to see is a more aggressive overall approach.

"We need to find ways to combat this virtual reality that Trump has created," he said.

The governor's race always is hugely consequential. DeSantis will now wield control over key state agencies. His appointees will oversee everything from water management districts to universities.

But the stakes were particularly high in the governor's race this year because the winner will get to appoint three state Supreme Court justices to replace three liberal leaning justices who are retiring.

DeSantis is poised to cement conservative control of a court that has often been a check on the GOP-controlled Legislature.

There were a few bright spots for Democrats this year. They flipped two South Florida congressional seats from red to blue, helping to secure a Democratic majority in the House.

The party also made gains in the state House and may have picked up a seat in the state Senate, although the race is headed for a recount. And Democrats held onto key pickups, such as the northern Sarasota County state House seat that Rep. Margaret Good flipped from red to blue in a February special election.

Additionally, there is still a chance that Nelson and Democratic candidate for agriculture commissioner Nikki Fried prevail in their recounts, although recounts rarely change election results.

But DeSantis's victory could limit future Democratic gains going forward.

Some of the Democrats' pickups were made possible — in part — by the so-called "Fair Districts" amendments to the state Constitution. The anti-gerrymandering initiatives require lawmakers to draw compact districts that are not supposed to favor a political party or incumbent.

Even after the amendments were adopted, it took legal challenges by a coalition of groups against the GOP-controlled Legislature to get the current congressional and state Senate districts.

The state Supreme Court ruled that the original congressional districts approved by the Legislature were drawn with partisan intent and ordered new district lines. The original state Senate districts also were successfully challenged in court.

After Tuesday, Republicans now hold 14 congressional districts in Florida and Democrats hold 13 districts, a relatively even split that reflects the state's narrow partisan divide. The split was 16 to 11 in favor of Republicans before this election.

Now the Supreme Court will have a conservative bent, raising the question of whether such lawsuits would be successful if future redistricting efforts are challenged.

"It's a big win" for the GOP, Corrigan said. "If again you come down to another controversial election in 2020 you've got a Republican in the governor's seat. And redistricting and things like that. And the Supreme Court — my gosh — the Florida Supreme Court's a big prize."

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promoting public safety and expanding educational opportunities.

"We need to build a Florida that is cleaner, safer, stronger and that will be my guiding light as governor," he said.

DeSantis said one area where he might unite Floridians will be behind an effort to address the problems of toxic algae and red tide and on moving forward with plans to restore the Florida Everglades.

"I think the first priority in terms of what is really urgent for Florida is really getting us on a strong track on water quality and the environment," he said.

DeSantis said he would use his relationship with President Donald Trump, who held campaign rallies for him, to advance the federal portions of the effort, including the creation of a reservoir near Lake Okeechobee to help divert and treat polluted water.

"I think you're going to get tired of me calling you, asking you for things for Florida," DeSantis said about Trump. "But I look forward to that. I think we'll have a great partnership."

DeSantis will also have willing partners in the Florida House and Senate. Incoming House Speaker Jose Oliva, R-Miami Lakes, was an early supporter of DeSantis. The newly elected lieutenant governor, state Rep. Jeanette Nunez, R-Miami, will also help DeSantis navigate the legislative process.

Lawmakers and the new governor are likely to find common ground on issues such as tax cuts, opposition to expanding

Medicaid and the creation of more educational "choice" programs like charter schools and scholarships to send students to private schools.

DeSantis is also a strong supporter of gun rights, meaning any gun-control efforts are not likely to advance, and is open to restrictions on abortions. In the Republican primary, he voiced support for a "heartbeat bill," which would prohibit doctors from providing abortions if fetal heartbeats can be detected.

As U.S. Navy veteran who served in the Iraq war, DeSantis will also find legislative support for his efforts to support active military members and veterans in the state.

One of DeSantis' biggest challenges will be moving from a legislative branch, where he served nearly three terms in Congress, to the chief executive of the nation's third-largest state.

DeSantis is taking over a huge enterprise, and one of his first tasks will be shaping a state budget proposal for 2019-20 that is likely to be in excess of \$89 billion.

He also must appoint a host of state agency heads overseeing areas such as education, health care, transportation and prisons.

Even prior to Tuesday's election, DeSantis said he was putting together a transition plan for taking over from Scott, who leads in a U.S. Senate race that is expected to require a recount.

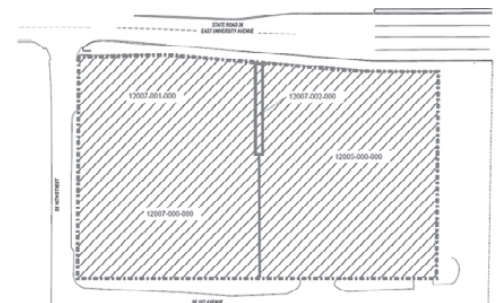
"You have to put together a government. I mean that's a lot of work," DeSantis said. "We have been doing this quietly behind the scenes, not to be presumptuous, but just because you don't have enough time. You have to start doing it."

NOTICE OF PROPOSED BROWNFIELD DESIGNATION

The City Commission of the City of Gainesville, Florida, proposes to adopt a resolution as described in this advertisement, and more fully set forth in the resolution, the title of which appears below. A public hearing (the first of two separate public hearings) on the resolution will be held on November 15, 2018 at 6:00 pm or as soon thereafter as may be heard., in the First Floor Auditorium of the City Hall Building, at 200 E. University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida. A copy of the resolution may be inspected by any member of the public at the Clerk of the Commission located at 200 East University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida during regular business hours. Interested parties may appear at the meeting and be heard regarding the proposed resolution. For Information Call 352-393-8565

RESOLUTION NO. 180517

A resolution of the City of Gainesville, Florida, designating certain property located at 1007 and 1021 E. University Avenue and 15 SE 10th Street, parcel numbers 12005-000-000, 12007-000-000, 12007-001-000, and 12007-002-000, as more specifically described in this resolution, as a Brownfield Area in accordance with the Florida Brownfields Redevelopment Act, Sections 376.77-376.85, Florida Statutes; providing directions to the City Manager; and providing an immediate effective date.



If any person decides to appeal a decision of this body with respect to any matter considered at the above referenced meeting or hearing, he/she will need a record of the proceeding, and for such purposes, it may be necessary to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based".

PERSONS NEEDING SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION SHOULD CONTACT THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY DEPARTMENT AT 352-334-5051 (TTD 352-334-2069) AT LEAST 48 HOURS PRIOR TO THE MEETING DATE.

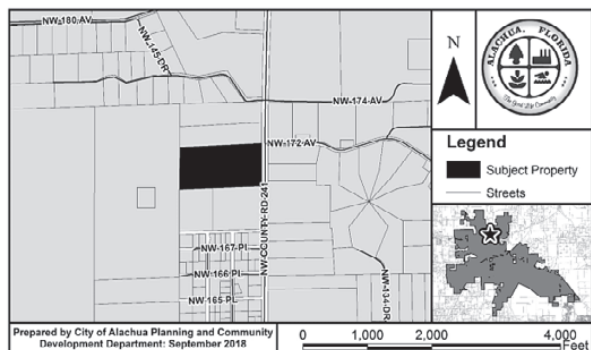
PUBLIC NOTICE OF ENACTMENT OF AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ALACHUA, FLORIDA

Notice is hereby given that the City Commission of the City of Alachua will hold a public hearing on a proposed ordinance. The hearing will be held on November 19, 2018, at 6:00 p.m., in the James A. Lewis Commission Chambers in City Hall, located at 15100 NW 142nd Terrace, Alachua, Florida.

The ordinance title is as follows:

ORDINANCE 19-03

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ALACHUA, FLORIDA, RELATING TO THE AMENDMENT OF THE OFFICIAL ZONING ATLAS; AMENDING THE OFFICIAL ZONING ATLAS FROM COMMUNITY COMMERCIAL ("CC") TO RESIDENTIAL SINGLE FAMILY - 3 ("RSF-3") ON APPROXIMATELY 20 ACRES; LOCATED AT 17002 NORTHWEST COUNTY ROAD 241; CONSISTING OF A PORTION OF TAX PARCEL NUMBER 03067-005-000; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT; PROVIDING SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.



At the public hearing, all interested parties may appear and be heard with respect to the application. Copies of the application are available for public inspection at the Planning and Community Development Department, 15100 NW 142nd Terrace, Alachua, Florida, on any regular business day between the hours of 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Written comments on the application may be sent to the following address: City of Alachua, Planning and Community Development, P.O. Box 9, Alachua, FL 32616. Notice is given pursuant to Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes, that, in order to appeal any decision made at the public hearing, you will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, you may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any persons with a disability requiring reasonable accommodation in order to participate in this meeting should call the City Clerk at (386) 418-6100 x 101 at least 48 hours prior to the public hearing.

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AFFIDAVIT FOR POSTED LAND USE SIGN

I Forrest Eddleton, POSTED THE LAND USE
(name)
SIGN ON November 6, 2018 FOR THE Ordinance 19-03 - CCOM2 - Wallace Rezoning
(date) (state type of action and project name)
LAND USE ACTION.

AS PER ARTICLE 2.2.9 D OF THE LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS.

THIS WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE STAFF REPORT.



(signature)

3

(number of signs)

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING POSTED NOTICE SIGNS

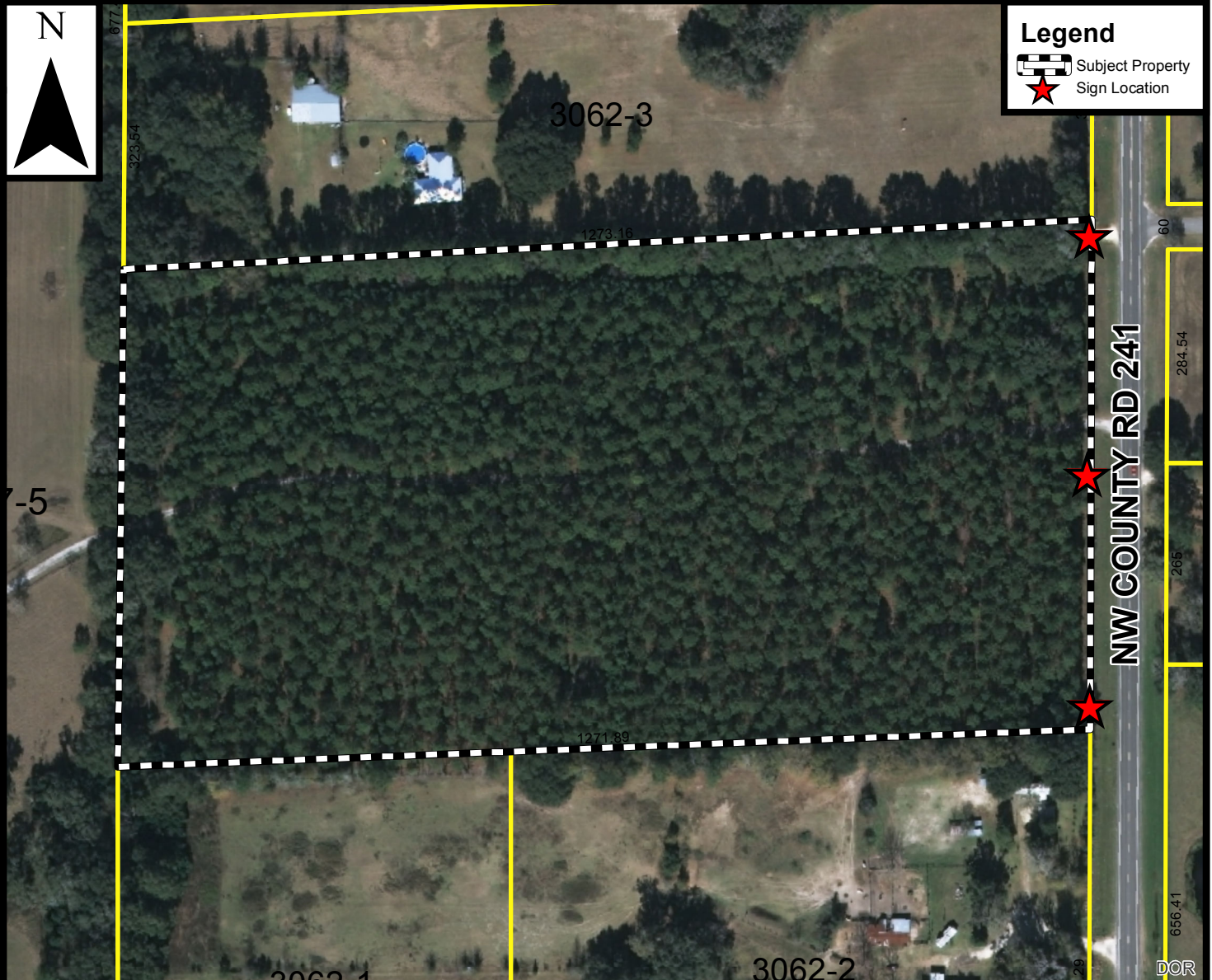
Pursuant to Section 2.2.9(D) of the City's Land Development Regulations, posted notice signs must be placed on the land that is the subject of the application, along each street which is adjacent to or runs through the land in a manner that makes them clearly visible. Signs shall be posted at intervals of not more than 400 feet when the land subject to the application has less than 1,500 feet of road frontage. When the land subject to the application has 1,500 feet or more of road frontage, signs shall be posted at intervals of not more than 1,320 feet.

Signs shall be inspected by the City subsequent to their posting. The applicant shall be responsible for ensuring that the posted notice is maintained on the land subject to the application until the completion of the final public hearing on the application.

Signs must be removed by the applicant and returned to the City within ten days after the final decision on the application.



Wallace Rezoning





City of
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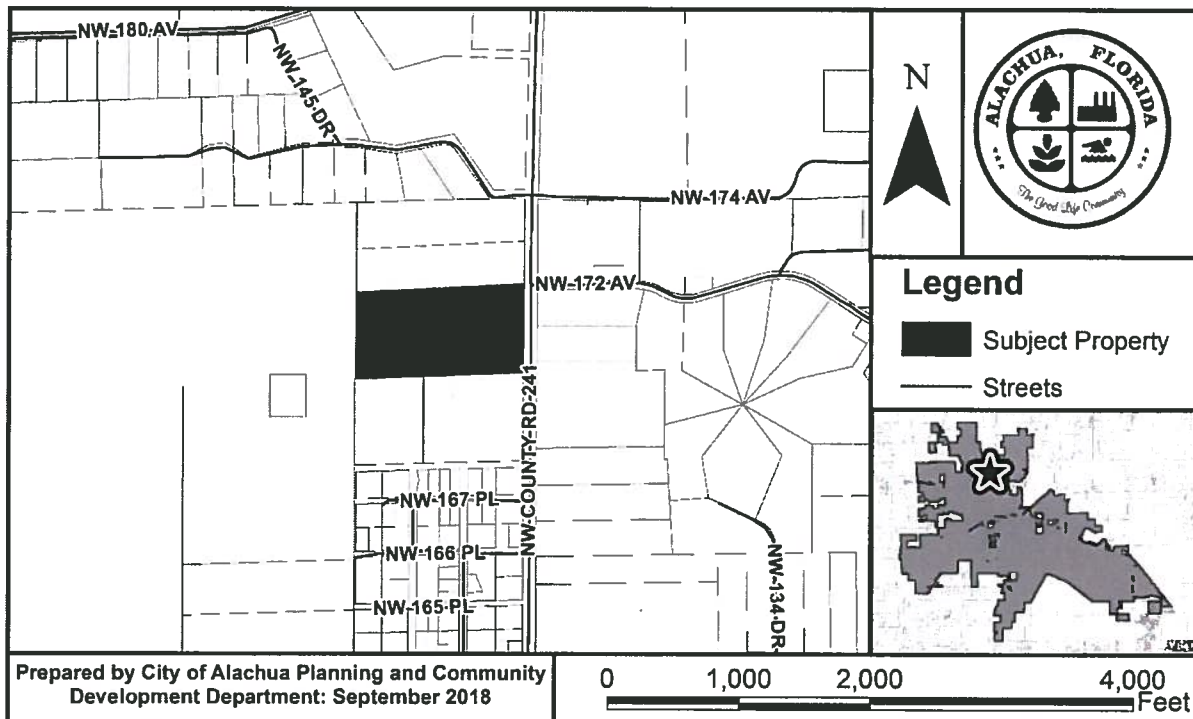
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