

# Urban extension: identifying interests and needs

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# Acknowledgements

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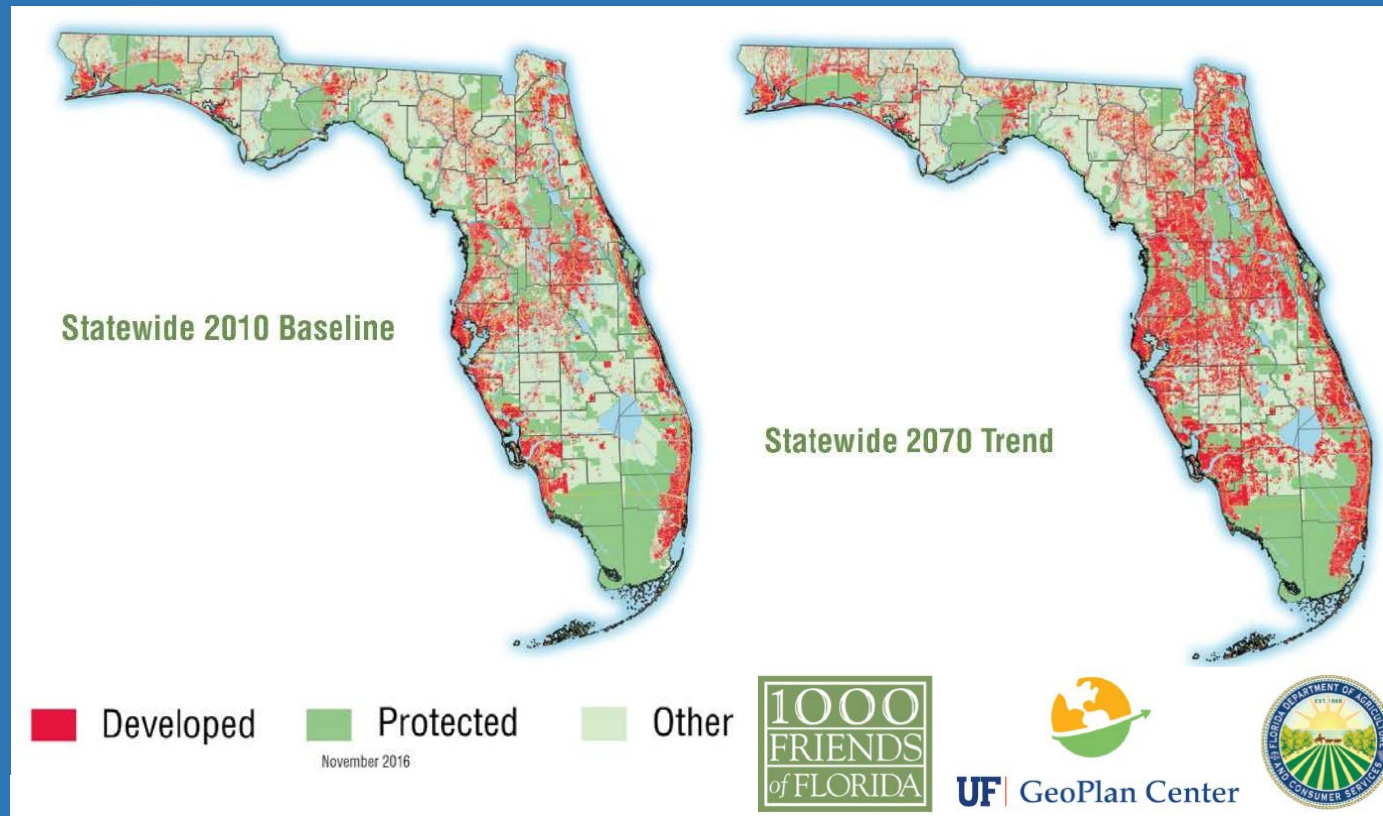
## Situation: Changing extension audience



“UF/IFAS is a federal, state, and county partnership dedicated to developing knowledge in agriculture, human and natural resources, and the life sciences and to making that knowledge accessible to sustain and enhance the quality of human life.”

- **Historically emphasized rural communities**

# Situation: Changing extension audience



- Shift in where humans live
- UF/IFAS initiative in urban extension
  - Extends existing activities to urban audiences

# Goal

- **Develop a workshop:**
  - (1) Brainstorm new strategies / extension models for increasing the impacts of natural resource-based extension in urban and urbanizing areas
  - (2) Build collaborations among extension specialists and county faculty
  - (3) Needs assessment
- **Stakeholders:** Extension specialists ↔ County faculty → Public

# Goal

- **Develop a workshop:**

(1) Brainstorm new strategies / extension models for increasing the impacts of natural resource-based extension in urban and urbanizing areas

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- **Stakeholders:**

Extension specialists



County faculty



Public

# Techniques

**Funding:** Renewable Resource Extension Act Capacity Grant

- Gave me motivation

**Planning meetings:** Sent agendas with specific goals

Restated goals at beginning

- Kept meeting on target

Tools to keep conversation on target

- e.g. ask how ideas tie back to goals
- suggest as “good idea” for future

# Techniques

**Phone interviews:** Confirm interests in urban extension

Assess needs

i.e., what would attract people to workshop?

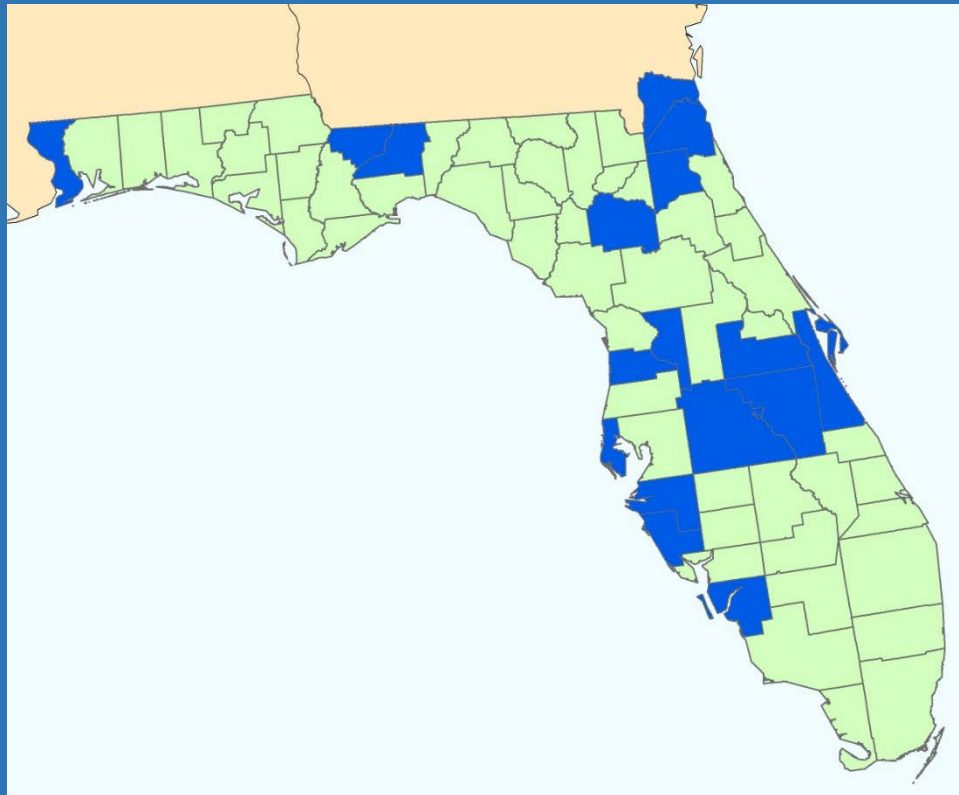
Learn what people were doing

## **Interviewed:**

6 / 8 Specialists

17 / 26 County faculty

17 counties varying in  
urbanization





# Techniques

## Phone interviews:

- Broadened “Stakeholder” – Natural Resource, Agricultural, Hort. Consumer and Family Sciences  
Reveal useful approaches
- Assured a “safe” discussion (usually not a problem)
- Asked neutrally worded questions (with input from collaborators)  
e.g., Why don’t you do urban extension? vs. What are barriers?
- Adapted questions to each conversation and as conversation progressed (framed in interviewee’s interests)
- Started and ended with enjoyable question (that gave good info)  
e.g., What do you do? What are some of your greatest successes?

# Techniques

## Phone interviews:

- Empathic listening:
  - Let them know that I was interested  
(ask follow-up questions about greater details)
  - Try to restate what they were saying  
(especially for complex ideas)
- Let them talk / vent
  - 15 minute interviews → > 30 minutes
  - They didn't mind
    - Perceived as their choice
    - They were given me information that they wanted to give

# Outcomes

- All saw a need for urban extension (even if not personally)
- ~ 60% want to work with Developers, Planners, HOAs, County officials, Landscapers to increase their impact
  - Don't know how to: connect or communicate their own utility
- Only one brought up the need to connect with lesser-served / minority communities
- Learned very innovative approaches to reaching new audiences
- Formal IST on making connections is needed
  - Brainstorming workshop is not enough
    - Won't attract attendance

## What I learned

- Communicate with stakeholders before planning event
  - Goals changed
- Reframe questions in context of interviewee's interests
  - e.g. Don't ask in context of Natural resources if focus is on ag.
  - Learn a little about someone before interviewing
- Avoid long gaps between interviews (e.g. multiple weeks)
  - Lost momentum / out of practice
- It is good to broaden who you think are your stakeholders
  - Innovative approaches can transcend disciplines
- Be open minded
  - Some of the more interesting conversations were with people whom I had little in common

## Next steps

- Organize and propose a formal IST (for next academic year)
- Get speakers / lecturers
  - Interviewee's who had good stories / success
    - Most were interested in communicating how they succeeded
  - Who interviewee's want to connect with
- Targeted invitations sent by District Extension Directors
  - Include interviewees who would benefit

# QUESTIONS ?

