I.
FUTURE LAND USE
[DRAFT 08/21]

GREEN COVE Springs

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I. FUTURE LAND USE ELEMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose

The Future Land Use Element (FLUE) is intended to designate future land use (FLU) patterns that will best accommodate the projected population and development while minimizing adverse impacts on natural resources and maintaining essential public facilities and services.

The FLUE consists of an inventory and analysis of existing land use data and patterns, the projection of future land needs, objectives and policies as well as a land use map series. The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and its associated policies will guide development in a 25-year planning horizon. Land development regulations and other tools will be used to implement the plan.

2. General History

Just 27 miles south of downtown Jacksonville, Florida, and 27 miles northwest of St. Augustine, Green Cove Springs lines the middle bend of the St. Johns River. Originally inhabited by native aboriginals thousands of years ago, the City first began to take shape in 1816 when George I.F. Clarke established the area's first large-scale lumbering operation.

In the 1850s, the area was often referred to as White Sulfur Springs before being renamed to Green Cove Springs in 1866. 'Green' refers to the lush, green vegetation in the area and the natural spring in the City, while 'Cove' refers to the bend of the St. Johns River on which the City was established. Continuing the timber legacy of George Clarke, Green Cove Springs' economy was sustained and amplified by the live oak harvesting industry. Moreover, livestock and hunting activities were increasingly prevalent within the area during the in mid-1800s. However, the area's main attractor of early settlers and tourists was the area's warm springs, which quickly grew in popularity with both Florida residents and traveling northerners in late 19th century. As a testament to the area's early tourism industry, several historic full-service hotels from this era continue to line the St. Johns River.

Shortly after this period, a third industry grew into significance: dairy farming. Gustafson's Farm opened in 1908, eventually becoming one of the largest privately-owned dairies in the southeast region of the United States. In 2004, the operation was purchased by Southeast Milk and changes in consumer taste forced the company to close its centurion Green Cove Springs doors in 2013, which caused a significant loss of local jobs and revenue.

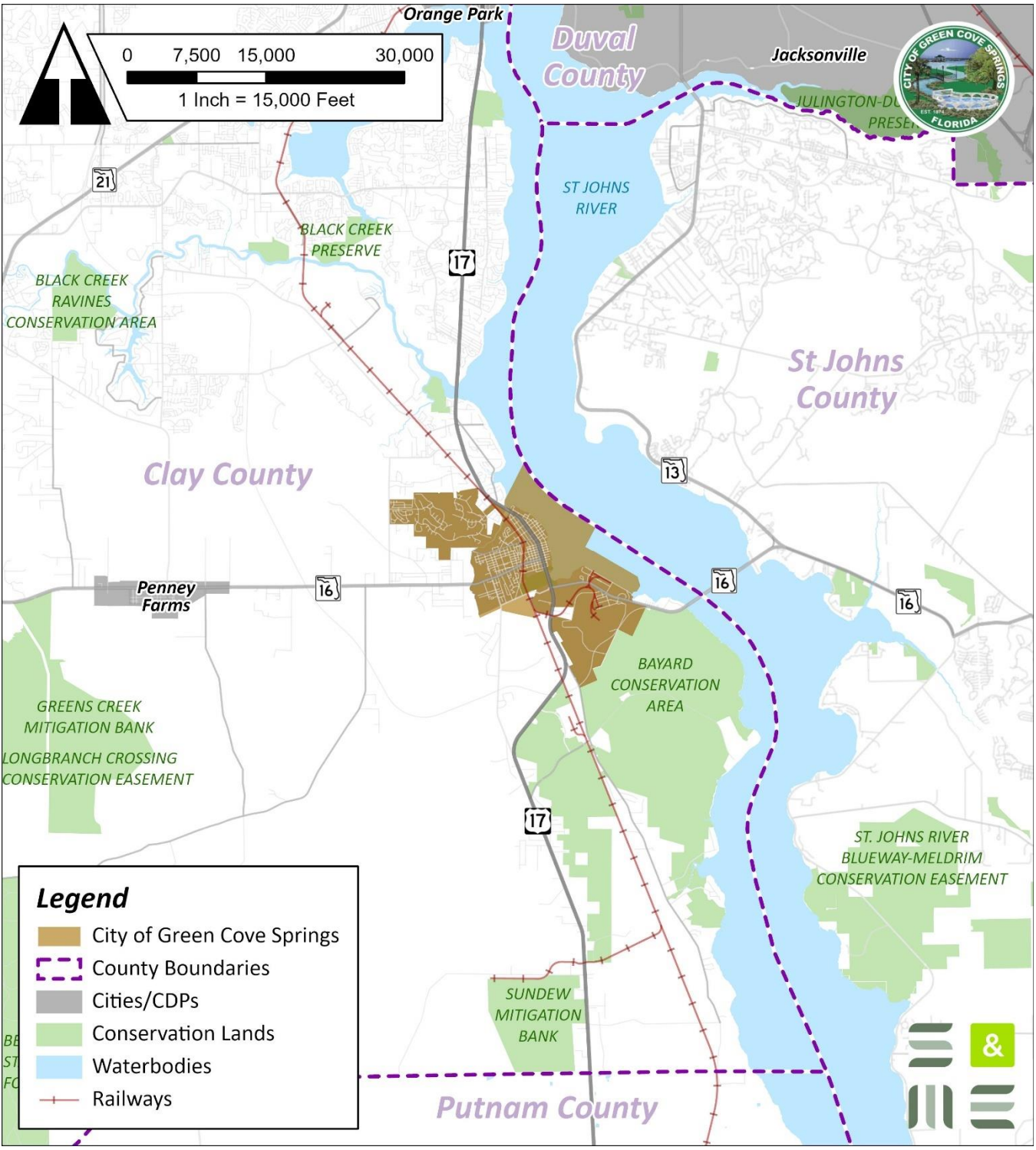
Dairy farming was not the only economic stronghold to suffer. The great winter freeze of 1894-1895 inspired railroad owner Henry Flagler to extend his tracks further south towards what is now known as the City of Miami. After Henry Flagler's Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway offered northern Americans access to south Florida locations, such as Palm Beach and Miami, tourism activity greatly declined within Green Cove Springs.

Even with the success of the Gustafson Farm, Green Cover Springs suffered greatly from the American Great Depression of the early 1930s. Fortunately, the military installations, Benjamin Lee Field (renamed Naval Air Station Green Cove Springs) and Camp Blanding, encouraged economic recovery towards the end of the 1930s. The Naval Air Station was purchased by the City after its 1961 decommission but was eventually sold to Louis Reynolds for the construction of the Reynolds Industrial Park with hopes for substantial job creation. The Park remains an important part of the City's future growth. Today, the City of Green Cove Springs thrives as a historic North Florida community balancing a manufacturing, health care, and retail trade economy.

Green Cove Springs has served as the County Seat of Government for Clay County, Florida since 1871, preceding its incorporation as a town on November 2, 1874. Green Cove's last Comprehensive Plan update was in 2011. In 2010, the Census-recorded population was just under 7,000 residents and has grown nearly 16% through 2020. Activity and population increases are anticipated with the completion of the First Coast Expressway (Florida 23) - estimated to begin its final construction phase in 2023. Phase 2, which runs through Clay County, is currently under construction.

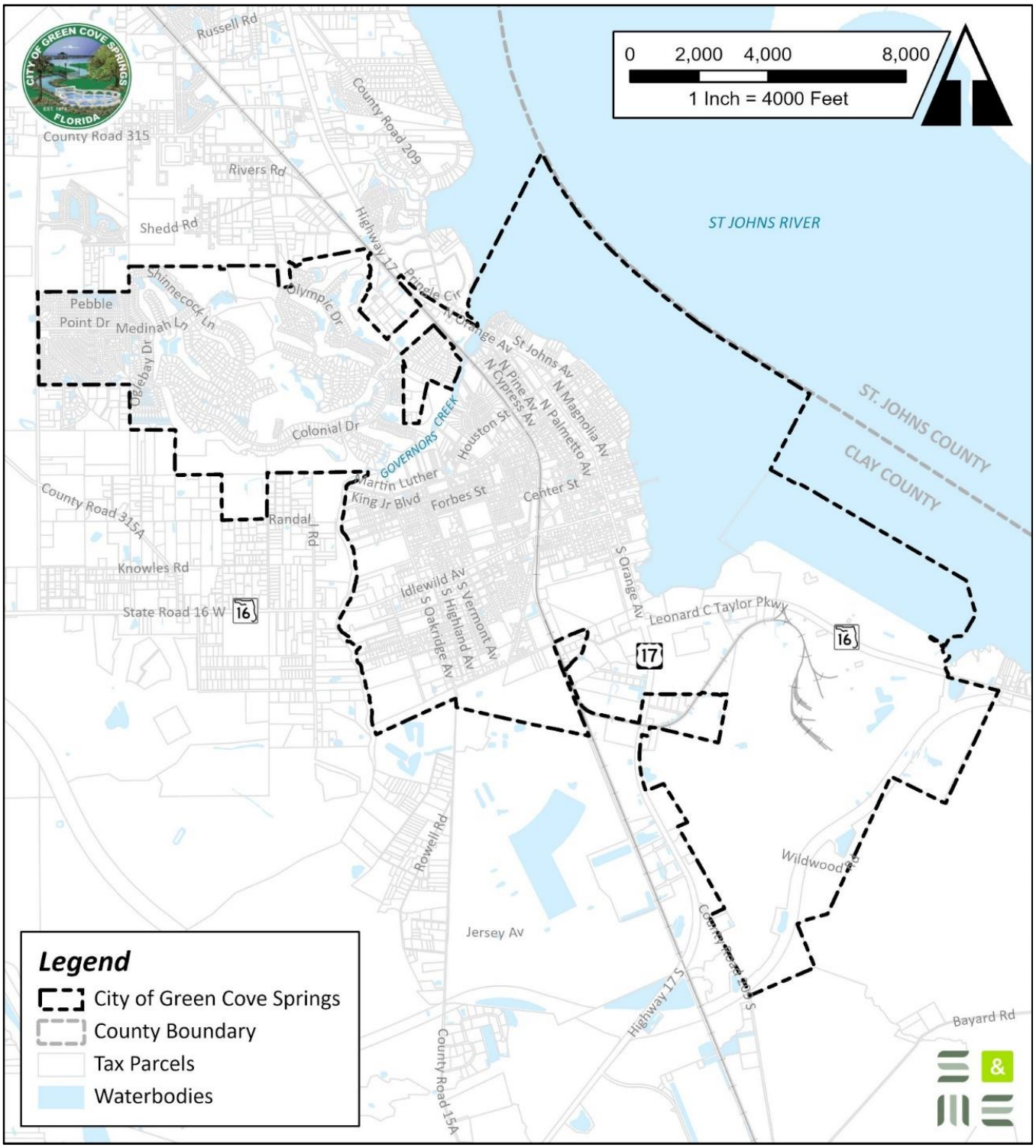
The First Coast Expressway will serve to connect the southwest quadrant of Jacksonville and I-10 to I-95 passing through the south side of Green Cove Springs. As shown in **Map I-1**, Green Cove Springs borders the St. Johns River, is directly south of central Jacksonville and north of central Palatka. The City's current boundaries are reflected in **Map 1-2**.

Map I - 1. Regional Context of Green Cove Springs, 2021



Sources: Florida Geographic Data Library (FGDL), Clay County, Clay County Property Appraiser, S&ME, 2021.

Map I - 2. Green Cove Springs City Boundary, 2021



Sources: City of Green Cove Springs, Clay County, Clay County Property Appraiser, S&ME, 2021.

B. LAND USE DATA, INVENTORY, AND ANALYSIS

This section describes the current conditions found in the City of Green Cove Springs. Through the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan update, the City of Green Cove Springs staff and community identified a number of challenges and opportunities that they desired to address in the Plan. This section also describes those challenges and provides recommendations for addressing them. The Goals, Objectives and Policies contain specific direction to implement the recommendations.

1. Current Land Use Composition

Table I-1 shows the acreage of land uses by category. This table and **Map I-3** show that the predominant use of land in the city is currently Industrial, covering about 35.2% of the City's total acreage—most of which can be traced back to Reynolds Park. The second most predominant land use is Low-Density Residential, covering approximately 21.5% of the Green Cove Springs' total land area. A brief description of each generalized land use category, along with their typical uses, is provided below.

Table I - 1. Existing Land Use Composition

Land Use Category	Acres	Percent of Total	Acres under Conservation	Percentage Conserved
Agricultural	18	0.4%	0	0.0%
Low-Density Residential	1,016	21.5%	14	0.3%
Medium-Density Residential	14	0.3%	0	0.0%
High-Density Residential	41	0.9%	0	0.0%
Commercial	86	1.8%	0	0.0%
Office/Professional	26	0.5%	0	0.0%
Industrial	1,666	35.2%	0	0.0%
Public/Institutional	599	12.7%	0	0.0%
Parks & Recreation	337	7.1%	37	0.8%
Utilities, Right-of-Way, Other	235	5.0%	0	0.0%
Vacant	695	14.7%	138	2.9%
Total	**4,733**	**100.0%**	**189**	**4.0%**

Sources: Clay County Property Appraiser (Tax Parcel Shapefile), S&ME, 2021.

a. Agricultural

There is only one site in the City designated as agriculture and it is currently used for timber. It is located on the west side of the City, south of SR 16.

b. Low Density Residential

The low-density residential land use category includes housing accommodations such as single-family detached dwellings and mobile home units. As shown in **Table I-1** and **Map I-3**, low density residential encompasses nearly one-fifth of the total land in the City. It is the predominant use north of Governors Creek and mixed with other uses in the central portion of the City.

c. Medium Density Residential

The medium density residential land use category includes attached housing units such as duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes. Medium residential uses are found in limited supply between US-16 (Idlewild Avenue) and Green Cove Avenue.

d. High Density Residential

This designation includes multi-story apartments or condominiums. As shown on **Map I-3**, high density residential occurs sporadically throughout the central part of the City.

e. Commercial

The commercial land use category accounts for less than two percent of the total land within the City and consists of a variety of retail and restaurant uses including, but not limited to, fast-food establishments, clothing stores, automobile service facilities, and similar uses. As shown on **Map I-3**, commercial uses are predominantly located along the US 17 corridor with a few scattered sites along Idlewild Avenue and the Leonard C. Taylor Parkway.

f. Office/Professional

This land use designation describes lands that contain professional offices including medical complexes, office buildings, doctor's offices, and may include structures that have been converted from single-family homes to offices. Office uses comprise a very small percentage of the City's total land area and are found along US-17 and SR 16, but also around the Clay County Courthouse and scattered throughout the downtown area.

g. Industrial

As noted in **Table I-1**, industrial uses encompass more than one third of the area of the City. These uses typically include manufacturing, assembly, processing, warehousing, wholesaling/distribution, heavy equipment repair, motor vehicle impoundment facilities, construction offices, and outdoor storage. In Green Cove Springs, the majority of the industrial land is in Reynolds Park with only a few small, scattered sites in the southwest intersection of US-17 and the Leonard C. Taylor Parkway. Industrial activities in Reynolds Park include seafood processing, aviation technologies, railcar repair, pipe manufacturing and distribution, boat storage and manufacturing, and a private airport.

h. Public/Institutional

Public/Institutional uses consist of public, semi-public and private not-for-profit uses, such as civic and community centers, conservation areas, hospitals, libraries, police and fire stations, and government administration buildings, as well as churches, social service facilities, cemeteries, nursing homes, emergency shelters, and similar uses. Educational facilities are also included in this category. Compared to other jurisdictions, the City of Green Cove Springs has a large percentage of publicly owned lands. Public lands are scattered throughout the City, with two large areas at the intersection of Green Cove Avenue and the railroad (vacant property owned by the City).

i. Parks & Recreation

The Parks and Recreation land use category is generally a subcategory of publicly owned land, but it also includes privately owned facilities such as golf courses. **Map I-3** shows the Magnolia Point Spring Park, Carl golf course and City parks including Friendship Park, Pugh Park, Augusta Savage and Vera Francis Hall Park.

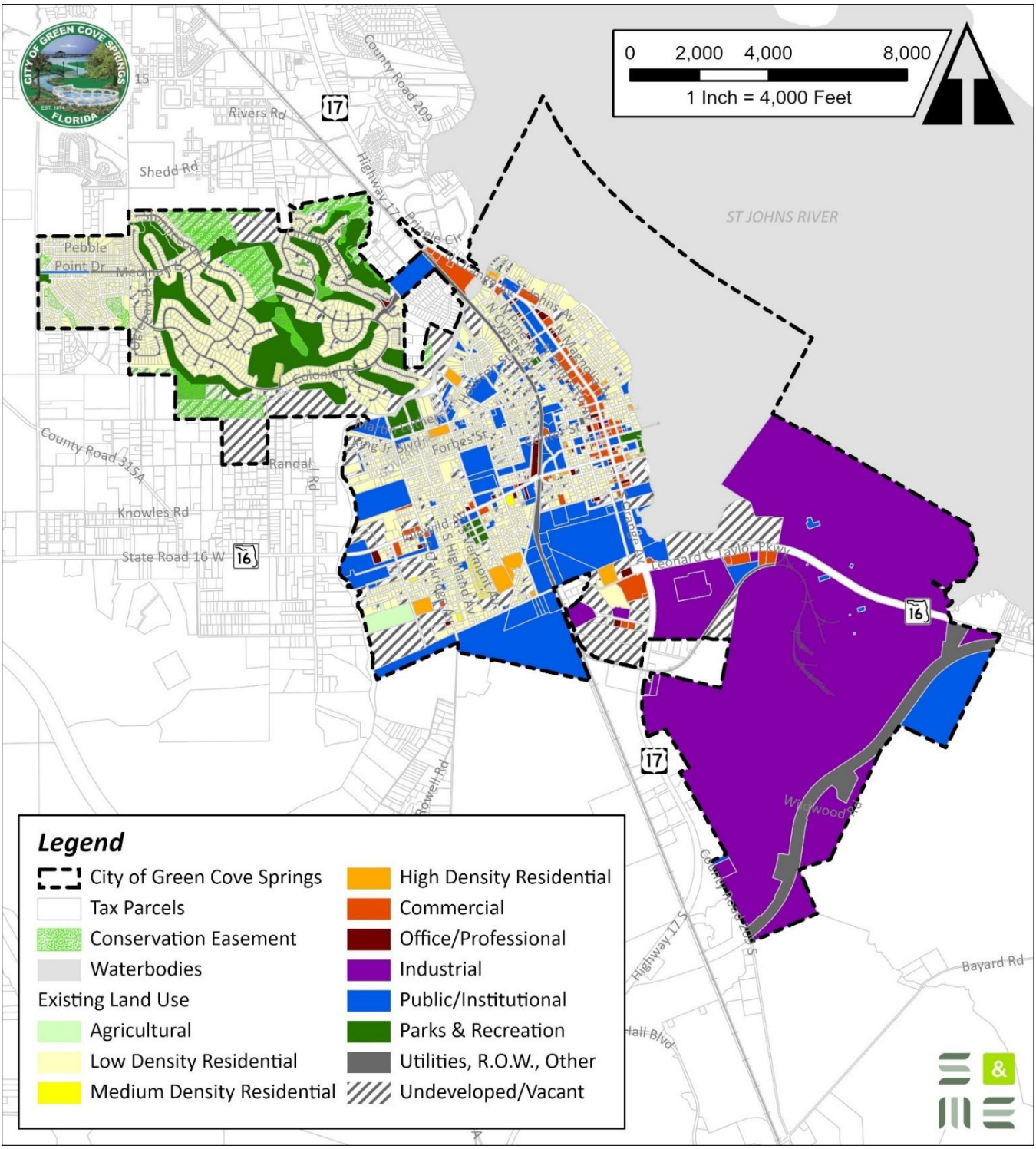
j. Utilities / Right-of-Way

The Utility, Right-of-Way, Other land use category contains infrastructure designed to accommodate the City's diverse residential and nonresidential uses. This designation includes uses such as utility boxes, stormwater retention/detention facilities, the railroad, and some roadway rights-of-way.

k. Vacant

The vacant classification refers to undeveloped or unimproved parcels and includes lots in subdivisions that have already been platted but are not developed. Vacant sites in Green Cove Springs include some large sites north and south of Magnolia Point and between Reynolds Park and downtown.

Map I - 3. Existing Land Use Composition



Sources: City of Green Cove Springs, Clay County, Clay County Property Appraiser, S&ME, 2021.

2. Projected Population

Future population growth is the driving force behind future facility needs and land requirements. The 2010 population for the City of Green Cove Springs totaled 6,908 residents. The Census Bureau just recently released updated population estimates for 2020 showing that the City population was 9,786 (1,732 more residents than previously estimated).

For comprehensive planning purposes, Chapter 163 of the Florida Statutes requires local governments to plan for the estimated permanent and seasonal population projections using the Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR) (also known as BEBR) projections or a "professionally acceptable methodology." Given that BEBR only publishes projections for counties, and they have not updated Clay County's projections to reflect the new 2020 population estimates, the City utilized a three-step approach to determine its future population.

First, City population projections were derived using a step-down analysis that utilized Clay County's population projections retrieved from BEBR and assumes that the City will maintain a proportionate share of the County's projected growth (3.668%).

Second, the City identified the population growth rate for each 5-year increment assigned by BEBR to Clay County and applied that rate to the updated 2020 Census population figure.

Third, the City considered two major developments that will have an impact on the City's population projections: *St. Johns Landing* (an existing multi-family apartment complex featuring 392 units housing 962 residents) which is expected to be annexed into the City by 2025 and *Ayrshire*, a planned residential community that is expected to develop up to 2,100 units through 2040. Assuming that Ayrshire will: (1) develop incrementally over a period of 20 years, (2) produce all 2,100 of its permitted dwelling units, and (3) house approximately 2.454 persons per unit (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), it is anticipated that 131 units (housing 321 residents) will be developed by 2025 and 656 additional units (housing 1,611 residents) will be produced every five years after that until the project is built out by 2040.

Based upon this methodology and set of assumptions, it is projected that the City will grow to 18,768 residents by the 2045 planning horizon, as shown in **Table I-2**.

According to the most recently available housing data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the City currently possesses a negligible number of seasonal housing units. As a result, seasonal housing units (nor populations) were included in the projections.

Table I - 2. Population Estimates and Projections, 2010-2045

Year	Clay County	Green Cove Springs	
		Based on 2020 Estimates	Based on updated Census Data
2010	190,865	6,908	6,908
2020	219,575 (218,245[1])	8,054	9,786[1]
2025	237,300	9,988	11,859
2030	252,400	12,152	14,143
2035	264,600	14,210	16,297
2040	274,800	16,195	18,363
2045	283,900	16,529	18,768

[1]*2020 population estimates released in August 2021.*
Sources: City of Green Cove Springs, S&ME, University of Florida BEBR, 2021.

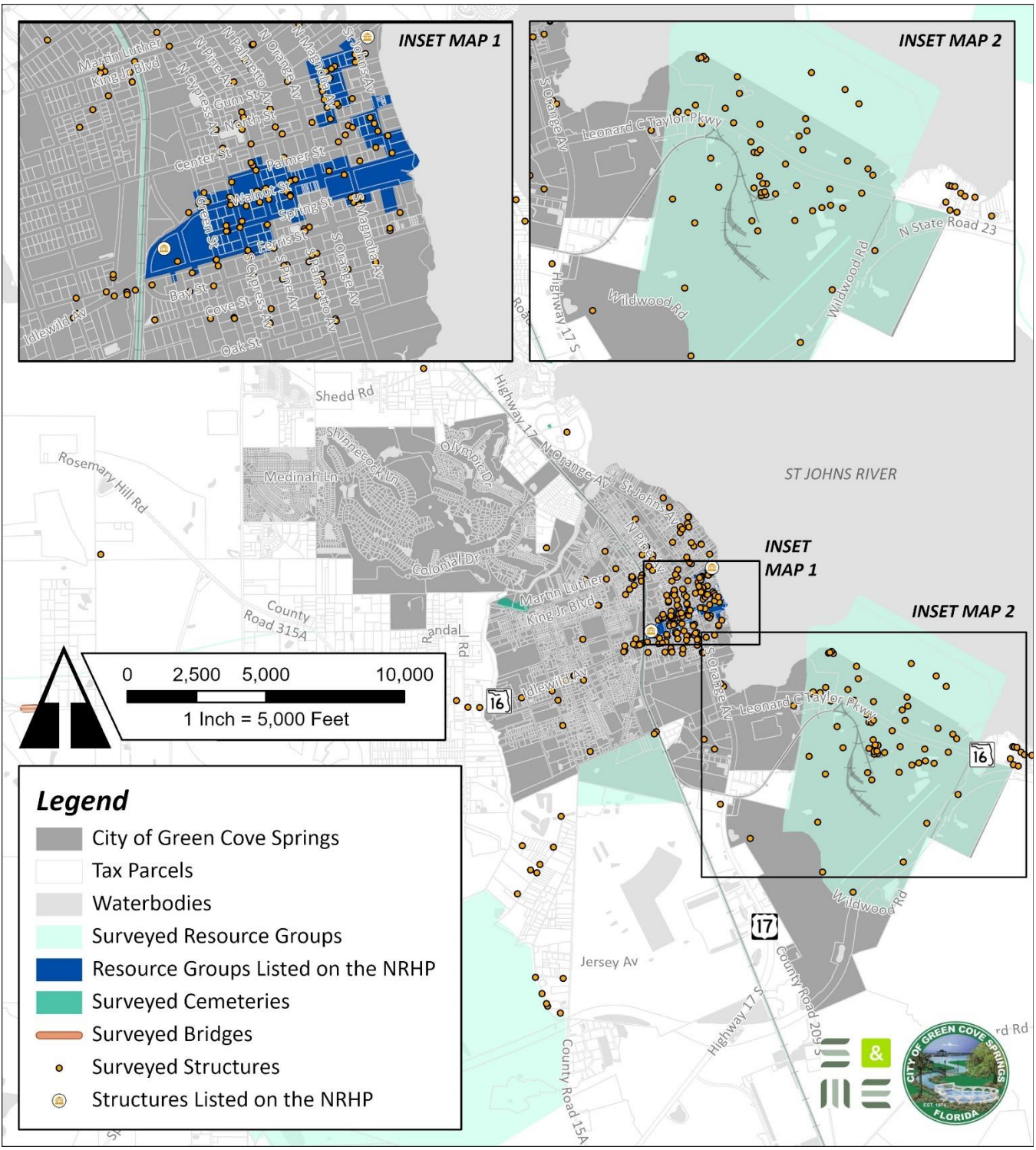
3. Historic Resources

The City of Green Cove Springs has a large number of historic resources and a historic district listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The district, bounded by Bay Street, the railroad tracks, Center Street, Orange Avenue, St. Elmo Street and the St. Johns River, was designated in 1991 and contains 63 contributing structures. Additionally, there are two individual structures listed in the National Register:

- Clay County Courthouse on Brabantio Avenue (added in 1975)
- St. Mary's Church on St. Johns Avenue (added in 1978)

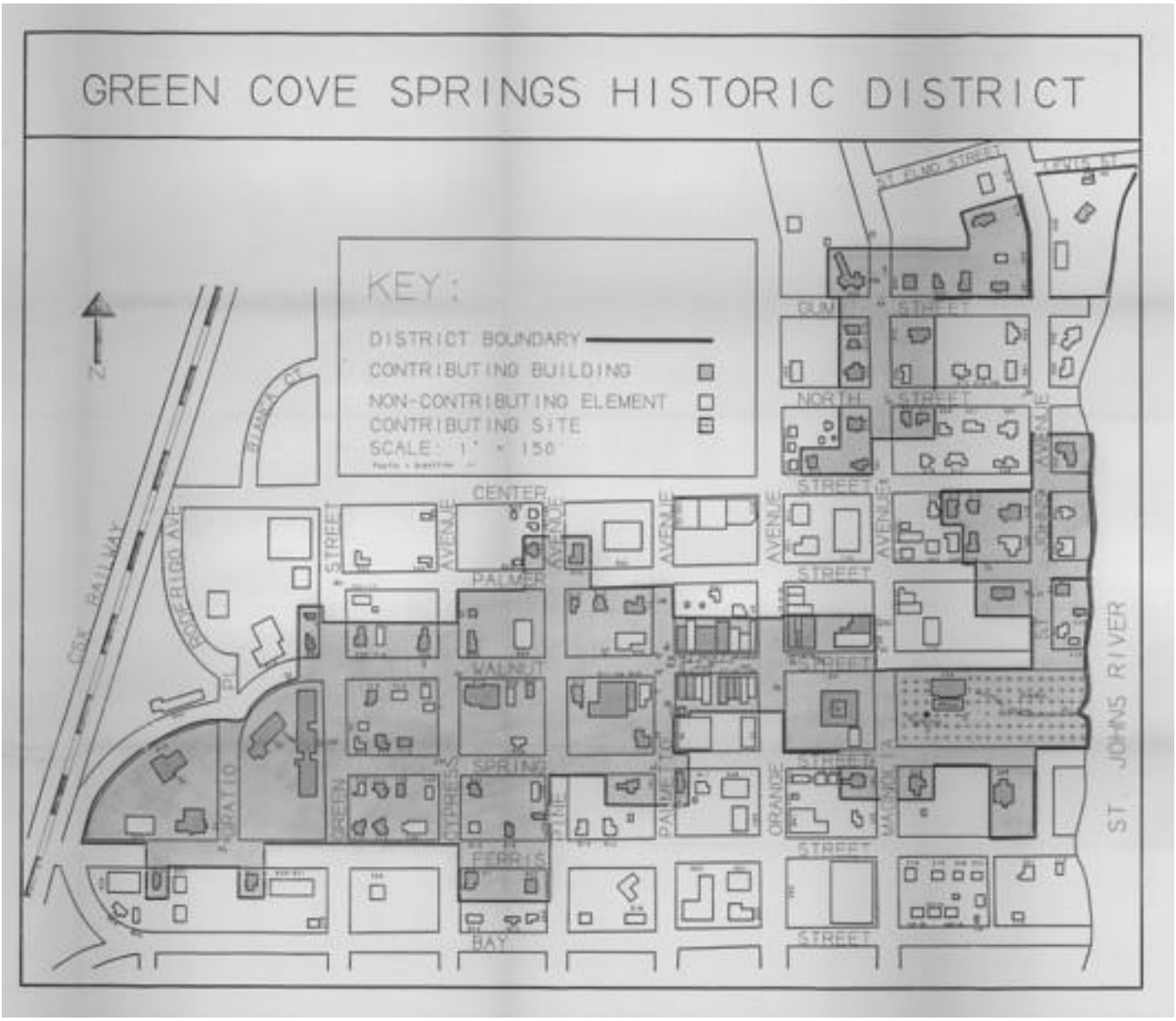
The City does not have a local register of historic structures or a historic preservation ordinance. Historic resources within the City are shown in **Map I-4**.

Map I - 4. Historic Resources



Sources: City of Green Cove Springs, Clay County, Clay County Property Appraiser, Florida Division of Historic Resources, FGDL, S&ME, 2021.

Map I - 5. National Register Historic District



4. Natural Resources

The ability of land to support development is a major determinant in land use patterns. The City of Green Cove Springs is located along the St Johns River and its coastal environment is one of the main points of attraction for the City. The following sections describe the natural environment within the City.

a. Water Bodies, Wetlands, and Floodplains

I. Floodplains

The overall City is divided into 33 drainage sub-basins. Generally, stormwater runoff is drained by Governors Creek west and north, the St. Johns River to the east and a woodland area to the south. Both Governors Creek and the woodlands eventually drain to the St. Johns River. The soils in the area have low percolation and infiltration rates. Additionally, the area has a high-water table, which combined with the quality of the soils, impede the natural drainage of stormwater.

In natural drainage systems, when a heavy rainfall generates large volumes of runoff, excess surface water is stored in the flood plain and is gradually drained by the natural wetland waterways. When fill and/or impermeable surfaces are placed within the flood plain, flooding occurs because natural stormwater retention areas have been displaced. Flood plain development has several negative consequences. Urban development increases runoff by enhancing the velocity of flow from impervious surfaces. Also, increased flooding can result from fill placed within the flood plain.

To protect the natural functions of the floodplain, the City should limit the density of development within the 100-year floodplain to allow only low intensity development. In addition, the location of any storage area for hazardous materials should not be stored within the 100-year flood plain of any watercourse.

II. Wetlands

The following Wetlands are identified in Green Cove Springs:

1) Freshwater Forested Shrub are located in Magnolia Point, the nature preserve at the northeast and northwest corner of SR 16 and US 17, and south of the Airpark in Reynolds Park and described as woody plants less than 20 feet tall are the dominant life form—i.e., the tallest life form with at least 30 percent areal coverage. The "shrub" life form includes true shrubs, young specimens of tree species that have not yet reached 6 m in height, and woody plants (including tree species) that are stunted because of adverse environmental conditions.
2) Freshwater Emergent Wetlands, which are located in the area northwest of SR 16 and US 17 and located in the area along CR 15A in the southwestern portion of the City, are predominately emergent plants—i.e., erect, rooted, herbaceous hydrophytes, excluding mosses and lichens—are the tallest life form with at least 30% areal coverage. This vegetation is present for most of the growing season in most years. These wetlands are usually dominated by perennial plants.

3) Estuarine and Marine Deepwater (St John's River) consists of deepwater tidal habitats and adjacent tidal habitats that are usually semi enclosed by land.
4) Riverines are located along Governor's Creek and small creeks that feed into Governor's Creek and are defined as systems contained within a channel and their associated streamside vegetation.
5) Freshwater Pond are located in Reynolds Park and Magnolia West and are natural and manmade ponds that under normal circumstances can support wetland vegetation but are not considered a part of a great pond, stream, or major wetland.

The wetlands in the City, can be impacted by improper drainage. There have been no pollution problems of the City's wetlands noted by the DEP or the SJRWMD. As indicated in the Transportation Element, the City is committed to paving all dirt streets and requiring paved parking for new development within the City of Green Cove Springs. This will decrease runoff from these roads into the City's stormwater management system. Florida allows wetlands to be permitted for development, subject to requirements for mitigation. Over time, this practice results in fragmentation of wetland systems, and the gradual but continual loss of wetland ecosystem functions and services. The cumulative effect results in regional impacts. The loss of forested and natural areas means less water recharge from the surface to the aquifer and increased storm water runoff impacts to water bodies such as the St. Johns River, which often experiences algal blooms in the summer months. The number of septic tanks permitted is a metric tracked in this report, as these systems, when they fail, have the potential for negative impacts on the river and ground water.

III. Soils

The soils in Green Cove Springs are comprised of 3 general categories according to the Soil Survey of Clay County prepared by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. The Soil Survey identifies the location and characteristics of soil associations within the City. Prior to any development, the Soil Survey should be consulted for greater details and information on soil suitability. The Soil Survey should be used to provide guidance for land uses, construction activities, drainage needs, etc.

A general description of the soil composition will be presented below, detailing the plant life associated with each and limitations, which are associated with the soil group.

ORTEGA-PENNEY-CENTENARY: Nearly level to moderately sloping, moderately well-drained and excessively drained soils that are sandy throughout. Some have thin lamellae of loamy fine sand at a depth of more than 57 inches, and some have a subsoil that is coated with organic matter at a depth of more than 50 inches. These soils are on broad, rolling, sandy uplands that are interspersed with some small streams, creeks and drainageways.

The natural vegetation is slash pine, longleaf pine, sand pine turkey oak, bluejack oak, post oak, and live oak. The understory vegetation includes pineland threeawn, low panicum, lopsided Indian grass, rosemary, and lichens. The vegetation on the wetter soils is cypress, bay, gum, and maple trees.

Severe limitations for these soils are low fertility and droughtiness that affect cropland production. The potential for seepage, which is caused by the deep, sandy texture of the soils, is the major restrictive feature for most urban uses. Limitations affecting homesites, small commercial buildings, and roads and streets are slight. Wind erosion can become a problem on sites that have been cleared of all protective vegetation. Limitations affecting septic tank absorption fields are mostly moderate; however, they vary from moderate to severe if the water table is close to the surface during wet periods.

LEON-MANDARIN-POTTSBURG: Nearly level, poorly drained and somewhat poorly drained soils that are sandy throughout and have a subsoil that is coated with organic matter. The landscape is nearly level pine and saw palmetto flatwoods interspersed with a few slight knolls, cypress ponds, swamps, and small, grassy, wet depressions. The natural vegetation is slash, loblolly, and longleaf pines. The understory vegetation is mostly saw palmetto, gallberry, wax myrtle, dwarf huckleberry, blackberry, greenbrier, pineland threeawn, bluestem, and sedges. The vegetation in the ponds, swamps and drainage ways is mainly cypress, bay and gum trees and water-tolerant grasses.

The soils in this map unit have several limitations for cropland. Wetness and droughtiness are the limiting factors. Most are suited to pasture, where drained. Limitations affecting most urban uses are severe due to wetness or the seasonal high-water table. This problem should be overcome before urban development is undertaken.

SAPELO-MEADOWBROOK-LEON: Nearly level, poorly drained soils that are sandy to a depth of 40 to 79 inches; some have a loamy subsoil, some have a sandy subsoil that is underlain by a loamy subsoil and some are sandy throughout and have a subsoil that is coated with organic matter. The landscape is nearly level pine and saw palmetto flatwoods interspersed with cypress ponds, drainageways, and small, grassy wet depressions.

The natural vegetation on the flatwoods is mixed slash and longleaf pines and a few loblolly pines. The understory vegetation is mostly saw palmetto, gallberry, running oak, wax myrtle, dwarf huckleberry, pineland threeawn, bluestem, and lichens. The vegetation in the ponds, depressions and drainage ways is mainly cypress, bay and gum trees and water-tolerant grasses.

The soils in this map unit have severe limitations for cropland. Wetness and droughtiness are the limiting factors. Most are suited to pasture, where drained. Limitations affecting most urban uses are severe due to wetness. If these soils are used for urban development, a drainage system is needed to remove excess water during wet periods and to adequately control the high-water table.

In general, the soils of Green Cove Springs are moderately to well suited for residential and related urban development but poorly suited for the use of septic tanks. Within developed urban areas providing municipal sewer service, most objections to development related to the soils can be removed through a system of drainage control, which provides for effective storm drainage during those periods when the natural water table is high.

The following page is a listing of the soil map units that can be found in Green Cove Springs. The soil units have a corresponding number which correlate to the numbers shown on the "Soils Map. Also included is the erosion hazard rating for each soil map unit, as determined by the Soil Conservation District. Overall, the soil units in Green Cove Springs are not characterized as having much potential for soil erosion. The Drainage Sub-Element documented several areas in the City that have experienced soil erosion in relation to the functions of drainage facilities. More detail relating to this issue can be found in the master drainage study attached with that Sub-Element.

There are no known commercially valuable minerals in the City of Green Cove Springs.

1. Roadways

The City is served by two FDOT roadways, US 17 which runs north-south, and SR 16 which runs east-west. In the near future, another major roadway will be added to the area, the First Coast Expressway, offering a fast route into the City from the south. This was one of the challenges and opportunities brought up and discussed during the public input session. A future interchange at US 17 will certainly have an effect on traffic conditions in the City. The Transportation Element addresses this topic in greater detail. As it relates to land use, the City and Clay County are expected to see increasing development pressures along US 17, with proposals for uses typically located at interchanges (i.e., gas stations, fast food restaurants, and possibly hotels). US 17 at this location is a major gateway into the City. Therefore, the City will need to ensure land development regulations guide development in that area in a manner that is consistent with the City's vision. Coordination with the County will also be necessary as the corridor is mostly in the unincorporated area.

2. Utilities & Services

The City of Green Cove Springs requires all development to connect with the existing public water supply system. The City's water system consists of two water treatment plants (WTP) that serve the entire Green Cove Springs water and sewer utility service area. The two plants serve the entire area on a looped system. At any given time, either plant should be able to supply water to the entire service area. The water service area extends beyond the northern, western, and southern corporate limits of the City of Green Cove Springs. The northern plant, the Harbor Road WTP (HRWTP), is rated at 1.440 million gallons per day (MGD). The southern plant, the Reynolds WTP (ReyWTP), is rated at 1.728 MGD.

Within Green Cove Springs, the City owns the only public sanitary sewer facility and provides service for most residences and businesses in the City. A small residential area adjacent to Foster Lane is currently being served by septic tanks. In total however, there are a very small number (approximately 10) of septic tanks in use within the City limits however within the City water / sewer service area there are approximately 365 units with septic tanks.

The corporate limits of the City of Green Cove Springs, excluding the Magnolia West development and Ayrshire Development are located within the City's sewer service area. Clay County Utility Authority (CCUA) will serve the Magnolia West development, annexed into Green Cove Springs in 1998. Magnolia West is a 163- acre development consisting of 535 proposed residential units located on the north side of the City. CCUA shall also serve the Ayrshire Development which is proposed for 2,100 single family homes. These are the only two developments that are served by the Clay County Utility Authority inside the City limits.

3. Airports

Green Cove Springs includes Reynolds Airpark, a former Naval Air Station that was decommissioned in 1961 and is currently used as a private airport. It was reported in 2020 that nine aircrafts were based at the airfield. Plans to upgrade the airfield have been considered in the past but have yet to be implemented.

The airport has a 5,000-foot runway. The flight service station is located at the Gainesville Airport (GNV), 54 miles away, and air traffic control is routed through Jacksonville International Airport (ZJX), 45 miles away.

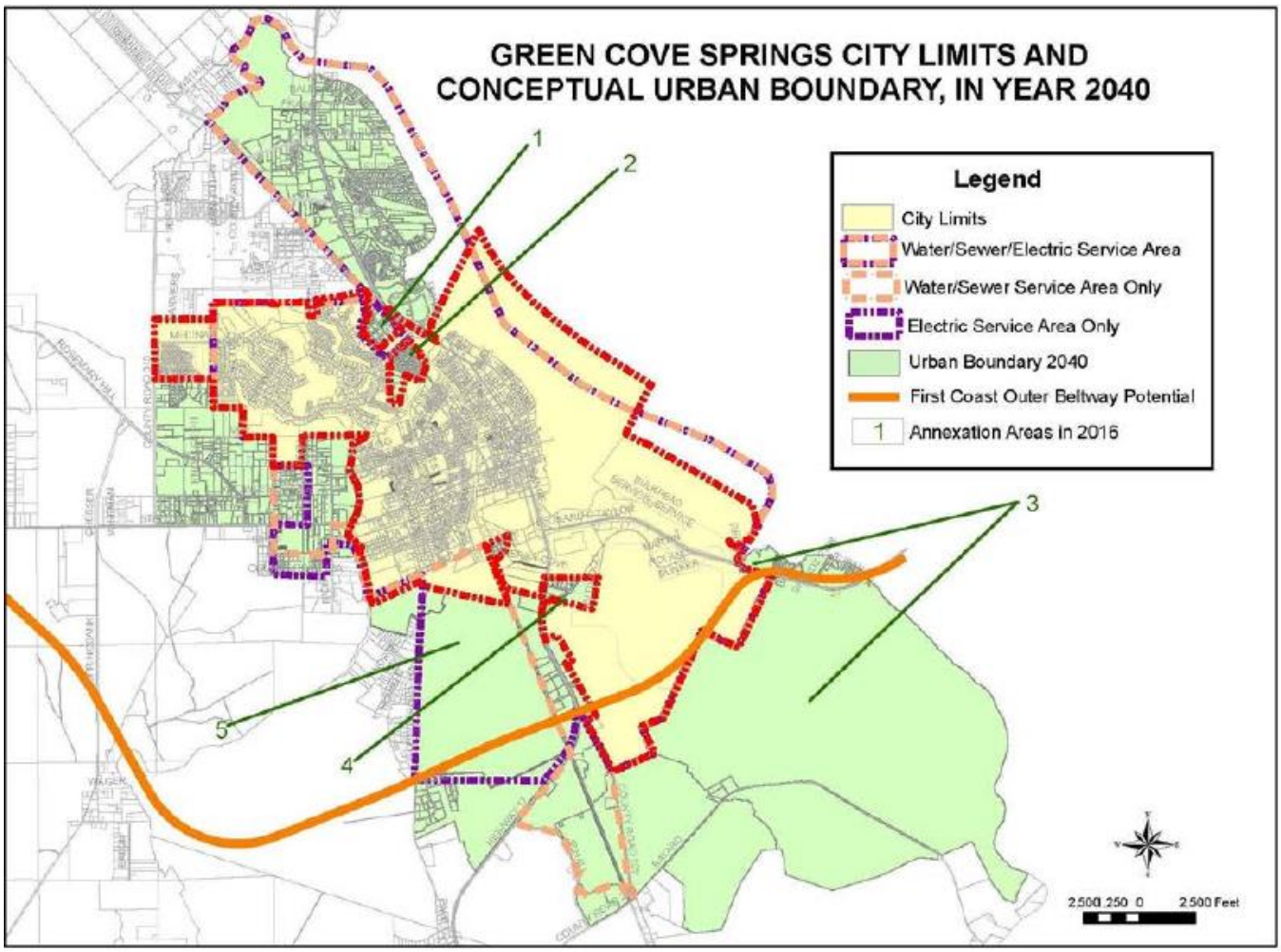
4. Military Installations

There are no military installations since the decommissioning of US Naval Air Station Lee Field in 1961.

5. Annexations

The City prepared a detailed study in 2016 describing areas that the City would consider for future annexation. These annexations would eliminate existing enclaves and represent a logical extension of City boundaries to areas already included in the City's water and sewer service area. **Map I-6** depicts the five annexation areas, which are described below. The study did not address the potential annexation of the St. Johns Landing, a 392-unit apartment complex located just north of the Governors Creek. This annexation became a priority after 2016.

Map I - 6. Potential Annexation Areas



Source: City of Green Cove Springs, 2016.

Area #1, Harbor Road Industrial Park, contains 44 acres in 22 parcels and is currently developed as an industrial park.

Area #2, Governors Creek/Travers Road/Gator Bay Subdivision, contains a 62-lot single-family subdivision which is currently served by city water and electric service.

Area #3, S.R. 16 East and Bayard Conservation Area, provides a logical extension of the City limits to the St. Johns River. The Bayard Conservation area is owned by the St. Johns River Water Management District and annexing a portion of it will allow for connectivity with trails being constructed and planned within the city limits.

Area #4, Hall Park Road, comprises 52 acres of industrial properties spread across nine individual parcels. The parcels are within the City's water/wastewater and electric service areas.

Area #5, Gustafson Property, the location of the former Gustafson Dairy operation, contains 1,018 acres spread across two parcels. This annexation will allow the City to have land use

control over the redevelopment of the site. The property is in the City's electric service area. The annexation of this property is currently under review and expected to be adopted by the City in the latter half of 2021.

B. COMMUNITY CHARACTER

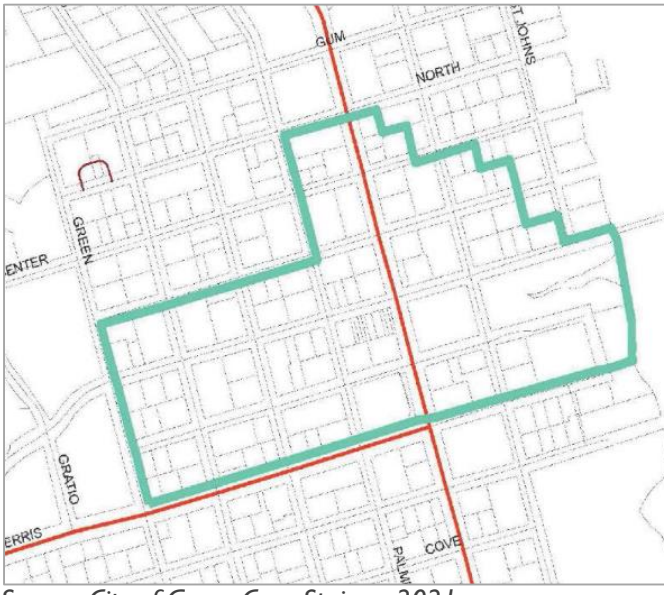
The growth of Green Cove Springs has remained relatively steady over the last several decades, but the introduction of the First Coast Expressway with an interchange at US 17 will undoubtedly change the pace of development. Recent development proposals hint at large subdivisions being planned for this part of town. The character of the Reynolds Park property may also change and past plans to convert the site into a mixed-use development may start to realize. While the residential growth and the additional jobs that new mixed-use development may bring are welcome in the community, special attention needs to be given to the character of the community. This section addresses various components of the City and the possibilities for improvement and preservation.

Urban Form plays a key role in shaping the character of a community. City residents have expressed concerns regarding the physical development of the City and the fact that new development does not reflect a clear/defined character that fits in with the vision they have for the community. The recommendations mentioned in this section contain a physical planning framework for various parts of the City to improve the quality of life and to ensure that new development shapes the City into a unique community that residents can identify with.

1. Downtown

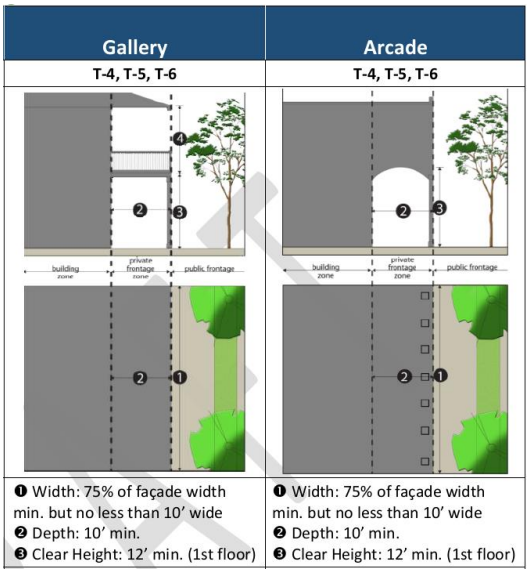
The City has a Future Land Use category and a zoning district designating the downtown area of the City as the *Central Business District* (see **Map I-7**). While that boundary represents the tight core of the original downtown, development in the surrounding area indicates the need to expand those boundaries to include some of the US 17 commercial corridor north of Walnut Street, the traditional grid west of US 17 and the historic district east of US 17, past Gum Street.

Map I - 7. Central Business District



There were three topics related to downtown discussed during the public engagement process: *urban form*, *parking*, and the need to boost *redevelopment* in the area.

- ***Urban Form*** is a top priority in the downtown area. The City needs to ensure the traditional block layout in the area is maintained, historic buildings are rehabilitated, and future development is consistent with a vision of a quaint but active and pedestrian-friendly downtown. Residents seem to agree with allowing additional building height (mid-rise) but prefer more traditional lot layout (buildings up to the street) and architecture. The FLUE Goals, Objectives and Policies need to ensure the realization of this vision through the implementation of Land Development Code amendments, including the adoption of Form Based Code (FBC) regulations.



A FBC is a "land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code" (Form-Based Codes Institute, 2021). By adopting a FBC for the downtown area, the City can require new development and redevelopment to be consistent with the downtown's desired building form, ensure compatibility between structures, and promote greater accessibility between developments.

- ***Parking*** has been an issue in the City core. Given the historic character of the area, there are many businesses that do not have formal parking lots and rely solely on on-street parking. Additionally, there are some uses in the downtown that, due to the nature of their operation, require large amounts of parking for events (e.g., weddings at the Clay Theater, public meetings at City Hall, events such as Food Truck Fridays, etc.). The City needs to assess the current demand and availability of public and private parking spaces in the downtown area and plan for future redevelopment activities.
- ***Redevelopment*** is imperative to achieve the vision of a vibrant downtown. While some buildings are expected to remain, there are others that would require redevelopment of the site. Additionally, there are vacant sites that could accommodate new development. During the public engagement sessions, residents and business owners asked what the City could do to help them in that effort. One tool that the City should consider to spur redevelopment in the downtown is the creation of a Community Redevelopment Agency/Area. The City tried once before but was unsuccessful obtaining approval from Clay County. Such as tool could provide some funding for capital projects within the downtown, which would spur redevelopment.

2. Gateway Corridors

In addition to the focus on downtown, the City will also need to address the future of the US 17 and SR 16 corridors as they represent gateways into the City. Most of the development along these corridors includes commercial uses, some of which have preserved an urban pattern (closer to downtown), but others are starting to adopt a suburban pattern that relies heavily on vehicular transportation for access and visibility. If that trend is allowed to continue, the City will start losing its character and start resembling the endless suburban commercial corridors that are seen throughout the state, flanked by expansive parking lots and big box retailers behind the sea of parking, with very little to no regard for pedestrians and bicyclists.

In the future, development along the City's major transportation corridors should consist of a mix of uses, ranging from commercial to office and even multi-family residential, which can all take advantage of the accessibility and connectivity with other parts of the City and surrounding jurisdictions. Strip development should be limited and shared facilities and services, such as parking and stormwater, encouraged.

3. Reynolds Park

Reynolds Park was formerly part of a Navy Base, which was decommissioned in 1961. The land was acquired by Louis Reynolds and established the Reynolds Industrial Park in 1965. The Park includes industrial and manufacturing activities, such as seafood processing, aviation technologies, railcar repair, pipe manufacturing and distribution, and boat storage and manufacturing, in addition to a private airport.

In 2010, the City of Green Cove Springs annexed the property and changed the future land use designation from Industrial to Mixed-Use Reynolds Park (MURP), opening the door to the redevelopment of more than 1,700 acres into a variety of uses, including residential, commercial/office and industrial/office, interspersed with recreational, open space and conservation areas with trails. There is currently not a single individual or firm actively redeveloping the entire site; the property may be redeveloped in pieces by different developers following the directives of the MURP.

This Comprehensive Plan Update plans to retain that MURP designation as it was adopted in 2010. However, the City is interested in connecting the downtown to Reynolds Park through bikeways/trails. With the construction of the First Coast Expressway and new bridge, this trail could then extend to the future fishing pier (old Shands bridge).

4. The Waterfront

The City of Green Cove Springs has approximately four miles of frontage along the St. Johns River. However, there are just a few spots left where the public can access that waterfront. Those few spots that are owned by the City should retain that access. The City also owns several vacant riverfront properties. While the environmental features will not permit intensive development, the City will consider trails and recreation uses that would allow for access to the waterfront. Two key opportunities for this area include the land at the intersection of SR 16 East and US 17 and the State-owned site just across the Governors Creek bridge. The first one can help make the trail from downtown to Reynolds Park and the Shands bridge fishing pier a reality. The site

across the Governors Creek bridge is not currently within City limits, but as noted above, it is a site targeted or future annexation. This site also represents a gateway into the City.

Green Cove Springs Pier

View from Governors Creek Site

5. Housing

The community expressed interest in ensuring the location of affordable housing in the City. Habitat for Humanity has been building numerous homes in the area, but few opportunities exist for multi-family dwellings.

The housing stock of Green Cove Springs is predominately comprised of single family detached dwellings, with limited options available for those who desire and/or necessitate more dense housing types, such as tiny homes, townhomes, condominiums, multi-family apartments, and accessory dwelling units. This lack of housing diversity (in tandem with regional, state, and national economic factors outside of the City's control) creates a market that is largely unaffordable to individuals or families who are unable to purchase or rent a single family home. These individuals/families often include persons belonging to vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and minorities, but also include essential workers who would prefer to live in the communities in which they serve, like police officers, firemen, teachers, nurses, and medical personnel.

The Housing Element discusses a range of options for increasing the affordability and diversity of its housing stock. A sample of the potential options explored within the Housing Element includes:

- Subsidizing impact fees for affordable housing projects
- Permitting accessory dwelling units in all residential zoning districts
- Expediting the development review process for affordable housing developments
- Reserving infrastructure and service capacities for new multifamily structures
- Establishing a surplus lands inventory of locally owned public lands and selling or donating these lands for affordable housing projects
- Eliminating or reducing parking, lot size and setback requirements affordable homes

- Offering development bonuses and incentives for locating apartments within the downtown area
- Allowing height and density bonuses for developments which provide affordable units

The Housing Element includes a more detailed discussion on housing diversity (cost and type).

6. Parks and Trails

When asked about priority improvements in the City, a majority of attendees expressed the desire to invest in parks and recreation, including safe pedestrian and bicycle trails. The Recreation and Open Space Element described the available opportunities at present and the needs that future growth will bring. While levels of service are typically measured in acres per 1,000 population, it is also imperative that the City address the location and types of parks provided. Detailed surveys and studies will need to be undertaken in the future to determine the types of parks (active, passive, fields and courts) that the community needs to sufficiently accommodate the City's existing and projected population.

7. Urban Sprawl

The City of Green Cove Springs is a small community that has not experienced a lot of development in the last 20 years. However, the construction of the First Coast Expressway will revitalize interest in bringing new development to the City. As new subdivisions and commercial developments are proposed, the City will need strong policies and regulations in place to ensure compact and pedestrian- and environmentally-friendly development. Connectivity must be also addressed to prevent the degradation of major roads and the quality of life for current residents.

III. Future Land Use

In an effort to create an orderly, logical, desirable, and efficient pattern of growth, the City of Green Cove Springs has designated each parcel of land within its jurisdiction a future land use (FLU) category. The designation of Future Land Use categories on the City's FLUM allows the City to broadly determine the type, intensity, and density of uses developed within each property. The former FLUE established 14 future land use categories. The set included four separate residential categories, four commercial categories (including the CBD category which was not depicted on the FLUM), and three mixed-use categories. The new FLUM has consolidated some of those categories into fewer, general categories. This map provides a cleaner picture of the future character of the City, while the zoning map and land development regulations address the intensity of development in different parts of the City.

A. FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

The City's FLU categories are listed in **Table I-3**, shown on **Map I-8,** and described below. The density and intensity figures represent ranges to be adjusted through zoning. The Neighborhood category, for instance, will be implemented by one zoning district that allows up to four dwelling units per acre, another allowing up to 20 dwelling units per acre, and one or more districts which permit densities between those two. Similarly, some zoning districts may allow support uses while others restrict uses to residential.

Table I - 3. Future Land Use Categories

Future Land Use Category [PRIOR FLUC]	Intended Uses	Max. Density (Units per Acre)	Max. Intensity (Floor Area Ratio)
NGH: Neighborhood [RLD, RMD, RHD, RRF]	A wide range of residential dwellings, public/institutional uses (e.g., schools, churches, and recreation facilities), and neighborhood-level office uses.	4 to 20	0.2
DT: Downtown [RLD, RMD, RHD, CLI, CMI, CHI, INS, REC]	A wide range of residential dwellings at varying densities, a diverse array of commercial activities at varying intensities, and public/institutional uses (e.g., schools, churches, and recreation facilities).	Up to 30 (40 with bonus)	2.0
MU: Mixed-Use [CLI, CMI, CHI, MUH]	A diverse array of commercial, office. and industrial uses at varying intensities.	Up to 20	1.0
MURP: Mixed-Use Reynolds Park [MURP]	A wide range of residential dwellings at varying densities, a diverse array of commercial activities at assorted intensities, water-dependent uses, and public/institutional facilities and spaces (e.g., schools, churches, and recreation facilities).	16 to 40	0.4 to 4.0

Future Land Use Category [PRIOR FLUC]	Intended Uses	Max. Density (Units per Acre)	Max. Intensity (Floor Area Ratio)
EC: Employment Center [IND]	Industrial activities which can include light and heavy manufacturing, distribution, and storage facilities.	None	0.6
PUB: Public [INS, REC, CON]	Public (e.g., government facilities, utilities, civic, cultural and recreation facilities), institutional uses (e.g., schools, churches), conservation lands, and similar activities.	None	0.3

Sources: City of Green Cove Springs, S&ME, 2021.

1. Neighborhood

The purpose of the Neighborhood future land use category is to accommodate predominantly residential uses and support uses such as public/semi-public uses, recreation sites and schools. This use category also permits neighborhood-scale professional, medical, and dental offices, where appropriate. The zoning map and land development regulations will determine the location of a variety of housing types and densities. The maximum density for single-family neighborhoods will be kept at a lower density, while higher densities are allocated to some waterfront sites and areas appropriate for multi-family.

2. Downtown

The Downtown category corresponds to the central part of the City and is expected to include a variety of uses including commercial, lodging, office, high density residential, recreation, schools and public/semi-public uses. Development bonuses will be provided in the land development code to incentivize vertical mixed-use, which is preferred but not required. This category and the Reynolds Park Mixed-Use category will allow the densities, but the Downtown category will allow the highest intensity of development.



3. Mixed-Use

This category represents areas of the City lining up the major transportation corridors (US 17, SR 16) and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Just like the Downtown category, Mixed-Use will include a variety of uses such as retail commercial, heavy commercial, lodging, office, high density residential, recreation, schools and public/semi-public uses. The Zoning Map and land development regulations will determine where these uses would be most appropriate. The intensity of development and urban form along the corridors will, however, be different than the Downtown category as there will most likely be a predominance of single uses. Regulations will need to account for the fact that these corridors are flanked by residential uses and will require adequate separation and buffering. Similarly, the zoning and land development regulations will determine where the more intensive commercial uses (auto sales, service and repair, warehousing, and similar uses) are appropriate based on proximity to residential, façade continuity and accessibility. Zoning regulations will incentivize the horizontal or vertical integration of uses, internal trip capture, and an overall high-quality environment for living, working, and visiting.


4. Mixed-Use Reynolds Park

This category is established to implement the redevelopment of Reynolds Park. Allowable uses include residential, commercial, office, lodging, health care, education, industrial, public/semi-public, recreation, and water-dependent uses. The Three Mile Swamp (approximately 142 acres) is an exception as only passive recreation uses are allowed in that portion of Reynolds Park.

The Goals, Objectives and Policies establish use percentages to ensure a mix is achieved over the 2045 planning period. Those percentages are intended to apply to Reynolds Park as a whole, not to individual sites. During the next evaluation of the City's Comprehensive Plan (required every seven years), the City will assess progress and determine if the percentages are working or if they need to be modified.

Source: Burke Design.

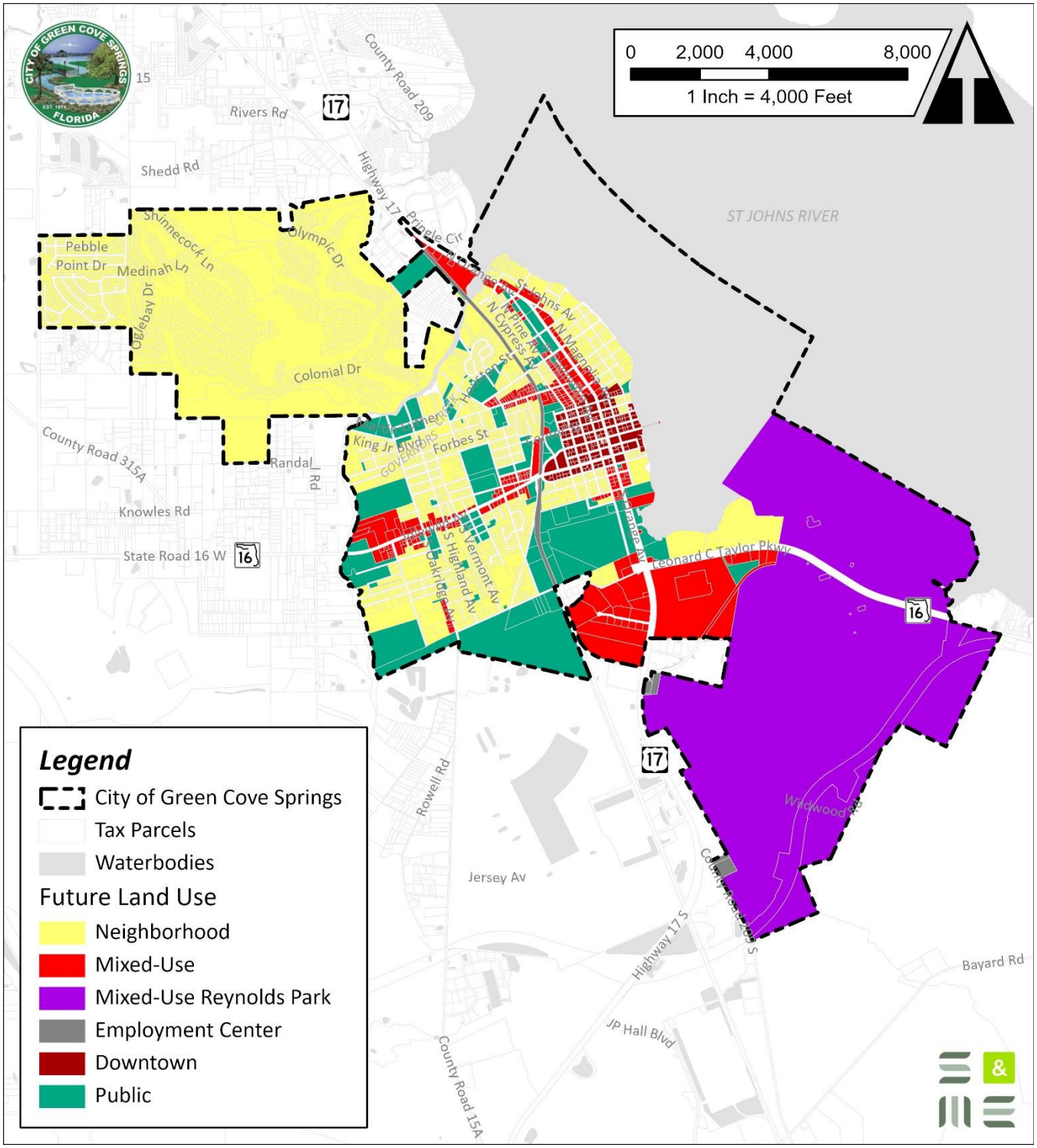
5. Employment Center

This category consists primarily of light and heavy manufacturing, heavy commercial, distribution and storage, with complementary office uses.

6. Public/Institutional

This category is intended to accommodate civic, cultural, government, religious, utilities, and other public necessity uses. The Future Land Use Map reflects sites that are currently occupied by such uses. The uses allowed in this category are also allowed in other land use categories. However, whenever such uses are proposed in the Neighborhood category and occupy more than one acre in size, they will require a future land use amendment to public/institutional. Conservation uses are exempt from this provision.

Map I - 8. Future Land Use Map, 2045



Sources: City of Green Cove Springs, Clay County, Clay County Property Appraiser, S&ME, 2021.

B. HOLDING CAPACITY ANALYSIS

This section compares the carrying capacity of the land, based on the adopted FLUM, with the population projections for the City. **Table I-4** shows the carrying capacity of the FLUM. The carrying capacity calculation includes the acreage of developable 'vacant' land and 'underutilized' sites (where a developed property's land value is greater than or equal to the value of buildings) and assume that new development will utilize the maximum density allowed by their FLU designation while previously developed properties will retain their existing density (unless considered underutilized by this analysis). **Map I-9** shows the FLU designation of vacant lands. **Map I-10** shows the designation of underutilized sites.

The following assumptions were made in the calculation of holding capacity:

a. The vacant land within the **Neighborhood** category will be developed at various densities: Approximately 80% will develop at four dwelling units per acre, 10% at eight dwelling units per acre, and 10% at 20 dwelling units per acre. A factor of 75% has been applied to account for areas designated Neighborhood that will be developed with non-residential support uses.

b. The **Downtown** category allows residential, but there are only four acres of vacant land and 14.9 acres of underutilized sites today. Unless there is redevelopment of the underutilized sites, there would only be 48 new multi-family units added. If it is assumed that the core of the Downtown (Walnut Street) will be redeveloped with vertical mixed-use developments within the planning timeframe of this plan, that number could be at least doubled. **Table I-4** shows a total of 214 potential units.

c. For **Mixed-Use**, it is assumed that at least 20% of the developable land will be used for multi-family development.

d. The timeline for the redevelopment of the **Mixed-Use Reynolds Park** site is uncertain. The property is not vacant at present time, so it does not appear in **Table I-4** as producing any dwelling units within the planning period of this plan. The opening of the FCE interchange may trigger activity on the site.

Table I-4 shows that, based on acreage available for development and redevelopment, the City could accommodate an additional 3,317 dwelling units by the year 2045 which, when multiplied by 2.454 persons per household (US Census Bureau, 2010), would equal **8,140 residents**. As noted previously, the City population projections revealed that the population is expected to increase by **8,982 residents** by the year 2045, for a total of 18,768 residents. This expected increase in population can be accommodated within City limits through the year 2035. Additional capacity may be needed at that time to address changes in growth that may be triggered by the opening of the First Coast Expressway interchange at US 17 and future economic development and redevelopment efforts which the City plans to undertake.

Table I - 4. Future Land Use Categories and Residential Holding Capacity, 2020-2045

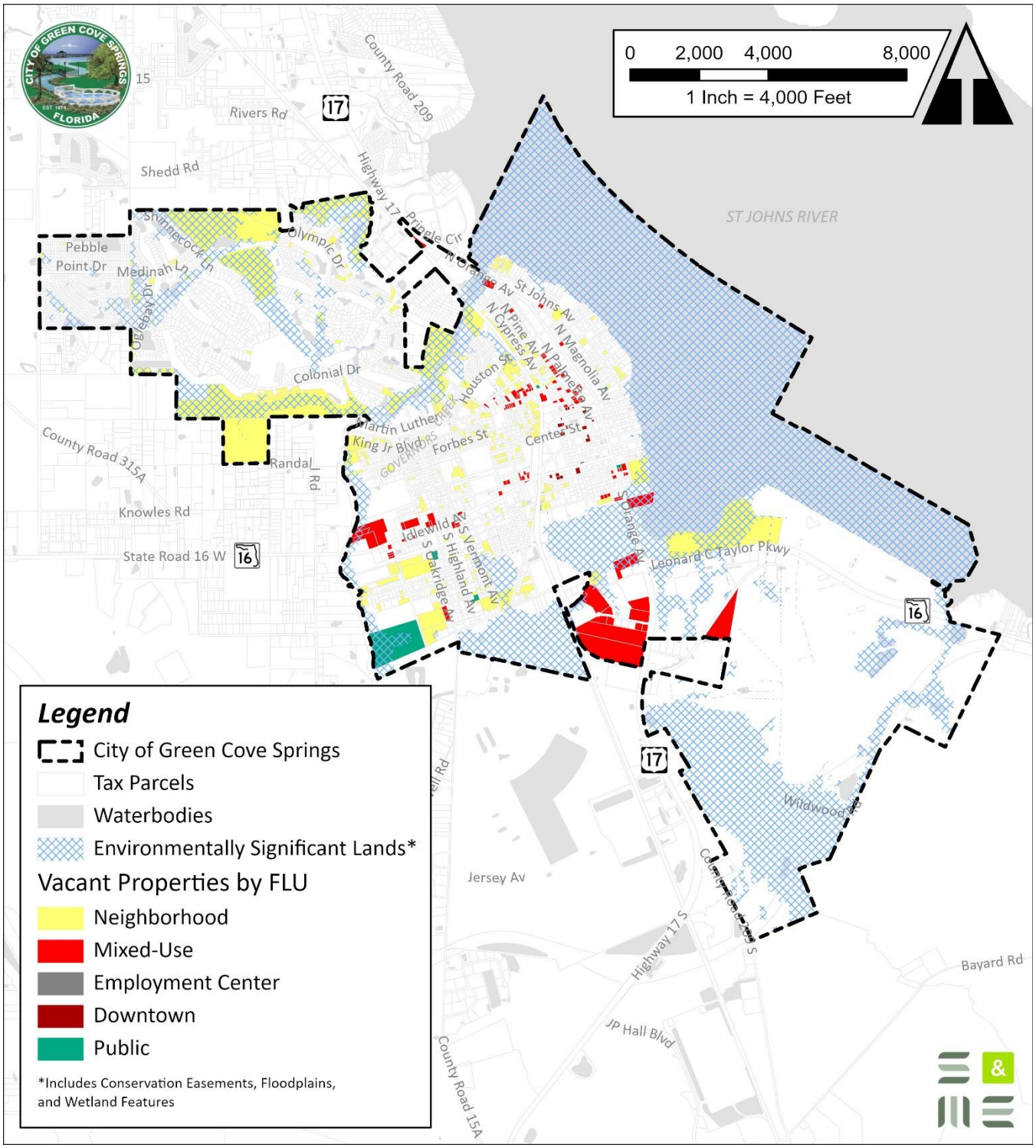
Future Land Use Category	Total Acres	Vacant Acres	Underdeveloped Acres	Environmentally Sensitive Lands[1]	Developable Acres	Residential (%)	Max. Density (du/ac)	Holding Capacity (dwelling units)
NGH	1,942.5	520.0	378.3	376.5	521.8	80%	4	1,670
						10%	8	220
						10%	20	549
DT	74.1	4.0	14.9	1.1	17.8	40%	30	214
MU	400.6	134.9	50.0	18.7	166.2	20%	20	665
MURP	1,735.0	0.0	NA	NA	NA	0%	40	0
PUB	543.9	35.2	58.9	22.4	71.7	0%	0	0
EC	36.7	0.4	7.2	0.0	7.6	0%	0	0
TOTAL	**4,732.8**	**694.5**	**509.3**	**418.7**	**785.1**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**3,317**

[1] Includes the portion of vacant and underdeveloped parcels that feature conservation easements, wetlands, and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) SFHA Zone A and AE (100-year floodplain).

[2] See Section C.2.a, above.

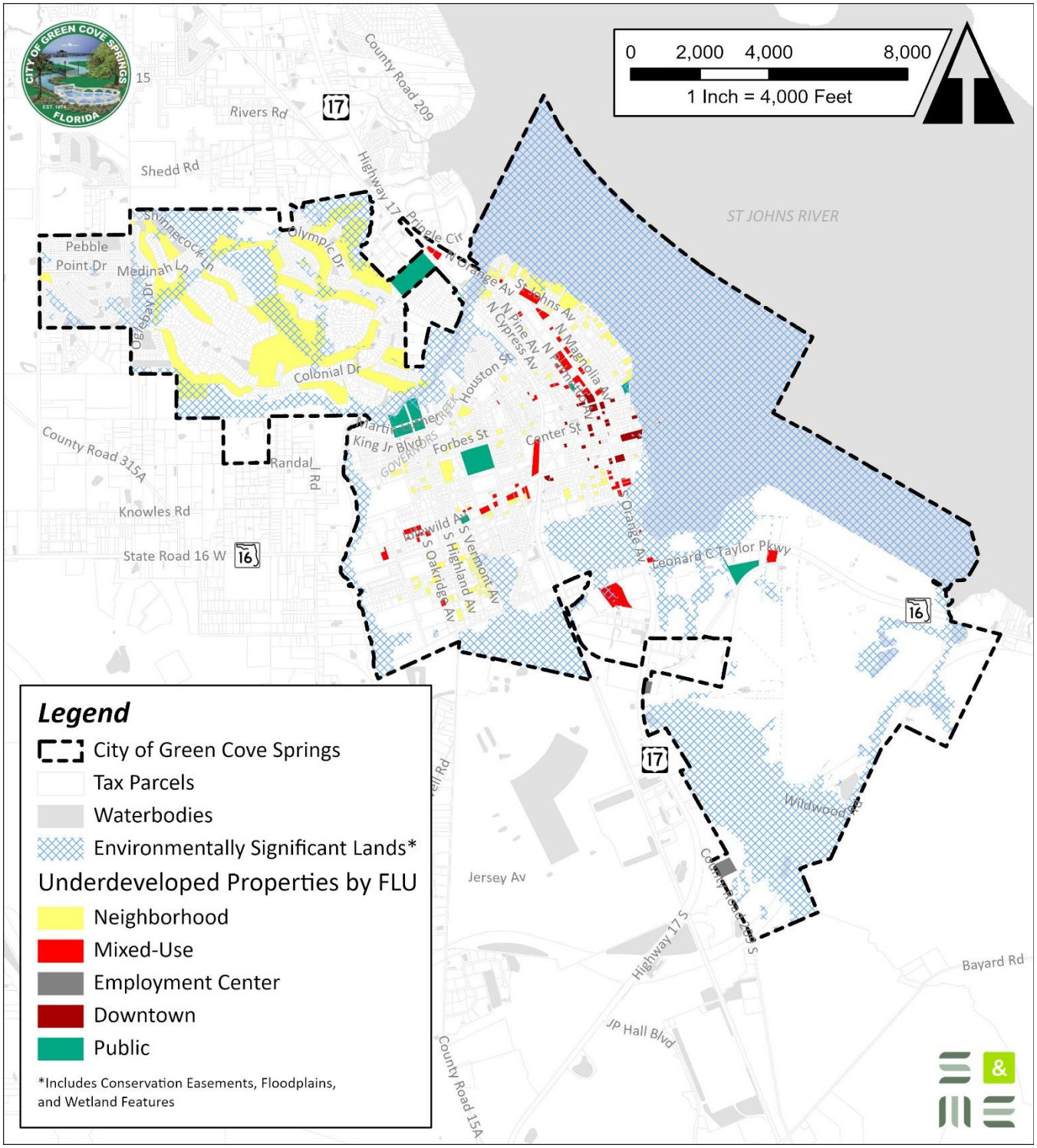
Sources: City of Green Cove Springs, Clay County, Clay County Property Appraiser, FEMA, FGDL, National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), S&ME, 2021.

Map I - 9. Future Land Use Classification of Vacant Parcels, 2045



Sources: City of Green Cove Springs, Clay County, Clay County Property Appraiser, FEMA, FGDL, NWI, S&ME, 2021.

Map I - 10. Future Land Use Classification of Underdeveloped Parcels, 2045



Sources: City of Green Cove Springs, Clay County, Clay County Property Appraiser, S&ME, 2021.