

City of Green Cove Springs CRA
Redevelopment Plan



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Green Cove Springs
Development Services Department
October 2022

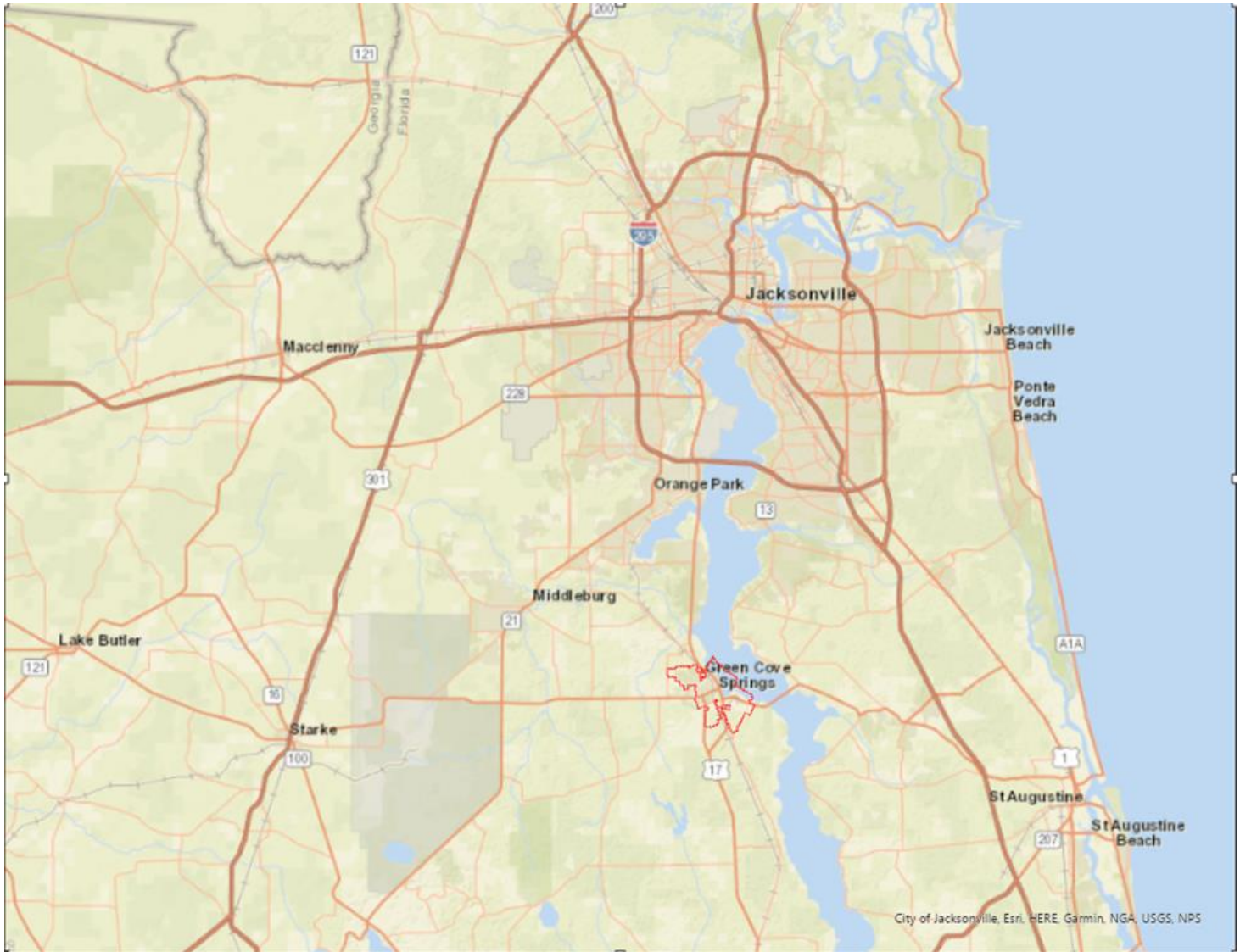


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Executive Summary

The Green Cove Springs CRA is located within the city limits of Clay County's most populous city, and it encompasses the City's historic downtown. Green Cove Springs is a welcoming city with a "small-town" atmosphere and urban amenities that make it an increasingly desirable place to live and raise a family, as evidenced by sustained population growth. Green Cove Springs is in the southeastern quadrant of Clay County.



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 century 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 Cove 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.

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 2020, the Census-recorded population was just under 10,000 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.

As with many small towns across the country, Green Cove Springs's downtown area has witnessed a decline over the years as new developments began to spring up outside of the urban core. This slow decline is true for both commercial and residential areas. As a result, the increase over time of taxable values has not kept up with "newer" areas of town. As shown in table 1 below, the CRA area has shown some redevelopment in the past five years but overall has failed to appreciably increase its aggregate assessed value (AAV) as compared to the City as a whole.

Plan Funding

The redevelopment of the Green Cove Springs Community Redevelopment Area will require a substantial financial investment on the part of the CRA. As provided for by Florida's Community Redevelopment Act, Florida Statutes Chapter 163, Part III, the principal source of funding for the CRA will be through Tax Increment Revenue from the City of Green Cove Springs and Clay County. Additionally, the CRA and the City may utilize other City, County, State, and Federal funding sources, as appropriate and available, to carry out the provisions of the Redevelopment Plan.

As required by F.S. 163.362(10), the Green Cove Springs Redevelopment Plan provides a time certain for completing all redevelopment financed by increment revenues. F.S. 163.362(10)(a) allows the Green Cove Springs CRA to use increment revenue for up to 40 total years after the year the initial Redevelopment Plan was adopted. The initial Green Cove Springs CRA Redevelopment Plan shall be adopted in 2022, therefore the maximum life permitted by statute would be until December 13, 2062.

This Redevelopment Plan contains Goals and Initiatives designed to address slum/blight conditions in the CRA district and attract private sector investment back into the urban core of the City. The projected total increment over the 30-year time horizon of the CRA is between \$18,995,996 to \$36,171,916.

Organization of the Plan

This Redevelopment Plan Amendment is organized into several sections, briefly described as follows:

Section 1 – Need for a Community Redevelopment Agency. A Finding of Necessity (FON) in accordance with the Community Redevelopment Act of 1969, Chapter 163, Part III, Florida Statutes is required to determine if slum and / or blight exist within the

Study Area.

Section 2 – Authority to Undertake Community Redevelopment - provides a summary of certain statutory requirements of the Community Redevelopment Act, as provided for in Florida Statutes 163, Part III.

Section 3 – Interlocal Agreement with Clay County - provides the framework for creation of the Green Cove Springs CRA.

Section 4 – Redevelopment Goals - introduces ten (10) Objectives for Redevelopment with Corresponding strategies for each Objective

Section 6 – Financial Information - contains financial projections, plan cost and timeline.

Section 7 - Legal Description - outlines the boundaries of the Green Cove Springs CRA.

Section 8 – Powers of a CRA. Identifies the powers of the CRA in regards of utilization of funding.

Section 9 Appendices



We encourage new and redevelopment to improve quality of life, enhance economic conditions, increase vibrancy and better realize a sense of place within the City's Historic Downtown and US 17 Corridor

Section 1: Downtown / US 17 Finding of Necessity

City of Green Cove Springs, FL

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1. Executive Summary

This study has been prepared to fulfill the requirements for a Finding of Necessity (FON) in accordance with the Community Redevelopment Act of 1969, Chapter 163, Part III, Florida Statutes. This report has reviewed data from multiple sources including the Clay County Property Appraiser and field observations, which lead to analysis to determine if conditions of slum and / or blight exist within the study area. This report represents the first step in creating a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) which will use Tax Increment Financing to invest in the area and improve its conditions. There are three statutory conditions that may be evaluated to determine a slum condition and fourteen statutory conditions that may be evaluated to determine a blight condition. For a slum condition, only one of the three is required to be met to make a finding of slum. For a blight condition, only two of the fourteen are required to be met to make a finding of blight.

One of three factors of slum was identified as being met, and seven of fourteen factors of blight were determined as being met, satisfying the statutory requirements to determine the Study Area is a slum area as well as a blighted area. With the adoption of this FON, the City Council of Green Cove Springs may designate a Community Redevelopment Area.

Table 1. Slum Factors

Factor	Met?
(a) Inadequate provision for ventilation, light, air, sanitation, or open spaces;	No
(b) High density of population, compared to the population density of adjacent areas within the county or municipality; and overcrowding, as indicated by government-maintained statistics or other studies and the requirements of the Florida Building Code;	No
(c) The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes.	Yes

Table 2. Blight Factors

Factor	Met?
(a) Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, parking facilities, roadways, bridges, or public transportation facilities.	Yes
(b) Aggregate assessed values of real property in the area for ad valorem tax purposes have failed to show any appreciable increase over the 5 years prior to the finding of such conditions.	Yes
(c) Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness.	Yes
(d) Unsanitary or unsafe conditions.	Yes
(e) Deterioration of site or other improvements.	Yes
(f) Inadequate and outdated building density patterns.	Yes

(g) Falling lease rates per square foot of office, commercial, or industrial space compared to the remainder of the county or municipality.	Data unavailable
(h) Tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land.	Not analyzed
(i) Residential and commercial vacancy rates higher in the area than in the remainder of the county or municipality.	Yes
(j) Incidence of crime in the area higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality.	Not analyzed
(k) Fire and emergency medical service calls to the area proportionately higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality.	Not analyzed
(l) A greater number of violations of the Florida Building Code in the area than the number of violations recorded in the remainder of the county or municipality.	Not analyzed
(m) Diversity of ownership or defective or unusual conditions of title which prevent the free alienability of land within the deteriorated or hazardous area.	Not analyzed
(n) Governmentally owned property with adverse environmental conditions caused by a public or private entity.	N/A
(o) A substantial number or percentage of properties damaged by sinkhole activity which have not been adequately repaired or stabilized.	N/A

Recommendations

The Study Area meets the criteria established in Section 163.340, Florida Statutes. It is staff recommendation that the City of Green Cove Springs adopt this Finding of Necessity by resolution per F.S. 163.355 and create a Community Redevelopment Agency for the Study Area as defined herein.

2. Introduction

The City of Green Cove Springs seeks to determine the feasibility of designating the Downtown and US 17 Corridor as a Community Redevelopment Area through the development of a Finding of Necessity and would also like to implement redevelopment in this area through the adoption of a Redevelopment Area Plan.

2.1. Background

Green Cove Springs is a city located along the west bank of the historic St. Johns River and since 1971 has served as the County Seat of Government for Clay County. The 2020 Census identified the population count to be 9,786, a 41.66% increase from the 2010 Census.

The city's name originates from the three physical characteristics. "Green" refers to the perennially green vegetation characterized by its tree scape and foliage. "Cove" refers to a bend

in the St. Johns River creating a safe area for mooring of boats during inclement weather periods. “Springs” refers to the natural spring (one of 600 in Florida), originating from the Floridan Aquifer with an estimated flow rate of approximately 2,200 gallons per minute. The spring water flows into the west side of the municipal swimming pool and then flows out the east side forming a stream eventually emptying into the St. Johns River.

The first inhabitants of the area were attracted to it because of the warm mineral spring, known as “The Boil.” The medicinal qualities of the spring and its location along the St. Johns River served as major contributors to the community’s development as a prominent attraction and destination for tourists during the 19th Century.

Green Cove Springs has had a storied history. It was home to Gustafson’s Farm, a family dairy operation owned by Frank and Agnes Gustafson that began in 1908. In the 1930s, the federal government located Benjamin Lee Field within the City. The United States Department of the Navy opened a flight training facility. In the 1950s, major American automakers had dealerships in Green Cove Springs along US 17, which led to the City being known as “the Little Detroit.”

The City grew economically and geographically, annexing land to include Magnolia Point Golf and Country Club and Magnolia West to the northwestern end, Cove Plaza on the southern end, and to the southeastern edge, FCT-granted land proposed to be the Ed Gustafson Regional Park as well as 560 acres intended to develop as a 2,100 unit residential subdivision.

In 2005, the City of Green Cove Springs adopted “Tomorrow’s Vision” as the guiding vision document for the future of the city. This document established goals for the City such as: maintain the small-town character; provide affordable housing; promote redevelopment in the corridors (US 17 / SR 16); improve traffic circulation; expand recreational opportunities; promote a business-friendly environment; strengthen Code Enforcement. One implementation mechanism included in the visioning document was the potential for a Community Redevelopment Agency. In 2014, the City adopted a Finding of Necessity, but the Community Redevelopment Agency was unable to come to fruition at that time.

Since then, the City has experienced additional growth and undergone further planning activities. In February 2021, the City began the process of updating the comprehensive plan, which was adopted a year later in February 2022. The 2045 Comprehensive Plan is designed to prepare the City for upcoming growth. The Future Land Use Map was amended from 13 categories to 6 categories: Neighborhood (NBD), Downtown (DT), Mixed Use (MU), Mixed-Use Reynolds Park (MURP), Industrial (IND), and Public (PUB). Further, the Future Land Use element established an objective to continue to redevelop and invest in blighted areas of the City, with Policy 1.6.1 directing the City to explore the creation of a Community Redevelopment Agency / Area.

Additionally, the Future Land Use elements directs the City in Policy 1.6.2 to develop a Downtown Master Plan and assess Walnut Street to determine how to increase safety and attractiveness of the streetscape. The Walnut Street assessment was completed in late 2021 and the Downtown Master Plan is underway, with a goal of adopting the plan by mid-April 2022.

2.2. Study Purpose

This Finding of Necessity will determine if the Study Area meets the statutory criteria to be designated as a Community Redevelopment Area. With this, the City aims to establish said area in an attempt to halt and reverse the decline within it in order to encourage new development and redevelopment to improve the overall quality of the area, leading to improved economic conditions, increased vibrancy, and a more established sense of place in the area.

If the Study Area meets the statutory criteria, the City will adopt this Finding of Necessity and seek to move forward with adopting a Redevelopment Plan.

2.3. Community Redevelopment Act Overview¹

The Florida Legislature enacted the Community Redevelopment Act (Act) in 1969. The legislature created the law to allow local governments to improve declining areas, as defined in the Act and detailed in subsections below. Such areas are detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of residents as well as being a nuisance to growth and the provision of adequate infrastructure and housing; the Act provides a way for the local governments to create a Redevelopment Area and fund redevelopment within it.

The Statute defines *community redevelopment* as local government or community redevelopment agency lead projects in an established community redevelopment area “for the elimination and prevention of the development or spread of slums and blight, or for the reduction or prevention of crime, or for the provision of affordable housing.” This may include slum clearance, redevelopment, rehabilitation, or conservation in a community redevelopment area, or any combination or part thereof, pursuant to the community redevelopment plan.

The Act establishes that powers granted by the Act are “for public uses and purposes” which involve the spending of public money and the potential exercise of police power, for which reason public interest, meaning a legitimate concern for general health, safety, and welfare within the area, is a requirement to implement the Act.

The Act further establishes the legitimacy of tax increment financing (TIF) as a method of successfully preserving and enhancing the tax base of an area, which will then serve to increase tax revenues for all taxing authorities for the area, enabling them to carry out their respective objectives more effectively. A redevelopment trust fund may be established by ordinance after the approval of a Community Redevelopment Plan to allow for the deposit of funds to be used by the agency to finance or refinance redevelopment. This fund must be established prior to receipt of any increment revenues. The statutes further state:

“The annual funding of the redevelopment trust fund shall be in an amount not less than the increment in the income, proceeds, revenues, and funds of each taxing authority derived from or held in connection with the undertaking and carrying out of community redevelopment under this part. Such increment shall be determined annually and shall be that amount equal to 95% of the difference between:

¹ The 2022 Florida Statutes, Title XI Chapter 163, Part III

1. The amount of ad valorem taxes levied each year by each taxing authority, exclusive of any amount from any debt service millage, on taxable real property contained within the geographic boundaries of a community redevelopment area; and
2. The amount of ad valorem taxes which would have been produced by the rate upon which the tax is levied each year by or for each taxing authority, exclusive of any debt service millage, upon the total of the assessed value of the taxable real property in the community redevelopment area as shown upon the most recent assessment roll used in connection with the taxation of such property by each taxing authority prior to the effective date of the ordinance providing for the funding of the trust fund.”

Florida Statutes additionally require counties or municipalities seeking to exercise the power granted by the Act to adopt by a resolution “supported by data and analysis, which makes a legislative finding that the conditions in the area meet the criteria” of a slum or blighted area, detailed in 163.340(7) and 163.340(8) and defined below in subsections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2. To make this legislative finding, governing bodies draft a Finding of Necessity (FON), which supports this legislative finding through in-depth analysis of the study area. The analysis contained in this report evaluates the existing conditions and identifies the existence, if any, of a slum or blighted area. This FON will be used by the City in designating and creating the Community Redevelopment Area, if it is determined the area meets the statutory requirements to be classified as a slum or blighted area.

2.3.1. Definitions of Slum Area

According to the Florida Statute Section 163.340(7), “slum area” is an area having physical or economic conditions conducive to disease, infant mortality, juvenile delinquency, poverty, or crime because there is a predominance of buildings or improvements, whether residential or nonresidential, which are impaired by reason of dilapidation, deterioration, age, or obsolescence, and exhibiting one or more of the following factors:

(a) “Inadequate provision for ventilation, light, air, sanitation, or open spaces;

(b) High density of population, compared to the population density of adjacent areas within the county or municipality; and overcrowding, as indicated by government-maintained statistics or other studies and the requirements of the Florida Building Code;

or

(c) The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes.”

2.3.2. Definitions of Blighted Area

According to the Florida Statute Section 163.340(8), “blighted area” means:

an “area in which there are a substantial number of deteriorated or deteriorating structures; in which conditions, as indicated by government-maintained statistics or other studies, endanger life or property or are leading to economic distress; and in which two or more of the following factors are present:

(a) Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, parking facilities, roadways, bridges, or public transportation facilities.

- (b) Aggregate assessed values of real property in the area for ad valorem tax purposes have failed to show any appreciable increase over the 5 years prior to the finding of such conditions.
- (c) Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness.
- (d) Unsanitary or unsafe conditions.
- (e) Deterioration of site or other improvements.
- (f) Inadequate and outdated building density patterns.
- (g) Falling lease rates per square foot of office, commercial, or industrial space compared to the remainder of the county or municipality.
- (h) Tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land.
- (i) Residential and commercial vacancy rates higher in the area than in the remainder of the county or municipality.
- (j) Incidence of crime in the area higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality.
- (k) Fire and emergency medical service calls to the area proportionately higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality.
- (l) A greater number of violations of the Florida Building Code in the area than the number of violations recorded in the remainder of the county or municipality.
- (m) Diversity of ownership or defective or unusual conditions of title which prevent the free alienability of land within the deteriorated or hazardous area.
- (n) Governmentally owned property with adverse environmental conditions caused by a public or private entity.
- (o) A substantial number or percentage of properties damaged by sinkhole activity which have not been adequately repaired or stabilized.”

The term “blighted area” may also be used for any area in which at least one of the factors identified in paragraphs (a) through (o) is present and all taxing authorities subject to 163.387(2)(a) agree, by interlocal agreement or by resolution, that the area is blighted.

2.3.2. Assessment Process

City Staff assessed the Study Area through a multitude of resources, including but not limited to existing data, especially that included in the Green Cove Springs GeoHub; data collected from other departments, especially Public Works and Police; desktop reviews of the area; in person / walking review of the area. Staff assessed the area for many aspects of blight as defined in the Florida Statutes, and this report describes the existing conditions as they relate to these factors.

2.4. Study Area

The specified Study Area encompasses ±172.8 acres and is known as the Downtown and US 17 Corridor. The corridor spans Orange Avenue from Governor Street on the north end to Oak Street on the south end. The Corridor lies between St. Johns Avenue and Magnolia Avenue on its eastern edge and Pine Avenue on its western edge. The Downtown portion reaches slightly farther to the

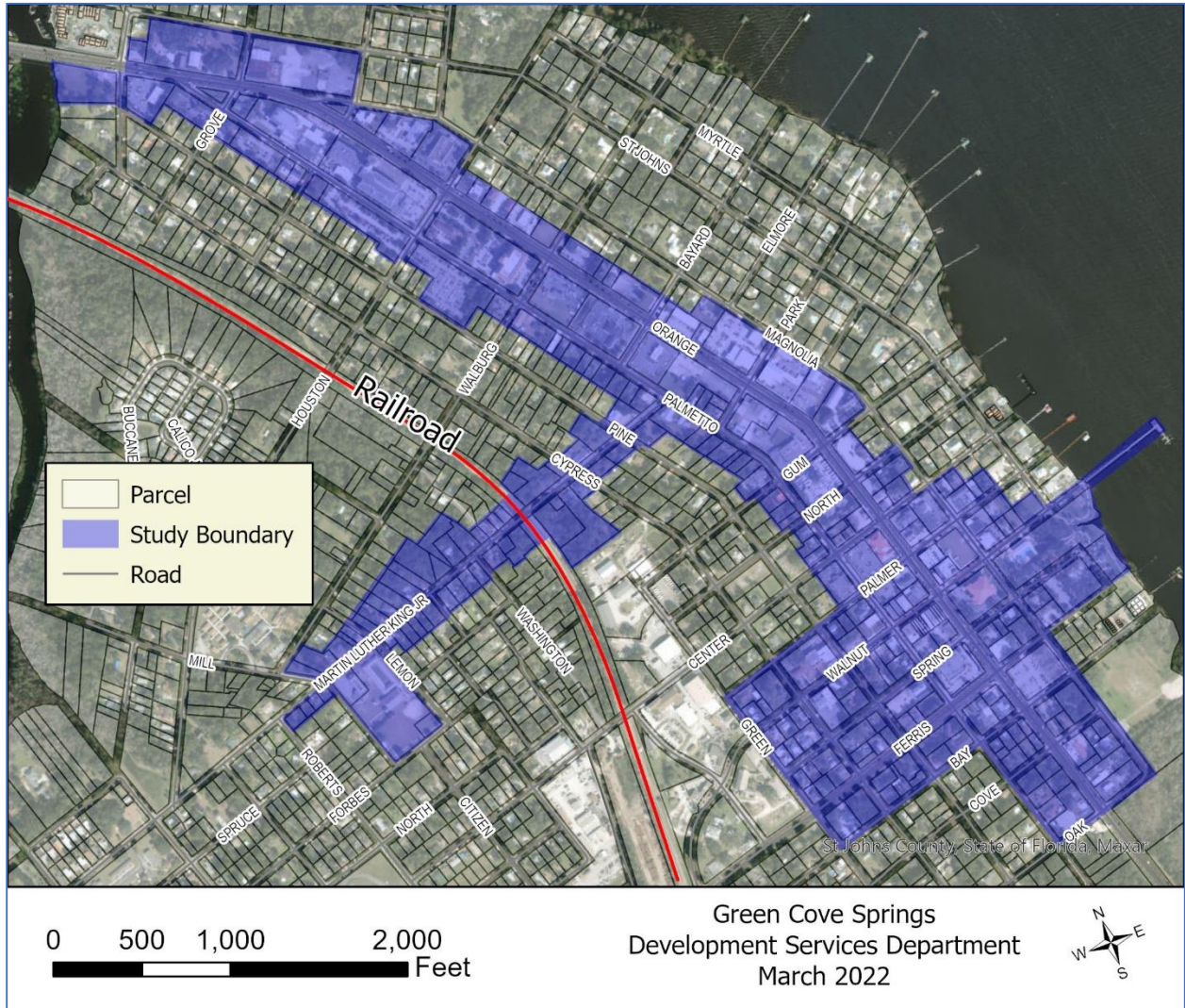
west and east. On the western side, it is bound by Palmer Street, Green Street, and Bay Street. On the eastern side, it expands diagonally eastward from Magnolia starting at Center Street, culminating at the river's edge with Spring Park property. The area is shown in Map 1.

The Study Area contains primarily commercial and institutional uses. Well known locations within the Study Area include: churches such as Springs Baptist Church, First Presbyterian Church, Doxa Church, and United Methodist Church; County government buildings including the Courthouse, Jail, Supervisor of Elections, and Administration Building; food / beverage service businesses such as Spring Park Coffee, Dunkin' Donuts, Burger King, La Casita, and Sweet Sensations; financial institutions, including Wells Fargo and VyStar Credit Union; automobile sales lots such as Green Cove Auto and Good Guys Motors as well as service businesses like Jesse's Auto Services and Darren's Custom & Restorations; retail uses like CVS, The Treasure Box, Walgreens, SS Something Special, and Green Cove Liquors; office uses including Exit Magnolia Realty, Vallencourt Construction, and Action Medical Staffing; and an event venue, Clay Theatre. Additionally, there are numerous vacant properties, including the recently demolished 1050 N Orange Ave, which previously housed an abandoned automobile sales lot, as well as the corner of North Street and Orange Avenue, which once housed two buildings and businesses. The Study Area also contains Spring Park, a well-known and loved park featuring the natural spring, a public spring-fed pool, walking trails, swinging benches, play structures, and great views of the St. Johns River. The foregoing list is not meant to be exhaustive but instead meant to provide a feel of the activity within the Study Area.

The expanse around the Study Area is primarily residential in nature, with some exception specifically along Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, which features some commercial spaces, as well as east of Green Street, which features County School Board property and related uses.

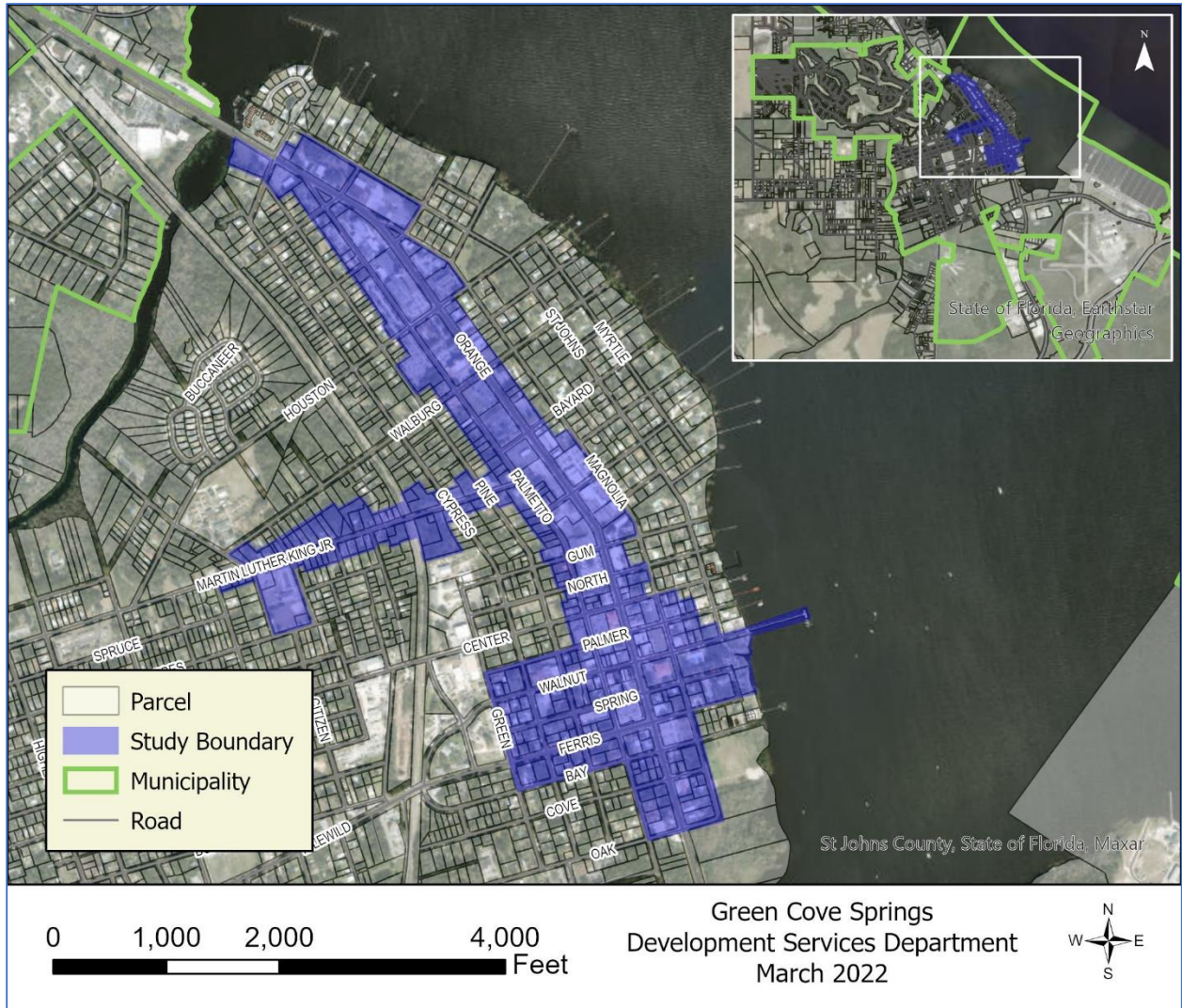
Within the Study Area, there are some planned or potential improvements. These include a proposed freestanding emergency medical facility operated by St. Vincent's as well as the Palmetto Trail project which will see an eight-foot multi-use path constructed along Palmetto Avenue from its southern end up to the Governors Creek Bridge. As part of the Walnut Street assessment, the City is also planning improvements to Walnut Street, particularly the block between Palmetto Avenue and Orange Avenue.

Map 1. Study Area



The Study Area is located somewhat centrally within the City, particularly for commercial development. Its location within the boundaries of the City can be viewed in Map 2. The northwest portion of the City consists of two subdivisions and the southeastern portion of the City consists of Reynolds Park / Clay Port – a future mixed-use development operating as an industrial site at present. The Study Area is contained within what is referred to as the Core City. The western portion of the Core City is dominated by residential development with a smattering of institutional development, namely School Board related properties. US 17 / Orange Avenue, Martin Luther King Blvd, and Palmetto Avenue, all within the Study Area, feature commercial development with some residential development as well.

Map 2. Study Area in Reference to the City



3. Slum and Blighted Area Analysis

City Staff reviewed the Study Area in relation to the statutory requirements for an area to be determined a slum area or a blighted area.

3.1. Slum

The condition of slum in the Study Area is met under the following criteria:

- (c) The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes.

Documentation of existing conditions provided in subsequent sections in this analysis indicates life and / or properties are endangered, specifically by dilapidation; unsecured inhabitable properties; deteriorating roadways, sidewalks, and accessibility features; abandoned homes; and overall deterioration of the Study Area.

3.2. Defective or inadequate public transportation facilities

The City of Green Cove Springs does not have locally operated public transportation facilities. Public transportation within Clay County, called Clay Community Transportation, is operated by the Jacksonville Transportation Authority². Of 4 available lines, 2 lines travel through Green Cove Springs. These lines operate from 6am to 7pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. The lines do include a flex service option wherein customers can call a reservation line to schedule a pick-up from their location that will be accommodated *when time allows*. The deviation will go as far as a ¼ mile off the route.

The Blue Line (Map 3) has one stop within the Study Area, the Clay County Courthouse (825 N Orange Ave), and one other stop within City Limits, at the Clay County Health Department. There are two stops moderately close to City Limits – the Pier Station stop west of town on State Road 16 and the Challenge Enterprises stop on Enterprise Way just north of town. There is two to three hours between pickups at the local stops, excluding Challenge Enterprises which only has one pickup time and one drop-off time.

The Green Line (Map 4) has one stop within the Study Area (and the City at large), the Clayton and Mildred Revels Senior Center (604 Walnut St). There are three hours between pickups at this stop, and similarly three hours between drop-offs to the location.

There are no options for local transit from residential to commercial or recreational areas of town. Additionally, the sidewalk and roadway conditions through the Study Area are in a poor state. Many streets show deterioration, especially with top layers breaking down, revealing the older brick streets beneath, which creates uneven surfaces. Sidewalks show significant deterioration as well with the following conditions being regularly observed throughout the Study Area:

- **Cracking:** Locations where the paved surface of the sidewalk has cracked or crumbled
- **Uplift:** A vertical change in height along a sidewalk (generally where “panels” of the sidewalk meet or where cracking has occurred)
- **Fixed Obstructions:** Anchored objects (such as utility poles) that reduce sidewalk width
- **Non-Fixed Obstruction:** Vegetation, non-anchored objects, or uncleanliness that reduces sidewalk width or walkability
- **Spalling:** Surface deterioration that appears as small indentations in the surface
- **Standing Water:** Locations where there is or there is evidence of standing water on the sidewalk
- **Loss:** Locations where a piece or pieces of the sidewalk were removed, whether purposefully for work or through erosion.

Examples of the above defined items are provided in the figures below.

Further, there are many places in the Study Area completely lacking sidewalks, primarily on local streets or only on one side of the street and often without excellent road crossing conditions to get from sidewalk to sidewalk as needed.

² Jacksonville Transit Authority, <https://www.jtafla.com/ride-jta/regional-services/clay-community-transportation/> accessed 3/14/2022

Such road and sidewalk conditions reduce the ability of the community to safely traverse the Study Area on foot, by micromobility³ device (bicycle, scooter, skateboard, et cetera) or by motorized vehicle.

Figure 1. Sidewalk Cracking, Palmer St, near 14 N Magnolia Ave



Figure 2. Sidewalk Cracking & Loss, Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd



Figure 3. Deteriorating accessibility feature, Corner of Orange Ave & Center St



Figure 4. Deteriorating accessibility feature, Southwest Corner of Orange Ave & Palmer St



³ Institute for Transportation & Development Policy, <https://www.itdp.org/multimedia/defining-micromobility/> accessed 4/7/2022

Figure 5. Road Disrepair, Walnut St



Figure 6. Road Disrepair, Intersection of Green St & Walnut St



Figure 7. Non-Fixed Obstruction, Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd

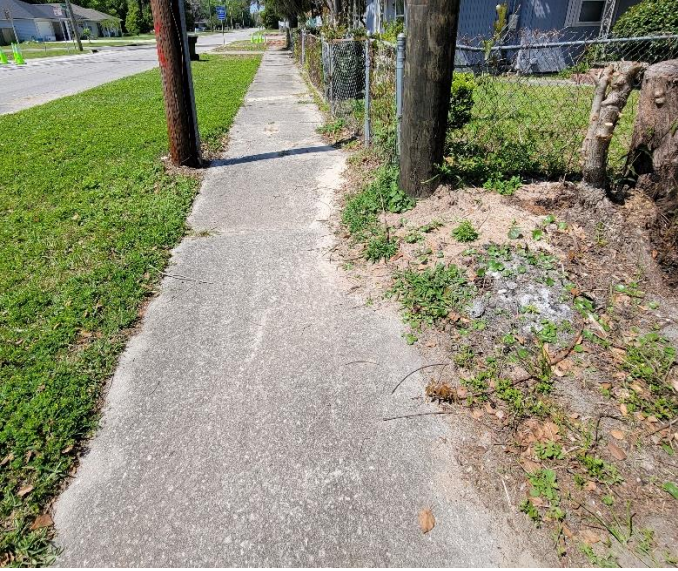


Figure 8. Non-Fixed Obstruction, Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd



Figure 9. Sidewalk Spalling, Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd



Figure 10. Sidewalk – Standing Water, Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.



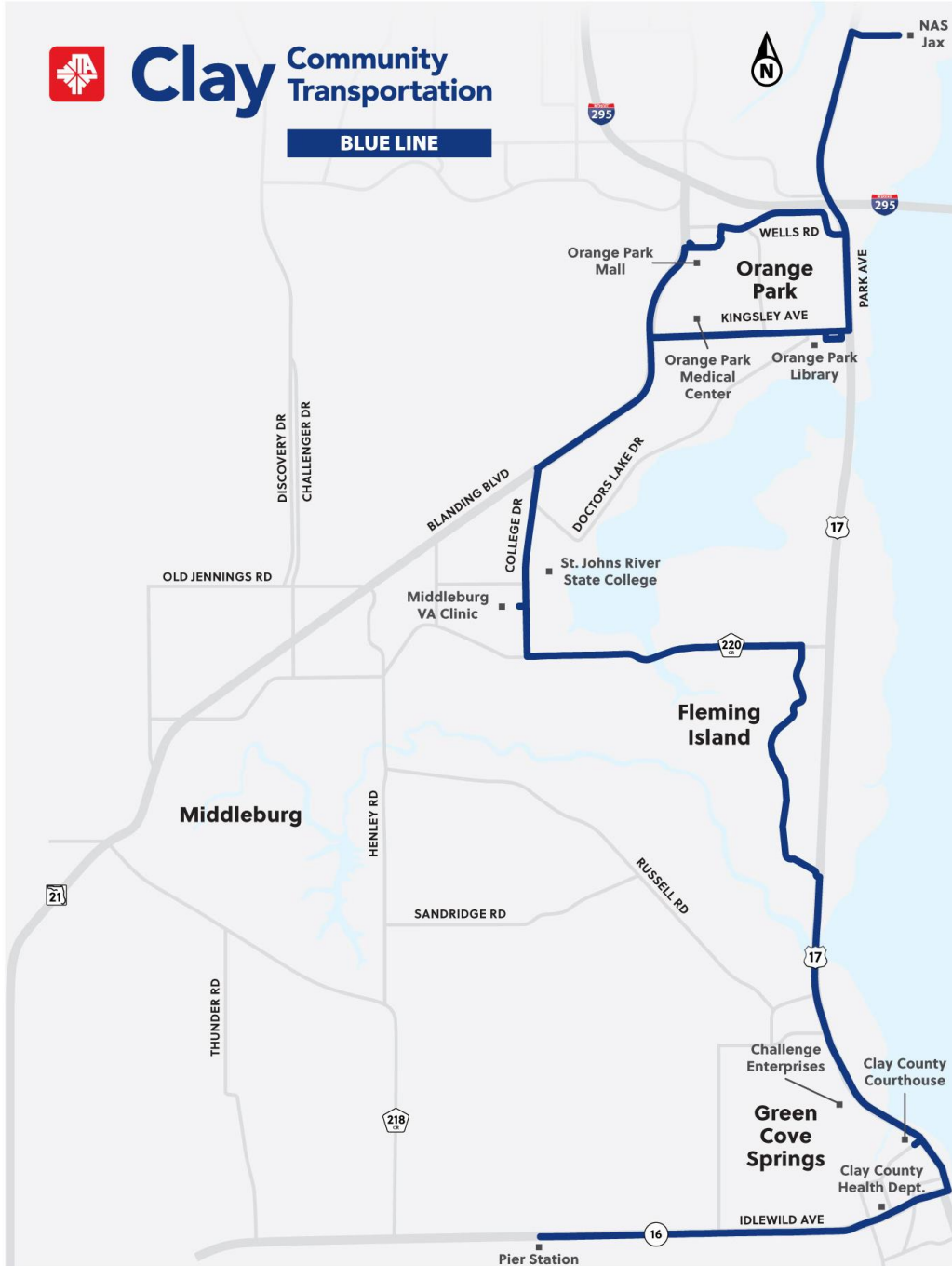
Figure 11. Sidewalk Uplift & Spalling, Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd



Figure 12. Sidewalk Loss, Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd



Map 3. Bus Route – Blue Line⁴



⁴ Jacksonville Transportation Authority, <https://www.jtafla.com/ride-jta/regional-services/clay-community-transportation/clay-blue-line/>

Map 4. Bus Route – Green Line⁵



3.3. Aggregate assessed values do not show appreciable increase over past 5 years

The Study Area has experienced some redevelopment in the past five years, but the deterioration present, as shown in later sections, has prevented the Study Area from seeing an appreciable increase in its aggregate assessed value (AAV) as compared to the City as a whole. In Table 1, it is demonstrated that the City as a whole has experienced an increased AAV of 50.71% while the Study Area has only seen an increase of 20.53%.

Table 3. Aggregate Assessed Value Comparison

Year	Study Area	City
2017	\$ 85,088,819.00	\$590,524,531.00
2018	\$88,913,992.00	\$642,232,893.00
2019	\$95,646,152.00	\$802,652,764.00
2020	\$95,809,061.00	\$802,652,764.00
2021	\$102,557,978.00	\$890,001,640.00
% Increase	20.53%	50.71%

⁵ Jacksonville Transportation Authority, <https://www.jtafla.com/ride-jta/regional-services/clay-community-transportation/clay-green-line/>

3.4. Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness

Within the Study Area, approximately 25.6% of the lots could be considered faulty (Map 4). The criteria for this determination were as follows:

- **Size:** Commercially zoned lots with less than approximately 75 feet of frontage and approximately 100 feet of depth – despite the zoning code identifying no minimum lot requirements in commercial districts, the size of these lots is not suited for adequate commercial development, assuming they are developed individually given the diversity of ownership.
- **Adequacy:** Lots deemed inadequate are shaped in a manner which decreases their developability.
- **Usefulness:** Lots deemed less than useful are shaped in a manner which will likely completely prevent or deter their development or redevelopment.
- **Accessibility:** Lots deemed inaccessible are landlocked.

The City does permit residential development within many commercially zoned areas, and some of the identified lots have historically or recently been developed residentially as a consequence. Ideally, as identified in the Future Land Use Map, these lots would develop commercially or with a mix of uses to better support the neighborhood.

Recent development exemplifies the difficulties with developing commercially on narrow or otherwise small lots. Between 2019 and 2020, Dunkin Donuts constructed a new location within the Study Area – 610 N Orange Ave. The site is approximately 250ft along Orange Avenue (the primary roadway) by 125ft deep. The development received a variance from the City's Zoning Code requirements, which require parking to be to the side or back of a building in the Gateway Commercial Corridor. Due to the depth of the property and the type of development (drive-thru fast food), the lot layout was inadequate to permit development without a variance.

On the basis of the plight of Dunkin Donuts and the criteria identified above, additional lots are truly eligible to be considered faulty within the Study Area, but being that they are already commercially developed, at this time, they are not being considered faulty.

Map 5. Faulty Lots



3.5. Unsanitary or unsafe conditions

There are several sites with unsafe or unsanitary conditions located within the Study Area. Figures 13-29 (following) demonstrate the conditions for a portion of these properties.

Field inspection and Google StreetView inspection of the Study Area identified sites with deteriorating or damaged structures which pose a threat to building occupants, condemned or abandoned buildings, incomplete construction projects, lack of sidewalks or blocked rights-of-way (ROW[s]), as well as brownfield sites. There are unsafe commercial spaces where there is either a lack of defined pedestrian versus vehicular space or a lack of maintenance that would keep the area safe for traversing to and from a business.

These figures represent some of the many deteriorating, unsafe, and at times abandoned structures in the area.

Figure 13. Unsafe, Deteriorating Roof, 116 N Magnolia Ave



Figure 15. Unsafe, Boarded Openings, 115 N Magnolia Ave



Figure 17. Unsafe, No Sidewalk, ROW used for RV Parking, 327 N Orange Ave



Figure 14. Unsafe, Condemned Building, 428 N Orange Ave



Figure 16. Unsafe and unsanitary, Openings / Junk Storage, 115 N Magnolia



Figure 18. Unsafe, No Sidewalk, across from Figure 5, 425 N Orange Ave



Figure 19. Unsanitary, Discontinued Gas Pumps, 201 N Orange Ave



Figure 20. Unsafe, Collapsed Canopy, Petroleum Contamination Site⁶, 100 N Orange Ave



Figure 21. Unsafe, Low hanging power lines, concrete drive in disrepair, south of 25 N Orange Av



Figure 22. Unsafe, ROW in disrepair, busines parks in ROW, 3 S Palmetto Ave



Figure 23. Unsafe, Lack of signage, marked parking spaces, pedestrian safety, 24 Green St



⁶ FL Department of Environmental Protection's Contamination Locator Map, <https://prodenv.dep.state.fl.us/DepClnup>

Figure 24. Unsafe area in front of active commercial building, 1100 Martin Luther King



Figure 25. Unsafe Structure / Abandoned, 1007 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd



Figure 26. Unsafe / Abandoned Structure, 1001 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd



Figure 27. Unsafe / Abandoned Structure, 713 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd



Figure 28. Unsafe / Abandoned Structure, 613 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd



Figure 29. Unsafe Structure, 612 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd



3.6. Deterioration of site or other improvements

In addition to the deterioration of site improvements shown in section 3.5, within the Study Area, there are multiple occurrences of deteriorating improvements, especially access points or paved areas in surrounding buildings. Paving is wearing away or cracking creating hazardous conditions for drivers using the lots to park or maneuver the site and pedestrians crossing the access points. Figures below provide examples of this type of wear and tear in the corridor.

Figure 30. Deteriorating Drive / Sidewalk, 220 Palmer



Figure 31. Deteriorating Drive, 327 N Orange Ave



Figure 32. Parking lot disrepair, between 604 & 500 Walnut St



Figure 33. Sidewalk disrepair, between 604 & 500 Walnut St



3.7. Inadequate and outdated building density patterns

The applicable zoning districts for the Study Area generally include: Central Business District, Gateway Corridor Commercial, Gateway Corridor Neighborhood, and C-1 Neighborhood Commercial. The heart of the Study Area is where the Central Business District is located – also known as the Downtown area. The Gateway districts are located along the “corridor” area, notably US 17 or Orange Ave. The Martin Luther King Blvd corridor is zoned as neighborhood commercial but features primarily low density residential development including active and abandoned residential structures, churches, vacant lots, concrete block commercial buildings lacking transparency and activation.

Figure 36. Outdated building pattern, 208 N Orange Ave, Food Store



Figure 37. Outdated building pattern, 425 N Orange Ave, Wells Fargo



Figure 38. Outdated Building Pattern, 327 N Orange Ave, Rick Baker's RV



Figure 39. Low Density Development, 606 Spring St



Figure 40. Low Density Development, 627 Spring St



Figure 41. Low Density Development, Not Fronting Street, 702 Ferris St / 709 Spring St



Figure 42. Undeveloped, Gustafson Property, Pine St (behind house on Walnut St)



3.8. Vacancy rates

17.1% of properties within the Study Area are classified as vacant by the Clay County Property Appraiser. This level of vacancy within the Study Area is 44.9% higher than that of the rest of the municipality, which has an 11.8% rate of vacancy.

Many of these lots, shown in the figures below, are prime locations that once housed a local business which has since been removed. The lots have yet to have been redeveloped despite their prime locations in the commercial areas of the City.

Figure 43. Vacant Lot, Previously 208 N Orange Ave



Figure 44. Vacant Lot, East of 604 Walnut St



Figure 45. Vacant Lot, BROWNFIELD⁷, south of 535 N Orange Ave



Figure 46. Vacant Lot at the northeast corner of Orange Ave & Walburg St



Figure 47. Vacant Lot at the northwest corner of Orange Ave & Governor St



⁷ FL Department of Environmental Protection's Contamination Locator Map, <https://prodenv.dep.state.fl.us/DepClnup>

Map 6. Vacancy Rates



4. Recommendations

The Study Area meets the criteria established in Section 163.340, Florida Statutes (F.S.). It is staff recommendation that the City of Green Cove Springs adopt this Finding of Necessity by resolution per Section 163.355, F.S., and create a Community Redevelopment Agency for the Study Area as defined herein. This will enable redevelopment of the area which is necessary for the safety and economic welfare of the community.

Section 2 - Authority to Undertake Community Redevelopment, Creation, Powers

Authority to Undertake Community Redevelopment

This document has been prepared under the direction of the Green Cove Springs Community Redevelopment Agency in accordance with the Community Redevelopment Act of 1969, F.S. 163, Part III. In recognition of the need to prevent and eliminate slum and blighted conditions within the community, the Act confers upon counties and municipalities the authority and powers to carry out “Community Redevelopment”. For the purposes of this Community Redevelopment Plan, the following definition, taken from the Florida State Statutes, Section 163.340, shall apply:

“Community redevelopment” or “redevelopment” means undertakings, activities, or projects of a county, municipality, or community redevelopment agency in a community redevelopment area for the elimination and prevention of the development or spread of slums and blight, or for the reduction or prevention of crime, or for the provision of affordable housing, whether for rent or for sale, to residents

of low or moderate income, including the elderly, and may include slum clearance and redevelopment in a community redevelopment area or rehabilitation and revitalization of coastal resort and tourist areas that are deteriorating and economically distressed, or rehabilitation or conservation in a community redevelopment area, or any combination or part thereof, in accordance with a community redevelopment plan and may include the preparation of such a plan.

The ability of a county or municipality to utilize the authority granted under the Act is predicated upon the adoption of a “Finding of Necessity” by the governing body which was approved by Resolution R-03-2022 on April 14, 2022.

Creation of the Community Redevelopment Agency

Upon the adoption of a “Finding of Necessity” by the governing body and upon further finding that there is a need for a Community Redevelopment Agency to function in the county or municipality to carry out community redevelopment purposes, any county or municipality may create a public body corporate and politic to be known as a “Community Redevelopment Agency”. The Agency shall be constituted as a public instrumentality, and the exercise by the Agency of the powers conferred by Chapter 163, Part III, Florida Statutes shall be deemed and held to be the performance of an essential public function (Section 163.356(1) Florida Statutes).

Powers of the Community Redevelopment Agency

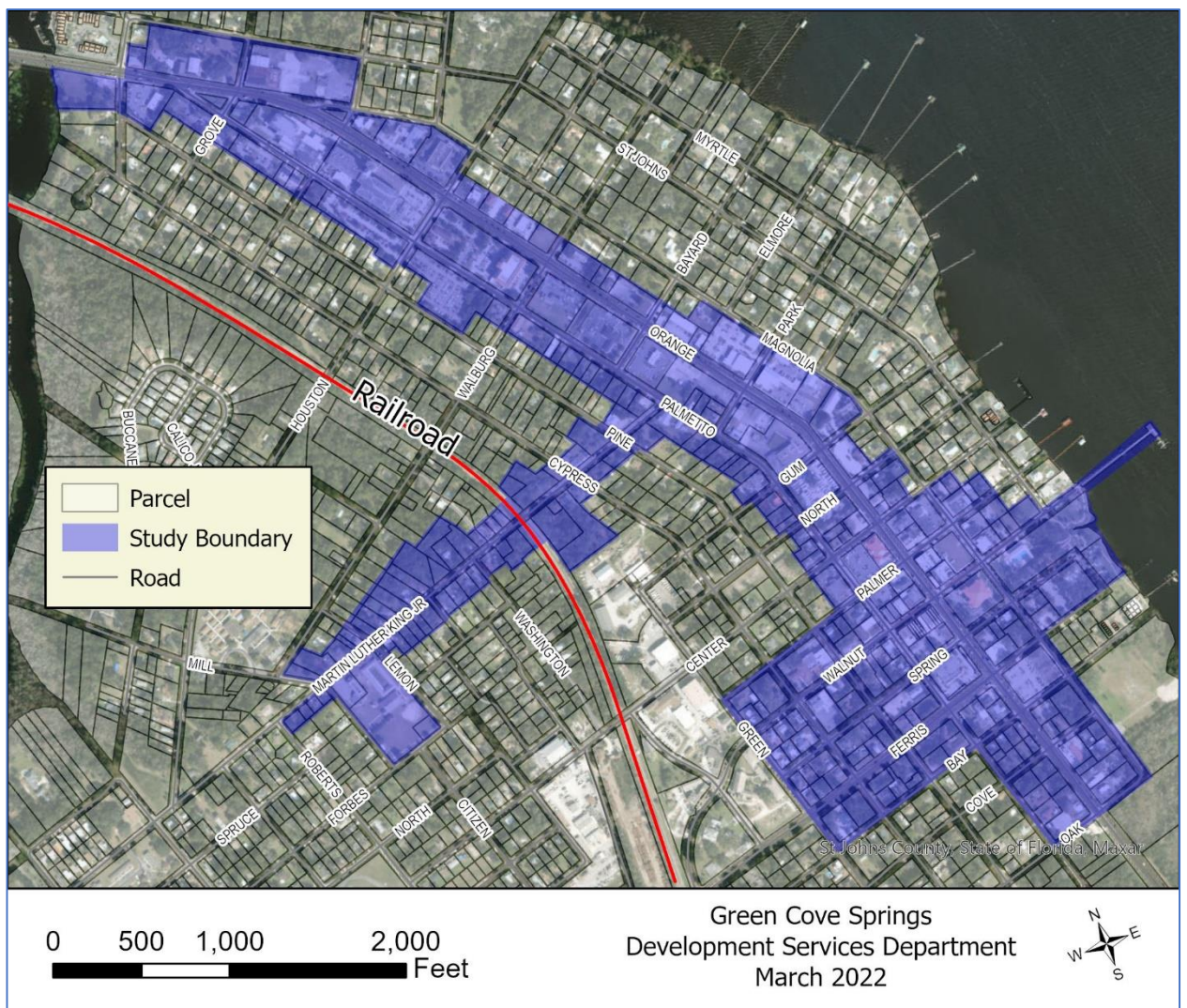
The Community Redevelopment Act confers a wide array of redevelopment powers to counties and municipalities with home rule charters, as specified in Florida Statute 163.410. As a charter county, Clay County has retained those powers, except as delegated (the “conveyed powers”) to the City of Green Cove Springs through incorporation in an Interlocal Agreement to carry out redevelopment activities. The City then, has delegated the conveyed

powers to the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA).

The Community Redevelopment Area

Pursuant to Statutes, a community redevelopment area must be a slum area, a blighted area, or an area in which there is a shortage of housing that is affordable to residents of low or moderate income, including the elderly.

The Green Cove Springs Community Redevelopment Area generally consists of the older central core of the City and surrounding neighborhoods, which have become deteriorated due to age, obsolescence, and the lack of investment. Unfortunately, a deteriorating area is self-propagating, and as conditions worsen, residents and private businesses become less willing to put their financial resources into the area. This cycle severely limits the ability of private enterprise to stop the spread of slum and blight without public assistance.



The Community Redevelopment Plan

All redevelopment activities expressly authorized by the Community Redevelopment Act and funded by tax increment revenue must be in accordance with a Redevelopment Plan, which shall be approved by the CRA Board, the City of Green Cove Springs and the Clay County Commission. Like the City's Comprehensive Plan, the Community Redevelopment Plan is an evolving document, which may be evaluated and amended on a regular basis to accurately reflect changing conditions and community objectives.

The CRA Plan provides for effective implementation of redevelopment Goals and Initiatives to remove slum and blighted conditions within the CRA district as provided by Florida Statutes.

Section 3 – Interlocal Agreement with Clay County

The Green Cove Springs CRA, Green Cove Springs City Council and the Clay County Commission entered into a negotiated Interlocal Agreement that established the terms under which the City of Green Cove Springs could establish a Community Redevelopment Agency. A summary of the terms of the agreement are as follows (see full copy of the Agreement in Section 9, Appendix):

- 1) The initial term of the Green Cove Springs CRA shall begin on January 1, 2023 and continue for 30 years from that date;
- 2) The City may extend the CRA Plan based on an affirmative vote of the City of Green Cove Springs and County Commission;
- 3) The “base year taxable property assessment roll, used to calculate the tax increment to be deposited into the CRA trust fund, shall be 2023;
- 4) The CRA Redevelopment Plan must be approved by affirmative vote of the County Commission and City Council;
 - a. The Redevelopment Plan and any amendments shall meet all requirements of state statutes, and contain a detailed statement of the projected costs of redevelopment;
 - b. Funds shall be used to fund all CRA projects included in the Redevelopment Plan;
 - c. Redevelopment activities and projects in the Plan must be designed to mitigate slum/blight conditions which were the basis of the Finding of Necessity;
- 5) The City shall deposit 95% of an amount based on the calculation of increment using the City's millage in that year into the CRA trust fund, unless otherwise provided by the Agreement. The remaining 5% is an administration fee for the City.
- 6) The CRA may sell bonds and execute notes, and enter other forms of debt or leveraging, as well as collateral documents, to finance capital improvements deemed necessary by the CRA for redevelopment purposes. However, no debts may extend beyond the expiration date of the CRA Plan;
- 7) The CRA shall abide by all provisions of the Community Redevelopment Act;
- 8) The County shall, by resolution, delegate to the City all the powers for redevelopment in the Community Redevelopment Act;
- 9) If the City chooses to establish a CRA and complies with all of the provisions of statute and this agreement to establish the CRA trust fund, the County shall deposit 95% of an amount based on the calculation of increment using the City's millage in that year into the CRA trust fund;
- 10) The County shall abide by all provisions of the Community Redevelopment Act.

Once the Redevelopment Plan is approved by the CRA, it will be required to be ratified by the City of Green Cove Springs and the Clay County Commission. In addition to the approval of the Redevelopment Plan, the City and County shall also be required to ratify an interlocal agreement pursuant to Section 163.410, Florida Statutes, the Clay County Commission delegated the authority to exercised community redevelopment powers to the City of Green Cove Springs via Resolution 2021/22-56, subject to the conditions in the interlocal agreement-see copy of Resolution 2021/22-56 in Sections 5,6,7 and 8, in Appendix.

Section 4 - Redevelopment Vision, Objectives and Strategies

APPROACH

This Chapter presents the vision for the Redevelopment Area. In addition, this Chapter identifies potential objectives and strategies, and lays a foundation for the programs and projects to be considered by the City of Green Cove Springs, Clay County, the CRA, and private enterprise in implementing this vision.

Projects, costs, or budgets provided in the Redevelopment Plan are estimated, and will be refined as additional research, plans, and documents are prepared to implement the particular objectives, strategies, resulting programs, and projects. The costs given for budgeting purposes establish the framework for the financial planning analysis.

Costs or budgets should not be construed as exclusively the burden of the public sector. Costs or budgets are intended to be total costs with potential allocations to the public and private sectors assigned on the basis of the encouragement of private enterprise as a tool to carry out a significant portion of this Plan and apparent benefit, value, revenues, or other relevant factors.

VISION FOR THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AREA

The vision for the Redevelopment Area focuses on creating a vibrant multimodal mixed-use corridor that offer residents and visitors a high-quality destination featuring active uses, pedestrian connections, a safe transportation network, and inviting public spaces in a manner that promotes and accommodates growth while continuing to honor the City's rich small-town charm and history. At the same time, redevelopment efforts shall be complimented with maintaining affordable housing options for residents of low or moderate income, including the elderly. The CRA will support infrastructure and not impact the City's ability to provide an adequate level of service within the Redevelopment Area.

The development of certain segments of the subject corridors will lead to the conversion of the existing, non-sustainable, haphazard development pattern that has occurred along the corridors. The CRA will be treated with improved infrastructure intended to promote area rehabilitation and ultimately the highest and best use of structures. Gateways and wayfinding signage will be developed at key locations as identified in the Downtown Master Plan to identify entry to serve as focal points for the Community Redevelopment Area. Linear features will be beautified with landscape improvements and hardscapes.

The intent of this Plan is to serve as a framework for guiding development and redevelopment in the Redevelopment Area. This Plan identifies redevelopment objectives and lays the foundation for programs and capital projects to be undertaken, which will reverse and remove blight documented in the Findings of Necessity. This Plan addresses implementation strategies that were adopted as part of the Downtown Master Plan. These programs, projects, funding, and administrative opportunities will continue to be refined as they are implemented. It is clearly understood that grants and other revenues (impact fees, general revenue, grants etc.) need to be used in conjunction with available increment revenues to achieve these stated goals. While based on the most accurate data available, the various strategies and costs identified in this Plan will require additional study as specific programs and projects are initiated, refined, and implemented.

The focus of the Plan is the mitigation or correction of the various blighted area conditions documented in the adopted Finding of Necessity Report and the implementation strategies identified in the 2022 Downtown Master Plan. Changing social, physical, and economic conditions could warrant the modification of this Plan. If the Plan is modified, the CRA must comply with Section 163.361, Florida Statutes and applicable County Resolutions.

As the redevelopment process unfolds, a Conceptual Diagram will be generated to illustrate specific improvements planned. The elements shown in the Conceptual Diagram may be relocated or realigned as part of future planning initiatives, so long as modifications are generally consistent with the vision articulated in this Plan. The City Land Development Code (LDC) shall address the redevelopment area's urban design framework.

Map 1. Study Area



REDEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

In partnership with private enterprise and the County, the redevelopment initiative embodied in this Plan will reverse and remove the observed blighted conditions within the Redevelopment Area by leveraging public assets to improve the overall economic condition and the physical condition of the Redevelopment Area. Creating safe, vibrant and pedestrian friendly corridors along US 17 and downtown roadways / featuring more attractive mixed use and commercial opportunity will greatly enhance the quality of life not only for the residents but the population of the City and County at large.

Strategic initiatives are to be identified and placed into action to address, reverse, and remove the blighted area conditions, which have substantially impaired reinvestment activity within the Redevelopment Area; and ultimately will be substantially redeveloped and revitalized as a community focal point to the benefit of City and County residents, businesses, property owners, and visitors through the implementation of this Redevelopment Plan.

Objectives have been identified and placed into action to address, reverse, and remove the blighted area conditions, which have substantially impaired reinvestment activity within the Redevelopment Area; and ultimately will be redeveloped and revitalized as a community focal point for the benefit of City and County residents, businesses, property owners and visitors through the implementation of the plan.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Objective 1: Improve transportation facilities within the Redevelopment Area including sidewalks, crosswalks, bike paths, and other multi-modal options to enhance regional connection. These strategies will correct the blighted conditions of defective or inadequate public transportation facilities (*Figures 1-12 and Map 3 & 4 of the Finding of Necessity Report*).

Strategies:

1. Sidewalk Repair and obstruction relocation as set forth along Magnolia Avenue, Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, Orange, Palmer and Center Streets as shown in figures 1-4 , and 7-8,
2. Repair the deterioration of Walnut Street between Green Street and Pine Avenue as shown in figures 5-6 of the Finding of Necessity Report. This will improve safety, traffic flow and access.
3. Provide for updated surveys of downtown roadways to determine right of way widths and obstructions to determine where additional multimodal improvements are viable such as:
 - a. roadway, sidewalk, and lighting improvements on appropriate streets, and provide safe pedestrian routes.
 - b. roadway and streetscape improvements based on a phasing plan which emphasizes visual impact in addition to improved access and circulation.
 - c. Provide the ability for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists to access an enhanced internal transportation network which connects, if applicable, the neighborhoods to services and commercial corridors.
 - d. Develop and incorporate landscape and lighting design standards to create a safe and inviting environment.
 - e. Integrate traffic calming techniques throughout the internal roadway system to enhance safety and facilitate a pedestrian/bicycle friendly environment. Traffic calming techniques may include the use of pavers or decorative concrete, raised pavement, roundabouts,

- change of landscape treatment, and the creation of pedestrian nodes at major intersection, mid-block crossings and other locations where potential conflicts exist between vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists.
- f. Traffic lights, crosswalks, and regulatory/wayfinding signage will be used to enhance the safety of vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists in key locations throughout the Redevelopment Area
4. Add curb extensions, and narrow travel lanes and add decorative pedestrian crossings to reduce the pedestrian crossing distance across Orange Avenue at the intersection with Walnut Street. This will improve pedestrian safety and provide a clear sense of arrival into the Downtown and serve to effectively bridge the eastern and western portions of the downtown.
 5. Coordinate with the Florida Department of Transportation to reduce travel lane widths, provide and expand landscape buffers, install street trees, and widen sidewalks along the US 17 Corridor to enhance pedestrian comfort, safety and a greater sense of arrival to Green Cove Springs as set forth as implementation phase 1, #11 in the GCS Downtown Master Plan.
 6. Promote the Redevelopment Area through designing and implementing a signage and wayfinding system directing traffic to and from the major connectors, and destinations in the region, as set forth in implementation phase 1, #3 of the GCS Downtown Master Plan.

Objective 2: Create a vibrant Downtown area with a mixed-use, multimodal development pattern. These strategies will correct the blighted conditions of faulty lot layout (*Figures of the Finding of Necessity Report*); unsafe conditions (*Pgs. 19 and 21 - 25 of the Finding of Necessity Report*); and deterioration of site or other improvements (*Pgs. 16, 17, 20 and 24 of the Finding of Necessity Report*). In addition, this objective addresses the implementation strategies set forth in the Downtown Master Plan.

1. Implement a Form Based Code with mixed use urban design/development standards for the Downtown Core as set forth in implementation step phase 1, # 4 in the GCS Downtown Master Plan. The standards will address the incorporation of parking lot layout, building design, landscaping, signage, pedestrian connections, and linkages between land uses through a functional cross access system.
2. Implement the branding and wayfinding plan set forth in the GCS Downtown Master Plan Implementation Phase 1, Step #3. The wayfinding plan will help to establish the unique place the downtown area has within the City and region.
3. Reposition the Green Cove Springs downtown through marketing initiatives to attract targeted uses/industries retain existing businesses and improve the quality of life within the CRA.
4. Provide public art along Walnut Street and Spring Park in coordination with the Clay County Tourism Strategic Plan.
5. Provide the following incentive programs to encourage and support private sector investment and encourage targeted retail development:

- a. Anchor Tenant Incentive Program

The Anchor Tenant Incentive Program provides loan-to-grant funding to commercial property owners and/or commercial tenants to assist with interior building improvements and business start-up costs. The goal of the program is primarily to incentivize anchor restaurants and breweries (food and drink establishments), and hotels to establish in Downtown, which in turn will help stimulate the local economy and improve the quality of life for Green Cove Springs residents and visitors. Eligible participants may receive loan-to-grant funding for 35% of the total interior building improvement and business start-up costs, up to a maximum of \$75,000. Loan-to-grant funding may exceed \$75,000 and be made available to businesses outside the food and drink category if the City is presented with a unique 'catalyst' project. A catalyst project is generally defined as a business that is first-to-market and anticipated to have a catalytic impact that will promote the City of Green Cove Springs Downtown Master Plan vision for a thriving Downtown where people can live, work and play. The term of the loan will be five years from the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. For each year the business is open and operating, 20% of the loan will be forgiven. If after five years the business is open and operating, the loan will be forgiven entirely and converted into a grant. Properties that pay no Ad-valorem taxes or are otherwise tax exempt are not eligible. In cases where a portion of a property is tax-exempt, funding may be made only to the taxable portion/percentage of the property. Loan-to-grant funds may be disbursed to a program participant on a reimbursement basis. The City and program participant would create a payment schedule based on project milestones. The Incentive Program can also be used for payment of mobility and impact fees.

- b. Rental Subsidy Program

The proposed Rental Subsidy Program would provide an 18-month partial rental subsidy (up to \$25,000) to qualifying targeted businesses. The funding award would be administered over an 18 consecutive month period. The award recipient would be paid the rent subsidy as agreed upon in an executed performance agreement between the applicant and the City. The applicant must have an executed multi-year lease (two-year minimum) with the owner. A copy of the lease, or binding or proposed multi-year commercial lease agreement must be provided to the city.

- c. Business Façade Grant

The Business Façade Grant Program provides a matching grant to commercial property owners and/or

commercial tenants, located in the targeted area, to assist with eligible exterior building and site improvements. Eligible applicants include both commercial property owners and business lessees with written authorization of the property owner. Eligible businesses must be from a small business industry sector targeted by the City and may be an individually owned franchise as long as it meets all other criteria. The façade grant award would be a 50% reimbursement of total projects costs with a maximum award of \$15,000. Up to \$4,000 of the total available may be spent on outdoor furniture and dining fixtures. The grant award amount will decline over time rewarding projects completed in a timely manner. If an awarded project is not started within one year of award, the award will be withdrawn.

d. Tax Increment Fund Rebate

Refunding a portion of City tax revenue generated by on-site/building improvements or new construction (increment) could be another potential incentive to encourage targeted retail development in Downtown Green Cove Springs. The refunded amount would be paid out over a five (5) year period with a declining scale of refunds to be determined by the City. The applicant would enter into a Performance Agreement with the City detailing the proposed capital investment and improvements to be made and the proposed increment rebate amounts and periods. The grant is a reimbursement of a portion of City Ad-Valorem taxes paid by the applicant. The CRA shall utilize the Tax Increment Fund of the Community Redevelopment Agency to provide the tax increment rebate proposed in addition to other incentives and CRA programming and redevelopment powers as authorized by F.S. 163.360, Part III.

6. When feasible, the City should encourage acquisition and subsequent redevelopment by the private market. Other related activities that may be undertaken by the City include:
 - a. Map and index all commercial properties in the Redevelopment Area to provide detailed information on parcel boundaries, sizes, and ownership.
 - b. Identify and inventory all relevant substandard properties.
 - c. Document and analyze parking demands and infrastructure constraints throughout the Redevelopment Area.
 - d. Document site criteria for modern mixed-use developments by business type to facilitate the understanding of contemporary developer site and parking requirements.
 - e. The City may facilitate aggregation and redevelopment of “problem” or constrained parcels or groups of parcels.
 - f. The City may assist in the purchase, sale, negotiation, and coordination of land assembly. However, the City shall not use eminent domain to acquire land that will be ultimately used or transferred for private development.
 - g. Identify catalyst sites such as the City property at Walnut and St Johns Avenue to serve as important strategic assets to cause an early and precedent-setting change in the community redevelopment area and to spur other growth.

Objective 3: Increase the Downtown Parking Supply

Strategies:

1. Provide additional parking spaces within City owned property at the Palmetto Avenue and Spring Street intersection, GCS Downtown Master Plan Implementation Phase 1, #7C.
2. Provide Festival Street Parking along Magnolia Avenue between Walnut and Spring Street, GCS Downtown Master Plan Implementation Phase 1, #7D.
3. Provide on-street parking on Magnolia Avenue between Spring and Ferris Street, GCS Downtown Master Plan Implementation Phase 1, #7E.

4. Provide on-street parking along Magnolia Avenue between Oak Street and Ferris Street. (GCS Parking Study Recommendation).

Objective 4: Incorporate housing revitalization through housing maintenance programs and rehabilitation services. These strategies funded through the SHIP and CDBG programs will help correct the blighted conditions of unsanitary or unsafe conditions Unsanitary or unsafe conditions (*Figures 13-29 of the Finding of Necessity Report*), associated with residential uses; and deterioration of site or other improvements (*Figures 30-33 of the Finding of Necessity Report*).

Strategies:

1. By addressing the problems associated with substandard and dilapidated housing, the City/CRA will mitigate contributing blight conditions within the Redevelopment Area.
2. In the same manner, redevelopment efforts shall be complimented with efforts to provide affordable/workforce housing to residents of low to moderate income, including the elderly.
3. Promote programs for homeowners to rehabilitate their homes. Such programs include zero interest loans or information on other funding sources for the repair of single and multi-family homes depending on the applicant's income.
4. Assist low-income households through the SHIP program with down payment and closing costs assistance. The assistance may be for the purchase of an existing structure.
5. Infrastructure improvements such as roadway improvements, stormwater, wastewater, and potable water make properties more conducive for development. The City may undertake infrastructure improvements in partnership with private entities. If determined improving the infrastructure of certain properties is beneficial to the City for housing revitalization and blight mitigation within the Redevelopment Area, the CRA may undertake capital improvements on these individual properties.
6. Work with the private sector and Non-Government Organizations to create programs that improve the availability of affordable workforce housing for low to moderate income residents
7. Work with the City of Green Cove Springs and Clay County to encourage development and renovation of Mixed-Use, Affordable, Workforce, and Mixed-Income Housing.

Primary Objective 5: Establish a creative, equitable, efficient and practical funding and financing mechanism to properly implement this Plan. These strategies will correct the blighted conditions of identified in the Finding of Necessity Report and the Implementation steps identified in the Downtown Master Plan.

Strategies:

1. It is important the City/CRA identify and secure all effective sources of funding including, but not necessarily limited to, increment revenues, non-ad valorem assessments, and grant funding revenue.
2. The City/CRA shall be willing to contemplate the issuance of bonds, secure other financial instruments, seek and utilize grants, and seek out other sources and alternatives to aid in implementing this Plan.

Objective 6: Ensure the Redevelopment Area is safe and clean over a period of time. These strategies will correct the blighted conditions of unsanitary or unsafe conditions Unsanitary or unsafe conditions (*Figures 13-29 of the Finding of Necessity Report*), associated with residential uses; and deterioration of site or other improvements (*Figures 30-33 of the Finding of Necessity Report*).

Strategies:

1. The City will identify, execute, and coordinate special maintenance standards and programs for public

facilities, roadways, open space areas, entries, and commercial uses along the three corridors.

2. The Community Redevelopment Act encourages “community policing innovations.” This concept is defined as policing techniques or strategies designed to decrease crime by reducing opportunities for, and increasing the perceived risks of engaging in, criminal activity through visible presence of law enforcement in the community, including, but not limited to, community mobilization, neighborhood watch programs, citizen patrol, foot patrol, or intensified motorized patrol. The City will review these programs to improve the actual and perceived security, building safety, and appearance of the Redevelopment Area.

Objective 7: The City may plan, design, and deliver additional infrastructure improvements or services within the Redevelopment Area, if deemed those improvements enhance the quality or attractiveness of the Redevelopment Area especially with regard to public amenities. These strategies will correct the blighted conditions of unsanitary or unsafe conditions (*Pgs. 18, 23 and 24 of the Finding of Necessity Report*); and deterioration of site or other improvements (*Pgs. 18, 23 and 24 of the Finding of Necessity Report*).

Strategies:

1. Such additional infrastructure may include undergrounding utilities in certain areas to achieve a desired visual impact, upgrading technology, and telecommunications availability to attract businesses or the enhancement of landscape areas. Such additional improvements will complement the redevelopment plans for the Redevelopment Area.
2. Additional services may include extraordinary right-of-way or other public area maintenance, planning, and implementing cultural, charitable or place-making activities, events and related services which showcase the Redevelopment Area.
3. The CRA shall acquire land and create / expand regional stormwater retention areas and conveyance systems as needed to accommodate proposed growth

Objective 8: Historic Preservation

Strategies:

1. Support programs that contribute to the renovation and preservation of historic structures and the downtown historic district.
2. Restoration of the Rivers House located at Spring Street and Magnolia Avenue. Provide additional funding to upgrade the Rivers House to address site and building code violations and to approve the visual appeal of a vital community landmark.

Objective 9: Parks/Public Spaces

Strategies:

1. Provide support, including funding, for construction of facilities for Spring Park that will draw visitors to the CRA commercial district while simultaneously building a sense of, “Place,” in the downtown area.
2. Work to improve pedestrian access from in the downtown area to Spring Park.
3. Design and construct City Hall Park between City Hall and US 17 (Implementation step #12, Downtown Master Plan).

Objective 10: Redevelopment Administration

Strategies:

As provided for in Florida Statute 163, Part III, the Green Cove Springs Community Redevelopment Agency will utilize Incremental Tax Revenues to fund administration, overhead or any other expenses encumbered to achieve the Redevelopment Goals identified within this CRA Plan, including:

1. Redevelopment planning, surveys, and financial analysis.
2. Acquisition of real property in the CRA District.
3. Clearance and preparation of areas for redevelopment.
4. Repayment of borrowed funds.
5. All expenses related to bonds and other indebtedness.
6. Development of affordable and workforce housing.
7. Provide funding for legal and professional services as needed.

Section 5 - Financial Projections

Base-year Property Values

The base-year for the Green Cove Springs CRA is 2023, as defined in the interlocal agreement between the Green Cove Springs CRA, the City of Green Cove Springs and the Clay County Commission, and the first contributions to the Green Cove Springs CRA Trust Fund will begin after January 1, 2024.

Implementation of the CRA Plan is projected to generate approximately \$9.7 million in net new property taxes between FY 2023 and 2053. The distribution of these net new taxes is provided in the following estimates. This estimate assumes an annual average growth of TIF of 1.5%.

Project Green Cove Springs CRA TIF Revenues (3% Growth Rate)

	City TIF	County TIF	Total TIF
2024	5,798	9,508	15,306
2025	11,770	19,302	31,072
2026	17,921	29,389	47,310
2027	24,256	39,779	64,036
2028	30,782	50,481	81,263
2029	37,503	61,504	99,007
2030	44,427	72,857	117,284
2031	51,557	84,551	136,109
2032	58,902	96,596	155,498
2033	66,467	109,002	175,469
2034	74,259	121,781	196,040
2035	82,285	134,942	217,227
2036	90,551	148,499	239,050
2037	99,066	162,462	261,528
2038	107,835	176,845	284,680
2039	116,869	191,658	308,527
2040	126,173	206,916	333,089
2041	135,756	222,632	358,388
2042	145,626	238,819	384,446
2043	155,793	255,492	411,285
2044	166,265	272,665	438,930
2045	177,051	290,354	467,404
2046	188,160	308,573	496,733
2047	199,603	327,338	526,941
2048	211,389	346,667	558,055
2049	223,528	366,575	590,103
2050	236,032	387,080	623,113
2051	248,911	408,201	657,112
2052	262,176	429,956	692,132
2053	275,840	452,363	728,202
Total	\$ 3,672,550	\$ 6,022,789	\$ 9,695,338

Section 6 - Legal Description

Section 7 – Chapter 163.370 Powers

163.370 Powers; counties and municipalities; community redevelopment agencies.

(1) Counties and municipalities may not exercise the power of eminent domain for the purpose of preventing or eliminating a slum area or blighted area as defined in this part; however, counties and municipalities may acquire property by eminent domain within a community redevelopment area, subject to the limitations set forth in ss. 73.013 and 73.014 or other general law.

(2) Every county and municipality shall have all the powers necessary or convenient to carry out and effectuate the purposes and provisions of this part, including the following powers in addition to others herein granted:

(a) To make and execute contracts and other instruments necessary or convenient to the exercise of its powers under this part.

(b) To disseminate slum clearance and community redevelopment information.

(c) To undertake and carry out community redevelopment and related activities within the community redevelopment area, which may include:

1. Acquisition of property within a slum area or a blighted area by purchase, lease, option, gift, grant, bequest, devise, or other voluntary method of acquisition.

2. Demolition and removal of buildings and improvements.

3. Installation, construction, or reconstruction of streets, utilities, parks, playgrounds, public areas of major hotels that are constructed in support of convention centers, including meeting rooms, banquet facilities, parking garages, lobbies, and passageways, and other improvements necessary for carrying out in the community redevelopment area the community redevelopment objectives of this part in accordance with the community redevelopment plan.

4. Disposition of any property acquired in the community redevelopment area at its fair value as provided in s. 163.380 for uses in accordance with the community redevelopment plan.

5. Carrying out plans for a program of voluntary or compulsory repair and rehabilitation of buildings or other improvements in accordance with the community redevelopment plan.

6. Acquisition by purchase, lease, option, gift, grant, bequest, devise, or other voluntary method of acquisition of real property in the community redevelopment area which, under the community redevelopment plan, is to be repaired or rehabilitated for dwelling use or related facilities, repair or rehabilitation of the structures for guidance purposes, and resale of the property.

7. Acquisition by purchase, lease, option, gift, grant, bequest, devise, or other voluntary method of acquisition of any other real property in the community redevelopment area when necessary to eliminate unhealthful, unsanitary, or unsafe conditions; lessen density; eliminate obsolete or other uses detrimental to the public welfare; or otherwise to remove or prevent the spread of blight or deterioration or to provide land for needed public facilities.

8. Acquisition, without regard to any requirement that the area be a slum or blighted area, of air rights in an area consisting principally of land in highways, railway or subway tracks, bridge or tunnel entrances, or other similar facilities which have a blighting influence on the surrounding area and over which air rights sites are to be developed for the elimination of such blighting influences and for the provision of housing (and related facilities and uses) designed specifically for, and limited to, families and individuals of low or moderate income.

9. Acquisition by purchase, lease, option, gift, grant, bequest, devise, or other voluntary method of acquisition of property in unincorporated enclaves surrounded by the boundaries of a community redevelopment area when it is determined necessary by the agency to accomplish the community redevelopment plan.

10. Construction of foundations and platforms necessary for the provision of air rights sites of housing (and related facilities and uses) designed specifically for, and limited to, families and individuals of low or moderate income.

(d) To provide, or to arrange or contract for, the furnishing or repair by any person or agency, public or private, of services, privileges, works, streets, roads, public utilities, or other facilities for or in connection with a community redevelopment; to install, construct, and reconstruct streets, utilities, parks, playgrounds, and other public improvements; and to agree to any conditions that it deems reasonable and appropriate which are attached to federal financial assistance and imposed pursuant to federal law relating to the determination of prevailing salaries or wages or compliance with labor standards, in the undertaking or carrying out of a community redevelopment and related activities, and to include in any contract let in connection with such redevelopment and related activities provisions to fulfill such of the conditions as it deems reasonable and appropriate.

(e) Within the community redevelopment area:

1. To enter into any building or property in any community redevelopment area in order to make inspections, surveys, appraisals, soundings, or test borings and to obtain an order for this purpose from a court of competent jurisdiction in the event entry is denied or resisted.

2. To acquire by purchase, lease, option, gift, grant, bequest, devise, or other voluntary method of acquisition any personal or real property, together with any improvements thereon.

3. To hold, improve, clear, or prepare for redevelopment any such property.

4. To mortgage, pledge, hypothecate, or otherwise encumber or dispose of any real property.

5. To insure or provide for the insurance of any real or personal property or operations of the county or municipality against any risks or hazards, including the power to pay premiums on any such insurance.

6. To enter into any contracts necessary to effectuate the purposes of this part.

7. To solicit requests for proposals for redevelopment of parcels of real property contemplated by a community redevelopment plan to be acquired for redevelopment purposes by a

community redevelopment agency and, as a result of such requests for proposals, to advertise for the disposition of such real property to private persons pursuant to s. 163.380 prior to acquisition of such real property by the community redevelopment agency.

(f) To invest any community redevelopment funds held in reserves or sinking funds or any such funds not required for immediate disbursement in property or securities in which savings banks may legally invest funds subject to their control and to redeem such bonds

as have been issued pursuant to s. 163.385 at the redemption price established therein or to purchase such bonds at less than redemption price, all such bonds so redeemed or purchased to be canceled.

(g) To borrow money and to apply for and accept advances, loans, grants, contributions, and any other form of financial assistance from the Federal Government or the state, county, or other public body or from any sources, public or private, for the purposes of this part and to give such security as may be required and to enter into and carry out contracts or agreements in connection therewith; and to include in any contract for financial assistance with the Federal Government for or with respect to community redevelopment and related activities such conditions imposed pursuant to federal laws as the county or municipality deems reasonable and appropriate which are not inconsistent with the purposes of this part.

(h) To make or have made all surveys and plans necessary to the carrying out of the purposes of this part; to contract with any person, public or private, in making and carrying out such plans; and to adopt or approve, modify, and amend such plans, which plans may include, but are not limited to:

1. Plans for carrying out a program of voluntary or compulsory repair and rehabilitation of buildings and improvements.
2. Plans for the enforcement of state and local laws, codes, and regulations relating to the use of land and the use and occupancy of buildings and improvements and to the compulsory repair, rehabilitation, demolition, or removal of buildings and improvements.
3. Appraisals, title searches, surveys, studies, and other plans and work necessary to prepare for the undertaking of community redevelopment and related activities.

(i) To develop, test, and report methods and techniques, and carry out demonstrations and other activities, for the prevention and the elimination of slums and urban blight and developing and demonstrating new or improved means of providing housing for families and persons of low income.

(j) To apply for, accept, and utilize grants of funds from the Federal Government for such purposes.

(k) To prepare plans for and assist in the relocation of persons (including individuals, families, business concerns, nonprofit organizations, and others) displaced from a community redevelopment area and to make relocation payments to or with respect to such persons for moving expenses and losses of property for which reimbursement or compensation is not otherwise made, including the making of such payments financed by the Federal Government.

(l) To appropriate such funds and make such expenditures as are necessary to carry out the purposes of this part; to zone or rezone any part of the county or municipality or make exceptions

from building regulations; and to enter into agreements with a housing authority, which agreements may extend over any period, notwithstanding any provision or rule of law to the contrary, respecting action to be taken by such county or municipality pursuant to any of the powers granted by this part.

(m) To close, vacate, plan, or replan streets, roads, sidewalks, ways, or other places and to plan or replan any part of the county or municipality.

(n) To organize, coordinate, and direct the administration of the provisions of this part, as they may apply to such county or municipality, in order that the objective of remedying slum and blighted areas and preventing the causes thereof within such county or municipality may be most effectively promoted and achieved and to establish such new office or offices of the county or municipality or to reorganize existing offices in order to carry out such purpose most effectively.

(o) To develop and implement community policing innovations.

(3) The following projects may not be paid for or financed by increment revenues:

(a) Construction or expansion of administrative buildings for public bodies or police and fire buildings, unless each taxing authority agrees to such method of financing for the construction or expansion, or unless the construction or expansion is contemplated as part of a community policing innovation.

(b) Installation, construction, reconstruction, repair, or alteration of any publicly owned capital improvements or projects if such projects or improvements were scheduled to be installed, constructed, reconstructed, repaired, or altered within 3 years of the approval of the community redevelopment plan by the governing body pursuant to a previously approved public capital improvement or project schedule or plan of the governing body which approved the community redevelopment plan unless and until such projects or improvements have been removed from such schedule or plan of the governing body and 3 years have elapsed since such removal or such projects or improvements were identified in such schedule or plan to be funded, in whole or in part, with funds on deposit within the community redevelopment trust fund.

(c) General government operating expenses unrelated to the planning and carrying out of a community redevelopment plan.

(4) With the approval of the governing body, a community redevelopment agency may:

(a) Prior to approval of a community redevelopment plan or approval of any modifications of the plan, acquire real property in a community redevelopment area by purchase, lease, option, gift, grant, bequest, devise, or other voluntary method of acquisition; demolish and remove any structures on the property; and pay all costs related to the acquisition, demolition, or removal, including any administrative or relocation expenses.

(b) Assume the responsibility to bear any loss that may arise as the result of the exercise of authority under this subsection, in the event that the real property is not made part of the community redevelopment area.

(5) A community redevelopment agency shall procure all commodities and services under the same purchasing processes and requirements that apply to the county or municipality that created the agency.

Section 8 - Appendices

City – County interlocal Agreement

City Finding of Necessity Resolution

County CRA Delegation Resolution

Green Cove Springs Downtown Master Plan