

City of Gainesville

FINDING OF NECESSITY REPORT FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE EASTSIDE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AREA

Prepared for:
City of Gainesville



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Summary

This Findings Report describes the physical, economic and regulatory conditions within the Eastside Expansion Study Area ("Study Area"). The methodology utilized to accomplish this task included: a field study and inspection; a review of City maintained statistics; and a review of the City's Comprehensive Plan and other studies prepared by the City. The information presented in this Findings Report is adequate by the standards of Scenario One, explained in Section 3.0, to acknowledge blight within the Study Area. The foregoing factors together with other data of inference provided by the City of Gainesville provide substantial evidence towards findings of blight. Based on this information and statistics there is a substantial number of deteriorated or deteriorating structures and the City may determine the Study Area to be blighted.

Of the fourteen criteria listed in Chapter 163.340 (8) F.S., the blight findings analysis indicates that three conditions exist in the Study Area hampering its immediate and long-term social, economic and physical development.

a) Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, parking facilities, roadways, bridges and public transportation facilities (Chapter 163.340(8)(a) F.S.)

The absence of sufficient public transit headways and transit amenities compromises pedestrian safety in the study area. The lack of public parking facilities creates a less than adequate parking environment in the study area by detracting from the attractiveness and creating safety hazards. Incomplete roadways, unpaved roadways, inadequate and an incomplete drainage infrastructure, and an absence of a complete pedestrian environment contribute to unsatisfactory roadway conditions for vehicular movements and overall public safety.

c) Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness (Chapter 163.340(8)(c) F.S.)

Inconsistent lot sizes, and the pattern of vacant and undeveloped land found throughout the Study Area inhibit development and redevelopment, leading to substantial site deterioration, economic distress and an underutilization of land in the Study Area.

e) Deterioration of site or other improvements (Chapter 163.340(8)(e) F.S.)

Physical deterioration in the housing stock, unkempt and overgrown lawns, deteriorated structures, unsanitary disposal of garbage, contributes to an overall impression of degradation, inadequate infrastructure, and unsanitary conditions.

Due to the isolation of the study area relative to the rest of the municipality, yards, dangerous buildings and vacant land related incidents have augmented the deterioration and unsightly appearance of the community and has added to the blight within the Study Area.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The study area known as the “Eastside expansion” constitutes several neighborhoods and corridor-oriented business properties east of the City’s downtown business district and south of the existing Eastside Community Redevelopment Area (“CRA”). In strong contrast to the robust development and economic growth of the western area of the City, and that of the resurgent downtown, the Eastside Expansion area has had limited revitalization until recent years, and still lags that of the west side. Little commercial or residential development occurred through the 1970’s and 1980’s, and the average household income and educational attributes of the population lagged behind that of much of the balance of the City. While there were several reasons for this malaise, the points most often cited were the comparative isolation of the area relative to the University of Florida’s economic engine, the economic base shift from agriculture and dismissed reliance on the railway system as a dominant form of personal and goods transportation.

Recognizing the apparent lack of progress in the economic growth and vitality of the area, the East Gainesville Task Force became active in the early 1990’s. In 1996, the Task Force recommended the creation of a Community Redevelopment Area (a fourth area for Gainesville’s Community Redevelopment Agency). Following a thorough investigation of existing conditions for a proposed redevelopment area, and as documented in an Assessment of Needs Study prepared in the fall of the year 2000, the City of Gainesville City Commission adopted blight findings for the Eastside Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) in December, 2000 and the Eastside Redevelopment District Redevelopment Plan in October 2001.

In January 2006, the City Commission recognized the significant potential for redevelopment in Southeast Gainesville. In particular, the City Commission focused on an area with particular need and potential just south of and adjacent to, the current southern boundary of the Community Redevelopment Agency’s (CRA) Eastside Redevelopment Area. It was proposed that expanding the Redevelopment Area to include this area may encourage redevelopment to occur at a faster pace and a higher level. It was considered that the CRA can address blighted conditions by, among other steps, providing infrastructure, consolidating land, and marketing the area. Working with a consultant to prepare a Findings of Necessity (Blight Findings) Report would enable staff to determine the feasibility of such an expansion. The City Commission authorized staff to issue a Request for Proposal to hire a consultant to study the feasibility of expanding the Eastside Redevelopment Area, to prepare a Finding of Necessity report for a southern expansion of the Eastside Redevelopment Area, and, if supported by the Finding of Necessity report, update the Eastside Redevelopment Plan to include the expansion area.



Figure 1.0: Dilapidated Commercial Building near Southeast 4th Street and Southeast 11th Place

In May 2006, the City Commission authorized the consulting firm of APD, Inc. to prepare the Finding of Necessity Report for the southern expansion of the Eastside Redevelopment Area. In general, this document serves to determine the occurrence of blight in the proposed expansion area through statistical research, windshield investigations, and community discourse; summarizing previous findings of earlier, yet still relevant, planning initiatives; and to use this data to ultimately prepare a coalesced set of strategies to improve the Eastside Expansion Area while creating a symbiotic and seamless relationship with the existing Eastside Redevelopment Plan. Noting that the physical condition and pattern of development in this area are the products of some seventy years of development activity, the Plan offers a guide to those efforts that will take some time to come to fruition.



Figure 1.1 Abandoned properties on Southeast 4th Street and Southeast 3^d Terrace

1.1 Proposed Eastside Expansion Area Defined

The Study Area is located in Southeast Gainesville (**See Figure 1.2**), generally south of the Eastside CRA (**See Figure 1.3 and Figure 1.4**) and constitutes approximately 499 acres or 1.62 % of the City of Gainesville's total land area of 54 square miles. Combined with the existing Eastside Redevelopment Area, which is approximately 720 acres, the expansion area would represent 41.2% of the combined Eastside Redevelopment Area. A lengthy review process was undertaken to determine the exact size and boundaries of the Study Area. This review process included local stakeholders, public officials, and the consultant team. The expansion of the Eastside CRA is supplemented by data, studies and planning by the South East Gainesville Renaissance Initiative (SEGRI) in its assessment and discovery of extensive deterioration in key infrastructure outside the current Eastside CRA and its determination of unsafe and dilapidated conditions in many key sites within the proposed expansion area such as Kennedy Home Apartments and other sites. SEGRI incorporates the entire Eastside Expansion area, including Lincoln Estates (an exempt community under the Eastside Expansion because it is already developed and not found to be blighted) and seeks to encourage the developmental potential of this Study Area as it pertains to residential, single-family attached and detached units using new urban principles to result in neo-traditional development.

Having identified the Study Area shown in Figure 1.0, the team considered the specific conditions that constitute blight as listed in the Redevelopment Act identified by the Florida Legislature. An area may be determined blighted if it conforms to any one of the following two scenarios:

Scenario 1: 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, are leading to economic distress or endanger life or property, 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; or
- n) Governmentally owned property with adverse environmental conditions caused by a public or private entity. See Section 163.340(8), F.S.

Scenario 2: An area in which at least one of the factors identified above are present and all taxing authorities agree either by interlocal agreement or agreements with the agency or by resolution, that the area is blighted.

Figure 1.2 – Eastside Expansion Area Location within the Gainesville City Limits

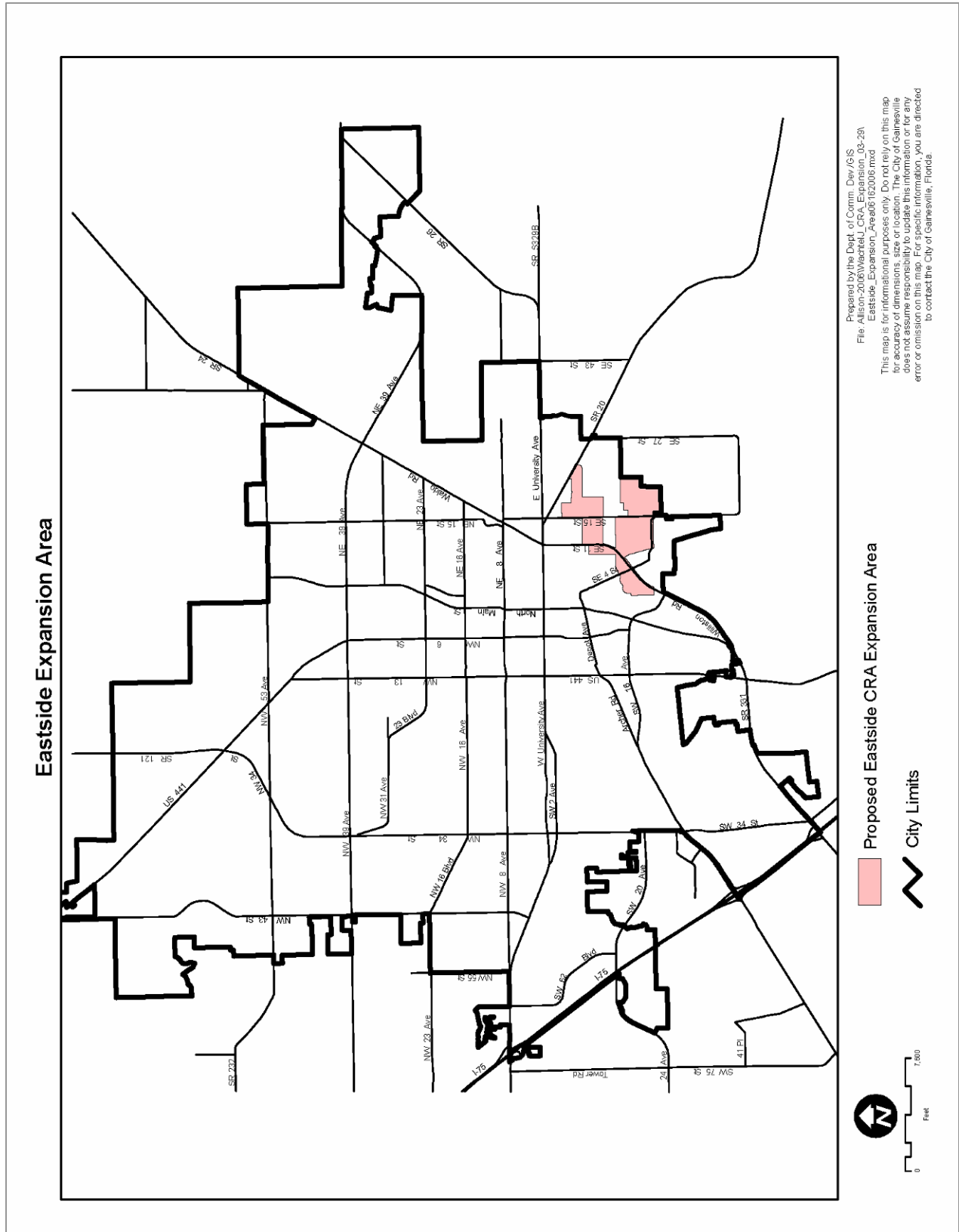


Figure 1.3: Eastside CRA with the Proposed Eastside Expansion CRA

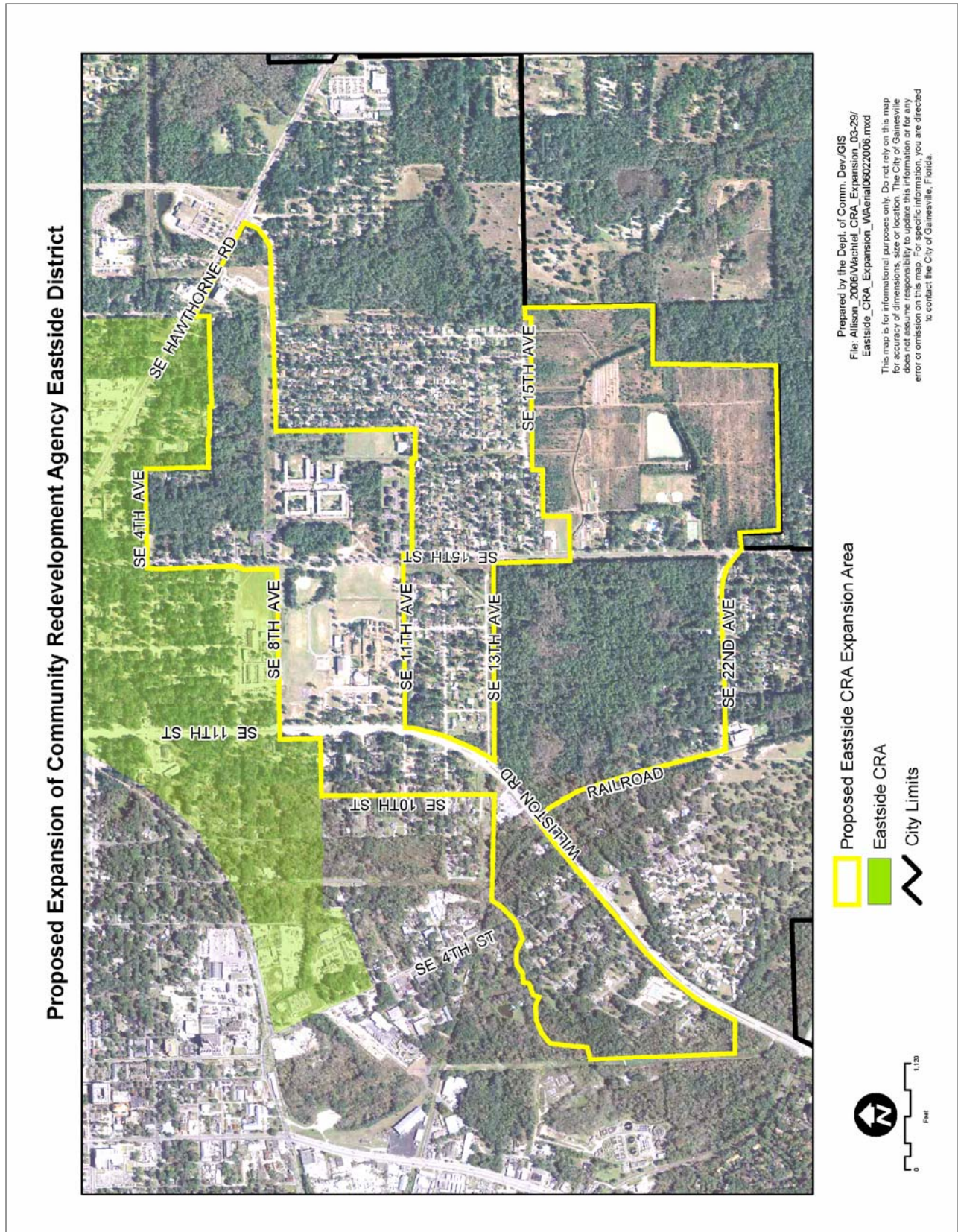
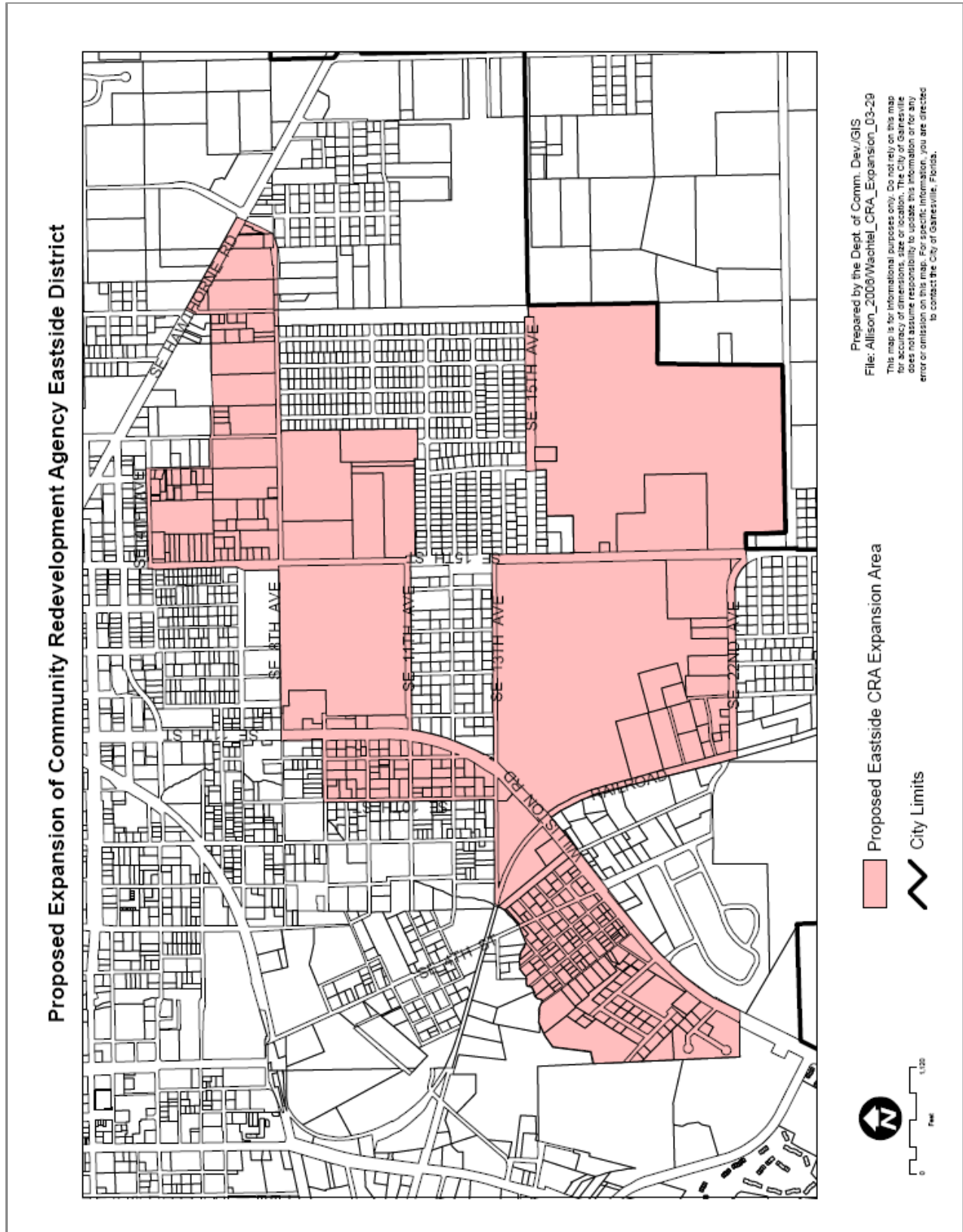


Figure 1.4: Eastside Expansion CRA



1.2 Community Redevelopment Act Overview

The purpose of the Redevelopment Act is to assist local governments in preventing and/or eliminating blighted conditions detrimental to the sustainability of economically and socially vibrant communities or areas. In 2000, the City of Gainesville made a finding of blight in the Eastside Redevelopment Area. In 2006, due to the high probability of the presence of blight in adjacent areas, a plan for the finding of necessity in the Eastside Expansion Area was proposed for the southern boundary of the district. To include the Study Area in the existing Eastside Redevelopment Area and update the East Gainesville Redevelopment Plan, the City needs to complete a finding of blight for the area. The following paragraphs describe the blighting conditions, their specific effects and the intentions of the community redevelopment mechanism as a tool for redevelopment activities and programs.

Section 163.335(1), F.S. ...[blighted areas] constitute a serious and growing menace, injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and welfare of the residents of the state; that the existence of such areas contributes substantially and increasingly to the spread of disease and crime, constitutes an economic and social liability imposing onerous burdens which decrease the tax base and reduce tax revenues, substantially impairs or arrests sound growth, retards the provision of housing accommodations, aggravates traffic problems, and substantially hampers the elimination of traffic hazards and the improvement of traffic facilities; and that the prevention and elimination of slums and blight is a matter of state policy and state concern in order that the state and its counties and municipalities shall not continue to be endangered by areas which are focal centers of disease, promote juvenile delinquency, and consume an excessive proportion of its revenues because of the extra services required for police, fire, accident, hospitalization, and other forms of public protection, services, and facilities.

Section 163.335(2), F.S. ...certain slum or blighted areas, or portions thereof, may require acquisition, clearance, and disposition subject to use restrictions, as provided in this part, since the prevailing condition of decay may make impracticable the reclamation of the area by conservation or rehabilitation; that other areas or portions thereof may, through the means provided in this part, be susceptible of conservation or rehabilitation in such a manner that the conditions and evils enumerated may be eliminated, remedied, or prevented; and that salvageable slum and blighted areas can be conserved and rehabilitated through appropriate public action as herein authorized and the cooperation and voluntary action of the owners and tenants of the property in such areas.

Section 163.335(3), F.S. ...powers conferred by this part are for public uses and purposes which public money may be expended and the power of eminent domain and police power exercised, and the necessity in the public interest for

the provisions herein enacted is hereby declared as a matter of legislative determination.

Section 163.335(5), F.S. ...the preservation or enhancement of the tax base from which a taxing authority realizes tax revenues is essential to its existence and financial health; that the preservation and enhancement of such tax base is implicit in the purposes for which a taxing authority is established; that tax increment financing is an effective method of achieving such preservation and enhancement in areas in which such tax base is declining; that community redevelopment in such areas, when complete, will enhance such tax base and provide increased tax revenues to all affected taxing authorities, increasing their ability to accomplish their other respective purposes; and that the preservation and enhancement of the tax base in such areas through tax increment financing and the levying of taxes by such taxing authorities therefore and the appropriation of funds to a redevelopment trust fund bears a substantial relation to the purposes of such taxing authorities and is for their respective purposes and concerns.

Section 163.335(6), F.S. ...there exists in counties and municipalities of the state a severe shortage of housing affordable to residents of low or moderate income, including the elderly; that the existence of such condition affects the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of such counties and municipalities and retards their growth and economic and social development; and that the elimination or improvement of such conditions is a proper matter of state policy and state concern is for a valid and desirable purpose.

Chapter 2002-294, Laws of Florida (2002), amended Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, dealing with community redevelopment agencies, areas, and plans. Section 10(3) of Chapter 2002-294 provides that in the case of the expansion of a community redevelopment area after July 1, 2002, the governing body, in this case the City of Gainesville, must adopt a resolution, supported by data and analysis which makes a legislative finding that the condition in the expanded area meets the criteria described in amended Section 163.340(7) or (8) defining slum or blight. The resolution must find the existence of slum or blight, as defined in the aforementioned section, in the "expanded area" and further find that the rehabilitation, redevelopment, etc. of such area is necessary in the interest of the public health, safety, morals or welfare of the residents of the City. Prior to the adoption of such resolution, the governing body must provide public notice of the proposed action and at least 15 days before the proposed adoption of the resolution, mail by registered mail a notice to each taxing authority that levies ad valorem taxes on taxable property contained within the geographic areas of the expanded area. If a finding of blight is made, as described above, the Gainesville Community Redevelopment Agency may recommend a modification to a redevelopment plan, changing the boundaries of a redeveloping area to add the "expanded area" to such redevelopment area, as well as including other amendments to the plan. The City would then hold a hearing on the proposed modification to a community redevelopment plan, after public notice by publication in a newspaper having general circulation in the

area. Upon approval of the modified plan, the modified plan is deemed to be in full force and effect within the modified (original plus expanded) redevelopment area.

In the case of the Study Area, the City of Gainesville and Alachua County are the only taxing authorities with some financial interest in the implementation of a formalized redevelopment process. Other entities, that also may exercise certain jurisdiction or control within the same legal boundaries defined for this study will not, as a matter of law or policy of the City, experience any diminution in their ad valorem revenues stemming from a resolution that defines or finds blight as described herein. These entities are, in fact, likely to experience an increase in their revenues over time as the result of such action.

1.3 Planning Process

Determining if blight conditions exist within the Study Area is the initial step in ascertaining if it is appropriate to expand the existing Eastside Redevelopment Area. This analysis, which documents the extent of blight conditions and analysis in support of that documentation, is referred to as the "Finding of Necessity Report". This Report describes the physical, economic and regulatory conditions within the Study Area that are associated with blight or its causes and discusses the need for the expansion of the Eastside Redevelopment Area. The consultant team working with City staff inspected the Study Area, reviewed government maintained statistics and other studies, and prepared this report.

1.4 General Profile and History

According to the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR), as of 2005 the City of Gainesville has a population of 119,889 residents. U.S. Census figures describe Gainesville's population as young with 29.4% of the population between the ages of 18-24. Gainesville has a lower median age than the Florida state average and the number of college students is significantly above the state average, reflecting the influence of the University of Florida. As expected, the citywide owner occupancy (47.7%) is lower than the renter occupancy 52.3%. The population of the Study Area correlates with citywide population and housing characteristics relating to age and tenure. The Study Area contains 1,541 residents, 1.3% of the City of Gainesville's population, with a disproportionate number of elderly citizens (8.8% are over the age of 65), and 11% of the people living within the Study Area are between the ages of 18-24 or college age (2000 U.S. Census). Likewise the proportion of owner occupied units compared to renter occupied units in the Study Area is low with only 35.5% of the housing units in the Study Area owner occupied. The remaining percentage 64.5% of housing units are renter occupied.

The University of Florida, established in 1906, has historically taken a large role in the development of Gainesville and continues to be a dominant influence in its neighborhoods. Even though the University is located northwest of the proposed Eastside Expansion Area, only a small percentage of the 41,543 students reside in the

Eastside communities. A second major institutional influence upon the growth of Gainesville has been the growth of the large hospital complexes during the 1970s.

2.0 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT INVENTORY

The inventory of the existing physical conditions paints a descriptive picture of the current utilization of properties within the Expansion Area. A review and analysis of the Study Area's physical environment is required to determine whether certain blighting influences or conditions exist. Data used for this analysis was primarily taken from a number of sources including site visits, City maintained data from the City's Public Works and Community Development departments, and the City of Gainesville Comprehensive Plan. This section of the report documents the area's existing land uses, and visual character/condition of buildings and sites, future land use, existing zoning and transportation systems.

2.1 Existing Land Use

Residential

The single-family residential land use consists of 13.3% of the total land area in the Expansion Area. (See Figure 2.2) The Sugar Hill neighborhood is a residential community located on the western edge of the Expansion Area and is accessed by SE 11th Street. Single-family housing is also located along SE 15th Street in the northern quadrant. Multifamily residential dwellings consist of the Carver Garden Apartments and the now vacant and boarded Kennedy Homes apartments.

The condition of housing units varies from new construction ranch-style to older single-story dwellings in standard condition to various degrees of deterioration. Seventy-three (73) housing code violations have been issued in from 1999 – 2004. In addition, eighty-seven (87) properties within the Expansion Area have been issued building permits, and seven (7) are identified as candidates for demolition by the City's Code Enforcement Division.

Non-residential Uses

The non-residential land uses in the redevelopment area include commercial, industrial, mixed use, public service, agricultural, recreation and unimproved properties (Figure 2.0). Retail/Commercial land use areas generally occur directly along Hawthorne Road and along portions of SE 11th Street. Most of the development occurs as small lot, single proprietor uses, though some larger scale industrial buildings have been built within the last few years.



Figure 2.0: Example overgrown lot

The Alachua County School Board operates one elementary (Williams) school and one middle (Lincoln) school in the proposed Expansion Area (or study area). A large-scale school bus maintenance and administrative annex facility also is located between Hawthorne Road and University Avenue near the eastern edge of the district.

Perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of the study area is the large percentage of wetlands and vacant land. Even though the area is located in relatively close proximity to the downtown and is visible and/or accessible from the major arterials in the Expansion Area including SE 8th Avenue, SE 15th Street, SE 11th Street, approximately 40% of the study area (206 acres) remains as undeveloped land including non-developable wetland which makes urban development more difficult. From an environmental standpoint, some of this property can be permitted for development. Consequently, blight within this area encompasses a significantly larger area than in other CRAs. The vacant land factor obviously contributes to a much smaller tax base than would otherwise be the case with almost any non-exempt development and the haphazard location of vacant land makes organized development of other tracts difficult. Furthermore, many of the vacant tracts are used as illegal dumping sites. Much of this land has moderate to heavy vegetation cover, which contributes to the practice and which further deteriorates adjacent sites.

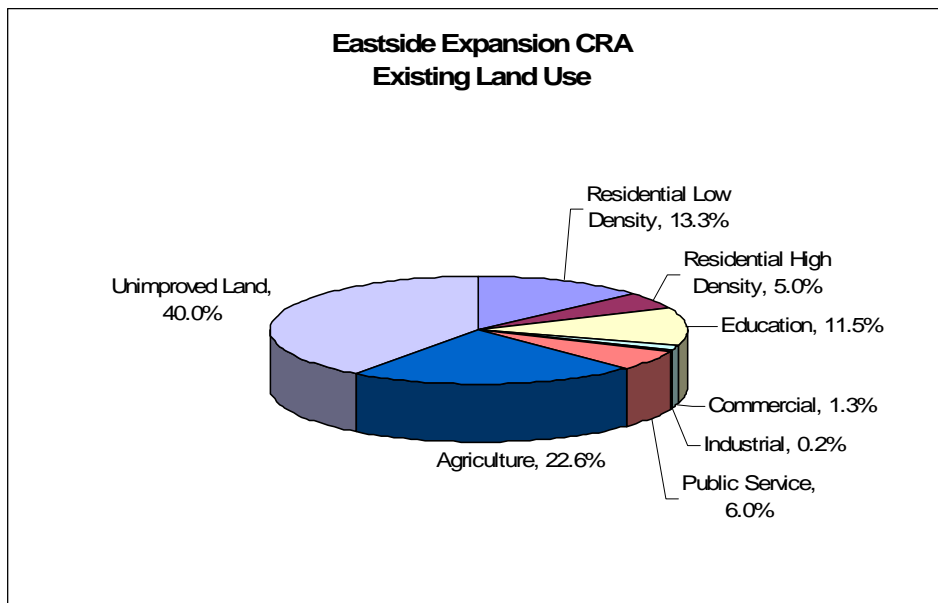
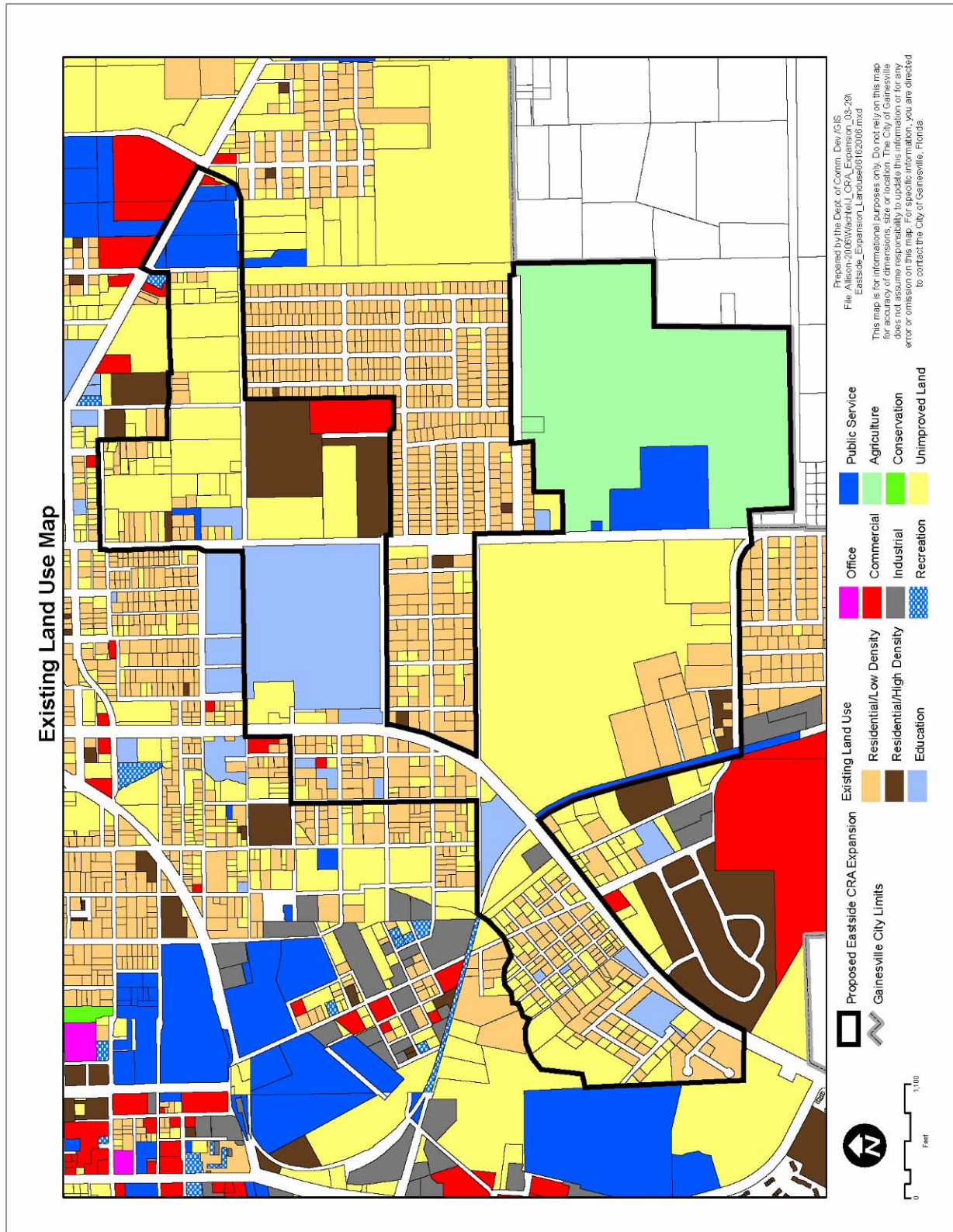


Figure 2.1: Proposed Eastside Expansion Existing Land Use

Figure 2.2 - Proposed Eastside Expansion CRA Existing Land Use



2.2 Infrastructure

As noted, a network of arterial and local streets traverses the study area. The arterial streets are typically designed as four-lane divided or five lane sections. The neighborhood streets are almost all two lanes, though several of the lane and right-of-way dimensions are of substandard width relative to current design criteria. Due to right-of-way constraints, many local streets in the Sugar Hill portion of the study area are discontinuous. Most local streets in the area were originally paved some thirty years ago. About .65 miles of the area's streets were "semi-paved," with material designed to last a maximum of 15 years. (See Figure 2.3 and 2.4) In addition, 3.38 miles of the streets do not have curb and gutter. This contributes to a greater number of defective and inadequate roadway infrastructure than elsewhere in the city. The City's Public Works Department continues to maintain and upgrade the condition of local streets on a "needs" basis, as limited funds are available.

Due in part to the aforementioned right-of-way limitations, the majority of neighborhood streets do not include sidewalks (6.16 miles). Several trunk collector roadways include sidewalks, though these facilities are discontinuous and under designed. While sidewalks also are present along most segments of the arterial roads, their width is relatively narrow and their location is usually within three feet of travel lanes.

The multi-lane arterial roadways, including SE 11th Street, tend to sever the pedestrian and broader community connections between the neighborhoods of the study area. Pedestrian crosswalks on these roads, or other features that would provide safer pedestrian access, are present only at major intersections. One exception to this condition is the rail trail, where the former railway line has been converted to an excellent pedestrian/bicycle amenity for all of the area and City users.

2.3 Drainage

The study area has relatively flat topography, with several creeks or streams in the area (Figure 2.6). The area's drainage is accommodated mainly via open swale and shallow ditch systems that convey water to the natural water bodies. Development in the area and in the neighboring upstream environs has, for the most part, occurred with few if any significant stormwater management facilities. Runoff from most of the major roadways and adjacent commercial sites discharges directly into the ditch and stream systems. In short, area-wide stormwater management and treatment facilities are all but absent.

The problems associated with this condition are standing water and periodic flooding in portions of this district, as well as the environmental damage caused by the introduction of untreated stormwater in the natural drainage system. While the City is engaged in efforts to remedy the problem, including the construction of interceptor ponds and culvert replacements, the needs are still significant relative to available funds.

In addition, The City of Gainesville has identified sections of the Study Area to have soil limitations for urban development (Figure 2.5) which further limits the area's ability to redevelop.

Figure 2.3 – Infrastructure Map

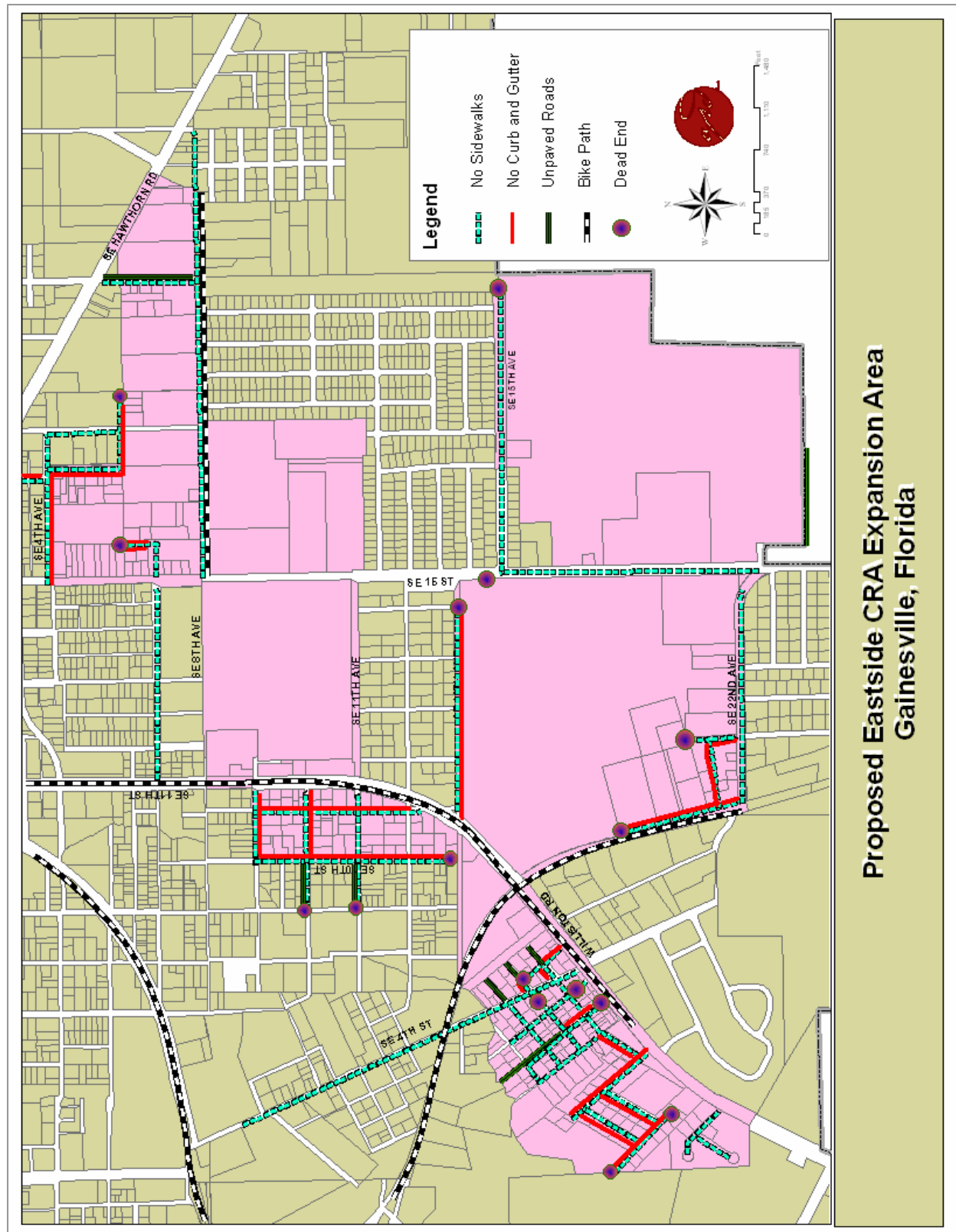


Figure 2.4 – Public Works Roadway Inventory
Source: City of Gainesville Public Works Department

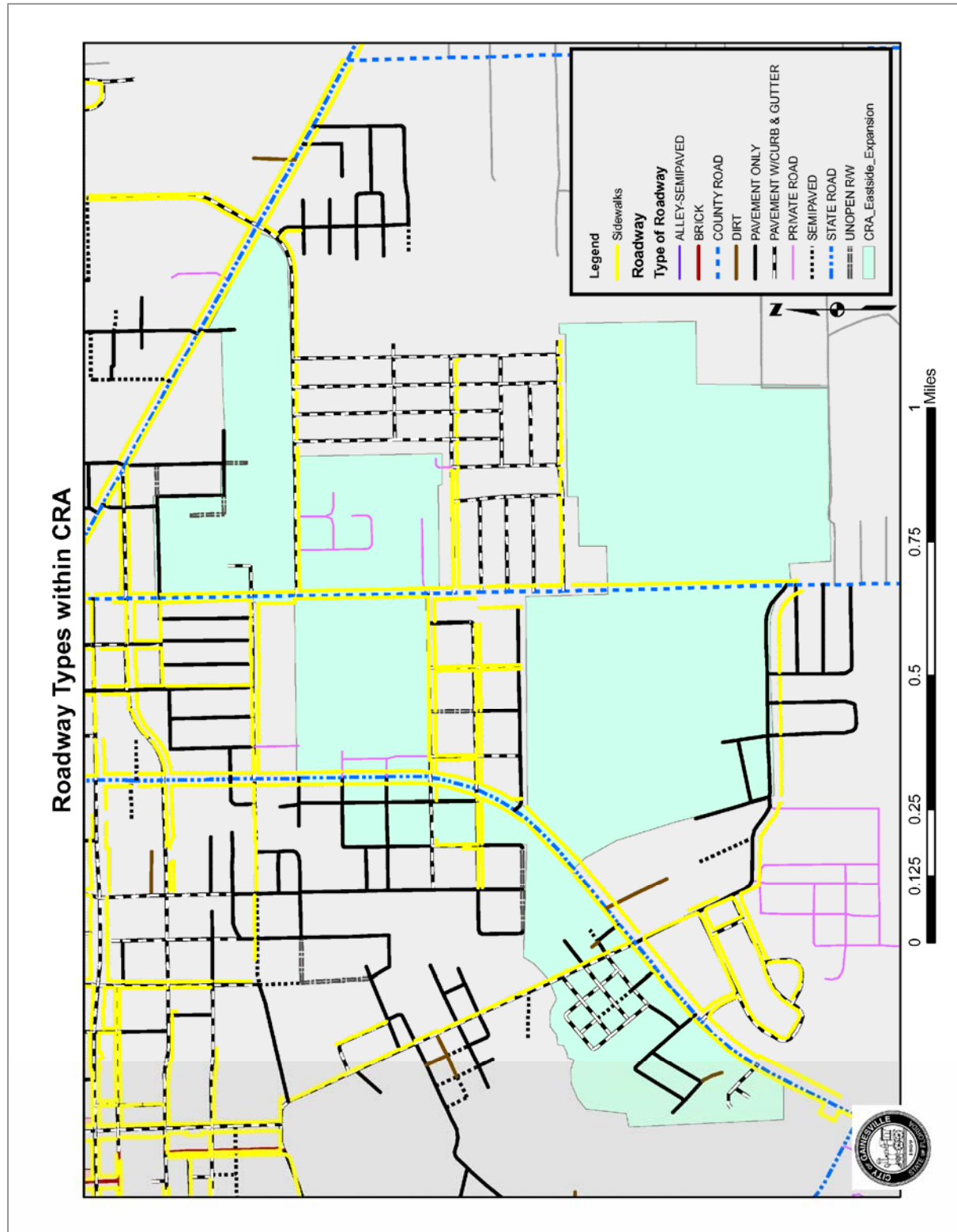


Figure 2.5 – Urban Soil Development Limitations
Source: City of Gainesville Comprehensive Plan

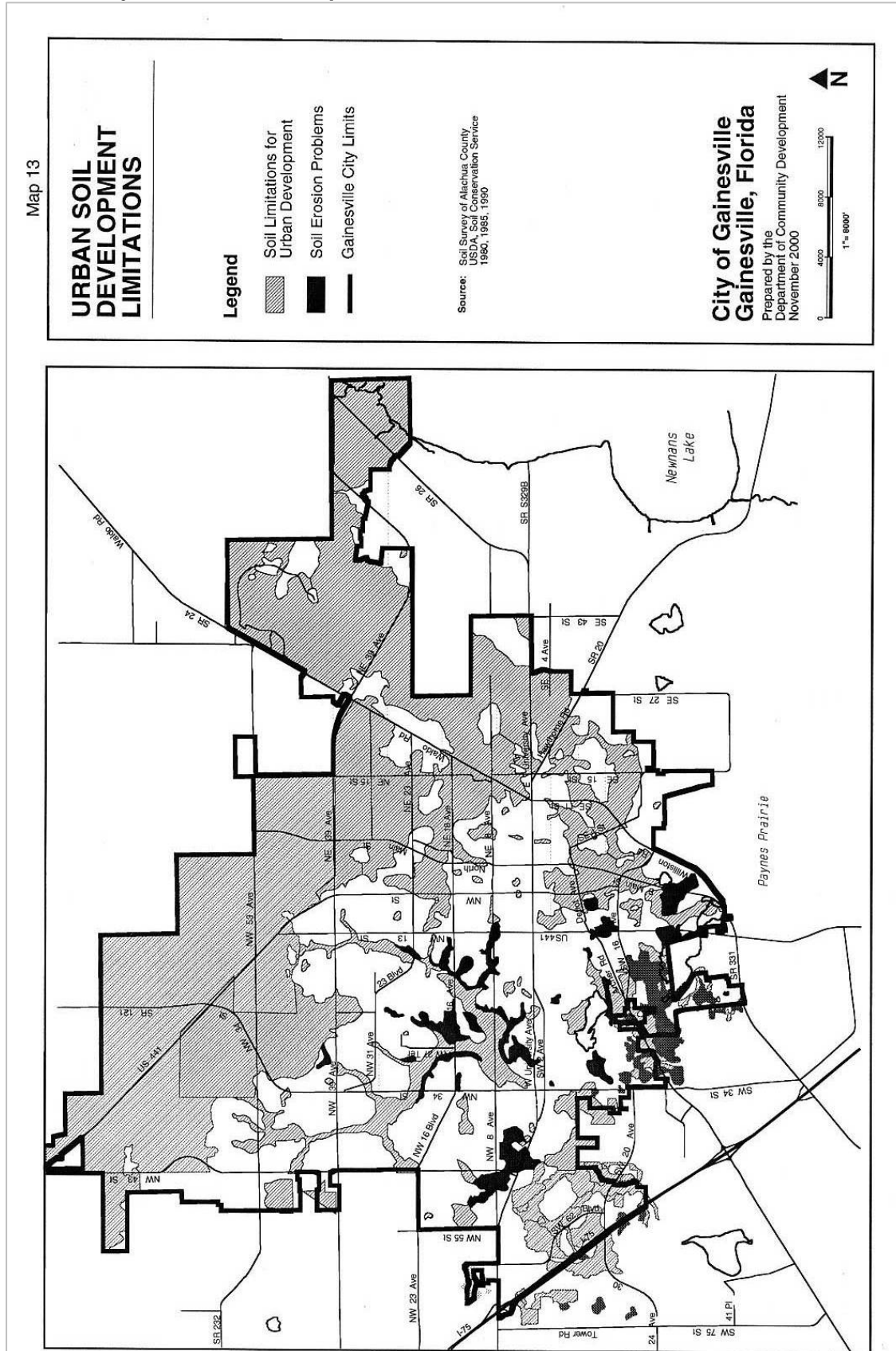
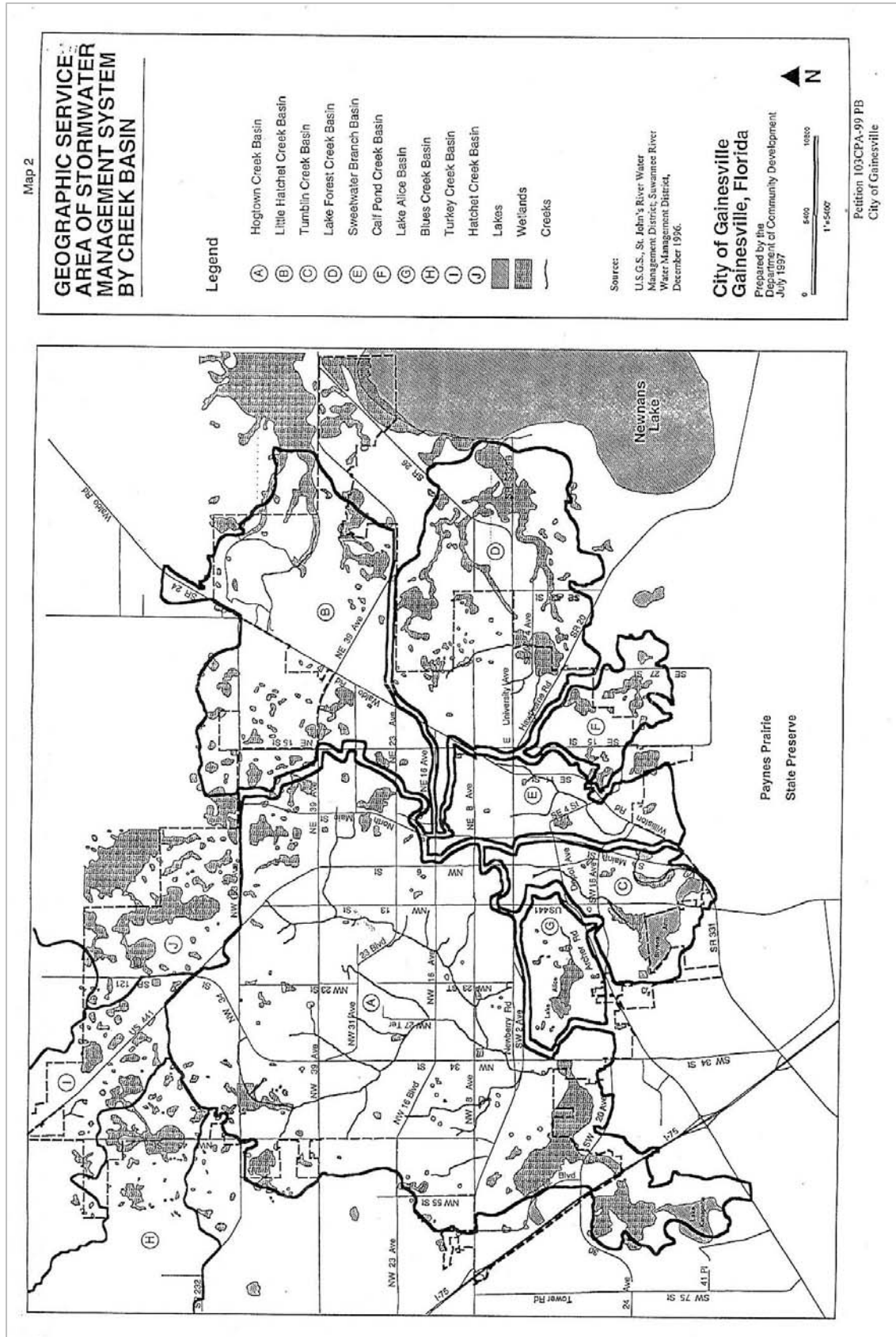


Figure 2.6 Storm Water
Source: City of Gainesville Comprehensive Plan



2.4 Transit

The City's Regional Transit System (RTS) operates in only portions of the study area. (See **Figure 2.7.**) In addition, there are an inadequate number of bus stops and other transit facilities in the area, and lengthy route headways discourage ridership. RTS is presently evaluating upgrades to service in the area based on their anticipated fleet expansion.

2.5 Parks

The study area is generally underrepresented for parks facilities. The largest park/recreation facility near the area, Lincoln Park, is effectively divorced from the study area population by virtue of Waldo Road's "edge" location and character as a high speed, arterial highway. Facilities at the smaller parks need repair, renovation, or basic improvements such as seating, new play equipment, trash containers, and drinking fountains.

2.6 Future Land Use & Zoning

The Future Land Use described on **Figure 2.8** is the future land use pattern per the 2000 City of Gainesville Comprehensive Plan. The future land use reflects a residential preservation approach and opportunities for new low density residential development in currently undeveloped areas. The future land use is significant when redefining the long-range development plan for the Expansion Area. In addition, the current zoning (**Figure 2.9**) will maintain the residential character of the study area in the existing residential neighborhoods as well as future development sites.

Figure 2.7 – RTS Routes
Source: City of Gainesville Public Works Department/RTS

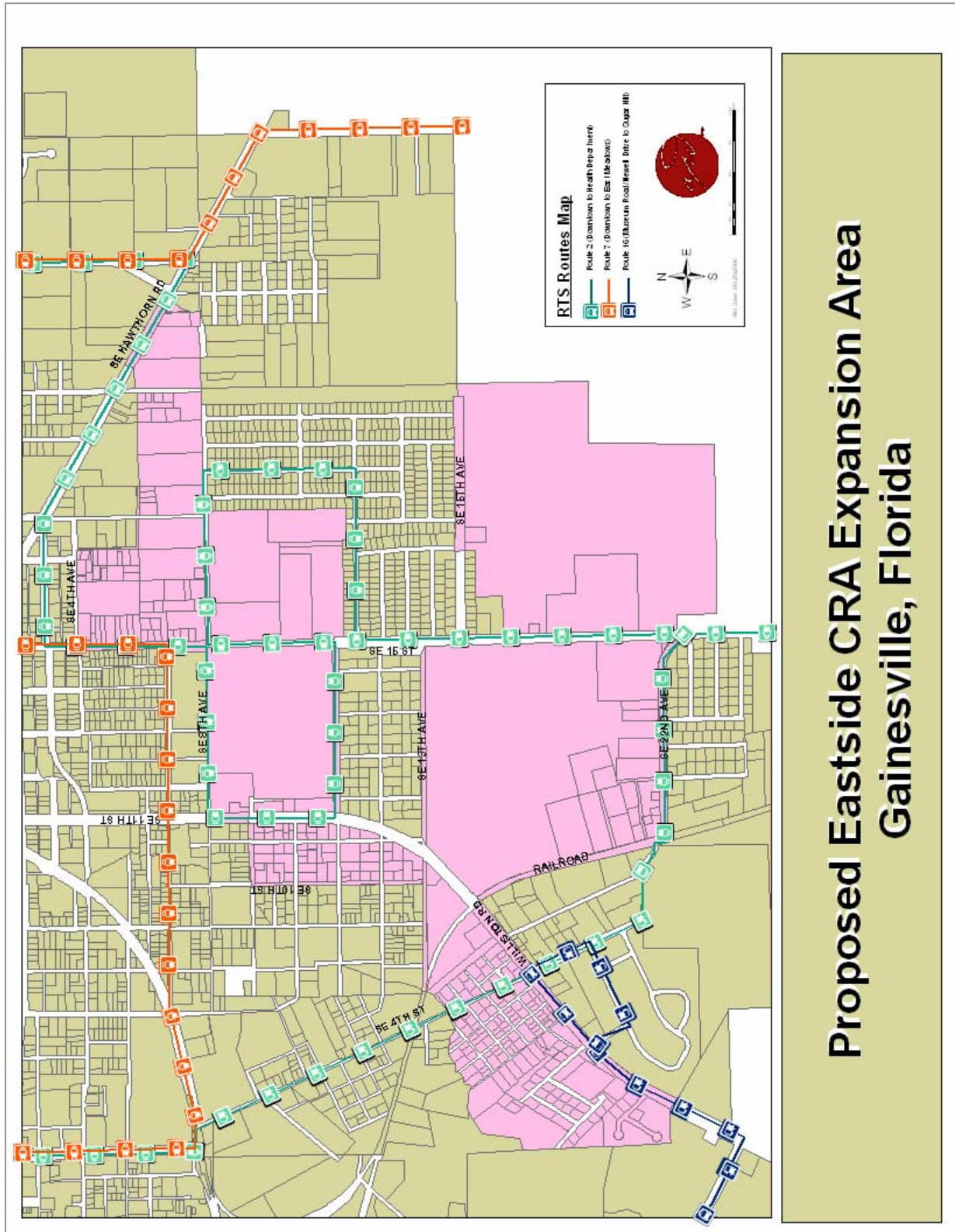


Figure 2.8 – Future Land Use
Source: City of Gainesville Community Development Department

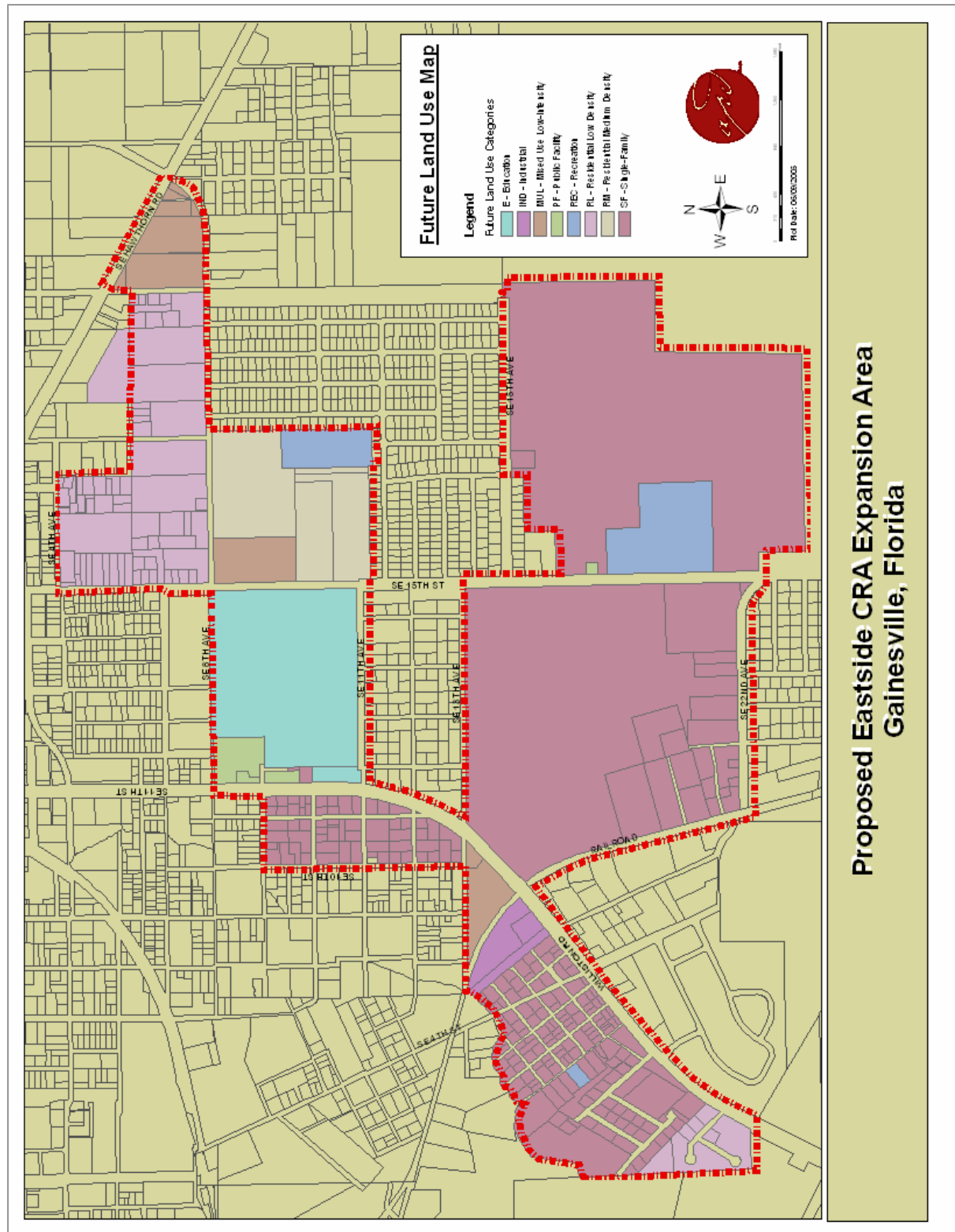
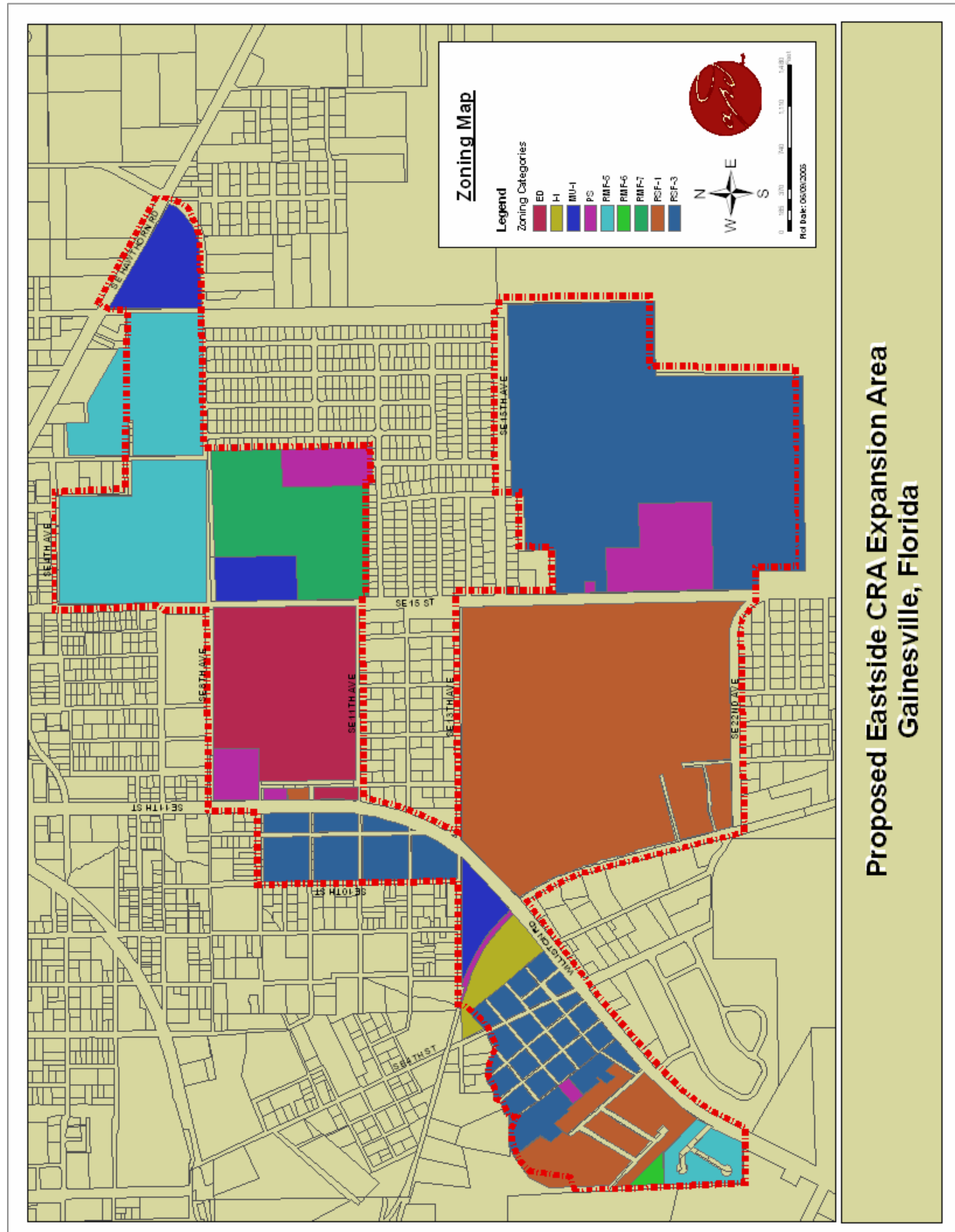


Figure 2.9 – Existing Zoning
Source: City of Gainesville Community Development Department



3.0 CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING BLIGHT

The objective of this analysis is to document the factors which contribute to a finding of blight. In June 2006, the planning team conducted a windshield survey of the Study Area to determine whether blighted conditions exist within the study area. The results of that survey, in addition to other sources of City maintained data, are described in this section.

Chapter 163 Part III 163.340 F.S. establishes two pathways to determine if the Study Area is a blighted area, sufficient to warrant the full battery of redevelopment powers conveyed by such a designation. The first scenario involves the layering of two tests. The first test is broadly conditional and the second test is criteria specific. Both tests must conclude that the described conditions exist affirmatively. The second scenario involves a specific agreement among parties subject to a prospective trust fund agreement. Where such agreement exists, then the jurisdiction seeking to designate a redevelopment area need pass a less rigorous test. As in the first scenario, this test relates to specific criteria and it must conclude affirmatively.

Scenario One

The first test of scenario one requires that a study area identified as a blighted area contain a "substantial number of deteriorated, or deteriorating structures, in which conditions, as indicated by government-maintained statistics or other studies, are leading to economic distress or endanger life or property".

The second test of Scenario One is that the area must be one in "which two or more of the following factors are present". Statistics and other studies referred herein identify substantial numbers of deteriorated and deteriorating structures and found that the data collected supports at least three of these factors: (a), (c), and (e), as noted in bold below.

- (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; or
- (n) Governmentally owned property with adverse environmental conditions caused by a public or private entity. See Section 163.340(8), F.S.

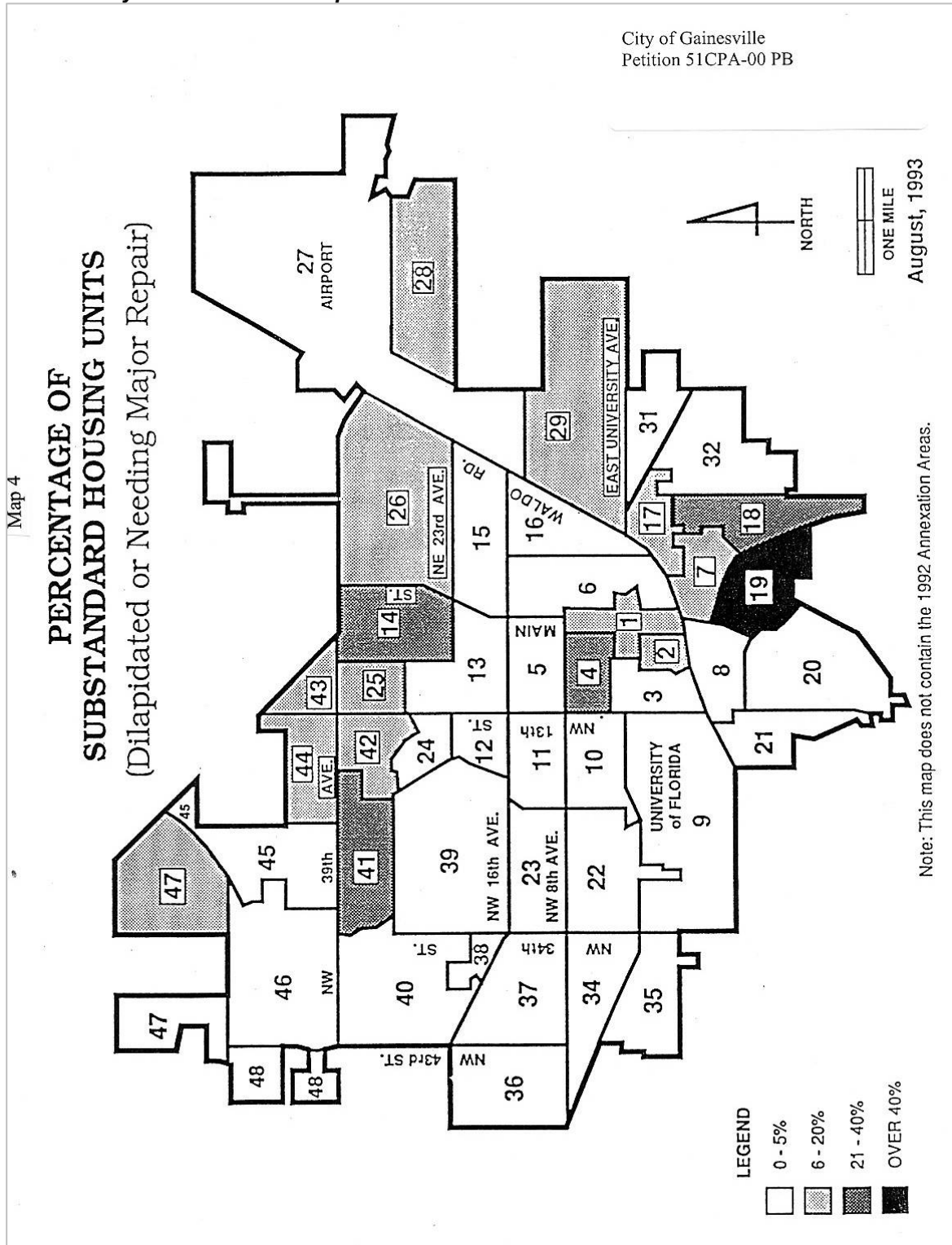
Scenario Two

Chapter 163.340 (8) F.S. also states that a blighted area may be "any area in which at least one of the factors identified in paragraphs (a) through (n) above are present and all taxing authorities subject to 163.387 (2)(a) agree, either by interlocal agreement or agreements with the agency or by resolution, that the area is blighted. Such agreement or resolution shall only determine that the area is blighted".

3.1 STUDY AREA BLIGHT FACTORS

The aforementioned scenario one was used to determine blight in the Study Area. The planning team performed an analysis of the Study Area using both tests in Scenario One and found blighted areas in the Study Area conforming to Florida State statutes found in Section 163.335(1), F.S. describing blight as "a serious and growing menace, injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and welfare". The first test of scenario one determines the presence of substantially deteriorated and deteriorating structures. The City of Gainesville Comprehensive Plan references the Gainesville's Housing Conditions Survey, completed in 1992, as a comprehensive assessment of the condition of housing in the City. The survey, which was conducted by the Code Enforcement Division, concluded that portions of the study area contained the highest percentage of units which have been classified as either "dilapidated" or "needing major repair" (**Figure 3.0**). A more recent windshield survey completed by the Code Enforcement Division in 2005 for the South East Gainesville Renaissance Initiative, confirms that a substantial amount of deteriorated or deteriorating structures still exists in the study area. The lack on physical investment duly noted by limited issuance of building permits and an over abundance of code violations are representative of deterioration. This physical deterioration coupled with functional deterioration such as insufficient drainage infrastructure, lack of pedestrian facilities, inconsistent vehicular access and connections are prevalent throughout the study area and contribute to its overall deterioration. Photographs of these structures are included throughout this document. The continuing nature of this condition has been confirmed by further analysis of code enforcement criteria.

Figure 3.0 Percentage of Substandard Housing Units
 Source: City of Gainesville Comprehensive Plan



Of the fourteen criteria listed in Chapter 163.340 (8) F.S., the blight findings analysis indicates that three (3) conditions exist in the Study Area hampering its immediate and long-term social, economic and physical development:

- 1) **Florida Statute Section 163.340(8)(a) - Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, parking facilities, roadways, bridges, or public transportation facilities;**
- 2) **Florida Statute Section 163.340(8)(c) - Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness;**
- 3) **Florida Statute Section 163.340(8)(e) - Deterioration of site or other improvements;**

§ 163.340(8)(a) - Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, parking facilities, roadways, bridges, or public transportation facilities

Public Transportation Facilities

Transit service to the Eastside Expansion Area is provided by the City of Gainesville Regional Transit System (RTS). Transit Bus Route #2 (Downtown to Health Department) serves SE 15th Street, Lincoln Estates, Lincoln Middle, Williams Elementary, Sugar Hill neighborhood and G-Tech. In addition, Route #7 Downtown to East Meadows and Route #16 Museum/ Newell Drive to Sugar Hill serve portions of SE 15th Street and Williston Road respectfully. Routes 2 and 7 are the main transit routes in the expansion area providing service every 60 minutes between the hours of 6:00 am and 8:00 pm and together transport an average of 700 passengers each weekday.

Observations and RTS amenity data conclude that for the 7.5 miles of service and 48 stops on Route #2, there are only 4 transit shelters and 18 RTS benches. As for Route #7, there is 6.5 miles of service with 41 stops and the amenities include 5 shelters and 12 RTS benches. Pedestrian safety is compromised due to limited transit shelters, benches and other transit stop amenities that protect the pedestrian from environmental elements and vehicular movements while commuting (**Figure 3.1**).

In addition, the RTS FY 2005 and 2006 Ridership Report showed a 2% reduction in transit ridership for Route #2. This route is also the least productive route in the system with 20 passengers per hour for 2700 hours of service provided. It may be concluded that the one hour headways impact the mobility needs for the Eastside Expansion area ridership and may contribute to this reduction in transit ridership.

RTS FY Ridership Comparison			
<i>Route #2 - Downtown to Health Department</i>			
	2005	2006	
	Passengers		% Change
October	7106	6661	6.26%
November	6771	6118	9.64%
December	6468	6544	-1.18%
January	6314	6028	4.53%
February	5950	5955	-0.08%
March	6481	6924	-6.84%
April	6512	5975	8.25%
May	6562	6849	-4.37%
TOTAL	52164	51054	2.13%

Source: RTS FY 2005 & 2006 Ridership Report

According to the RTS Five Year Transportation Service Plan, an assessment of services warranted increased frequency of service and modifications to schedules to better facilitate connections for riders requiring transfers and enhanced evening and Sunday service. RTS believes that demand does exist to support service and will continue to support efforts that promote a higher level of transit service for east Gainesville residents and visitors.



Figure 3.1: Example of Existing and Lack of Amenities at Bus Stops in the Expansion Area

Public Parking Facilities

The lack of public parking facilities creates a less than adequate parking environment in the Expansion Area. According to the City of Gainesville's Public Works Department, no public parking facilities exist within the study area and, as

such, are not located on the inventory map of Public Works facilities (**Figure 3.0**). Major attractors in the Expansion area that require a large amount of parking include the Williams Elementary and Lincoln Middle Schools, T.B. McPherson Park and Community Center and Lincoln Park. While parking at school facilities may be limited to school hours and special events, a demand for additional parking will increase as the facilities continue to increase enrollment and are used for large special events and community meetings. The recreational facilities face similar parking issues as they host numerous special events that require a tremendous amount of parking that can not be adequately contained at the existing facility. Currently, on street parking around these facilities is limited and as the current parking facilities reach capacity instances of illegal parking on sidewalks and on residential streets blocking pedestrian traffic. Inadequate parking facilities ultimately hasten the deterioration of the Expansion Area, detract from the attractiveness and create safety hazards in the Expansion Area.

Roadways

The roadways within the Expansion Area serve residential, business and regional transportation needs. The assessment of the overall roadway functionality reveals an incomplete street network and unpaved roads internal to the residential neighborhoods. These unpaved roads (.65 miles) located in the Sugar Hill neighborhood are identified on **Figure 3.3 and 3.4** and contribute to unsatisfactory roadway conditions for vehicular movements.

The street grid internal to the residential neighborhoods terminates at large tracts of vacant land. The absence of a complete street network and the installation of roadblocks and/or barriers at these termination locations compromise the current and future land use patterns within the expansion area (**Figure 3.2**).

The Sugar Hill neighborhood is plagued with inadequate drainage



Figure 3.2: Termination of street with barriers – SE 13th Ave at SE 15th Street



Figure 3.3: Example of a partially unpaved roadway that lacks adequate drainage and pedestrian facilities.

and infrastructure deficiencies (3.38 miles without curb and gutter). The lack of curbs and gutters necessary for drainage is prevalent and contributes to the deterioration and functionality of the roadways in the Expansion Area. The streets with insufficient drainage and deficiencies are illustrated on **Figure 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6**. As illustrated in **Figure 3.3**, the lack of drainage facilities is deteriorating roadways within the study area.

Pedestrian Facilities

There are numerous segments of incomplete or missing sidewalks (6.16 miles) internal to the residential blocks of the expansion area. This lack of consistent and reliable pedestrian facilities fails to provide adequate connections to surrounding residential neighborhoods, public facilities including the Williams Elementary and Lincoln Middle schools and community resources including Lincoln Park. Although there are formal trails and bike paths along the perimeter arterials that offer alternative modes of transportation, the lack of sidewalk connection to the interior residential neighborhoods compromises the safety of pedestrians to utilize these facilities. The incomplete pedestrian facilities in the Expansion Area are identified on the No Sidewalk Map (**Figure 3.7**).

In addition to the incomplete pedestrian facilities, there are also limited pedestrian amenities including lighting, benches and buffering from vehicular movements. Streetscape improvements and the installation of such amenities increase the functionality of and safety of the overall pedestrian infrastructure.

Figure 3.4 –Roadway Inventory
Source: City of Gainesville Public Works Department

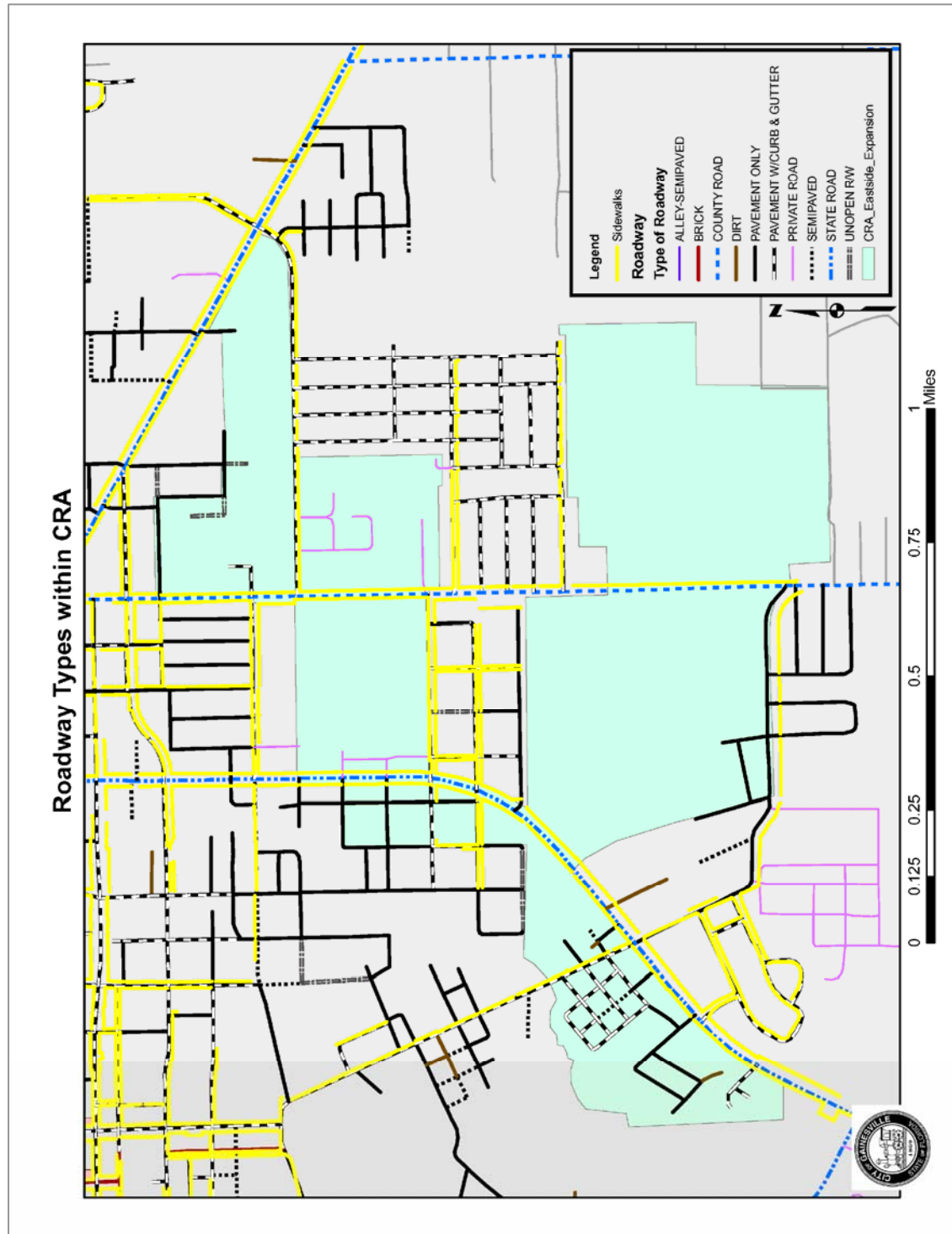


Figure 3.5 – Unpaved Roads
Source: APD Field Survey

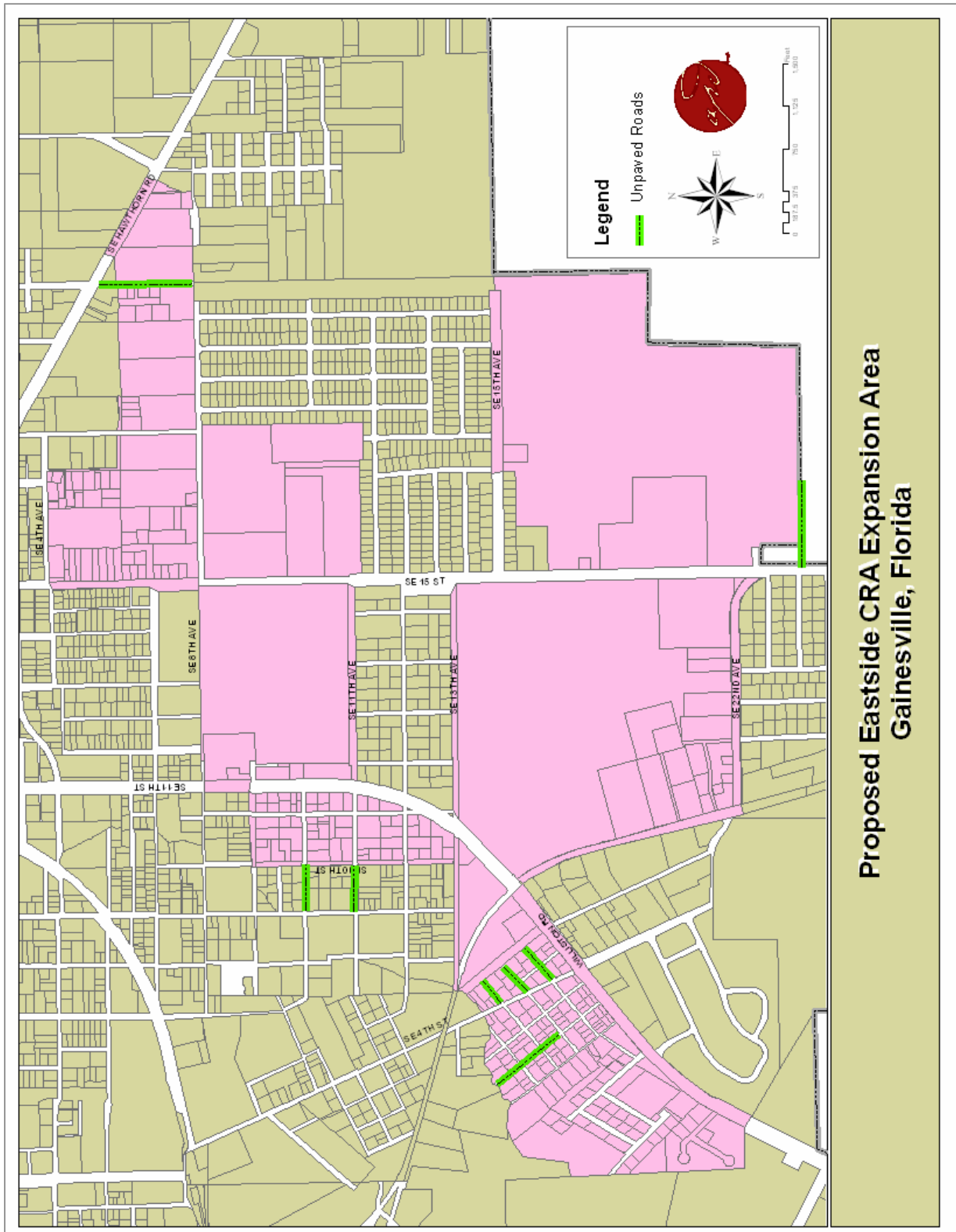


Figure 3.6 – No Curb and Gutter
Source: APD Field Survey

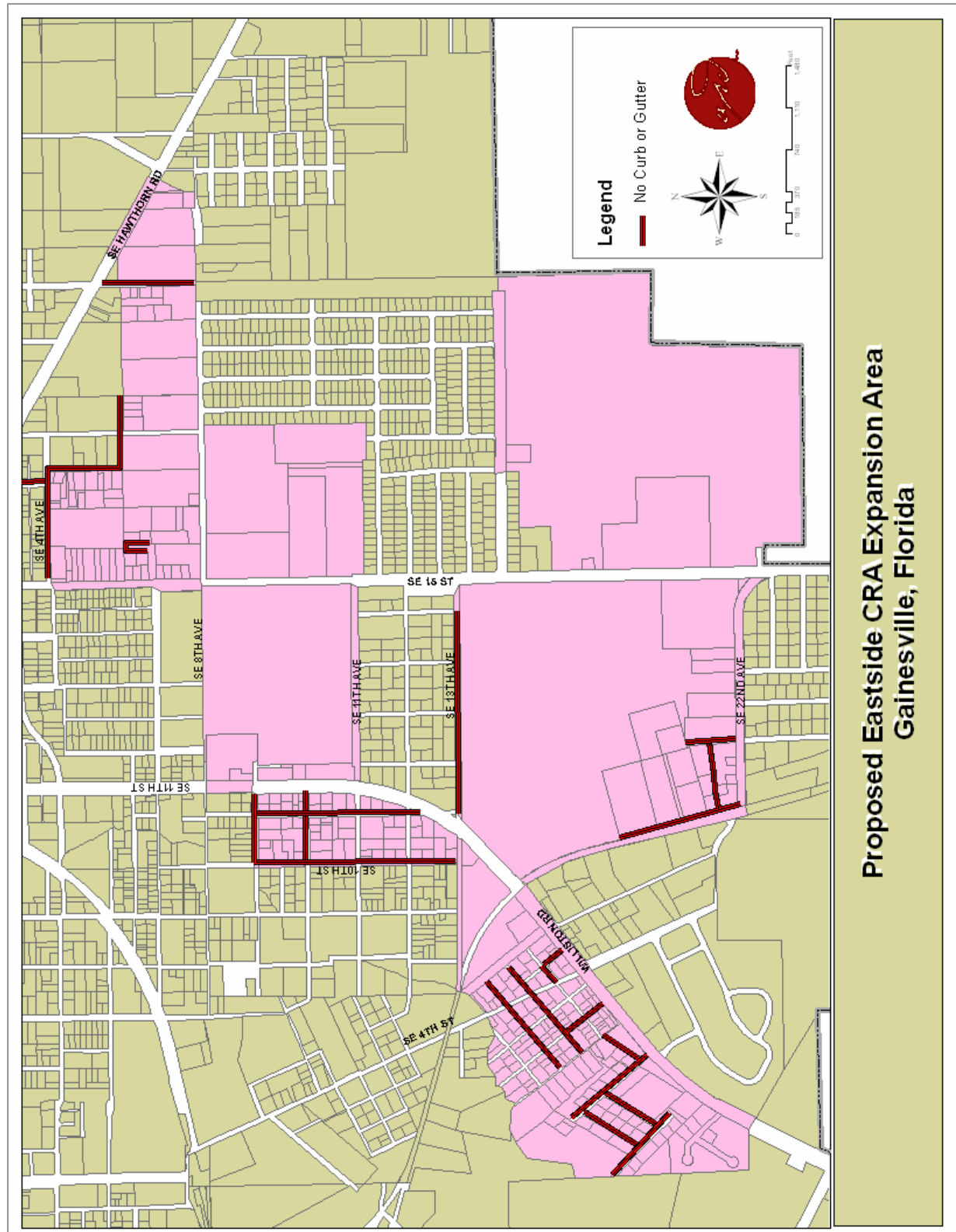
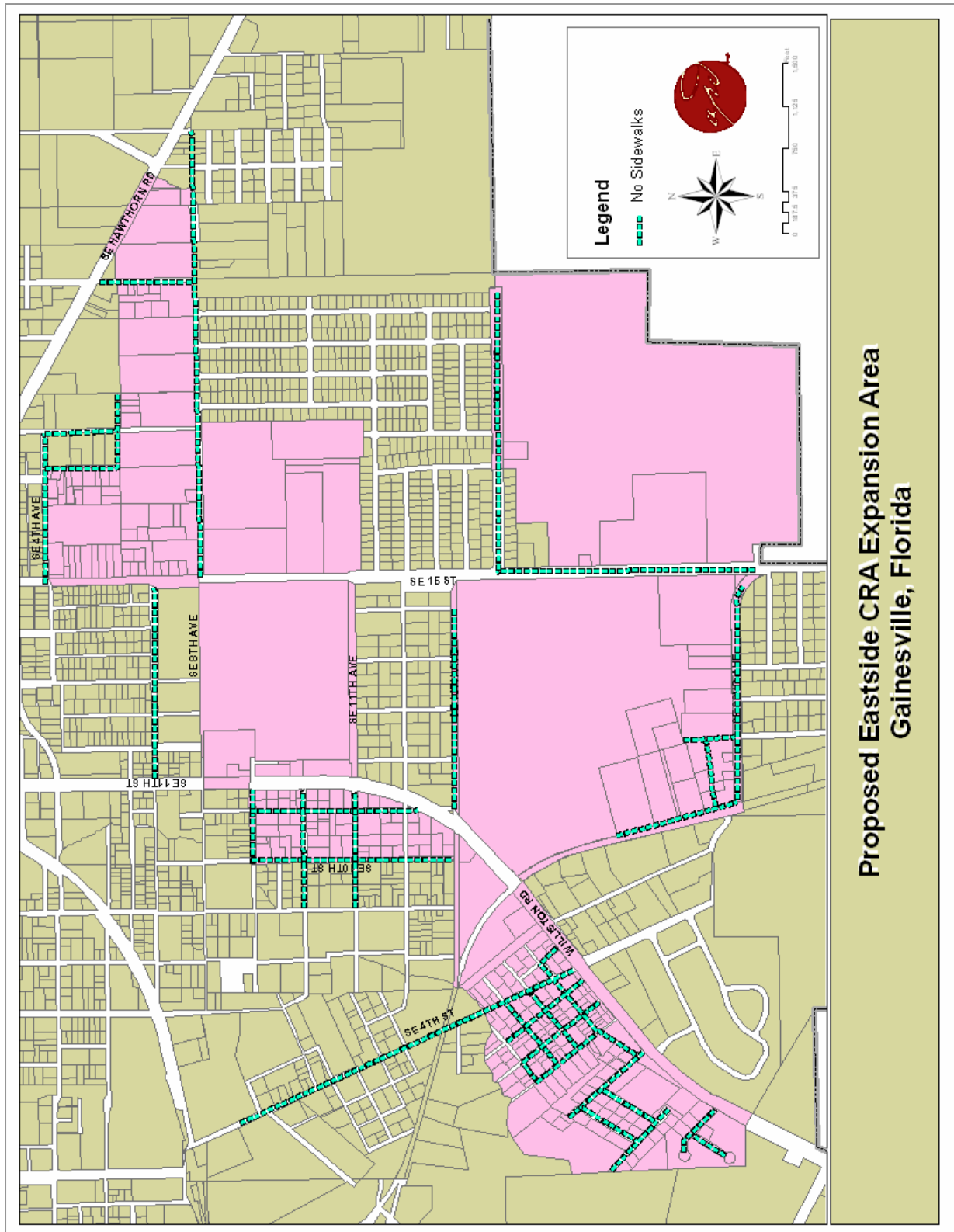


Figure 3.7 – No Sidewalks
Source: APD Field Survey



§ 163.340(8)(c) - Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness;

The revitalization of East Gainesville lags behind the resurgence of new investment of West Gainesville which can be contributed to several factors, one being faulty layout of existing properties in the Eastside Expansion Area.

Inconsistent and Non-conforming lot sizes

Of the 326 lots in the Eastside Expansion Area, 22% appear too small to develop and/or do not conform with the minimum lot sizes under the current zoning regulations for single family allowable uses (**Figure 3.10**). It can be concluded that the inconsistent single family lot sizes deter single family developers from purchasing and constructing new homes which ultimately impairs sound growth and investment in the area.

This lack of investment is also evident by the limited building permits for new single family construction. The permit data also reflects the lack of renovations and overall improvements to the existing housing and commercial stock in the Expansion Area. For example, it is anticipated that two new building permits would have been issued in the study area based on a comparison of Citywide permits issued. However, there were not any New Residential Permits issued in the Expansion Area. Eight commercial remodeling permits would be anticipated for the number of parcels in the study area, but no permits were issued, five new commercial permits would be anticipated in the study area as well but again, none were issued during this data collection period.

Anticipated Vs. Actual Building Permits Issued: 2000-2006

Description	Citywide	Anticipated*	
		Study Area	Study Area
New Residential	319	2	0
Electrical	6,986	45	11
Mechanical	5,578	36	8
Plumbing	3,268	21	1
Gas	1,812	12	3
remodel Residential	3,273	21	25
Remodel Commercial	1,225	8	0
Roofing	4,668	30	12
New Commercial	704	5	0
TOTAL	22,833	180	60

** Anticipated is based on a comparison of the total number of parcels Citywide, total number of permits issued per parcel compared with the number of parcels in the Expansion area.*

Figure 3.8: Building Permits Issued in the Eastside Expansion Area

Under utilization of property

Under utilization of property is also a factor that contributes the blight and deterioration of the Expansion Area. Of the 1,229 acres of land in the Expansion Area, 40% of the land area is vacant or unimproved land (**Figure 3.11 and Figure 3.12**) that illustrates a lack of investment and underutilization. In addition, the haphazard location of vacant land as well as the nondevelopable wetland areas in the study area make development of other tracts difficult.

Where infill development has occurred, there are incidents where new single family residents are adjacent to large parcels of undeveloped land (**see Figure 3.9**). This development pattern contributes to the instability of the residential community.



Figure 3.9: New Construction Adjacent to Undeveloped Land

Figure 3.10 – Non-Conforming Lots
Source: City of Gainesville GIS Data

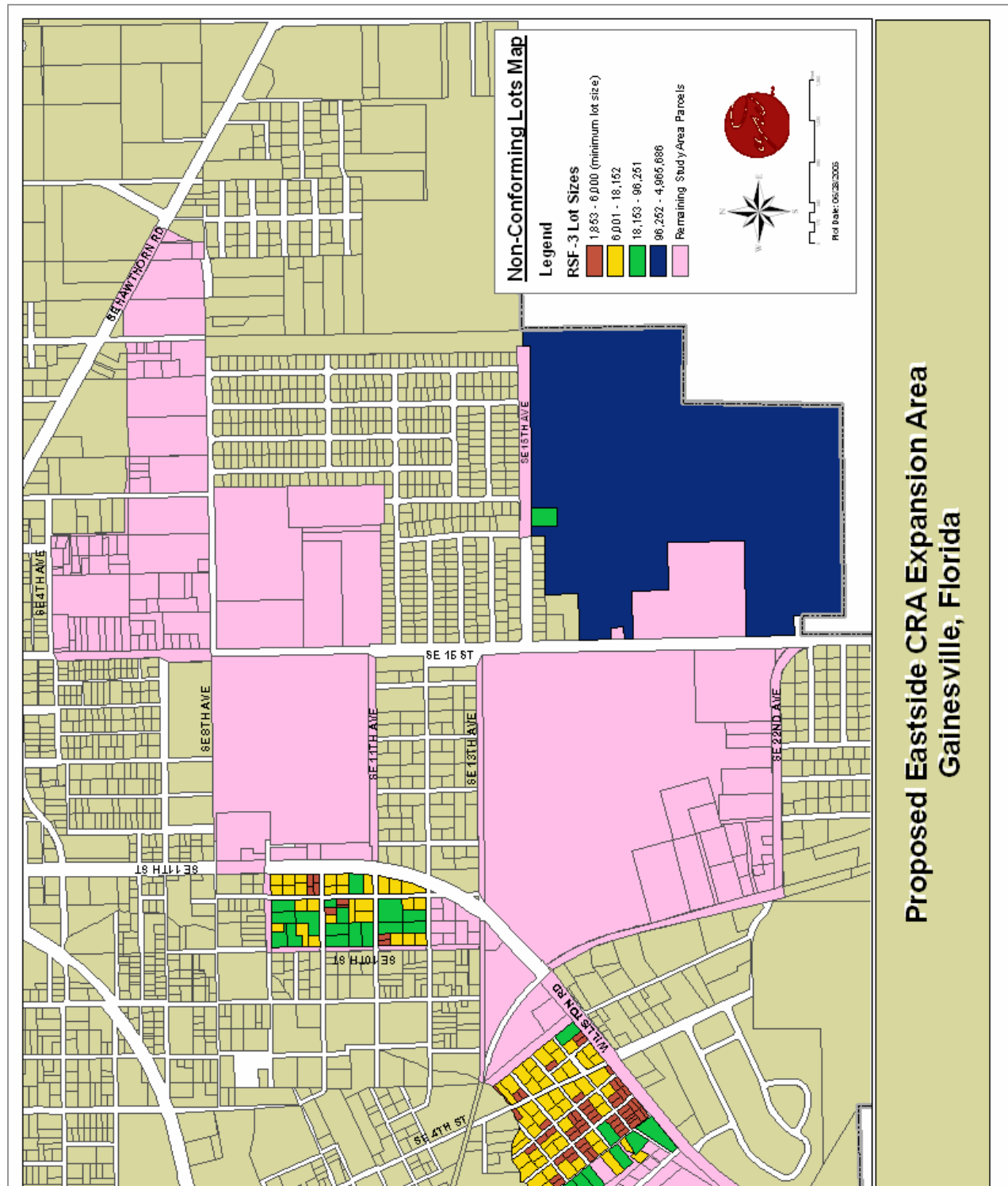


Figure 3.11 – Unimproved (Vacant) Land
Source: City of Gainesville Community Development Department

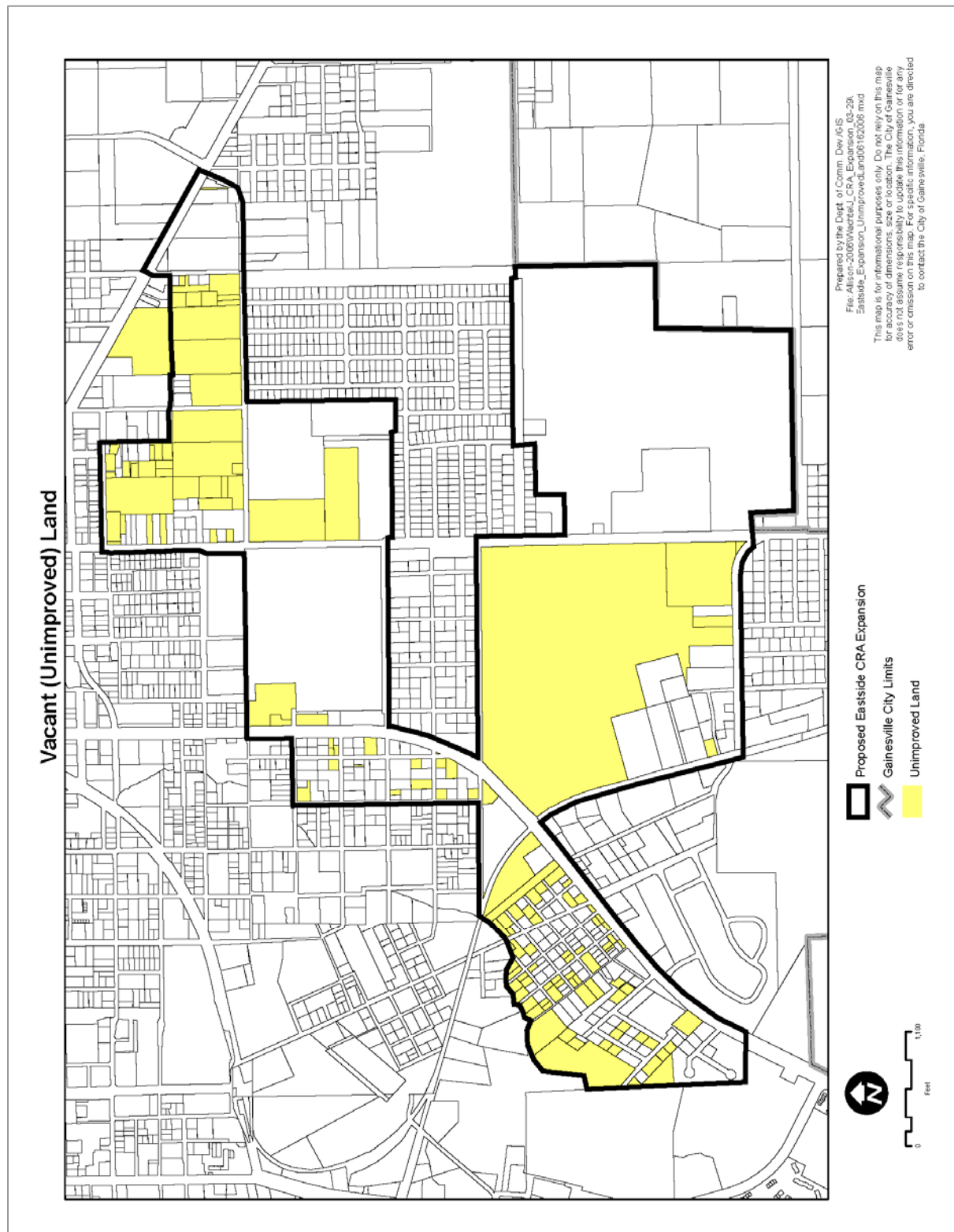


Figure 3.12: Sample Vacant and Overgrown Lots in the Expansion Area



Under-utilization of land and economic distress is visible in the Expansion Area where new construction is developed adjacent to deteriorated structures (**Figure 3.13**). The physical deterioration in the housing stock created an overall unkempt environment in the form of overgrown lots, deteriorated structures, unsanitary conditions. These conditions and lack of investment contribute to an instable residential environment ultimately leading to the decline in the market value of the newly constructed housing.



Figure 3.13: New construction adjacent to deteriorated housing.

§ 163.340(8)(e) - Deterioration of site or other improvements;

The physical assessment performed by the consulting team and other City maintained data have revealed physical deterioration of single and multi-family dwellings in the Expansion Area. The Kennedy Apartments on Southeast 8th Avenue is an immediate public safety hazard. The complex has been unoccupied since 2004 due to fires, gas main malfunctions and structural deterioration. Despite security measures to deter access to this site, repeat vandalism is prevalent. The physical deterioration and lack of investment contributes to the physical decline of the Expansion Area.

Several homes along SE 11th Ave are unoccupied, severely deteriorated with unkempt yards and also contribute to the deterioration of the Expansion Area (**Figure 3.16**). This situation negatively impacts long-term sustainability and marketability and leads to the impression of abandonment, physical deterioration and lack of investment which can ultimately present a challenge to redevelopment in the Expansion



Figure 3.14: Aerial of Kennedy Homes property

Area.

Figure 3.15.: Kennedy Homes Site



Figure 3.16: Sample Deteriorated Housing in the Expansion Area



Vacant Land and Nonconforming Lots

Another reason for the deterioration of the study area high acreage of undeveloped land (206 acres or 40% of the study area). This land includes an expansive area of non-developable wetland, and vacant land scattered among lots of nonconforming sizes which makes urban development more difficult. In addition, neighborhood streets are almost all two lanes, though several of the lane and right-of-way dimensions are of substandard width relative to current design criteria. Due to right-of-way constraints, many local streets are discontinuous and about .65 miles of the area's streets were "semi-paved," with material designed to last a maximum of 15 years. Due in part to the aforementioned right-of-way limitations, the majority of neighborhood streets do not include sidewalks (6.16 miles).

Code Violations

The percentage of code violations can be used to support the conclusion disinvestment and deterioration in the study area. Per the Code Enforcement Division, the Eastside Expansion area had 798 (2%) code violation investigations compared to the 39,219 total violation investigations in the City of Gainesville. Of these investigations, all complaints exceeded the expected ration for the area per the percentage of parcels contained in the study area. This is compounded by the fact that within the last five years only eighty-seven (87) properties within the Study Area were issued building permits with seven (7) existing units condemned for demolition by the City's Code Enforcement Division.



Figure 3.17: Sample of Code Violation: cited as a dangerous building.

Of the complaints listed on the following chart (**Figure 3.18**), the percentage of dangerous building violations, exceeds the citywide total at 7.4% and exceeds the expected total for the area by 12.3%. The majority of these properties have been identified by the Code Enforcement Office for demolition. As further illustrated in Figure 3.18, the anticipated number of violations based on the size of the Eastside Expansion Area and code enforcement violations citywide, is much lower than the actual number of violations. For example, in an area the size of the study area 62.8 major housing violations would be expected based on citywide data comparisons. The actual number of major housing violations in the expansion area is 372, nearly six times what would be expected for an area of that size. The anticipated number of vacant land related code violations for an area of this size would be 4.7. In actuality, there were 45 Vacant Land violations in the study area, nearly ten times what would be anticipated for an area of this size.

Figure 3.18: City of Gainesville Code Enforcement Violations Comparison

Code Enforcement Violations: Comparison of the Proposed Eastside Expansion Area with Citywide Complaints: 2000-2006					
Complaint Type	*Anticipated Number of Violations	Eastside Expansion Actual Violations	Total Violations Citywide	Eastside Expansion % of Total	*** x Anticipated # .6%
Abandoned Vehicles	9.2	22	1528	1.4%	2.4
Animal Complaint	0.5	3	88	3.4%	5.7
Boarded Dangerous Bldgs.	1.3	6	212	2.8%	4.7
Comm. Zoning Violation	3.7	4	624	0.6%	1.1
Commercial Building	1.6	2	274	0.7%	1.2
Dangerous Building	4.3	53	721	7.4%	12.3
Home Occupation Permit	12.9	14	2158	0.6%	1.1
Landlord Permit	20.3	34	3379	1.0%	1.7
Landlord Permit Application	90.7	178	15119	1.2%	2.0
Major Housing Violation	62.8	372	10472	3.6%	5.9
Minor Housing Violation	0.8	2	132	1.5%	2.5
Multiple Violations	1.4	2	240	0.8%	1.4
Non-operational Vehicles	9.2	22	1528	1.4%	2.4
Properties in lien process	0.6	3	104	2.9%	4.8
Rehab Annual	1.2	5	196	2.6%	4.3
Rehab First	0.5	5	87	5.7%	9.6
Res. Zoning Violations	5.4	7	907	0.8%	1.1
Special Event Permit	0.7	5	113	4.4%	7.4
Survey/In-house Request	3.3	14	555	2.5%	4.2
Vacant Land Related	4.7	45	782	5.8%	9.6

** This is the anticipated number of violations expected for an area of this size, based on the total number of violations Citywide. The proposed CRA contains 326 parcels while the total number of parcels for the city is reported at 50,898. The proposed district therefore contains 6 tenths of 1 % of the parcels in Gainesville.*
***The Column labeled % of total reports the percentage of complaints city wide in the proposed district.*
**** Represents the multiplier by which the complaints in the proposed area exceed the .6% expectations. For example, the number of violations for Dangerous Buildings are 12 times what would be expected with this number of parcels (based on Citywide data).*

4.0 CONCLUSION

This Findings Report describes the physical, economic and regulatory conditions within the Study Area. The methodology utilized to accomplish this task included: a review of property appraiser data; a field study and inspection; a review of City provided statistics; a review of the City's Comprehensive Plan and other studies prepared by the City. The information summarized in this Findings Report is adequate by the standards of Scenario One, explained in Section 1.1, to acknowledge blight within the Study Area. The foregoing factors together with other data of inference provided by the City of Gainesville provide substantial evidence towards findings of blight. Based on these findings, the City may determine the Study Area to be blighted.

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