

Conservation Lands Program



Background

- **Strategic Plan Goal 6: Culture, Nature and Fun Activities.**
- The acquisition of conservation land was prioritized in the Strategic Plan. Green Space Preservation & Acquisition.
- The 2022 National Community Survey™ indicated that 64% of residents rated the overall quality of the natural environment positively, lower than the national benchmark. In the 2024 survey, this metric reduced to 62%. In 2022, 55% of residents rated preservation of natural areas positively, similar to cities nationwide, and 46% of residents rated Port St. Lucie open space positively. In 2024, 46% of residents regarded the preservation of natural areas positively, while 45% rated open space positively. There has been a downward trend since 2022. Residents have indicated a desire for additional green space.
- We currently have eight City-owned Conservation properties. We would like to add signage identifying them as Conservation Lands.

Location Map



- A. Del Rio North**-Southeast of I-95/Crosstown Parkway Interchange (**18.98 ac**)
- B. Del Rio South**-Southeast of I-95/Crosstown Parkway Interchange (**16.13 ac**)
- C. Commerce Centre North**-North of Commerce Center Drive and west of I-95 (**94.5 ac**)
- D. Torino Park** – South of North Torino Parkway (**10.5 ac**)
- E. Peacock Parcel**-East of Peacock Blvd (**2.17 ac**)
- F. Westmoreland** – South of PSL Blvd (**12.87 ac**)
- G. Commerce Centre South**-South and west of Commerce Center Drive (**22.87 ac**)
- H. Mariposa**-South of Mariposa Avenue (**19.75 ac**)

Background

- We have had Environmental Assessments and Preserve Area Management Plans prepared for each conservation parcel, however funding to advance work on all the parcels at once is a challenge.
- At the 2023 Winter Workshop, Council directed staff to focus on the Torino and Westmoreland.
- Today we will update you on what has been accomplished since the 2023 Winter Workshop and identify opportunities/next steps for the Council.

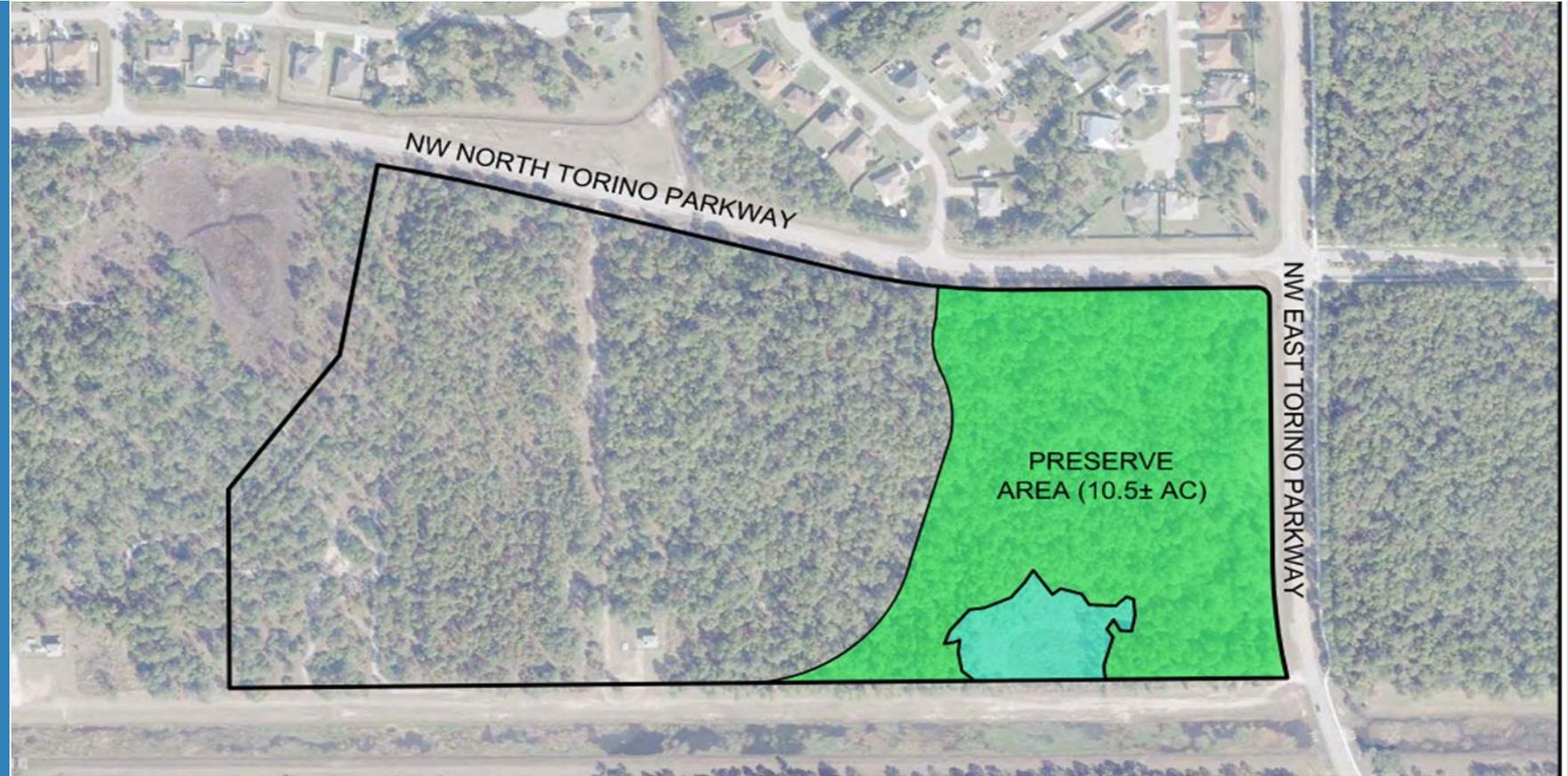
Torino Park



Project Summary

Torino Park –
south of North
Torino Parkway

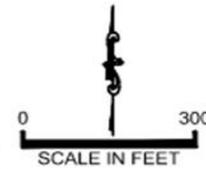
43.16 acres
(overall)



T AERIALS DATED 2021

LEGEND

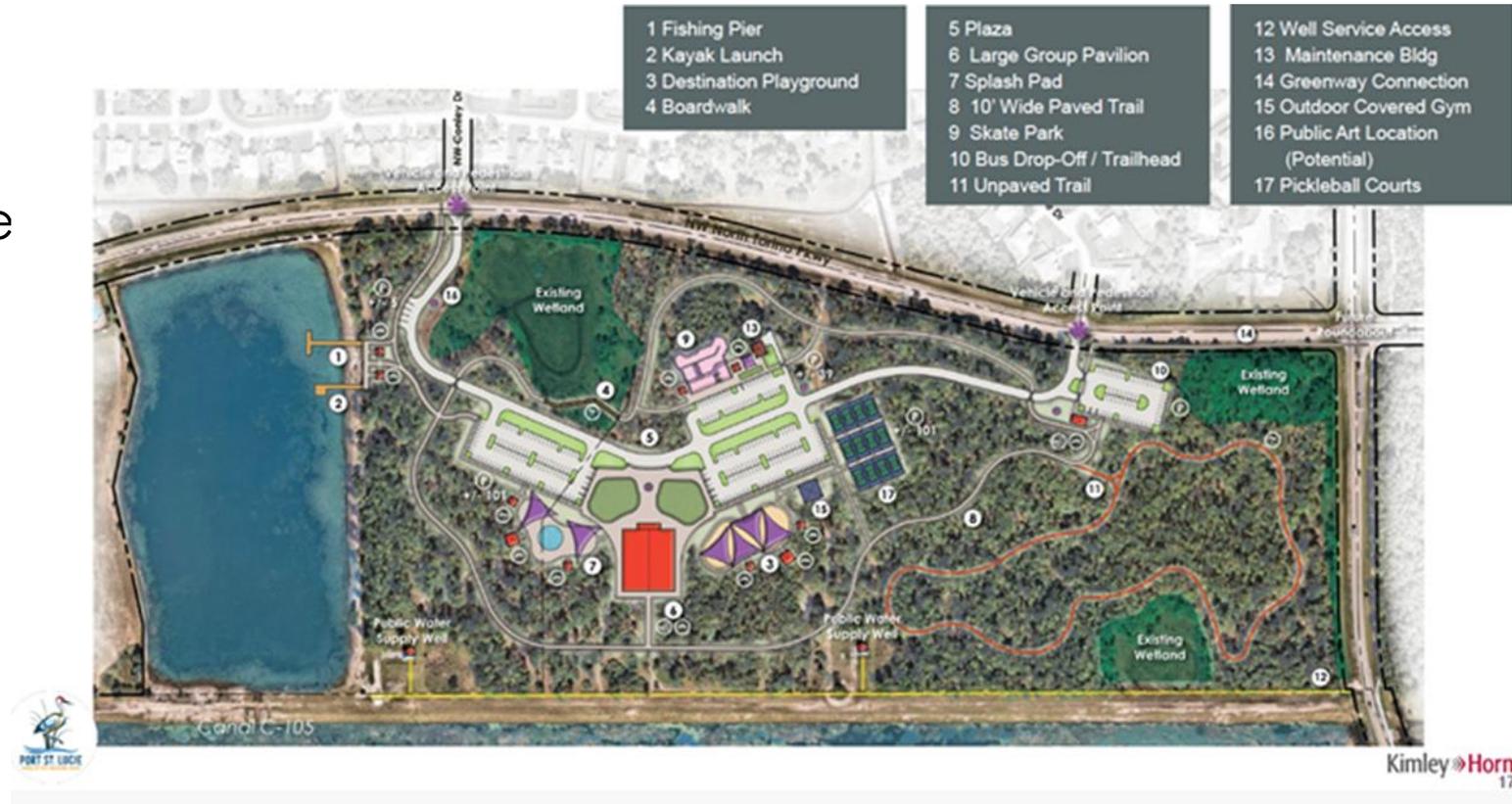
-  - NON DISTURBED AREAS
-  - AREAS OF MINOR DISTURBANCE



**CITY OF PSL SITE 4
DISTURBANCE**

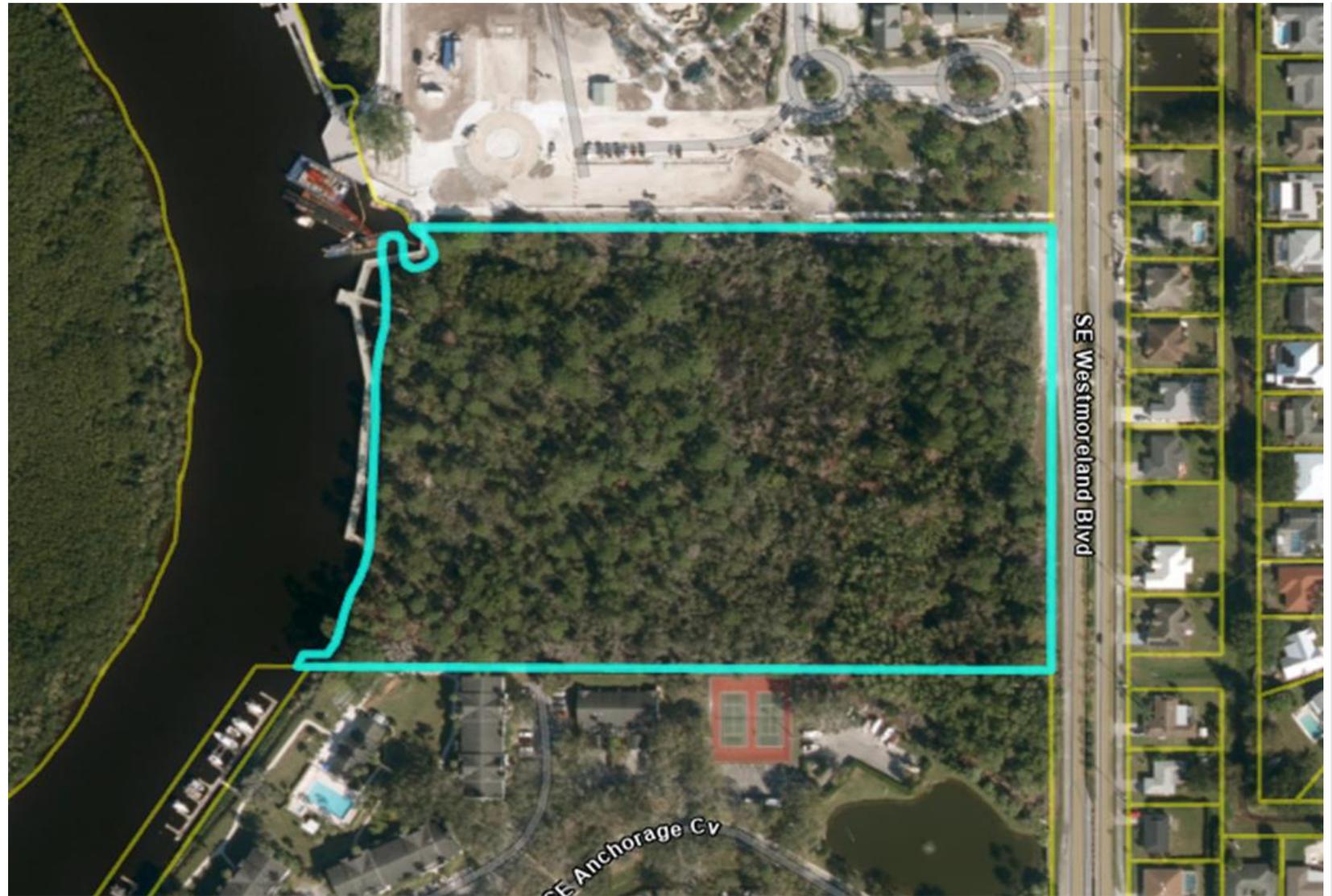
Status Update

- ❖ Invasives being treated quarterly.
- P&Z was part of the City's Torino Regional Park Design Team.
- Majority of site and wetlands to be preserved as part of proposal.
- Design Team and CMAR (Construction Manager at Risk) contracts awarded, and the project is officially on the way.
- The design phase will span 2025.
- Construction, including trails, anticipated to begin in early 2026 with an estimated opening of early 2027.



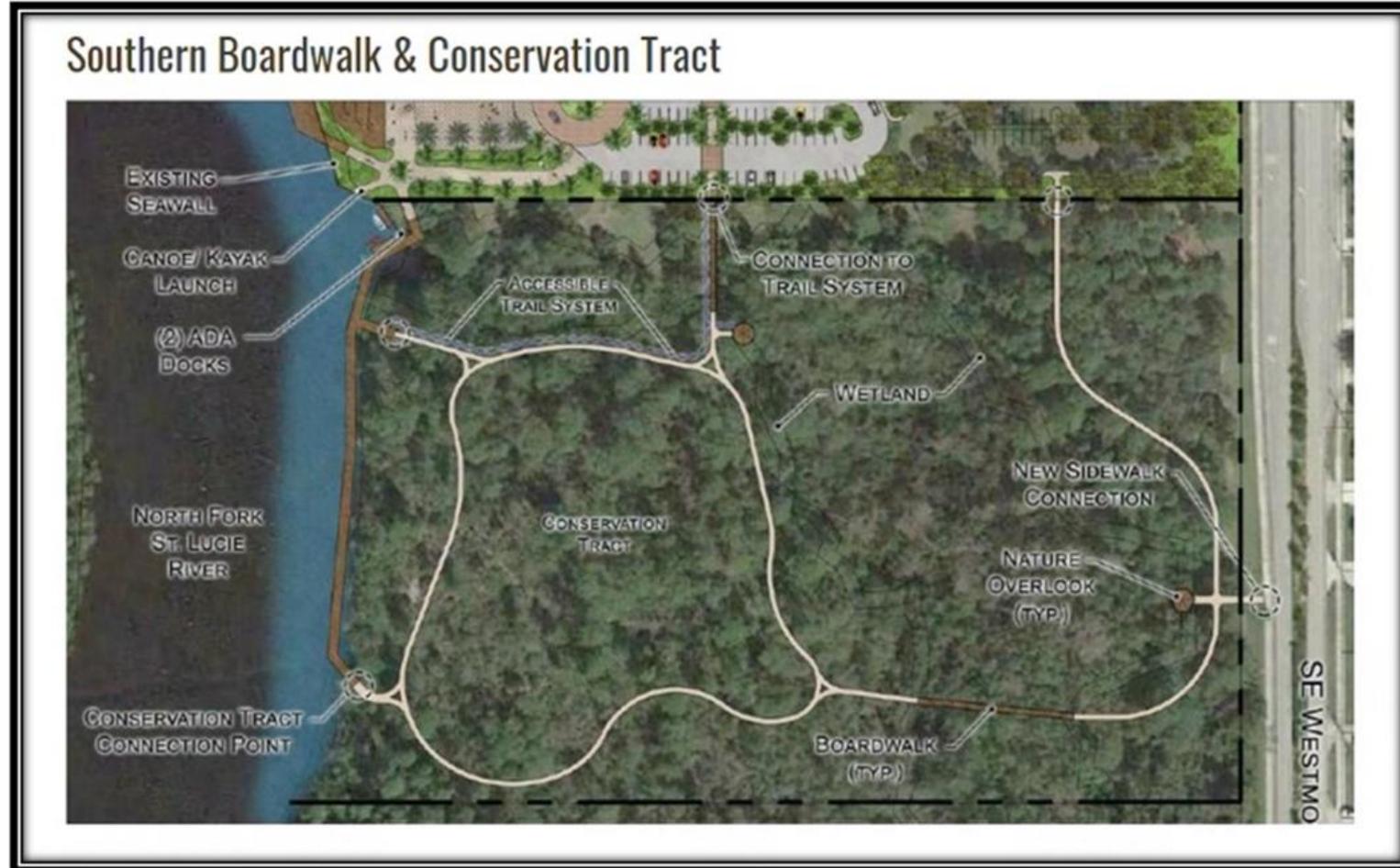
Westmoreland

- Port District Master Plan being implemented.
- FIND (Florida Inland Navigation District) award for \$400k.
- The use is only for trails / boardwalk connection. No other recreational improvements are proposed.

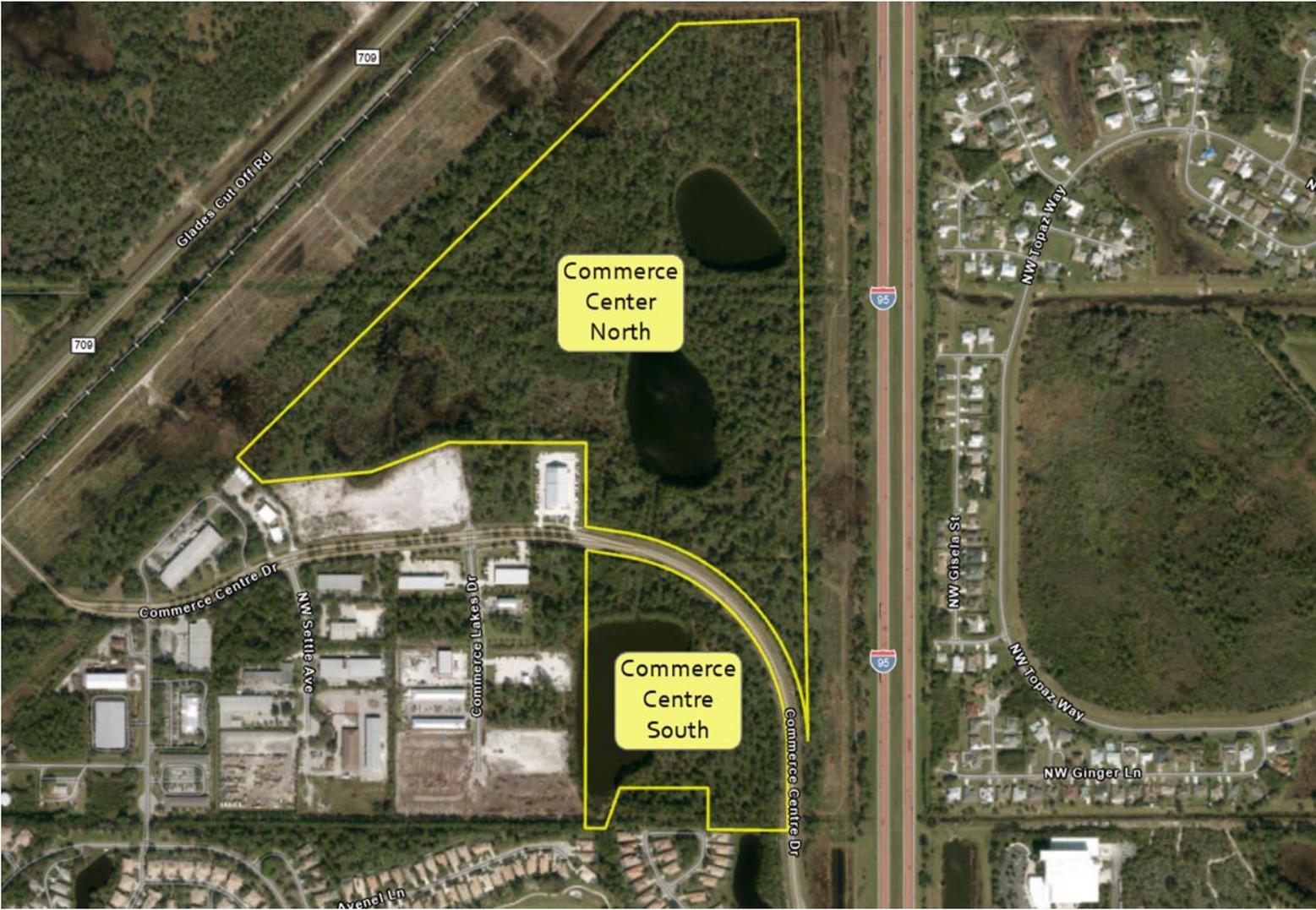


Status Update

- ❖ Invasives being treated quarterly.
- Planned connection with existing trail systems to the boardwalk and river observation deck.
- Planned designated trails.
- Plans were reviewed by staff.
- Solicitation request expected to be released in January and awarded in February. Construction to start shortly thereafter.



Opportunity: Commerce Centre North Preserve Area



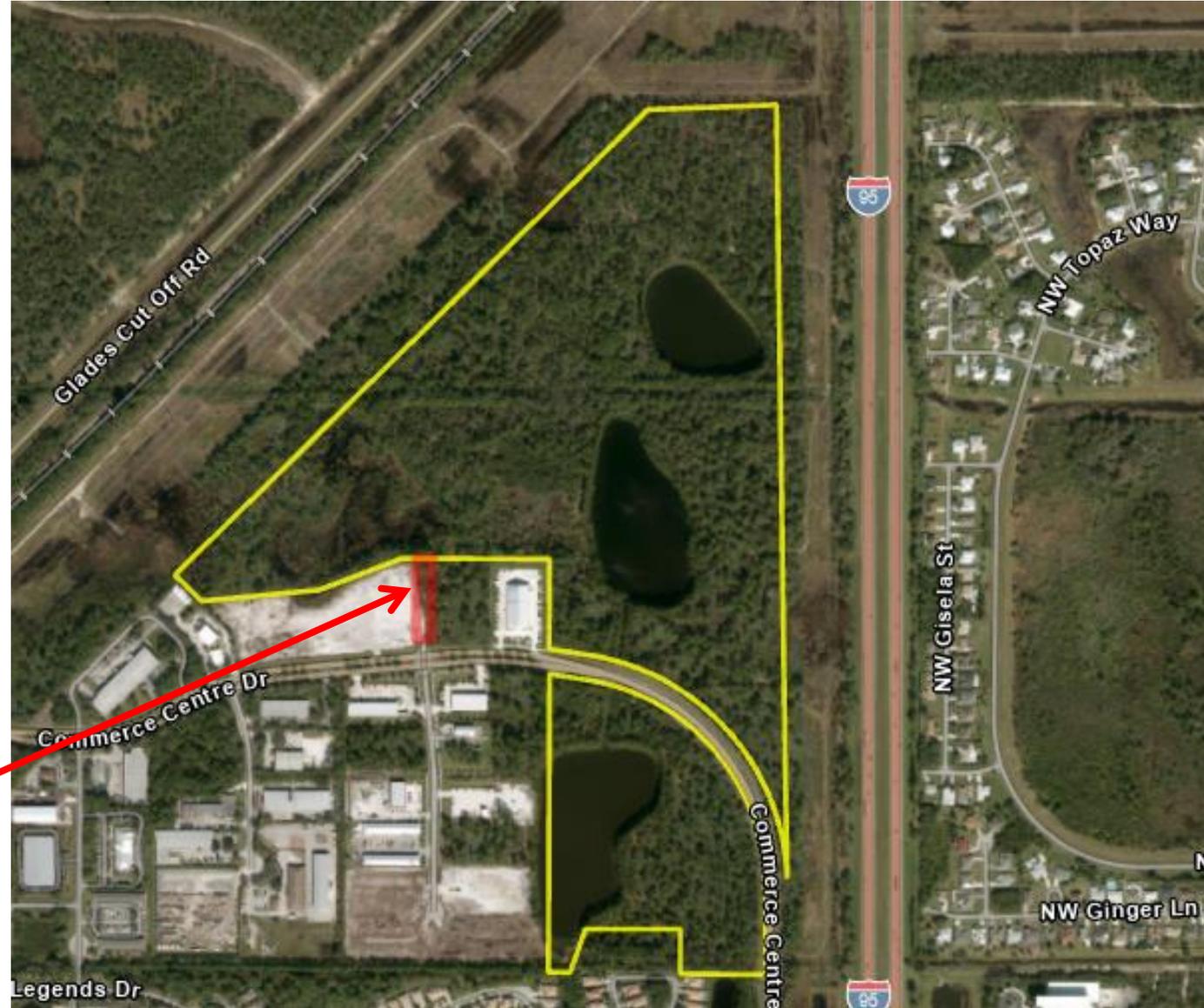
Background

- 94.5-acre parcel; Immediate needs are fencing, invasives removal, trash cleanup, concept plan development

Staff actions to date:

- Pursued State Future Forest Grant- Inspected by State Forester, deemed not eligible.
- Awaiting opening of the Urban and Community Forestry Planting, Preservation, and Invasive Control grant (expected 1st quarter 2025) – Staff intends to apply for funds to advance the management plan.
- Staff secured the 0.72-acre parcel for use as access to this property.

Note: P&Z will collaborate with Parks & Rec once this property is activated.



Potential Property Improvements

- Security and wildlife friendly fencing
- Parking
- Boardwalks
- Walking trails
- Conservation and habitat restoration education
- Signage, kiosks and education centers
- Observation deck



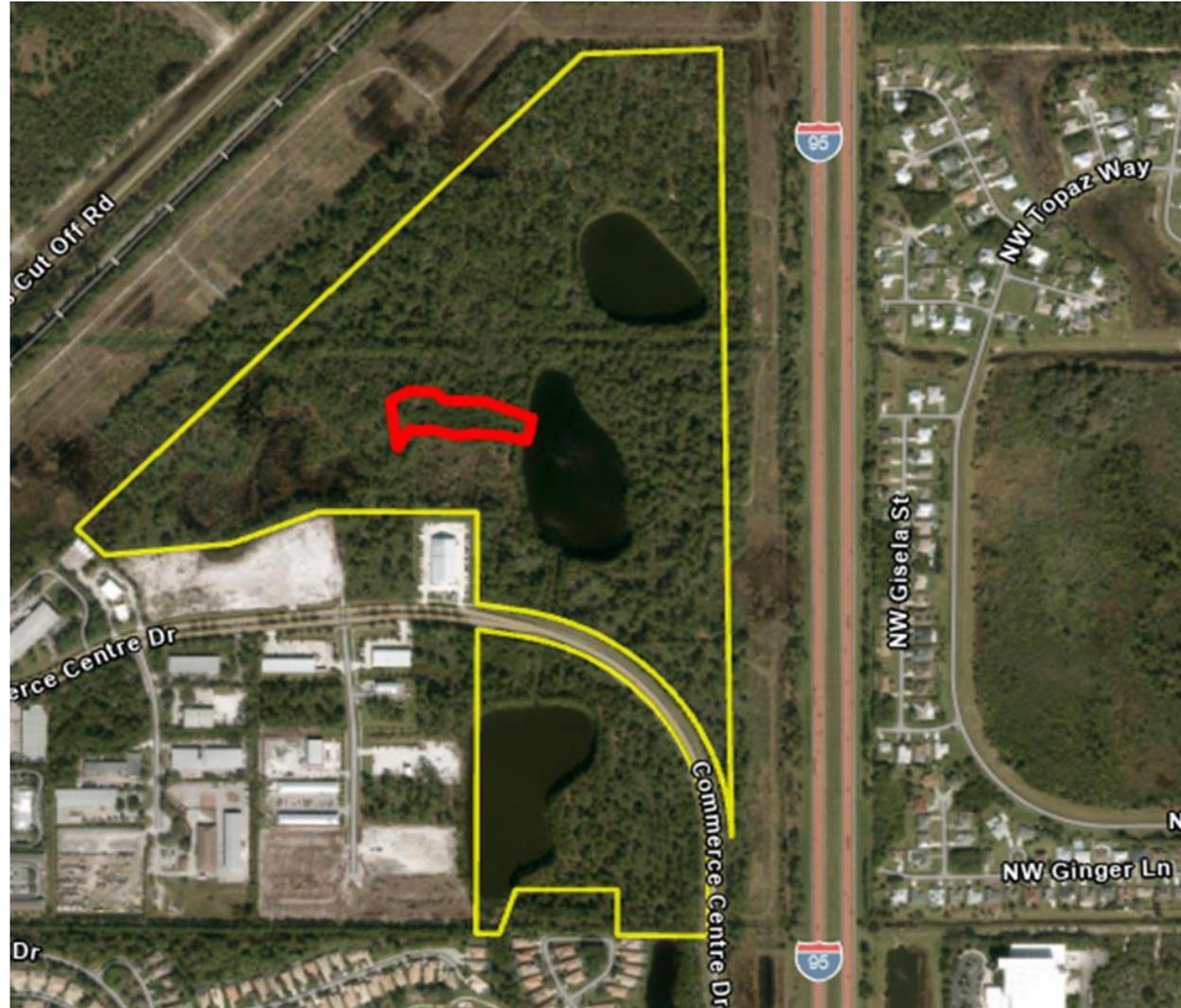
Recommended Activities

- Restoration and Maintenance Activities
 - *Eradication of the nuisance and invasive non-native vegetation – APPLY FOR GRANT FUNDING*
 - *Restoration of wetland and upland habitat*
 - *Wetland and upland supplemental planting*
 - *Secure the property with appropriate fencing*
- Monitoring, reporting and inspections
- Develop Conceptual Plan for City Council review
- Hold a neighborhood meeting



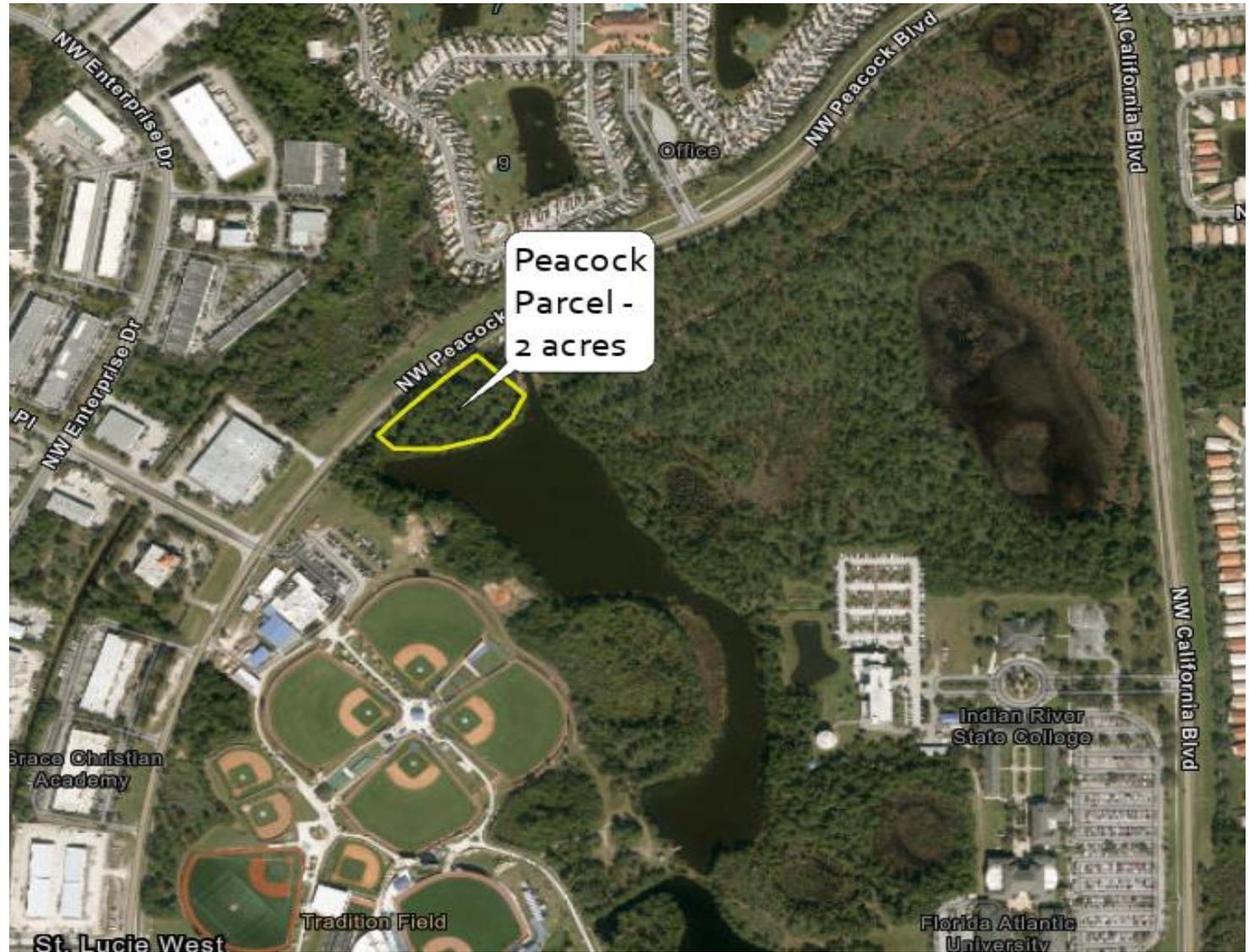
Opportunity: Land Acquisition

- Staff has been working with the PGA Village POA on several matters and understands that they may be willing to transfer ownership of this parcel.
- Staff has indicated interest in acquiring the property given its location.
- Staff requests Council support for continued efforts to acquire property for Conservation and Open Space uses.



Opportunity: Peacock Parcel

- 2.17 acres; East of Peacock Blvd; adjacent to IRSC lands
- Property could sustain a small parking area and trail head to access potential IRSC trail system
- Next steps:
 - Continue to coordinate with IRSC
 - Develop conceptual plan for City Council consideration
 - Hold a neighborhood meeting



Opportunity: Add a budget line for Conservation Lands Management

- The Planning Department has a budget line for consulting services for Conservation Land Management with a current balance of \$100,000. That line could help pay for the development of conceptual and construction plans for activation of conservation lands.
- Ongoing conservation lands management should be added to the Planning Department budget in the future to support continued maintenance and implementation of the land management plans.



Opportunity: Increase Mitigation Fees for Upland Habitat Removal

- The city receives payment as mitigation for removal of upland habitat. Those funds go into the Conservation Fund which can be used as stated in Section 157.06(E)3.b. ii.
 - Conservation Trust Funds shall only be used for acquisition and management of upland preserves, development of passive recreation facilities on such lands consistent with the permitted principal uses and structures of the Open Space Conservation Zoning District, and education pertaining to such lands.
- In 2007 the upland mitigation fee was \$140,000/acre with a provision for a yearly 5% adjustment. In 2017 the fee was \$217,186. The fees were reduced by Resolution in 17-R27 to \$25,005/acre.
 - Conservation Fund balance = \$682,178
- Staff recommends preparing a future agenda item to review what the updated, 2025, Conservation Lands mitigation fee may be.



Staff Recommendations:

1. Council support the addition of signage for conservation lands.
2. Council support the Next Steps for the Commerce Center North Preserve Area.
3. Council support the Next Steps for the Peacock Property.
4. Council support staff's continued effort to identify and pursue acquisition of conservation lands as possible.
5. Council direct staff to advance an agenda item to review and discuss an updated Upland Habitat Mitigation fee.
6. Council continue to consider securing larger undisturbed lands for Conservation and passive recreation purposes due to increasing development pressure.

