

POLK COUNTY DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE STAFF REPORT

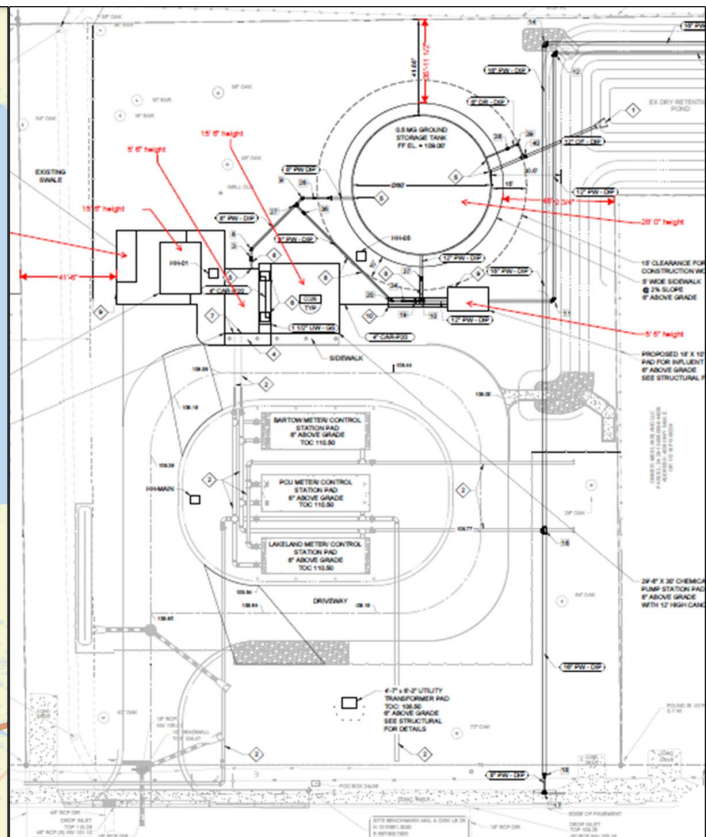
DRC Date:	August 28, 2025	Level of Review:	Level 3 Review
PC Date:	September 10, 2025	Type:	Conditional Use
BoCC Date:	n/a	Case Numbers:	LDCU-2025-19
Applicant:	Polk County	Case Name:	CR 540A Booster Pump Station
		Case Planner:	Ian Nance

Request:	Conditional Use request for a Booster Pump Station with a 0.50 Million Gallon Ground Storage Tank and supporting facilities (Class III Utilities).
Location:	4520 East County Road 540A, west of Bartow Highway, east of Stokes Road, north of Bartow in Section 13, Township 29, Range 24.
Property Owners:	Polk County; City of Lakeland; City of Bartow
Parcel Number (Size):	242913-000000-044120 (+/- 2.08 acres)
Future Land Use:	Residential Medium-X (RMX) US 98 Selected Area Plan
Development Area:	Transit Supportive Development Area (TSDA)
Nearest Municipality:	Bartow
DRC Recommendation:	Approval
Planning Commission Vote:	Pending

Site Location



Site Plan



Summary:

Polk County Utilities (PCU) is proposing a potable water Booster Pump Station (Class III Utility) which includes a 0.50-million-gallon Ground Storage Tank and support facilities. This parcel will contain equipment suitable to boost pressure in a potable water line from a Polk Regional Water Cooperative (PRWC) water main entering in from the north side of the parcel, out towards Polk County's Southwest Service Area. The site was selected due to its previous acquisition to serve as an emergency interconnect between the cities of Bartow and Lakeland, and Polk County.

This parcel is near three service areas with existing pipelines and will serve a critical purpose to pump water where needed in emergency conditions. Because of the previously determined utility purpose, it was thought to be both practical and efficient to co-locate the PRWC's booster pump station on the parcel. The prime factor for consideration is the ground storage tank in a residential district. The tank is 60 feet in diameter with a height of approximately 28 feet in height.

The site is within a Residential Medium-X (RMX) future land use designation that allows a maximum height of 50 feet. This site is in a transition area west of US Highway 98 between neighborhood commercial uses and suburban residential development. One single-family home abuts the property to the west. Personal services are located to the east. The tank will be located a minimum of 50 feet from residential property lines, and the site will be landscaped in accordance with LDC Section 720 and the US 98 Selected Area Plan (SAP).

Once constructed, the facility will be operated via the County Utility Division's supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system from offsite, requiring occasional visits for system cleaning and maintenance. The facility will include multiple onsite structures including an electrical building, booster pumps, as well as the subject tank. These mechanical components are specifically designed by the manufacturers to be placed in residential settings and mitigate any noise pollution.

Access will be provided by an existing driveway onto CR 540-A, an Urban Collector (UC) roadway. Class III utility uses such as this generate little-to-no consistent impacts on traffic, schools, emergency response, parks, utilities, or other public services. No wetlands or flood zones are located on the subject site. This facility meets the relevant standards in the Comprehensive Plan and LDC, made compatible with surrounding uses through LDC provisions, and staff recommends approval.

Findings of Fact

- *This is a request for Conditional Use Approval of a potable water Booster Pump Station (Class III Utility) which includes a 0.50-million-gallon Ground Storage Tank and support facilities. The subject site is currently used as an emergency interconnect between the cities of Bartow and Lakeland, and Polk County.*
- *The subject site is within a Residential Medium-X (RMX) future land use designation in the US Highway 98 Selected Area Plan (SAP) and Transit Supportive Development Area (TSDA).*
- *Comprehensive Plan Policy 2.104-A1 states, “Transit Supportive Development Areas shall meet the following criteria:*
 - a. be those areas where the availability of infrastructure and other community facilities and services, including, but not limited to mass transit and other transportation alternatives, utilities, public safety, recreational and educational services, promotes and supports the location of higher density and intensity compact, mixed use development;*
 - b. be supported by existing or planned urban type services that are programmed or expected for the 10-year planning horizon;*
 - c. be designated as part of a coordinated land use and transportation strategy that supports the provision of improved and expanded transit services, as identified in the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) 2060 Transportation Vision Plan and the connecting circulator routes, in order to increase mobility and travel options;*
 - d. include development criteria that:*
 - 1. promote the development of walkable communities which include a balance between employment opportunities, mix of complementary uses and activities, and a range of housing opportunities;*
 - 2. improve access to employment areas, schools, shopping and recreational opportunities.”*
- *According to Comprehensive Plan Policy 2.125-D1 states, “The following utility facilities shall be permitted throughout the County in all land use classifications, subject to County approval, to support existing and proposed development:*
 - a. water and sewer transmission and treatment facilities, including, without limitation, collection and distribution mains, water and sewerage-treatment facilities, and pumping facilities;*
 - b. electrical-transmission and distribution facilities including, without limitation, electrical transmission lines, substations, and related electrical-distribution facilities;*
 - c. communications facilities, including, without limitation, radio towers and microwave transmission facilities, (subject to other restrictions within the Plan or the County's Land Development Code);*

- d. *public potable wells and temporary or permanent package treatment plants; and*
- e. *natural-gas and liquefied-fuel pipelines.”*

- *Comprehensive Plan POLICY 2.125-D2.d says, “Polk County adopted the Land Development Code in accordance with Section 163.3202(1), FS, to further define appropriate development controls to govern the locational and site criteria for utilities.”*
- *Chapter 10 of the Land Development Code (LDC) defines Class III Utilities as “Production or treatment facilities such as sewage treatment plants, elevated water storage towers, non-accessory **ground storage tanks**, or similar facilities. This definition does not include electric power plants and lime stabilization facilities.”*
- *LDC Table 4.12 lists Class III Utilities as “C3” Conditional Uses in RMX districts, requiring approval from the Planning Commission in accordance with LDC Section 906.*
- *LDC Section 303, Criteria for Conditional Uses, states “Class III utility facilities may be permitted within a residential district only if the applicant demonstrates what efforts have been made to first site the facility within a non-residential district and why those sites were not chosen. At a minimum, alternative non-residential sites within one quarter of one mile from the selected site shall be considered.”*
- *LDC Section 303, Criteria for Conditional Uses, states “For purposes of public safety and welfare, all new Class III utilities (except transmission lines) and all new electrical power substations (both Class II and Class III), shall be protected by fencing or other appropriate protection to discourage entry by animals and unauthorized persons. Fencing shall be interior to any required vegetative buffering. The minimum height for enclosures shall be six feet from finished grade level. Fencing in or adjacent to residential uses or districts shall exclude barbed or razor wire fencing materials below the height of six feet.”*
- *LDC Section 303, Criteria for Conditional Uses, states the maximum average noise levels which shall be permitted at the utility site’s perimeter on any given day, when a proposed utility locates next to a residential use or residential district is 65 dB(A).*
- *The zoned schools for the site are Highlands City Elementary; Bartow Middle; and Bartow Senior High.*
- *Fire response to this site is primarily from Polk County Fire Rescue Station 28, 4101 Clubhouse Rd, Highland City.*
- *The site is served by the Polk County Sheriff’s Office Southwest District Command Center, located at 4120 US 98 South, Lakeland.*
- *The site is in the city of Lakeland’s Utility Service Area. The site serves as an emergency interconnect between the Cities of Bartow, Lakeland, and Polk County.*
- *The site access to the subject property is on County Road 540A (Road No. 931302) a County-maintained Urban Collector roadway.*

- *There are no wetlands and floodplains on the site. The nearest surface water is Lake Hancock to the east.*
- *The site is comprised of Candler and Taveres Sands, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, Polk County Survey.*
- *According to FNAI Biodiversity Matrix, the subject site (Unit ID 36349) no endangered species have been identified onsite. The property is not located within the Polk Green District. No conservation easements are adjacent to the property.*
- *The site is not within an airport flight path and height notification zone.*
- *This application has been reviewed for consistency with LDC Sections 906, 303, the US 98 SAP, and 220.*

Development Review Committee Recommendation: Based on the information provided by the applicant, recent site visits, and the analysis conducted within this staff report, the Development Review Committee (DRC) finds that with the proposed conditions the request **IS COMPATIBLE** with the surrounding land uses and general character of the area and **IS CONSISTENT** with the Polk County Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code. Therefore, the DRC recommends **APPROVAL of LDCU-2025-19.**

Planning Commission: *The Planning Commission will vote on this application on September 10, 2025.*

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

Based upon the findings of fact, the DRC recommends APPROVAL of LDCU-2025-19 with the following conditions:

1. This approval shall be for a Booster Pump Station (Class III Utilities) with a 0.50-million-gallon Ground Storage Tank and support facilities, as described in the staff report. [PLG]
2. Additional accessory structures necessary for the operation of this facility may be permitted as minor modifications to the site plan. [PLG]
3. The site plan included herein together with the conditions of approval shall be considered the "Binding Site Plan." Any modifications to LDCU-2025-19, except for those listed in Section 906.E of the LDC, shall constitute a Major Modification to this approval and require a Level 3 Review before the Planning Commission. [PLG]

GENERAL NOTES

NOTE: This staff report was prepared without the benefit of testimony and evidence submitted by the public and other parties at a public hearing.

NOTE: Approval of this request shall not constitute a waiver or variance from any applicable development requirement unless specifically noted in the conditions of approval and consistent with the LDC.

NOTE: All written comments made in the application and subsequent submissions of information made during the application review process, which are on file with the Land Development Division, shall be considered to be binding upon the applicant, provided such comments are not at variance with the Comprehensive Plan, LDC or other development regulations in effect at the time of development.

NOTE: Approval of this request is only for Level 3 Review and only for those development decisions within the Planning Commissioners' jurisdiction. Building permits will be required for improvements to structures in accordance with Chapter 553 of the Florida Statutes.

NOTE: Issuance of a development permit by the county does not in any way create any rights on the part of the applicant to obtain a permit from a state or federal agency and does not create any liability on the part of the county for issuance of the permit if the applicant fails to obtain requisite approvals or fulfill the obligations imposed by a state or federal agency or undertakes actions that result in a violation of state or federal law.

Surrounding Land Use Designations and Current Land Use Activity

The following table provides a reference point for notable and pertinent Future Land Use Map districts and existing land uses upon them.

Table 1

Northwest: Residential Medium Pasture w/Single Family Home	North: Residential Medium County Stormwater Pond	Northeast: Institutional-1 Elementary School
West: Residential Medium Single-Family Home	Subject Property: Residential Medium Utilities	East: Office Center Personal Supports
Southwest: Residential Low-4 CR 540A	South: Residential Low-4 CR 540A	Southeast: Residential Low-4 CR 540A

The subject property is in a transition area west of US Highway 98 between neighborhood commercial uses and suburban residential development.

Compatibility with the Surrounding Land Uses and Infrastructure:

The Comprehensive Plan defines Compatibility in Section 4.400 as “A condition in which land uses or conditions can coexist in relative proximity to each other in a stable fashion.”

Planning staff analyzes a site plan for compatibility by reviewing several factors: the type and intensity of adjacent uses versus the proposed use; how the proposed development interacts with the surrounding area in relation with existing uses; access to roads and where traffic generated from the site will travel; the proximity to retail, employment, emergency services, mass transit, parks, and other public services; and how the applicant addresses possible incompatibilities that might arise from the proposed use by utilizing mitigating strategies found in the Comprehensive Plan or through Conditions of Approval agreed upon by the applicant and staff.

A. Land Uses:

Polk County Utilities (PCU) is proposing a potable water Booster Pump Station (Class III Utility) which includes a 0.50-million-gallon Ground Storage Tank and support facilities. This parcel will contain equipment suitable to boost pressure in a potable water line from the PRWC's water main entering in from the north side of the parcel, out towards Polk County's Southwest Service Area. The subject site is currently used as an emergency interconnect between the cities of Bartow and Lakeland, and Polk County.

Ground storage reservoirs can be made compatible almost anywhere through buffering and proper site location. Ground storage tanks occupy visual space but cause few if any other externalities. The tank is 60 feet in diameter with a height of approximately 28 feet. The site is within an RMX future land use designation that allows a maximum height of 50 feet. The site is adjacent to a single-family home to the west. The tank will be set back a minimum of 50 feet from any residential property line, in accordance with compatibility standards found in LDC Section 220. Buffering will be required in accordance with LDC Section 720 and the US 98 SAP.

LDC Section 303, Criteria for Conditional Uses, states the maximum average noise levels permitted at the utility site's perimeter on any given day, when a proposed utility locates next to a residential use or residential district, is 65 dB(A), but the noise from this facility will be well below these levels. The high-service pump station houses the distribution system pumps which are often the primary noise source along with the on-site well and an emergency backup generator. These mechanical components are specifically designed by the manufacturers to be placed in residential settings to mitigate noise pollution. In the case of an emergency scenario where the backup generator is required, the generator is fully enclosed in a sound attenuated enclosure.

Finally, the presence of this facility will not create additional traffic demands. Once constructed, the facility will be operated via the County Utility Division's supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system from offsite. There will only be occasional visits for system cleaning and maintenance.

B. Timing & Infrastructure:

Polk County Comprehensive Plan Policy 2.102-A3 states, "Development shall be distributed throughout the County consistently with this Future Land Use Element so that the public utility, other community services, and public transit and transportation systems can be efficiently utilized; and compact, high-density and intensity development is located where urban services can be made available."

LDC Section 303, Criteria for Conditional Uses, states "Class III utility facilities may be permitted within a residential district only if the applicant demonstrates what efforts have been made to first site the facility within a non-residential district and why those sites were not chosen. At a minimum, alternative non-residential sites within one quarter of one mile from the selected site shall be considered."

County staff has reviewed potential surrounding non-residential sites that would operate as efficiently as the chosen location. The site was selected due to its previous acquisition to serve as an emergency interconnect between the cities of Bartow and Lakeland, and Polk County.

Nearest and Zoned Elementary, Middle, and High School

School capacity is not a concern for utility uses. Proximity and traffic conflicts are a concern. Fortunately, the activity on this site is benign and will have no potential conflicts with any school operations.

The zoned public schools for the site are Highlands City Elementary; Bartow Middle; and Bartow Senior High.

Table 2

Name of School	Average driving distance from subject site
Highlands City Elementary	1.63 Miles
Bartow Middle	5.99 Miles
Bartow Senior High	5.57 Miles

Source: Polk County School Board GIS

Nearest Sheriff, Fire, and EMS Station

Polk County Fire Rescue provides Advanced Life Support transport to all residents and visitors of Polk County. It also provides fire suppression, rescue services, and fire prevention services to all unincorporated Polk County and the municipalities of Eagle Lake, Polk City, Mulberry, Lake Hamilton, and Hillcrest Heights. Emergency response is considered effective if response times are within eight (8) minutes in rural and suburban areas and 13 minutes in urban areas. All PCFR stations are staffed 24/7 by career fire or EMS personnel and augmented by response from other PCFR stations.

Both fire and ambulance responses to the subject location are primarily from Polk County Fire Rescue Station 28, 4101 Clubhouse Rd, Highland City. This travel distance is 1.2 miles, and the average response time should be 6-8 minutes. Polk County is currently planning a joint fire station with the city of Bartow to be in the vicinity of the intersection of EF Griffin Road and Smith Lane. The travel distance from that location is approximately 1.1 miles, so the average response times should not be negatively affected.

Once open, the existing Fire Station 28 will most likely close or be repurposed, and the subject location will be served by the new joint station. The new joint station may include an automatic aid agreement where fire units from the city of Bartow are automatically dispatched based on situational needs and PCFR unit availability. Response times can vary significantly based on many factors but are within the suburban levels on average.

Table

	Name of Station	Distance	Response Time*
Sheriff	Sheriff's Office Southwest District Command Center 4120 US 98 South, Lakeland	±3.1 miles	9:40 minutes 22:13 minutes
Fire	Polk County Fire Rescue Station 28 4101 Clubhouse Rd, Highland City	±1.2 miles	6-8 minutes

Source: Polk County Sheriff's Office and Public Safety

*Response times are based on when the station receives the call, not from when the call is made to 911.

This water treatment plant will be an unmanned facility. Aside from construction, there should be little demand for fire/rescue services resulting from the operation of this site. There are not many combustible features to a water treatment facility of this size.

The site is in the district of the Polk County Sheriff's Office Southwest District Command Center 4120 US 98 South, Lakeland. Sheriff response times are not as much a function of the distance to the nearest Sheriff's substation, but more a function of the overall number of patrol officers within the County.

The PCSO is always trying to improve response times, especially for Priority 1 Calls, by employing new technologies such as Emergency 1 Dispatch (E1D) and Live911. E1D is a program designed to alert deputies at the earliest possible moment of a call for service that is being classified as a true emergency. E1D alert notifications are sent to deputies via their agency-issued smart phones as text messages, alerting deputies of the call type and address of the emergency. Similarly, Live911 technology allows deputies to hear emergency calls in real-time as the dispatcher is receiving the information. Both E1D and Live911 enable deputies to self-dispatch to these in-progress, high-risk incidents as dispatchers collect additional information about the call, thus reducing our response time to emergency situations.

Patrol staff in each district also monitors the response times for their areas and tries to manage their shifts according to manpower, hotspots, traffic obstructions/construction sites, etc. Areas that are spread out tend to have slightly longer response times because of the vast land mass of their district and time of travel. Since patrol deputies are not sitting in the office waiting on a call, it is easier for patrol staff to assign them to certain sectors or beats based on areas with higher call volume to reduce response time; however, this cannot be predicted precisely.

Water and Wastewater Demand and Capacity:

This water production and proposed storage facility will not require any water or wastewater. It will continue to provide water services.

A. Estimated Demand and Service Provider:

The site is within an RMX future land use district. It has already been developed for utility purposes. It is in the city of Lakeland's service area. It will create no demand for centralized potable water or wastewater. The point of this request is to boost water pressure in existing public water systems.

B. Available Capacity:

Capacity information is not available for the city of Lakeland. To the south of the project is the Southwest Utility Service Area. The public water system here is anticipated to be permitted for 7.5 Million Gallons per Day (MGD) by 2028 due to an increase of 0.72 MGD from the Southeast Wellfield. This application will provide needed storage and pressure for the overall potable water system in this area.

C. Planned Improvements:

With portions of Polk County lying within the Southern Water Use Caution Area (SWUCA), as identified by the Southwest Water Management District, there has been a significant effort by the State and additional stakeholders to address the water use in the region. This facility will blend an Alternative Water Supply (AWS) supplied by the Polk Regional Water Cooperative (PRWC) with

raw water from Upper Floridian Aquifer well to provide treated potable water to this area of Polk County.

Roadways/ Transportation Network

The Polk County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) monitors traffic congestion on over 425 roadway segments (950 directional links). The Roadway Network Database (RND) contains current traffic data for all arterial and collector roads and includes information on the current traffic volume and level-of-service for these major roads. The RND contains over 26 fields of transportation data for over 1,300 miles of state, County, and city roads in Polk County – one of the largest road networks in the State of Florida.

Much of the transportation data contained in the updated RND is based on traffic counts taken recently by the TPO and Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and is used to calculate the level of service and how much capacity is available on a given road based on the road's level of service (LOS) standard. Also included are several safety and multi-modal indicators that help us track some of the TPO's performance measures and targets. This includes a calculation of crash rates, as well as if there is a presence of transit services, sidewalks and bicycle facilities for each road segment.

The report identifies both daily and peak hour traffic volumes. Daily traffic volumes are reported in Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) – the typical traffic volume on a weekday over a 24-hour period. Peak hour traffic represents the highest hourly traffic volume for period between 4 – 7 p.m. It is reported as both a two-way volume and as directional volumes (east and west or north and south).

The peak hour traffic volumes are used to estimate the level-of-service for each roadway, in each direction. Level-of-service refers to the quality of traffic flow. It is the primary measure of traffic congestion. Level-of-service (LOS) is measured on a scale of 'A' to 'F' with LOS 'A' being the best (free-flow traffic) and LOS 'F' being the worst (severe traffic congestion).

A. Estimated Demand:

Class III Utilities do not generate significant amounts of traffic on roadways. They are typically more of a “land intensive” use. This means they can use a lot of land but don't have as much activity to go with it.

There will not likely be any increase in transportation demand because of this approval. After construction of the ground storage tank and supporting facilities, the plant will be operated through the County's supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system. There are no offices or habitable structures planned onsite that will draw personnel beyond the occasional visits for testing and maintenance. This request will not require either a major or minor traffic study since the average annual daily trip rate (AADT) will be less than 50 trips per day.

B. Available Capacity:

The project will have direct access to County Road 540A (Road No. 931302) a County-maintained Urban Collector roadway. Although the request will have a limited impact on the transportation system, it is still pertinent to be aware of available capacity when making land use decisions. Table 4, to follow, provides a brief snapshot of the capacity on the surrounding road network.

Table 4

Link #	Road Name	Current Level of Service (LOS)	Available PM Peak Hour Capacity	Minimum LOS Standard
4162E	CR 540A From: Lakeland Highlands Road To: US 98	C	759	D
4162W	Masterpiece Road From: US 98 To: Lakeland Highlands Road	C	759	D

Source: Polk County Transportation Planning Organization, Concurrency Roadway Network Database January 17, 2025

C. Roadway Conditions

CR 540 is an Urban Collector roadway. It is a four-lane divided highway with a paved surface width of 70 feet, bike lanes, and sidewalks.

D. Planned Improvements:

No improvements noted.

E. Sidewalks

Sidewalks are located on both sides of CR 540A.

F. Mass Transit

No mass transit is located along CR 540A, but bust stops are located within 0.25 miles on each side of US Highway 98 for the Lakeland-to-Bartow Silver Line.

Park Facilities:

Utility infrastructure does not create a direct demand for parks or recreational facilities. It is very rare that a utility infrastructure project will impede or diminish the use of a park or recreation improvement.

A. Location:

Highlands City Park, Highlands City Senior Field, and Banana Lake parks are all within 2.5 miles of the subject site.

B. Services:

Banana Lake Park features covered picnic shelters, a short, paved walking trail, a boat launch site and a fishing pier.

Highland City Park is the home to recreational softball leagues. It has two Little League fields, one pony field, and one softball field. There is also a playground with a covered area, a pavilion, and basketball courts.

Highlands City Senior Field features baseball and softball fields, as well as picnic tables.

C. Environmental Lands:

Circle B Bar Reserve, on the northwest shore of Lake Hancock, is a former cattle ranch that today boasts a wide variety of plants and animals and several distinct ecosystems in this reserve of 1,267 acres.

D. Planned Improvements

There are no planned improvements to park facilities in this area, according to the County's 5-year capital improvements plan.

Environmental Conditions

The Polk County Comprehensive Plan has a Conservation Element. Division 2.300 of the Comprehensive Plan mentions, "The goal, objectives, and policies of the Conservation Element are designed to protect the natural resources which make Polk County a special place while preventing degradation of the environment and allowing development and economic expansion to occur." There should be no serious environmental conditions that need to be addressed with this subject site.

A. Surface Water:

Lake Hancock is approximately one mile to the east. According to the Polk County Water Atlas, Lake Hancock sits at the headwaters of the Peace River and plays an important role in meeting minimum flows in the Upper Peace River, as well as in improving water quality in the Peace River and Charlotte Harbor. It is in the Peace River - Saddle Creek Watershed and considered impaired due to poor nutrient levels. No impacts are anticipated with this proposal.

B. Wetlands/Floodplains:

There are no wetlands or 100-year flood hazard areas onsite. The nearest flood hazard and wetland areas are along the shores of Lake Hancock to the east.

C. Soils:

The site is comprised of Candler and Taveres Sands, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, Polk County Survey. There are no limitations to a ground storage facility onsite. No septic systems will be needed for this use.

D. Protected Species

According to FNAI Biodiversity Matrix, the subject site (Unit ID 36349) no endangered species have been identified onsite. The property is not located within the Polk Green District. No conservation easements are adjacent to the property.

E. Historical & Archeological Resources:

No protected archeological resources are located onsite, according to the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources.

F. Wells (Public/Private)

No private wells are indicated onsite.

G. Airports:

The nearest airport is Bartow Airport, approximately five miles to the east.

Economic Factors:

The Southern Water Use Caution Area (SWUCA) was designated in 1992 to address declines in aquifer levels due primarily to groundwater withdrawals. Drawdowns in aquifer levels in some areas exceeded 50 feet. The SWUCA encompasses approximately 5,100 square miles, including all of DeSoto, Hardee, Manatee, and Sarasota counties, and parts of Charlotte, Highlands, Hillsborough and Polk counties. This area is experiencing reduced flows in its river systems, reduced lake levels, and saltwater intrusion into the Upper Floridan aquifer along the southwest coast of the state. Concurrently, similar environmental declines were being witnessed on the eastern coast of central Florida.

After data-gathering and analysis into the causes of these environmental declines, the FDEP developed a program called the Central Florida Water Initiative (CFWI). The CFWI Planning Area covers five counties, including Orange, Osceola, Polk, Seminole and southern Lake County. The boundaries of the St. Johns River, South Florida and Southwest Florida water management districts (Districts) meet in the area. In 2020, rules were adopted to limit water users in the CFWI area to their currently permitted groundwater quantities, or the quantities necessary to meet their needs in the year 2025, depending upon the use type. This rule will limit growth and development in Polk County unless other sources of drinking water can be found.

The PRWC was formed as a non-profit, special district of the State of Florida created to plan, develop, and deliver a future high-quality drinking water supply. The PRWC was created by interlocal agreement among member governments and is a regional utility funded by contributions from the member governments and State agency grants. Based on the local and regional water supply needs of Polk County's communities, the member governments knew that planning to meet those needs and protect Polk County's water resources needed to be a collective and collaborative process.

The Southwest Florida Water Management District is the largest funding partner, having committed over \$200 million to the project so far. The PRWC has also been successful in securing over \$10 million in state funding grants for this regional project. In addition, low-interest state revolving funds and federal WIFIA loans will be used to help finance the project and give members time to generate future revenue for repayment of the project loans.

Despite all the grants and low-interest loans, the water produced from this facility will cost more than it costs to retrieve water from the Upper Floridan Aquifer. This is due to the effort and energy it takes to bring the Lower Floridan Aquifer's briny water to purification and consumption standards. The byproduct of the process also comes at a cost to dispose through deep well injection. The individual utilities will make decisions for any changes to their customer drinking water rates. Water conservation will ultimately be a critical factor that lessens the financial burdens on average consumers.

Water storage systems provide financial benefits to the utility provider and ultimately taxpayers. These tanks act as capacitors to mitigate surge demand, which provides balanced water pressure. There is also less strain on other parts of the system when storage is available. In the long run, maintenance costs are lower, there are fewer pipe bursts, and water outages are less likely.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, LDC, and Other County Ordinances:

The property is in the Transit Supportive Development Area (TSDA). Comprehensive Plan Section 2.104-A1 states the TSDA shall meet the following criteria:

- a. be those areas where the availability of infrastructure and other community facilities and services, including, but not limited to mass transit and other transportation alternatives, utilities, public safety, recreational and educational services, promotes and supports the location of higher density and intensity compact, mixed use development;
- b. be supported by existing or planned urban type services that are programmed or expected for the 10-year planning horizon;
- c. be designated as part of a coordinated land use and transportation strategy that supports the provision of improved and expanded transit services, as identified in the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) 2060 Transportation Vision Plan and the connecting circulator routes, in order to increase mobility and travel options;
- d. include development criteria that:
 1. promote the development of walkable communities which include a balance between employment opportunities, mix of complementary uses and activities, and a range of housing opportunities;
 2. improve access to employment areas, schools, shopping and recreational opportunities.”

POLICY 2.125-D1: UTILITIES PERMITTED USES states that “*utility facilities shall be permitted throughout the County in all land use classifications, subject to County approval, to support existing and proposed development.*” To better serve existing development and additional development in the future, there is a need for more water storage so that efficient flows can be maintained to distribute this water to existing and new customers.

Table 5, to follow, provides an analysis of the proposed request when compared to the typical policies of the Comprehensive Plan selected by staff for evaluation of development proposals. Based upon this analysis, the proposed request is consistent with these policies.

Table 5

Comprehensive Plan Policy	Consistency Analysis
<p>POLICY 2.102-A2: COMPATIBILITY - Land shall be developed so that adjacent uses are compatible with each other, pursuant to the requirements of other Policies in this Future Land Use Element, so that one or more of the following provisions are accomplished: a. there have been provisions made which buffer incompatible uses from dissimilar uses; b. incompatible uses are made to be more compatible to each other through limiting the intensity and scale of the more intense use; c. uses are transitioned through a gradual scaling of different land use activities through the use of innovative development techniques such as a Planned Unit Development.</p>	<p>The proposed facility will not exceed the height district for the RM future land use (50'). The tank will be set back 50 feet from residential properties. Landscaping will be planted in accordance with LDC standards. Equipment onsite will not exceed LDC standards for noise on the property line (65dBA).</p>
<p>POLICY 2.102-A1: DEVELOPMENT LOCATION – Polk County shall promote contiguous and compact growth patterns through the development process to minimize energy costs, conserve land, water, and natural resources, minimize the cost of services, and prevent development patterns where tracts of land are by-passed in favor of development more distant from services and existing Communities.</p>	<p>This potable water storage tanks are needed to enable more “contiguous and compact growth patterns.”</p>
<p>POLICY 2.102-A3: DISTRIBUTION - Development shall be distributed throughout the County consistently with this Future Land Use Element so that the public utility, other community services, and public transit and transportation systems can be efficiently utilized; and compact, high-density and intensity development is located where urban services can be made available.</p>	<p>This request is in the city of Lakeland’s service area. This is a greatly needed component of the overall distribution of potable water throughout the network. This will improve the operation of the system and contribute to more consistent water pressure.</p>
<p>POLICY 2.102-A4: TIMING - The development of land shall be timed and staged in conjunction with the cost-effective and efficient provision of supporting community services which, at a minimum, shall require compliance with the Plan's Level of Service requirements and the County's concurrency management system.</p>	<p>This ground storage facility is needed to serve current development as well as potential future development.</p>
<p>POLICY 2.102-A15: ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES - The County will direct new growth to areas where adequate public facilities exist or are planned; and ensure that essential services are in place to provide for efficient, cost-effective response times from the Fire Department, Sheriff’s Department, and Emergency Management Service (EMS).</p>	<p>The subject property is located within an area of the County that has adequate public safety services as identified in the staff report. Ground storage reservoirs are essential to maintaining adequate water pressures in a water system so that fire hydrants have adequate flow for their emergency use.</p>

LDC Table 4.12 listed Class III Utilities as a “C3” conditional use requiring Planning Commission approval. A Level 3 Review is approved by the Planning Commission under the criteria listed in Section 906.D.7 of the LDC

Table 6

The Planning Commission, in the review of development plans, shall consider the following factors in accordance with Section 906.D.7 of the LDC:	
Whether the proposed development is consistent with all relevant requirements of this Code;	<i>Yes, this request is consistent with the LDC Section 303, Class III Utilities and 906.D Level 3 Review Procedures.</i>
Whether the proposed development is consistent with all applicable policies of the Comprehensive Plan;	<i>Yes, this development is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan because POLICY 2.125-D1 states “utility facilities shall be permitted throughout the County in all land use classifications”</i>
Whether the proposed use is compatible with surrounding uses and the general character of the area, including such factors as density, height, bulk, scale, intensity, traffic, noise, and appearance; and	<i>The subject site is in a transition zone between neighborhood commercial activities at the intersection of arterial and collector roads, and suburban residential development. The site will be buffered from adjacent uses.</i>
How the concurrency requirements will be met if the development were built.	<i>Ground storage water tanks generate an insignificant amount of vehicle travel, require no school or park capacity, must be designed to meet drainage requirements, and are a concurrency facility on their own.</i>

The request meets all the conditions in Section 303 of the LDC for Class III Utilities in an RM land use district, as listed in the Findings of Fact of this report.

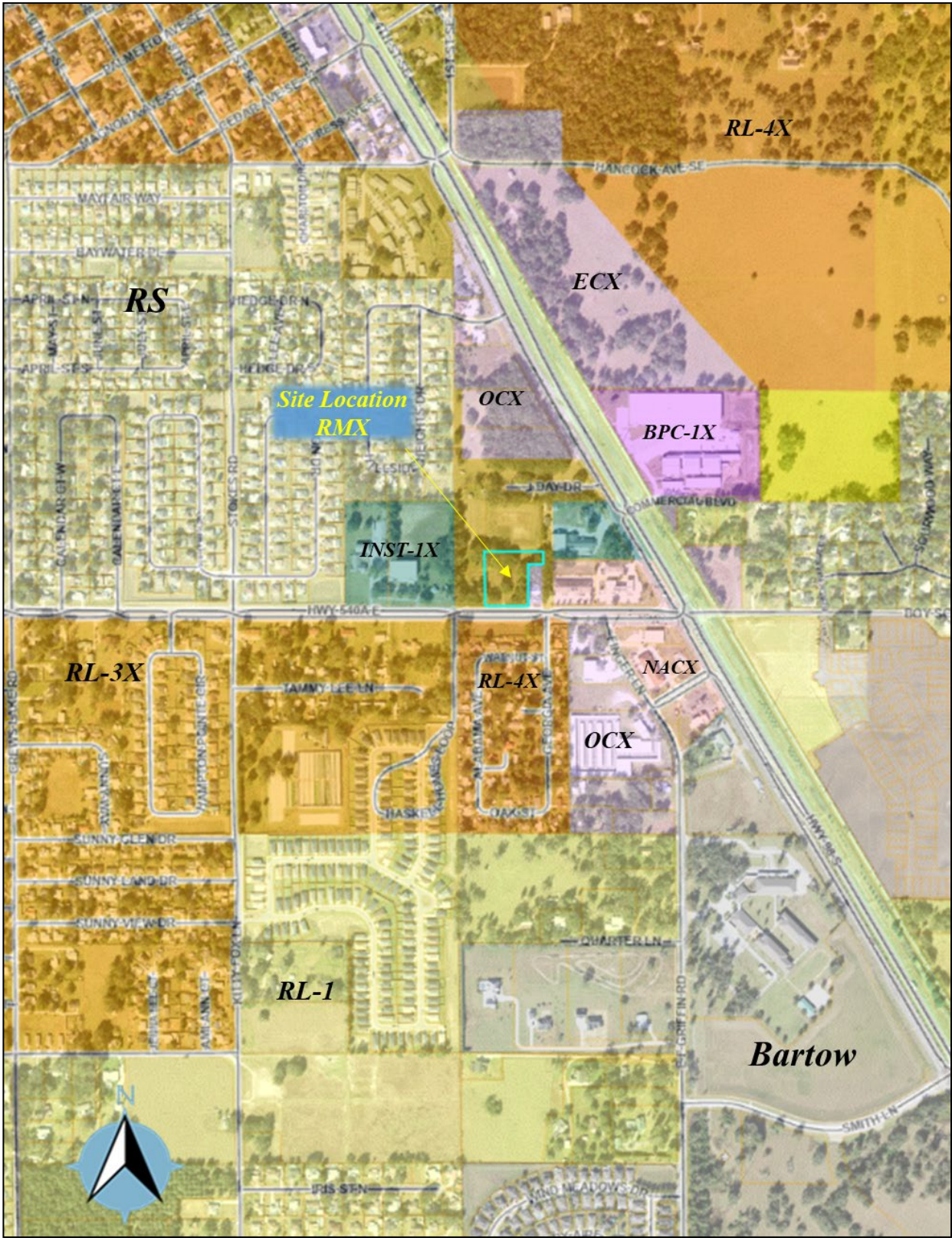
Comments from other Agencies: The Polk County Utilities, Land Development Engineering, County Surveyor, Polk County School Board, and the Polk County Public Safety Division contributed to the drafting of this report.

Exhibits:

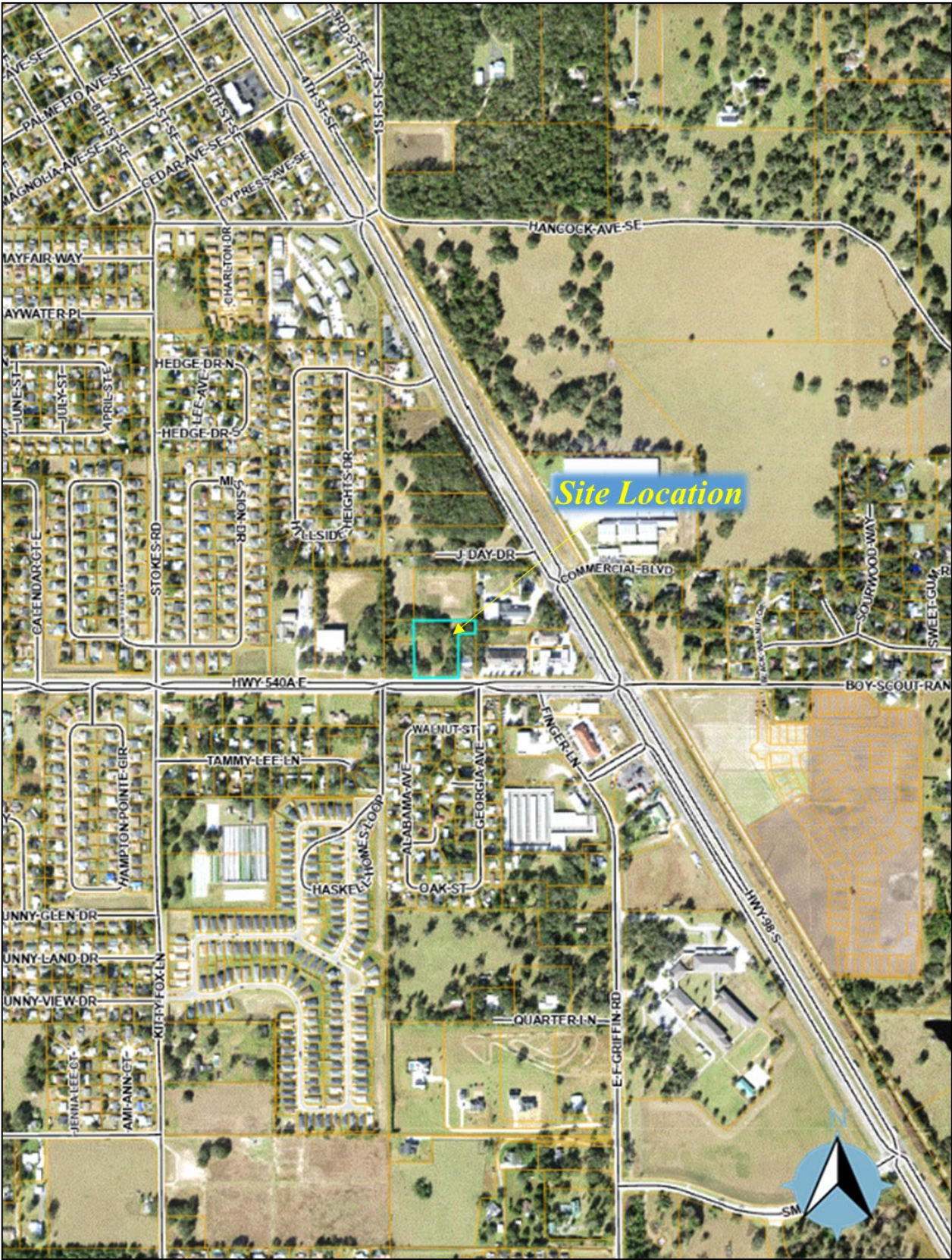
- Exhibit 1 Location Map
- Exhibit 2 Future Land Use Map
- Exhibit 3 2023 Aerial Image (Context)
- Exhibit 4 2023 Aerial Image (Close)
- Exhibit 5 Site Plan



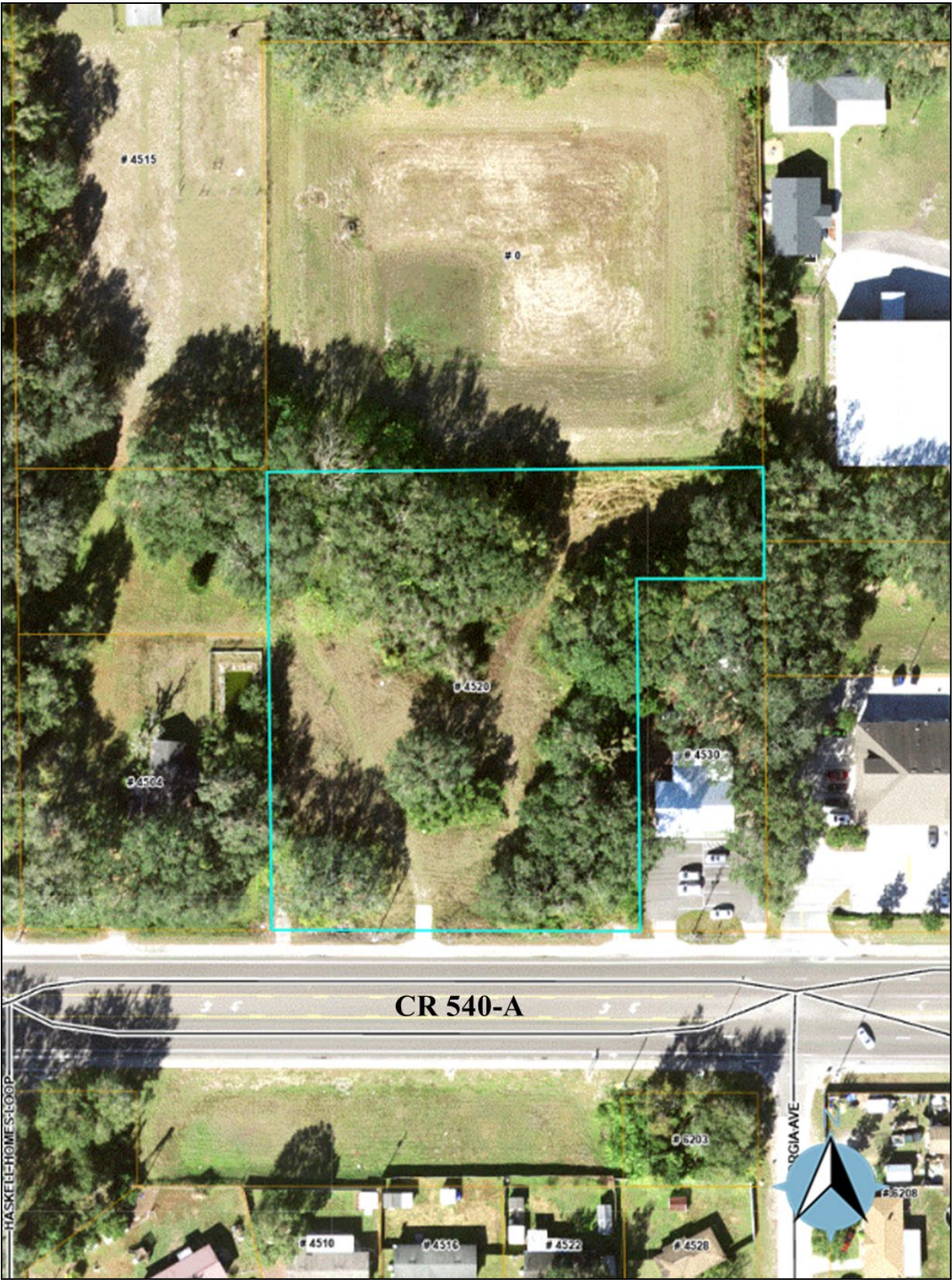
Location Map



Future Land Use Map



2023 Aerial Image (Context)



2023 Aerial Image (Close)

Case Overview

Level 3/IAN