

# POLK COUNTY DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE STAFF REPORT

<b>DRC Date:</b>	July 24, 2025	<b>Level of Review:</b>	Level 3 Review
<b>PC Date:</b>	September 10, 2025	<b>Type:</b>	Conditional Use
<b>BoCC</b>	N/A	<b>Case Numbers:</b>	LDCU-2025-15
<b>Date:</b>		<b>Case Name:</b>	Tiger Creek Preserve CU
<b>Applicant:</b>	NV5, Inc.	<b>Case Planner:</b>	Andrew Grohowski, Planner II

<b>Request:</b>	The owner is requesting Conditional Use approval to provide private lodging for staff in an Agriculture/Residential Rural (A/RR) land use district in the Nature Conservancy's Tiger Creek Nature Preserve.
<b>Location:</b>	674 Pfundstein Road, east of Scenic Highway and Wardlaw Road, south of Murray Road, west of Jewell Lane, north of Sultenfuss Road, northeast of the City of Frostproof in Section 02, Township 31, Range 28.
<b>Property Owners:</b>	The Nature Conservancy
<b>Parcel Size (Number):</b>	283102-000000-021010 (±60.84 acres)
<b>Future Land Use:</b>	Agriculture/Residential Rural (A/RR)
<b>Development Area:</b>	Rural Development Area (RDA)
<b>Nearest Municipality:</b>	City of Frostproof
<b>DRC Recommendation:</b>	Conditional Approval
<b>Planning Commission Vote:</b>	Pending Hearing

**Tiger Creek Preserve**



**2023 Aerial Image**



## Summary:

The applicant, on behalf of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), is requesting Conditional Use (CU) approval for the placement of five (5) private cabins in an Agriculture/Residential Rural (A/RR) land use district. The subject property is approximately 60 acres and is part of the approximately 4,980-acre conservation area of Tiger Creek and its surrounding uplands. The parcel has existing buildings in operation on site and wishes to place five (5) 12'x42' cabins to provide lodging for staff, volunteer workers, scientists and seasonal interns who perform land conservation and maintenance activities within the preserve on a short-term and temporary basis. These facilities will be used by staff only and not for public use.

Tiger Creek Preserve, managed and operated by TNC, is one of four campus preserves under TNC Florida's Center for Conservation Initiatives. As with other conservation sites throughout the County, the location provides County citizens with the importance of habitat conservation through educational opportunities and self-guided tours. The large site is open to the public year-round and requires ongoing upkeep and security by its volunteers and staff.

TNC staff have a variety of job demands ranging from habitat restoration, wildfire response, and providing aid to lost hikers. This is especially not an easy undertaking given the vast 4,980 acres of land and over ten miles of hiking trails. Per Table 2.1 of the Land Development Code (LDC), these private cabins are considered "Private Lodges and Retreats" which requires a Conditional Level 3 Review with a public hearing with the Planning Commission. The cabins will cut down on lengthy travel times to Tiger Creek Preserve for workers and enable vital management and operational coverage for the preservation.

The proposed cabins will not be located in any environmentally sensitive areas, including wetlands or floodplains, to warrant any impacts. Additionally, a species survey was conducted by the applicant which indicated an active Sand Skink burrow near the site. According to the submitted site plan, the cabins will provide necessary buffer requirements from the burrow to protect from any impacts (*Exhibit 6*). Should approval for the proposed cabins be granted, the applicant will be required to submit for a Level 2 staff review, during which engineered site plans must be submitted to address Conditional Use requirements, stormwater, parking needs, and site design for compatibility.

The request is relatively benign in intensity and meets all conditional requirements outlined in Chapter 3, Section 303 of the LDC. The substantial property size further insulates the use from any potential offsite concerns. Through site design and the conditions of approval, staff finds the request is compatible with the surrounding area and consistent with the LDC and Comprehensive Plan. Staff recommends approval of this application with the provided conditions of approval.

## Findings of Fact

- *This is a Conditional Use request to place five (5) 12'x42' cabins, or Private Lodges, that will be placed on approximately 60 acres within an Agriculture/Residential Rural (A/RR) land use district in the Rural Development Area (RDA).*
- *Chapter 10 of the Land Development Code (LDC) defines Private Lodges and Retreats as "Gathering places, such as a company retreat or a fraternal lodge, which are not open to the general public and whose use is limited to the membership, and their guests, of the owning organization. These sites are intended to provide a meeting place and resource-based recreational site for the organization, and typically provide lodging and kitchen facilities, as well as meeting rooms."*

- *The property has access to Pfundstein Road (Road No. 181102), a Local Residential Roadway with a pavement width of 20 feet. The nearest monitored roadway for Level of Service tracked for traffic counts or concurrency by the Polk County Transportation Organization's Roadway Network Database is State Road 17 (Scenic Highway) (Road No. 009011), approximately 2.8 miles west.*
- *Otto Pfundstein and Doris Pfundstein were the original owners of the property since at least December 21, 1959, according to the Quit Claim Deed for ROW dedication to Polk County under O.R. Book 343, Page 319.*
- *Dora Pfundstein distributed the subject property to their first party, Ulrich Schoenfeldt, after their passing through a Distributive Deed on February 19, 1987, according to O.R. Book 2507, Pages 554 to 556.*
- *On January 10, 1997, The Nature Conservancy purchased the subject property through a Warranty Deed with Ulrich Schoenfeldt according to O.R. Book 3786, Pages 636 and 637.*
- *There is no water or wastewater services to the subject parcel. A private well and septic tank will be utilized.*
- *The property contains no wetlands or flood zones.*
- *According to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory Biodiversity Matrix, the site is located within an identified one-mile radius for multiple endangered animal species. A species survey was conducted on the property which found one (1) Sand Skink burrow nearby. The applicant will adhere to appropriate buffer requirements and will be required to demonstrate at Level 2 Review how any impacts have been minimized or mitigated.*
- *According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, Polk County Survey, the subject site contains Astatula Sand and Hontoon Muck. The proposal will be located on Astatula Sand. This soil has slight limitations for septic tank absorption fields and slight limitations for small dwellings.*
- *The subject property is not located within an Airport Impact Zone or a Wellhead-Protection Area.*
- *According to a preliminary report from the Secretary of State's Department of Historical Resources Florida Master Site File, no archaeological sites are found within the parcel boundaries.*
- *Section 303, Private Lodges, of the LDC requires the following criteria to be met:*
  - "1. All vehicle access points shall be on a paved road.*
  - 2. No outdoor public address systems or speakers shall be used within 500 feet of any residential property line.*
  - 3. The proposed parking facilities shall be setback at least 25 feet from adjacent residential property.*
  - 4. Off-street parking areas shall be surfaced and maintained to provide a durable, dust free surface and shall provide adequate drainage facilities for disposal of all collected surface water. Surfacing materials may include pavement, gravel, wood chips, pervious paving materials, or grass.*
  - 5. Outdoor activities involving 250 or more persons shall be limited to operation from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.*

6. No activity shall be conducted that produces noise, odors, dust, fumes, fire hazard, or other nuisance beyond the property boundaries.

7. Any proposal for a religious institution within a lodge or retreat in a location that will render a legal use nonconforming shall require a Level 3 Review.

8. Recreational Camping is permitted within a retreat consistent with the standards for Recreational Camping in this Code.

9. RV spaces shall be considered accessory if stays are limited to no more than 30 days within the facility and comprise no more than 10% of the habitational units. RV spaces providing for stays of longer durations shall only be permitted as an RV Park as required by this Code.

10. In A/RR and RS districts, facilities shall be scaled similar to surrounding development with regard to both structure size and intensity.”

- Per Table 7.10 of the LDC, Lodges and Retreats warrant a site-specific determination for parking requirements. A total of five (5) unpaved parking spaces is proposed to accommodate the five (5) cabins.
- The property is zoned for Frostproof Ben Hill Griffin, Jr. Elementary and Frostproof Middle and Senior High.
- Fire response to this project is from Polk County Fire Rescue Station #1, located at 714 North Scenic Highway, Babson Park. Ambulance response is handled from a separate location at Fire Rescue Station 12, located at 1385 Fort Meade Road, Frostproof. Fire and EMS are located approximately 4.7 miles and 11.8 miles away, with an estimated response time of 12-15 minutes for Fire and 22-25 minutes for EMS. (11) minutes. The nearest municipal fire hydrant is approximately 3.5 miles away.
- The site is located within the Polk County Sheriff’s Office Southeast District, located at 4011 Sgt Mary Campbell Way in Lake Wales. Response times for SE in July 2025 were: Priority 1 Calls – 13:35 and Priority 2 Calls – 27:46.
- Section 204.A.1 of the LDC states, “The purpose of the A/RR district is to provide lands for the continuation of productive agricultural uses and to provide for very low-density residential development within unincorporated rural areas. The A/RR district permits agricultural activities, agricultural support facilities, multi-family dwelling units, farm labor housing, group living facilities, and community facilities.”
- The site is located in the Rural Development Area (RDA) which is the area “characterized by large open areas, agricultural use, with scattered development and rural centers. Services are limited and mostly found in the rural centers and clustered developments” according to POLICY 2.108-A1 of the Comprehensive Plan.
- POLICY 2.125-E1 of the Comprehensive Plan states that “Community Facilities shall be allowed in all land use classifications, unless specifically prohibited elsewhere in this Comprehensive Plan” and that “Type B facilities may be permitted in all areas of Polk County in accordance with the policies of this Plan and in accordance with the Land Development Code adopted by the County in accordance with Section 163.3201(1), F.S.”
- POLICY 2.121-A1 of the Comprehensive Plan states “Institutional uses, Community Facilities and essential services will be allowed as conditional uses, in accordance with

*policies of this Plan and the guidelines of the County's Land Development Code" in the Agricultural/Residential Rural districts.*

- *Per 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."*
- *This request has been reviewed for consistency with Tables 2.1 & 2.2 and Section 303 of the LDC.*
- *This request has been reviewed for consistency with SECTION 2.102 GROWTH MANAGEMENT and SECTION 2.108 RURAL-DEVELOPMENT AREA (RDA); of the Comprehensive Plan.*

**Development Review Committee Recommendation:** Based on the information provided by the applicant, the findings of fact, a recent site visit, and the staff report, the Development Review Committee (DRC) finds that the proposed request **IS COMPATIBLE** with the surrounding land uses and general character of the area, **IS CONSISTENT** with the Polk County Comprehensive Plan; therefore, the DRC recommends **APPROVAL of LDCU-2025-15**.

### **CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL**

Based upon the findings of fact the Development Review Committee recommends **APPROVAL** of **LDCU-2025-15** with the following Conditions:

1. The property shall be approved for five (5) cabins within an Agricultural/Residential Rural (A/RR) land use district. Any modifications to LDCU-2025-15, 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]
2. The cabins will be for private purposes only and not for public use. [PLG]
3. Prior to site clearing or grubbing, the applicant shall hire a qualified professional to conduct a site survey/walkover to ensure that no threatened or endangered plant or animal species exist on the site. If any are discovered, the applicant shall properly protect the specie(s) or mitigate any impacts consistent with federal, state, and local law. [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 Commission's jurisdiction. A Level 2 Review (engineered plans) will be required reflecting the standard conditions listed in Section 303 of the Land Development Code and the development standards listed in Chapter 7 of the Land Development Code. Upon completion of the Level 2 Process, building permits will be required for all 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

**Table 1**

<b>Northwest:</b> Preservation (PRESV) Tiger Creek Preserve ± 578 acres	<b>North:</b> Preservation (PRESV) Tiger Creek Preserve ± 578 acres	<b>Northeast:</b> Preservation (PRESV) Tiger Creek Preserve ± 321 acres
<b>West:</b> Preservation (PRESV) Tiger Creek Preserve ± 578 acres	<b>Subject Property:</b> Agriculture/Residential Rural (A/RR) ± 60.84 acres	<b>East:</b> Preservation (PRESV) Tiger Creek Preserve ± 321 acres
<b>Southwest:</b> Agriculture/Residential Rural (A/RR) Tiger Creek Groves Subdivision Single-family residences	<b>South:</b> Agriculture/Residential Rural (A/RR) Tiger Creek Groves Subdivision Single-family residences	<b>Southeast:</b> Agriculture/Residential Rural (A/RR) Tiger Creek Groves Subdivision Single-family residences

The area is rural in nature as the surrounding properties are in a Preservation (PRESV) or Agriculture/Residential Rural (A/RR) land use district. The Preservation district is associated with the Tiger Creek Nature Preserve. The subject site as well as a few other properties nearby were not within the preserve's initial confined boundaries when it was established in 1971. In January 1997, the 60-acre property was purchased by TNC through a warranty deed, with the A/RR designation remaining unchanged since the Comprehensive Plan adoption in 1991 (O.R. Book 3786, Pages 636 and 637). According to the Property Appraiser, a 3,175 sq. ft. Administrative Office, 2,350 sq. ft. storage warehouse, 1,626 sq. ft. equipment shed, and 1,540 sq. ft. storage garage are currently on site.

Pfundstein Road extends further past the conservation entrance and provides access to the Tiger Creek Groves subdivision to the south. The subdivision was platted in 1983 (P.B. 75, Page 37) and consists of 144 residential lots ranging from two (2) to ten (10) acres with only about half having been developed. Further east, Walk in Water Lake Estates and Tiger Creek Forest subdivisions along the shoreline of Lake Weohyakapka were neighborhoods platted and developed in the 1980s. The large tracts of land in the immediate area of the subject property are owned by either Alico Incorporated, TNC or the State of Florida.

### Compatibility with the Surrounding Land Uses and Infrastructure:

#### A. Land Uses:

The surrounding areas are either conservation which is part of Tiger Creek Preserve, or agricultural use such as citrus or pasture. Large tracts of residential lots are found to the south of the site, also known as the Tiger Creek Groves subdivision. The nearest home is almost ¼ mile south of the proposal, with substantial surface

**The LDC defines compatibility as “A condition in which land uses or conditions can coexist in relative proximity to each other in a stable fashion over time such that no use or condition is unduly negatively impacted directly or indirectly by another use or condition.”**

water and vegetation to aid in screening efforts. There is adequate buffering with existing vegetation and distance from the request to the residences. Almost half the subdivision consists of vacant properties which could be developed with residential units. The proposal includes five (5) unpaved parking spaces located to the north to accommodate the five (5) 12'x42' cabins, each of which is a one-bedroom mobile home park model. Given the property's large size, the cabin's private usage, as well as proximity to the preserve's office and main parking area, Staff finds this number of spaces sufficient for this request. The proposal will meet all of the conditions outlined in Section 303 of the LDC including setbacks and noise. Since the cabins are for TNC workers and staff only, large gatherings or intensive activities are not applicable to this request.

The proposed conditional use for the five (5) private lodges will have no impact on future development of the area. Installation of the cabins will enable TNC staff to more efficiently operate and maintain the onsite natural conservation lands by providing on-site short-term/temporary housing for some of the workers, scientists, interns and volunteers. These improvements will not generate any additional traffic or trips to the preserve and in fact will reduce the number of trips on the road network because the workers who utilize the short-term/temporary housing will no longer have to travel to and from the preserve to engage in their on-site activities. If the property was designated to reflect the current functions of TNC, such as "Recreation and Open Space" or "Leisure/Recreation," conditional use approval would not be necessary for Lodges and Retreats.

#### B. Infrastructure:

The subject property is located within a Rural Development Area (RDA), and the area is very limited for infrastructure and public services. The property will be serviced by a private well and septic system, as there are no connections available to public potable water or wastewater systems. There are public safety services within a short driving distance. There are no mass transit stops within a reasonable distance. There are no sidewalks in the area. The use is largely self-sustaining and is not anticipated to have an adverse effect on any public services. The property will likely need to provide above ground fire protection tanks for immediate fire coverage. The request is not anticipated to require the extension or improvements to existing roadways or utilities.

#### Nearest and Zoned Elementary, Middle, and High School

The property is zoned for Frostproof Ben Hill Griffin, Jr. Elementary and Frostproof Middle and Senior High. The proposed private lodges are not expected to have any impact on school concurrency as the use will not generate the need for children to attend school. Therefore, the proposed use is not likely to have any adverse impacts upon school operations.

**Table 2**

Name of School	Distance from subject site
Frostproof Ben Hill Griffin, Jr. Elementary	±6.2 miles driving distance
Lake Marion Creek Middle	±6.8 miles driving distance
Haines City Senior High	±6.8 miles driving distance

Source: Polk County GIS

Private lodges do not generate a demand for school capacity. Therefore, such data is not provided in this report.

### Nearest Sheriff, Fire, and EMS Station

Fire response to this project is from Polk County Fire Rescue Station 1, located at 714 North Scenic Highway in Babson Park. The travel distance is about 4.7 miles with an average response time of 12-15 minutes. Meanwhile EMS response is from Polk County Fire Rescue Station 12 located at 1385 Fort Meade Road in Frostproof. The travel distance is approximately 11.8 miles with an average response time of 22-25 minutes. There are no fire hydrants within the immediate area. The closest municipal fire hydrant is approximately 3.5 miles away. The property will likely need to provide above ground fire protection tanks for immediate fire coverage.

Sheriff's response to the site is served by the Southeast District, located at 4011 Sgt Mary Campbell Way in Lake Wales. The response times for SE were: P1 – 13:35 minutes; P2 – 27:46 minutes. Priority 1 Calls are considered to be true emergencies, in-progress burglary, robbery, injuries, etc. Priority 2 Calls refer to events that have already occurred, such as a burglary that occurred while the homeowner was on vacation and had just been discovered. Sheriff's 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.

**Table 3**

	Name of Station	Distance	Response Time*
Sheriff	Northeast District Headquarters (4011 Sgt. Mary Campbell Way)	±7.8 miles	P-1: 13:35 P-2: 27:46
Fire	Polk County Fire Rescue Station 1 (714 North Scenic Highway)	±4.7 miles	12-15 minutes
EMS	Polk County Fire Rescue Station 12 (1385 Fort Meade Road)	±11.8 miles	22-25 minutes

*Source: Polk County Sheriff's Office Response Times for July 2025 Polk County Fire Rescue Response Times for August 2025*

### Water and Wastewater Demand and Capacity:

The site is fairly remote from the nearest County service area. This site is located within the Rural Development Area (RDA) with no services nearby. The closest service area is the Southeast Regional with potable water lines over 2.5 miles away.

#### A. Estimated Demand and Service Provider:

Development on the property will not impact the minimum LOS for the existing facilities. This site is located in a Rural Development Area (RDA) which does not require new development to connect to centralized water and wastewater. The private cabins will be entirely serviced by an on-site well and private septic system.

#### B. Available Capacity:

The addition of the proposed cabins will not result in a significant increase in water usage or wastewater generation.

#### C. Planned Improvements:

The general area is not served by an existing utility provider. Staff is unaware of any improvements that will provide services to this site.



## Roadways/ Transportation Network

The cabins are not for public use, therefore not generating any external trips. The cabins will provide necessary upkeep and cut down on lengthy travel times to Tiger Creek Preserve for workers. The standard measure for transportation impacts, along with the private usage, indicate the Average Annual Daily Trips (AADT) will fall below 50 trips, therefore not requiring a minor traffic study. Given the rural nature of this location, there are no mass transit stops nor sidewalks within a reasonable distance.

### A. Estimated Demand:

Based on the ITE Trip Generation Manual, Campground/Recreational Vehicle Parks (ITE Code 416) generate 0.41 Annual Average Daily Trips (AADT) and 0.27 Peak PM Trips per site/space. Hypothetically speaking, the five cabins could generate approximately 2 AADT and 1 Peak PM Trips. It is important to note that the cabins are for private use by TNC staff, scientists, and workers on a short-term and temporary basis which is not a factor in concurrency calculations.

### B. Available Capacity:

The subject site gains access from Pfundstein Road, a two-lane local roadway. The proposal is not anticipated to generate additional trips. However, if they did, there is ample capacity on the surrounding roadways. The nearest monitored roadway is Scenic Highway, approximately 2.8 miles west of the site.

**Table 4**

Link #	Road Name	Current Level of Service (LOS)	Available PM Peak Hour Capacity	Minimum LOS Standard
5202N	SR 17 (Scenic Highway) From: CR 630 To: Seminole Ave	B	1,070	D
5202S	SR 17 (Scenic Highway) From: CR 630 To: Seminole Ave	B	1,064	D
4064E	CR 630 (Indian Lakes Cutoff) From: US 27 To: SR 60	C	574	C
4064W	CR 630 (Indian Lakes Cutoff) From: US 27 To: SR 60	C	566	C

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

### C. Roadway Conditions:

The site is served by an existing driveway from Pfundstein Rd (Road Number 181102) and access to the cabins will be provided from the existing private roadways within the subject property. According to Polk County's Road Inventory, Pfundstein Road is a County-maintained Local Road with a 20-foot-wide paved surface and 65 feet of ROW. Pfundstein Road is not monitored for concurrency by Polk County TPO but meets County roadway standards.

### D. Sidewalk Network:

No sidewalks are present on Pfundstein Road. No sidewalk improvements will be required for the proposed private lodges and retreats.

E. Planned Improvements:

Staff has not identified any planned improvements to the local roadway or sidewalk network near the subject site.

F. Mass Transit:

The population concentration is relatively low in the area and will likely remain so with the lack of services present. This is not an area of the County that is planned for transit services. The nature of this request does not demand the need for mass transit, either.

**Park Facilities and Environmental Lands:**

Tiger Creek Preserve serves as existing conservation lands through the private ownership of TNC. Lake Wales Ridge State Forest (Walk in Water Tract) is directly to the southeast and provides additional recreational activities. Tiger Creek is home to two high-quality, seepage blackwater streams including Patrick Creek. A seepage stream gets its water from the surrounding uplands; the blackwater comes from the leaching of tannins from falling vegetation. Only two or three such streams with an intact hardwood floodplain exist in Florida.

A. Location:

Lake Wales Ridge State Forest is located at 851 County Road 630 East in Frostproof. While the conservation boundaries are adjacent to Tiger Creek Preserve, the entrance is approximately 3.3 miles south from the subject property.

B. Services:

Tiger Creek Preserve offers hiking through guided trails. Lake Wales Ridge State Forest provides primitive camping, fishing, hunting, hiking and biking trails, picnic shelters and equestrian trails.

C. Multi-use Trails:

Over ten miles of hiking trails are found in Tiger Creek Preserve. Lake Wales State Forest offers hiking and horseback riding trails.

D. Environmental Lands:

Besides Tiger Creek Preserve, additional conservation lands are found throughout the area. Lake Wales Ridge State Forest is immediately to the southeast of the preserve. Both TNC and State Forest protect a portion of the Lake Wales Ridge, a unique scrub ridge that provides valuable community habitat.

E. Planned Improvements:

Staff has not identified any planned improvements to the County parks near the subject site.

**Environmental Conditions**

There are wetlands and floodplains on the property, however these environmental conditions are not located where the cabins are proposed. The private lodging and associated parking will result in a de

minimis increase in impervious area to the site and will not cause any adverse impacts to the flood stage of the pond. According to Florida Natural Areas Inventory Biodiversity Matrix, multiple documented species have been found within a one-mile radius of the site, emphasizing the importance of continued conservation efforts. The applicant has stated a Sand Skink has been observed near the proposed cabins and will provide appropriate buffers from the burrow to ensure no impact.

A. Surface Water:

The site currently slopes downhill to a small lake, informally known as Lake Otter. Elevation contours are approximately 108' near the proposed cabins and slope to about 86' at the edge of the lake.

B. Wetlands/Floodplains:

There are wetlands associated with a small lake located south of the project site which will remain undisturbed by this project.

C. Soils:

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, Polk County Survey, the subject site where the cabins will be located is comprised of Astatula Sand, 5 to 12 percent slopes. The limitation on septic tank absorption fields is in regard to a potential ground water contamination hazard in areas that have a concentration of homes with septic tanks due to poor filtration. The soil is well-drained and should not pose any negative effects.

**Table 5**

Soil Name	Septic Tank Absorption Field Limitations	Limitations to Dwellings w/o Basements	% of Site (approximate)
Astatula Sand 0-8% Slopes	Slight: Poor Filtration	Slight	55%
Astatula Sand 5-12% Slopes	Slight: Poor Filtration	Slight	30%
Hontoon Muck	Severe: subsides, ponding	Severe: subsides, ponding	2.4%
Water			12.6%

*Source: Soil Survey of Polk County, Florida, USDA, Soil Conservation Service*

D. Protected Species

According to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory Biodiversity Matrix, multiple endangered and threatened plant and animals species have been documented nearby. Species include the Gopher Tortoise, Sand Skink and Scrub Plum. The applicant's Impact Statement mentions wildlife surveys for listed species identified one (1) active sand skink burrow. The project proposes to meet the required undisturbed buffer zone of 80-feet for this burrow (*Exhibit 6*).

E. Archeological Resources:

According to a preliminary report from the Secretary of State's Department of Historical Resources Florida Master Site File, no archaeological sites are found within the parcel boundaries.

F. Wells (Public/Private)

This site is not within any of the County's Wellhead Protection Districts.

G. Airports:

The site is not within any Airport Buffer Zones. FlyJivefly Airport (f.k.a. David Wine’s Airstrip) and Timmer Heliport are private airports located along the western shores of Lake Weohyakapka. Both are approximately 3.5 miles from the subject site.

**Economic Factors:**

Tiger Creek Preserve is a priceless nature preserve that provides opportunities for County citizens and visitors to escape the hustle of everyday life. Everyone has a right to access to green spaces and the positive impacts it provides. The preserve and its trails are open year-round during daylight hours for visitors to enjoy Florida’s natural habitat within the Lake Wales Ridge. While the cabins are private and not open for public use, they cater to staff and workers that help continue the preserve’s operations and ongoing maintenance. When visitors are not enjoying the recreational amenities Tiger Creek Preserve has to offer, they can utilize hotels, restaurants, and businesses nearby. While not immediately central to such amenities, Frostproof and Lake Wales are within a reasonable driving distance for such services.

**Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code:**

Lodges and Retreats are considered Community Facilities based upon a framework provided in the Comprehensive Plan for this type of use listed in POLICY 2.125-E. Because of the communal, social and recreational qualities of these types of uses, Lodges and Retreats fall under a Type “B” Community Facility, which is described as “non-governmental facilities which provide needed public services”. Designating Lodges and Retreats, or Community Facilities, as a Conditional Use within A/RR land use districts is consistent with POLICY 2.121-A1 of the Comprehensive Plan that states “Institutional uses, Community Facilities and essential services will be allowed as conditional uses, in accordance with policies of this Plan and the guidelines of the County’s Land Development Code” within an A/RR district.

Table 6, to follow, provides an analysis of the proposed request when compared to typical policies of the Comprehensive Plan selected by staff for evaluation of development proposals. Based upon this analysis, the proposed request is consistent with relevant policies of the Polk County Comprehensive Plan.

**Table 6**

Comprehensive Plan Policy	Consistency Analysis
<u>POLICY 2.102-A1: DEVELOPMENT LOCATION</u> - <i>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.</i>	The site is located in the Rural Development Area (RDA) in an area where urban services are limited. The event facility will be required to provide their own sources for potable water and wastewater and will be self-sustained. The proposed cabins will help sustain TNC’s ongoing preservation and conservation research efforts.
<u>POLICY 2.102-A2: COMPATIBILITY</u> - <i>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.</i>	The proposed conditional use is not expected to create incompatibility with the surrounding uses since the preserve has been in existence for over fifty years. The neighboring properties are either part of the Tiger Creek Nature Preserve or currently in agricultural use such as citrus or pasture. Large tracts of residential lots are in Tiger Creek Groves to the south. There is adequate buffering with existing vegetation and distance from the request to the residences.

Comprehensive Plan Policy	Consistency Analysis
<b>POLICY 2.102-A4: TIMING</b> - <i>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.</i>	The proposed request is not anticipated to create a Level-of-Services (LOS) deficiency upon existing services provided by the County. Such services were analyzed as part of this report.
<b>POLICY 2.102-A3: DISTRIBUTION</b> - <i>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.</i>	The CU is being proposed within the RDA. There are no municipality water or wastewater lines directly available to the site. The applicant will use a septic tank and a potable well. Public safety services are somewhat nearby, and above ground fire protection tanks will be provided for immediate fire coverage.
<b>POLICY 2.102-A15: ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES</b> - <i>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).</i>	The request for cabins is to ensure vital management and operational coverage for the preservation. These housing facilities will provide the necessary lodging for TNC works and staff alike to continue operations.

The Planning Commission, in the review of development plans, shall consider the following factors listed in Table 7 in accordance with Section 906.D.7 of the Land Development Code.

**Table 7**

<b>The Planning Commission, in the review of development plans, shall consider the following factors in accordance with Section 906.D.7 of the LDC:</b>	
<b>Whether the proposed development is consistent with all relevant requirements of this Code;</b>	<i>Yes, this request is consistent with the LDC, specifically Table 2.1 which permits this use upon completion of a Level 3 Review. The conditions required in Section 303 and are applicable will be enforced after a Level 3 Review. These can be found in the Findings of Fact on Pages 2-5 of the staff report.</i>
<b>Whether the proposed development is consistent with all applicable policies of the Comprehensive Plan;</b>	<i>Yes, this request is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, as reviewed in Table 8.</i>
<b>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</b>	<i>Yes, the request is compatible with surrounding uses and the general character of the area and the site will further be made compatible through the Conditions of Approval. See Pages 6-7 of this staff report for data and analysis on surrounding uses and compatibility.</i>
<b>How the concurrency requirements will be met if the development were built.</b>	<i>This request will not require concurrency determinations from the School Board, or TPO. The impact on public services can be found in the analysis found on Pages 7-10 of the staff report.</i>

### **Comments from other Agencies:**

#### **Fire Marshalls Office**

Polk County Fire Rescue has confirmed that above ground storage tanks are required to be installed for adequate fire coverage. Requirements will be outlined further during the Level 2 Review.

#### **Exhibits**

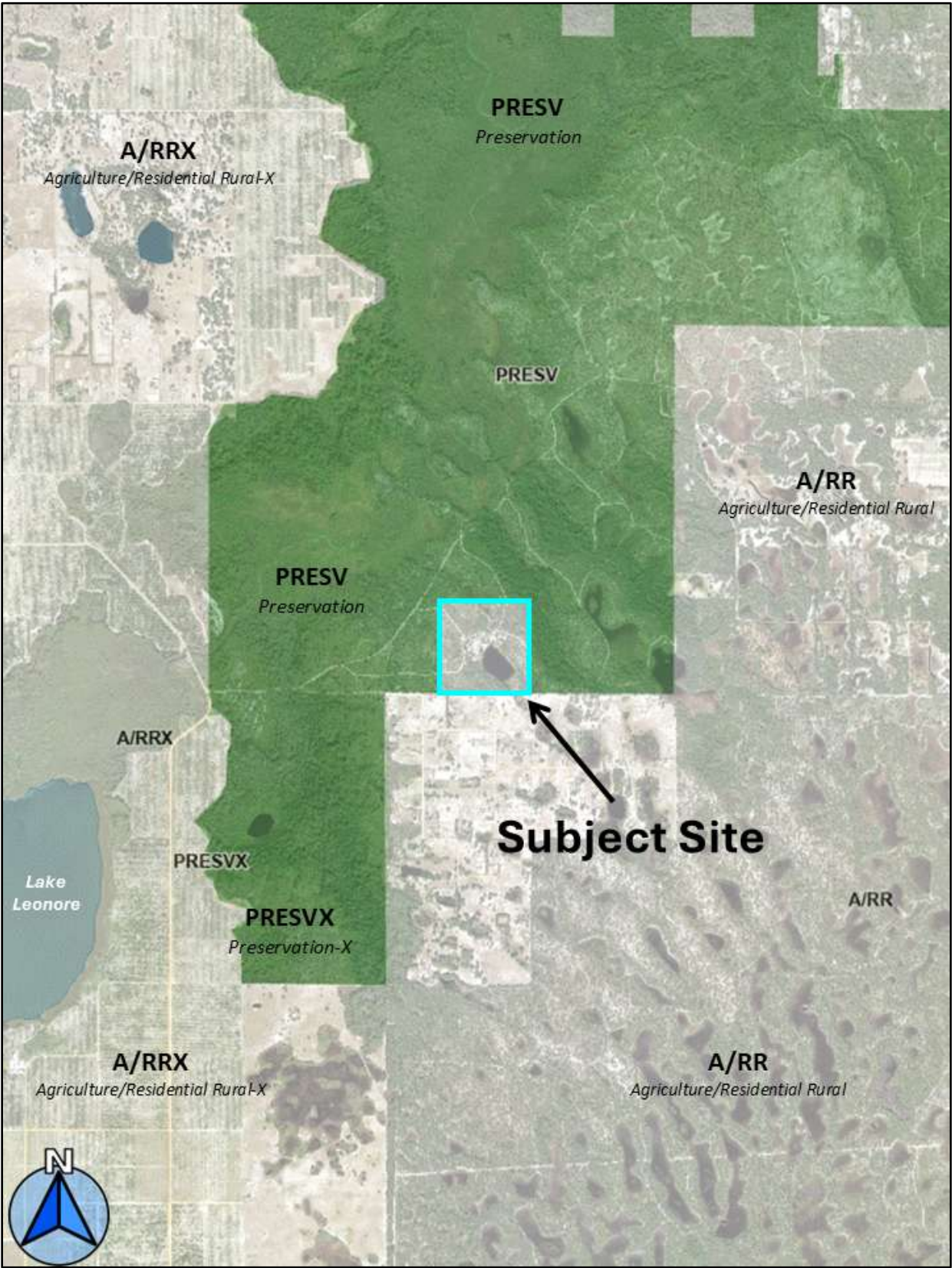
Exhibit 1 – Location Map  
Exhibit 2 – Future Land Use Map  
Exhibit 3 – Tiger Creek Preserve

Exhibit 4 – 2025 Satellite Image (Context)  
Exhibit 5 – 2023 Aerial Photo (Close-up)  
Exhibit 6 – Site Plan



Location Map





Future Land Use





# Tiger Creek Preserve



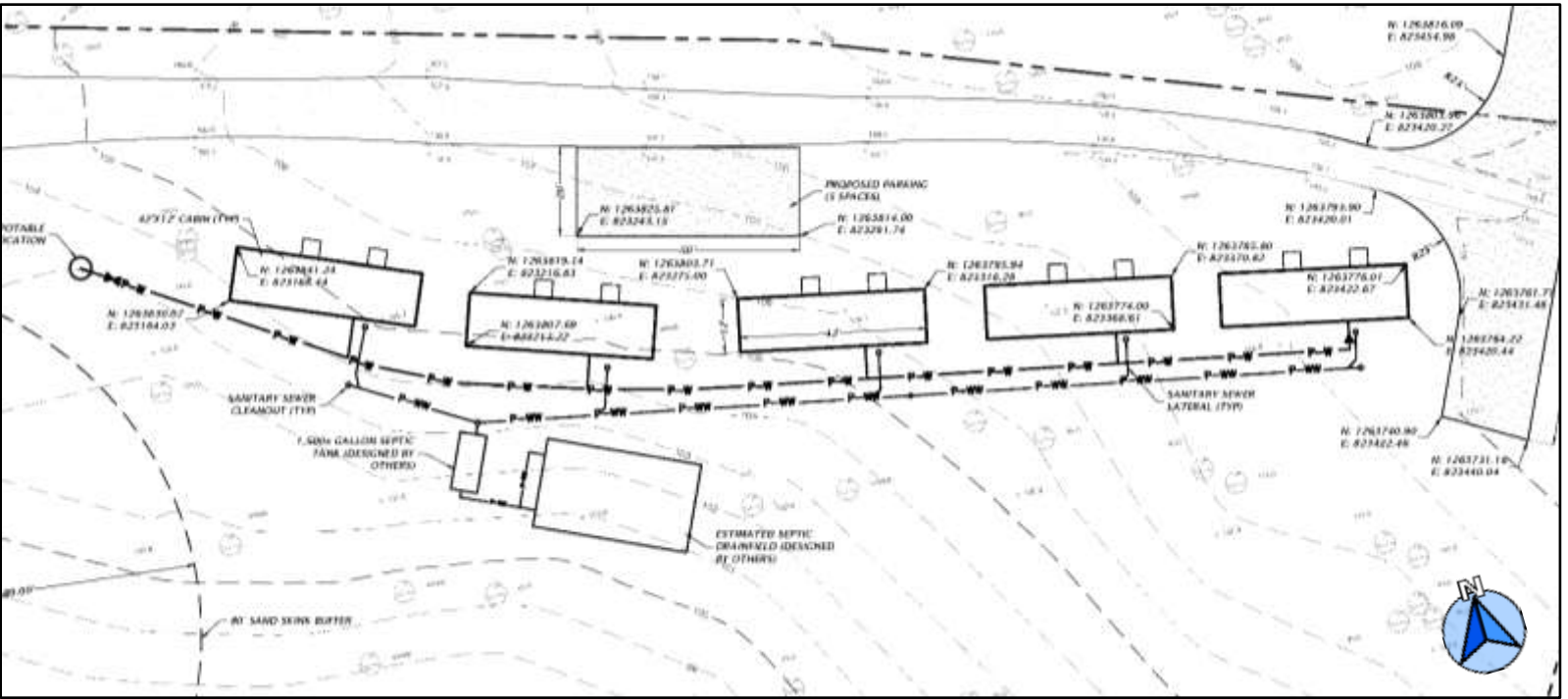


2025 Satellite Image (Context)





2023 Aerial Photo (Close-up)



Site Plan