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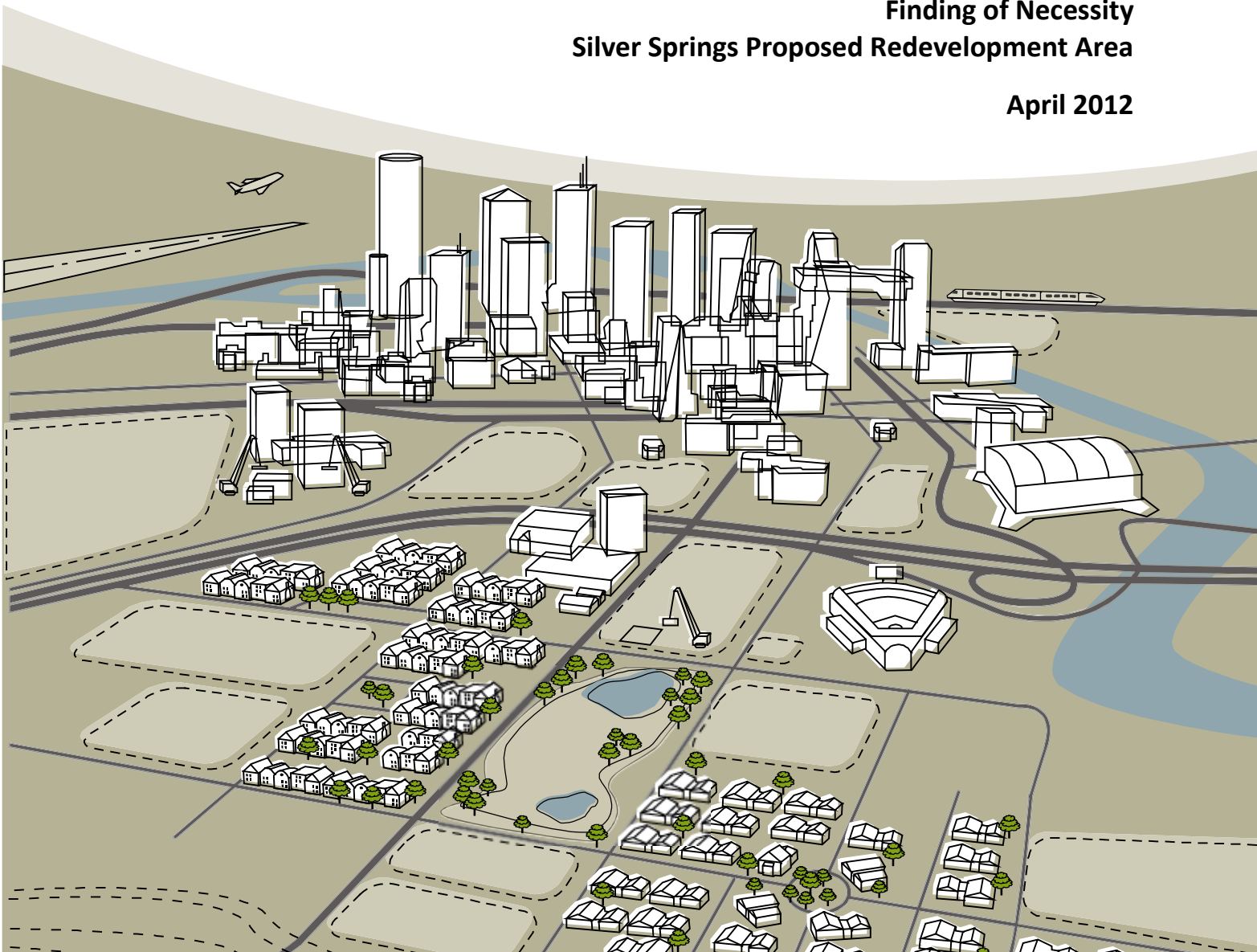
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Marion County, Florida

**Finding of Necessity
Silver Springs Proposed Redevelopment Area**

April 2012



STRATEGISTS ■ ECONOMISTS ■ PLANNERS ■ ADVISORS

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Overview and Purpose

The Silver Springs area is located to the east of the city of Ocala and part of the Ocala Metropolitan Statistical Area. Silver Springs is home to one of the largest artesian springs in the world, and has served as an attraction and host for numerous events as well as a destination for visitors and residents for more than 100 years. Over time the Silver Springs Study Area has shown significant signs of disinvestment. As a result, it has lost its historic appeal as a destination.

The purpose of this analysis is to support the link between the statutory definition of a “blighted area” and the Silver Springs proposed redevelopment area under examination. If the determination of such conditions of blight can be established based on the statutory definitions set forth in Section 163, Part III, Florida Statutes (F.S.), the “Redevelopment Act,” a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) can be created in conjunction with preparation and adoption of a redevelopment plan. Analysis of data and documentation of the Silver Springs Study Area within this report is evaluated based on the provisions established in Florida’s Redevelopment Act, Section 163, Part III, Florida Statutes (F.S.).

Introduction

The initiative to create a CRA and redevelopment plan for the Silver Springs area arises from the need to stimulate reinvestment in the area and identify new funding sources which would improve existing conditions and generate additional improvement activity. A key concern of the area is an underutilization of economic potential of the springs themselves and the surrounding properties. A redevelopment initiative to identify new market potential for the area and the supporting upgrades to the infrastructure, housing stock, and overall physical environment is a necessary component to the broader goal of attracting investment.

Before identifying prospective private sector interest in the area, current blighting influences should be addressed to begin rebuilding the infrastructure necessary to support and attract investment. Deteriorating conditions of structures, utilities, and general physical environment undermine economic development efforts and impede the improvement of the area. Symptomatic of the deterioration is indicated by the significant decrease in ad valorem tax revenues.

Identifying resources to remove blighting influences is essential to remain competitive in the economic marketplace. An initial step is creating the CRA with community approved boundaries. A *Finding of Necessity* (FON) assists in identifying a proposed redevelopment area. A subsequent community redevelopment plan will specify the desired improvement projects and implementation steps to execute them. The CRA will be funded in most part by increment revenues designated specifically to the Study Area. These monies will be contributed to a Trust Fund for redevelopment efforts pursuant to the County’s Silver Springs CRA Development Initiative, and further, the capital improvement and job creation program.

Marion County Engineering Department data, county maps, study area specific maps, and government maintained statistics have been examined in conjunction with Real Estate Research Consultants’ staff interpretations of county supplied data in assessing the Study Area.

Community Redevelopment Act of 1969: Objectives and Purpose

Overall, the purpose of the Redevelopment Act of 1969 is to provide a legal process for local governments to assemble community redevelopment agencies to combat deteriorating conditions specific to an area and rehabilitate the physical, social, and economic atmosphere through financing and regulatory tools provided in the statutes. Each area is different and requires a different analytical approach to prove the deteriorating conditions there. The referenced Florida Statutes addresses the definition of slum and blight conditions, the ill effects such conditions inflict on communities, and the creation of CRA as an implementing force through which to maintain economic stability.

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

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

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Section 163.335(3), F.S. ... *powers conferred by this part are for public uses and purposes for which public money may be expended and police power exercised, and the necessity in the public interest for the provisions herein enacted is declared as a matter of legislative*

determination.

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

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

According to Chapter 163.356 of the Redevelopment Act, a FON analysis focuses on a determination of blight and/or slum conditions in an area which may “constitute a serious and growing menace, injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and welfare of the residents of the state,” and negatively burden a community’s traffic system, utilities, ad valorem revenues, property values, and social fabric which would otherwise contribute positively to the economic stability of the community. As a simultaneous operation in conjunction with the finding of such a blighted area, the need for a CRA is established.

The CRA will possess the authority to govern the course of action concerning the redevelopment and rehabilitation of the Study Area, and further, in the corporate limits of Marion County in the case that the governing body of the County has acceded in the community redevelopment plan set forth by the County.

Declarations and Process

The initial step in pursuing the creation of a CRA and redevelopment area is documenting the existing conditions. This analysis of the Silver Springs Study Area summarizes the extent and effects of blight which lead to the deterioration of economic, social, and physical components of the Study Area. This analysis documenting the extent of blight, represented through the physical conditions, economic instability, and conclusionary analysis in support of that documentation is referred to herein as the “Report.” Real Estate Research Consultant’s staff, along with Marion County staff, has analyzed government maintained statistics and reports and the physical condition of the area, resulting in the documentation and analysis of the blighting conditions of the Study Area contained within this Report.

Historical Perspective and Integrity of the Study Area

Located in North Central Florida along Interstate-75, Marion County spans 1,584 square miles and includes the second largest national forest in Florida, Ocala National Forest. Silver Springs is recognized as one of the world's largest artesian springs and has the largest discharge of all inland first-magnitude springs in Florida. The headwaters of the Silver River are formed in Silver Springs, which flow into the Ocklawaha River. Geographically, Marion County is the fifth largest County in Florida. Between 2000 and 2010, Marion County has experienced a 28% increase in population and boasts an overall population of over 331,298 according to the US Census Bureau 2010 data.

The Silver Springs amusement park has been a major tourist attraction for over 100 years. Glass bottom boat tours thrived off the river's natural beauty, with the river head waters located within the 350 acre nature park. In addition the park has hosted multiple filming crews for movies and TV shows. Native species to the area are viewable via tours through the park. Due to the distance from interstates and newer competing theme parks in the Central Florida region, the amusement attraction has been struggling economically, and revenues depend heavily on the park as a concert venue for musical artists. The area around the Silver River was originally acquired by the State of Florida and operations of Silver Springs Nature Park are currently leased to private manager, Palace Entertainment.

As currently drawn, the Study Area encompasses slightly over 3,574.15 acres, and includes a variety of land uses. Residential property comprises the majority of land, second to state-owned property, from which approximately 19 percent of the total taxable value is derived. According to 2011 property tax records, the proposed redevelopment area includes a total of 876 parcels, which account for a taxable value of \$83,179,293. The Study Area is part of the larger Ocala Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

In addressing the issues associated with the Silver Springs area, Marion County has indicated an interest in creating a CRA to provide focus to the rehabilitation of the area. The CRA would provide opportunities to encourage new capital investments in the residential, commercial, and tourism development areas. The focus would be to encourage job-generating investments, pursuant to the redevelopment initiative.

According to the State of Florida unemployment statistics between November 2010 and December 2011, Marion County hosts a labor force of 134,601 individuals, of which, 115,210 are supported by employment. Unemployed individuals totaled 19,391 and the unemployment rate of the County as of August 2011 was 14.4%.

Findings of Necessity

This Finding of Necessity (FON) is intended to be adopted by the Marion County Board of Commissioners to support the need for creation of a CRA as well as designating the Silver Springs Study Area's proposed boundary. The FON, as set forth in Section 163.355 of the Florida Statutes, is a tool for assessing an area on the blighting influences and how these conditions affect the area's economic viability relative to Marion County as a whole. Two explicit pathways exist for verifying the existence of blight under Chapter 163, sufficient to warrant the full application of redevelopment powers conveyed by such a designation.

- "Alternative One" involves the layering of two tests. As the legislation follows, test one must be satisfied before the criteria for test two can be analyzed. The first test is broadly conditional and requires a study area to contain a "substantial number of deteriorated or deteriorating structures, in which conditions indicated by government-maintained statistics or other studies, are leading to economic distress or endanger life or property." Structures as stated includes infrastructure, which the term itself encompasses "the system of public works of a country, state, or region; the resources (as personnel, buildings, or equipment) required for an activity (Merriam-Webster, 2012).

Upon satisfying the first test, the applicant may proceed to fulfill the second test, which is criteria specific. The second test states the area must be one in "which two or more of the following factors are present."

- a) Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, parking facilities, roadways, bridges, or public transportation facilities;
- b) Aggregate assessed values of real property in the area for ad valorem tax purposes have failed to show any appreciable increase over the 5 years prior to the finding of such conditions;
- c) Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness;
- d) Unsanitary or unsafe conditions
- e) Deterioration of site or other improvements;
- f) Inadequate and outdated building density patterns;
- g) Falling lease rates per square foot of office, commercial, or industrial space compared to the remainder of the county or municipality;
- h) Tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land;
- i) Residential and commercial vacancy rates higher in the area than in the remainder of the county or municipality;
- j) Incidence of crime in the area higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality;
- k) Fire and emergency medical service calls to the area proportionally higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality;
- l) A greater number of violations of the Florida Building Code in the area than the number of violations recorded in the remainder of the county or municipality;
- m) Diversity of ownership or defective or unusual conditions of title which prevent the free alienability of land within the deteriorated or hazardous area; or
- n) Governmentally owned property with adverse environmental conditions caused by a public or private entity.

- “Alternative Two” involves a specific agreement among parties subject to a prospective trust fund agreement. If an agreement exists, the jurisdiction seeking to designate a redevelopment area need pass a less rigorous test. This test relates to specific criteria, similar to the first alternative, and must conclude affirmatively. Under the Redevelopment Act, a blighted area may be “any area in which at least one of the factors identified in paragraphs (a) through (n) of Section 163.40(8), F.S. are present and all taxing authorities (as such term is defined in the Redevelopment Act) subject to Section 163.387 (2)(a) agree, either by interlocal agreement or agreements with the agency or by resolution, that the area is blighted.

The focus of this report remains within the requirements of the alternative one, including the first and second tests. The documentation of Study Area conditions within this report execute the first test and second test of alternative one in that order, following the process set forth within Chapter 163 of the Florida Statutes.

Existing Land Use Characteristics

This section of the report details the land composition and characteristics associated with parcels within the proposed Redevelopment Area.

Area Composition

As currently drawn, the Silver Springs Proposed Redevelopment Area depicted in **Figure 1** encompasses 876 parcels, and slightly over 3,574 acres of real property in Marion County. In terms of number of parcels, the current land use distribution is approximately 40 percent residential (vacant and improved), 20 percent improved mobile homes, 9 percent multi-family units (less than 10 units), 7 percent warehouse/distribution, 4 percent vacant commercial, 2 percent right-of-way designated parcels, and 1 percent state-owned land.

In terms of the acreage distribution from the greatest to least, the current land use is approximately 43 percent state-owned property, 14 percent residential (vacant and improved), 9 percent private/non-classified, 7 percent grazing land, and 4 percent County-owned property. Improved religious institutions, parking lots, campgrounds, and mobile homes comprise about 2 percent of the total land area each. All remaining uses, for both percentage of total parcels and acreage, which fall below one percent of the total acreage in the Study Area are not listed although available in **Table 2**.

The area is predominantly characterized by residential parcels, 614 parcels in total (vacant and improved, mobile home, condominium multi-family) which encompass roughly 662 acres, and are approximately 71 percent of the total parcel composition. The 178 improved residential parcels, or approximately 20 percent, comprise about 338 acres. The 2011 tax roll reported these residential parcels contributed \$15,342,619 in taxable value. There are a small number of residential units consisting of more than 10 units, condominiums, and hotel/motel units. There is a large portion of mobile homes in the area, accounting for 177 parcels and about 90 acres, or 20 percent of total parcels, and represents a total taxable value of \$3,006,848.

There is a total of 217 vacant parcels (residential, commercial, industrial), or about 25 percent, which encompass slightly over 248 acres. The 2011 Tax Roll reported these vacant parcels to represent \$6,177,671 in taxable value. The majority of the taxable contributing values in the

Study Area stem primarily from residential properties, nearly 20 percent of the total taxable value in the area, while warehouse/distribution, hotel/motel, and camps/campgrounds are the next greatest contributors. Refer to **Table 1** for detailed land use distribution.

In determining whether the Study Area should be designated as a CRA, the following points should be considered:

- Unkempt vacant lots, particularly residential, are scattered throughout the Study Area. Dumping and trash in combination with overgrown weeds can easily lead to a higher risk of fire hazard, as well as attracting vermin which create other health risks. Vacant land by number of parcels and acreage (residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional) comprises about 25 percent and 7 percent of the area, respectively.

Figure 1: Silver Springs Proposed Redevelopment Boundary

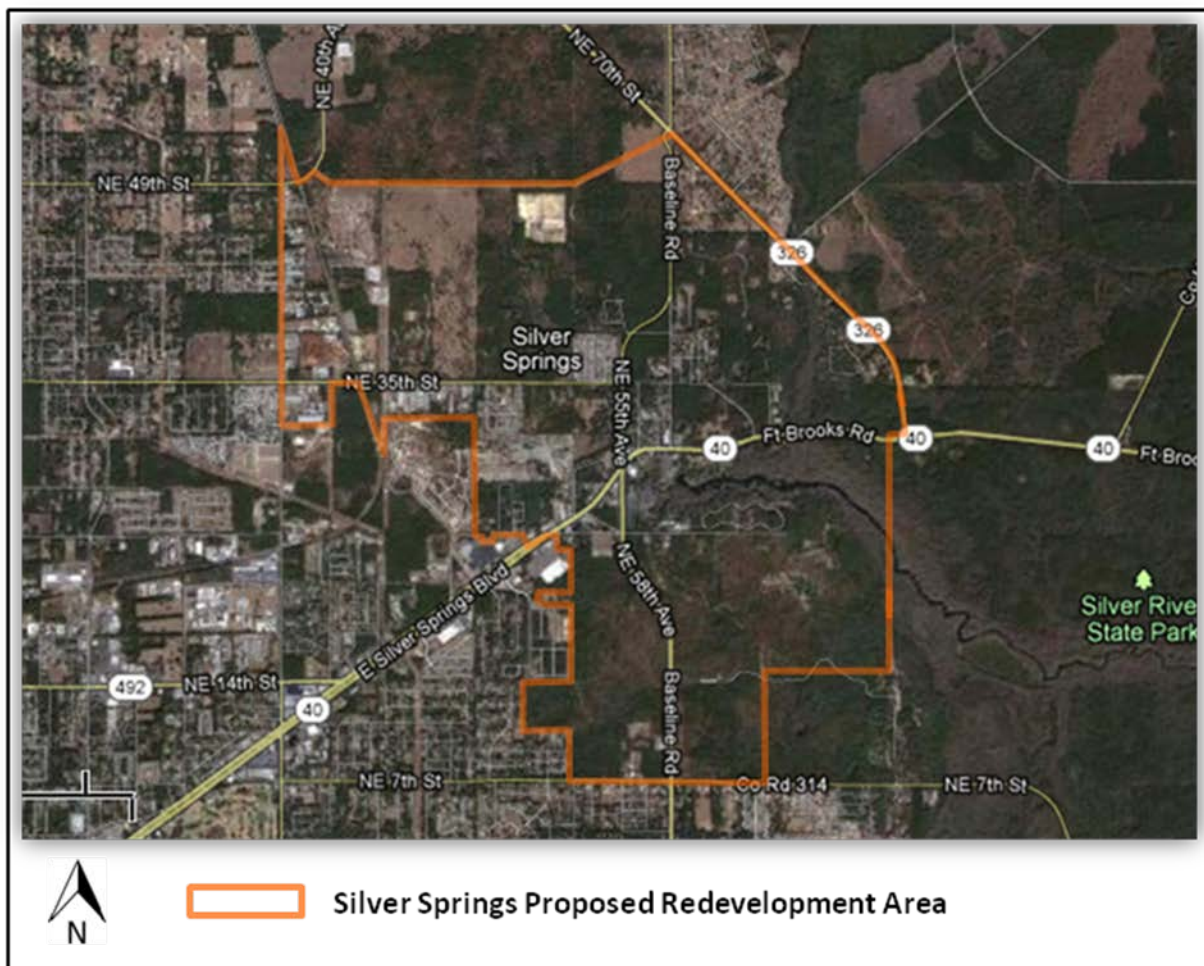


Table 1: Study Area Land Use Distribution by Parcel, Acreage, and Total Tax Value, 2011

Property Code	Description	# Parcels	Acreage	Total Tax Value
0	Vacant Residential	170	151.29	\$ 3,316,412
1	Improved Residential	178	337.98	\$ 15,342,619
2	Improved Mobile Home	177	90.48	\$ 3,006,848
3	Multi-Family 10 or More Units	5	34.44	\$ 5,308,257
4	Condominium	2	5.56	\$ -
8	Multi-Family less than 10 units	82	41.84	\$ 6,787,712
10	Vacant Commercial	37	55.4	\$ 2,223,552
11	One Story Store	5	2.12	\$ 867,611
16	Community Shopping Center	8	11.32	\$ 1,988,994
17	One Story Office, Non-professional	6	15.99	\$ 2,227,146
21	Restaurant	2	4.72	\$ 961,365
22	Restaurant/Drive In	1	0.43	\$ 227,258
25	Service and Repair/Non-Vehicle	2	0.56	\$ 173,543
27	Vehicle Sales and Repair	3	1.45	\$ 469,914
28	Parking Lot	4	63.01	\$ 3,192,844
33	Nightclub/Bar/Liquor Service	2	1.49	\$ 636,585
36	Camps/Campgrounds	2	67.85	\$ 6,791,080
38	Golf Course/Driving Range	1	2.32	\$ 279,985
39	Hotel/Motel	9	22.25	\$ 8,409,817
40	Vacant Industrial	10	34.41	\$ 637,707
41	Light Manufacturing	6	12.86	\$ 1,854,008
42	Heavy Manufacturing	2	2.51	\$ 251,739
43	Lumber Yard/Sawmill	3	36.77	\$ 626,163
47	Mineral Processing	2	15.93	\$ 525,971
48	Warehouse/Distribution	59	44.77	\$ 9,740,256
49	Storage/Junk Yard	5	14.82	\$ 2,068,477
52	Cropland Class 2	1	11.06	\$ 1,158
57	Timber Class 4	4	22	\$ 26,275
63	Grazing Land	8	264.24	\$ 695,892
70	Vacant Institutional	1	1.2	\$ -
71	Improved-Church	8	95.61	\$ -
72	School/Private	1	1.1	\$ 333,734
76	Death service	1	2.5	\$ -
77	Club/Lodge/Union Hall	3	2.93	\$ 131,165
86	County Property	11	152.84	\$ -
87	State Property	17	1521.87	\$ -
89	Municipal Property	4	33.45	\$ -
90	Leasehold Interests	2	0.06	\$ 6,277
91	Utilities	4	50.45	\$ 438,812
94	Right-of-Way	19	37.6	\$ -
99	Acreage/Non Classified	9	304.67	\$ 641,976
Total		876	3,574.15	\$ 80,191,152

Marion County Economic & Small Business Development, Real Estate Research Consultants, Inc., A GAI Company

Table 2: Land Use Summary in Silver Springs Study Area by Percentage of Totals

	Description	% of Total Parcels	% of Total Acreage	% of Total Tax Value
0	Vacant Residential	19.52%	4.23%	4.14%
1	Improved Residential	20.44%	9.46%	19.13%
2	Improved Mobile Home	20.32%	2.53%	3.75%
3	Multi-Family 10 or More Units	0.57%	0.96%	6.62%
4	Condominium	0.23%	0.16%	0.00%
8	Multi-Family less than 10 units	9.41%	1.17%	8.46%
10	Vacant Commercial	4.25%	1.55%	2.77%
11	One Story Store	0.57%	0.06%	1.08%
16	Community Shopping Center	0.92%	0.32%	2.48%
17	One Story Office, Non-professional	0.69%	0.45%	2.78%
21	Restaurant	0.23%	0.13%	1.20%
22	Restaurant/Drive In	0.11%	0.01%	0.28%
25	Service and Repair/Non-Vehicle	0.23%	0.02%	0.22%
27	Vehicle Sales and Repair	0.34%	0.04%	0.59%
28	Parking Lot	0.46%	1.76%	3.98%
33	Nightclub/Bar/Liquor Service	0.23%	0.04%	0.79%
36	Camps/Campgrounds	0.23%	1.90%	8.47%
38	Golf Course/Driving Range	0.11%	0.06%	0.35%
39	Hotel/Motel	1.03%	0.62%	10.49%
40	Vacant Industrial	1.15%	0.96%	0.80%
41	Light Manufacturing	0.69%	0.36%	2.31%
42	Heavy Manufacturing	0.23%	0.07%	0.31%
43	Lumber Yard/Sawmill	0.11%	1.03%	0.78%
47	Mineral Processing	0.23%	0.45%	0.66%
48	Warehouse/Distribution	6.77%	1.25%	12.15%
49	Storage/Junk Yard	0.57%	0.41%	2.58%
52	Cropland Class 2	0.11%	0.31%	0.00%
57	Timber Class 4	0.34%	0.62%	0.03%
63	Grazing Land	0.92%	7.39%	0.87%
70	Vacant Institutional	0.11%	0.03%	0.00%
71	Improved-Church	0.92%	2.68%	0.00%
72	School/Private	0.11%	0.03%	0.42%
76	Death service	0.11%	0.07%	0.00%
77	Club/Lodge/Union Hall	0.34%	0.08%	0.16%
86	County Property	1.26%	4.28%	0.00%
87	State Property	1.95%	42.58%	0.00%
89	Municipal Property	0.46%	0.94%	0.00%
90	Leasehold Interests	0.11%	0.00%	0.01%
91	Utilities	0.46%	1.41%	0.55%
94	Right-of-Way	2.07%	1.05%	0.00%
99	Acreage/Non Classified	1.03%	8.52%	0.80%
Total		100%	100%	100%

Marion County Economic & Small Business Development, Real Estate Research Consultants, Inc., A GAI Company

Visual Character, Existing Building, and Site Conditions Analysis

This section of the report provides an assessment of characteristics of the land and built properties within the Study Area. This section documents conditions through location specific photographs verifying a “substantial number of deteriorated, or deteriorating structures.” With reference to blight criteria, it addresses the following:

- Building Conditions and Photographic Documentation
- Transportation, Road, and Traffic Conditions

Building Conditions and Structure Documentation

For the purposes of this Report, a *dilapidated* structure is defined as one which is not safe for occupation. Dilapidated structures exhibit roof holes and leaks; more than half of the windows boarded up; structural damage; exterior paint has eroded away showing stucco and cracks; rotted wood; fallen fences and property abandonment. A *deteriorated* property is defined as one which has been neglected by property owners and is in need of maintenance to prevent hazardous conditions. These properties exhibit the following: worn roofs; missing tiles or shingles; several roof patches; boarded up or broken windows; littered properties; overgrown grass; faded paint; a lack of swale maintenance; cracked sidewalks and walkways, and broken fences.

Dilapidated and deteriorated residential structures were identified through a site inspection of the Study Area conducted on November 8, 2011. The parameters of the survey were based on the definition of a “blighted area” pursuant to Chapter 163.340, F.S. Through windshield survey, residential areas were viewed for structural deficiencies, landscaping and upkeep of property. A number of commercial structures did exhibit qualities of dilapidation including more than half of the windows boarded up, eroding exterior paint, and property abandonment. In addition, the commercial structures documented can be classified as deteriorated properties due to the general neglect from property owners and exhibiting a need of maintenance to prevent hazardous conditions.

Factors of deterioration evident include trash in yards, deteriorating roads and sidewalks, poor housing conditions, broken/boarded up windows, vacancies, and neglect of landscape. Condition of the buildings and landscape maintenance were two of the main factors considered when examining residential properties. A common attribute of many of the residential, industrial, and commercial properties is unkempt landscape on properties and right-of-ways. A visual analysis of the Study Area indicated a significant amount of residential properties can be classified as dilapidated or deteriorated.

The following field photographs taken by RERC staff on November 8, 2011, contribute to the significant number of deteriorated structures in the Study Area:

The photos below show the extent of damage to the structure from vacancy. All building front visibility and access have been covered by plywood. The windows behind the plywood are shattered. The structure, consisting of a connected strip of commercial properties, is located on Silver Springs Blvd. and Highway 40. According to the definition of a deteriorated property, this structure exhibits broken/boarded-up windows, overgrown grass, and is in need of maintenance to prevent hazardous conditions.



This property is located on NE 58th Ave. on the East side of the street, two parcels to the North of NE 37th St. The home looks to have been demolished but debris has remained on site. The debris is in need of removal as it poses a safety hazard to neighborhood residents as well as contributes to the decrease in property values in the area. Specific to the definition of a deteriorated structure, this property exhibits a littered property and has been neglected by property owners and is in need of maintenance to prevent hazardous conditions. This property exhibits complete deterioration and neglect.

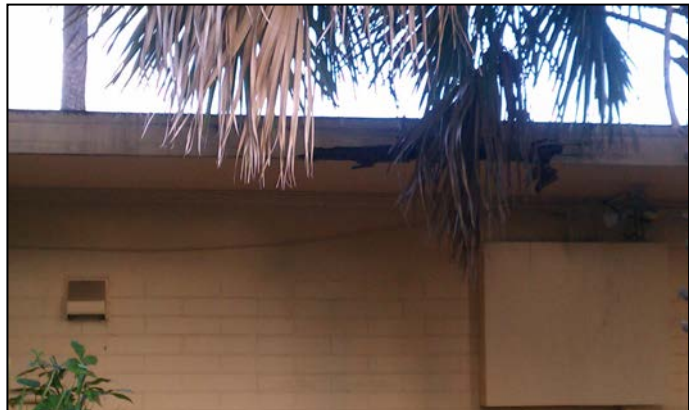


It should be noted that the County employs two code inspectors which respond to service calls at any one time, therefore properties like this are not being addressed unless a complaint is processed. The two employees working code enforcement requests are unable to patrol the proposed redevelopment area for obvious needs as the photo illustrates. The U.S. Geological Survey aerial photography updated in 2012, available via Google Maps, shows this property as it sits, and has yet to be addressed during the time period between early November, 2011, when RERC staff had collected these field observation photos, and current conditions.

This photo shows a vacant duplex exhibiting signs of deterioration including a worn roof, unpaved dirt driveway, and overgrown grass. This property is located on the SW corner of NE 35th St. and NE 56th Ave.



The photos to the right illustrate the backside of a motel. Deterioration of the structure is most noticeable on fascia boards of roof. Landscaping has clearly been neglected as well. This property is located on NE 57th Ave, North of Route 40, East of Silver Springs Blvd.



This structure is viewed from the perspective off of Baseline Road. The location is at the intersection of Baseline Road and NE 30th St. The photos below illustrate the deteriorating structure, littered property, and cracked pavement and walkways.



An abandoned shopping cart is evident at the foot of the staircase, cracked pavement and walkways. This site has been neglected by owners and is in need of maintenance to prevent hazardous conditions.



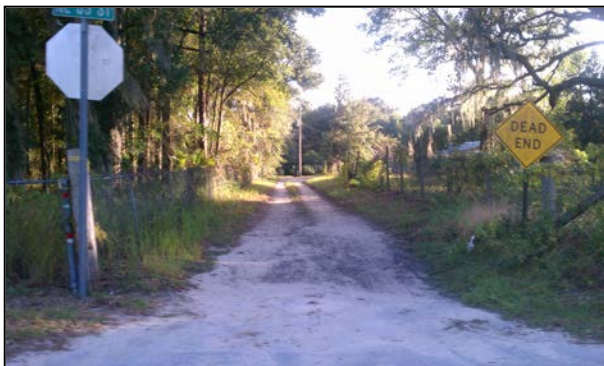
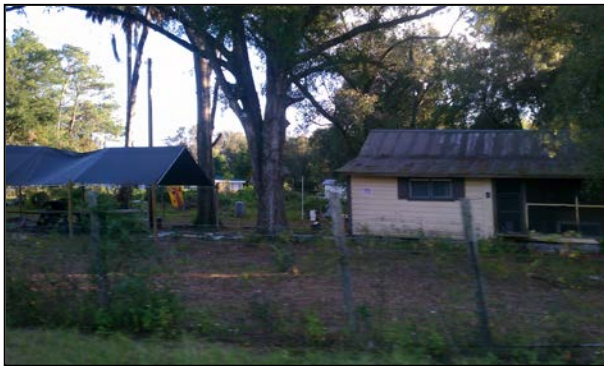
Photo to the left shows the property from the NE 30th St. perspective. Illustrated is another stairwell exhibiting deteriorating conditions as well as the poor condition of the concrete parking lot.



The following photographs were taken of a commercial structure on the NE corner of East Highway 40 (East Silver Springs Blvd.) and NE 58th Ave. This is a vacant, deteriorating commercial structure exhibiting plant growth inside the building, a littered property, mold growth on interior and exterior of structure, visible moisture inside building, broken fence, and overgrown grass.



The photos below are all images along NE 52nd Court; House numbers 3400-3410 NE 52nd Court Ocala, FL 34488. The photo location is at the corner of NE 52nd Court and NE 35th St. There are no paved roads and litter along sides of dirt road and around homes. Housing structure appears to have a worn roof, faded paint, overgrown grass, and is in need of maintenance to prevent hazardous conditions.



This property is located at 3000 NE 55th Ave., Silver Springs, FL 34488. The property exhibits a conglomeration of defective structures and cluttered outside storage. The parking lot is sub-standard in current condition.



The photos below illustrate a former mini-golf attraction on NE 25th St. This structure displays overgrown grass, worn roof, and a broken fence. The structure has been neglected by property owners and is in need of maintenance to prevent hazardous conditions. Pavement and fence are in need of repair as well.



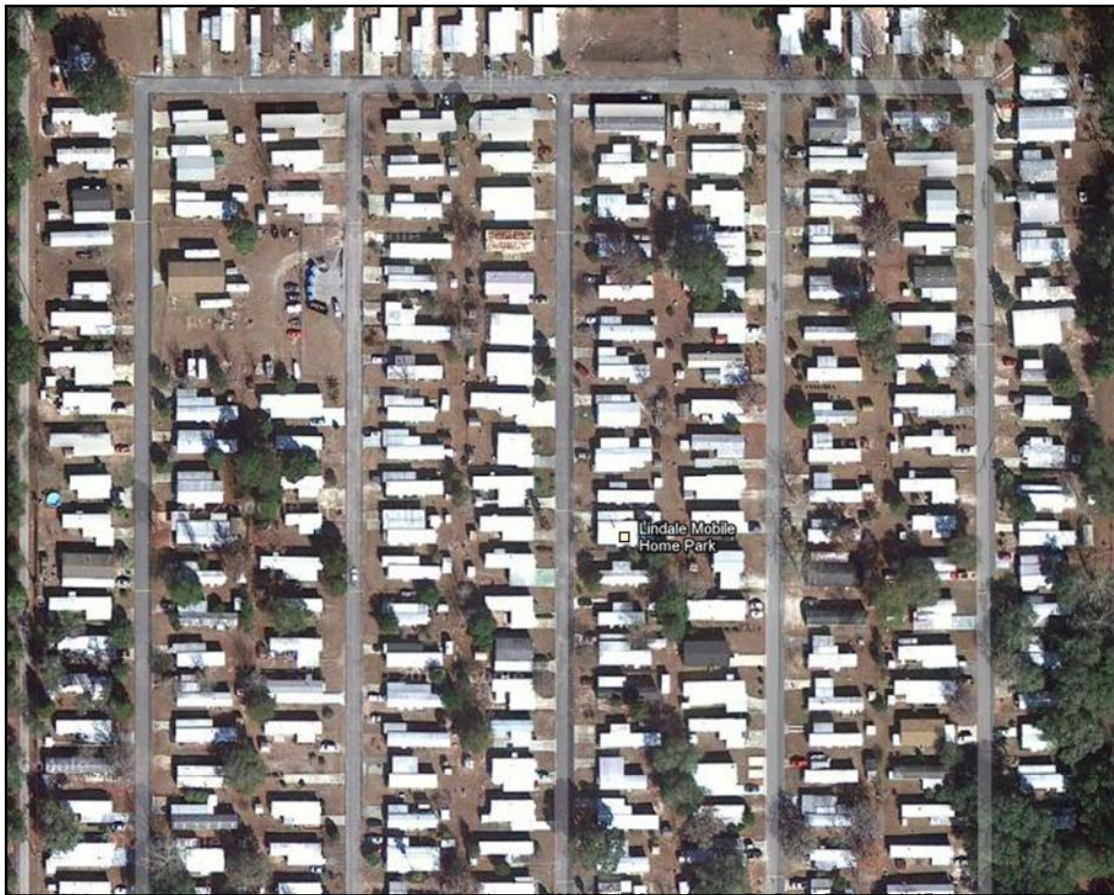
The photo to the right illustrates a vacant commercial building located on East Silver Springs Blvd. Former gun/pawn and used car dealer.



Transportation, Road, and Traffic Conditions

With the exception of a few limited areas, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, and bike lanes are generally absent throughout the Study Area, in particular the residential areas. With the absence of sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, and bike lanes, the environment is not conducive for walking, jogging, or bicycling. Furthermore, other improvements, such as street light fixtures, pavement markings, and pedestrian signs generally are missing or are in need of repairs/upgrading. The absence of pedestrian transportation infrastructure is evidence of an inadequate transportation system in the Study Area. **Figure 2** illustrates the lack of pedestrian sidewalks in the Lindale residential mobile home park located off of NE 35th Street.

Figure 2: Lindale Mobile Home Park, 5431 NE 35th Street



Google Maps, Real Estate Research Consultants, Inc., A GAI Company

Examination of the residential neighborhoods reveals the deteriorating conditions of many driveways in front of residential units. Paved driveways exhibit broken pavement, while others are either unpaved or covered in gravel and vegetation. The overall transportation conditions outlined in this report contribute to the disinvestment of properties along the roads in residential areas and are in need of maintenance to prevent hazardous conditions.

The following photographs demonstrate the roadway and pavement conditions which contribute to the predominance of defective parking facilities and roadways:

The photograph to the left exhibits deteriorating infrastructure/pavement. This photograph was taken at NE 64th Ave. Rd. at Route 326. Stormwater runoff has etched a path of flow from the pavement, resulting in cracking and deterioration of the pavement.



This photograph was taken from the West side of the road, at NE 56th Ave. No sidewalks, gutters, curbs, stormwater infrastructure are present.



Photographed while looking East on NE 32nd St. at the intersection with NE 56th Ave. This stretch of pavement fails to include curbs, gutters, sidewalks, or any form of stormwater infrastructure.



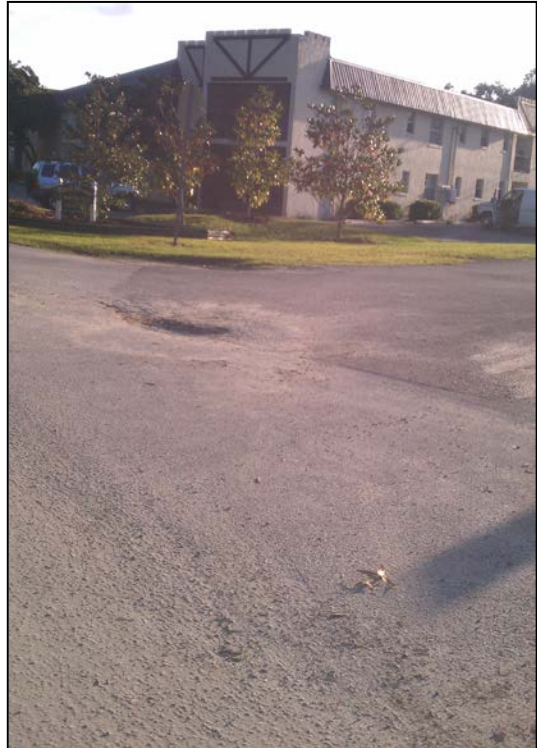
Photographed at the Intersection of NE 57nd Ave. and NE 32nd St. This is a two-lane dirt road in a residential area. As a result of the lack of pavement, severe ponding has occurred in the middle of the road.



This photograph was taken looking North on NE 57th Ave., from intersection at NE 32nd St. This documents the dirt roads in residential areas of the Study Area. There is no stormwater infrastructure, which compounds the effects precipitation has on ponding in the roadway.



This photograph was taken on the SW corner of NE 29th St. and Silver Springs Airport Rd. A large pothole had formed in the middle of the intersection, clearly due to deterioration and neglect of pavement surface.



This photograph presents the *Springs RV Resort*. There is major pavement and driveway deterioration occurring on a main entrance roadway residents use daily.



This photograph was taken looking East on NE 24th St. This location is beyond the back of house/maintenance operations center at Silver Springs Park. The pavement is aged and vegetation growing through, as well as evidence of the deterioration of the surface itself.



The photographs to the right were taken at the intersection of NE 58th Ave. and Highway 40. There is a lack of curb, gutter, stormwater infrastructure, and sidewalk at this location. Dirt/sand along the roadway has caused the pavement to crack and break apart.



This photograph documents the cracking pavement and pot holes in the parking lot of the *Relax Inn* on East Silver Springs Blvd.



The infrastructure upon which the long-term social and economic well being depends is deficient, absent, or deteriorated beyond a level which justifies repair or maintenance. The *overall* conditions in the Study Area are such that they combine to create a context of functional and physical deterioration which is conducive to economic, physical, and social distress. The conditions and circumstances are leading to economic distress which, in their current condition, is certainly capable of endangering life and property if not substantially modified, retrofitted, repaired, rebuilt, or redeveloped entirely.

There is evidence of “a substantial number of deteriorated, or deteriorating structures, in which conditions... are leading to economic distress or endanger life or property.” The first test of

alternative one has been satisfied and permits a transition to a discussion of the second test. Test two of alternative one is to prove two or more of the factors delineated in Section 163.340(8) paragraphs (a) through (n) of the Florida Statutes exists within the Study Area. The following sections address test two of alternative one.

Reported Investment and Disinvestment Activity

Approximately 876 properties comprised the Study Area (improved and unimproved) in 2011. The total tax base in the Study Area as of the 2011 certified tax roll was about \$83,179,293.

Marion County experienced a severe fluctuation in taxable values over the past five years, although the values did not appreciate and depreciate at the same rate. From 2009 to 2010, the Study Area exhibited the greatest negative percent annual change from 2009 to 2010, -13.09 percent, while during the same time period, countywide taxable values saw a change of -3.94 percent. The aggregate taxable values of Marion County saw an overall depreciation of over a period of five years beginning in 2007 of -\$5,899,328,648, or an average annual decrease of approximately -2.60 percent. The Study Area shows a depreciation of aggregate taxable value from the 2007 value to that of 2011 equaling -\$29,529,384, and at an average annual decrease of -1.32 percent. The aggregate taxable values of the Study Area have failed to show any appreciable increase of the previous five years considering the loss of -\$25,529,384 of taxable revenue. Data is available in **Table 3**. These “conditions, as indicated by government maintained statistics, are leading to economic distress” which hinders recovery from present levels of economic and social well being.

Table 3: Aggregate Taxable Values, 2006 to 2011

Year	Silver Springs Study Area			Marion County		
	Total Tax Value	% Annual Change	Total # Parcels	Total Tax Value	% Annual Change	Total # Parcels
2011	\$83,179,293	-8.44%	876	\$14,934,717,793	-8.01%	265,231
2010	\$90,845,600	-13.09%	873	\$16,235,048,796	-3.94%	263,897
2009	\$104,525,347	-9.78%	858	\$16,900,545,060	-12.02%	263,832
2008	\$115,859,072	6.58%	858	\$19,209,864,163	-7.80%	262,460
2007	\$108,708,677	18.14%	794	\$20,834,046,441	18.76%	259,161
2006	\$92,013,647	-	778	\$17,543,701,963	-	253,219

Marion County Property Appraiser, Real Estate Research Consultants, Inc., A GAI Company

There are a total of 170 vacant residential parcels with an aggregate taxable value of approximately \$3,316,412 in 2011. Vacant commercial land accounts for 37 parcels, which represent an aggregate taxable value of \$2,223,552. Combined, vacant residential and commercial properties equate to approximately 24 percent of all the properties within the Study Area.

In determining whether the Study Area should be designated as a CRA, the following points should be considered:

- Aggregate assessed values of real property in the area for ad valorem purposes have failed to show any appreciable increase over the five years prior to the finding of such conditions in this report. In 2007 the aggregate taxable value of Study Area properties

was \$108,708,677 and in 2011 it was \$83,179,293, a decrease of -\$25,528,384, or -23.48 percent, in taxable value over a period of five years.

Fire and Emergency Life Safety Responses

Calculated for the fiscal year beginning in September of 2010 and ending in October of 2011, 16,771 life safety responses were serviced for Marion County as a whole. The proposed Redevelopment Area absorbed 167, or about 1% of these life safety calls when compared to the County as a whole. A large portion of these calls were placed along NE 60th Court, and to the South East of its intersection with NE 55th Ave./Rd.

There were a total of 119,276 medical service calls placed within Marion County between September 2010 and October 2011. Between this time period, 1,561 medical calls were placed, roughly 1.3 percent. A large portion of these calls were placed in the neighborhood directly to the east of the intersection of NE 60th Court and NE 55th Ave./Rd. There were a cluster of medical calls received from a neighborhood to the West of this intersection and South of NE 35th St. East Silver Springs Blvd. accounts for a portion of the medical calls as well. Data was obtained from Marion County Planning Department and GIS maintained statistics.

Crime

The Marion County Sherriff's office has broken Marion County into twelve districts. As of April 3, 2012, the Silver Springs District has a crime rate of 2.74 crimes per 100 persons according to the District Commander Lt. Marion County as a whole has a crime rate of 2.32 crimes per 100 persons. Crime was disproportionately represented in the Silver Springs District when compared to the County as a whole.

Specific crime statistics to the Silver Springs area was obtained from the Marion County Sherriff's Public Information Office. The Silver Springs area recorded a total of 333 crimes during the period between January 1, 2011 and December 31, 2011.

Table 4: Incidences of Crime in Silver Springs District

Silver Springs (2011)	
Type of Crime	Incidences
Assault	41
Burglary	27
Other	21
Property	8
Robbery	1
Theft	42
Unknown	188
Vehicle	5
Total	333

Marion County Sherriff's Office, Real Estate Research Consultants, Inc., A GAI Company

Stormwater, Wastewater, and Potable Water

An adequate stormwater system in the Study Area is lacking. Main arterial roads are the only roads with stormwater infrastructure, generally consisting of curb inlets which feed the larger collection system. Collector roads, especially in residential areas, did not exhibit curbs, gutters, or inlet systems to prevent flooding in the event of heavy precipitation. Water is forced to flow through front yards and along the sides of road pavement, which erodes the pavement causing premature cracks and issues of ponding.



This photo represents the conditions of NE 58th Avenue. There is an inlet to collect stormwater, but no curbs or gutters to continue the system to other inlets.

The County's Utilities Administration has provided information and maps of existing current water and sewer utilities within the Study Area boundary. **Figure 3** shows Marion County water and sewer utilities serving the Study Area, including seven pumping stations, and one waste water treatment facility. According to an County Engineering staff for Marion County Utilities, there is a mixture of individual septic systems, a central wastewater and water system, and wells currently in use. If a lot that contains a built structure, does not have Marion County Utilities in front of it, and is not serviced by Tradewind's or Sunshine Utilities, the lot is serviced by either a septic system, well system, or both. **Figure 4** shows the areas serviced by Tradewinds and Sunshine Utilities which service portions within the proposed Study Area boundary.

The cumulative effect of septic disposal of wastewater is considered undesirable under current standards. The average size of the area's plats is particularly unsuited to septic systems. Although there is no minimum lot size mandated, as a practical matter, it is likely that the extensive use of septic systems utilized on such small home sites today will result in the expensive need to retrofit the area with central wastewater in the future. As a matter of practicality, individual septic systems, while undesirable for single family homes, are especially unsuitable for servicing commercial properties. Efforts to attract commercial development to the area are impeded by septic and well systems.

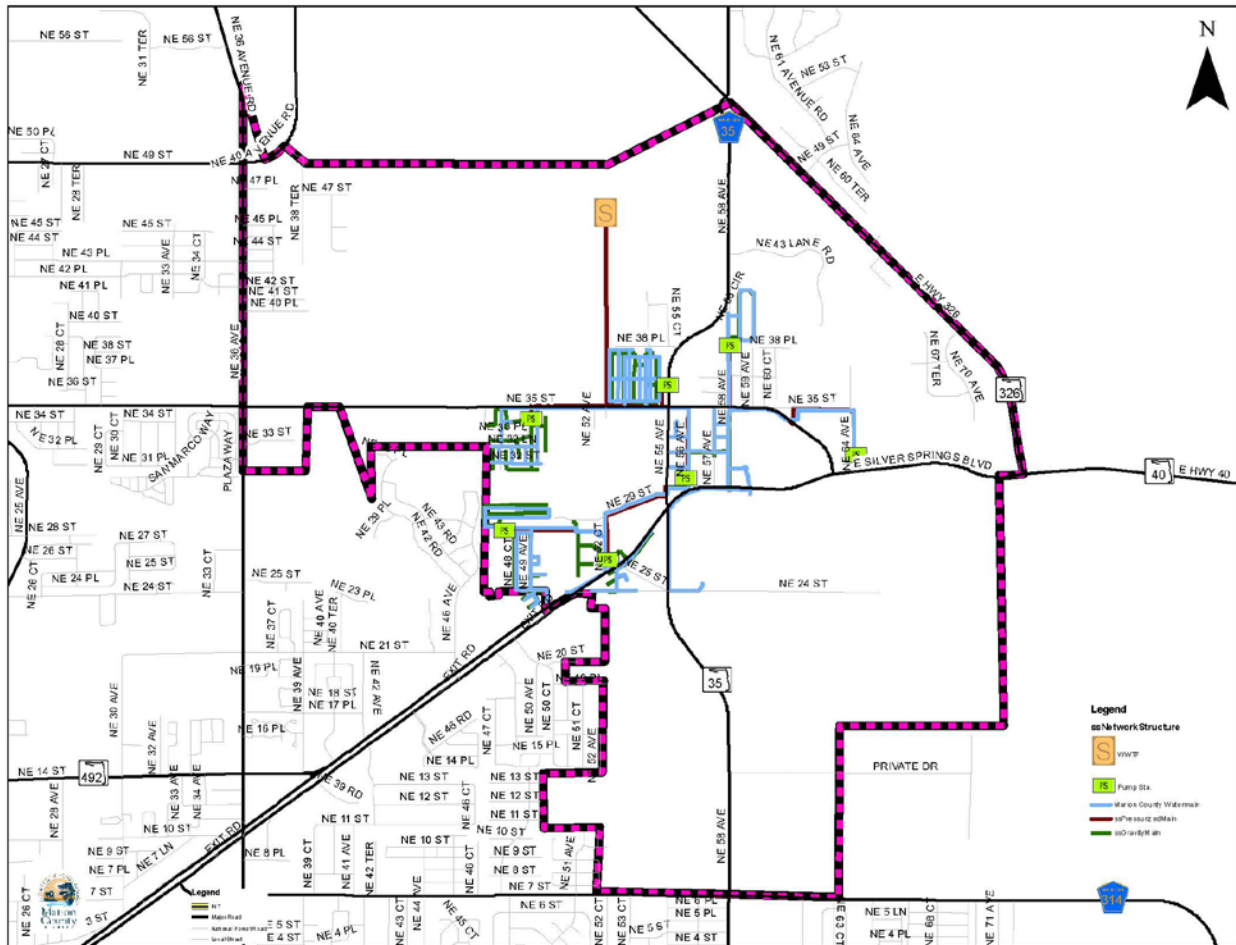
Septic systems are not precluded in county regulations, and are allowable for new residential properties under county code requirements. The requirement to utilize the centralized water and sewer system are regulated by density. Properties under five acres are not required to hookup to county utilities. Properties over five acres are required to utilize county water and sewer utilities. According to County Engineering staff gravity mains are in place to serve much of the Study Area's domestic properties, although affordability has prevented residents from utilizing such county utilities.

Like central wastewater systems, central water systems are preferred in areas with major development because of the implied health risks. The current pattern of development relies upon well water, although capacity from two county wells and distribution lines exist and could serve the study area. Because of concerns about contamination, well supplied water is no longer deemed acceptable except as a temporary measure.

Controlled water supplies are a major concern in the development of public policy, and the use of wells as a source of potable water is discouraged because of the implied health hazards. When treated water is accessible from a public utility, it is encouraged to be used. As with septic systems, the current regulations would not permit the widespread use of wells as a means of providing water. Given the current number of residential units and the relatively small number of commercial structures, wells have not yet been a source of problems.

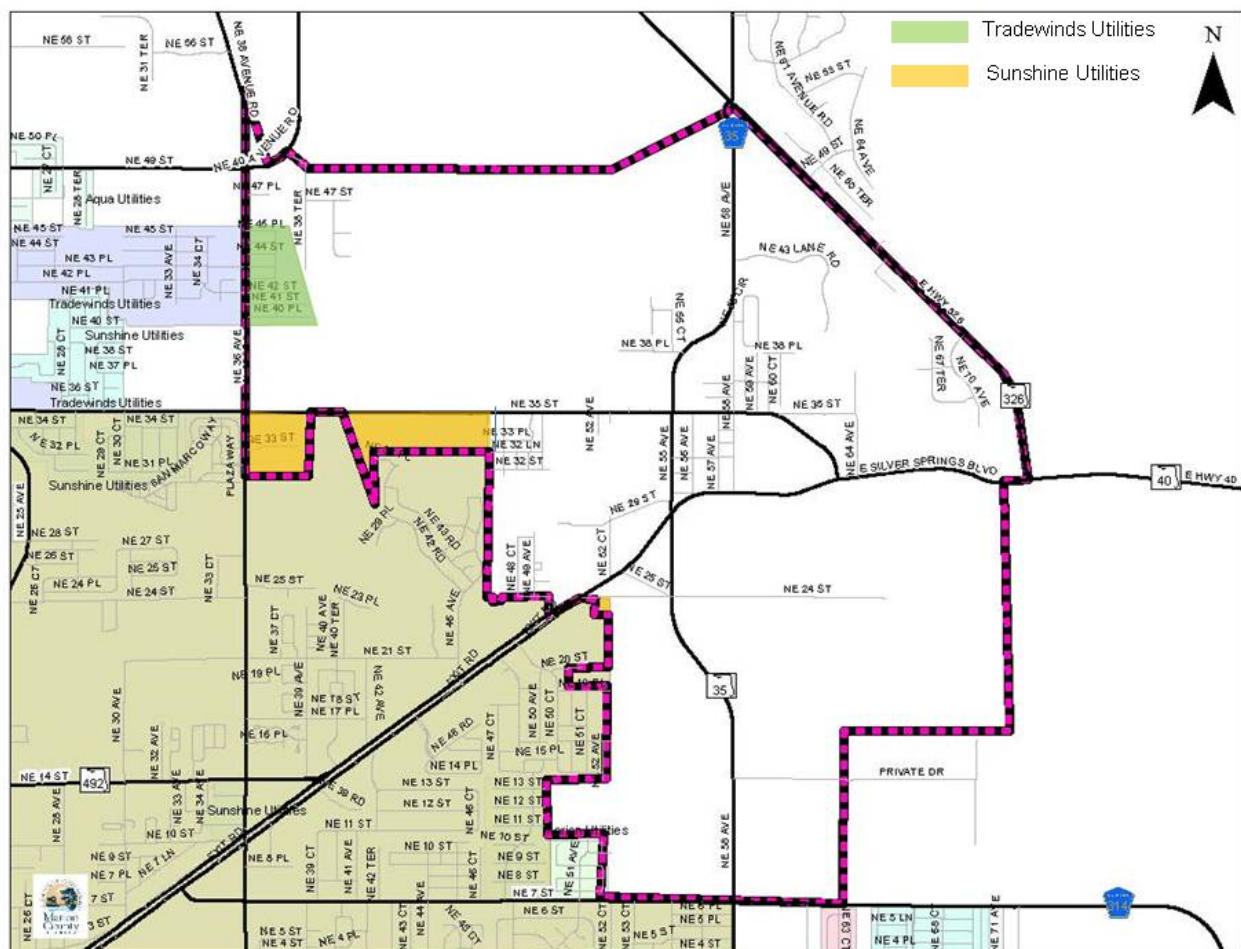
The past experience with these types of water supplies, however, should not be confused with a heightened interest in removing the area's dependence on well water. The prospect of numerous wells located near numerous septic systems, considering the interest in redevelopment, is a major potential health concern. Concern was expressed, during a conversation with County Engineering staff, of the proximity of septic and well systems to the recharge site of the Floridian Aquifer, the flanks of the Ocala Uplift, and more locally, the first-magnitude discharge of Silver Springs. Organic nitrates come from wastewater from septic tanks and municipal wastewater application sites, which can penetrate the drinking water sources and cause purification costs to increase, affecting utility prices.

Figure 4: Marion County Water and Sewer Utilities Within Silver Springs Study Area



Marion County Utilities, Real Estate Research Consultants, Inc., A GAI Company

Figure 5: Other Water and Sewer Utilities Within Silver Springs Study Area



Marion County Utilities, Real Estate Research Consultants, Inc., A GAI Company

Code Violations

Code violation data is evidence of health and safety issues which create unsafe conditions and may contribute to risk of loss and injury from electrical hazards, fire, and unsafe structures. In addition, evidence of unsanitary conditions, and health issues related to structure materials, hazardous material contamination, presence of vermin, and poor light and ventilation may be obtained. Data was obtained from Marion County Planning Department. Of the majority of occurrences upon visual inspection of the Study Area, the majority of violations which were not accounted for in the data received from the County include junk, trash, overgrown vegetation, and abandoned property.

Code violations were examined for the County as a whole compared to the Study Area. For the fiscal year between September 2010 and October 2011, there were 8 code violations within the Study Area compared to 512 in the remainder of Marion County, a total of 520 addressed code violations overall. Those addressed within the Study Area account for about 1.5 percent of all recorded code violations within Marion County. For every one property record in the Study Area, there were approximately .009 code violations per property, or one code violation per 109

parcels. In Marion County as a whole, there were .002 code violations per property, or one code violation per 510 parcels.

It should be noted the County employs two code inspectors whom respond to service calls at any one time, therefore the area is underserved, which the photos suggest. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Marion County consists of slightly over 1,584 sq. mi. of dry land area, which is serviced by two code enforcement positions.

To support this clear under staffing issue, illustrated in the first photo on **page 11**, the pile of rubble on the property is not included in the 8 code violations which were recorded between September 2010 and October 2011. Cases, as this photo indicates, are unable to receive attention in a timely manner and constitute an economic and social liability, with the potential to substantially impair sound growth.

Additional Indicators of Deterioration and Blight

This photograph documents an abandoned shopping cart located on the East side of the street on NE 56th Ave.



This photograph documents a set of abandoned shopping carts located at NE 57th Ave., to the South of NE 32nd St. on the East side of the street.



Photograph was taken at NE 57th Ave., to the South of NE 32nd St. on the East side of the street. This is an extension of the previous photograph to illustrate the deteriorating roadway littered with trash. There are no curbs, gutters, or stormwater infrastructure present.



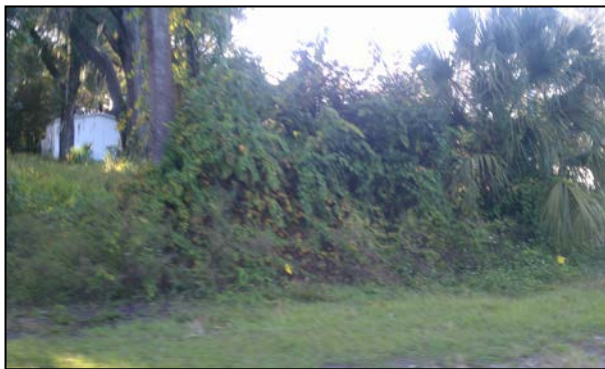
This is a vacant property with overgrown vegetation around the fence. Photograph was taken along NE 35th St.



This photograph was taken along Baseline Rd./NE 55th Ave. This is a vacant parcel exhibiting overgrowth and neglect. This is a visual eyesore to the surrounding properties.



The photos below document a vacant parcel which collects trash and debris. The two photographs below were taken on the corner of Baseline Rd./ NE 55th Ave. and NE 35th St.



Conclusions/Summary

This FON Report assesses conditions of blight in the Silver Springs Study Area to determine if the formation of a CRA is justified to protect the public health, safety, morals, and welfare.

Providing the basis for creating a CRA, in accordance with Chapter 163.355, Florida Statutes require a detailed examination of existing land use characteristics and other indicators. Working with Marion County Office of Economic and Small Business Development and Planning staff, RERC prepared this report, conducted field surveys, and analyzed the data, in a manner consistent with Florida Statutes, and **finds the Silver Springs Study Area does meet the requirements necessary to support creation of a CRA. In the context of assessing substantial deterioration under the Redevelopment Act, we believe the term “structure” reasonably includes not only the buildings in the designated area but the infrastructure built or constructed previously and now incapable of supporting any substantial development.**

Assessment of “Substantial Deterioration”

The Redevelopment Act provides little specific criteria or guidance in Section 163.340(8), F.S. regarding the definition or attributes of deteriorating structures other than that implied. Florida Statutes focus on a series of indicators which in the aggregate are assumed to lead to economic, physical, or social distress. The representative examples of residential and commercial structures speak to the context of the Study Area and functionally deteriorated and rendered functionally and physically obsolete in current condition.

The infrastructure upon which the long-term economic stability of the Study Area depends is deficient, absent, or deteriorated beyond a level which justifies repair or maintenance. The *overall* conditions in the Study Area are such that they combine to create a context of functional and physical deterioration which is conducive to economic, physical and social distress. The conditions and circumstances documented in this Report and readily observable in the Study Area evidence a “substantial number of deteriorated, or deteriorating structures” leading to economic distress which, in their current condition, are certainly capable of endangering life and property if not substantially modified, retrofitted, repaired, rebuilt, or redeveloped entirely.

Blight Factors Present in the Study Area

Of the fourteen conditions indicative of blight listed in the Redevelopment Act, this analysis indicates at least five such conditions exist in the Study Area. The conditions outlined in this report are hindering the immediate and longer term social, economic, and physical development of the Study Area. This finding is based upon a determination in which the following criteria of blight are met, applicable to the Study Area.

Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, parking facilities, roadways, bridges, or public transportation facilities (“blight”) (Section 163.340(8) a, F.S.)

- *The overall transportation conditions outlined in this report contribute to the disinvestment of properties along roadways. Photographic evidence of deficient transportation infrastructure in need of repair, upgrade, and maintenance to conform to current code regulations is evident on pgs. 17-21*

- *The majority of streets in the Study Area have no sidewalks, curbs, or gutters. The lack of sidewalks and the separation which curbs provide between street traffic and pedestrians creates an environment unsafe for pedestrians (pgs. 17-21).*
- *The primary concern is deterioration in context and setting which will discourage long-term economic stability and lead to a reduction in useful life more rapidly than would be the case in a stable residential and commercial environment.*
- *The context and setting is defined in large part by the quality of the road grid. Among the most visible structural improvements within the Study Area, the road grid has deteriorated to a level which no longer justifies simple repairs but rather requires complete reconstruction to meet contemporary standards for local roads. Given the absence of paved roads in some of the residential areas, the cost of new construction will likely be significant (pgs. 18-21).*
- *As for a number of commercial properties, many do not meet current demands of the marketplace. It is apparent from visual inspection, coupled with a review of the current land uses, that a number of structures have reached the end of their economic useful life and are functionally obsolete.*
 - *Strip of commercial property located on Silver Springs Blvd. and Highway 40. Pg. 11*
 - *Vacant motel located at the intersection of Baseline Road and NE 30th St. Pgs. 12-13*
 - *Commercial structure on the NE corner of East Highway 40 (East Silver Springs Blvd.) and NE 58th Ave. Pg. 14*
 - *Vacant mini-golf attraction on NE 25th St. Pg. 16*

Aggregate assessed values for real property in the area for ad valorem tax purposes have failed to show any appreciable increase over the 5 years prior to the finding of such conditions (“blight”) (Section 163.340(8) b, F.S.)

- *Aggregate assessed values of real property in the area for ad valorem purposes have failed to show any appreciable increase over the five years prior to the finding of such conditions in this report. In 2007 the aggregate taxable value of study area properties was \$108,708,677, and in 2011 it was \$80,191,152, a loss of -\$25,528,384 in taxable value at an average annual decrease of -1.98 percent (pg. 22).*

Unsanitary or Unsafe Conditions (“blight”) (Section 163.340(8) d, F.S.)

- *Presently, Marion County operates several branches of a centralized potable water system. This is not essential to the functioning of the Silver Springs Study Area, although centralized public water supplies are the preferred means of providing public water because these systems can be continuously monitored for quality by trained operators and technicians*
- *Many of the Study Area properties can be supplied with available water and sewer utilities, although owners are unable to afford the costs associated with hooking up to the county systems*

- *Septic systems, however well regulated, are not viewed favorably by regulators, health officials, and users. Left to be monitored and maintained by each user, septic systems frequently fail bringing the risks of contamination to water supplied by wells and posing difficulties for mosquito control. Considering the interest in redevelopment of the Study Area, the prospect of a growing community served by septic systems would be unacceptable by current stringent development standards*
- *Centralized wastewater service is especially important for encouraging a broad mix of commercial uses. The current arrangement has effectively forced aged commercial properties to develop individually with their own septic system. Contemporary commercial development would not support this approach or practice. In effect, the absence of central wastewater service creates physical conditions which render the majority of the area's commercial properties functionally deteriorated*

Incidence of crime in the area higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality (“blight”) (Section 163.340(8) j, F.S.)

- *Crime was disproportionately represented in the Silver Springs District compared to the County as a whole. The Silver Springs District has a crime rate of 2.74 crimes per 100 persons while Marion County as a whole has a crime rate of 2.32 crimes per 100 persons*

A greater number of violations of the Florida Building Code in the area than the number of violations recorded in the remainder of the county or municipality (“blight”) (Section 163.340(8) I, F.S.)

- *For every one property record in the Study Area, there were .009 code violations, or one code violation per 109 parcels. In Marion County as a whole, there were .002 code violations per property record, or one code violation per 510 property records. Pgs. 33-34*

When compared to Marion County as a whole, conditions of the Study Area are indicative of blight as documented in this report. This review provides documentation of blight in the area, and through the Redevelopment Act, the area qualifies for assistance in redevelopment efforts and financing by becoming designated as a Community Redevelopment Area. Government maintained statistics coupled with staff field observation and documentation of the blighted conditions indicate the current conditions of the Study Area “are leading to economic distress or endanger life or property,” according to the Redevelopment Act. The current conditions of the area impede the immediate and long-term physical, economic, and social development.

The information summarized in this report justifies Marion County in acknowledging the described conditions and adopting the requisite resolution declaring the need for the rehabilitation, redevelopment, and conservation of the Study Area in the interest of public health, safety, morals, and welfare.

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