

2025-286A

City of
Gainesville

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs



Hoggetowne Medieval Faire Update


April, 10, 2025

Where We've Been

- Thomas Center – 5 years
- Alachua County Faire Grounds – 30 years
- Virtual – 1 year
- Old YMCA Sports Complex – 2 years
- Depot Park – 2 years



A bit of history

- 
- 1986** Hoggetowne was started by the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) and was held at the Thomas Center
 - ~1989** Cultural Affairs took over the management of the Faire
 - 1991** The Faire moved to the Alachua County Fairgrounds (was there for 30 years)
 - 2001** The Faire had outgrown the single weekend and a second weekend was added
 - 2020** The Faire grew again and a third weekend was added
 - 2022** The loss of the Alachua county fairgrounds necessitated the relocation to the old YMCA sports complex on Archer Rd
 - 2024** Both the prime and backup location that was being worked on fell through 10 weeks before moving on site and staff had to pivot to the Depot Park option

Where We Are

Depot Park – 2 years

Reduced

11 stages to 6 stages

150 vendors to 90 vendors

3 weekends to 1 weekend

Notable Losses

Joust

Birds of Prey

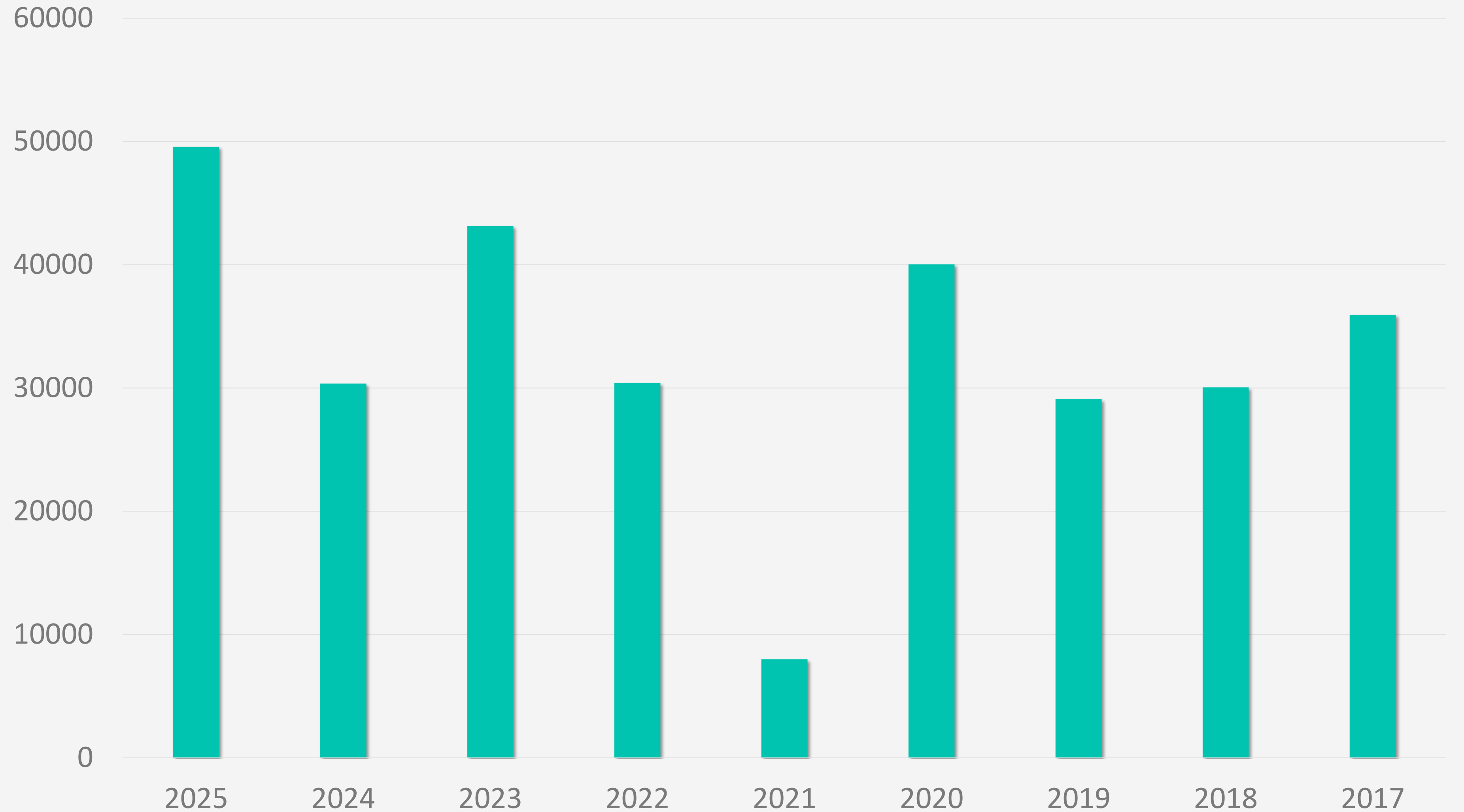
Barely Balanced

Medieval Games



Yearly Attendance

2025 – 49,565
2024 – 30,358
2023 – 43,135
2022 – 30,417
2021 – 8,000
2020 – 40,030
2019 – 29,081
2018 – 30,047
2017 – 35,944



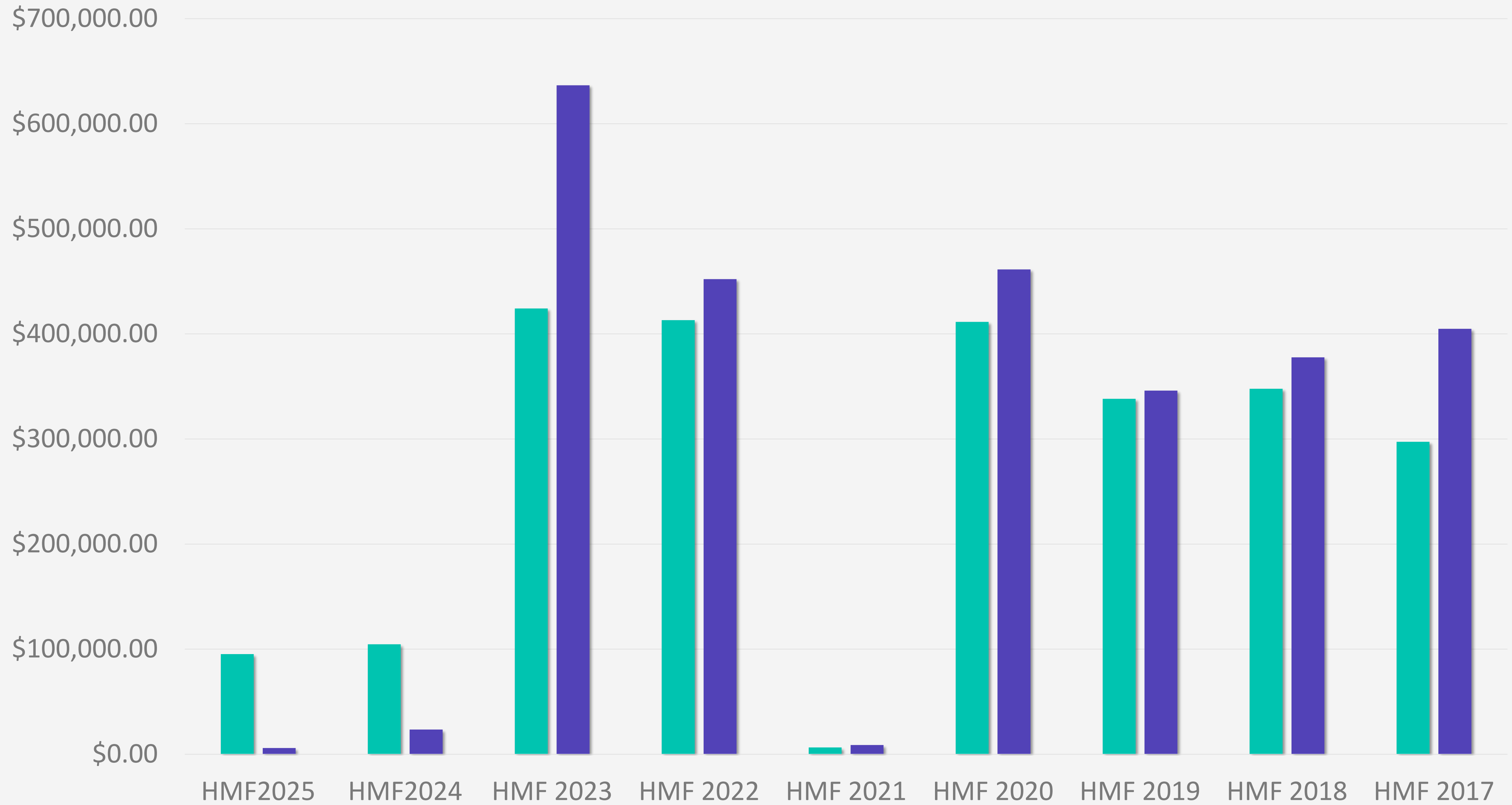
Expense vs. Revenue



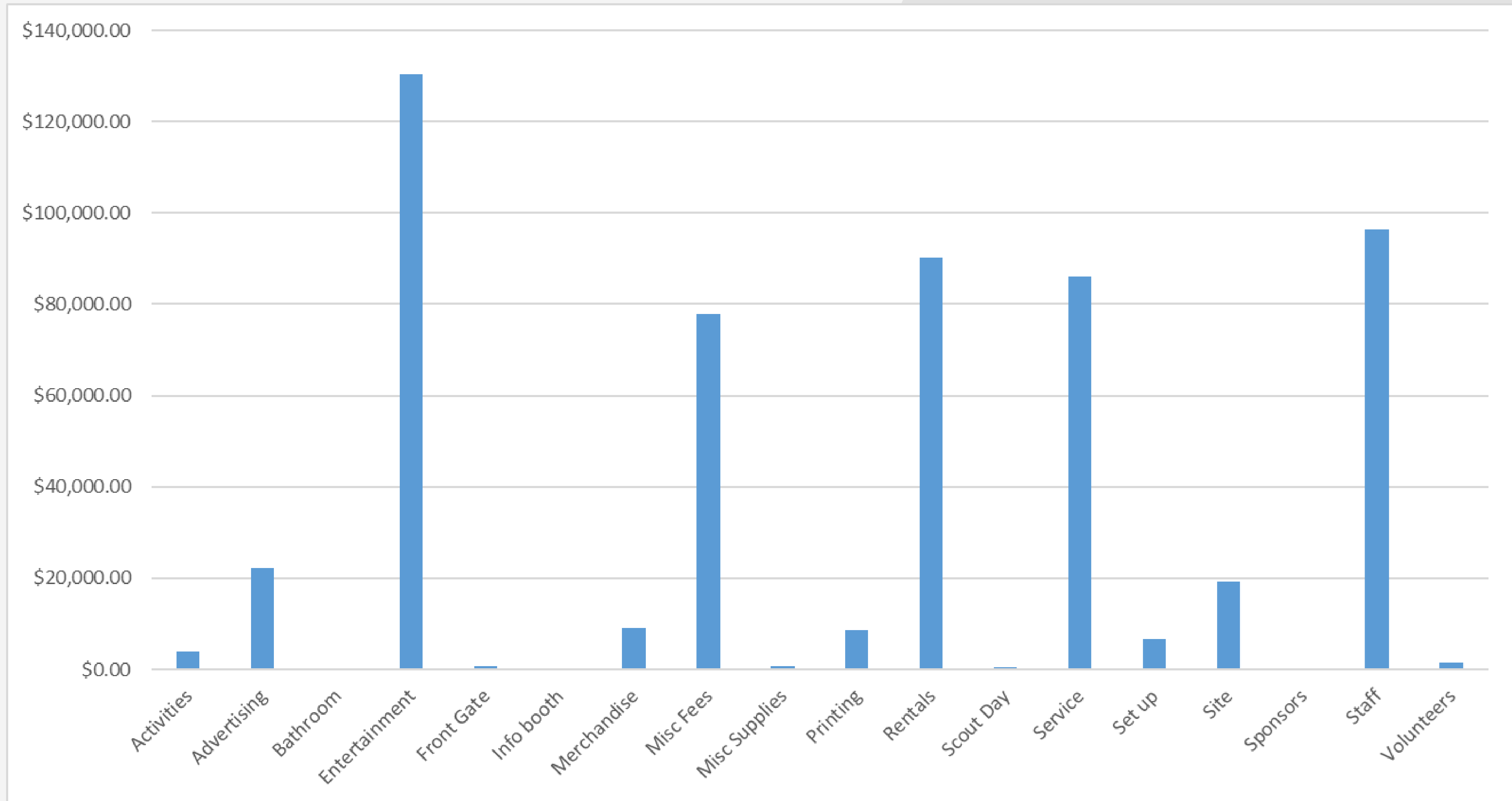
Expenses



Revenue



Expense Breakdown - 2023

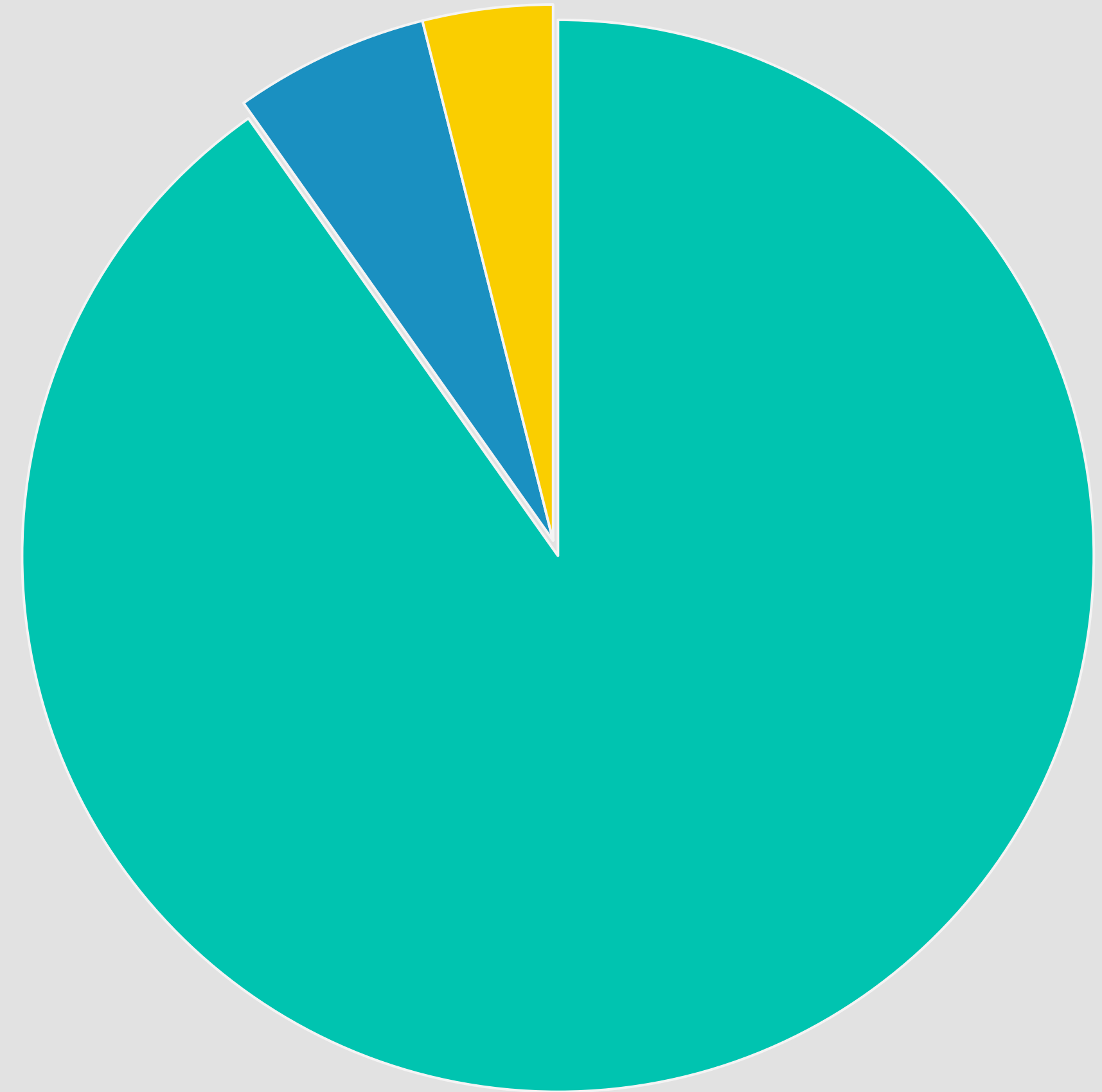


Funding

The medieval faire is self sustaining and relies on ticket revenue along with booth fees, grants and sponsorships to pay for all expenses.

Only staff-time for planning the event is covered in the General Fund.

- ◆ **Ticket Sales – 92%**
- ◆ **Booth Fees – 4.5%**
- ◆ **Sponsorships & Grants – 3.5%**



Spotlight Features



150 Medieval Merchants



150 Volunteers



11 Stages of Entertainment



2000 School Day Students

Minimum Space Needs

Area	Acres	Purpose
Parking	35	Attendees and participants
Merchant	5	150-160 merchant booths of varying sizes
Food Court	1.5	20 food vendors, seating, queue lines, storage
Games/ Rides	.5	3 rides, 6 games, queue lines
Encampment / Activities	1	SCA, Kids Kingdom, Living Encampments
Stages & Seating	2	11 stages of entertainment
Management	.5	Ticket booth, cash office, queue lines
Participant Camping Space	1.5	For merchants and performers
Miscellaneous	.5	Dumpsters, port a lets, generators, mulch, walk ways, greenspace, etc.
Total 47.5 acres		

Site Needs: Requirements



Size

50-60 acres of flat dry land that is mostly cleared



Location

4 miles within the Gainesville City limits



Time

All of January and some of February with additional prep time option, if needed



Event Permit

Must be able to secure permit

- Requirements are achievable
- Sufficient time to complete



Vehicle Access

Multiple entrances and exits

- Two for guests
- One for staff/emergency vehicles

Four lane highway - Guest Access
Two lane highway - Staff Access

Site Needs: Infrastructure

Water

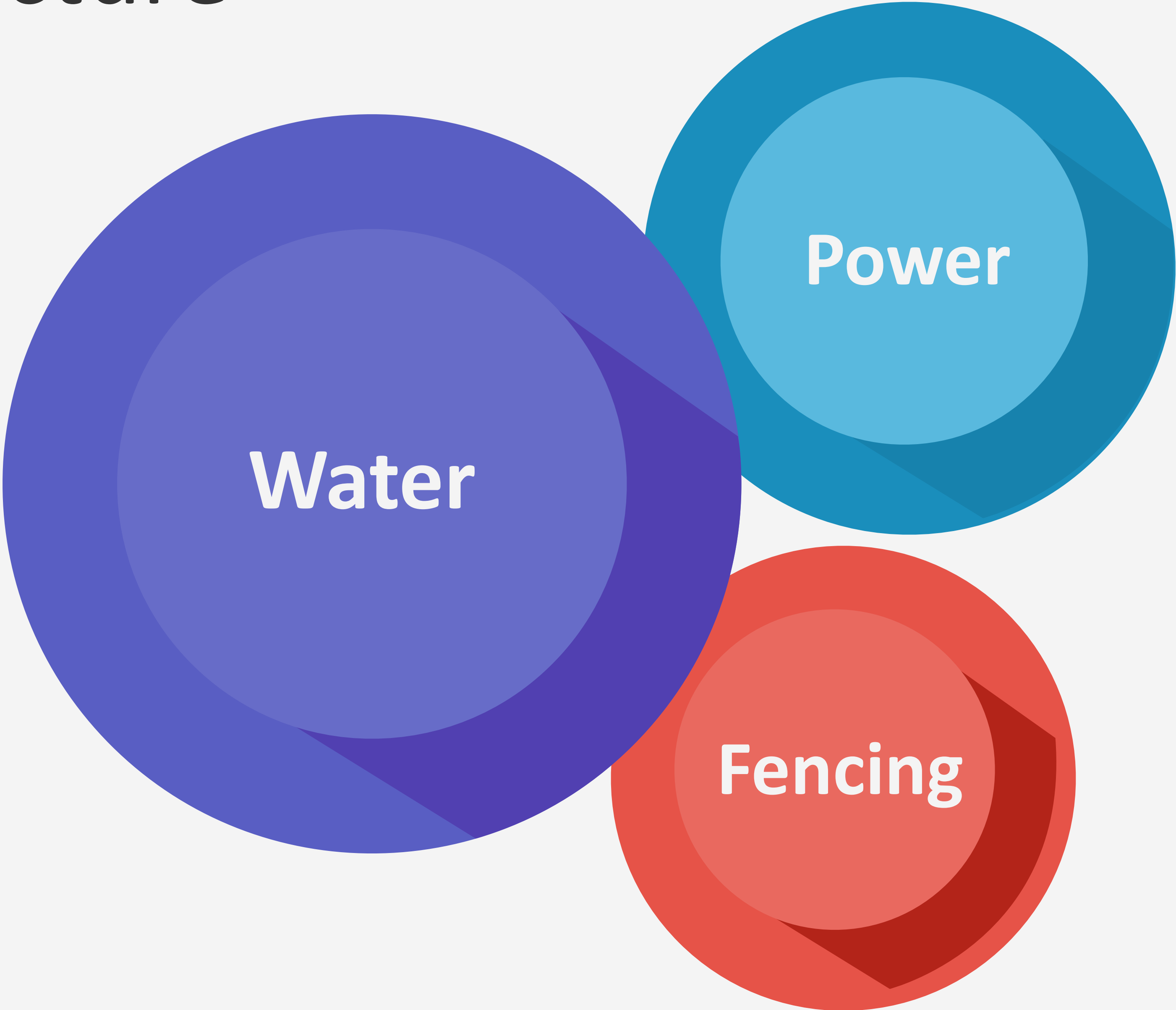
Crucial for food vendors and animal performers

Power

Support at least 15 food vendor booths

Fencing

Perimeter fencing to prevent unauthorized access



Site Needs: Additional Desired Features



Need we say more



For vendors and performers



Along the west side to help
block against strong winter
winds



For easy ADA access within
the site

Why 4 miles?

- The event requires assistance from several City teams to set up and take down
- Set up takes 5 to 7 full days and take down takes 3-4 days for approximately 10-12 Parks staff. During this time, staff is unable to fulfill other duties to maintain City parks.
- Since the event is self-supported, the event budget is unable to absorb the impact of additional overtime costs that would be incurred due to staff needing to travel to a distant location
- Economic Impact that the tourism dollars bring to the City of Gainesville will be lost if the event is held too far from the City limits
- With the loss of the economic impact and cost of staff time for set up and take down for the event, the City receives no benefit for producing the event.

Old County Fairgrounds

(next to Gainesville Airport)

This site is now owned by the military and is not an option.





Staff reviewed over 40 individual potential locations. Following is a brief list of the most suggested locations and why these properties were not eligible.

Alachua County Agriculture and Equestrian Center

~18 possible useable acres

10 miles from City limits

Does not meet the space requirements for parking and program space.

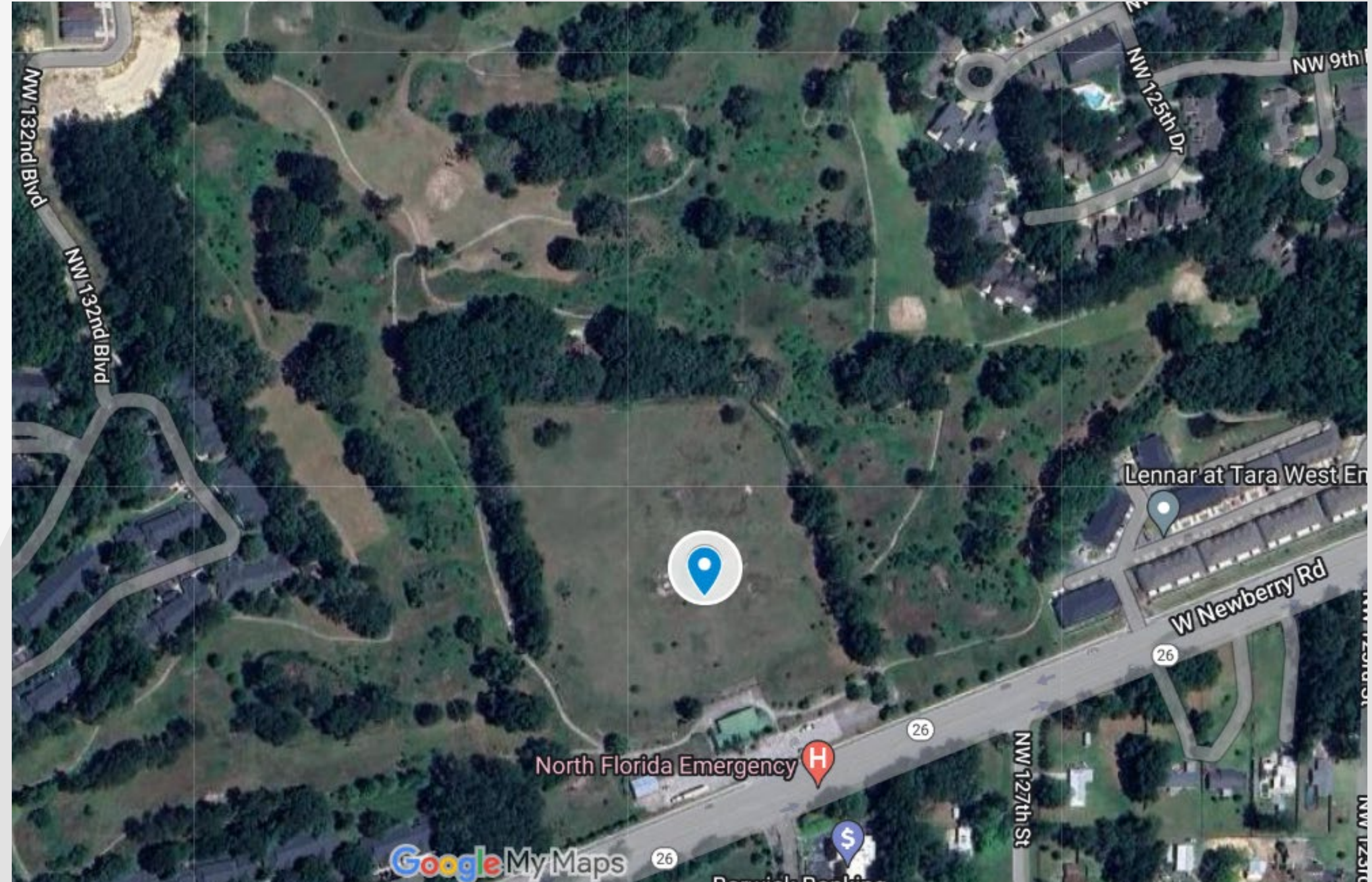
- 10 acres programming (min)
- 30 acres parking (min)



West End Golf Course

This space was acquired by Alachua County and will become a county managed park.

Current plans for the space do not include sufficient parking for 4,000 vehicles



Gainesville Raceway

Meets all the minimum requirements.

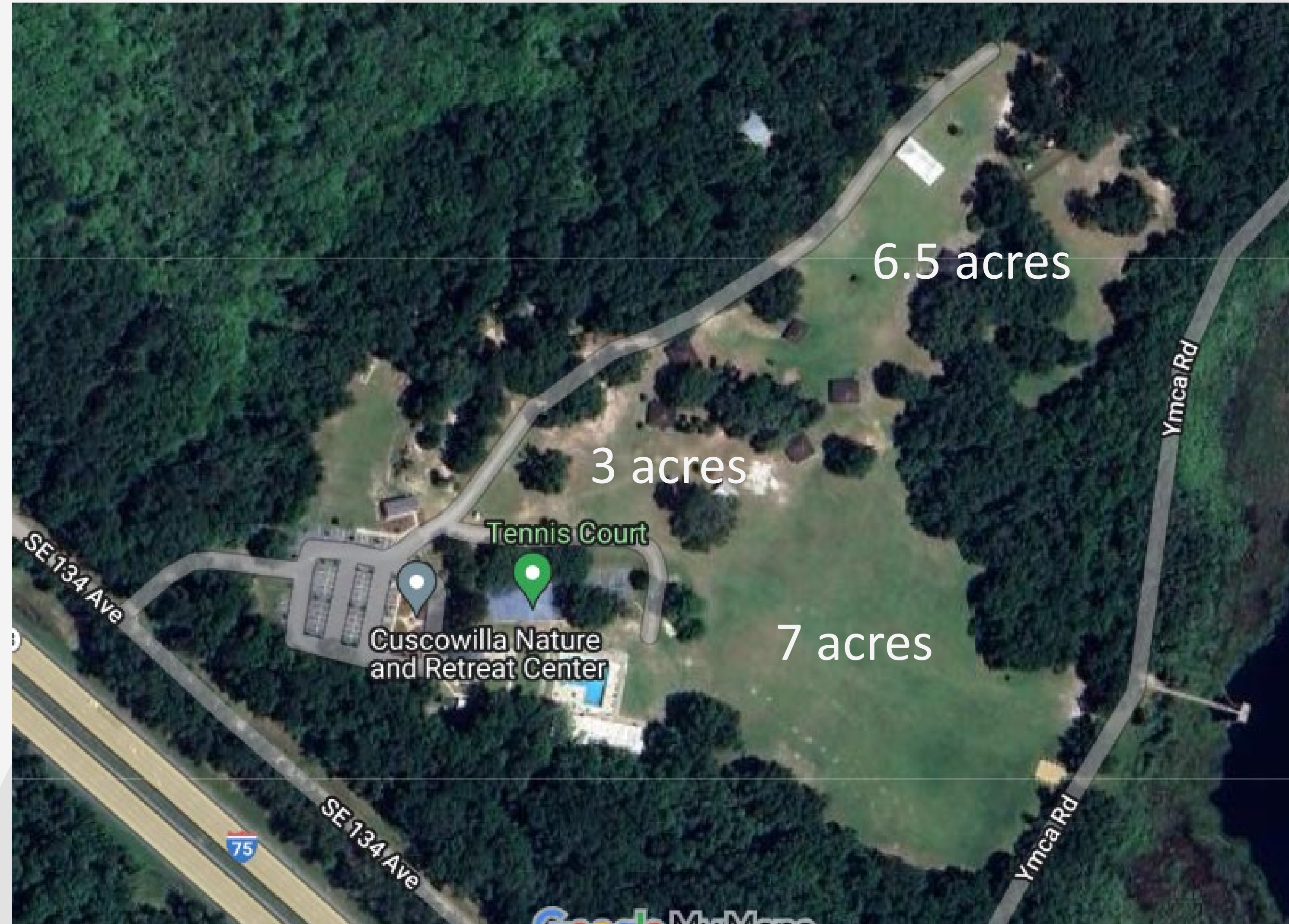
However, the extensive insurance requirements are cost prohibitive for the event.



Cuscowilla Nature Center

~16 acres

Does not meet the space requirements for parking and program space.



MLK Center / Citizens Field

~13 acres

Does not meet the space requirements for parking and program space.

During review it was discovered there is more available parking in "parking pockets" in the Depot Park/ Downtown area than in this location.

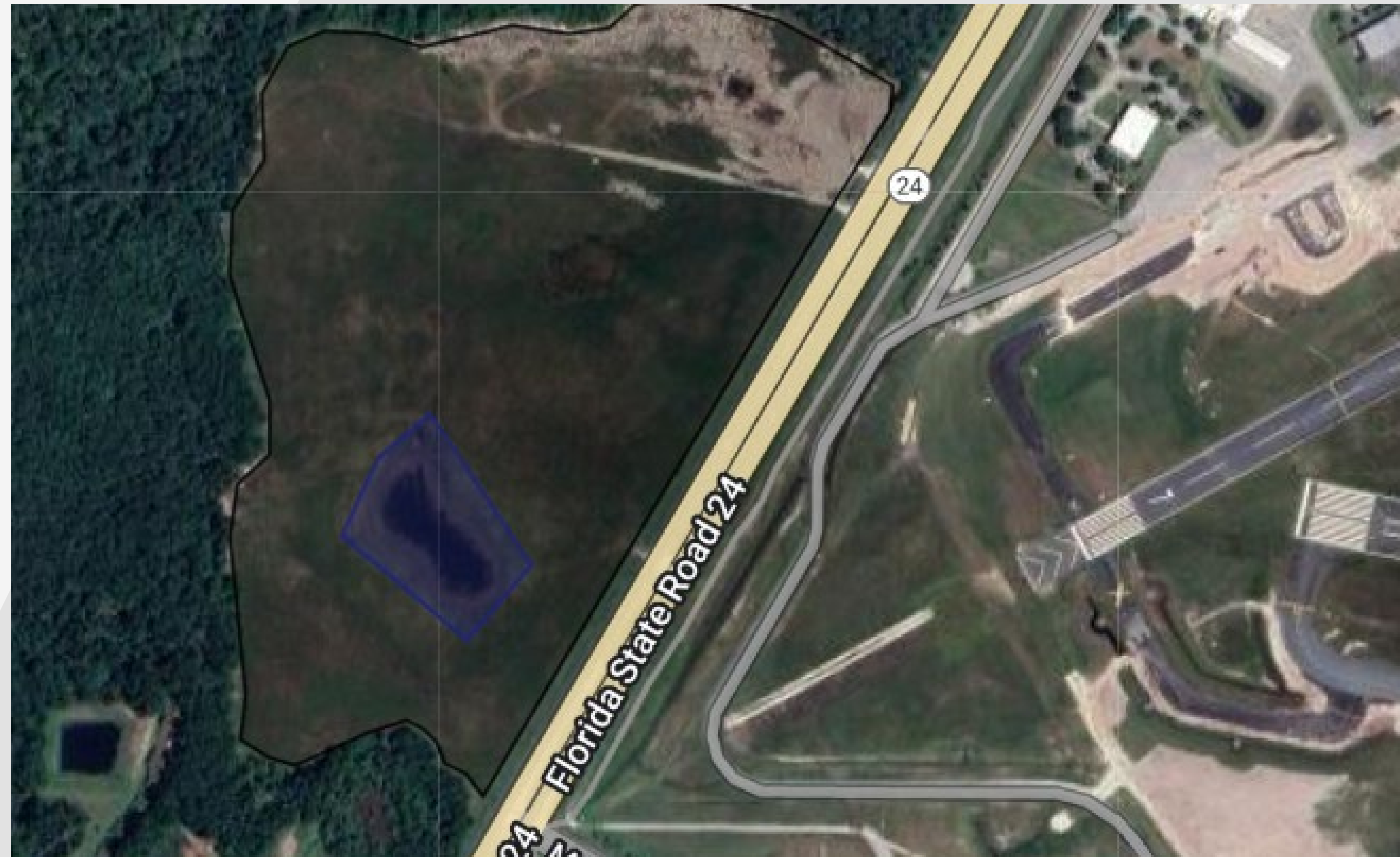


Waldo Road

(across from the airport)

~40 usable acres

FAA sound restriction on decibels near or in the flight path of aircraft and the proximity and positioning of the site to the Gainesville Regional Airport, prevent this space from being utilized.



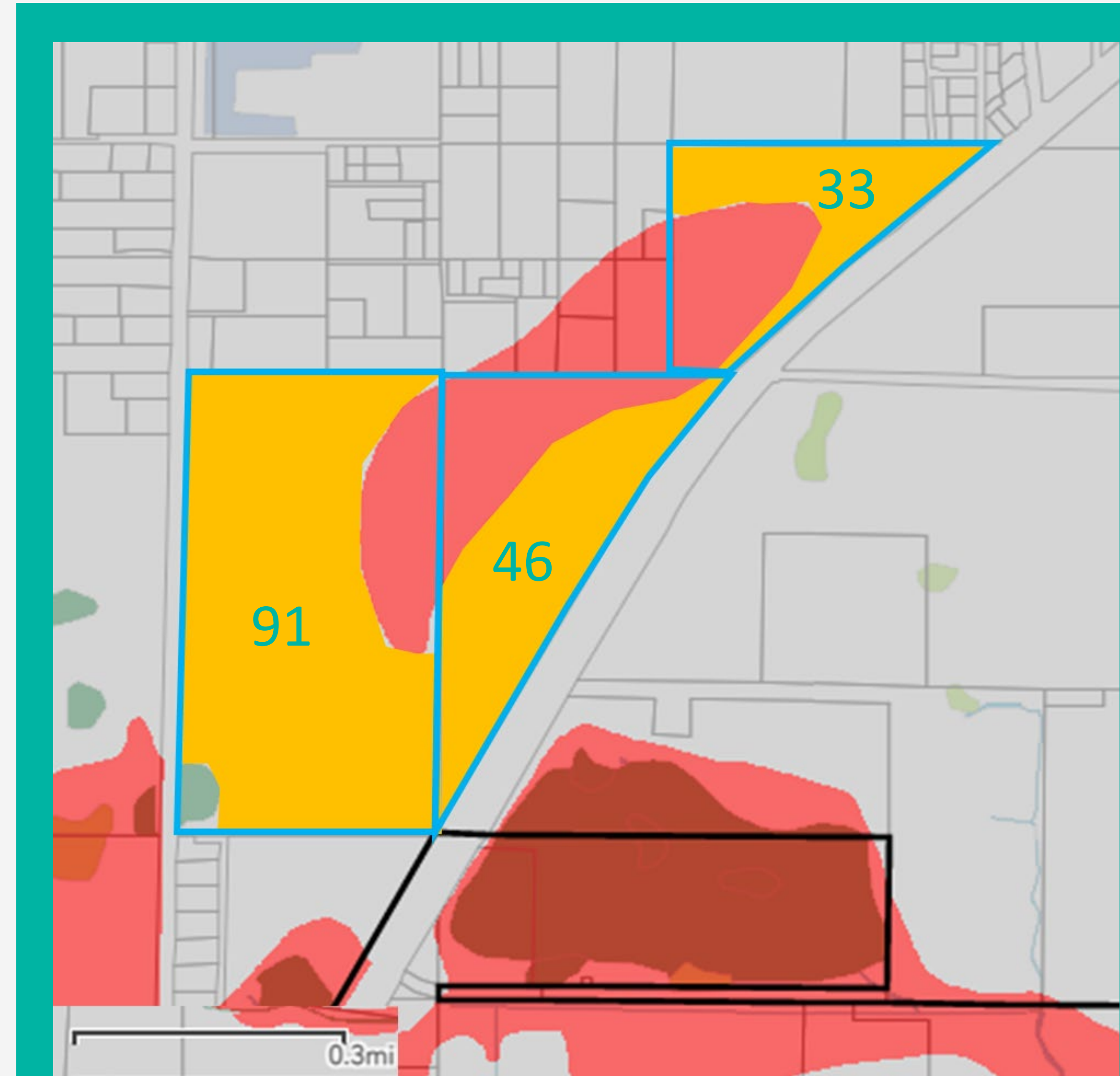
Festival Park @ Koppers Site (2018 Concept Design)



So close - Burch Property (Waldo Road)

Three parcels totaling 171 acres.

- 2023 - Staff moved to purchase the three parcels for \$1.5M
- The owner was unwilling to include a zoning clause in the contract that was required by the City (stating that the sale of the property was contingent on the City receiving the zoning necessary to use the property as needed for the festival park).
- Another company purchased the property and is now selling it for \$10M



Additional Site Research

Private Owned Properties

Carson Springs Wildlife

Peanut Patch and Corn Maze

Property on Hawthorne Rd

Thee Mine/Post Farms

Waldo Flea Market

Waldo Motorsports

City Owned Properties

Boulware Springs

Fred Cone Park

Gum Root Park

Ironwood Golf Course

Morningside Nature Park

What's Next



Depot Park

Opportunities

We already own it

Paved pathways

Challenges

Only ~ 5 usable acres

Limited parking

Can't charge admission fees

Restricted to one weekend

Lack of funding



PRCA Property on 121

Opportunities

We already own it

Timber contractor

Could restrict entry for admission fees

Can have more than one weekend

Challenges

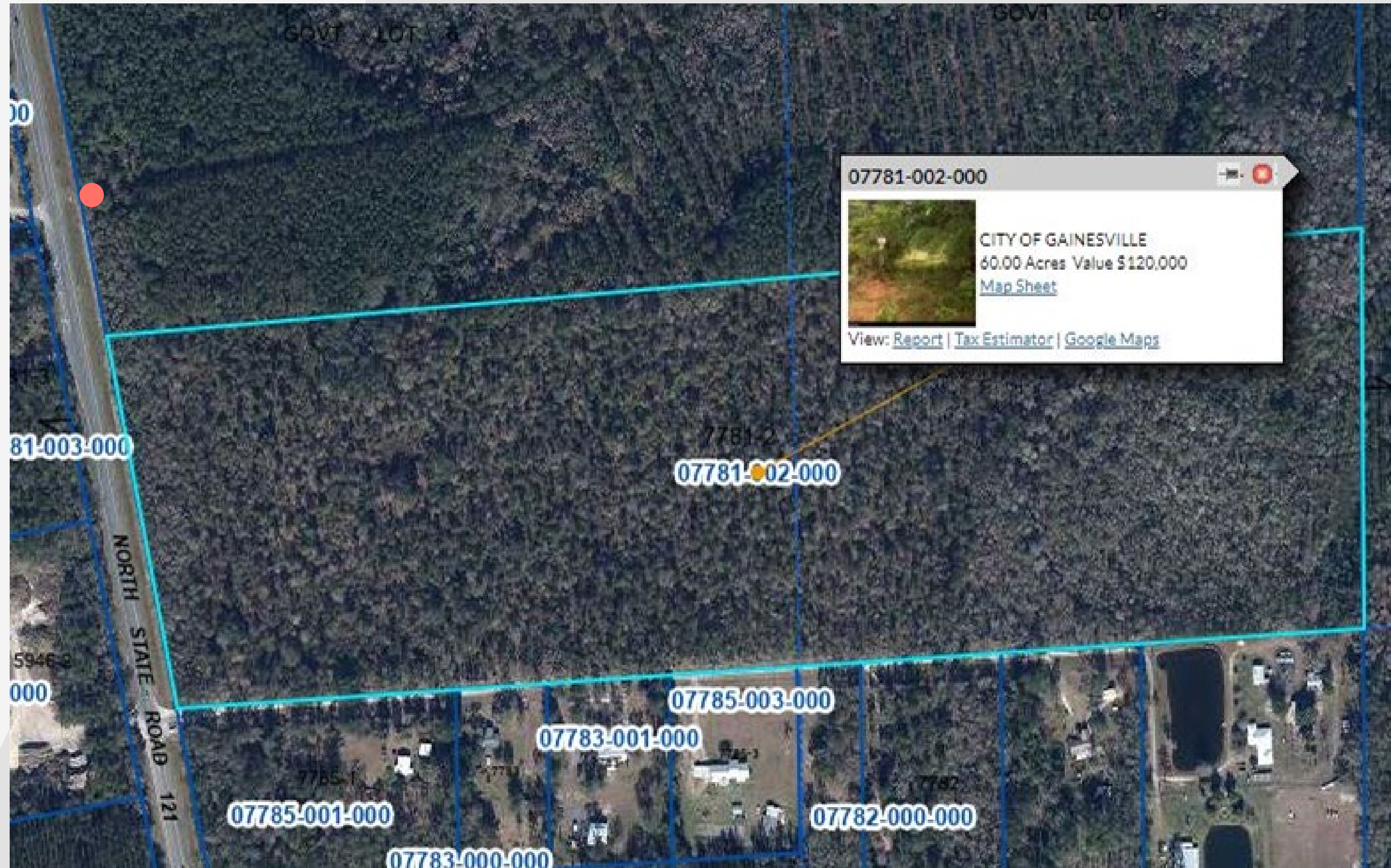
Only ~35 usable acres

No road access to property

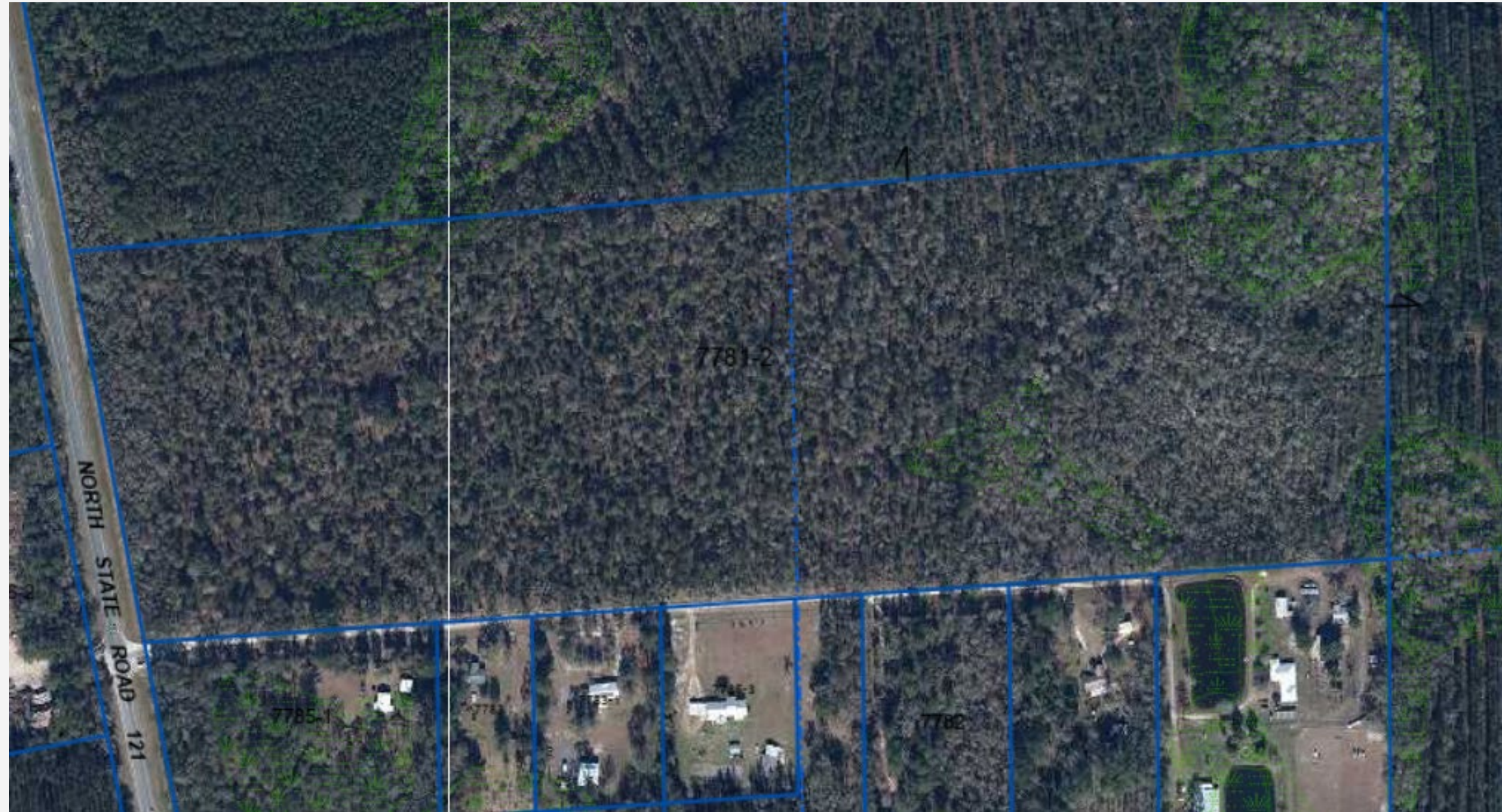
Adjacent to neighborhood

Two lane highway

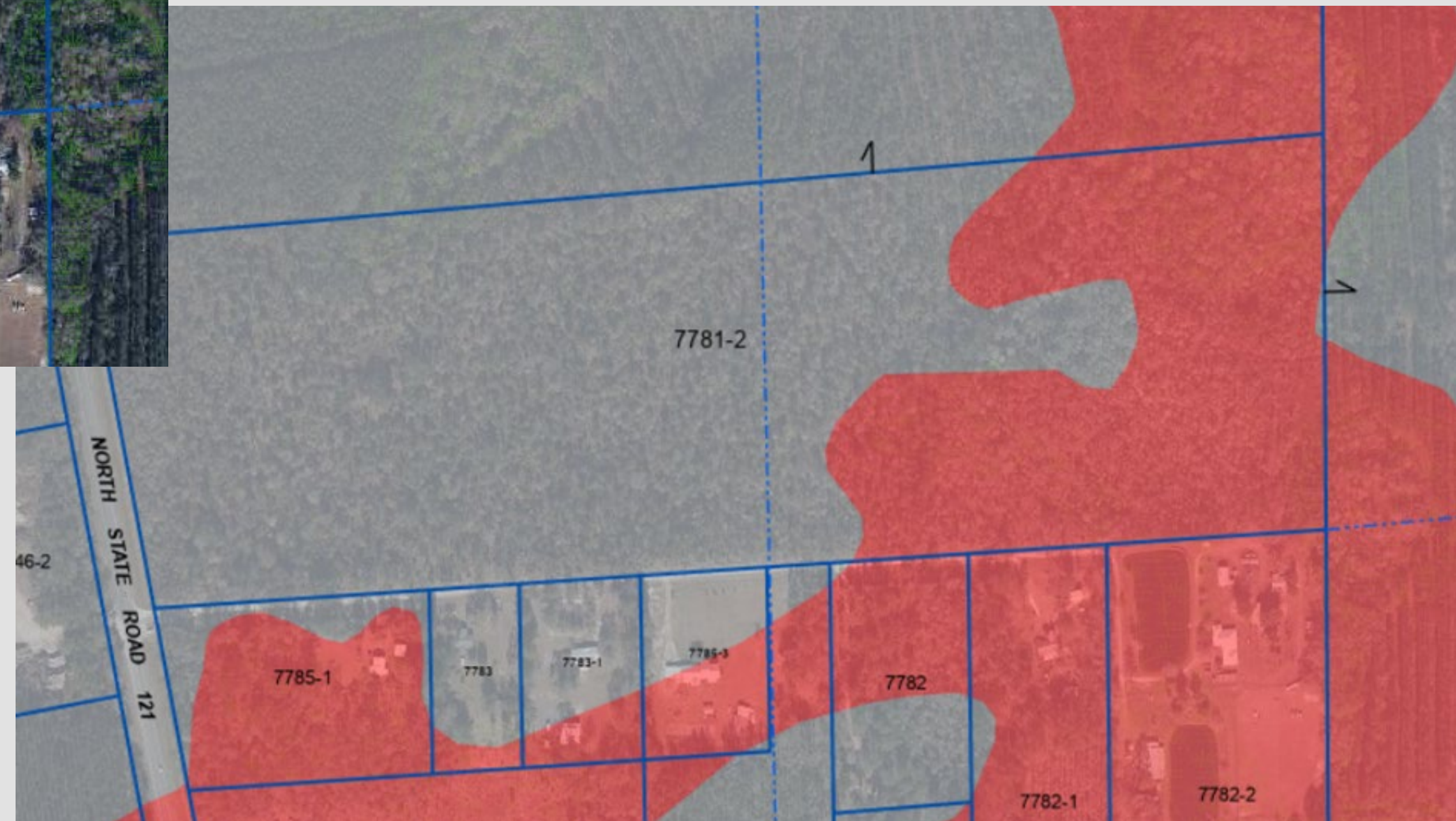
No infrastructure



PRCA Property on 121



Wetlands



Flood Zone

What is the problem?



Due to the closure of the old Alachua County Fairgrounds, the Hoggetowne Medieval Faire has yet to secure a location that meets its long-term requirements.



The effort to establish a permanent festival and arts park—intended to serve as a long-term home for the Hoggetowne Medieval Faire and other cultural events—has been delayed due to increasing property and construction costs..

Conclusion

Without funding support from the City Commission and other sources, the Hoggetowne Medieval Faire will not be able to continue as a City-produced event.

Recommendation

Funding would need to be secured in the FY26 to support an additional year of the Faire at Depot Park, for \$130,000.



Seek other funding sources such as City-County Partnership for the Depot Park-based free event in FY26.



Seek other funding sources such as City-County Partnership for a permanent Festival and Arts Park.

