

Thelma Boltin Site Trailhead & Sweetwater Loop Trail Alignment Development

June 30, 2026

Thomas Center

Public Workshop #1



City of
Gainesville

N|V|5

Thelma Boltin Site Trailhead & Sweetwater Loop Trail Alignment Development

Agenda

6:30-6:45 *Arrival & Sign-In*

6:45-7:15 *Presentation and Feedback Session*

7:15-8:00 *Breakout Tables*



01 Project Introduction

Meeting Agenda

City of
Gainesville



N|V|5

01 Project Introduction



<https://dos.fl.gov/cultural/programs/florida-folklife-program/folk-heritage-awards/list-of-past-recipients/thelma-boltin/>

On September 4, 2025, the Gainesville City Commission voted 6-1 to demolish the Thelma A. Boltin Center building.

With their motion, the City Commission moved to reimagine “***the site as a trailhead along the Sweetwater Trail Loop system, connecting Depot Park, the Matheson History Museum, Tom Petty Park, and the 6th Street Trail.***”

*The reimagined site should **honor the historic and cultural legacy of the location and Thelma Boltin’s contributions**, incorporating the **folk art tradition she spent her career elevating**, the site's **World War II history**, along with **usable outdoor community space**, **stormwater improvements to reduce flooding in the neighborhood**, and a **community garden element to promote sustainability, education, and neighborhood connection....**”*



Historic photo of Service Center taken by Thelma Boltin, courtesy of the Matheson Museum

02 Project Site

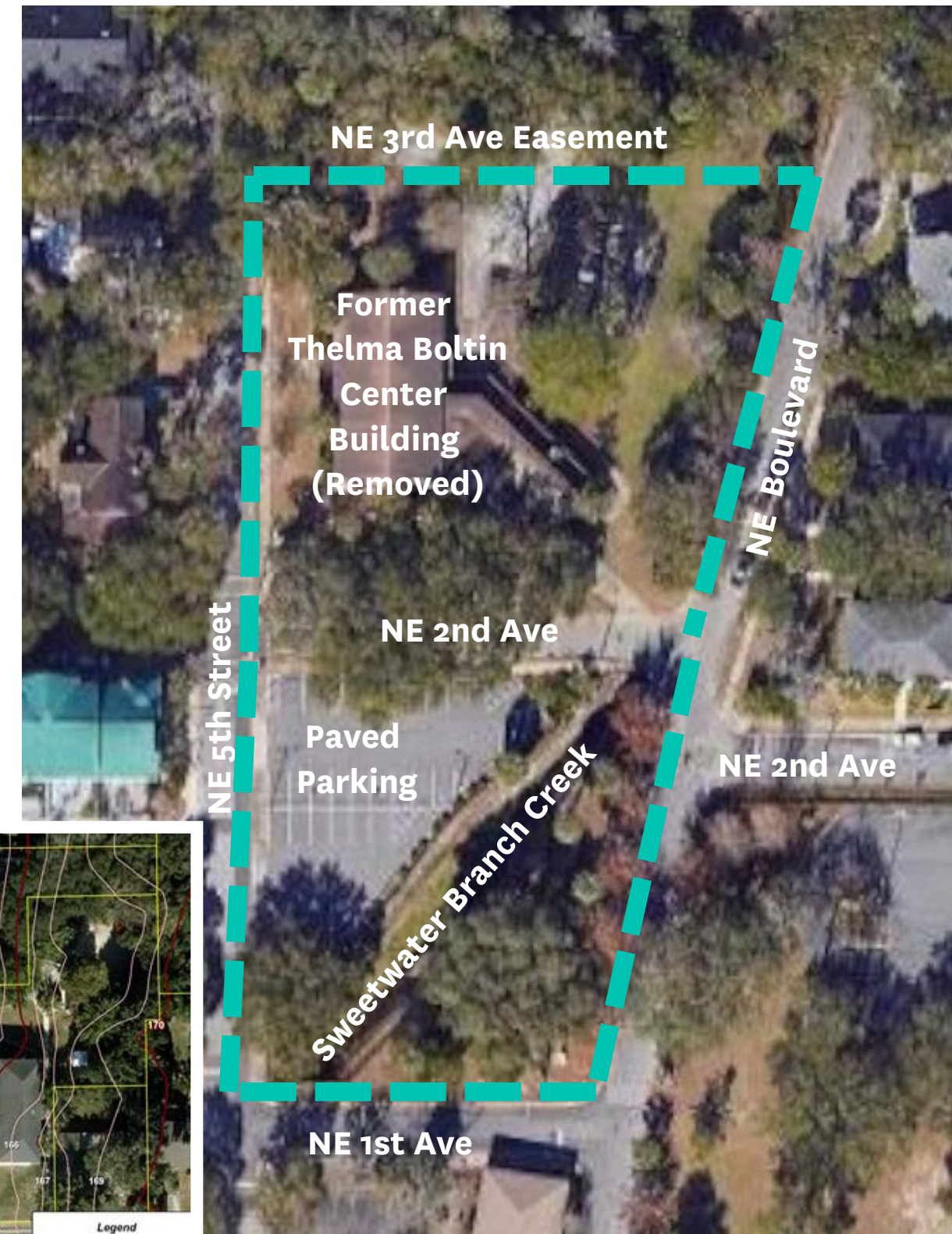
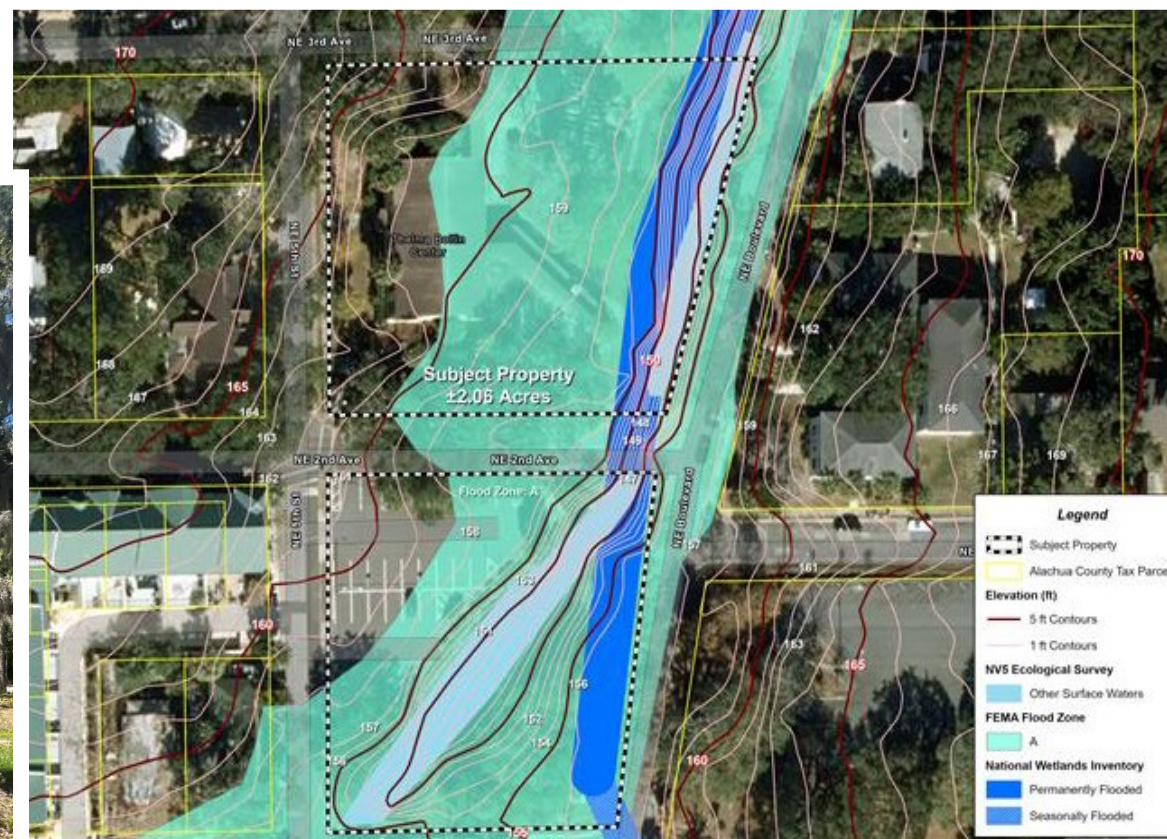
This project will include **conceptual design** for three main components:

1. Thelma Boltin Site
2. Sweetwater Greenway Trail Alignment
3. Stormwater Improvements



03 Project Scope – Thelma Boltin Site Park / Trailhead

- Approx. 2.2 acres
- Two parcels, bisected by NE 2nd Ave
- Option to incorporate NE 2nd Ave
- Sweetwater Branch Creek + ecological considerations
- Partially in Floodplain Zone A
- Maintain community gardens
- Site survey + ecological analysis

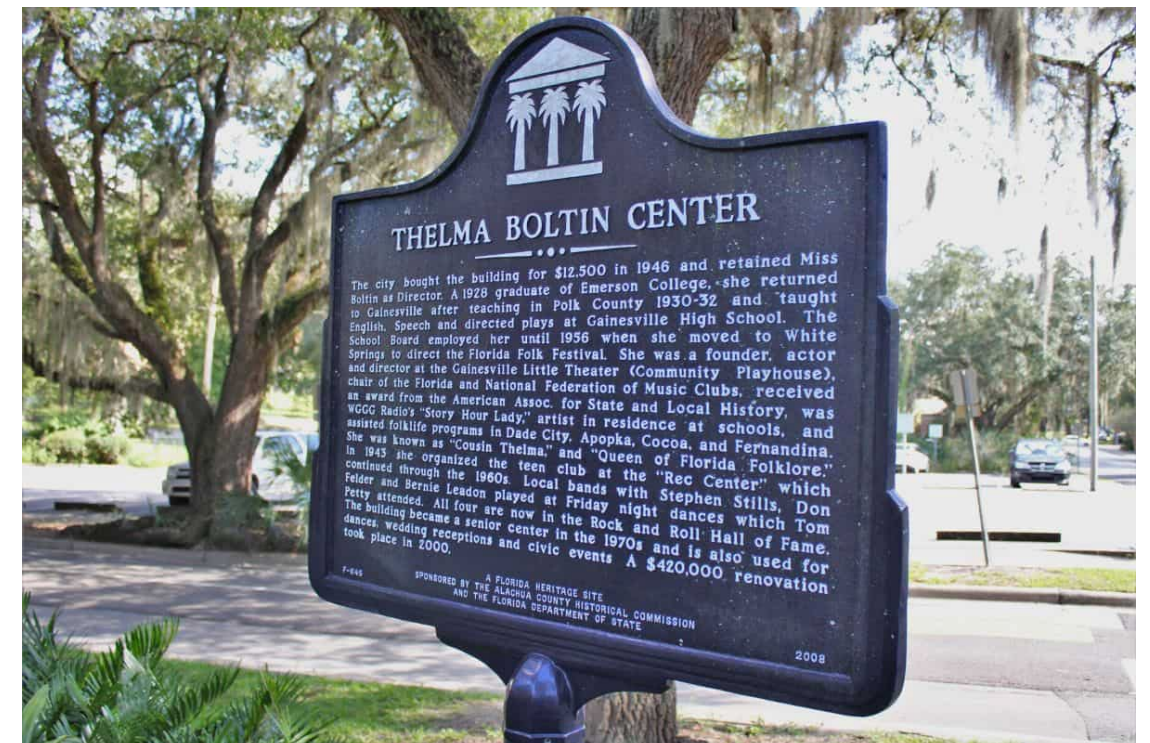


03 Project Scope – Thelma Boltin Site Park / Trailhead

- Reimagine site as a **trailhead** for Sweetwater Greenway Trail
- Honor the **historic and cultural legacy** of the site
- Recognize Thelma Boltin’s contributions, incorporating **folk art** legacy
- Recognize site’s **World War II** history
- Create **usable outdoor community space**
- Provide **stormwater improvements** to reduce flooding in the neighborhood
- Maintain **community garden** element to promote sustainability, education, and neighborhood connection
- Approximately \$2M budget for project site



<https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/2003/10/16/the-legacy-of-thelma-boltin/31648123007/>



<https://www.mainstreetdailynews.com/news/gainesville-demolish-thelma-boltin>

03 Project Scope – Thelma Boltin Site Park / Trailhead

WWII History – Servicemen’s Center



- Servicemen attended events here including dances, plays, variety shows, and sing-alongs.
- Other activities included chess, card games, ping-pong and bingo
- Outdoor activities included badminton, barbeque and shuffleboard.
- Soldiers had the opportunity to eat, socialize, and relax.

Thelma Boltin



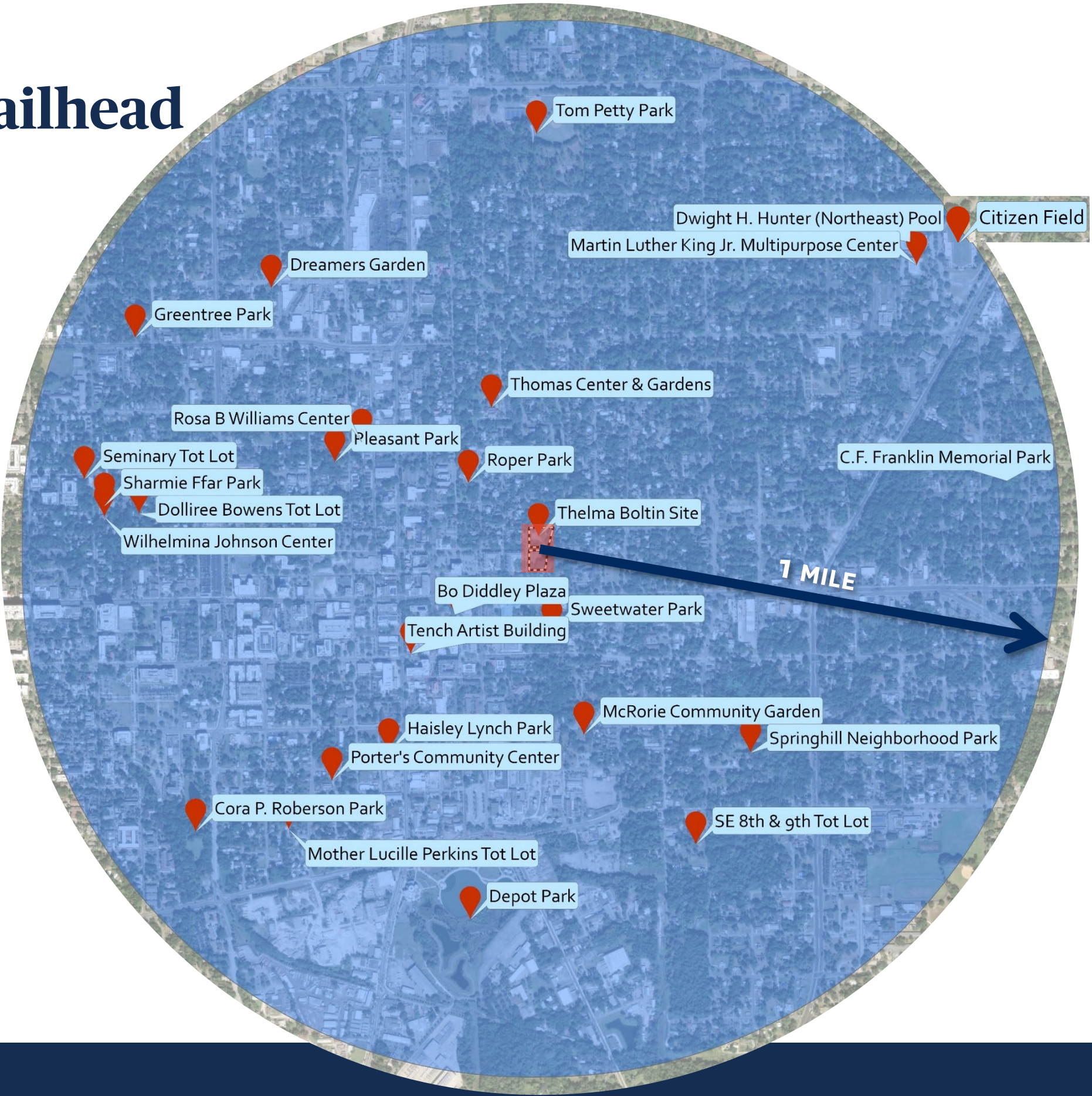
- “Cousin Thelma” was a storyteller, actress, and musician.
- She served as program director for the Servicemen’s Center, Gainesville’s first recreation director, and helped found the Florida Folk Festival of which, she was a long-time director.
- Organized youth “Teen Time” club that was attended by future Rock and Roll Hall of Fame artists Stephen Stills, Bernie Leadon, Don Feldner, and Tom Petty.

03 Project Scope – Thelma Boltin Site Park / Trailhead



03 Project Scope – Thelma Boltin Site Park / Trailhead

Public Spaces within 1 Mile of Thelma Boltin Site		
Bo Diddley Plaza Stage - Available for Rentals	Sharmie Ffar Park Playground - Pavilions	Sweetwater Branch Park Picnic Tables - Playground - Walking Trails - Dogs on Leash
Tench Artist Building Artist Studio	Dolliree Bowens Tot Lot Playground	McRorie Community Garden Community Garden - USDA Recognized - Compost
Haisley Lynch Park Playground - Walking Trails/ Paths - Dog Park	Wilhelmina Johnson Center Meeting Rooms	Springhill Neighborhood Park Picnic Tables - Grills - Walking Trails/Paths - Dogs on Leash
Porter's Community Center Community Center - Playground - Basketball Court	Pleasant Park Picnic Tables - Playground - Grills - Dogs on Leash - Pavilions	SE 8th and 9th Tot Lot Picnic Tables - Playground
Mother Lucille Perkins Tot Lot Playground - Picnic Table	Rosa B Williams Center Gallery - Dance Floors - Meeting Rooms - Basketball Courts - Playground	Cade Museum Science & Innovation Museum - Hands-on Labs - Summer Camp - Preschool Programming - Rentable Space
Cora P. Roberson Park Picnic Tables - Grills - Dogs on Leash - Basketball Courts - Pavilions - Pond with Fountain	Thomas Center and Gardens Performance Space - Banquet Rooms - Meeting Rooms - Gardens	Cotton Club Museum & Cultural Center History Museum - Art Exhibits - Performance Space - Rentable Space
Depot Park Accessible - Bicycle Paths - Picnic Tables - Playground - Grills - Restrooms - Waterplay - Walking Trails/Paths - Wildlife/ Bird Watching - Dogs on Leash - Pavilions	Roper Park Picnic Tables - Playground - Grills - Dogs on Leash	Alachua County Headquarters Library Library - Meeting & Study Rooms - Computers & Wi-Fi - Printing & Copying - Events & Programs - MakerSpace
Tom Petty Park Bicycle Paths - Picnic Tables - Playground - Grills - Restrooms - Multipurpose Ball/Field(s) - Walking Trails/Paths - Dogs on Leash - Tennis Courts - Pickleball Courts - Dog Park	Dwight H. Hunter Pool Accessible - Picnic Tables - Restrooms - Waterplay	Matheson History Museum History Museum - Speaker Series - Tours - Summer Camp
Dreamers Garden Community Garden	Martin Luther King Jr. Multipurpose Center Wellness Center - Locker Rooms - Shower - Meeting Room - Kitchen - Gymnasium - Stage - Parking	Reserve Park Walking Trails/Path - Obstacle Course - Playgrounds - Public Art - Pavilion - Picnic Tables - Grills - Community Garden
Greentree Park Picnic Tables - Playground - Grills - Restrooms - Multipurpose Ball/Field(s) - Dogs on Leash - Basketball Courts - Pavilions	Citizens Field Accessible - Restrooms - Multipurpose Ball/Field(s) - Bleachers	
Seminary Tot Lot Picnic Tables - Playground	C.F. Franklin Memorial Park Picnic Tables - Playground - Grills - Walking Trails/Paths - Dogs on Leash - Basketball Courts - Pavilions	



03 Project Scope – Thelma Boltin Site Park / Trailhead

Summary:

Recreation, Sports + Fitness:

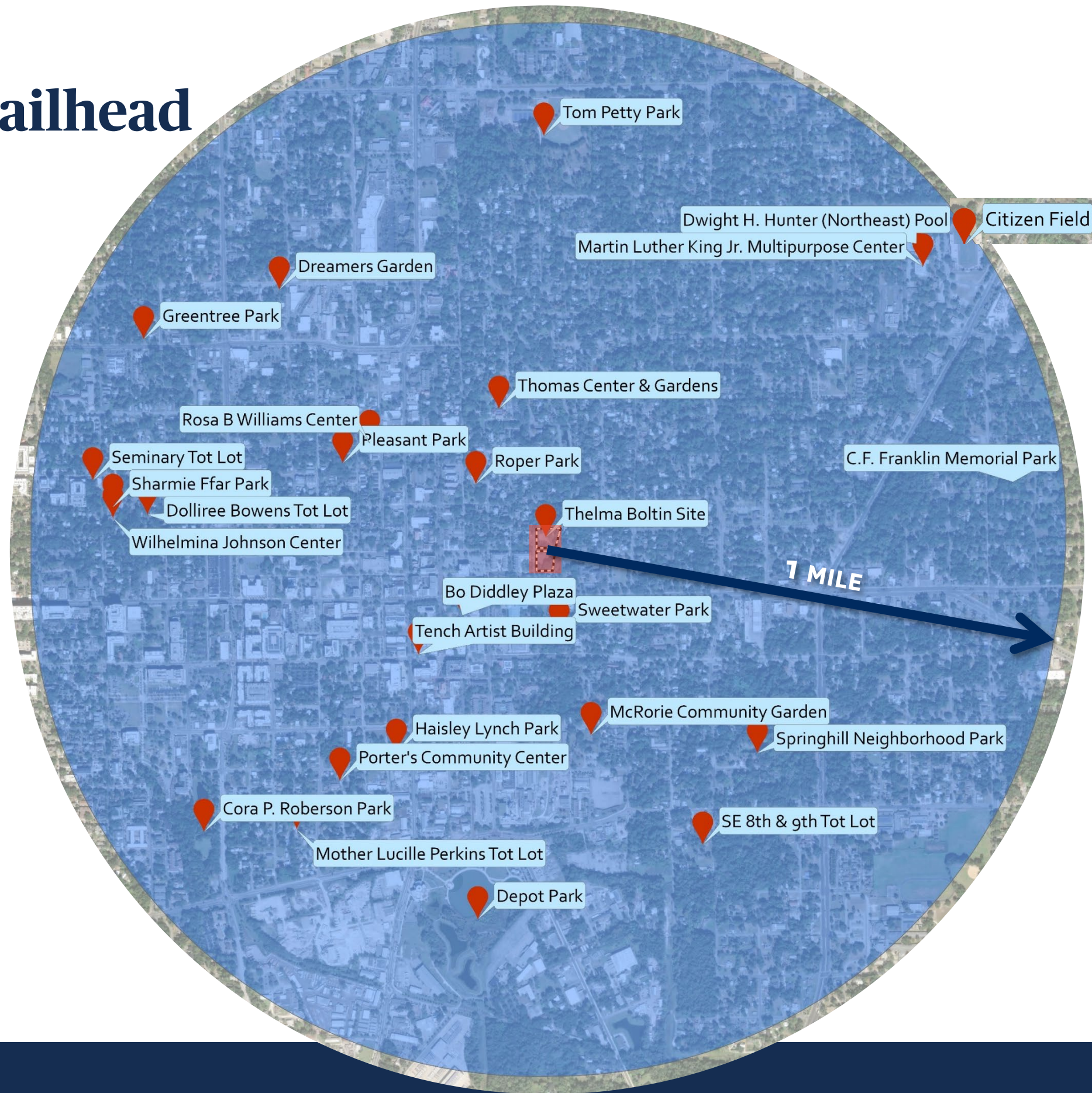
- Playgrounds
- Walking / Bike Paths
- Dog parks
- Basketball courts
- Tennis courts
- Pickleball courts

Passive Recreation + Social Amenities:

- Community Gardens
- Picnic areas
- Grills
- Pavilions/shelters

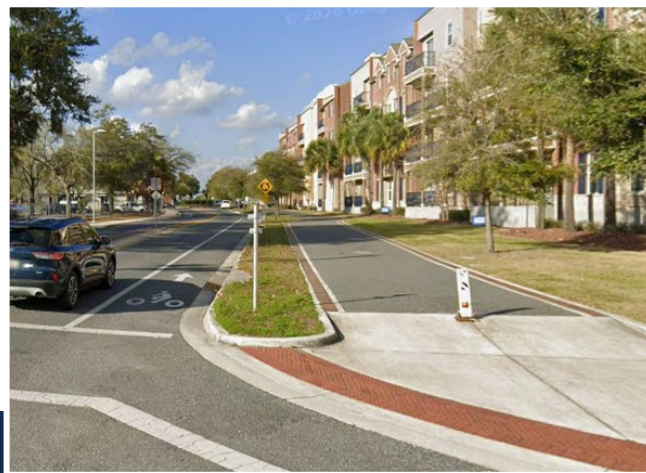
Other:

- Outdoor performance spaces
- Restrooms



03 Project Scope – Sweetwater Greenway Trail

- Incorporation of multi-use trail that follows NE Boulevard from University Ave to 6th Street Rail Trail
- Study potential trail corridors using public rights-of-way and existing easements, where feasible
- Will consider creek, stormwater, parking, and accessibility
- Trail construction is currently not funded; however, this project will help establish a construction budget for the City for future planning



03 Project Scope – Sweetwater Greenway Trail

- A “Multi-use Trail” or “Shared Use Path” is an approximate 10’ or wider pathway that accommodates multiple modes of transportation.
- Anticipated Design Considerations:
 - Available ROW
 - Tree Impacts
 - Creek structures (walls, culverts, etc.)
 - Managing stormwater and improvements to reduce flooding



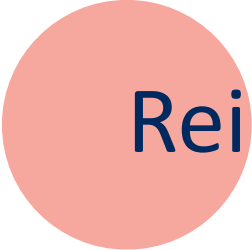
04 Project Scope – Stormwater Improvements

- Perform Hydraulic Analysis & Determine Feasible Floodplain Storage/ Restoration on Site
- Identify current choke points and problem areas to make recommendations for solutions



05 Project Recap

THREE MAIN COMPONENTS:



Reimagine the Thelma Boltin Site



Initial alignment for Sweetwater
Trail Loop System

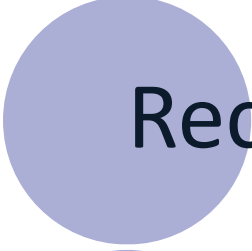


Stormwater Improvements

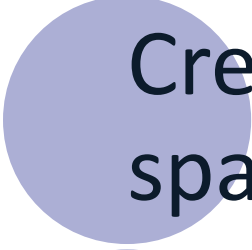
KEY PROJECT DIRECTIVES:



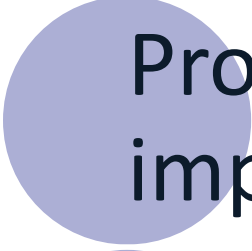
Honor Thelma Boltin + Folk Art
Tradition



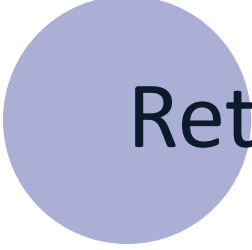
Recognize the site's WWII History



Create usable outdoor community
space



Provide stormwater
improvements



Retain community garden element

05 Process - How do we get there?

Public Engagement Opportunities:

Project aims to connect with local artists, cultural organizations, neighborhood groups, and City Boards/Committees in a community engagement process to collaboratively create a unique public space that reflects community identity and supports local needs.



STAY

ENGAGED...



Three Phases of Public Engagement:

Initial Discovery Phase

- Goals: Introduce the project, collect feedback, and define project goals
- Input Opportunities: Facilitate stakeholder meetings, City Advisory Boards and Committee meetings, + **1 Public Workshop**



WE ARE HERE!

Initial Plans + Trail Alignment Phase

- Goals: Present initial site plans + potential trail alignments, receive feedback
- Input Opportunities: Facilitate stakeholder meetings, City Advisory Boards and Committee meetings, **1 Public Workshop** + 1 City Commission Meeting

Refined Plans + Trail Alignment Phase

- Goals: Revise site plans + potential trail alignment based on community feedback, present final conceptual plans + alignment, provide feedback for implementation including budget projections
- Input Opportunities: Facilitate stakeholder meetings, City Advisory Boards and Committee meetings, **1 Public Workshop** + 1 City Commission Meeting

05 Process – How do we get there?

Public Engagement Opportunities:

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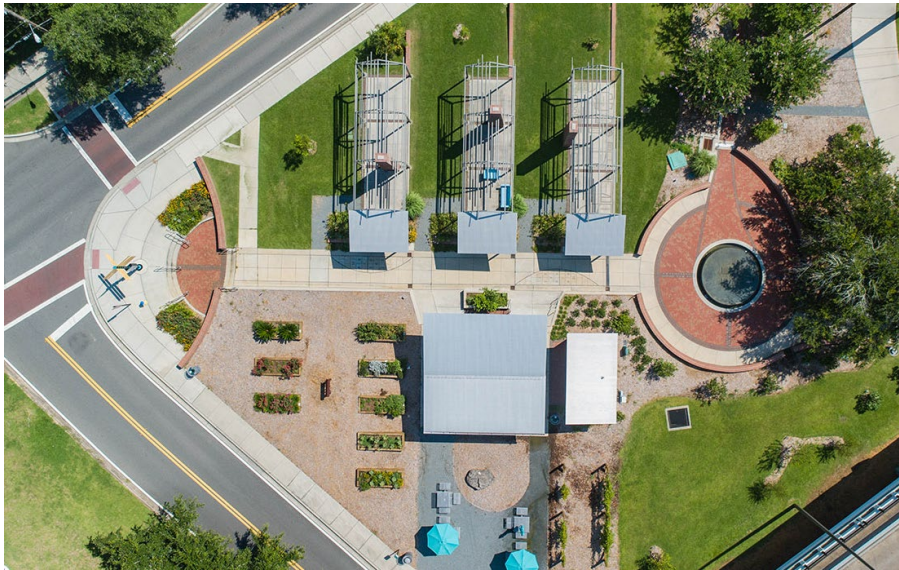


WSPP Project Manager:

Rachel Mandell – 352-393-8544 – mandellrc@gainesvillefl.gov



**Smokey Hollow Park,
Tallahassee**



<https://blueprintia.org/public-art/art-projects/smokey-hollow/>

<https://www.ocala.com/picture-gallery/news/local/2020/02/07/photos-tusawilla-sculpture-stroll-celebration/67446875007/>



**Tusawilla Art Park,
Ocala**



<https://www.ocala-news.com/2021/04/25/reflections-at-tusawilla-park/>



**Bonnet Springs Park,
Lakeland**



<https://www.wusf.org/arts-culture/2025-10-28/nicest-park-in-entire-country-downtown-lakeland>

A blue-tinted photograph of a tropical forest path. The path is paved and curves through a dense forest with large trees and lush undergrowth. The text "Feedback Session" is overlaid in the center in a white, serif font.

Feedback Session

05 Feedback

Project Feedback:

Please use the link below to access an online survey and provide feedback on the questions presented during the 1st Community Workshop held on June 30.

Instructions

Go to
www.menti.com

Enter the code

7693 3935



Or use QR code



Thank you!