

Annutteliga Hammock Project Surplus and Consolidation Strategy



Southwest Florida
Water Management District

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Project Overview

- Annutteliga Hammock is a 31,250-acre partnership acquisition project of the Florida Forever program, of which 12,231 acres have been acquired to date. The intent of the project is to provide for water quality protection of Chassahowitzka Springs and serve as a natural linkage between the Chassahowitzka Wildlife Management Area and Withlacoochee State Forest. With the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) as the lead agency, other acquisition partners include the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District), Hernando County, Florida Forest Service (FFS), Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and The Nature Conservancy.
- The District's acquisition area includes 8,489 acres, with 2,317 acres acquired to date. The majority of this area includes Royal Highlands, a platted subdivision consisting of half-acre to one-acre lots. The area is characterized by a lack of central water or wastewater services and contains an extensive network of unpaved, County-maintained roads.

Acquisition Challenges

- Beginning in 1998, the District acquired 2,164 acres in the project area. By 2005, significant real estate price escalation and concerns with managing the scattered nature of the project resulted in a temporary halt on acquisition.
- Approval of a smaller acquisition area allowed for continuation in 2007. This area provided for connectivity with adjacent public lands and generally corresponds to the Consolidation Regions identified on Exhibit 2. The revised approach allowed staff to proceed directly to the Governing Board with appraisals and acquisition for parcels not exceeding appraised value. An additional 153 acres were acquired until further acquisition ceased in 2010.

Management Challenges

- Effective long-term management of the project is increasingly difficult. Prescribed fire management of the small, non-contiguous parcels is precluded due to the immediate adjacency of private properties or structures. Security to discourage illegal dumping or unauthorized uses is labor and time intensive. Current land management activities focus on larger project tracts and consist of security, prescribed burning, resource monitoring, exotic species control, and public use/recreational development and monitoring.
- Changes by FDEP to the Florida Forever project boundary in 2011 eliminated properties with residential or commercial structures, mining or intensive agricultural operations, or those previously developed with infrastructure (i.e., water/sewer lines, paved roads). This removed 802 parcels (1,073 acres) from the District's project acquisition area and 2,970 parcels (3,667 acres) outside the area, reducing potential for meaningful connectivity with partner project lands to the south and east.

Strategy Recommendations

- *Identify parcels for surplus and retention* – Exhibit 1 depicts those properties within the Annutteliga Hammock project proposed for surplus, as well as those proposed for retention. Surplus activities for the identified parcels, to the extent practicable, should be undertaken in a prioritized phasing based on market and infrastructure considerations, as follows:
 - Phase 1 - Parcels adjacent to roads proposed for paving by Hernando County in Royal Highlands Units 6, 7 and 8 (Exhibit 3)
 - Phase 2 – Parcels in Country Estates and Florida Sunshine Farmettes and Royal Highlands Units 1B, 3, and 3B, which exhibit greater sales activity and/or are located in closer proximity to U.S. Highway 19 and community services (i.e., shopping, medical, etc.)
 - Phase 3 – Remaining parcels located within Royal Highlands Units 6, 7 and 8
- *Define areas for consolidation* - The Consolidation Region depicted on Exhibit 2 provides for connectivity with public conservation properties to the west and north. Acquisitions within this corridor may be considered in a prioritized manner once initial surplus efforts prove successful and could occur via purchase or in exchange (on an equal value basis) with other District-owned surplus parcels. Initial acquisitions, if pursued, should be emphasized within Priority Area 1 to consolidate that portion of the project located between existing public conservation lands. Acquisitions within Priority Areas 2 and 3 may be pursued, in that order, but are secondary to those within Priority Area 1.
- *Combine parcels for surplus to reduce impacts and competition with other property sales* – In an effort to reduce nitrogen loading within the Chassahowitzka springshed, contiguous District-owned parcels identified for surplus should be combined, where feasible and practicable, and sold or traded as one property. This would result in up to 587 smaller individual parcels being combined into up to 210 larger parcels (Exhibit 4). The combined parcels would be deed restricted (or other viable instrument) to one dwelling unit and the development envelope limited, thereby reducing potential septic and landscape nitrogen loading within the springshed. Combining parcels for surplus will result in creating a unique product, allowing for increased sales potential by those seeking a larger or atypical property within this geographic area. The unique nature of this product also serves to reduce direct sales competition with the numerous half-acre properties typical of this area.
- *Special provisions for larger surplus properties* – In order to afford enhanced water resources protection, additional provisions will be implemented as a condition of sale for those larger properties (20+ acres and greater) identified as surplus. Provisions may include, but are not limited to: 1) restrictions on the number of times each parcel can be subdivided to limit density; and/or 2) use of conservation easements, deed restrictions or other measures to limit the development envelope and uses on each parcel. The subject properties are located within either the Rural and Residential land use categories on the Hernando County Future Land Use Map (FLUM), with

two of the properties containing existing FLUM designations of Conservation. Zoning for the properties include either Agriculture or Residential (R1C). Pursuant to the Hernando County Comprehensive Plan, properties in the Rural category have an allowed density of up to 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres, whereas the properties in the Residential category are allowed up to 5.4 dwelling units per acre. Any proposed subdivision of these properties would be restricted to densities allowed by the FLUM, but will be limited by the District to a maximum of 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres, generally affording greater protections than the overlying FLUM designations.

- *Coordination with partner acquisition entities* – Given the partnership nature of the project, continue coordination activities with each of the identified project acquisition partners, including the FDEP, FFS, FWC, FDOT, Hernando County and The Nature Conservancy. Ongoing coordination with Hernando County is recommended relative to their engagement with citizens on District surplus activities, their long-range road paving initiatives and the proposed extension of Thrasher Road through to U.S. Highway 98.
- *Coordination with Hernando County on land use activities* – Several measures outlined in this strategy to address continued resource protection will require activities that are land use based in nature. These measures include, but are not limited to, use of plat vacations, replatting and/or rezoning for property consolidation, as well as use of deed restrictions or conservation easements to limit densities and/or development envelopes. Given Hernando County's specific authority for land use control, application of these measures will require close coordination with the County. As such, the District has initiated discussions with the County's Planning and Zoning staff for review and input on these options and will continue to coordinate with them to implement those measures most effective to achieving the objectives of this strategy.
- *Coordination with Public Affairs Bureau on strategy implementation* – The nature and extent of the proposed surplus effort warrants coordination with Public Affairs Bureau staff. They can assist in the development of messaging and other outreach that may be required for this unique, long-term surplus/consolidation project.
- *Initiate surplus activities* – Pursuant to direction outlined in this strategy, initiate disposition activities for the identified surplus parcels. Disposition of District-owned parcels should be considered available for, in priority order: 1) exchange with privately owned parcels starting with those located in the Priority 1 Consolidation Region; 2) sale to abutting property owners; or 3) sale on the open market as surplus. Exchanges should first be explored in order to not flood the market with additional properties, which could potentially further depress property values. Provisions of Chapter 373.089(4), F.S., provide Governing Board flexibility in addressing exchanges, with all such exchanges to occur on an equal value basis.
- *Continue to pursue changes to Chapter 373, Florida Statutes* – Changes to Chapter 373.089, F.S., proposed as part of SB 762 considered by the 2015 Florida Legislature did not pass. Such changes would have provided greater latitude to the District and other agencies in the disposition of smaller, lesser valued properties like

many of those within the Annutteliga Hammock project. The District will continue to pursue such changes in future years. In the interim, the District will continue to be efficient and flexible in its disposition of properties in accordance with existing Florida Statutes and District Governing Board policies and procedures, with an overall objective to fully recoup its investment in the project.

Exhibit 1

Annutteliga Hammock - Surplus Parcels and Parcels to be Retained

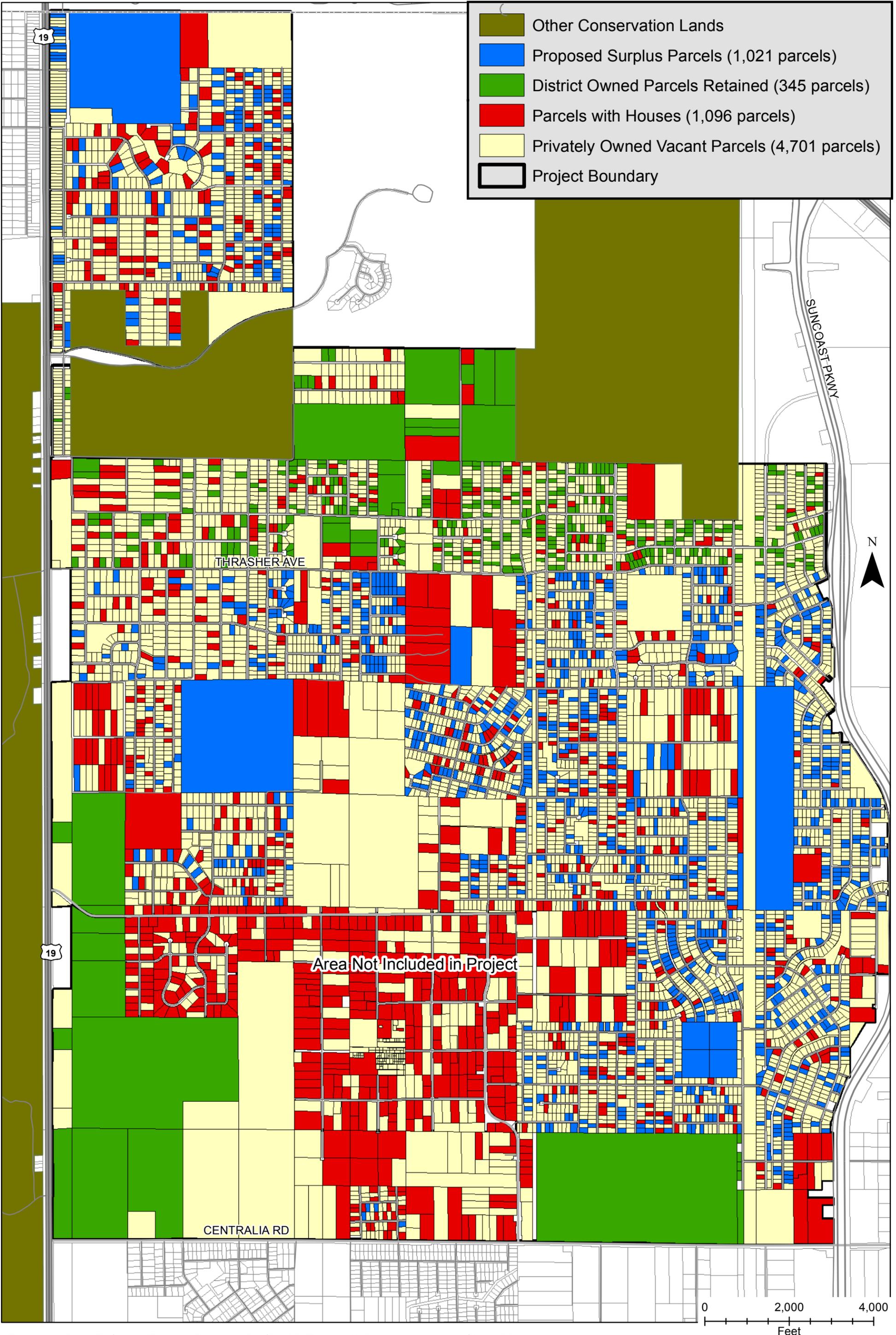


Exhibit 2

Annutteliga Hammock - Surplus Parcels and Consolidation Region Priority Areas

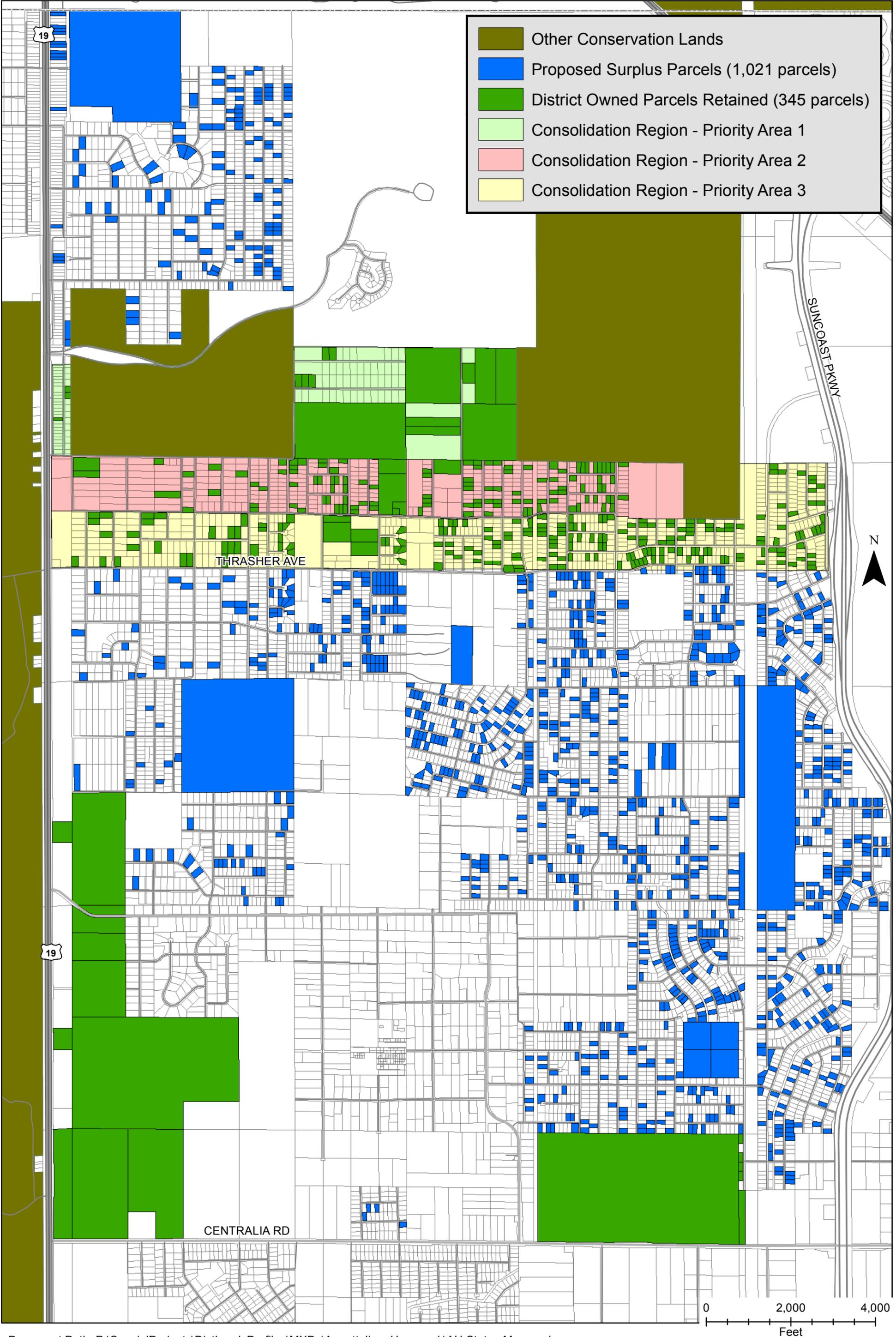


Exhibit 3 Annutteliga Hammock - Proposed Paving Areas

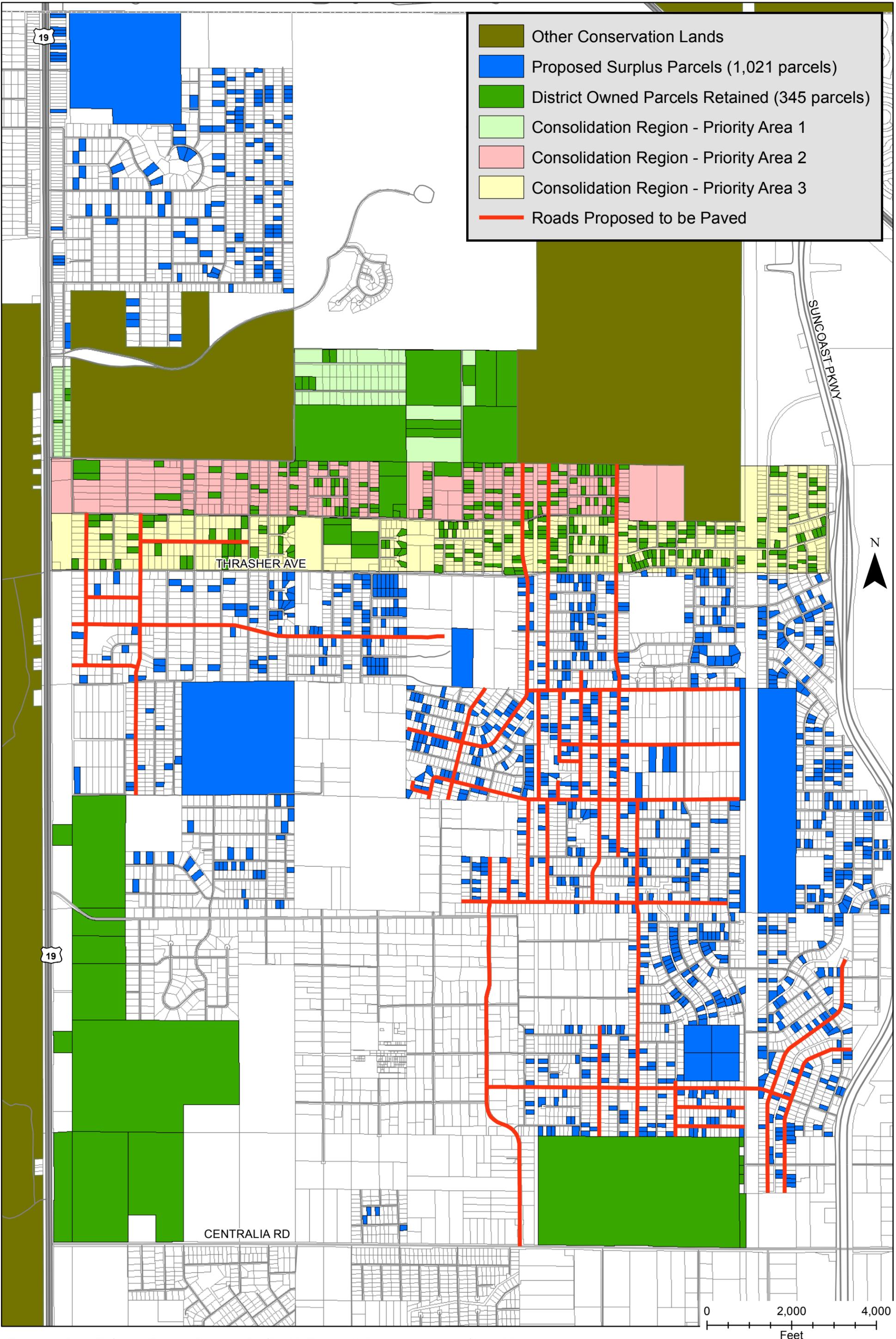


Exhibit 4 Annutteliga Hammock - Proposed Merged Parcels

