



North Port

FLORIDA





Land Acquisition Program for Environmentally Sensitive Lands

North Port Natural Resources Division

Environmental Advisory Board Meeting
December 1, 2025



Program Purpose

- Proactively identify, evaluate, and acquire environmentally sensitive lands.
- Preserve natural resources and support the ULDC and comprehensive plan.
- Enhance ecological integrity, public health, and community resiliency.
- Reduces flooding risks
- Preserves vital wetlands & habitats
- Uses the Environmental Protection Fund strategically



Why This Matters to North Port

- North Port's rapid growth increases strain on natural systems
- Flooding and water quality issues already cost residents and the city
- Preserving key parcels can reduce flood risks and infrastructure costs
- Balanced development = sustainable growth
- Offers economic benefits by increasing property values, attracting tourism, and reducing costs related to flood control and other environmental services.



Hurricane Ian -Flooding



Environmental and Economic Connection

Conservation = Cost Savings

- Natural flood protection reduces infrastructure costs
- Cleaner water = lower stormwater treatment expenses
- Green space increases nearby property values
- Investing in conservation enhances the community's quality of life by providing recreational spaces, improving air quality, and fostering a sense of connection with nature.
- Eligible for grants & FEMA resilience credits

Overview of Identified Ecological Zones

Zone 1:
31.11 Acres
7 Areas

Zone 2:
78.15 Acres
9 Areas

Zone 3:
45.09 Acres
4 Areas

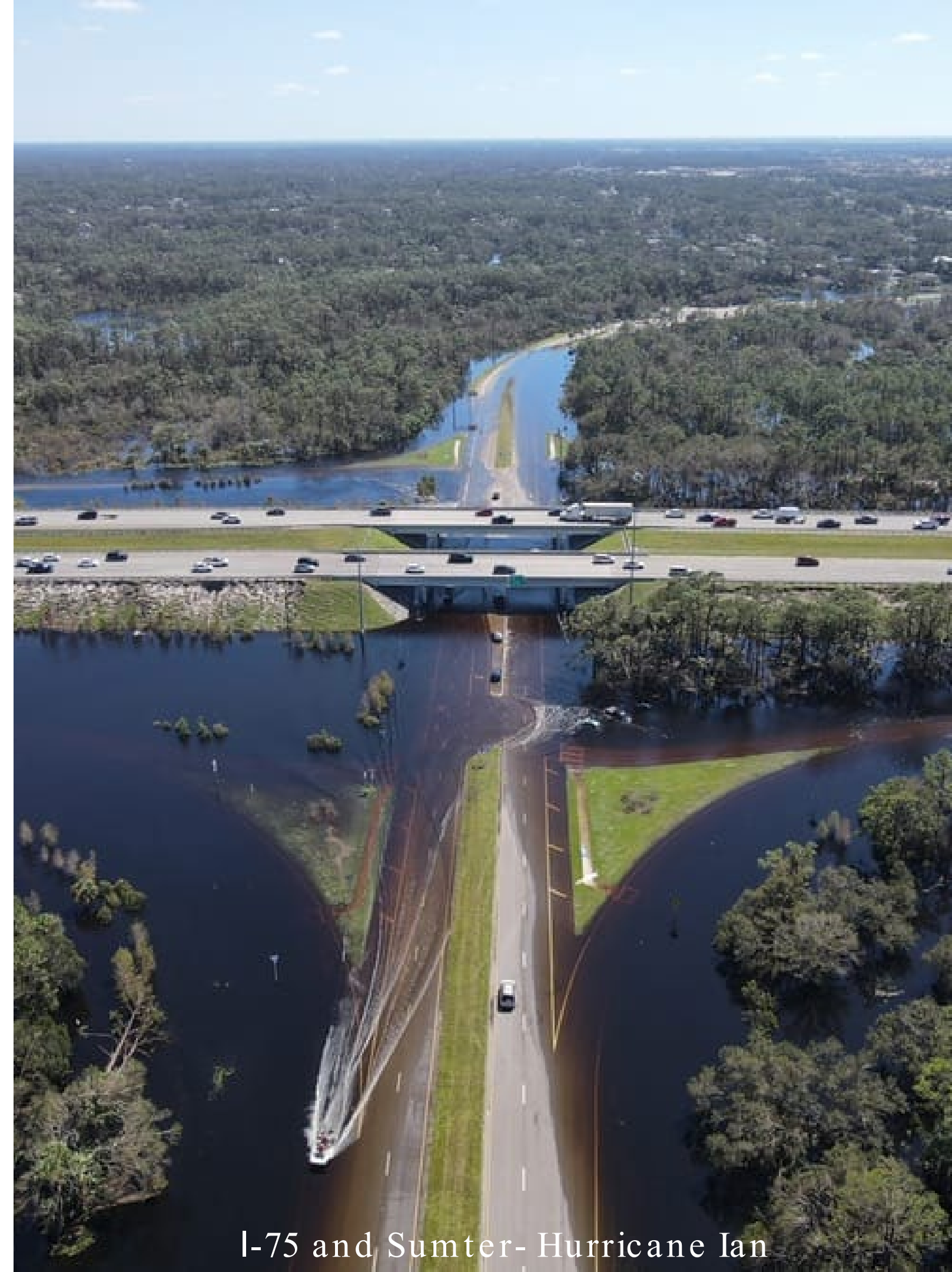


Zone 4:
45.09 Acres
2 Areas

Zone 5:
134.9 Acres
12 Areas

Benefits of Permanent Conservation

- Reduces the city's long-term flood management costs
- Protects water quality and aquifer recharge zones
- Maintains critical habitat for native and protected species
- Provides public green space opportunities
- Aligns with state and federal conservation initiatives
- Conservation land acquisition promotes biodiversity, protecting the ecosystems that support various species and ensuring a balanced natural environment for future generations.



I-75 and Sumter- Hurricane Ian



Funding Mechanism:

Funding Source: **Environmental Protection Fund**

- Dedicated to environmental projects
- Supports land acquisition, restoration, and protection
- Partner with Road and Drainage District when appropriate.
- Leverage State & Regional grants:
 - Florida Forever Program
 - FDEP Springs Restoration Grants
 - SWFWMD Cooperative Funding Initiative
 - Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
 - Federal climate resilience grants



Acquisition Strategy

Steps for implementation:

Nomination Process: Properties nominated by City staff, via GIS screening. Prioritize parcels based on flood, habitat, and connectivity values

Evaluation: Scoring based on ecological value, development threat, connectivity, size, and management feasibility.

Due Diligence: Conduct appraisals and willing-seller negotiations, title searches, environmental risk assessments, and site inspections.

Coordinate with conservation partners (state, NGOs, SWFWMD)

Approval: City Commission approval required.

Street Name/Lot #	Parcel ID	Assessed Value
		\$

	Lot Score	Multiplier	Composite Score
1) Gopher Tortoise Habitat		3	0
2) Scrub Jay Habitat		3	0
3) Other Species of Concern Habitat		2	0
4) Heritage Oaks Present		3	0
5) Other Trees of Concern Present		2	0
6) Overall Plant Coverage		2	0
7) Watershed Impact		3	0
8) Connectivity to other conservation land		2	0
9) Adjacent to Waterways/Retention Ditches		2	0
10) Neighborhood Green Space Need		2	0
11) Human Disturbance		1	0
12) Invasives Present		1	0
13) Within the floodplain		3	0

Composite Score Total			0
Lot size in Acres (.25, .50, 1.00, etc.)			
Lot cost			

Final Score (max 100.00)	0
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Currently listed with a realtor (yes/no)?		
Taxes, current or delinquent?		

Scorecard Guidelines

Categories	Scoring Guidelines
1) Gopher Tortoise Habitat	0= none, 1= non with future potential, 2=1-2 GTs, 3=inside zone, prior nesting present
2) Scrub Jay Habitat	0= outside zone, no presence, 1=outside zone, with presence, 2=inside zone, with presence, 3=inside zone with prior nesting presence
3) Other Species of Concern Habitat	0 = 0=no presence, 1=seen or heard in vicinity, 2=confirmed presence (ebird or ECNP records), 3=confirmed prior nesting; Northern Quail, Chuck-will's widow, Meadowlark, Burrowing Owl, Swallow-tailed kite
4) Heritage Oaks Present	0=none, 1=one, 2=two, 3= three or more, includes young trees with growth potential
5) Other Trees of Concern Present	0= none, 1=one or two, 2=three or four, 3= five or more; quantity and quality of sabal palms, slash pines, red maples, scrub oaks
6) Overall Plant Coverage	0=mostly open, 1=mix of vegetation and open areas, 2=heavily vegetated without diversity, 3=heavily vegetated with diversity, excludes invasives
7) Watershed Impact	0=dry, 1=partially wet during rainy season, 2=mostly wet during rainy season, 3=true wetlands
8) Connectivity to other conservation land	0=none, 1=located nearby, 2=adjacent to non-CNP conservation land, 3=adjacent to CNP owned land
9) Adjacent to Waterways/Retention Ditches	0=none, 1=located nearby, 2=adjacent to retention ditch, 3=adjacent to waterway
10) Neighborhood Green Space Need	0=large conservation land already present, 1=low need, 2=moderate need, 3=nigh need; includes biodiversity
11) Human Disturbance	0=high, 2=moderate, 3=none; includes bulk garbage, structures, disturbed vegetation, stored belongings, ATV trails
12) Invasives Present	0=high, 1=moderate, 3=none; includes Caesar's weed, potato vine, Brazilian pepper
13) Within the floodplain	0=no zone, 1= zone d, 2=outside SFHA, 3=high risk flood zone (Special Flood Hazard Areas-SFHAs)

Projected Community Benefits

- Reduced flooding in residential zones
- Improved water quality in Myakkahatchee Creek, Myakka River, and ultimately Charlotte Harbor
- Enhanced recreational and educational opportunities
- Strengthened city image as an environmentally responsible community
- Long-term cost savings





Alignment with City Goals

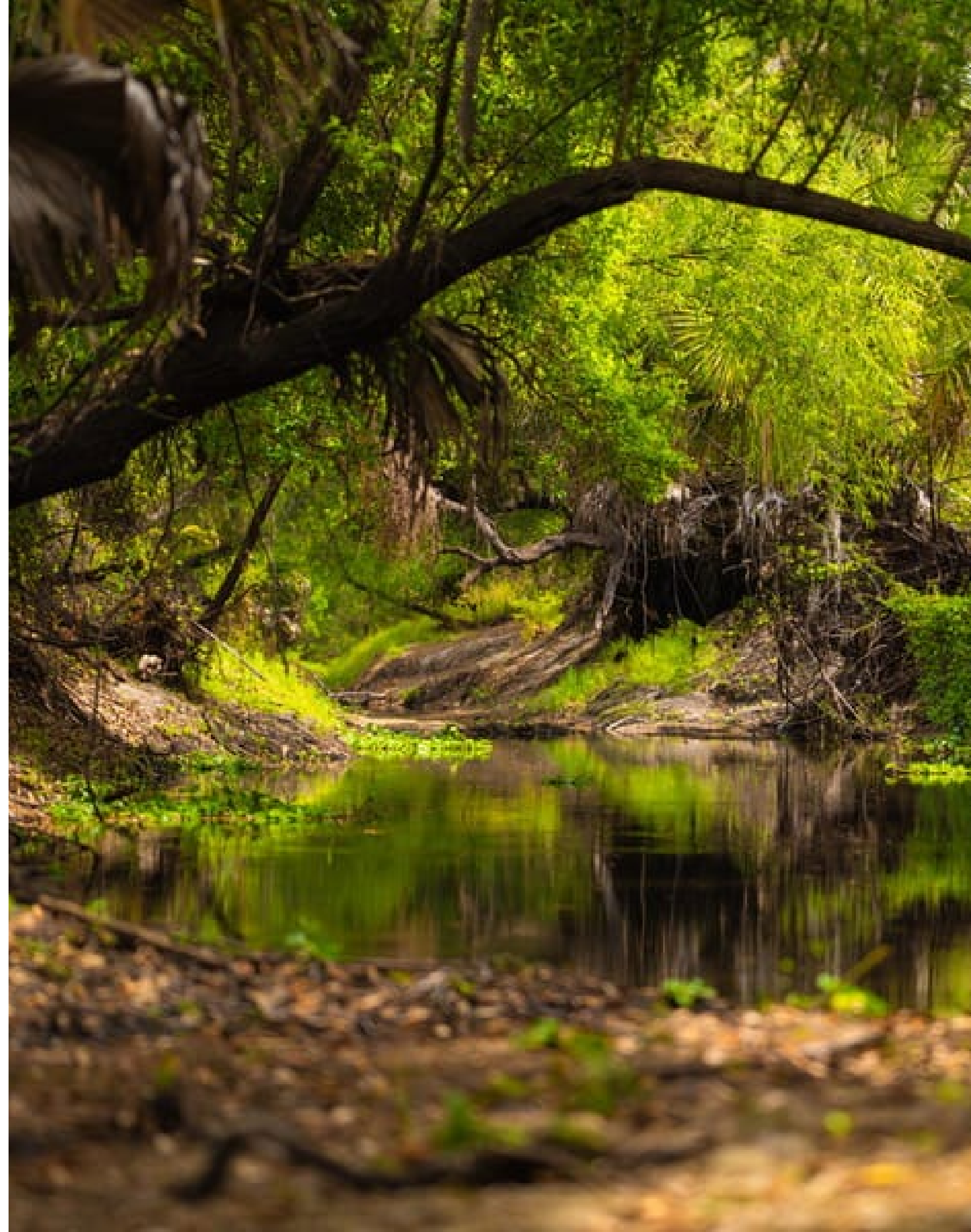
Supports:

- Comprehensive Plan (Conservation & Sustainability elements)
- Floodplain Management & CRS Program
- Community Resilience Planning

Case Study / Example

Case Study: Sarasota County Neighborhood Parkland Program

- Conserved/acquired over 110 properties and 41,000+ acres through conservation partnerships
- Reduced flood impacts & improved water quality
- Leveraged over \$30 million in grant funding
- Provides nature-based recreational areas (*Land Acquisition and Management Program | Sarasota County, FL, 2019*)



Commission Direction

Option 1 Staff Recommendation: Pursue Properties in Order of Ranking

Under this option, staff would pursue all parcels identified by the Natural Resources Division in order of their staff ecological ranking. Each acquisition would depend on the presence of a willing seller, the property's fair market value, and the availability of funding. If a property owner is unwilling to sell or requests a price above the appraised value, or if funding is insufficient, staff would move on to the next parcel on the list until all identified properties have been considered or available funding has been exhausted.





Option 2: Top 10 Properties

Under this option, staff would focus acquisition efforts on the ten parcels with the highest ecological value as identified by the Natural Resources Division. Efforts would be limited to these parcels unless no willing sellers are found. If none of the top ten parcels are available, staff would proceed down the ranked list in order of ecological value until funding is utilized.

Option 3: Floodplain, Wetlands, and Stormwater

Under this option, all parcels not containing wetlands, floodplains, or stormwater management potential would be removed from the acquisition list. The focus would be solely on properties that provide direct hydrological or flood mitigation benefits to the City.





Next Steps

- Initiate contact with willing property owners
- Complete appraisals per City Commission Policy 2023-01
- Present acquisition agreements for Commission consideration
- Advance partnership coordination and grant submissions
- Execute Year 1–2 implementation schedule focused on due diligence and feasibility

Call to Action

- A balanced approach to growth means protecting what makes North Port vibrant.
- Investing in natural infrastructure today prevents costly problems tomorrow.
- Collaboration with local environmental organizations to partner with land trusts





Thank you! Questions?