



UPDATED Northwood Parcels Proposal - **DRAFT**

Alliance of Tallahassee Neighborhoods (ATN)

January 2023

Introduction

ATN has updated its response to the City's request for community input on the Northwood property, now that plans for the police station have become more complete. We urge the City to retain the property for the good of our community and to develop a plan now for the rest of the site.

Our updated proposal enables the city to meet the needs and desires of citizens and staff both now and in the future. It reflects the public input provided to date and discussions with city commissioners and managers in city real estate, public housing, landscaping, traffic engineering, and law enforcement, as well as other experts.

Guiding Principles

1. The entire Northwood parcel should remain under city ownership.

Since Mayor Dailey first proposed purchasing the property at a city commission meeting on April 10, 2019, the guiding consideration was to control the destiny of the site, one of the last large tracts of land centrally located in the city, a lesson learned from a commission trip to Greenville, SC. As Mayor Dailey stated, the site could be "redeveloped as a workforce housing neighborhood that complements an elementary school, a middle school, and Levy Park.... In light of the fact that the city owns the dirt, **it gives us the opportunity to control the destiny of the property specifically to what is developed there.**"

Keeping Northwood and leasing portions of it will enable the City to meet both current and future needs. Now, we can build more affordable housing that we so desperately need. We can take advantage of space next to the police headquarters to provide related community services, such as restorative justice and supervised court-ordered child visitation space, in an environment that feels safe. We can play an active part in improving the North Monroe corridor. And, critically, we can provide the flexibility to address future needs, such as expanding the police station as the city grows or revamping the mobility hub as transit and travel patterns change.

Keeping the property is more far-sighted than selling it to meet the fleeting market needs of 2024. The City owns and leases other properties successfully, and leasing a property to the private sector keeps it in the tax base while controlling its tenants and use. This property's zoning allows about anything—all the more reason to own this parcel. Keeping Northwood would not recoup its modest cost, but will provide ongoing opportunities, and increased value over time.

2. We must take advantage of this golden opportunity for COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.

This is a large parcel, centrally located, and in close proximity to public schools, grocery and retail shops, and parks. It has been described as a site for not just a police headquarters, but for clearly identified and well-documented community needs: affordable and workforce housing, youth and community services, and positive use of needed storm water drainage. The Northwood site is a once in a lifetime opportunity to address these needs in creative, effective, and caring ways. This site is a call to community, not just a call to development.

3. To realize this opportunity, we need a public-oriented, creative, and guiding master plan.

We cannot let the property develop piecemeal. With a public-oriented and creative master plan, this property can become an exemplary model of integrated community spaces and services. We'll lose this potential synergy if we don't act before further decisions are made. Already the police headquarters was sited and roads laid without regard to what will be on the rest of the property. Going forward we need to create synergy among all the parcels, buildings, functions, designs, and neighborhood interconnections to maximize community use and development.

A good master plan will enhance not only onsite entities, but the neighborhoods and businesses around them. The plan should complement planning for the North Monroe corridor. Northwood is also one point of the "Community Services Triangle" concept that includes the Senior Center and current TPD property at Lake Ella. Planning should not be limited to the Northwood site but include the community-based opportunities and interrelatedness of nearby sites, including schools, grocery and retail stores, etc. For that, we need a comprehensive, integrated, and guiding master plan.

Our Vision

Overall, we envision Northwood as a campus-like environment, with interconnected public spaces, linked by shaded and well-landscaped wide walkways and islands of greenery, fountains, bike racks, and ease of movement from parcel to parcel. The site and individual parcels should meet community needs and provide appealing places to live, work, learn, and play. An inviting, exciting place!

In addition to police headquarters, we envision an activity center, affordable housing, a community resource center, a wildlife observation deck, and a transit hub on site. These buildings should meet the City's 2050 carbon neutrality goals.

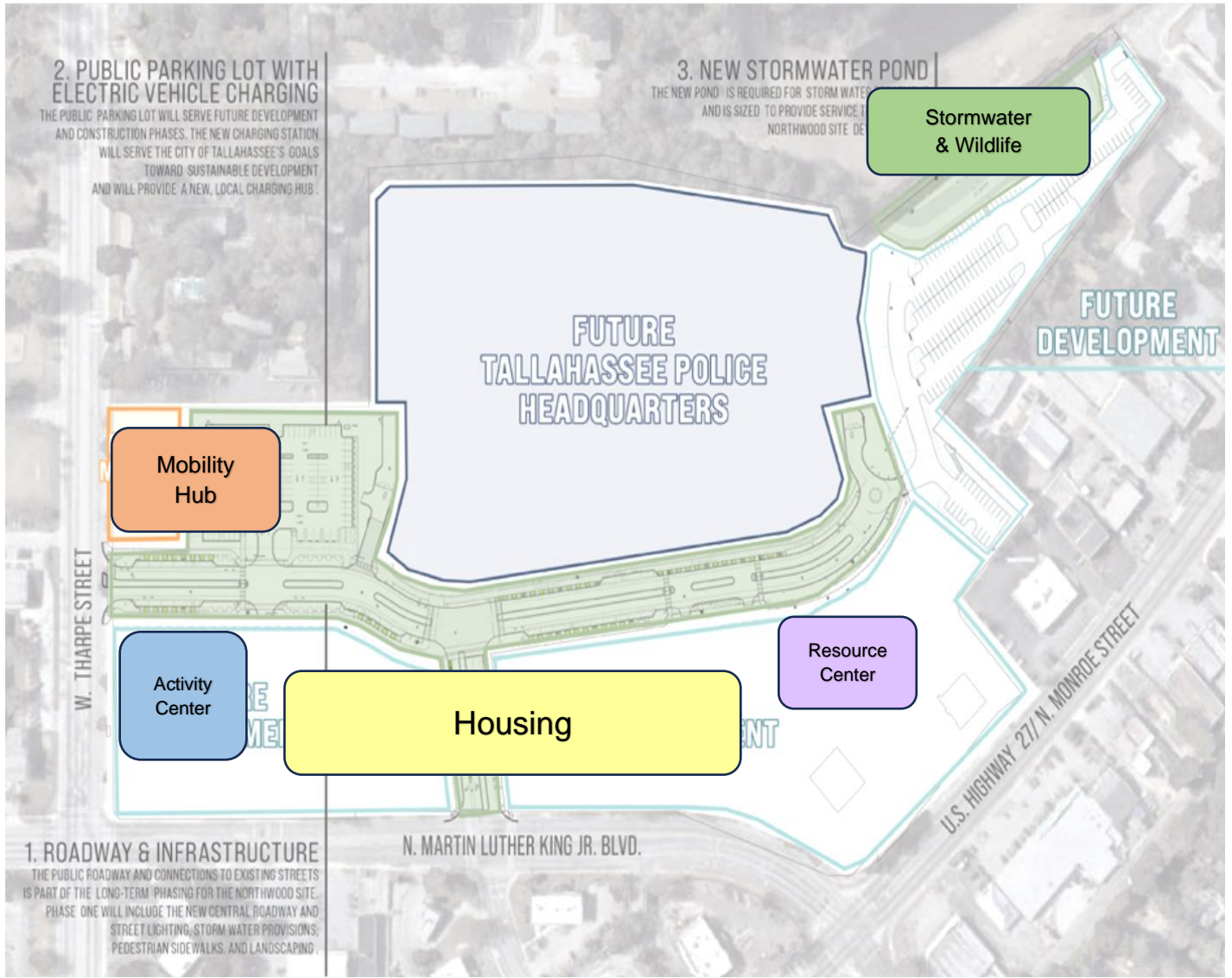
Designing the whole Northwood site as a campus will optimize its value, its contribution to public health and welfare, and its positive effect on the North Monroe corridor. The campus needs an engaging focal point that the whole community can enjoy. The options are unlimited- some ideas include sculpture, features children can play in such as splash pools, landscaping features such as a tree or special garden with seating, or a carousel. The City should engage community youth to help design the space and let planners know what they would like to see.

A graphic of this proposal is shown on the next page; of course, there are many ways to include these ideas in a campus landscape. We invite you to imagine what a city treasure this site can be.

Services could be offered by community-based agencies, etc. through partnerships and service agreements. Staging implementation of these community spaces and services will allow time to identify the roles and responsibilities of appropriate City departments and budget resources to build the structures and buy associated equipment and fund operations, staffing, and maintenance.

As construction may be phased in over time, the future footprints could serve as active spaces in the meantime and provide opportunities for additional activities. These could include, for example, raised gardens, picnic areas, small acoustic performance areas, walking and exercise trails with exercise stations, community gardens, outdoor art, food trucks, or a Farmer's and Artist's market space.

Parcel by Parcel Descriptions



Northwood Activity Center **Southern third of parcel 1, at Tharpe and MLK**

Parcel 1, across from Raa Middle School and Reudiger Elementary, is an ideal location for community activities center primarily oriented to children and youth. This center could function similar to the Sue McCullum Community Center, which hosts an afterschool program but uses the space at other times for other groups and activities, including those for adults. Like the Senior Center, rooms and spaces could be designed to serve multiple purposes, as shown below.

This center could be supported through agreements with the school district, the county library system, and city parks and recreation. It could be built to provide shelter or operations space in emergencies for the police department, the schools, or the community. The funding for this center could be scheduled for the future or it could be possible to work with the developers of the proposed adjacent housing to build this space.

Activities	Spaces
Sports and recreation; study hall, tutoring and classes, computer lab game rooms, arts and crafts rooms music, dance and yoga, and theater rooms quiet space and reading nooks	Gymnasium Room with mirrored wall Room with soundproofing Kitchen/ drink and snack room Rooms wired for many computers Classroom size and small meeting size rooms
Digital Information Library satellite	Storage space
Outside: gardening, recreation	Outside: Walking/Running Track around Building Drop off/ Pick Up Zone



Housing

Northern two-thirds of Parcel 1 and southern two-thirds of Parcel 2

Tallahassee has a desperate need for workforce and affordable housing. Mayor Dailey introduced the idea of buying the Northwood property by saying what a great place it would be for teachers and city employees to live, close to schools, groceries, a park, and buses. A housing development should be appealing, built to green standards, and integrated into the park-like environment of the site, with inviting walkways, benches, and spaces for public gathering and space that is quieter and more private.

By “affordable” we don’t mean high-end housing, with a few units reserved for those who pay less. We mean housing that individuals and families with low and middle incomes can afford.

The city should retain the land leverage it to lease it to developers to build and manage housing, with the leases reflecting the city’s vision for the property. With these two parcels, the city could allocate one parcel to workforce and the other to subsidized housing, or select a developer to lease both parcels for one kind of affordable housing.

TPD staff consider housing on this site to be compatible with the police headquarters. Many people may enjoy the safety of living near the police station.

And finally, the fact that commercial development along the North Monroe Street corridor is struggling is an indication that we should do something other than use the remaining Northwood parcel property for more individual commercial sites.



Northwood Resource Center

Northern third of parcel 2

The Community Resource Center would serve multiple purposes. The ground floor could be leased for a convenience store or small diner for those living on the site and police staff, or a daycare center. Taking advantage of the building’s proximity to the police station, the upper floors could be used for related community services, including restorative justice space, and supervised court-ordered child visitation and transfer space, in an environment that feels safe. It could also be used as a safe sales/exchange space for reuse, reduce, recycle.

Other social services and resources could also be provided here by community partners, such as career counseling, veteran assistance, or a Tempo branch office.

The space between the hub and existing restaurants could include a dog park, which would be helpful for the residences on-site and the broader community.

The master plan should also address the future use of property now leased by two restaurants.

Activities	Spaces
Restorative Justice/ Conflict Resolution	Large and small meeting/class rooms
Legal Aid	Small offices
Notary Service	Rooms for small groups or 1-on-1's
Career Education and Counseling Services and Referrals	Computer Lab/ Little Library
Job Search and Placement Services and Referrals	Kitchen/ drink and snack room
Volunteer Opportunities and Placement Services	Storage Rooms
Non-Profit Forums and Community Outreach	
Private Sector Forums and Community Outreach	Daycare Center for Program
Mental Health Counseling Services and Referrals	Participants; toddler playground
Social Work Services and Referrals	
Public Library Mini-Branch online Services	



Water Retention and Wildlife Observation Area

Parcel 3 (Northern interior parcel next to pond)

Assuming that this area will remain a parking lot, as shown on city drawings, we recommend integrating the four-story police department, the onsite housing, surrounding neighborhoods, and the drainage ponds area, by constructing a small structure on the edge of the outer-most pond for observation of the wildlife who already live there as a result of the original deep wet zone. The structure could be a beautiful tie to nature, for example with a roof like that of the new FAMU Way restroom, which is covered with a variety of growing native plants.

City drawings show the site’s north-south road and associated north parking lot ending at this point of the property. This is an important preventive measure to keep it from becoming a throughfare that adds more traffic to the already congested intersections with Monticello Road and to stop drivers from cutting through the Northwood, adding unrelated trips to the parcel.



Mobility Hub: Parking, Transit Pavilion, Drop Off and Pick Up

Parcel 4 (Tharpe)

Looking at the Community Services Triangle and Midtown as a whole, we believe it’s time to try again with a circulating trolley or jitney that allows neighbors to walk and ride and residents who live farther away to drive or bike and ride among the many destinations throughout Midtown, including the Senior Center, the Senior public apartments next to the Senior Center, the merchants of Midtown, the Grove, Lafayette Park, and Lake Ella. To that end, we recommend using parcel 5 to include parking (already included in the city’s paving plans) and a pavilion for trolley and bus riders. This could also include pickup/drop off space for Uber and Lyft and for parents, who currently use this area to pick up and drop off their kids for school. This mobility hub can be retooled as transportation evolves in the future.

Exterior Borders

Northwood’s borders are important both as transitions to other neighborhoods/activities and as attractive and inviting entries into the property. The perimeter sidewalks that run alongside the development should be widened to become promenades (such as those on Franklin Blvd.) They should be well-landscaped on both the road side and the development side. The plan could also include pedestrian bridges to facilitate safe passage between the Northwood campus and the schools, adjoining neighborhoods, the Publix Plaza and the laundry and nearby restaurants, and Levy and Lake Ella parks.

Development on the site should face into the property so as to encourage people to come into the campus. Care will need to be taken to site dumpsters and loading platforms so that they are masked. The view from the interior should be of inviting residences and community centers, and green space for pedestrians. We believe this will require a strong design code so as to create an inviting environment.