



**Agenda
Special Meeting
of the Mary Esther Local Planning Agency
June 2, 2025 - 5:30 PM**

195 Christobal Road – North, Mary Esther, FL 32569

1. **INVOCATION**
2. **CALL TO ORDER**
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
4. **ROLL CALL**
5. **ADMINISTRATION OF OATH TO THOSE PERSONS TESTIFYING**
6. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**
 - 6.1. **Consideration of transmittal of the City of Mary Esther Comprehensive Plan update for State Coordinated Review and first reading of Ordinance 2025-04**
7. **ADJOURN**

******* PLEASE TURN OFF OR SILENCE ALL CELL PHONES *******

VIEWING ONLINE

To watch the meetings virtually, citizens may log onto the city's website (www.cityofmaryesther.com), click the "Public Meetings" section, and select the meeting they would like to watch.

NOTES:

- 1) *Adjournment with continuation on the following day at 6:00 PM may be called if the meeting proceeds past 6:00 PM.*
- 2) *The City does not keep verbatim minutes as a matter of record. If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Local Planning Agency with respect to any matter considered at this meeting, he or she will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, he or she may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. See Florida Statute 286.0105*
- 3) *Any invocation that may be offered before the official start of the Local Planning Agency meeting shall be the voluntary offering of a private citizen, to and for the benefit of the Local Planning Agency. The views or beliefs expressed by the invocation speaker have not been previously reviewed or approved by the Local Planning Agency, and the Local Planning Agency is not allowed by law to endorse the religious beliefs or views of this or any other speaker.*

AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item 6.1.

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Tyler Reed, Community Development Director

DATE: June 2, 2025

SUBJECT: Consideration of transmittal of the City of Mary Esther Comprehensive Plan update for State Coordinated Review and first reading of Ordinance 2025-04

BACKGROUND:

The City of Mary Esther, in collaboration with the Emerald Coast Regional Council (ECRC), has updated its Comprehensive Plan, a foundational document that guides the city's long-term growth, development, and policy decisions.

In accordance with Chapter 163.3184(4)(b), Florida Statutes, the City of Mary Esther is transmitting its comprehensive plan update for State Coordinated Review. This submission is identified as an Evaluation and Appraisal-based Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

This amendment constitutes a significant update to the City of Mary Esther's Comprehensive Plan to address statutory changes, integrate findings from the City's Evaluation and Appraisal process, update the planning horizon, add a Property Rights Element, and align the comprehensive plan with current local conditions and community vision. The amendment revises various plan elements, including Future Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Infrastructure, Coastal Management and Conservation, Recreation and Open Space, Intergovernmental Coordination, Capital Improvements, Public School Facilities, and the addition of a new Property Rights Element, consistent with Chapter 163.3177, Florida Statutes.

Two public workshops were held. The first Public Workshop took place on December 11, 2024; the second was April 7, 2024.

DISCUSSION:

The updates to the Comprehensive Plan include:

- **Revised Format:** Enhancements to the structure and layout of the document to improve accessibility and usability for city officials, stakeholders, and residents.
- **Goals, Objectives, and Policies:** Revisions to these core components across all elements of the plan, reflecting updated priorities and emerging trends in urban planning, sustainability, and community development.
- **Property Rights Element:** The addition of this new element ensures compliance with recent legislative mandates, affirming the city's commitment to protecting property rights and balancing them with community interests. These updates are intended to provide a

modern framework for decision-making and planning, addressing current challenges and opportunities while laying the groundwork for a resilient, vibrant future for Mary Esther. Through this effort, the city aims to reflect the evolving needs of its residents and businesses while meeting state-mandated requirements for comprehensive planning.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no anticipated financial impact with the update of the Comprehensive Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

Motion to approve the transmittal of the City of Mary Esther Comprehensive Plan update for State Coordinated Review, and recommend a first reading of Ordinance 2025-04 to the City Council.

ATTACHMENT(S):

1. Transmittal Materials
2. Ordinance 2025-04, Comprehensive Plan Update
3. Ordinance 2025-04, Comprehensive Plan Update, Attachment A
4. Business Impact Statement
5. Mary Esther Comprehensive Plan Presentation

[CITY LETTERHEAD]

[Date]

Florida Department of Commerce
Division of Community Development
107 East Madison Street
Caldwell Building, MSC-160
Tallahassee, FL 32399-4120

Subject: Transmittal of Comprehensive Plan Amendment – City of Mary Esther
Comprehensive Plan Update (Evaluation and Appraisal Based Amendment)

Florida Department of Commerce:

In accordance with Chapter 163.3184(4)(b), Florida Statutes, the City of Mary Esther is transmitting its comprehensive plan update for State Coordinated Review. This submission is identified as an Evaluation and Appraisal-based Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

Amendment Name: City of Mary Esther Comprehensive Plan Update (EAR-Based Amendment)

Description: This amendment constitutes a significant update to the City of Mary Esther's Comprehensive Plan to address statutory changes, integrate findings from the City's Evaluation and Appraisal process, update the planning horizon, add a Property Rights Element, and align the comprehensive plan with current local conditions and community vision. The amendment revises various plan elements, including Future Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Infrastructure, Coastal Management and Conservation, Recreation and Open Space, Intergovernmental Coordination, Capital Improvements, Public School Facilities, and the addition of a new Property Rights Element, consistent with Chapter 163.3177, Florida Statutes.

Public Hearing Certification: The City certifies that all required public hearings have been properly advertised and conducted in compliance with Florida Statutes. The dates of the public hearings are as follows:

Land Planning Agency Public Hearing: June 2, 2025

City Council Transmittal Public Hearing: June 2, 2025

These hearings complied fully with notice and procedural requirements under Chapter 163.3184 and Chapter 166, Florida Statutes and the City of Mary Esther's ordinances.

Primary Contact Information:

For any questions or further information, please contact:

Tyler Reed
Community Development Director
City of Mary Esther
195 Cristobal Road N
Mary Esther, FL 32569
Phone: 850-243-3566
Email: treed@cityofmaryesther.com

Thank you for your assistance and timely review of this comprehensive plan amendment.
We look forward to receiving your comments.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Stein
Mayor, City of Mary Esther

Enclosures:

- Proposed Ordinance
- Comprehensive Plan Amendment Text (legislative format)
- Map Element
- Supporting Data and Analysis
- Completed Amendment Submission Checklist

cc:

Emerald Coast Regional Council, Kandase Lee
Northwest Florida Water Management District, XXXXXX
Florida Department of Transportation (District 3 Office) , XXXXXX
Florida Department of Environmental Protection, XXXXXX
Florida Department of State (Division of Historical Resources) , XXXXXX
Okaloosa County, XXXXXX
Eglin Air Force Base, XXXXXX
Hurlburt Field, XXXXXX

ORDINANCE 2025 - 4

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF MARY ESTHER, FLORIDA AMENDING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IN ITS ENTIRETY, PURSUANT TO 163.3184 (3), FLORIDA STATUTES, PROVIDING FOR STATUTORY CHANGES, UPDATING THE PLANNING HORIZON, ALIGNING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE, WITH CURRENT LOCAL CONDITIONS AND COMMUNITY VISION, AND INTEGRATING FINDINGS FROM THE CITY'S EVALUATION AND APPRAISAL PROCESS TO INCLUDE AMENDMENTS TO THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS: INTRODUCTION, DEFINITIONS, FUTURE LAND USE, FUTURE LAND USE MAP, TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING, INFRASTRUCTURE, COASTAL MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE, INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION, CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS, AND PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES, WITH THE ADDITION OF A NEW PROPERTY RIGHTS ELEMENT.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MARY ESTHER, FLORIDA:

SECTION 1 – AUTHORITY. The authority for enactment of this Ordinance is the City Charter, Section 163, Part II and Section 166.021, Florida Statutes and the adopted Comprehensive Plan.

SECTION 2 – PURPOSE. The purpose of the Ordinance is to amend the adopted Comprehensive Plan according to with Chapter 163.3184(4)(b),

1. Revises multiple plan elements, including: Future Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Infrastructure, Coastal Management and Conservation, Recreation and Open Space, Intergovernmental Coordination, Capital Improvements, Public School Facilities; and
2. Addresses statutory changes as required by Florida law.
3. Incorporates findings from the City's Evaluation and Appraisal process.
4. Updates the planning horizon to reflect future growth and development.
5. Adds a new Property Rights Element, in compliance with Chapter 163.3177, Florida Statutes.
6. Aligns the Comprehensive Plan with current local conditions and the community's vision.

SECTION 3 - FINDINGS OF FACT. The City Council of the City of Mary Esther, Florida, finds the following:

- A. Ensures consistency with state planning requirements and best practices; and
- B. The amendments will promote compact orderly development and discourage urban sprawl; and
- C. A Public Hearing precedent to final adoption of this Ordinance has been duly noticed and conducted by the City Council; and
- D. This Ordinance contains a set of amendments to the Comprehensive Plan which amendments are treated as a unit; and
- E. The amendments adopted hereby are the minimum necessary to conform the Plan to changes in law, changes in the rules governing local government comprehensive plans and changed conditions.

SECTION 4 – ADOPTION OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS.

The amendments shown and delineated in Attachment “A” to this Ordinance are hereby adopted and Attachment “A” is incorporated herein by reference.

SECTION 5 – SEVERABILITY. If any section, sentence, clause or phrase of this Ordinance is held to be invalid or unconstitutional by a Court of competent jurisdiction, then said holding shall in no way affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Ordinance.

SECTION 6 – EFFECTIVE DATE. The effective date of this Ordinance and the Plan Amendments contained herein shall be 31 days after the Florida Department of Commerce notifies the City that the plan amendment package is complete, if the amendments are not timely challenged. If timely challenged, this Ordinance and the Amendments shall become effective on the date the Florida Department of Commerce or the Administration Commission enters a final order determining the amendments to be in compliance.

So Done this _____ day of _____, 2025.

By: _____

Chris Stein, Mayor

City of Mary Esther, Florida

ATTEST:

Dillon Morris
City Clerk

1st Reading:

Published:

2nd Reading:

THE CITY OF MARY ESTHER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN INTRODUCTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Purpose and Scope

The City of Mary Esther Comprehensive Plan provides the official framework for guiding growth, development, and resource conservation. This Plan balances economic vitality, environmental stewardship, and community needs, while meeting Florida's statutory requirements. Through its Goals, Objectives, and Policies (GOPs), the Plan ensures that Mary Esther:

- Manages infrastructure and growth efficiently;
- Protects and enhances public spaces and natural resources;
- Coordinates with local, regional, and state goals; and
- Promotes community participation and transparency.

Legal Authority and Framework

This Plan is adopted under Chapter 163, Part II, Florida Statutes, known as the Community Planning Act, and complies with relevant state requirements. It is implemented locally through the City's Land Development Code (LDC), concurrency management system, and other development regulations.

Historical Context

Mary Esther's first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1990, with subsequent revisions to address changing conditions and periodic Evaluation and Appraisal Reports (EARs). This 2025 updated incorporates recent legislative changes, updates key data, and integrates findings from the 2024 Vision Plan process.

Public Participation

The City of Mary Esther held public forums on December 11, 2024 and April 7, 2025 as part of the Comprehensive Plan update process. This forum provided an opportunity for residents, stakeholders, and community leaders to review and discuss preliminary findings and proposed policies. The forum was designed to ensure that the community's voice continues to shape the future of Mary Esther, building on the extensive public involvement that occurred during the development of the Mary Esther Community Vision Plan, issued in July 2024.

Administration and Oversight

The City Council, sitting as the Local Planning Agency (LPA), prepares and adopts the Comprehensive Plan, monitors its implementation, and ensures compliance with state law. The City Manager (or designee) oversees daily administration and coordinates concurrency management to confirm that necessary infrastructure and services are available.

Concurrency Management

Mary Esther’s concurrency requirements align development approvals with the capacity of public facilities, including roads, potable water, sanitary sewer, solid waste, stormwater, and recreational facilities. Before permits are issued, each project must demonstrate that it meets or will not exceed adopted levels of service (LOS).

Organization of the Plan

I. Introduction & Implementation

II. Goals, Objectives, and Policies (GOPs)

- A. Future Land Use Element
- B. Transportation Element
- C. Housing Element
- D. Infrastructure Element
- E. Coastal Management and Conservation Element
- F. Recreation and Open Space Element
- G. Intergovernmental Coordination Element
- H. Capital Improvements Element
- I. Public School Facilities Element
- J. Property Rights Element

III. Data and Analysis (Supporting Documentation)

- A. Future Land Use Element
- B. Transportation Element
- C. Housing Element
- D. Infrastructure Element
- E. Coastal Management and Conservation Element
- F. Recreation and Open Space Element
- G. Intergovernmental Coordination Element
- H. Capital Improvements Element
- I. Public School Facilities Element
- J. Property Rights Element

IV. Map Element

Implementation

Implementation

To ensure the Comprehensive Plan remains effective and responsive, the City will conduct an annual goal-setting session in conjunction with its Capital Improvements planning. During this session:

1. Staff Progress Report

- City staff will present accomplishments, challenges, and relevant data from the previous year, including concurrency status, capital project updates, and any legislative changes affecting the Plan.

2. City Council Review and Prioritization

- The City Council will review staff findings, assess progress toward Plan objectives, and set priorities for the upcoming year. This may occur during a regularly scheduled Council meeting or a special session dedicated to long-range planning.

3. Capital Improvements Coordination

- The annual goal-setting session will coincide with the City's update of the Capital Improvements Element. Proposed infrastructure projects must align with the Plan's Goals, Objectives, and Policies, as well as available funding sources and concurrency requirements.

4. Public Engagement

- Notice will be provided to residents and stakeholders. The public will have opportunities to comment on proposed priorities or highlight emerging issues. Any additional outreach methods—such as open houses or surveys—shall be selected based on community needs and available resources.

5. Plan Amendment Consideration

- If Council identifies areas needing formal updates—whether to reflect new data, address emerging development trends, or incorporate legislative changes—staff will initiate amendments according to state procedures.

Through this structured, annual review and goal-setting process, the City of Mary Esther will maintain a dynamic, responsive Comprehensive Plan that consistently reflects community values and state policy directives.

DEFINITIONS

The definitions found in Chapter 163, Part II, F.8. are hereby adopted by reference.

RULES OF CONSTRUCTION: In the interpretation and construction of this Plan, the following definitions and rules of construction shall be observed, unless they are inconsistent with the manifest intent of the City Council or the context clearly requires otherwise.

Unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, singular words include the plural, person or man includes both genders and words not otherwise defined shall have those meanings commonly and customarily ascribed to them and as can be found in any standard dictionary reference books.

Gender: Words or phrases in the masculine gender include the feminine and vice-versa.

Singular/Plural: Words in the singular include the plural and vice-versa.

Shall/May: The word "shall" is mandatory and the word "may" is permissive.

Written or in writing: "Written" or "in writing" includes any representation of words, letters, or figures in the English language, whether by printing or otherwise and may include representations using electronic media.

Year: Year means 12 consecutive months or a 12-month calendar year.

Day: Day means a 24-hour calendar day.

Boundaries: Where uncertainty arises or exists as to the boundary lines for zoning districts, land use categories, or other geographically described area within this Plan, the following criteria apply:

Boundaries indicated as approximately following the centerlines or rights-of-way of streets, highways or alleys shall be construed to follow such centerline or right-of-way.

Boundaries indicated as approximately following platted lot or parcel lines shall be construed as following such lines.

Boundaries indicated as approximately following City limit line shall be construed as following such lines.

Boundaries indicated as following shorelines of water bodies will follow mean high water or ordinary high-water lines, as applicable.

Definitions Adopted by Reference: The definitions found in Chapter 163, Part II, Florida Statutes, are hereby adopted and incorporated herein by reference. Should there be a conflict with any definition included herein in the Statute, the definition in the Statute

prevails. In addition, words not otherwise defined shall have those meanings commonly and customarily ascribed to them and as can be found in any standard dictionary books.

DEFINITIONS: The following words or phrases shall have the meaning herein described:

Abut means to physically touch or border upon, or to share a common property line.

Accessory use means a use of land or structure or portion thereof customarily incidental and subordinate to the principal use of the land or structure and located on the same lot or parcel.

Adjacent to a protected environmentally sensitive area means any location within 50 feet of the boundary of any protected environmentally sensitive area, whether the location is on or off the development site.

Adult congregate living facility shall be as defined in Florida Statutes (F.S. 429.01 - 429.54.).

Adversely affected person means any person who is suffering or will suffer an adverse effect to an interest protected or furthered by the City's Comprehensive Plan, including but not limited to interests related to health and safety; police and fire services; densities or intensities of development; transportation facilities; recreation facilities, equipment or services; and environmental or natural resources. The alleged adverse effect may be shared in common with other citizens of the City, but must exceed in degree the general interest for community good that is shared by all citizens of Mary Esther.

Affordable housing means housing for which monthly rents or mortgage payments, including taxes, insurance, and utilities, do not exceed 30 percent of the median adjusted gross annual income for families or individuals in the City, which adjusted annual median income is periodically established by the State and/or Federal government.

Appurtenant structure means a structure which is on the same parcel or lot as the principal structure and where the use of said structure is incidental to the use of the principal structure.

Area of shallow flooding means a designated AO, AH, or VO zone on the flood insurance rate map, with base flood depths from one to three feet, where a clearly defined channel does not exist, where the path of flooding is unpredictable, and where velocity flow may be evident.

Area of special flood hazard include all areas designated on a flood hazard boundary map as zone A or a flood insurance rate map as zones A, AO, AH, AI-30, AE, A99, VO, or VI-30, VE or V. The relevant flood hazard boundary map and flood insurance rate maps, and any revisions thereto, are adopted by reference and declared to be a part of this Plan.

Arterial road means a roadway providing service which is relatively continuous and of relatively high traffic volume, long trip length, and high operating speed. In addition, every United States numbered highway is an arterial road.

Associated wetlands means any wetland that is adjacent or contiguous to waters of Santa Rosa Sound and which has a direct hydrologic connection to such waters and is regulated by the Army Corps of Engineers or the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Base flood means the flood having a one percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year.

Basement means that portion of a building having its floor below ground level on all sides.

Bicycle and pedestrian ways means any road, path or way which is open to bicycle travel and travel afoot (labor intensive transportation) and from which motor vehicles are excluded.

Building means a structure created to shelter any form of human activity and includes house, garage, shed, parking lot, store, business, warehouse, among others.

Clearing means the removal of trees and brush from land, not including mowing of grass or routine landscape maintenance.

Coastal high-hazard area means the area below the elevation of the category 1 storm surge line as established by a Sea, Lake, and Overland Surges from Hurricanes (SLOSH) computerized storm surge model

Collector road means a roadway providing service which is of relatively moderate traffic volume, moderate trip length and moderate speed. Collector roads collect and distribute traffic between local roads or arterial roads.

Concurrency means a condition where specified facilities and services have or will have the necessary capacity to maintain the adopted level of service standard at the time of impact of a development project.

Density and gross density mean the total number of dwelling units divided by the total site area, less public right-of-way.

Detention means the collection and storage of surface water for subsequent gradual discharge.

Developer means any person, including a governmental agency, undertaking any development.

Development is as defined in Section 163.3221 (4),(a), (b) and (c), Florida Statutes.

Development controls means standards in this Plan and/or the Land Development Code which control the development or use of land and which are in addition to the densities, intensities, and uses assigned to land by the Future Land Use Map or Zoning District Map.

Drainage detention structure means a structure which collects and temporarily stores storm water for the purpose of treatment through physical, chemical, or biological processes with subsequent gradual release of the storm water.

District means a geographically definable area possessing a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, objects or areas which are united historically by plan or physical development.

Dwelling unit means a single housing unit providing complete, independent living facilities for one housekeeping unit, including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation.

Flood and flooding mean a temporary, partial or complete inundation of normally dry land from the overflow of inland or tidal waters, or from the unusual and rapid accumulation of runoff or surface waters from any source.

Flood hazard boundary map (FHNM) means the map issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency showing flood prone areas. Draw from the United States Geological Survey maps, it does not provide flood elevations.

Flood insurance rate map (FIRM) means the official map issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency showing both the area of special flood hazard and the risk premium zones within the City.

Floodplain means land which will be inundated by floods known to have occurred or reasonably characteristic of what can be expected to occur from the overflow of inland or tidal waters and the accumulation of runoff of surface waters from rainfall.

Floodway means the channel of a natural stream or river and portions of the floodplain adjoining the channel which are reasonably required to carry and discharge the floodwater of flood flow.

Floor area ratio (FAR) is a means of determining intensity of land use. FAR is calculated by multiplying the area of a parcel or lot by the applicable FAR established in this Plan. The result is the maximum allowable square footage of a building or buildings on a site or parcel. For the purposes of calculating the FAR, the area includes all land within the parcel or site, including easements, which easements may restrict the location of permanent buildings or structures. NOTE: The FAR establishes the maximum potential intensity which may be allowed on any particular site, however all other limits, regulations or restrictions (setbacks, parking, open space, etc.) apply to all development and may result in the maximum intensity potential being unattainable.

Gross floor area means the sum of the gross horizontal areas of the several floors of a building measured from the exterior face of exterior walls, or from the centerline of a wall separating two buildings, but not including interior parking spaces, loading space for motor vehicles, or any space where the floor-to-ceiling height is less than six feet.

Highest adjacent grade means the highest natural elevation of the ground surface adjacent to a wall or surface.

Hotel means a commercial establishment providing lodging and, usually, meals and other services for the public, especially for travelers.

Impervious surface means a surface that has been compacted or covered with a layer of material so that it is highly resistant to infiltration by water. It includes, but is not limited to, semi-impervious surfaces such as compacted clay, as well as conventionally surfaced streets, roofs, sidewalks, parking lots and other similar structures.

Improvement means any manmade, immovable item which becomes part of, is placed upon or is affixed to real estate.

Local road means a roadway providing service which is of relatively low volume, short average trip length or minimal through traffic movements, and high-volume land access for abutting property.

Lot means a designated parcel, tract or area of land established by subdivision or as otherwise allowed by law.

Lowest floor means the lowest enclosed floor of a structure, including a basement, but not including the floor of an area enclosed only with insect screening or wood lattice as permitted by the flood damage prevention regulations.

Manufactured home means a structure, transportable in one or more sections, which is built on a permanent chassis, designed to be used with or without a permanent foundation and connected to the required utilities. The term also includes park trailers, travel trailers and similar transportable structures placed in use (other than for sale) on a site for 180 consecutive days or longer.

Manufactured housing has the following features or characteristics: Produced or mass produced in a factory; designed and constructed for transportation to a site for installation and use when connected to required utilities; and either an independent, individual building or a module for combination with other elements to form a building on the site.

Mean sea level means the average height of the sea for all stages of tide. For purposes of this Plan, the term is synonymous with National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD).

Motel means a hotel intended primarily for those traveling by car, usually with easy access to each room and convenient access from each room to an area for cars.

Multifamily dwelling means any residential structure containing two or more separate dwelling units.

Natural systems mean systems which predominantly consist of or are used by those communities or plants, animals, bacteria and other flora and fauna which occur indigenously on the land, in the soil or in the water.

Occupant, applied to a building or land, means any person who holds a written or oral lease of or actually occupies the whole or part of such building or land, either alone or with others.

Ordinary maintenance means work that does not require a construction permit and that is done to repair damage or to prevent deterioration or decay of a building or structure or part thereof as nearly as practicable to its condition prior to the damage, deterioration or decay.

Owner means a person who, or entity which, alone, jointly or severally with others, or in a representative capacity (including without limitation, an authorized agent, attorney, executor, personal representative or trustee) has legal or equitable title to any property in question, or a tenant, if the tenant is chargeable under his lease for the maintenance of the property.

Parcel means a unit of land within legally established property lines.

Planning and zoning board, local planning agency and **board of adjustment** mean the City Council or such agency or body as the Council may designate to act in its stead.

Protected environmentally sensitive area means an area designated for protection in the Coastal Management and Conservation Element of this Plan.

Protected wellhead means a wellhead with a permitted capacity of 100,000 gallons per day or more.

Public grounds means the parks and all public land owned or leased by the City, County (including the School Board), State or Federal governments and those parts of public places which do not form traveled parts of streets as defined.

Rate means volume per unit of time.

Regulatory floodway means the channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be unobstructed in order to discharge the base flood without increasing the water surface elevation of that flood more than one foot at any point.

Retention means the collection and storage of runoff without subsequent discharge to surface waters.

Runoff coefficient means the ratio of the amount of rain which runs off a surface to that

which falls on it, a factor from which runoff can be calculated.

Sediment means the mineral or organic particulate material that is in suspension or has settled in surface water or groundwater.

Significant adverse effect means any modification, alteration or effect upon a protected environmentally sensitive area which measurably reduces the area's beneficial functions as delineated in the Coastal Management & Conservation Element of this Plan.

Single-family dwelling means a structure containing one dwelling unit, and not attached to any other dwelling unit by any means. A single-family unit may contain an accessory apartment.

Site means any tract, lot or parcel of land or combination of tracts, lots or parcels of land that are in one ownership, or in diverse ownership but contiguous and under unified control, and which are to be developed as a single unit, subdivision or project.

Storm water means the flow of water which results from, and that occurs immediately following a rainfall.

Storm water management system means the system, or combination of systems, designed to treat storm water, or collect, convey, channel, hold, inhibit or divert the movement of storm water on, through or from a site.

Storm water runoff means that portion of the storm water that flows from the land surface of a site either naturally, in manmade ditches, or in a closed conduit system.

Street includes avenues, boulevards, highways, roads, alleys, lanes, viaducts, bridges, and the approaches thereto, and all other public thoroughfares in the City, and shall mean the entire width thereof between abutting property lines.

Structure means anything constructed or erected with a fixed location on the ground or attached to something having a fixed location on the ground. Among other things, structures include buildings, mobile homes, billboards and signs.

Surface water means water above the surface of the ground, whether or not flowing through definite channels. The term includes any natural or artificial ponds, and it includes streams, channels, ditches and similar features in which water flows in a definite direction and which has a definite channel bed or banks.

Vehicle use area means an area used for circulation, parking or display of motor vehicles, except junkyards.

Water's edge shall be determined by the location of the ordinary (average annual) high water line or high tide line.

Wellhead protection area means a diameter of 200 feet around a potable water well site where no other land use is permitted.


Wetland means land that is inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and under normal circumstances does or would support, a prevalence of vegetation, typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. For the purposes of this Plan, wetlands shall be those areas so designated and regulated by either the Army Corps of Engineers of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection or both.

Wetland's edge means the landward boundary of hydric soils or wetland vegetation, based on the wetland vegetation index and as determined by a regulatory agency or competent survey.

ELEMENT A - FUTURE LAND USE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Pursuant to Section 163.3177(6)(a), F.S., the following represents the Future Land Use Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the City of Mary Esther. In addition to statutory requirements, the Goals, Objectives, and Policies were developed in keeping with the character, conditions, both environmental and social, and desires of the community. Goals, Objectives, and Policies are intended to address the establishment of a long-term end towards which the land use programs and activities of the community are ultimately directed.

The included Future Land Use Map Series is, by reference, made a part of this Ordinance including all future amendments, revisions, and updates. The Future Land Use Map Series may be amended by following the requirements in Florida Statutes Section 163.3184.



GOAL A1

Manage and regulate land uses, locations, and densities to ensure the promotion, protection, and improvement of public, health safety, and welfare of the residents of the City of Mary Esther.

Objective A1-1 - Coordinate future growth and development with the appropriate topography, soil conditions, and availability of facilities and services to protect the public health, safety, and welfare through the adoption, implementation, and enforcement of land development regulations.

Policy A1-1a - The City's Land Development Regulations shall be maintained in the City's adopted Land Development Code (LDC).

Policy A1-1b - The LDC shall contain specific and detailed provisions to implement this Ordinance including, as a minimum, the following:

- a. Regulation of the subdivision of land (reference Article 2, Section 13 – Land Development Code);
- b. Regulation of the use of land by zoning districts which implement the land use categories shown on the Future Land Use Map (reference Chapter 21 - City Code);
- c. Ensure compatibility of adjacent land uses (reference Chapter 21 - City Code);
- d. Provide for open space (reference Element F of this Ordinance);
- e. Protect potable water wellfields and sources (reference Policy E2-2a);

- f. Regulation of areas subject to seasonal or periodic flooding (reference Policy A1-5c);
- g. Continue to provide for drainage and storm water management (reference Objectives D3-1 and D3-2);
- h. Protect the environmentally sensitive lands designated within this Ordinance (reference Policy E2-3c);
- i. Continue the regulation of signage (reference Article 16 of the City’s LDC); and
- j. Ensure adequate, safe, and convenient on-site traffic flow and parking (reference Policy B1-1b).

Policy A1-1c - The LDC, adopted pursuant to Policy A1-1a, shall include regulations that implement the following future land use categories, consistent with the Future Land Use Map (FLUM). These categories establish the maximum densities and intensities of development permissible within the City and provide standards for compatibility with adjacent uses.

Low Density Residential

Description: This category accommodates predominantly single-family detached residential uses on individual lots. Typical uses include homes with accessory structures (e.g., garages), limited home-based occupations subject to the LDC, and neighborhood-scale amenities including churches and daycares.

Density: Up to five-point-five-one (5.51) dwelling units per gross acre.

Historic Duplex Cottage District

Description: This category reflects the historic use of these properties as predominantly historic single-family detached, cottage, or duplex residential uses. It is the intention of the City to preserve these uses and allow for the reconstruction of similar dwellings. The LDC will include appropriate setbacks and design standards. Limited home-based occupations subject to the LDC may be appropriate.

Density: Up to ten (10.0) dwelling units per gross acre. Density may not exceed the existing number of dwellings per lot as of adoption of this ordinance (2025) by more than two (2) additional dwellings.

Medium Density Residential

Description: This category accommodates a range of residential uses

including single-family attached or detached units, duplexes, and small-scale multi-family developments. Typical features may include townhouses, low-rise apartments, and comparable housing types. Height limits and site design standards shall be set in the LDC.

Density: Up to ten (10) dwelling units per gross acre.

High Density Residential

Description: This category allows more intensive residential development, including multi-family complexes and taller residential structures, subject to compatibility standards in the LDC. Typical features include multi-story buildings with shared amenities, such as parking structures and communal recreational areas.

Density: Up to twenty (20) dwelling units per gross acre, unless otherwise specified for certain sites or projects.

Commercial

Description: This category accommodates retail, office, service, and other business activities to serve residents and visitors. Typical features include shopping centers, offices, restaurants, and other commercial uses. Compatibility measures in the LDC shall address buffering, traffic impacts, and transitions to nearby residential areas.

Intensity: Governed by a maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of one-point-nine-two (1.92), unless stricter requirements apply.

Mixed Use

Description: This category allows a combination of residential and commercial uses within the same structure or on the same site.

Density: Up to twenty (20) dwelling units per gross acre for the residential component.

Intensity: Commercial uses governed by a maximum FAR of one-point-nine-two (1.92).

Standards: A typical mixed-use project may involve multiple buildings or a single structure with commercial uses on lower floors and residential uses on upper floors. Where properties abut lower-density neighborhoods, compatibility must be demonstrated through setbacks, buffers, building orientation, and similar methods. The LDC shall establish specific design criteria to ensure orderly transitions from lower to higher densities.

For multiple uses within one or more buildings, the required distribution of uses shall be approximately sixty-five percent (65%) residential and thirty-five percent (35%) commercial, based on the gross square feet of the proposed building(s). For multiple uses on the same property but contained in single use buildings (all residential or all commercial in separate structures), the percentage distribution shall be based on the gross acreage of the subject property.

Development of any property in this category shall be as a Planned Unit Developments (PUD) and the Planned Mixed Development District (PMDD), which are development types and zoning districts. The rezoning phase of the approval process shall be considered simultaneously with a Comprehensive Plan amendment to place the property in this mixed-use category. Property owners considering use of this category should review and be familiar with the provisions of Section 7.15.06 (Planned Unit Development District) and Section 7.15.07 (Planned Mixed Development District) of the City's Land Development Code.

Conservation

Description: This category preserves and protects environmentally sensitive lands such as wetlands, floodplains, and other natural habitats. Very limited development is permitted, typically restricted to passive recreation, habitat conservation, and essential infrastructure that cannot be located elsewhere. All development or alterations must comply with federal, state, and local environmental regulations, including provisions for wetland protection and flood damage prevention.

Public Lands

Description: This category includes lands owned, leased, or operated by governmental entities (local, state, or federal). Permitted uses include public buildings, administrative offices, schools, libraries, emergency services, and related public facilities.

Recreation

Description: This category supports public and private recreational facilities. Development within this category shall emphasize open space, public access, and environmental protection where necessary. Permitted uses include parks, playgrounds, sports fields, greenways, and other recreational spaces.

Policy A1-1d - The City shall establish the following two Special Overlay Districts to address unique redevelopment and preservation needs in targeted areas. The Future Land Use Map shows the areas, and the LDC shall include regulations for the following

two overlays:

Town Center Overlay

Purpose: Guide the redevelopment of large commercial properties, such as the Santa Rosa Mall site, into a mixed-use town center with a coordinated mix of commercial, residential, office, and civic uses.

Density and Intensity: May allow higher residential densities and Floor Area Ratios (FARs) than base zoning, as specified in the LDC, with the development of an appropriate master plan which responds to community goals. These goals include pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, gathering spaces for public use, landscaping, and buffering where the district abuts lower-intensity uses.

Soundside Overlay

Purpose: Provide flexible renovation and redevelopment options for a historic residential neighborhood with a high concentration of nonconforming lots and structures. It is the intention of the City that the historic mature tree canopy located within the Soundside overlay be afforded additional protections.

Flexibility Provisions: The LDC will be modified to provide specific solutions which may include general relaxation of dimensional requirements, accessory structure siting, and fencing regulations, an administrative process to grant relief of up to fifty percent (50%) of dimensional requirements, and the creation of a Special Use permit process for modifications greater than fifty percent (50%), while continuing to rely on variances only when appropriate.

Administrative approvals will be used for only minor renovations or expansions that maintain both life-safety standards and neighborhood character. Special Use permits will be used for substantial changes that satisfy compatibility requirements.

Policy A1-1e - The LDC will include standards for buffering of incompatible uses and provision of open space and recreation.

Objective A1-2 - The City of Mary Esther shall enforce its Concurrency Management System within the LDC to ensure that facilities and services needed to support development are available concurrent with the impacts of such development.

Policy A1-2a - Prior to the issuance of a development permit (order), the system shall ensure that the adopted level of service standards in this Ordinance for potable water, sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, and recreation will be maintained. The Mary Esther City Administration together with the City Council shall be responsible for ensuring

compliance with the Concurrency Management System and shall report on such compliance to the City Council on an annual basis concurrent with the annual Comprehensive Plan review and goal setting process described in this Ordinance. The City Manager, or his or her designee, will be responsible for the four (4) primary tasks which are described below. The four tasks are:

- 1) Maintaining an inventory of existing public facilities and capacities or deficiencies;
- 2) Determining concurrency of proposed development which does not require City Council approval;
- 3) Providing advisory concurrency assessments and recommending conditions of approval to the City Council for those applications for development orders which require City Council approval; and
- 4) Reporting the status of all public facilities covered under this system to the City Council and recommending a schedule of improvements for those public facilities found to have existing deficiencies.

Policy A1-2b - The City administration will collect and make available to the public information on various facilities. The information shall be updated on an annual basis. The information will contain data such as: design capacity of wastewater and potable water facilities and the identification of any deficiencies within such systems; the existing and adopted levels of service standards for water and sewer systems; any programmed improvements to the facilities either by the City or the private sector; the design capacity for solid waste facilities including transfer stations and landfills; existing and proposed level of service standards for stormwater management systems; and existing and proposed provisions of recreation and open space facilities by the City or the private sector. It should be noted that this is not an all inclusive list of guidelines for use in the concurrency management system; rather it is indicative of the types of information to be contained within the LDC and the method and manner of administering the LDC.

Policy A1-2c - The City will coordinate establishing level of service (LOS) standards for the above-named facilities with State, regional, or local entities having operational and maintenance responsibility for such facilities.

Policy A1-2d - No development activity may be approved unless it is found that the development is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and that the provision of the public facilities enumerated in Policy A1-2b above will be available at prescribed levels of service concurrent with the impact of the development on those facilities.

Policy A1-2e - As a minimum, the concurrency management system will ensure that at least one (1) of the following standards will be met prior to issuance of a development order:

- 1) The necessary facilities and services are in place at the time a development permit is issued; or
- 2) A development permit is issued subject to the condition that the necessary facilities and services will be in place when the impacts of development occur; or
- 3) The necessary facilities are under construction at the time a permit is issued; or
- 4) The necessary facilities and services are the subject of a binding executed contract for the construction of the facilities or the provision of the services at the time that the development permit is issued. NOTE: This provision only relates to parks and recreation facilities. The LDC will include a requirement that the provision or construction of a facility or service must commence within three (3) years of the issuance of the development order or permit and that required parks and recreation facilities needed to serve new development are in place or under actual construction within one (1) year of issuance of a development order or permit; or
- 5) The necessary facilities and services are guaranteed in an enforceable development agreement. An enforceable development agreement may include, but is not limited to, development agreements pursuant to Section 163.3220 F.S. or an agreement or development order issued pursuant to Chapter 380 F.S. Any such agreement shall include provisions pursuant to paragraphs 1, 2 or 3 above.

Policy A1-2f – The provisions of Policy A1-2e above, notwithstanding the prescribed levels of service for any system or systems, may be degraded during construction of new facilities if, upon completion of the new facilities, the prescribed LOS will be met and maintained.

Policy A1-2g - The construction of any development project may be phased or staged so as to coincide with the phased or staged construction of infrastructure facilities so that the levels of service for such facilities are maintained upon completion of each phase or stage of the development project.

Policy A1-2h - The Land Development Code (LDC) shall designate the appropriate City official(s) having responsibility for determining that levels of service are met and will be maintained prior to issuance of a development permit. The City may place the burden of demonstrating compliance upon the developer or applicant. In order to be approved, applications for development shall provide sufficient information showing compliance with LOS standards.

Policy A1-2i – LDC shall include quantitative methods for determining levels of service that exist and which may be impacted by any particular development application. In addition, the LDC will fully describe the process necessary for a finding of compliance with levels of service.

Policy A1-2j – The LDC shall include standardized quantitative data which is to be used in determining the impact of any proposed development upon the public facilities and services within the City (roads, drainage, potable water, sanitary sewer, solid waste, and recreation and open space). Applications for development approval shall include the projected impact upon public facilities and services upon occupancy or use of the proposed development. Any deviation from the standardized criteria within the LDC must have the prior approval of the City Council before such data may be used for determining or projecting impacts of the proposed development.

Objective A1-3 - The City shall continually encourage and support the redevelopment and renewal of blighted or under-utilized areas.

Policy A1-3a - The City shall direct its Community Development Block Grant efforts to those areas within the City demonstrating greatest need. Greatest need shall be defined as those areas meeting the program requirements identified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Policy A1-3b - The LDC shall contain requirements for new development to utilize existing water, sewer, and solid waste collection systems in order to discourage urban sprawl and encourage commercial re-development.

Policy A1-3c - New development will be located in conformance with the categories shown on the Future Land Use Map and with the following standard:

- a. New commercial development shall locate on arterial roadways and along Hollywood Boulevard, West.

Objective A1-4 - The City shall encourage and provide for the elimination or reduction of uses inconsistent with the community's character and future land uses. Regulations necessary to implement the policy standards shall be included within the LDC.

Policy A1-4a - The LDC shall contain provisions to eliminate expansion of non-conforming land uses which are inconsistent with the Future Land Use Map or the City's Zoning Ordinance.

Policy A1-4b - The LDC shall contain provisions which ensure that all future development is consistent with accepted planning practices and principles as well as natural area limitations. The provisions (regulations) will address items such as conservation of resources, efficiency of use and development, aesthetic appeal, and short- and long-term impacts of proposed development plans.

Policy A1-4c - Expansion or replacement of land uses which are inconsistent or incompatible with the Future Land Use Map shall be prohibited (also, see Policies A1-1c, A1-1d, and A1-3c).

Policy A1-4d - The City shall continue enforcement of the limitations placed on non-conforming uses of buildings, non-conforming uses of land, changes in use classifications in districts, and restoration and occupancy of damaged buildings as delineated in Chapter 21 of the City Code as a means to eliminate expansion of non-conforming land uses which are inconsistent with the Future Land Use Map.

Objective A1-5 - The City shall continually ensure the protection of natural and historic resources.

Policy A1-5a - The LDC shall contain provisions that promote the natural functions of identified wetlands, and wetlands enhancement projects will be encouraged or required where appropriate. Note: Appropriate is defined as any time a proposed development impacts and degrades an identified functioning wetland. Development or redevelopment activities which impact the identified functioning wetland within the City will not be approved unless the project plans provide for the continuation of the natural functions of the wetland and/or enhancement of the wetland's characteristics. Approval by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection will be required.

Policy A1-5b - The LDC shall include regulations that control the extraction of natural resources, and such extraction shall be permitted only when in conjunction with construction projects. Such extractions shall be conducted so as to retain the resource upon completion of the construction. Note: The extent of resource retention will be defined within the approved development orders or development permits issued to any particular project or site.

Policy A1-5c - The City shall adopt or maintain a flood ordinance that meets or exceeds the minimum requirements promulgated by FEMA for participation in the National Flood Insurance Program.

Policy A1-5d - The LDC shall include provisions which will require identification and preservation of significant archeological and/or historic sites or structures within the City. Significant is defined as any site listed on the Florida Master Site File as developed and maintained by the Office of the Secretary of State.

Policy A1-5e - The LDC shall contain regulations which must be followed any time a proposed development may impact a historic site within the City. Protection of these sites will be accommodated through regulations contained within the LDC. The regulations will be developed in cooperation with the Office of the Secretary of State, Division of Historical Resources. The regulations will include requirements which provide for the cessation of land disturbing activities any time artifacts with potential historical significance are revealed during construction activities on any site with potential historical significance. The purpose of the cessation is to allow time to determine the significance of any artifact or historical evidence found on the site. The cessation may be lifted upon such determination. Normally, determination will be made by those approved to make

such determination by the Office of the Secretary of State, Division of Historical Resources.

Objective A1-6 - Coordinate coastal area population densities with the Okaloosa County Hurricane Evacuation Plan (reference Element E of this Ordinance).

Policy A1-6a - Population density shall be limited to those limitations reflected on the Future Land Use Map and as described in Policy A1-1c.

Policy A1-6b - The City shall promote, to the extent possible, improvements to the critical roadway segments delineated in the Okaloosa County Hurricane Evacuation Plan.

Objective A1-7 - The City shall discourage the proliferation of urban sprawl by encouraging redevelopment consistent with the Future Land Use Map upon adoption of this Ordinance.

Policy A1-7a - The City shall prioritize its Capital Improvements funding in a manner that generally assigns first priority to the renewal and replacement of obsolete or worn-out facilities in order to provide infrastructure capacity necessary for private sector development or redevelopment activities (reference Policy H1-1c of this Ordinance).

Policy A1-7b - The City shall encourage the rehabilitation and reuse of governmental facilities, structures, and buildings as the preferred alternative to new construction (reference Policy H1-1d of this Ordinance).

Policy A1-7c - The City shall use its fiscal resources to encourage "infill" development.

Policy A1-7d - Public facilities and services shall be located to minimize their costs, minimize their impacts on the natural environment, and maximize their efficiency. Impacts on the natural environment and efficiency of proposed public facilities shall be considered and delineated by the City (or its professional consultants, i.e., engineers) during the design phase of any public facility. Cost for such facilities shall be estimated by the City (or its consultants) and finally determined pursuant to the City's bid process for the acquisition or construction of public facilities or services. Impacts on the natural environment, efficiency of public facilities, and cost considerations shall be determined in advance of project construction for those projects conducted by the City using its own forces or the forces of others (reference Policies B1-1f, B1-1g, B1-5a, D1-2a, D1-2b, D2-1b, D2-1c, D3-2a, D3-2b, E1-1c, E1-1e.).

Objective A1-8 - The City shall ensure the availability of suitable land for utility facilities necessary to support proposed development through provisions within the LDC or acquisition of land by the City (reference Policies A1-1a and B1-5a).

Policy A1-8a - The City shall include land acquisition within its Capital Improvements

Element (reference Element H) and within its Capital Improvements Program when necessary to provide for public lands for utility facilities.

Policy A1-8b - The City shall continue to require dedication of adequate rights-of-way pursuant to Chapter 21 of the City Code for use as roadways and by utilities for extensions or improvements.

Objective A1-9 - The LDC shall allow and encourage the use of innovative land development techniques including, but not limited to, provisions for planned unit developments and cluster housing (reference Policy A1-1a of this Ordinance and Chapter 21 of the City Code).

Policy A1-9a - The City shall continue to promote and encourage the use of the planned unit development technique enacted within Chapter 21 of the City Code.

Policy A1-9b - The LDC shall include provisions which, at a minimum, contain:

- a. Density, lot coverage requirements, and height variations through the provision of two or more zoning districts designed to implement the commercial and planned unit development categories;
- b. Sight and sound buffers between residential uses and more intensive uses;
- c. Planned unit developments and planned mixed developments shall be encouraged to include local or neighborhood convenience facilities within such developments; and
- d. The LDC will contain provisions pursuant to Policy B1-1b.

Planned Unit Developments (PUD) and the Planned Mixed Development District (PMDD) are both development types and zoning districts.

Policy A1-9c - The City shall identify and pursue the most effective public-finance mechanisms to catalyze private reinvestment, public-realm upgrades, and infrastructure improvements in the Town Center Overlay and other priority redevelopment areas designated by the City. These may include but are not limited to Community Revitalization Areas or other techniques enabled by Florida Statutes.

Objective A1-10 - Provide for and locate schools in a coordinated manner ensuring that the planning and construction of educational facilities are coordinated in time and location concurrent with need, necessary services and infrastructure, and to ensure consistency with this comprehensive plan. Note: No new schools are anticipated to be located within the City of Mary Esther during the planning period (through 2045). There are no available vacant lands with sufficient acreage to accommodate a new school within the City. However, should conditions change and developed property becomes available to the school district, the

following policies and provisions will apply.

Policy A1-10a - Public, Charter, and private schools are permitted in all land use categories shown on the adopted Future Land Use Map, except the Conservation category, consistent with the following criteria:

- a. The proposed school location shall be compatible with existing and projected uses of adjacent property;
- b. The location, arrangement, and lighting of play fields and playgrounds shall be such that adverse impacts to adjacent residential properties are minimized;
- c. Public facilities and services are, or will be, available with sufficient capacity to maintain the adopted level of service (LOS) for each facility or service upon completion of construction of the school;
- d. The proposed school location contains no significant environmental constraints that would preclude development of an educational facility (or facilities) thereon;
- e. There will be no adverse impacts to archaeological or historical sites or structures listed on the State of Florida Historic Master Site File or to any sites designated by the City Council as having locally significant historic or archaeological value;
- f. The proposed location contains soils and topographic features that are suitable for development or are adaptable for development and outdoor educational purposes;
- g. The proposed location is of sufficient size to accommodate required parking and internal circulation;
- h. Where feasible, the proposed site is so located to allow for co-location with parks, libraries, and community centers;
- i. The proposed location is not within the area regulated by Section 333.03(3), Florida Statutes, regarding the construction of educational facilities under approach and departure paths of aircraft using airports, including Hurlburt Field; and
- j. New middle schools and high schools shall be located on, or be directly accessible from, a collector or arterial roadway.

Policy A1-10b - Pursuant to the provisions of Objectives G1-1 and G1-2 and Policies G1-1a, G1-1b, and G1-2c, the City shall continue to coordinate activities with the Okaloosa County School Board and such coordination shall include the procedures and notification/response requirements, as well as all other relevant provisions related to planning and coordination, contained in Chapter 163, Part II and Chapter 235, Florida

Statutes.

Objective A1-11 - Ensure the continual compatibility of development and redevelopment activities with the military missions associated with Eglin Air Force Base (AFB) and Hurlburt Field.

Policy A1-11a - Within established Military Influence Planning Areas (MIPA), all artificial lighting equipment (fixtures) shall be shielded with positive optical control so that all light emitted is projected below a horizontal plane extending from the bottom of the fixture. No building permit will be issued within the established MIPAs unless this requirement is met.

Policy A1-11b - Buildings and towers shall not penetrate the approach, transition, horizontal, or conical surfaces associated with Eglin AFB in a manner which would obstruct aircraft operations, navigation, or line-of-sight communications. Applications for any structure potentially inconsistent with this policy must be accompanied by a statement from the Commander of Eglin AFB, or his or her representative, that the proposed structure would not interfere with the Air Force mission.

Policy A1-11c - The City will not issue any building permits that include applications for communications equipment operating within the 5.4-to 5.9-GHz bandwidth so as to avoid military radio frequency interference unless prior approval is received from the military. Any application for such equipment or frequency shall be provided to the designated military representative on the Local Planning Agency (LPA) for consideration and a determination as to whether mitigation or other actions may be sufficient to allow the issuance of a permit. Also, the City will make available to the public educational material on radio frequency interference provided by the Air Force.

Policy A1-11d - Consistent with the introduction of this Plan and Policy G1-2c, the City will provide the military representative on the LPA all information related to Plan amendments, rezonings, changes to the land development regulations, and/or potential development orders just as is provided all other members of the LPA. Any comments or objections of the Air Force shall be carefully considered by the City prior to taking final action on any such matter. In the case of Plan amendments, such comments or objections also shall be provided to the State Land Planning Agency and shall be considered by the City just as the comments or objections from other reviewing agencies are considered.

ELEMENT B – TRAFFIC CIRCULATION ELEMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Pursuant to Section 163.3177 (6)(b), F.S., the following represents the Transportation Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the City of Mary Esther. In addition to statutory requirements, the Goals, Objectives, and Policies were developed in keeping with the character and desires of the community to create an efficient traffic circulation pattern and plan for all modes of transportation.



GOAL B1:

Provide a safe, cost effective and functional roadway and transportation system for all residents and visitors to the City of Mary Esther.

Objective B1-1 - Continually provide for safe, convenient, efficient, and cost-effective motorized and non-motorized traffic circulation, with emphasis on pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, neighborhood safety, and traffic calming, to support a walkable and livable community.

Policy B1-1a - The City hereby adopts level of service C as the minimum operating level of service for local roads within the City.

Policy B1-1b - All new developments, including, but not limited to, planned unit developments, shopping centers, multi-family residential projects, and other projects with internal circulation and parking needs shall be required to provide safe and convenient on-site traffic flow, labor intensive transportation facilities, and sufficient vehicular parking to accommodate the needs of the development. Said provisions shall be delineated within the LDC.

Policy B1-1c - All new road construction projects within the City shall accommodate active transportation. Such accommodation may include the installation of signage, striping of roadways, widening of shoulders, installation of bike racks, installation of sidewalks, installation of bicycle and wheelchair ramps at intersections with curb reveal of two (2) inches or more, and the like.

Policy B1-1d - The LDC shall contain regulations which control the installation of future connections and access points of driveways to arterials and collector roads so as to facilitate safe and efficient access to and from the arterial and collector roads. The regulations shall include distance requirements between new curb cuts, driveways, and

the like. The distance shall be 500 feet.

Policy B1-1e - Coordinated access routes (service roads) shall be encouraged for developments adjacent to major roadways within the City. The LDC shall define those developments which will be required to provide coordinated access routes as a condition of development. All developments adjacent to major roadways will be encouraged, through the plan review process, to provide coordinated access routes.

Policy B1-1f - The LDC shall contain regulations which provide for all future developments to pay all costs and construct all roads within the development to City standards so that the roads, upon construction, may be accepted into the City's road system (reference Objective H1-4).

Policy B1-1g - The City shall prioritize its maintenance and reconstruction activities pursuant to Policy H1-1c together with any cost/benefit analysis, traffic safety analysis, and analysis of the physical conditions of the various roadways within the City. Said analyses may be performed by the City or others. If performed by others, the manner and methods of analyses must be approved by the City.

Policy B1-1h - The City shall evaluate and implement traffic-calming measures (e.g., speed tables, narrowed lanes, enhanced lighting) on local and collector streets where traffic speeds endanger pedestrians or create hazardous conditions. Prioritization shall be guided by crash data, speeding complaints, proximity to schools and parks, and coordination with the Emerald Coast Regional Council's High Injury Crash Network.

Objective B1-2 - Maintain and design function of roadways for present and future residents upon adoption of this Ordinance.

Policy B1-2a - The following peak hour (30th highest hour) level of service standards for arterial and collector roads within the City are hereby adopted:

- (a) Hollywood Boulevard (C.R. 602) through the city: LOS - E
- (b) S.R. 393 (Mary Esther Cut-Off) from S.R. 30 to city limits (north): LOS - E
- (c) S.R. 30 (U.S. 98) from Hurlburt Field to city limits (east): LOS - D
- (d) All other arterials and collector roads: LOS - D

The above level of service standards were established in cooperation with the Florida DOT and the Okaloosa-Walton TPO.

Policy B1-2b - The City will include right-of-way protection provisions within the LDC.

Policy B1-2c - The City will continue to support the Okaloosa County EC Rider and EC

Dial-A-Ride systems. Such support may include, but is not limited to, a link on the City's website for the EC Rider schedule and the inclusion of information (brochures) with utility bills so as to inform the citizens of Mary Esther of opportunities for system use.

Policy B1-2d - The City will coordinate with FDOT and the Okaloosa County School District to alleviate congestion on Highway 98 near the Mary Esther Elementary School, including exploring an entryway realignment from Hollywood Boulevard to incorporate a safe and efficient carpool queue.

Objective B1-3 - Coordinate the traffic circulation system with the future land uses shown on the Future Land Use Map Series upon adoption of this Ordinance.

Policy B1-3a - All land use decisions shall be consistent with the Future Land Use Map and the Traffic Circulation Map.

Policy B1-3b - The City shall continue its practice of providing or requiring the provision of active transportation systems to link residential areas with recreational and commercial areas in a safe manner.

Policy B1-3c - As part of the annual Comprehensive Plan review and goal setting process, staff shall evaluate City traffic volumes and system demands in order to monitor and identify impacts of new growth.

Policy B1-3d - The City Manager, or his or her designee, shall review all plans and proposals for development or redevelopment within the City by using the Future Land Use Maps and the Future Traffic Circulation Maps adopted herein. The review shall include a determination of consistency with the maps. Note: The review is not limited to the map series but must include the map series.

Policy B1-3e - The City shall facilitate a waterfront-access feasibility study in coordination with private property owners, FDOT, and relevant regional agencies to identify safe pedestrian crossings, parking areas, and signage for access to the Santa Rosa Sound. The study shall include potential Blueway routes for kayakers and paddlers, ensuring consistency with the Future Land Use and Traffic Circulation Maps.

Objective B1-4 - Continually coordinate the City's decision-making process with the plans and programs of the Okaloosa-Walton TPO and the Florida DOT upon adoption of this Ordinance.

Policy B1-4a - The City will participate in and cooperate with the preparation of the TPO's Cost-Feasible Plan.

Policy B1-4b - The City will continue its active participation in and review of the Okaloosa-Walton TPO plans and planning process to ensure that TPO recommendations and

activities are consistent with this Ordinance.

Policy B1-4c - The City will participate in and review the annual updates of the Five-(5) Year Work Program (FDOT) to ensure that activities of the City and the Work Program are consistent.

Objective B1-5 - The City shall provide for the protection of existing and future rights-of-way from building encroachment within the LDC.

Policy B1-5a - The City shall continue to enforce Chapter 21 of the City Code (the Zoning Ordinance). The Zoning Ordinance shall provide adequate setbacks along all area roadways, including state highways, so that existing rights-of-way are protected from building encroachment.

Objective B1-6 - Enhance the City's transportation system by incorporating advanced technologies, in coordination with regional and state partners, to improve mobility, safety, and reliability.

Policy B1-6a - Continue collaborating with Okaloosa County and its Traffic Management Center (TMC) to share and analyze traffic data, signal timing plans, and equipment status. Support ongoing TMC expansion to improve regional traffic management and incident response.

Policy B1-6b - Align local regulations and infrastructure planning with Florida's ongoing efforts to accommodate autonomous and connected vehicles, as outlined in Florida Statute 316.85 and FDOT programs. Identify opportunities to prepare roads, signals, and municipal policies for the safe integration of these technologies.

Policy B1-6c - Encourage and support the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, particularly along key evacuation routes and at major destinations. Coordinate with the Florida Department of Transportation's Electric Vehicle Master Plan to ensure City efforts conform to state goals and funding opportunities.

Objective B1-7 - Create a vibrant, multimodal town center around the Santa Rosa Mall and adjacent corridors by integrating Complete Streets concepts, pedestrian-friendly design, and improved transit service.

Policy B1-7a - Encourage mixed-use redevelopment of the Santa Rosa Mall site and surrounding properties with building orientation, street layout, and streetscape improvements that support pedestrian activity. The City shall encourage: Complete Streets design standards, including sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike lanes; Consolidated or shared driveways, where feasible, to reduce curb cuts and improve roadway safety; and Connectivity to existing transit routes or future transit services.

Policy B1-7b - Consider fee reductions or credits for developments in the town center area that include enhanced public amenities such as transit shelters, bike racks, and publicly accessible green spaces or plazas.

Objective B1-8 - As part of the annual Comprehensive Plan review and goal setting process, staff shall evaluate local transportation performance to ensure timely implementation of multimodal goals, coordinated with regional and state partners.

Policy B1-8a - The City shall adopt and maintain an annual reporting process that tracks key transportation metrics, including: New sidewalks or bike lanes installed, Intersection or corridor improvements completed, Average travel times on local arterials, and Crash data focusing on bicycle and pedestrian incidents. The annual report shall be presented to the City Council and made available on the City's website.

Policy B1-8b - Where deficiencies are identified, the City shall prioritize corrective actions in its Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). These actions may include additional intersection enhancements, signage, crosswalk improvements, or a reevaluation of level-of-service standards.

ELEMENT C – HOUSING ELEMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Pursuant to Section 163.3177(6)(f), F.S., the following represents the Housing Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the City of Mary Esther. The goals, objectives, and policies are intended to serve as a guide for both public and private decisions. Further, the objectives, policies, and strategies in this Element, as well as in the other Comprehensive Plan elements, should be considered and viewed as a whole. No single objective, policy, or strategy is intended to have precedence over another. Rather, they should provide an overall framework for the management of the City's resources and for meeting the needs of current and future residents.



GOAL C1

Ensure the provision of safe, affordable, and adequate housing for the current and future residents of the City.

Objective C1-1 - Provide guidance and direction to the public and private sectors for the provision of adequate and affordable housing for present and future residents and for households with special housing needs.

Policy C1-1a - The Future Land Use Map (and Zoning Map) continually shall provide for sufficient development or redevelopment opportunities within residential areas.

Policy C1-1b - As part of the annual Comprehensive Plan review and goal setting process, the City will review its regulatory and permitting process and specifically examine opportunities to allow a wider variety of housing types (e.g., cottage courts, townhomes, live-work units) to improve housing availability and affordability.

Policy C1-1c - The Land Development Code (LDC) shall include streamlined permitting checklists for small-scale infill projects and missing middle housing. These checklists shall also provide applicants with referrals to relevant agencies for quicker development review.

Policy C1-1d - The LDC shall include criteria guiding the location of housing for low- and moderate-income families, mobile homes, group homes, foster care facilities, and households with special needs. Low- and moderate-income households may be located in any residential area provided the development plan for such housing conforms to all relevant requirements of this ordinance and the LDC. The criteria guiding the location of mobile homes, group homes, foster care facilities, and households with special needs

shall be as delineated in Policies A1-3a, C1-1f, C1-1g, and C1-1h.

Policy C1-1e - The City shall continue cooperating with local, state, and federal agencies to provide housing assistance. Where feasible, the City shall also partner with non-profit housing providers to encourage mixed-income development and adaptive reuse of underutilized sites (e.g., portions of the Santa Rosa Mall area).

Policy C1-1f - The City shall continue to implement and enforce Chapter 21 of the City Code, consistent with State law, to ensure that adequate sites for mobile homes and/or manufactured housing are available in various zoning districts and that adequate criteria provide the necessary guidance for such mobile homes and/or manufactured housing.

Policy C1-1g - The City will include criteria in the LDC for the development of group homes, and such homes shall be located within areas designated on the Future Land Use Map as medium density residential.

Policy C1-1h - The LDC shall include criteria for the location of foster homes, and such foster homes shall be located within any residential area designated on the Future Land Use Map.

Objective C1-2 - The continual elimination of substandard housing conditions and the structural and aesthetic improvement of existing housing stock.

Policy C1-2a - The City shall use the data generated by the most recent Census, when available, to identify substandard housing within the City, if any.

Policy C1-2b - Continually, the LDC shall include provisions and regulations which direct the elimination of substandard housing identified pursuant to Policy C1-2a.

Policy C1-2c - The LDC shall contain provisions which continue the City's practice of removing, or causing the removal of, housing stock with structural deficiencies.

Policy C1-2d - The LDC shall contain provisions requiring appropriate landscaping and open space in both new and redeveloped housing areas, supporting improved neighborhood aesthetics and walkability.

Policy C1-2e - The City will continue to strictly enforce its building and housing codes as well as its planning and zoning codes. In addition, the City will review its building, housing, planning, and zoning codes and code requirements to ensure that quality of housing and integrity of neighborhoods is adequately addressed.

Objective C1-3 - Increase the supply of “missing middle housing” including adequate areas and infrastructure for housing for very low-, low-, and moderate-income families, manufactured housing, group homes, and foster care facilities.

Policy C1-3a - The City shall implement the Concurrency Management System (reference Objective A1-2 of this Ordinance) upon adoption of the LDC.

Policy C1-3b - The LDC shall contain provisions which prohibit the connection of facilities described in Objective C1-3 to septic systems and require the connection of said facilities to the central sewage system (reference Policy E2-2c).

Policy C1-3c - Principles and criteria guiding the location of housing for very low-, low-, and moderate-income families, including missing middle and mixed-use development, shall be included within the LDC.

Policy C1-3d - Staff shall explore the appropriateness of allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) as a strategy to support the provision of missing middle housing, particularly for very low-, low-, and moderate-income families. This evaluation shall include assessing infrastructure capacity, compatibility with existing neighborhoods, compliance with concurrency requirements, and consistency with the goals of the Vision Plan. Recommendations shall be presented as part of the annual Comprehensive Plan review and goal-setting process

Policy C1-3e - As part of the annual Comprehensive Plan review and goal setting process, the City will examine its housing needs based on the Census and other data. As part of this review, the City shall identify ways to expand housing choices in mixed-use or town center areas to meet the goals set forth in the Vision Plan.

Objective C1-4 - The LDC shall contain regulations to provide for the conservation, rehabilitation, or when necessary, demolition of housing within the City.

Policy C1-4a - The City shall continue enforcement of its land development regulations to conserve and rehabilitate housing, extend the useful life of the existing housing stock, and stabilize or improve existing neighborhoods, including the aesthetic appeal of such neighborhoods.

Policy C1-4b - The LDC shall contain techniques to encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings to meet diverse housing needs. These techniques may include incentives for missing middle or mixed-use redevelopment on underused commercial sites.

Objective C1-5 - The City will continually ensure the protection of historically significant structures.

Policy C1-5a - The LDC shall include criteria for the determination of appropriateness for preservation of historic structures (reference Policy C1-5c).

Policy C1-5b - The LDC shall include regulations which require the identification of historically significant structures in advance of the issuance of a building permit

(reference Policies A1-5d and A1-5e).

Policy C1-5c - The City shall continue to use the Florida Department of State, Division of Historic Resources as a resource for identification of historic sites within the City.

Objective C1-6 - Provide relocation assistance or housing during the process of housing rehabilitation upon adoption of this Ordinance.

Policy C1-6a - The City will continue to seek grants to provide for relocating low- and moderate-income persons during the housing rehabilitation process.

Policy C1-6b - The City will continue its Housing Assistance Referral Program in cooperation with the agencies identified in Policy C1-1e.

Objective C1-7 - Implement housing programs on an "on-going" basis upon adoption of this Ordinance.

Policy C1-7a - The City will cooperate with the agencies identified in Policy C1-1e to facilitate bond backed low interest mortgage loans for home purchases by qualified individuals or families.

Policy C1-7b - The City will continue to cooperate with the agencies identified in Policy C1-1e so that residents in need may take advantage of various state and federal programs including, but not limited to, the U.S. HUD Section 8 Housing Assistance Program, the Section 8 Voucher Program (including "finders-keepers"), and others.

Policy C1-7c - The City will continue reviewing its regulatory and permitting program annually, evaluating improvements to housing delivery. Specific attention shall be given to forming partnerships that enable mixed-use and infill development (e.g., Santa Rosa Mall), encourage missing middle housing, and ensure affordable housing options.

ELEMENT D – INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Pursuant to Section 163.3177(6)(c), F.S., the following represents the Infrastructure Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the City of Mary Esther. In addition to statutory requirements, the Goals, Objectives, and Policies were developed in keeping with the desires of the community to be fiscally sustainable and resilient.

SANITARY SEWER:



GOAL D1

The provision of an environmentally safe and efficient wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal system.

Objective D1-1- Continually correct existing facility deficiencies, replace obsolete or worn-out facilities and maximize the use of existing facilities.

Policy D1-1a - Continue to cooperate with Hurlburt Field in exploring future wastewater solutions.

Policy D1-1b - The City shall include level of service (LOS) standards within the LDC and shall ensure the maintenance of LOS standards through implementation of Concurrency Management (Reference Objective A1-2).

Policy D1-1c - The LOS standard for sanitary sewer within the City shall be 100 gallons per capita per day (average daily demand) for both collection and treatment.

Policy D1-1d - The LDC shall contain detailed methodologies for determining available capacity and the impact upon capacity of any proposed development.

Policy D1-1e - The City will maintain an infiltration/inflow rate of twenty percent (20%) of average daily flow or better.

Policy D1-1f - Package treatment plants are prohibited within the City. Nothing in this policy shall be interpreted to prohibit pre-treatment facilities when necessary to serve individual businesses or industry.


Policy D1-1g - The City will require that all septic tank users connect to the central sewer system within one year of sewer availability.

Objective D1-2 - Coordinate extensions of the collection system and increases in capacity of the entire system with the Future Land Use Map and future facility needs.

Policy D1-2a - Extension of collection systems, when necessary, shall be provided by the private sector and consistent with the Future Land Use Map.

Policy D1-2b - Reconstruction or rehabilitation of existing collection lines and treatment facilities will be prioritized through the annual goal setting process.

SOLID WASTE:



GOAL D2
The provision of an environmentally safe, efficient, and cost-effective system for the collection and disposal of solid waste.

Objective D2-1 - Continually correct existing facility deficiencies, if any, and coordinate the increase in capacity of facilities to meet future needs and maximize the use of existing facilities.

Policy D2-1a - The City shall continue enforcement of its mandatory Garbage Ordinance (Section 10-4 of the City Code) so that all solid waste generated within the City is properly collected.

Policy D2-1b - The City shall work with regional partners when appropriate to provide for the efficient and cost-effective transportation of solid waste collected within the City to appropriate disposal facilities to maximize the life of existing landfills.

Policy D2-1c - Continue to cooperate with regional partners in efforts to develop technologically sound, cost effective, and long-term solid waste disposal solutions.

Policy D2-1d - The City shall review level of service standards for solid waste collection within its LDC and shall ensure the maintenance of LOS standards through the City's annual Comprehensive Plan review and goal setting process.

Policy D2-1e - The level of service standard for solid waste within the City of Mary Esther shall be five (5) pounds per capita per day.

Policy D2-1f - The City shall continue to promote participation in recycling programs so that the solid waste stream going to landfills is reduced.

STORMWATER/DRAINAGE:



GOAL D3

The provision of an environmentally safe and efficient stormwater management system.

Objective D3-1 - Continually correct existing facility deficiencies and maximize the use of existing facilities.

Policy D3-1a - The City shall continue its practice of not issuing development permits for projects not meeting the design criteria for correcting existing deficiencies or meeting future drainage requirements.

Policy D3-1b - The City shall continue its practice of correcting localized drainage problems so that LOS standards are maintained (reference Policy D3-2c).

Policy D3-1c - The City shall on roadways (existing or new) require the use of swale drainage to the maximum extent possible. Perforated pipe shall be used in situations where piping is necessary (also, see Policy E1.2b).

Policy D3-1d - The City shall continue its periodic inspection program of stormwater control structures to ensure the proper functioning of such structures.

Policy D3-1e - Prioritization for replacing drainage facilities, correcting existing deficiencies, and providing for future drainage facility needs shall be accomplished through the annual Comprehensive Plan review and Capital improvements Planning process.

Policy D3-1f - The LDC shall include regulations which require stormwater management plans for new development or redevelopment activities to incorporate the use of natural drainage patterns and features, to the maximum extent possible, given the characteristics, size, and composition of the proposed development.

Objective D3-2 - Provide stormwater management facilities concurrent with the demand created by future development.

Policy D3-2a - Installation of drainage facilities made necessary by new development shall be the responsibility of the developer.

Policy D3-2b - The LDC shall contain LOS standards for drainage and stormwater management.

Policy D3-2c - The LOS standards for drainage shall be:

Retain the first inch of runoff on-site; and

Post-development runoff shall not exceed the pre-development runoff rate for a 25-year storm event, up to and including an event with a 24-hour duration.

Note: The LDC shall include design and performance standards pursuant to the Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) requirements.

POTABLE WATER:



GOAL D4

The provision of an environmentally safe and efficient system for potable water.

Objective D4-1 - Correct facility deficiencies, replace obsolete or worn-out facilities, and maximize the use of existing facilities.

Policy D4-1a - The City shall include LOS standards within its LDC and shall ensure the maintenance of LOS standards through implementation of the Concurrency Management system.

Policy D4-1b - The LOS standard for potable water within the City shall be 100 gallons per capita per day.

Objective D4-2 - Continue to provide potable water facilities concurrent with demand.

Policy D4-2a - Cost for potable water facilities will be funded by user fees, special assessments, or other devices determined appropriate by the City.

Policy D4-2b - Cost for water line extensions made necessary by new development shall be funded in total by the developer.

Objective D4-3 - Continually conserve potable water resources.


Policy D4-3a - Continue to participate in and cooperate with the Regional Utility Authority for water supply planning and financing alternatives.

Policy D4-3b - An area of water resources concern has been established by the Northwest Florida Water Management District to protect the area's water resources from

depletion, saltwater intrusion, or man induced contamination, or from any other activity which may substantially affect the quality or quantity of the area's water resources. Within such area, the NFWFMD has established lower permit thresholds, management (maximum) and minimum levels, and stipulates any limiting conditions as necessary to monitor, manage, and control the use of water. The City of Mary Esther shall cooperate with the NFWFMD in its enforcement of regulations regarding the area of water resources concern within the City.

Policy D4-3c - To assist in the protection of the area declared an area of water resources concern, the City shall include within the LDC appropriate regulations to assist in the enforcement of the NFWFMD regulations accompanying the declaration. Specifically, the LDC shall include relevant portions of Section 40A-2.801, et. seq. of the Florida Administrative Code in order to provide for regulatory provisions to protect the quality and quantity of groundwater serving the City.

NATURAL GROUNDWATER AQUIFER RECHARGE:



GOAL D5
Provide for the recharge of the sand and gravel aquifer from rainfall.

Objective D5-1 - Continually, the LDC shall include regulations which protect the function of the sand and gravel aquifer and the recharge potential for such aquifer.

Policy D5-1a - The LDC shall include regulations which ensure the continuation of adequate open spaces within the City so that rainfall may reach the sand and gravel aquifer through percolation.



ELEMENT E – COASTAL MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Pursuant to Section 163.3177(6)(d), F.S., the following represents the Coastal Management and Conservation Element Goals, Objectives, and Policies for the City of Mary Esther. The purpose of this element is to plan for and, where appropriate, restrict development activities where such activities would damage or destroy coastal resources; protect human life; limit public expenditures in areas that are subject to destruction by natural disaster; and promote the conservation, use, and protection of natural resources. This element is based upon data and analysis requirements pursuant to Section 163.3178 and 163.3177 Florida Statutes, compiled with coastal inventory maps in the Coastal Management Element Data Inventory and Analysis Document. There are no identified prime (potable) natural groundwater aquifer recharge areas, dune systems, or deep water ports within the City. The coastal construction control line (CCCL) in this area is located on Santa Rosa Island and not within the City's jurisdiction.



GOAL E1

Protect people and property by limiting public expenditures in areas subject to destruction by natural disasters and by restricting development activities that would damage or destroy coastal or natural resources.

Objective E1-1 - Continually protect, conserve, or enhance coastal wetlands, living marine resources, important aquatic vegetation, and wildlife (shoreline) habitats by including regulations within the Land Development Code (LDC) necessary to implement the policies of this objective, among others as recommended by the Florida Department of Commerce to delineate enhancing protection of resources.

Policy E1-1a - Limit the specific impacts and cumulative impacts of development or redevelopment upon wetlands, water quality, water quantity, wildlife habitats, living marine resources, or other natural resources by implementation of Policies A1-1a, A1-1b, A1-5a, A1-5b, A1-5c in the Future Land Use Element and D3-1c in the Infrastructure Element of this Ordinance.

Policy E1-1b - Channeling run-off directly into water bodies or other areas identified in Objective E1-1 shall be prohibited.

Policy E1-1c - The City designates the coastal high hazard area (CHHA) as the area below



the elevation of the category 1 storm surge line as established by the Sea, Lake, and Overland Surges from Hurricanes (SLOSH) computerized storm surge model. The City will limit public expenditures in the CHHA to the provision of recreation uses, protection of natural resources, or to increase the public's access to the shoreline and to maintain existing infrastructure in order to protect the rights of property owners within the CHHA (reference Policies E1-5a and H1-2a).

Policy E1-1d - The City shall assist in the application of and compliance with all state and federal regulations which pertain to endangered or rare species and will provide for protection of areas known to provide habitats for these species when issuing development permits.

Policy E1-1e - New developments with the potential to impact the quantity or quality of natural resources will be required to obtain the necessary permits from all applicable state and/or federal agencies (Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Northwest Florida Water Management District, and/or U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) prior to the authorization of a development permit by the City.

Policy E1-1f - The LDC shall include shoreline protection regulations, and such regulations shall include Section 21-52 of the City Code (Section 21-52 provides that residential structures be located at least 100 feet from the mean high water line of Santa Rosa Sound).

Policy E1-1g - The LDC shall contain mitigation provisions which must be followed by any development that impacts the resources listed in Policy E1-1a. The provisions shall include:

- a. The elimination of any degradation of the natural systems; or
- b. Mitigate impacts on natural systems at a ratio of 2 to 1 whenever degradation occurs as a result of new development. Note: Mitigation will be allowed only when development cannot occur pursuant to subparagraph (a) above.

Objective E1-2 - Maintain and/or improve estuarine environmental quality through management techniques, regulations, and cooperation with regional management plans.

Policy E1-2a - The City shall implement the land use categories shown on the Future Land Use Map with the LDC. Such implementation will ensure the continuation of environmentally sensitive land uses adjacent to the shoreline.

Policy E1-2b - Any stormwater detention or retention areas located near an estuary or estuarine systems or other water bodies within the city limits shall be designed so that the shorelines are sinuous rather than straight and so that water/land interfaces are curvilinear and maximize space for growth of littoral vegetation (also, see Policy D3-1c).



Policy E1-2c - The City shall participate in, and coordinate with committees of, the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance, Estuary Programs that encompass Santa Rosa Sound, and the Northwest Florida Water Management District's Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) programs to the extent that such programs affect activities of the City in its efforts to protect Santa Rosa Sound.

Objective E1-3 - Provide criteria and standards for shoreline land-uses using regulatory and management techniques to mitigate threat to human life and to control proposed development and redevelopment to protect the coastal environment.

Policy E1-3a - The LDC shall contain the standards necessary for construction or development of shoreline parcels.

Policy E1-3b - The LDC shall contain the City's Zoning Ordinance which provides land use criteria for shoreline uses.

Policy E1-3c - The LDC shall contain development avoidance strategies to prevent human and structural loss in areas identified by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) intermediate-low and intermediate-high sea level rise projections for a planning period not less than 20 years.

Policy E1-3d - The City may employ site development techniques and best practices to reduce the losses to the local government and property owners caused by coastal flooding. Techniques include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. Increased setbacks from the shoreline;
- b. Living shorelines and beach nourishment programs;
- c. Floodable development (i.e. waterfront parks); and
- d. Elevated structures, flood resistant materials, and breakaway designs.

Objective E1-4 - Establish construction standards within the LDC which minimize the impacts of manmade structures on the shoreline and any beach or dune systems within the City.

Policy E1-4a - The LDC shall contain FEMA construction standards (reference Policy A1-5c).

Objective E1-5 - Limit public expenditures that subsidize development in the CHHA.

Policy E1-5a - The LDC shall contain building regulations regarding construction in the CHHA, and the regulations shall include criteria such as:



- a. First floor elevations;
- b. Wind load requirements;
- c. Frangible ancillary structures; and
- d. Other requirements necessary to protect and preserve the health and safety of the public.

Policy E1-5b - The City shall review and analyze all general hazard mitigation reports produced by County, Regional, State or Federal agencies in order to determine if any changes to the City's building, land use, stormwater management, or other regulations are necessary or appropriate. The primary purpose of any changes made will be to reduce the exposure of lives and property to natural hazards.

Objective E1-6 - Direct population concentrations away from the CHHA and areas vulnerable to future flooding using regulatory and management techniques to mitigate threat to human life.

Policy E1-6a - The City shall conduct an update to its vulnerability assessments every five (5) years to identify areas vulnerable to future flooding which results from storm surge and related impacts of sea level rise. The assessment should include an analysis of hurricane storm surge models and a coastal flood scenario using NOAA, USACE, or other sea level rise projection curve generally accepted by the scientific community for a specified future timeframe of not less than 20 years. Identified areas may be considered for adoption to an Adaptation Action Area, pursuant to Section 163.3177(6)(g)10, Florida Statutes.

Policy E1-6b - The currently allowable development densities and intensities south of U.S. 98, with particular attention paid to vulnerable areas identified in vulnerability assessments, shall not be increased during the planning period. Lawfully constructed buildings which conform to this Plan and the City's Land Development Regulations may be rebuilt if damaged or destroyed by disaster to the density or intensity existing or allowed prior to such disaster.

Objective E1-7 - Maintain or reduce hurricane evacuation times.

Policy E1-7a - The City shall cooperate with Okaloosa County to implement recommendations and guidance provided in the Okaloosa County Local Mitigation Strategy and the most recent Statewide Regional Evacuation Study.

Policy E1-7b - Continue to support critical roadway segment improvements through participation with the Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) and interaction with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to further reduce and



improve hurricane evacuation times.

Policy E1-7c - The City shall maintain a minimum roadway clearance time for hurricane evacuations of 12 hours on roads under local jurisdiction.

Objective E1-8 - Implement the City's post-disaster redevelopment plans which will reduce or eliminate the exposure of human life and public and private property to natural hazards in the event of a natural disaster or manmade hazard.

Policy E1-8a - The City shall continue its participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in conformance with Public Law 93-288 (reference Policy A1-5c) and the NFIP Community Rating System (CRS).

Policy E1-8b - The City's post-disaster redevelopment plan will continue to distinguish between immediate repair and clean up actions needed to protect public health and safety and long-term repair and redevelopment activities. The post-disaster redevelopment plan will incorporate the vulnerability assessment described in Policy E1-6a to aid in identifying and prioritizing appropriate redevelopment sites and activities.

Policy E1-8c - The city administration shall maintain an inventory of areas within the city which have experienced repeated damage from coastal storms. This inventory will be cross referenced with the CHHA and parcels identified in the vulnerability assessment described in Policy E1-6a to determine if these damages are occurring in documented areas of future flooding. The inventory shall be provided to the City Council by staff during the annual Comprehensive Plan review and goal setting session.

Policy E1-8d - During the annual Comprehensive Plan review and goal setting session, staff shall recommend to the City Council, as needed, Comprehensive Plan and ordinance amendments to ensure consistency with the hazard mitigation annex of the local peace time emergency plan (reference Policy E1-7a) and applicable existing interagency hazard mitigation reports.

Policy E1-8e - Immediate recovery actions needed to protect the public health and safety shall take priority in permitting decisions following hurricane storm events.

Policy E1-8f - If rebuilt, structures which suffer damage in excess of 75% of their appraised value shall be rebuilt in accordance with all current and applicable land use and building code requirements.

Policy E1-8g - The City shall address the needs of historic resources in preparation for a natural disaster by using state resources to inventory historic structures and by documenting damage assessment and stabilization methods in the post-redevelopment plan.



Objective E1-9 - Reduce flood risk in coastal areas which results from high-tide event, storm surge, flash floods, stormwater runoff, and the related impacts of sea level rise to achieve the following:

- a. Protect property values and human health and safety; and
- b. Protect native vegetative communities, listed animal species and their habitats, beach and shoreline ecosystems, surface and ground water, aquatic vegetation, and natural hydrology from adverse impacts caused by human activities.

Policy E1-9a - The City shall minimize the disturbance of natural shorelines which provide stabilization and protect landward areas from storm impacts.

Policy E1-9b - Opportunities for non-structural shoreline enhancement projects shall be identified in the repair of seawalls along low energy shorelines.

Policy E1-9c - The City shall encourage waterfront property owners to maintain a viable amount of sea oats, and other native vegetation recommended by FDEP and approved by the City, in an effort to reduce impacts on infrastructure, private property, and human life.

Policy E1-9d - The City shall use accommodation strategies through design, construction, and use of structures to handle periodic flooding.

Policy E1-9e - The City will be consistent with flood-resistant construction requirements in the Florida Building Code and federal floodplain management regulations.

Policy E1-9f - The City shall continue to upgrade its stormwater infrastructure where appropriate through drainage improvements and seawall repair, in addition to sustainable flood management actions such as installation of bioswales, recharge through drainage wells, use of pervious pavement, and maintenance of naturally preserved areas (refer to Element D - Infrastructure).

Policy E1-9g - The City, alone or with others, shall use public land acquisition and conservation easements as financially feasible.

Objective E1-10 - Increase public access to the shoreline.

Policy E1-10a - The City shall continue to enforce the public access requirements of the Coastal Zone Protection Act of 1985 and shall include such requirements within the LDC.

Policy E1-10b - Shorelines renourished or protected at public expense shall be made available for public use.

Policy E1-10c - The City will continue to maintain public rights-of-way providing access



to Santa Rosa Sound.

Policy E1-10d – The City will continue to seek all available federal and state financial assistance to increase public access to the shoreline.

Policy E1-10e – The LDC shall contain incentives for recreational, water-dependent uses of Santa Rosa Sound.

Objective E1-11 - The City will adopt, maintain, and enforce land development regulations in the LDC which provide for the protection, preservation, or sensitive re-use of historic resources.

Policy E1-11a - The City shall adopt, as part of the LDC, performance standards and guidelines for the preservation or adaptive reuse of historic resources upon identification of such resources (reference Policies A1-5d and A1-9b).

Objective E1-12 - The City shall allow no development in the coastal area (or elsewhere) unless level of service standards are maintained and infrastructure needs are fulfilled in compliance with the City's Concurrency Management System (reference Objective A1-2 of this Ordinance).

Policy E1-12a - The City shall continue to maintain the adopted Land Development Code.

Policy E1-12b - The level of service standards shall be those delineated in Policies B1-1 a, B1-2a, D1-1c, D2-1e, D3-2c, D4-1b and F1-3b.

Policy E1-12c - Infrastructure improvements and areas of service shall be phased and determined pursuant to Element H of this Ordinance.

Policy E1-12d – Development in the coastal area shall be consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Future Land Use Element and the Infrastructure Element (reference Elements A and D of this Ordinance).



GOAL E2

Properly manage and conserve the important natural resources within the City.

Objective E2-1 - Continually protect air quality by regulating land uses which have, or may have, point source emissions through the LDC.

Policy E2-1a - The City shall maintain air quality within its jurisdiction in conformance



with state and federal air quality guidelines.

Policy E2-1b - New developments with the potential to emit pollutants into the air will be required to obtain the necessary permits from the Department of Environmental Protection or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency prior to authorization of a development permit by the City.

Policy E2-1c - The LDC shall contain provisions which require any development with point source emissions which may degrade air quality to comply with all applicable federal and state regulations regarding emission control. These regulations may include the installation of scrubbers, emission treatment facilities, and the like.

Policy E2-1d - The City will continue to cooperate with the Department of Environmental Protection so that minimum air quality levels, established by the Department, are maintained.

Objective E2-2 - Conserve, appropriately use, and protect the quality and quantity of water sources and of waters that flow into Santa Rosa Sound by including appropriate regulations within the LDC.

Policy E2-2a - The City shall protect water quality by restricting or prohibiting activities known to adversely affect the quality or quantity of identified water sources (reference Policies A1-1a, A1-1b, A1-5a, A1-5b, A1-6a, D1-1f, D1-1g, D3-1c, E1-1b and E1-2b). Note: There are no prime ground water recharge areas or cones of influence within the City.

Policy E2-2b - In cooperation with the Northwest Florida Water Management District, the City shall implement any emergency water conservation plans necessary to protect water sources during periods of insufficient supply.

Policy E2-2c - The City will require all septic tank users to connect to the central sewer system within one year of notification of sewer availability.

Policy E2-2d - The City of Mary Esther, the City of Fort Walton Beach, and Okaloosa County shall execute an interlocal agreement which will establish procedures whereby each city will be afforded the opportunity to review development proposals that affect Santa Rosa Sound or other water bodies so that adequate sites for water dependent uses are made available, estuarine pollution is prevented, surface water run-off is controlled, living marine resources are protected, exposure to natural hazards is reduced, and public access to the shoreline is maintained.

Policy E2-2e - The City will continue its practice of not approving any development plan which does not provide for the development to be connected to the central sewage system. Therefore, the City shall prohibit the installation of any new septic tanks within the City.



Policy E2-2f – The City shall continue to enforce the provisions of Article 12.06.00 of the LDC which provides for the use of xeriscape landscaping, water saving devices, promotes the use of native plants, restricts the use of certain plants, and accomplishes other things in order to reduce the demand for water and energy. The City shall consider modifying this ordinance to adopt Florida Friendly Landscaping as a standard (reference Florida Statute 373.185).

Objective E2-3 - The City will continually conserve and protect earth resources (soils, minerals, and vegetation); enhance degraded natural areas; and conserve, appropriately use, or protect unique native or aquatic vegetative communities.

Policy E2-3a - The LDC shall contain requirements that limit land uses or construction techniques to those compatible with soil conditions specific to the site. The regulations shall include boring and soils tests conducted by testing facilities licensed by the State of Florida, when necessary.

Policy E2-3b - The City will work independently and cooperate with other local political entities and officials of local governments within Okaloosa County to conserve, appropriately use, or protect unique native or aquatic vegetative communities located within more than one jurisdiction.

Policy E2-3c - The City will develop and maintain an environmentally sensitive lands inventory which shall include, but not be limited to, floodplains as identified by the FEMA; wetlands under the jurisdiction of the Department of Environmental Protection or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and the areas identified by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory. In addition, the sensitive lands inventory shall include identified native vegetative communities using resources such as the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Policy E2-3d – Extraction of minerals or other natural resources shall be regulated pursuant to Policy A1-5b.

Policy E2-3e - The City shall continue to enforce its open space and buffer requirements contained within Chapter 21 of the City Code.

Policy E2-3f - The LDC shall include regulations which provide for the preservation and protection of native vegetation and trees.

Policy E2-3g – The City shall require identification of any and all hazardous wastes or materials used or stored by any licensed business within the City. This practice shall be implemented through the issuance (or denial) of a business license based upon an adequately completed application form containing the hazardous materials information on the form.



Objective E2-4 - Continually conserve, appropriately use, and protect fisheries, fishery habitats, wildlife habitats, and other marine or wildlife resources in or near the City.

Policy E2-4a - The City shall assist in the implementation of and compliance with all state and federal regulations which pertain to endangered and rare species and will provide protection for the integrity of areas known to provide habitats for such species when issuing development permits (reference Policy E1-1d).

Policy E2-4b - The City shall cooperate with the Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and other state or federal agencies so as to provide the fullest protection to marine or wildlife habitats that may be impacted by existing or proposed development.

Policy E2-4c - No development permit shall be approved if construction pursuant to the permit would threaten the life or habitat of any species listed on the Federal Endangered Species Inventory or designated as "threatened" or "species of special concern" either by the state or federal governments.

(Ord. No. 99-02, 3-1-99; Ord. No. 00-01, 4-10-00; Ord. No. 2010-03, § 4(Att. A), 3-9-10)



ELEMENT F – RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Pursuant to Section 163.3177(6)(e), F.S., the following represents the Recreation and Open Space, Element Goals, Objectives, and Policies for the City of Mary Esther. In addition to statutory requirements, the Goals, Objectives, and Policies encourage the health and well-being of City residents by increasing opportunities for outdoor recreational activities. Additionally, this element promotes the protection of the natural resources that attract visitors and seeks to conserve Mary Esther's natural beauty and way of life for future populations.



GOAL F1

Provide an adequate, environmentally sound, and cost-effective recreation and open space system for all residents of the City.

Objective F1-1 - Ensure the public's access to recreation sites, open spaces, and the shoreline on a continuing basis through the LDC.

Policy F1-1a - The City shall continue to enforce the open space requirements contained within the City Code. These requirements shall be included within the LDC.

Policy F1-1b - The City shall continue to require the provision of open space by private development when such development is a planned unit development, a multifamily development, a mixed-use commercial area, or other similar type of development where relatively large land areas are involved. The requirements shall be contained within the LDC.

Policy F1-1c - The City shall continue to protect and provide access to open spaces and the shoreline by including appropriate regulations within the LDC to implement Policies E1-1c, E1-9a, E1-9b, E1-9c, E1-9d, E1-9e, and E2-2d among others.

Policy F1-1d - The City shall continue its practice of making barrier-free access improvements to existing City parks and facilities. New parks and open spaces shall be required to provide barrier-free access.

Policy F1-1e - The City shall continue to work with public and private partners to provide spaces for community gardens and the City's farmer's market.

Objective F1-2 - Review, at least annually, the cooperative efforts between the public and private sectors in the provision of recreational opportunities and ensure that such



efforts are coordinated.

Policy F1-2a – As part of annual Comprehensive Plan review and goal setting, staff shall conduct an analysis of the cooperation and coordination between the public and private sectors in the provision of recreational opportunities.

Policy F1-2b - The City shall continue its cooperative efforts with public, private sector, and non-profit organizations in the provision of recreational facilities and open space areas.

Policy F1-2c - The City will cooperate with other local governments in the MPO area to implement the bikeway recommendations currently being prepared by the Emerald Coast Regional Council for the Okaloosa-Walton TPO.

Policy F1-2d - The City shall continue to review the efforts of the Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce and the Okaloosa County Tourism Development Department to ensure that such efforts are consistent with this Ordinance.

Objective F1-3 - Ensure that parks and recreation facilities and open space are adequately and efficiently provided by public agencies and private enterprises on a continuing basis through the LDC.

Policy F1-3a - The LDC shall include specific definitions for open space, parks, and recreation facilities. Among others, the definitions shall include:

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS: Moderately sized recreation areas located to provide convenient access (no more than one half (1/2) mile) from neighborhoods served. Facilities may include nature trails, educational information, wildlife observation areas, picnic/rest areas, shade trees, sports facilities, and playground equipment. Access is by local streets with facilities for bicycles and pedestrians.

WATER ACCESS PARKS: Small to moderately sized open areas which allow physical or visual access to the adjacent body of water. Facilities may include piers, boat ramps, picnic tables, benches, and shade trees.

TOWN CENTER PARK: Public amenity associated with mixed-use development located in the Town Center Overlay (reference Policy A1-1d) to improve the area's appeal. Facilities may include multi-purpose open areas, playgrounds, seating, landscaped features, and other elements designed to draw visitors and residents for recreational or community-focused activities.

MINI PARK/SPECIAL USE PARK: Small recreation areas set aside to accommodate specific leisure activities for the community. These facilities may include gazebos, picnic areas, recreational courts, or facilities. Service radius may or may not include adjacent neighborhoods.



NOTE: Each park as defined will include some, if not all of the above listed features and facilities.

Policy F1-3b - The level of service standard for recreation, parks, and open space for the City shall be one (1) acre per one thousand (1,000) population. Note: There are no identified deficiencies in the provision of recreational and open space facilities during the planning period.

Policy F1-3c - The City shall continue to acquire (through lease, acquisition, or dedication) open space and natural areas so as to maintain and improve: (1) recreational opportunities for all residents; and (2) the natural function of open space, wetlands, and other sensitive lands within the City.

Policy F1-3d - The City will continue to apply for all available state and federal funds to implement recreation programs and provisions of this element.

Policy F1-3e - The City shall continue to require the provision of recreational facilities and open space in any private sector development pursuant to regulations contained within the LDC.

Policy F1-3f - The City shall continue to preserve and protect the shoreline through regulations contained within the LDC (reference Policies A1-1b, D3-1c, E1-1f and Section E of this Ordinance).



ELEMENT G – INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Pursuant to Section 163.3177 (6)(h), F.S., the following represents the Intergovernmental Coordination Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the City of Mary Esther. In addition to statutory requirements, the Goals, Objectives, and Policies were developed to determine and respond to the needs for coordination processes and procedures with adjacent local governments, regional, and state agencies.



GOAL G1

Provide coordination of this plan with other local governments and regional and state agencies providing services within the City.

Objective G1-1 - To review, on an annual basis, actions that have taken place to coordinate the Comprehensive Plan of Mary Esther with the Plans of other units of government and the Okaloosa County School Board.

Policy G1-1a – Staff, in preparing for the annual comprehensive plan review and goal setting session, shall include within its review efforts an analysis of the coordination between plans of affected governments.

Policy G1-1b - The City shall continue to coordinate with neighboring local governments, the School Board, and the Air Force, and to provide information regarding proposed development in accordance with local ordinances and state statutes.

Policy G1-1c - If the city receives request(s) for annexation, the city shall follow the annexation procedures in the Florida Statutes and will coordinate such annexation with Okaloosa County.

Policy G1-1d - The City shall consider participation with Okaloosa County and other units of local government in the acquisition and use of a computerized Geographic Information System (GIS).

Policy G1-1e - Continue to cooperate with other units of government and governmental agencies so as to provide for coordination and evaluation of development proposals which may impact Santa Rosa Sound (reference Policy E2-2d).



Objective G1-2 - Coordinate with appropriate state, regional, and local agencies, which have operational and maintenance responsibility for public facilities in Mary Esther, the impacts of development proposed in this plan upon development or plans of the affected state, county, or local agency and to achieve, when necessary, mutually agreed upon level of service standards.

Policy G1-2a - The City shall use the Emerald Coast Regional Council's informal mediation process to resolve conflicts with other units of government.

Policy G1-2b - During the annual Comprehensive Plan review and goal setting, staff and the City Council shall review the following:

- a. An analysis of the effectiveness of the conflict resolution process described in Policies G1-2a and G1-2b;
- b. The adequacy of LOS standards which have been established by this Ordinance;
- c. An analysis of the adequacy of procedures established to review proposed development within the area to the existing Comprehensive Plans of Mary Esther or adjacent local governments; and
- d. An analysis and/or review of development proposed in this Ordinance or amendments to this Ordinance indicating the relationship of any proposed development contained within this Ordinance (or amendments) to the Comprehensive Plan of Mary Esther or adjacent local governments. This review shall be based upon the consistency of the proposed development with the Comprehensive Plan (all development shall be consistent with this Ordinance).

Policy G1-2d - The City will implement agreements which establish standards for setting or changing LOS with other entities providing such service and may include:

- a. FDOT for State Roads; and
- b. Okaloosa County for solid waste disposal.

Policy G1-2e - In accordance with current Florida law, the City shall submit any development order and supporting documentation for projects that meet or exceed the thresholds established in Section 380.06, Florida Statutes, or other applicable provisions, to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (or its successor agency) and any other reviewing agencies as required. Where large-scale or regionally significant developments are subject to additional review processes under Florida Statutes, the City shall comply with all applicable state requirements.



GOAL G2

Collaborate and coordinate with the Okaloosa County School Board to ensure high quality public school facilities which meet the needs of Mary Esther's existing and future populations.

Objective G2-1 - The City will implement the executed Interlocal Agreement pursuant to §163.3177, F.S. with the School Board, County, and other municipalities thereby providing for close coordination and evaluation of proposed development when such development includes residential uses. To ensure that the obligations of the City are fulfilled, the City shall continue to participate with all relevant committees and groups, existing or formed, as a result of the Agreement.

Policy G2-1a - General types of provisions that will be included in the Interlocal Agreement in order to advise the School Board, adjacent municipalities, special taxing districts, and others of proposed developments which may impact their jurisdiction include:

Transmission of information from the City of Mary Esther to the above entities describing proposed developments and school planning activities.

Provision for a feedback process/information exchange so the above entities can inform the Local Planning Agency of any potential adverse impact(s) from proposed development(s) and/or conflicting planning activities (Also, see Policy I1-1c of this Ordinance).

Provision for the district-wide application of LOS standards.

Objective G2-2 - The City shall strive to maintain and enhance joint planning processes and procedures for coordination of public school facilities for planning and decision-making.

Policy G2-2a - On an ongoing basis, the City shall establish new and review existing coordination mechanisms that will evaluate and address its Comprehensive Plan and programs and their effects on the comprehensive plans of adjacent local governments, the school board, and other units of government providing services but not having regulatory authority over the use of land, and the State, by an annual county-wide forum, joint meetings, or other types of forums with other agencies. Assistance for this effort shall be requested from regional and state agencies, as needed.

Policy G2-2b - Annually, the School Board shall provide information from its 5-Year Work Plan to determine the need for additional school facilities. Each year, the School Board shall provide the City a general education facilities report which shall contain information detailing existing facilities and projected needs. The report shall also contain the School

Board's capital improvement plan, including planned facilities with funding representing the District's unmet needs.



ELEMENT H - CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Pursuant to Chapter 163.3177(3)(a), F.S., the following represents the Capital Improvements Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the City of Mary Esther. In addition to statutory requirements, the Goals, Objectives, and Policies were developed in keeping with the character, conditions (both environmental and social), and desires of the community. These goals, objectives, and policies are to establish the long-term end for the timely and efficient provision of public facilities by sound fiscal policies.

This element is based upon the public facility needs identified in the other Comprehensive Plan Elements and supports Element A – Future Land Use.



GOAL H1

The timely and efficient provision of public facilities through the use of sound fiscal policies.

Objective H1-1 – Use the Capital Improvements Element as a directory to meet the needs of the City of Mary Esther for the construction of capital facilities necessary to correct existing deficiencies, to accommodate desired future growth, and to replace obsolete or worn-out facilities upon adoption of this Ordinance. The five-year schedule of capital improvements (Table H-1) shall be the specific guide (directory) the City will use to determine construction of capital facilities and maintenance of LOS Standards.

Policy H1-1a - The criteria to evaluate capital improvement projects directly related to individual elements of this Ordinance are:

- a. The elimination of future public hazards; at present, there are no identified existing public hazards;
- b. The elimination of existing capacity deficits;
- c. The impact on the annual operating budget and Capital Improvements Program by the City of Mary Esther (see Policy H1-5a);
- d. Locational needs based on projected growth patterns (reference Element A and the Future Land Use Map (Map A:2) of this Ordinance);
- e. The accommodation of new development and redevelopment facility demands;
- f. Financial feasibility; and



- g. Plans of The Northwest Florida Water Management District and state agencies that provide public facilities within the jurisdiction of the City of Mary Esther.

Note: The above criteria shall be ranked during the annual Comprehensive Plan review and goal setting session described in Policy H1-3f. In addition, the criteria may be further ranked (or re-ranked) by the City Council during its annual budget development process.

Policy H1-1b - The City of Mary Esther shall manage its debt so that the total amount of general obligation bonds of the City, which may at any time be outstanding, shall be no more than 25% of the assessed valuation of the non-exempt real and personal property within the corporate limits of the City.

Policy H1-1c - Prioritize capital improvements funding (within the annual Capital Improvements Program - see Policy H1-5a) in a manner that generally assigns first priority to the renewal and replacement of obsolete or worn-out facilities, that assigns second priority to correcting existing deficiencies in public facilities, and third priority to facilities necessary to accommodate desired future growth. Nothing in this policy shall preclude the City of Mary Esther from increasing or rearranging the priority of any particular capital improvement project so that cost savings may be realized or LOS Standards are met.

Policy H1-1d - Promote rehabilitation and re-use of existing governmental facilities, structures, and buildings as the preferred alternative to new construction (reference Policies A1-3b, A1-7b, D1-1e, D3-1b, D3-1d, H1-1c of this Ordinance).

Policy H1-1e - The Schedule of Capital Improvements (Table H-1) shall be updated on an annual basis, by December 1 of each year, in a financially feasible manner and consistent with Florida law.

Objective H1-2 - Limit public expenditures that subsidize development in Coastal High Hazard Areas upon adoption of this Ordinance (reference Policies E1-5a, E1-5b, and E1-6a among others).

Policy H1-2a - Public expenditures in Coastal High Hazard Areas of the City of Mary Esther shall be limited to the provision, or support, of recreation uses such as parks and walkovers, erosion control devices, or to increase public access to the shoreline, or to maintain existing infrastructure in order to protect the rights of property owners in the CHHA (reference Objective E1-5 and Policy E1-5a).

Objective H1-3 - Coordinate land use decisions and available or projected fiscal resources with a schedule of capital improvements (Table H-1) which maintains adopted LOS standards and meets the existing and future facility needs by implementing Policies H1-3a through H1-3f, among others, upon adoption of this Ordinance.

Policy H1-3a - Land-use decisions shall be consistent with the five-year schedule of Capital Improvements (Table H-1).

Policy H1-3b - Establish level of service standards for public facilities which are within the jurisdiction of the City of Mary Esther. The standards found in the other elements of this Ordinance are reproduced here:

Roadways

Local: Minimum Operating LOS-C
(Reference Policy B1-1a)

State and
County:

- (a) Hollywood Boulevard (C.R. 602) through the city LOS-E
 - (b) S.R. 393 (Mary Esther Cut-Off) from S.R. 30 to city limits (north) LOS-E
 - (c) S.R. 30 (U.S. 98) from Hurlburt Field to city limits (east) LOS-D
 - (d) And all other arterials and collector roads LOS-D
- (Reference Policy B1-2a)

Sanitary Sewer 100 gallons/capita/day (reference Policy D1-1c)

Solid Waste 5.0 lbs/capita/day (reference Policy D2-1e)

- Drainage
- a. Retain the first inch of run-off on-site; and
 - b. Post development run-off shall not exceed the pre-development run-off rate for a 25-year storm event, up to and including an event with a 24-hour duration.
- (Reference Policy D3-2c)

Potable Water 100 gallons/capita/day (reference Policy D4-1b)

Recreation

Open Space 1 acre/1,000 population (reference Policy F1-3b)

Public School
Facilities

Level of Service (LOS) Standard: Consistent with the Interlocal Agreement, the uniform, district-wide level of service standards are set as 100% of the Department of Education (DOE) permanent capacity for Elementary, Middle, and High schools and for Special Purpose schools.

Amendments to the LOS standards shall be governed by Policy I1-1e.
(reference Policy I1-5a)

Policy H1-3c - Provide for the availability of public facilities to serve developments for which development orders were issued prior to the adoption of this Ordinance. *Note:* No development orders have been issued absent the necessary public facilities to serve the development prior to the adoption of this Ordinance.

Policy H1-3d - The fiscal resources of the City of Mary Esther will be used, to the extent necessary, to maintain LOS standards and support the five-year schedule of Capital Improvements (Table H-1).

Policy H1-3e - Provide for the availability of public facilities and services needed to support development concurrent with the impacts of such development subsequent to the adoption of this Ordinance. Reference Objective A1-2.

Policy H1-3f – The City hereby adopts an annual Comprehensive Plan review and goal setting process to review the development activities within the City of Mary Esther and to review the level of service conditions for the City. To ensure the Comprehensive Plan remains effective and responsive, the City Council will review its goals and objectives during an annual goal-setting session in conjunction with its Capital Improvements planning. This goal setting and review process will contain the following elements:

1. Staff Progress Report – City staff will present accomplishments, challenges, and relevant data from the previous year, including concurrency status, capital project updates, and any legislative changes affecting the Plan.
2. City Council Review and Prioritization - The City Council will review staff findings, assess progress toward Plan objectives, and set priorities for the upcoming year. This may occur during a regularly scheduled Council meeting or a special session dedicated to long-range planning.
3. Capital Improvements Coordination - The annual goal-setting session will coincide with the City's update of the Capital Improvements Element. Proposed infrastructure projects must align with the Plan's Goals, Objectives, and Policies, as well as available funding sources and concurrency requirements.
4. Public Engagement – Notice will be provided to residents and stakeholders. The public will have opportunities to comment on proposed priorities or highlight emerging issues. Any additional outreach methods such as open houses or surveys shall be selected based on community needs and available resources.
5. Plan Amendment Consideration – The City Council shall identify areas of this Ordinance needing formal updates. Staff will initiate amendments according to state procedures.

(reference Policies B1-3c, C1-1b, E1-8d, F1-2a, G1-1a, and H1-1a)

Objective H1-4 - Future development will bear a proportionate cost of facility improvements necessitated by the development in order to adequately maintain adopted LOS standards. Regulations will be included within the LDC, and the regulations will include methods of assessment. The methods will include a series of variables based upon the size, character, type, and location of the development and the development's impact upon all City systems as well as the benefits the development is anticipated to receive from such systems.

Policy H1-4a - Provide for assessing new developments a pro rata share of the costs necessary to finance public facility improvements necessitated by development in order to adequately maintain adopted level of service standards in the Land Development Code (LDC). The pro rata share of cost necessary to finance public facility improvements will be determined based upon the size of the proposed development, the land uses associated with the proposed development, the impact the land uses are projected to have on public facilities and services upon occupancy of the development, the benefits expected to be received by the development, and the maintenance of LOS standards for all facilities impacted by the development.

Policy H1-4b - Include requirements within the LDC that exact physical improvements to impacted systems (roads, utilities, etc.) by new developments or the redevelopment of existing facilities. This policy will be implemented through the City's permitting and inspection process.

Objective H1-5 - The City of Mary Esther will provide or require provision of needed improvements identified in the other chapters of this Ordinance and will manage the land development process so that public facility needs created by previously issued development orders or future development do not exceed the ability of the City to fund and provide or require provision of the needed capital improvements upon adoption of the LDC (reference Objective H1-4 of this ordinance).

Policy H1-5a - A capital budget will be adopted by the City Council as a part of the annual budgeting process. The Capital Budget (Capital Improvement Program) will be developed using this element as a directory. The Capital Improvement Program will include general government (general fund) projects as well as capital projects of the various enterprise operations of the City. However, budgeting and programming these projects can be done on a "fund by fund" basis.

Policy H1-5b - Use the City of Mary Esther's fiscal policies to direct expenditures for capital improvements which ensure the implementation of the Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the other plan elements in this Ordinance.

Policy H1-5c - The City will implement the Concurrency Management System described in Objective A1-2 of this ordinance (also, see Policies H1-3b and H1-4b) upon adoption of

the LDC.

Objective H1-6 - Ensure that future needs for public school facilities are addressed consistent with the adopted Level of Service (LOS) standards by managing the timing of preliminary residential subdivision plat approvals, approval of site plans for residential and residential mixed-use developments, or their functional equivalent, to ensure that adequate school capacity is available consistent with the adopted LOS standards for public school concurrency.

Policy H1-6a - Consistent with the Interlocal Agreement, the School Board and City agree to the following standards for school concurrency:

TYPE OF SCHOOL	LEVEL OF SERVICE
Elementary:	Department of Education (DOE) permanent Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH) capacity
Middle:	DOE permanent FISH capacity
High:	DOE permanent FISH capacity
Special Purpose:	DOE permanent FISH capacity

Policy H1-6b - The City shall ensure that future residential and residential mixed-use development pays a proportionate fair share of the costs of capital facility capacity needed to accommodate new residential uses and to assist in maintaining adopted LOS standards via legally available and appropriate methods for school facilities.

Policy H1-6c - The City hereby incorporates by reference the most current version of the School Board's School Master Facilities Plan prepared by the Okaloosa County School District/Facilities Division utilizing data from the Florida DOE that includes school capacity sufficient to meet anticipated student demands projected by the City, in cooperation with the County and consultation with the School Board's projections of student enrollment based on the adopted LOS standards, which shall be applied on a district-wide basis for all schools of the same type.

The City, in cooperation with the School Board, shall annually update the Capital Improvements Element by adopting by reference the School Board's financially feasible Work Plan, to ensure maintenance of a financially feasible capital improvements program and to ensure LOS standards will continue to be achieved and maintained during the five-year planning period.

Policy H1-6d - The 5-year schedule of improvements ensures the LOS standards for public schools are achieved and maintained within the period covered by the 5-year schedule. After the first 5-year schedule of capital improvements, annual updates to the

schedule shall ensure LOS standards are achieved and maintained for subsequent 5-year schedules of capital improvements by the addition of a new fifth year to address any deficiencies and to meet future needs.

Policy H1-6e - No later than December 1 of each year, the City will update this Capital Improvements Element to incorporate the upcoming five years of the School Board's Capital Improvements Program. The City and the School Board will coordinate during updates or amendments to the City's Comprehensive Plan and updates or amendments to long-range plans for School Board facilities.

Policy H1-6f - The City shall ensure maintenance of the financially feasible capital improvements program and ensure LOS standards will continue to be achieved and maintained for subsequent 5-year schedules of capital improvements by the addition of a fifth year.

Policy H1-6g - The City's strategy, in coordination with the School Board/District for correcting existing deficiencies and addressing future needs includes:

- a. Implementation of a financially feasible 5-year schedule of capital improvements to ensure LOS standards are achieved and maintained.
- b. Identification of adequate sites for funded and planned schools.
- c. Potential amendments to the LOS standards shall be considered at least annually at the staff working group meeting to take place no later than April 15th of each year. If the School Board proposes an amendment, it shall be accomplished by the execution of an amendment to the Interlocal Agreement by all parties and the adoption of amendments to each Comprehensive Plan. Impacts to adjacent communities shall be considered in the recommendations of the working group. The amended LOS shall not be effective until all plan amendments are effective and the amended Interlocal Agreement is fully executed. No LOS shall be amended without showing that the amended LOS is financially feasible, supported by adequate data and analysis, and can be achieved and maintained within the period covered by the first 5 years of the Work Plan. After the first 5-year schedule of capital improvements, capacity shall be maintained for subsequent 5-year schedules of capital improvements.
- d. The City will collaborate and cooperate with the School Board to determine the necessity to establish alternate funding sources within the next year's cycle of the Work Program and Capital Improvements schedule adoption process. Uniform district-wide concurrency standards by school type must be maintained. This Policy shall not be interpreted or construed to obligate or require the City to fund the School Board Work Plan.

INVENTORY OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Table H:1 - City of Mary Esther Capital Improvements Plan

Project	Budget Year					Funding Source	Project Total
	FY 2024-2025	FY 2025-2026	FY 2026-2027	FY 2027-2028	FY 2028-2029		
New City Hall	\$3,004,491	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund and Loan	\$3,004,491
Azalea Park Neighborhood Infrastructure Improvements	\$7,493,600	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General, Utilities, and Sales Tax Funds; Water and Sewer Loans and State Grant	\$7,493,600
North Bryn Mawr Park ADA and Safety Improvements	\$30,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$30,000
Elliott Park ADA and Safety Improvements	\$42,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$42,000
Christobal Waterfront Park	\$3,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	Okaloosa County and Bed Tax Allocation	\$3,000,000
Ray's Pond Rehabilitation	\$1,110,200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	Sales Tax fund and State Loan	\$1,110,200
Okaloosa County Sewer Force Main - Planning Phase	\$435,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	Utilities Fund and State Grant	\$435,000
Okaloosa County Sewer Force Main Engineering Phase	\$0	\$3,465,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	Sewer Loan and Other Loans	\$3,465,000
Okaloosa County Sewer Force Main - Construction	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$25,525,000	State Revolving Loan Fund, State and Federal Grants	\$25,525,000
Library HVAC Replacement	\$20,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$20,000
Spray/Squeegee Machine	\$70,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$70,000
Street Sweeper	\$230,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$230,000



Project	Budget Year					Funding Source	Project Total
	FY 2024-2025	FY 2025-2026	FY 2026-2027	FY 2027-2028	FY 2028-2029		
Harley Rake Attachment	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$10,000
Well #1 Fence	\$15,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$15,000
High-Accuracy GIS Mapping Unit	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$10,000
Pavement Management - Area 2 (Mary Esther Manor)	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$100,000
Pavement Management - Area 4 (Bryn Mawr)	\$0	\$175,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$175,000
Pavement Management - Area 1 (Springdale, Oak Tree, and Scottsdale)	\$0	\$0	\$150,000	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$150,000
Pavement Management - Area 3 (Azalea, Brewer, E. Highway 98)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$400,000	\$0	General Fund	\$400,000
Pavement Management - Area 5 (Christobal, Andalusia, S. Highway 98)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$150,000	General Fund	\$150,000
Sidewalk Improvements	\$10,000	\$10,500	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	General Fund	\$50,500
Water Distribution Improvements	\$83,000	\$88,400	\$94,070	\$98,024	\$75,000	Utilities Fund	\$438,494
Sewer Collections Improvements	\$131,000	231,000	\$210,000	\$220,500	\$231,525	Utilities Fund	\$1,024,025
Northwest Stormwater Ditch	\$0	\$1,644,700	\$0	\$0	\$0	Sales Tax Fund	\$1,644,700
Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI)	\$0	\$650,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	Water Loan	\$650,000
Mary Esther Boulevard	\$0	\$216,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$216,000

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS



Project	Budget Year					Funding Source	Project Total
	FY 2024-2025	FY 2025-2026	FY 2026-2027	FY 2027-2028	FY 2028-2029		
Beautification							
Public Works Roof Replacement	\$0	\$120,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$120,000
Oak Tree Nature Park Rehabilitation	\$0	\$180,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$180,000
Community Facilities Beautification	\$0	\$157,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$157,000
Highway 98 Water Main Replacement	\$0	\$5,193,983	\$0	\$0	\$0	State Grant	\$5,193,983
Vehicle Replacement	\$0	\$60,000	\$125,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	General Fund	\$285,000
Waterfront Park Development	\$0	\$0	\$20,000	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$20,000
Oak Tree Park Neighborhood Infrastructure Improvements	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,364,618	\$0	Sales Tax Fund, Water and Sewer Loans	\$5,364,618
Funding Total	\$15,794,291	\$12,191,583	\$609,070	\$6,143,142	\$26,041,525	N/A	\$60,779,611

Data Source: City of Mary Esther
Date Prepared: 11/2024



ELEMENT I - PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following represents the Public School Facilities Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the City of Mary Esther. The purpose of this element is to ensure the plans and activities of the City and the Okaloosa County School District are coordinated, compatible, and consistent with the needs of both. While there is but one public school in Mary Esther and no additional schools are planned or expected during the planning period and beyond, there is a need and requirement for the District and the City to cooperate on various land use issues affecting either the City or the District.

GOAL I1



Cooperate and coordinate with the District and School Board (District and Board) to ensure high-quality public school facilities which meet the existing and future needs of the City's population.

Objective I1-1 - Consistent with the Interlocal Agreement with the Okaloosa County School Board, the City shall implement and maintain mechanisms designed to closely coordinate with the District in order to provide consistency between this Comprehensive Plan and the public schools facilities programs, such as, but not limited to:

Improved student access and safety by coordinating the District's improvements and/or expansion of Mary Esther Elementary School with the City's road and sidewalk construction programs;

The location and design of school facilities and City facilities to take advantage of shared-use opportunities;

The expansion and rehabilitation of Mary Esther Elementary School so as to support/enhance neighborhoods; and

Improved efficiencies by the City and the District.

Policy I1-1a - Manage the timing of new residential and mixed-use development to coordinate and be consistent with adequate school capacity. The City may use the lack of school capacity as a basis for denial of applications for development approval which cannot demonstrate adequate capacity in the impacted schools.

Policy I1-1b - In cooperation with all parties to the Interlocal Agreement for Public School

Facility Planning, as required by §1013.33, F.S., the City will participate and fulfill its responsibilities thereunder. The Agreement includes procedures for:

Joint meetings;

Student enrollment and population projections;

Coordinating and sharing of information;

School site analysis;

Supporting infrastructure;

Comprehensive Plan amendments, rezoning, and residential and mixed-use development approvals;

Education Plant Survey and Five-Year District Facilities Work Plan that includes the Capital Facilities Plan (Work Plan);

Implementation of school concurrency, including levels of service standards, concurrency service areas, and proportionate fair share mitigation;

Co-location and shared use;

Oversight process; and

Resolution of disputes.

Policy I1-1c - If desired by the District, the City will include a representative of the District as a non-voting member of the LPA, as required by §163.3174, F.S.

Policy I1-1d - The City will coordinate with the District regarding the annual review of school enrollment projections and for the actions and activities provided in Element G (Intergovernmental Coordination) of this Plan.

Policy I1-1e - The City's strategy for correcting deficiencies, if any, and addressing future needs includes coordination with the School Board and District to accomplish:

Implementation of the District's financially feasible Capital Improvements Program to ensure Level of Service (LOS) standards are achieved and maintained.

Potential amendments to the LOS for schools shall be considered at least annually at the staff working group meeting to take place no later than April 15th of each year. If the District proposes an amendment identified through the financially feasible Work Plan, it shall be accomplished by the execution of an amendment to the Interlocal Agreement by all parties. The adoption of such amendments must be included in the comprehensive plans of all parties to the Agreement, including the City of Mary

Esther. Impact to adjacent communities shall be considered in the recommendations of the working group. The amended LOS shall not be effective until all local government plan amendments are effective and the amended Interlocal Agreement is fully executed.

No LOS shall be amended without showing that the revised LOS is financially feasible, supported by adequate data and analysis, and can be achieved and maintained within the period covered by the first five years of the Work Plan. The Work Plan shall be updated annually, as required by law, and the LOS shall be maintained throughout the period covered by the Work Plan.

Consideration and establishment, by the District, of impact fees in order to generate additional revenue to help fund school improvements.

Objective I1-2 - Preserve the character and neighborhood design through effective design and facility siting at Mary Esther Elementary School. Encourage the siting and design of improvements or expansions of the school so that it serves as a community focal point and remains compatible with surrounding land uses.

Policy I1-2a - The City will continue to work with the School District to ensure that any changes to Mary Esther Elementary School are consistent with this Plan, the City's rules and regulations, and the Interlocal Agreement for Public School Facility Planning.

Policy I1-2b - Changes to Mary Esther Elementary School shall be governed by Objective A1-10 and the policies thereunder, as applicable.

Policy I1-2c - The City shall continue its efforts to maintain and improve its network of sidewalks and trails so as to reduce hazardous walking conditions consistent with Florida's Safe Routes to School program. In addition, the City, in cooperation with the School District, shall coordinate and work with the Okaloosa-Walton TPO Long Range Transportation Plans to ensure funding for continued and improved safe access to the school.

Policy I1-2d - The City and the School District will jointly determine the need for and timing of on-site and off-site improvements (including supporting infrastructure) necessary to support any proposed renovations, expansion, or closure of Mary Esther Elementary School, and will enter into a written agreement as to the timing, location, and the entity(s) responsible for constructing, operating, and maintaining required improvements.

Policy I1-2e - The City will coordinate with Okaloosa County School District and Okaloosa County to explore the development of a new primary access drive for Mary Esther Elementary School from Hollywood Boulevard to alleviate congestion on Miracle Strip Parkway/Highway 98 caused by school arrival and dismissal and to improve safety.

Objective I1-3 - Encourage sustainable design and improvements to Mary Esther Elementary School.

Policy I1-3a - Coordinate with the School Board to improve the opportunities for shared use of school facilities and enhance the potential of the school for public recreation use.

Policy I1-3b - Encourage the School Board to use sustainable design and performance standards for any planned improvements to the school so as to reduce the facility's lifetime costs.

Objective I1-4 - Coordinate requests for changes to the adopted Future Land Use Map, rezonings, approval of or modification to subdivision plats, and site plans for proposed developments with a residential component with adequate school capacity. This will be accomplished by recognizing the School Board's statutory and constitutional responsibility to provide a uniform system of adequate public schools and the City's authority for land use, including the authority to approve or deny requests for Plan amendments, rezonings, subdivision plats, or site plans that generate students and impact the School District.

Policy I1-4a - The City shall coordinate anticipated student growth based on this Comprehensive Plan and the School Board's long-range facilities needs and plans over time.

Policy I1-4b - The City shall take into consideration the School District's comments and findings of available adequate school capacity when considering the decision to approve Plan amendments and other land use decisions as provided for in §163.3177(6)(a), F.S. This will be accomplished during the public hearing process at the LPA level through participation by the District on the LPA.

Policy I1-4c - Where capacity will not be available to serve students from a property subject to a land use change, the City will coordinate with the District to ensure adequate capacity is planned and funded in the Concurrency Service Area (CSA) of the assigned school(s) or in an adjacent CSA. To ensure adequate capacity is planned and funded, the District's long-range plan (5, 10, and 20-year periods) should be amended to reflect the needs created by the Plan amendment.

Objective I1-5 - Implement school concurrency and manage the timing of developments that generate public school students so as to assure adequate school capacity is available consistent with adopted Level of Service standards for public school facilities.

Policy I1-5a - Consistent with the Interlocal Agreement, the City and School Board agree to the following standards for school concurrency:

Level of Service (LOS) Standard: Consistent with the Interlocal Agreement, the uniform, district-wide Level of Service standards are set as 100% of the Department

of Education (DOE) permanent capacity for Elementary, Middle, and High schools and for Special Purpose schools. Amendments to the LOS standards shall be governed by Policy I1-1e.

Concurrency Service Areas: The Concurrency Service Areas shall align with primary, intermediate, and secondary school attendance zones that serve residents of the City of Mary Esther. In each Concurrency Service Area, the proposed project must meet school concurrency for the primary, intermediate, and secondary school levels within the attendance zones where the project is located. Amendments to the service areas shall be governed by Policy I1-1e.

Maximizing Concurrency Service Areas: Concurrency Service Areas shall maximize capacity utilization, taking into account transportation costs, limiting student travel times, student safety, and all other relevant factors as determined by the state standards on maximization of capacity.

Student Generation Rates: Consistent with the Interlocal Agreement, District staff and City staff will develop and apply student generation multipliers for residential units by type and projected price for schools of each type, considering past trends in student enrollment in order to project school enrollment. The generation rates shall be determined by the School Board in accordance with professionally accepted methodologies and shall be reviewed at least every two years and changed when necessary.

Policy I1-5b - The City's Land Development Code (regulations) shall include provisions that require all proposed residential units be reviewed for school concurrency at the time of final subdivision plat or residential/mixed-use site plan review. The City shall not deny such final subdivision plat or site plan approvals due to a failure to achieve and maintain the adopted LOS where:

Adequate school facilities will be in place or under construction within three years after the approval of the plat or site plan; or,

Adequate school facilities are available in an adjacent CSA and the impacts of the development can be shifted to that area; or,

The applicant/developer executes a legally binding agreement to provide mitigation proportionate to the demand for facilities to be created by the actual impact of the proposed development, as provided in the Interlocal Agreement.

In evaluating a subdivision plat or site plan for concurrency, any relevant programmed improvements in the first three years of the 5-year schedule of improvements shall be considered available capacity for the project and factored into the LOS analysis. Any relevant improvements in years 4 or 5 of the schedule shall not be considered available capacity unless funding for the improvement(s) is ensured

through School Board funding to accelerate the project, through proportionate share mitigation, or other means of ensuring adequate capacity will be available within 3 years. Relocatable classrooms may provide temporary capacity while funded facilities are being constructed.

Policy I1-5c - If the District comments or finds that there is not sufficient capacity in an affected CSA to accommodate the impacts from a proposed development, the following standards apply:

The final subdivision plat or site plan must be delayed to a date when capacity enhancement and the LOS can be ensured; or,

The final plat or site plan must provide capacity enhancement sufficient to meet its impacts through proportionate share mitigation; or,

Approval of the final plat or site plan is conditioned on the delay of permits for vertical construction to a date when capacity enhancements and LOS can be ensured.

The amount of mitigation required shall be determined by the Department of Education's most current cost per student station applicable to the City of Mary Esther.

Policy I1-5.4d - Options for providing proportionate share mitigation for any project that triggers a failure to maintain the adopted LOS for schools shall include the following:

Contribution of, or payment for, acquisition of new or expanded school sites or facilities; and/or,

Construction or expansion of permanent school facilities; and/or,

Creation of a mitigation bank serving the designated area(s) based on the construction of a public school facility or component.

Mitigation shall be directed to projects on the District's 5-year Capital Facilities Plan that the School Board agrees will satisfy the demand created by the development approval, and shall be ensured by a legally binding agreement between the School Board, the City, and the applicant executed prior to approval of a final plat or site plan or functional equivalent. If the School Board agrees to the mitigation, the Board must commit in the Agreement to place the improvement required for mitigation on its 5-year Capital Facilities Plan. The Agreement must also include the applicant's commitment to continuing renewal of the agreement for required mitigation until all impacts to the school facilities created by the actual development are mitigated.

Policy I1-5e - The amount of mitigation required shall be determined by calculating the number of student stations for each school type for which there is insufficient capacity



using the student generation rates applicable to a particular type of development and multiplying by the local costs per student station for each school type applicable to the City of Mary Esther, as determined by the School Board.

Objective I1-6 - The City will cooperate with the School Board in the Board's efforts to study the feasibility of the potential use of impact fees as a way to generate funds needed to defray the costs of new development on the school system and the impact on land use as such affects the ability of the Board to provide adequate facilities, as needed.

Policy I1-6a - In cooperation with the District, the City will make decisions regarding the use and amount of school impact fees, if any.

Objective I1-7 - The City shall monitor and evaluate this Element in order to ensure that best practices of the joint planning processes, coordination, and procedures contemplated herein are effective and useful.

Policy I1-7a - City staff shall include in its annual Comprehensive Plan review and goal setting session an evaluation of this Element and shall promulgate any recommendations deemed appropriate to modify and improve the Element and its desired outcomes.

Policy I1-7b - The City and the School Board will coordinate during updates or amendments to this Comprehensive Plan and updates or amendments for long-range plans for School Board facilities.

PROPERTY RIGHTS ELEMENT

The purpose of the Property Rights Element is to implement the requirements of House Bill 59, signed by the Governor on June 28, 2021. The bill modified Chapter 163.3177, Florida Statutes (F.S.), to require local government comprehensive plans to contain a Property Rights Element. The purpose of the Element, per Chapter 163.3177(i), is to identify property rights that shall be considered in local decision-making.



GOAL J1

The City of Mary Esther’s goal is to respect judicially acknowledged and constitutionally protected private property rights.

Objective J1-1 – The City shall consider property rights during local decision-making processes.

Policy J1-1a - The right of a property owner to physically possess and control his or her interest in the property, including easements, leases, or mineral rights.

Policy J1-1b - The right of a property owner to use, maintain, develop, and improve his or her property for personal use or for the use of any other person, subject to state law and local ordinances.

Policy J1-1c - The right of the property owner to privacy and to exclude others from the property to protect the owner’s possessions and property.

Policy J1-1d - The right of a property owner to dispose of his or her property through sale or gift.

Objective J1-2 - People have the right to participate in planning and development decisions that affect their lives and property. The City of Mary Esther’s decision-making will be transparent so that all people may participate in decisions that affect their lives and property.

Policy J1-2a - When the City amends this Comprehensive Plan, changes zoning designations, or considers development orders of significant impact, a public hearing shall be held in accordance with these policies. The applicant shall provide a certified list of property owners within a 300-foot radius of the subject parcel(s). The City shall use this list to send mailed notices and shall post a sign on the property.

Policy J1-2b - All hearings under Policy J1-2a shall be public, and any affected person may present or rebut evidence. Hearing procedures shall provide equal opportunity for

all affected persons to be heard. No party, including the applicant, shall receive more time or advantage in presenting evidence than any other party.

Policy J1-2c - The City shall mail a notice to all property owners and residents within the 300-foot radius at least 14 days before the scheduled hearing. The notice shall include the hearing date, time, and place, as well as a brief description of the proposed action.

Policy J1-2d - At least 14 days before the hearing, the City shall post a sign on each property frontage affected by the request, stating the hearing date, time, place, and the nature of the request.

Policy J1-2e - The City shall regularly evaluate and implement the most effective and cost-efficient methods of providing public notice permitted under Florida Statutes, including considering alternatives to traditional newspaper publication.

Section A:
Future Land Use Element



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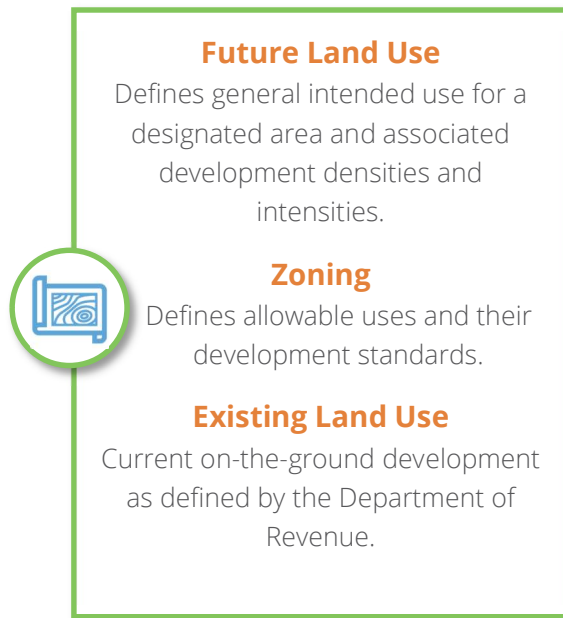
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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the Future Land Use Element is to enhance the quality of life of the City of Mary Esther’s residents through the provision of adequate housing, commerce, services, infrastructure, conservation of natural resources, promotion of economic development, and reduction of conditions that lead to incompatible land uses and hazards (see **Map A:1** for City Location map). This Element was formulated to be consistent with relevant sections of Chapter 163, Florida Statutes (F.S.); Part III, Chapter 169, F.S., and the Emerald Coast Regional Council’s Strategic Regional Policy Plan. The Future Land Use Element sets forth the physical plan for the future development of the City of Mary Esther. It describes the appropriate location for future land uses and promulgates the policies regulating the location and development of all land uses. It also sets forth not only the density and intensity of land uses appropriate for all locations, but also considers other factors at the time of adoption that affect land use development. Current trends are then incorporated into projected demand over two planning horizons, 2040 and 2050, to understand future development trends.

Future Land Use is distinct from the Zoning Ordinance and Existing Land Use. While Zoning and Existing Land Use are mentioned in this Comprehensive Plan, they are more fully developed in the Land Development Code. Zoning is established within the Land Development Code to guide development, use, and aesthetic standards. The Existing Land Use refers to the current (existing) on-the-ground development or vacancy, as determined by the Florida Department of Revenue (FDOR).

While each Element within the Comprehensive Plan is important, the Future Land Use Element is arguably the most important. It must be consistent with all other Comprehensive Plan Elements and articulate the Goals, Objectives, and Policies of these other Elements in the form of specific land use policies.



Future Land Use
Defines general intended use for a designated area and associated development densities and intensities.

Zoning
Defines allowable uses and their development standards.

Existing Land Use
Current on-the-ground development as defined by the Department of Revenue.

INVENTORY OF FUTURE LAND USE DISTRICTS

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, The City of Mary Esther covers approximately one and a half (1.5) square miles. The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) indicates the proposed location and distribution of future land uses intended to guide the development of the City of Mary Esther. All policies contained within the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Code must be consistent with the Future Land Use Maps contained in this adopted plan.

Table A:1 indicates the amount of land included in the City of Mary Esther’s various future land use categories as of the preparation of this planning document. The updated future land uses effective upon the adoption of this plan are depicted on the Future Land Use Map (**Map A:2**). The total amount of land included in the updated Future Land Use Map are included in **Table A:10**.

The Existing Land Use Map (**Map A:3**) describes the location and distribution of existing land uses in the City of Mary Esther.

Table A:1 – Approved Future Land Use Classifications by Acreage (2024)

Future Land Use (FLU)	Acres
Low Density Residential (LDR)	465.3
Medium Density Residential (MDR)	17.0
Commercial Use (C)	191.2
Recreational Use (REC)	10.6
Conservation (CON)	2.7
Public Lands (PL)	51.2
Recreation/Conservation (REC/CON)	33.9
Total	772.0
Data Source: Mary Esther FLUM, Updated through Ord. 2024-05 Date Prepared: 2/2025	

Descriptions of Future Land Use Districts

The following table describes the historic future land use categories with related use and development intensity information. **Table A:9** in the Opportunities section provides the revised and potential new Future Land Use categories needed based on the data and analysis.

Table A:2 –Approved Descriptions of Future Land Use Classifications

Future Land Use	Future Land Use Information (Historic)			
	Purpose	Density: Dwelling Units (DU) per Acre	Density: Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	Uses Permitted
Low-Density Residential	Provides areas for low-density residential uses and compatible ancillary uses.	Up to 5.51	Not applicable	Single-family homes; compatible ancillary uses under stipulated conditions.
Medium-Density Residential	Allows for moderate-density residential developments, including high-density zoning districts.	Up to 10.0	Not applicable	Multifamily housing; compatible ancillary uses under stipulated conditions.
Mixed Use	Integrates residential and commercial uses with flexibility in structure and layout.	Up to 20.0 (Residential)	Maximum FAR of 1.92	Mixed-use buildings (e.g., commercial on first floor, residential above); multiple buildings under unified control.
Commercial	Provides areas for commercial development with appropriate intensities.	Not applicable	Maximum FAR of 1.92	Retail, offices, services, and other commercial uses as regulated by the City Code.

Future Land Use	Future Land Use Information (Historic)			
	Purpose	Density: Dwelling Units (DU) per Acre	Density: Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	Uses Permitted
Industrial	Areas designated for industrial development.	Not applicable	Maximum FAR of 1.92	Manufacturing, warehousing, and other industrial uses as regulated by the City Code.
Recreational	Preserves land for recreational use and community enjoyment.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities.
Conservation	Protects environmentally sensitive lands and natural resources.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Wetlands, floodplains, and other conservation lands; minimal development permitted.
Public Lands	Accommodates public facilities and institutions.	Not applicable	Not specified	Educational facilities, public buildings and grounds, and other public uses.

Additional Special Districts

Military Influence Planning Areas (MIPAs)

Military Influence Planning Areas (MIPAs) are established to manage development and redevelopment activities in proximity to Eglin AFB and Hurlburt Field. These areas are identified as critical zones where specific land use controls are necessary to minimize conflicts between civilian development and military operations. The MIPAs include zones affected by noise contours, height restrictions, flight safety areas, and potential radio frequency interference zones.

Lighting Impacts on Military Operations

Artificial lighting within MIPAs poses significant risks to military night training operations. Unshielded lighting can create glare, sky glow, and light trespass, which interfere with pilots' night vision equipment and disorient aircrews during training missions. For example:

- **Glare:** Bright, unshielded lighting can obscure pilots' ability to detect ground-based features or safely execute maneuvers.
- **Sky Glow:** Increased urban lighting diminishes the effectiveness of military night vision training essential for Special Operations missions conducted from Hurlburt Field.

Existing lighting ordinances in other regions, such as those around Naval Air Station Whiting Field, have proven effective in mitigating these risks by requiring shielded fixtures that focus light below the horizontal plane.

Height Obstructions

The military uses defined approach, transition, horizontal, and conical airspace surfaces to ensure the safety and operational efficiency of aircraft. Structures penetrating these surfaces compromise safe navigation and may render airfields unusable under certain conditions, such as low cloud ceilings. Specific issues include:

- **Obstruction of flight paths:** Buildings or towers that exceed allowable height limits force pilots to modify their approach, potentially reducing airfield accessibility.
- **Line-of-sight interference:** Tall structures can obstruct radar and communication signals, which are critical for operational coordination during training and mission execution.

A study conducted by the Air Force in 2006 established height thresholds for Okaloosa County, ensuring unobstructed flight paths for Eglin and Hurlburt operations. Adherence to these thresholds is vital for continued military readiness.

Radio Frequency Interference (RFI)

The bandwidth between five-point-four (5.4) and five-point-nine (5.9) GHz is heavily utilized by Eglin AFB for radar tracking, communications, and beacon systems. Civilian devices operating within this range, such as wireless LANs and cordless phones, have been documented to disrupt military operations. Examples include:

- **Test mission failures:** Signal interference during radar testing has delayed or canceled critical military evaluations.
- **Regional risk zones:** The entire City of Mary Esther falls within the fifty (50) mile RFI mitigation buffer zone established by Eglin AFB, where proactive measures are essential to avoid signal disruptions.

Educational initiatives on RFI, such as distributing informational handouts to developers, have proven effective in reducing civilian-military conflicts in nearby jurisdictions.

OPPORTUNITIES AND NEEDS

This section of the Future Land Use Element summarizes existing conditions, potential development trends, and problems. Included in the first category - natural conditions affecting land use - are factors such as soil suitability to topography and the presence of natural resources, which may act as impediments or stimulants to growth. The second category - demographic, economic, and infrastructure conditions - is comprised of factors such as population; potable water availability; urban services including sewage, solid waste disposal, and transportation access; and the presence of historic resources. Approaches to managing the City of Mary Esther’s growth and development will be based largely on these analyses. Conditions that place limits on development potential of the local areas are examined.

Natural Conditions Affecting Land Use

The City of Mary Esther’s major resource is its proximity to the Santa Rosa Sound. Natural amenities, such as water features and parks, serve as recreational assets which attract development as well as visitors to the City. Surface waters are discussed in detail within the Conservation Element, while recreational resources are included in the Recreation and Open Space Element. No agricultural land or rangeland areas exist within the City limits. There are also no significant mineral or petroleum deposits within the City.

Topography and Physiography: The City of Mary Esther is located within the Panhandle Coastal Lowlands physiographic region (**Map A:4**) where the elevation ranges from sea level to five (5) feet above mean sea level along the coast to thirty-five (35) feet above mean sea level in the northern part of the City. Panhandle Coastal Lowlands consist of coastal deposits and landforms, and topography is generally flat to gently rolling. Natural drainage in the area is basically north to south into the Santa Rosa Sound.

Climate: The City of Mary Esther has long, warm summers and mild winters. Rainfall is abundant and the Gulf of Mexico largely accounts for the mild, moist climate. According to data from the Florida Climate Center, the City of Niceville (the closest station for which data is available) 1991-2020 mean daily average high temperature ranges eighty-nine-point-nine (89.9) degrees in July to sixty-one-point-two (61.2) degrees in January. Average low temperatures range from eighty-point-eight (80.8) degrees in July to forty-nine-point-six (49.6) degrees in January.

Temp	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Max	61.2	64.7	70.2	76.2	83.5	88.2	89.9	89.7	87.1	80.2	70.7	63.8	77.1
Mean	49.6	52.8	58.3	64.6	72.4	78.8	80.8	80.6	77.3	68.4	57.9	52.4	66.2
Min	38	40.8	46.4	53	61.4	69.4	71.7	71.5	67.6	56.5	45.1	41	55.2

Precipitation ranges from a high of nine-point-two (9.2) inches per month on average in August to four-point-six (4.6) inches on average in October, with seventy-three-point-four (73.4) inches annually.

Precipitation	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Total	5.9	5.3	5.4	6.0	3.8	6.8	8.9	9.2	7.0	4.6	5.0	5.7	73.4

General Geology: The geologic formations under the surface of the City are “undifferentiated sediments” of the Pleistocene and Holocene Ages, characterized by sand, clay, and organics (**Map A:5**). More detailed information on the physiographic and geologic foundation of the City of Mary Esther can be found within the Conservation Element.

Hydrology: An analysis of this topic appears in detail in the Infrastructure and Conservation Elements. Included in this section is an analysis of surface water, floodplains, as well as groundwater resources. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, surface water covers approximately four-point-three (4.3) acres of the City of Mary Esther. The National Wetland Inventory shows the City has approximately seventy (70) acres of wetlands. **Map A:6** depicts The City of Mary Esther’s wetlands and water bodies. These existing wetland areas are generally undeveloped.

Protecting the quality of surface waters and wetlands is a prime concern of this Comprehensive Plan and is enhanced by the numerous Federal and State regulations governing development and/or protection of these areas. The City has approximately eighty-eight (88) acres of land in the one-hundred (100) year and five-hundred (500) year floodplains combined (**Map A:7**), primarily south of U.S. Highway 98 along the Santa Rosa Sound. Floodplains can provide recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat preservation when maintained as parklands and open space. Development should occur at limited densities and intensities of use and should use construction practices designed to mitigate property damage while at the same time protecting the natural function of the floodplains.

Groundwater is the source of water supply for all uses in the City of Mary Esther and should be strictly protected from development and land uses potentially harmful to the groundwater resource. Provisions should be made to maintain/enhance overall recharge of the sand and gravel aquifer from rainfall. It should be noted, however, that the Floridan Aquifer is not recharged within the City, and the sand and gravel aquifer is not used for potable water purposes.

Soils: Soils are one of the most important factors affecting the development potential of land. Structures cannot be constructed on soils with poor load-bearing capacity unless costly methods are used to overcome the problem. Soil type also determines the applicability of septic tank usage for a given area. Soils with appropriate percolation characteristics not classified as hydric soils can often support septic tanks whereas wet soils cannot. The presence of wet soils is also indicative of the presence of wetland vegetative communities. Wetland communities are discussed in this Element and in the Conservation Element.

The distribution of soils in the City of Mary Esther is shown in **Map A:8**. More details on soil characteristics, including soil associations and descriptions, can be found within the Conservation Element.

Wetlands: There are approximately seventy (70) acres of wetlands in the City of Mary Esther, located in the wooded areas between Anderson Drive and Doolittle Boulevard, along Hollywood Boulevard, and north of U.S. Highway 98 in the southeast corner of the City (**Map A:6**). Local regulations enacted as implementing mechanisms for this Comprehensive Plan will serve to protect these areas in the future.

Demographic, Economic, and Infrastructure Conditions Affecting Future Growth and Development

Population Trends: This section of the Future Land Use Element examines the existing and projected demographic and economic factors influencing the demand for new development within the City. Since Chapter 163 F.S. requires that the Future Land Use Element, as well as all other elements, be consistent with these future development demands (i.e., population projections), this section comprises a critical portion of the Comprehensive Plan.

The University of Florida’s Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) estimates a total City of Mary Esther population of four thousand four hundred ninety-three (4,493) for 2024. **Table A:3** displays the City’s total population and growth rate (actual, estimates, and projections) from the U.S. Census Bureau and Shimberg Center estimates/projections beginning with 2030. It should be noted that population estimates are the estimations of a population in a set year, while projections estimate populations into future years.

Table A:3 - The City of Mary Esther Population Growth, 1970-2050

Year	Population Information	
	Population	% Change (10-Year)
1970	3,192	-
1980	3,530	10.6%
1990	4,139	17.3%
2000	4,055	-2.0%
2010	3,851	-5.0%
2020	3,982	3.4%
2030*	5,032	26.4%
2040*	5,580	10.9%
2050*	5,912	5.9%

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau (1970-2020); *Shimberg Center for Housing Studies (2030-2050)
Date Prepared: 10/2024

Based on Shimberg Center projections, the City of Mary Esther is projected to grow by one thousand fifty (1,050), or twenty-six-point-four percent (26.4%), between 2020 and 2030. By comparison, the state of Florida is projected to grow by three million forty-nine thousand nine hundred twenty-seven (3,049,927) persons, from twenty-one million five hundred thirty-

eight thousand one hundred eighty-seven (21,538,187) to twenty-four million five hundred eighty-eight thousand one hundred fourteen (24,588,114), or fourteen-point-two percent (14.2%), during the same time period.

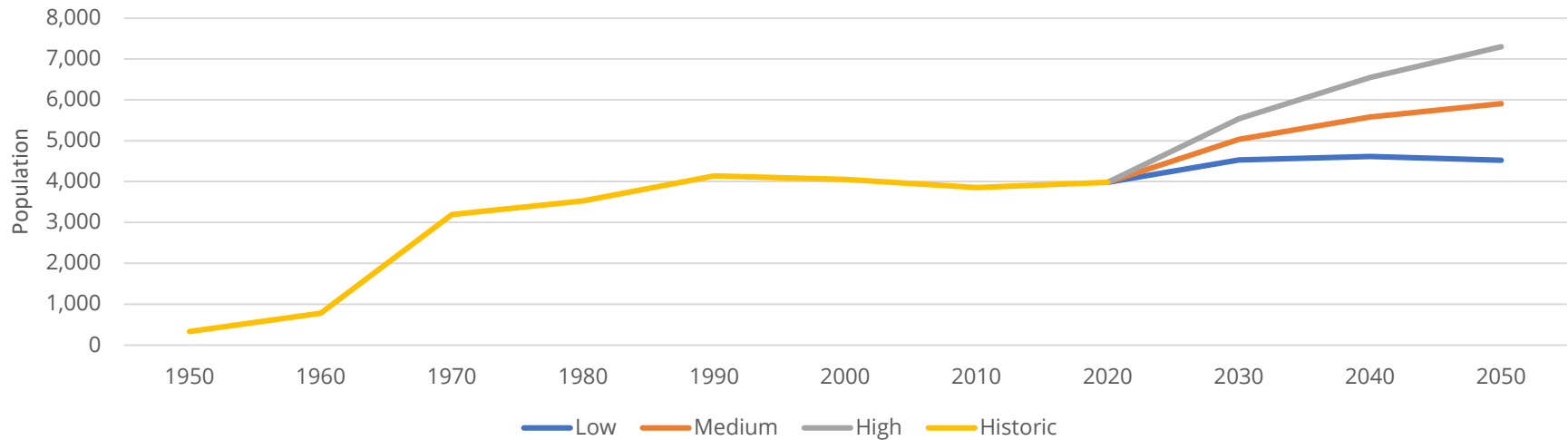
BEER also calculates low and high population projections (at the county level) to accommodate uncertainties in growth. Trends such as an increase in remote work or growth from development may impact the desirability of the City of Mary Esther. **Table A:4** and **Figure A:1** depict the various low to high population projection scenarios for the City of Mary Esther, Okaloosa County, and the State.

Table A:4 - Population Projections for the City of Mary Esther, Okaloosa County, and Florida, 2030-2050

Geographic Location	Population Projection Scenario								
	2030			2040			2050		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
City of Mary Esther	4,530	5,032	5,536	4,619	5,580	6,544	4,523	5,912	7,301
Okaloosa County	212,900	236,500	260,200	208,500	251,900	295,400	200,600	262,200	323,800
Florida	23,710,600	24,698,500	25,686,500	24,547,500	26,682,000	28,816,600	24,697,200	28,065,000	31,432,800

Data Source: *Projections of Florida Population by County, 2025-2050, with Estimates for 2023, BEBR*
Date Prepared: 10/2024

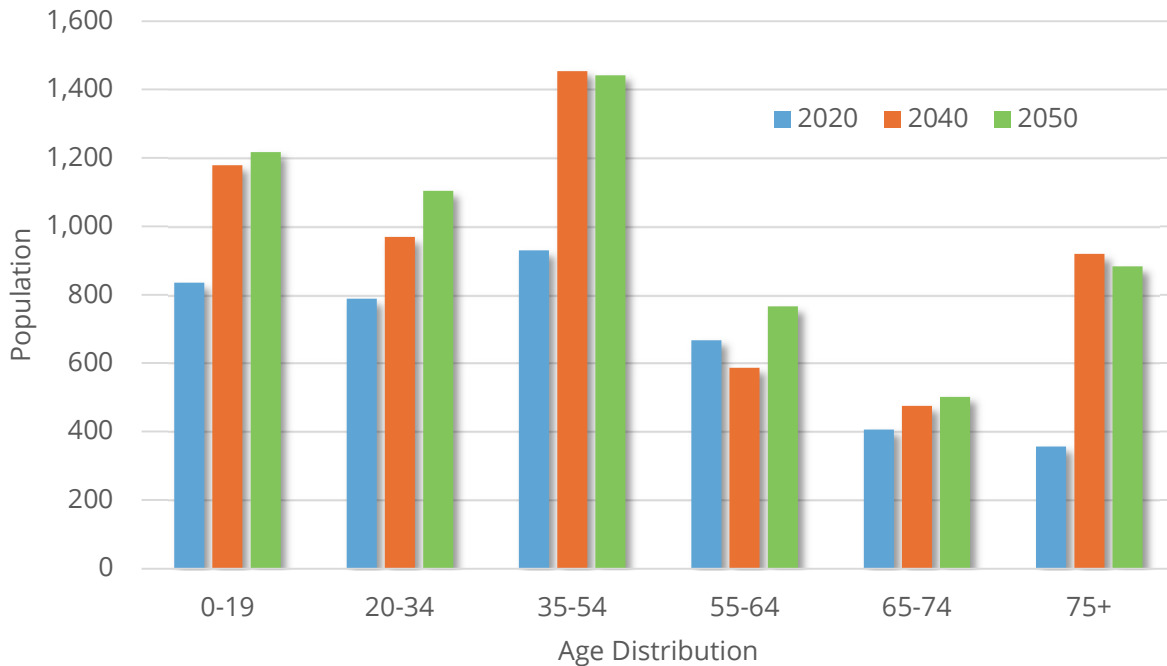
Figure A:1 - Historic Population and Projections



Data Source: *Projections of Florida Population by County, 2025-2050, with Estimates for 2023, BEBR*
Date Prepared: 10/2024

The distribution of Mary Esther’s population by age group is depicted in **Figure A:2** for 2020, 2040, and 2050.

Figure A:2 - Age Distribution, 2020, 2040, and 2050



Data Source: Estimates and projections by Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, based on 2010 and 2020 U.S. Census data and population projections by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, UF
Date Prepared: 11/2024

An analysis of age trends for residents between 2020 and 2050 mirrors national trends towards an increase in the retirement-aged population. The population aged sixty-five (65) years and above, commonly referred to as the retirement population, is anticipated to increase by eighty-three percent (83%), from seven hundred twenty-six (726) to one thousand three hundred ninety-four (1,394) persons between 2020 and 2040. This will have policy implications for the City in areas such as housing, transportation for seniors, senior activity programming, and health care needs.

Transportation Facilities: A good transportation system is necessary for the growth of all communities, both in terms of population growth and economic growth. The system must be safe and ensure the mobility of people, goods, and services to enhance economic growth and preserve an acceptable level of living standards for residents, while at the same time protecting environmental resources.

Roadways: Major roads in the City of Mary Esther include U.S. Highway 98 (SR 30), Mary Esther Boulevard (SR 393), Hollywood Boulevard, and Doolittle Boulevard. More details are included within the Transportation Element.

Currently, according to the NAVSTREETS database, there are thirty-nine and nine-tenths (39.9) miles of paved roadways within the City. Private roadways also exist, both paved and unpaved, in several gated communities where homeowner’s associations take responsibility for road maintenance. The City requires that all new private subdivision roads be paved and meet all roadway construction standards.

Commercial Aviation Service: The City of Mary Esther’s commercial air travel needs are predominately met by the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS), located approximately twelve (12) miles to the northeast of the City.

Transportation Disadvantaged Program: In compliance with Code of Federal Regulations 49 CFR Part 37, EC Rider’s Dial-A-Ride Program (Paratransit Service) is available to individuals with disabilities who are unable, as the result of physical or mental impairment, and without the assistance of another individual, to board, ride, or disembark public transportation for access to life sustaining activities, healthcare, employment, education, shopping, leisure, recreation, or general ventures.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities: Bicycling and walking are tools for healthy lifestyles and means of recreation in addition to being means of transportation. One of the visions outlined in the City of Mary Esther’s Vision Plan is to “become a walking and biking city, with a connected network of sidewalks, greenways, and multi-use trails.” The Great Northwest Coast Connector is a regional initiative that is continuing to advocate for the construction of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure along the FDOT-identified SUN Trail network. This long-distance trail can be an economic development tool through recreational tourism.

Sidewalks and greenways can provide greater accessibility for bicyclists and pedestrians. Some smaller scale improvements could also be made to better serve alternative transportation modes. Permanent or temporary protection can be provided at transit stops. Wide streets can be restriped to include bicycle or multi-use paths. Pedestrian crossings at signals can be improved, or midblock crossings added at common crossing points. (*Community Vision Plan: Public Infrastructure Assessment*, October 2022).

Education: Mary Esther Elementary School, Edwins Elementary School, Max Bruner Junior Middle School, and Fort Walton Beach High School (all part of the Okaloosa County School District) serve the City of Mary Esther. **Table A:5** compares educational attainment in The City of Mary Esther, the State of Florida, and the United States as a whole. **Map A:10** shows school locations within The City of Mary Esther.

Table A:5 - Education Level for The City of Mary Esther, Florida, and the U.S., 2018-2022

Education Level	Geographic Area			
	City of Mary Esther	Okaloosa County	State of Florida	U.S.
High School Graduate or Higher, % of Persons 25 years +	95.9%	93.0%	89.3%	89.1%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher, % of Persons 25 years +	32.7%	33.3%	32.3%	34.3%
Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2018-2022, Table S1501 Date Prepared: 10/2024				

This data shows that the City of Mary Esther’s percentage of population aged twenty-five (25) and older with a high school or higher education level is above the County, State, and national percentages. At the bachelor’s degree and higher level, the City of Mary Esther is slightly below the County percentage, but above the State and National percentages.

Medical Services: The City of Mary Esther offers its residents convenient access to a variety of medical services through nearby hospitals, clinics, and specialized healthcare facilities. One of the primary healthcare providers serving the area is the Fort Walton Beach Medical Center, located approximately five (5) miles east of Mary Esther at 1000 Mar Walt Drive, Fort Walton Beach, Florida. This full-service, two hundred sixty-seven (267)-bed hospital offers twenty-four (24)-hour emergency care, advanced surgical services, and specialized treatments, including cardiac care, orthopedic services, and a certified primary stroke center.

Another significant facility is the White-Wilson Medical Center, with its main campus at 1005 Mar Walt Drive in Fort Walton Beach. It is one of the largest multi-specialty physician groups in the region, offering comprehensive outpatient services such as family medicine, pediatrics, internal medicine, and over twenty (20) medical specialties including cardiology, neurology, and oncology.

Within Mary Esther itself, residents can access immediate care at the Urgent Care Center of Mary Esther, located at 151 Mary Esther Boulevard. This clinic provides walk-in medical services for non-life-threatening conditions, occupational health services, and basic laboratory testing.

For veterans, the Eglin Air Force Base Hospital located nearby provides medical services to active-duty military personnel and veterans. Additionally, specialized services such as dental care, optometry, and physical therapy are available through various private practices within the City and surrounding areas.

Pharmacy needs are met by several locations including CVS Pharmacy and Walgreens on Mary Esther Cut Off NW, providing prescription services, over-the-counter medications, and

health consultations. Emergency medical services are supported by the Mary Esther Fire Department and Okaloosa County Emergency Medical Services, ensuring rapid response times for medical emergencies.

The proximity and variety of these medical facilities ensure that Mary Esther residents have comprehensive healthcare options available, ranging from primary care and emergency services to specialized medical treatments, all within a short distance from their homes.

Recreational Opportunities: The City of Mary Esther maintains a diverse range of parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities that cater to residents of all ages and abilities. These include community parks, nature trails, playgrounds, sports fields, and picnic areas, as well as specialized amenities such as shuffleboard courts, basketball courts, and boat ramps. Collectively, these spaces contribute to the physical and mental well-being of the community and support the City's commitment to fostering a vibrant and sustainable environment. These facilities are detailed in Element F (Recreation and Open Space) of this Comprehensive Plan.

Library Service: The City's library makes resources available to residents for lifelong learning, information access, and leisure. This includes a materials collection of over thirty-three thousand eight hundred (33,800) audio books and DVDs, as well a computer lab and educational programming.

Public Safety: Law enforcement in the City of Mary Esther is provided by the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office (OCSO). The OCSO is responsible for maintaining public safety and enforcing laws within the City limits. They offer patrol services, criminal investigations, traffic enforcement, and community outreach programs aimed at enhancing the safety and well-being of residents. The Sheriff's Office also collaborates with local organizations to implement crime prevention initiatives and educational programs. The City contracts with the OCSO for enhanced services. This includes the services of two full-time deputies that conduct patrols, respond to calls, and provide crime prevention training to City staff and the public at-large.

The City contracts with the Ocean City/Wright Fire Department. This includes fire rescue, suppression, emergency medical services, and building fire inspections. The Department utilizes the existing City fire station, apparatus, and equipment.

Electrical Service: The City of Mary Esther receives electrical service from Florida Power & Light Company (FPL).

Water and Sewer Services: Most of the City of Mary Esther is served by municipal water and sewer systems managed by the City's Public Works Department. The department is responsible for providing clean and safe drinking water, maintaining water distribution lines, and ensuring effective wastewater collection and treatment. Ongoing infrastructure improvements aim to enhance service reliability and accommodate future growth within the community. The City currently contracts with Jacobs to manage these programs, with oversight provided by the Public Works Director.

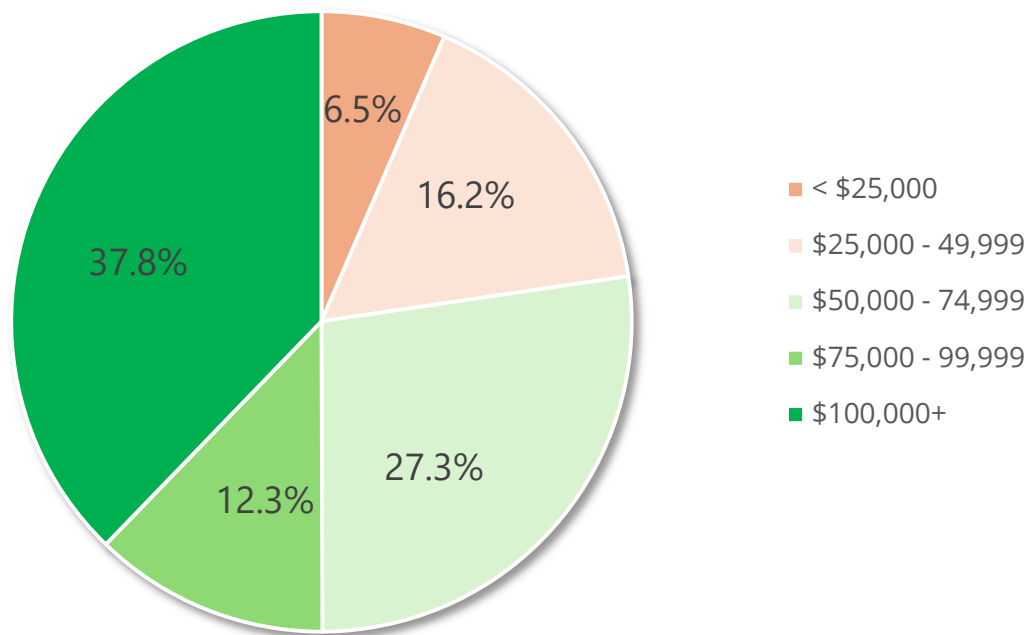
In 2020, a preliminary infrastructure study was conducted to evaluate the City's water and sewer systems, identifying areas for upgrades and expansion. Further information on this study can be found in the Infrastructure Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Solid Waste Management: Solid waste management in the City of Mary Esther is facilitated through a partnership with waste collection service providers like Waste Management Inc. Residents receive regular curbside garbage pickup, recycling services, and yard waste collection.

Broadband Service: Broadband service in the City of Mary Esther is provided by several telecommunications companies, including Cox Communications, Live Oak, and AT&T. These providers offer high-speed internet access, cable television, and telephone services to meet the digital connectivity needs of residents and businesses.

Household Income: Figure A:3 shows the average household income distribution for the City of Mary Esther. Table A:6 compares the median household income for the City of Mary Esther, the State of Florida, and the United States. It should be noted that these numbers for household income will differ from those within the Housing Element, as the area median income (AMI) often used for housing data replaces this data.

Figure A:3 - Household Income for the City of Mary Esther, 2018-2022



Data Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, 2018-2022, Table S1901
Date Prepared: 10/2024

Table A:6 – Median Household Income for the City of Mary Esther, Okaloosa County, Florida, and the U.S., 2018-2022

Geographic Area	Median Income	% of U.S. Median Income
City of Mary Esther	\$75,167	100.0%
Okaloosa County	\$73,988	98.5%
State of Florida	\$67,917	90.4%
United States	\$75,149	100.0%
Data Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, 2018-2022, Table S1901 Date Prepared: 10/2024		

As depicted above, the City of Mary Esther has a median household income of seventy-five thousand one hundred sixty-seven dollars (\$75,167) according to the American Community Survey’s five (5) year estimates, 2018-2022. Please note that this differs from the area median income (AMI) used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which is used in the Housing Element. The median household income shown is extremely close to the national median income, and slightly higher than Florida’s median household income.

Tourist Attractions: Although the City of Mary Esther’s economy is less oriented toward tourism than some of its neighbors in south Okaloosa County, tourist attractions in the City include its many recreation areas and restaurants as well as the Santa Rosa Mall.

Development and Redevelopment in Flood Prone Areas: Development in flood prone areas can produce many problems including serious injuries or death from floodwaters, property damage, high development costs, degradation of the natural environment, and lack of service and facility extensions to these areas.

Historic Land Use

The City of Mary Esther is home to approximately sixty-five (65) historic properties with the vast majority being homes of historic or cultural value. Most of these properties are along U.S. Highway 98. Some of these properties were constructed in the early Twentieth Century, while others were built as recently as 1971. The City does not have any current historic districts or places listed on the National Register of Historic Places (**Map A:9**).

Parcels south of Highway 98, are characterized primarily by larger lots with direct access to the Sound—with few exceptions. These properties are often shaded by expansive tree canopies and dense vegetation, creating a lush, secluded atmosphere. The homes in this district tend to be larger and older, with some of the city's most historic residences found here, including the oldest occupied residence from 1910.

A defining feature of the area is the presence of detached garages and various outbuildings, such as guest or residential cottages , typically positioned in front of the main home. Many

properties are enclosed by decorative walls or fences with gated entrances, while landscaped hedges are sometimes used to soften the appearance of chain-link fences. Elegant address signs adorn some properties, and a few homes even bear distinctive names like Tranquility on the Sound or Safe-N-Sound. Driveways are predominantly paved, though some remain in their natural state, lending an "Old Florida" charm to the landscape.

Town Center: The Santa Rosa Mall property presents a significant opportunity for revitalization that aligns closely with the goals outlined in Mary Esther’s Vision Plan for a new town center. Establishing a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) under Florida’s Community Redevelopment Act would provide the necessary framework to address the site’s challenges and unlock its potential as a vibrant, mixed-use development.

Indicators of blight under Section 163.340(8)(a)-(o), F.S., are clearly present at the site. The property exhibits structural deterioration and obsolescence, with significant vacancies and underutilized spaces resulting from shifts in retail trends and the rise of e-commerce. Transportation and infrastructure deficiencies further hinder redevelopment efforts, with the area lacking adequate pedestrian connectivity, bike access, and modern stormwater management systems. Additionally, stagnant property values and limited private investment underscore the need for public intervention to spur economic growth and attract new development.

The Mary Esther Vision Plan identifies the redevelopment of the Santa Rosa Mall property as a central component of the City’s future. The site has the potential to become a vibrant town center that incorporates housing, retail, office space, and public amenities. This vision emphasizes creating a more connected and walkable environment, introducing sidewalks, bike paths, and green spaces to better integrate the site with the surrounding community. Additionally, the redevelopment could provide diverse housing options, including “missing middle” housing such as townhomes and apartments, catering to a range of residents, including military personnel, young professionals, and retirees. A revitalized mall property would also serve as an economic catalyst, positioning the area as a hub for local businesses, dining, and entertainment.

Establishing a CRA would allow Mary Esther to pursue these redevelopment goals more effectively. A CRA enables the City to access targeted funding through tax increment financing (TIF), which could be reinvested in infrastructure upgrades and public amenities. This mechanism would also provide financial incentives to attract private developers willing to contribute to the site’s transformation. The CRA would facilitate a coordinated approach to redevelopment, integrating land use adjustments, infrastructure improvements, and economic development efforts to ensure cohesive and sustainable growth. Furthermore, the revitalized property would strengthen Mary Esther’s identity, contribute to regional economic stability, and support nearby military installations by providing additional housing and amenities.

In redeveloping the Santa Rosa Mall, investments in infrastructure would be key, including sidewalks, bike lanes, stormwater systems, and green spaces. Mixed-use zoning and higher density housing should be encouraged to reflect modern land use patterns and attract a diverse population. Public spaces for events, recreation, and community gatherings could foster a sense of place and enhance the quality of life for residents. Finally, the City could launch strategic marketing efforts to promote the site as an attractive destination for businesses, residents, and visitors, leveraging its proximity to Hurlburt Field and the Santa Rosa Sound.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE LAND USE

Residential Land Use

Analyzing historical and current trends in residential development highlights the future challenges and opportunities for meeting the City of Mary Esther’s residential needs. **Table A:7** shows that the City currently has four hundred eighty-nine-point-two (489.2) acres of residential land, with only twenty-four-point-seven (24.7) acres categorized as vacant residential. This limited availability of undeveloped land poses a significant challenge, especially considering projected population growth. The population is expected to increase by twenty-six-point-four percent (26.4%) by 2030 and an additional ten-point-nine percent (10.9%) by 2040, resulting in a total growth of approximately one thousand five hundred ninety-eight (1,598) residents by 2040.

Although the existing residential inventory could theoretically accommodate some of this growth, a portion of the current housing stock is either substandard or does not align with current market demands. Furthermore, the City’s existing residential density patterns, predominantly low-density single-family housing—comprising four hundred forty-one-point-one (441.1) acres of single-family residential land—limit the potential to house a significantly larger population. The demand for higher-density housing, such as multi-family developments, is likely to grow, especially with the success of projects like the Renaissance Phase I apartments, which demonstrate a market shift toward modern, higher-density residential options.

Given these constraints, Mary Esther must focus on converting underutilized or obsolete commercial properties into mixed-use or higher-density residential developments to accommodate future growth. The City has limited vacant residential land to meet projected needs, and further sprawling development is not feasible given the City’s landlocked nature and built-out character. Instead, strategic redevelopment of commercial areas into vibrant, mixed-use developments will provide opportunities to increase housing capacity without requiring additional land dedicated solely to residential use. This approach also aligns with broader urban planning trends, which prioritize walkable, multi-use communities that integrate housing, retail, and services.

The recent Renaissance Phase I apartments provide a compelling model for such redevelopment. By repurposing commercial properties into higher-density residential units, the City can efficiently use its existing land while meeting market demand for diverse housing options. Projects like this not only address housing shortages but also create opportunities for economic growth by attracting new residents and businesses to revitalized areas.

In summary, to meet the demands of a growing population, Mary Esther must prioritize the redevelopment of commercial properties into mixed-use and higher-density residential

developments. This approach maximizes land use efficiency, addresses housing needs, and supports the City’s long-term vision for sustainable and inclusive growth.

Table A:7 - Existing Residential Land Use for the City of Mary Esther

Existing Land Use (Condensed)	Existing Land Use Subcategory (FDOR Use Description)	Acres
Single-Family Residential	Single-Family	434.3
	Single-Family/Townhouse	5.9
	Manufactured Home	0.9
	<i>Combined Single-Family Total</i>	<i>441.1</i>
Multi-Family Residential	Multi-Family ≥ 10 Units	12.7
	Condominiums	3.7
	Multi-Family < 10 Units	7.0
	<i>Combined Multi-Family Total</i>	<i>23.4</i>
Vacant Residential	-	24.7
Total	-	489.2

In addition to clarifying definitions for the previously existing future land use categories, this plan update creates two new residential future land use categories ‘High Density Residential’ and the ‘Historic Duplex Conservation District (HDCD).’ The High Density Residential category is proposed to better align with the zoning districts of the City’s existing zoning ordinance and to allow for more precision in determining the appropriate density for particular parcels in the City.

The Historic Duplex Conservation District (HDCD) is based on some of the unique and currently non-conforming residential development that exist South of US 98 along the Santa Rosa Sound. The parcels included in this district generally have a principal dwelling unit with cottage(s) and/or duplex(s) on one parcel or have cottages and or duplexes on one parcel without a principal dwelling unit. The HDCD future land use district represents a style of development that is typical of the City of Mary Esther and not seen in many of the surrounding communities

Commercial Land Use

As Mary Esther’s population increases, the demand for commercial businesses will grow, driven by the need for goods, services, and employment opportunities to support the community. Based on a standard ratio of commercial to residential land of one to twenty (1:20), and considering the existing commercial land inventory in **Table A:8**, the City appears

to have sufficient land devoted to commercial uses to meet projected needs through 2040. Currently, Mary Esther has one hundred thirty-six-point-three (136.3) acres of commercial land, including nineteen-point-three (19.3) acres classified as vacant. This represents six percent (6%) of the City’s developed residential land use, which exceeds the standard ratio of five percent (5%).

However, the City’s commercial areas must evolve to align with modern trends and the growing demand for mixed-use developments. Much of Mary Esther’s commercial land, including regional shopping and department stores—totaling forty-seven-point-five (47.5) acres combined—reflects an outdated, auto-centric retail model. These properties, particularly those associated with declining mall infrastructure, offer prime opportunities for redevelopment into mixed-use developments that integrate residential units with retail, dining, and office space. Such transformations not only increase housing density but also promote walkability, attract diverse businesses, and foster a sense of community.

The redevelopment of existing commercial areas into mixed-use development is an efficient strategy to maximize land use while meeting the demands of a growing population. This approach also addresses the City’s limited vacant residential land, as new housing options can be created within repurposed commercial properties. Additionally, mixed-use redevelopment supports economic growth by attracting residents and businesses to revitalized commercial corridors.

Table A:8 - Existing Commercial Land Use for The City of Mary Esther

Existing Land Use (Condensed)	Existing Land Use Subcategory (FDOR Use Description)	Acres
Commercial	Stores, 1 Story	23.1
	Department Stores	22.6
	Supermarket	2.3
	Regional Shopping	24.9
	Community Shopping	14.2
	Office Buildings	6.6
	Professional Building	0.9
	Restaurant/Cafe	9.9
	Drive-In Restaurant	0.7
	Financial Building	4.3
	Service Shop	0.9
	Car Wash	0.4
	Vehicle Sales/Repair	1.5

Existing Land Use (Condensed)	Existing Land Use Subcategory (FDOR Use Description)	Acres
	Nightclub/Bars	2.5
	Hotels and Motels	2.0
	<i>Combined Commercial Total</i>	<i>117.0</i>
Vacant Commercial	-	19.3
Total	-	136.3

Industrial Land Use

Mary Esther is unlikely to require substantial industrial land use beyond very low-intensity operations such as warehousing or self-storage. The City currently has no developed industrial properties, and there is limited demand for high-intensity industrial activities due to its predominantly residential and commercial character, as well as its land constraints. Small-scale industrial uses, such as self-storage or warehousing, could be accommodated within existing commercial or underutilized properties, minimizing the need for new industrial land designations.

In summary, the future land use strategy for Mary Esther should focus on revitalizing existing commercial properties to meet the growing demand for mixed-use developments, while maintaining flexibility for low-intensity industrial uses. This approach ensures efficient land use, aligns with community needs, and supports the City's vision for sustainable and balanced growth.

Conservation Land Use

The Future Land Use Map designates two-point-seven (2.7) acres—approximately three one thousandths of a percent (.003%) of the City's total area—as Conservation. Under this designation, environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, floodplains, and important ecological habitats are protected to maintain water quality, reduce flood hazards, preserve wildlife habitats, and prevent exploitation or neglect. Only limited, low-impact activities and development are allowed, consistent with the broader goals of resource management described in Element E - Coastal Management and Conservation.

Recreation Land Use

The Recreation future land use category provides areas for public and private recreational facilities that encourage active and passive forms of leisure. In accordance with the City's Recreation and Open Space Element, these facilities include parks, playgrounds, sports fields, walking trails, and boat ramps designed to serve residents of varying ages and abilities. Recreation lands in this category may also be used for community events, educational programs, and resource-based activities such as picnic areas and nature observation. By preserving open space and supporting diverse recreational opportunities, this category promotes public health, social interaction, and community well-being while complementing other land uses within the City.

Facilities in the Recreation category are planned and managed to ensure equitable access, safety, and environmental protection. Land development regulations for this category incorporate level of service standards (LOSS) to guide capital improvements and maintain adequate facilities over time. In addition, design strategies emphasize ADA-compliant amenities, proper buffering from adjacent uses, and integration with green infrastructure that supports stormwater management and habitat conservation. Together, these measures

provide a balanced approach that aligns with the City’s long-term goals for sustaining high-quality recreational offerings and safeguarding valuable open spaces. Further information about current and future Recreation land use needs are included within Element F - Recreation and Open Space.

Public Facilities Land Use

This category is expected to increase as the population grows. However, since the City is not expected to grow much by the year 2035, not much of the additional vacant land in this category will need to be developed. The main exception will be for lands needed by the City if funding becomes available and it is decided to develop central plants for wastewater treatment and potable water. Additional data on the Public/Semi-Public future land use can be found within **Table A:1**.

OVERLAY DISTRICTS

Soundside

This proposed overlay addresses longstanding challenges in an older residential area where multiple properties do not comply with current land development standards, resulting in frequent variance requests for minor improvements. This has strained both municipal resources and property owners, who face extensive procedures for basic renovations or expansions. By establishing the Soundside Overlay, the City aims to reduce these burdens and encourage the responsible upkeep of existing homes. The overlay encourages the City to allow blanket relaxation of certain dimensional requirements, create an administrative process for smaller projects, and introduce a Special Use permit for more substantial modifications while preserving life-safety measures and neighborhood character. Streamlining these processes will help balance regulatory objectives with the practical needs of homeowners and the community.

Town Center

The Mary Esther Vision Plan identifies the redevelopment of the Santa Rosa Mall and surrounding properties as a central component of the City’s future. The site has the potential to become a vibrant town center that incorporates housing, retail, office space, and public amenities. This vision emphasizes creating a more connected and walkable environment, introducing sidewalks, bike paths, and green spaces to better integrate the site with the surrounding community.

2045 Future Land Use

Table A:9 – Proposed Future Land Uses for the City of Mary Esther

Future Land Use	Future Land Use Information			
	Purpose	Density: Dwelling Units (DU) per Acre	Density: Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	Uses Permitted
Low-Density Residential	Accommodates primarily single-family detached residential uses on individual lots. Typical uses include homes with accessory structures and limited home-based occupations. Neighborhood-scale amenities (e.g., small churches, daycares) may be allowed.	Up to 5.51 DU per gross acre	Not applicable	Single-family homes, accessory structures, limited home-based businesses, small-scale community facilities
Medium-Density Residential	Allows a variety of residential types, including single-family attached or detached, duplexes, and small-scale multi-family developments (e.g., townhouses, low-rise apartments). Site design standards address building height and layout.	Up to 10.0 DU per gross acre	Not applicable	Townhouses, duplexes, small-scale apartments, other comparable housing
High-Density Residential	Permits more intensive residential development, such as multi-family complexes and taller structures, with compatibility standards for surrounding uses.	Up to 20.0 DU per gross acre (unless otherwise specified)	Not applicable	Multi-story residential buildings, parking structures, on-site amenities

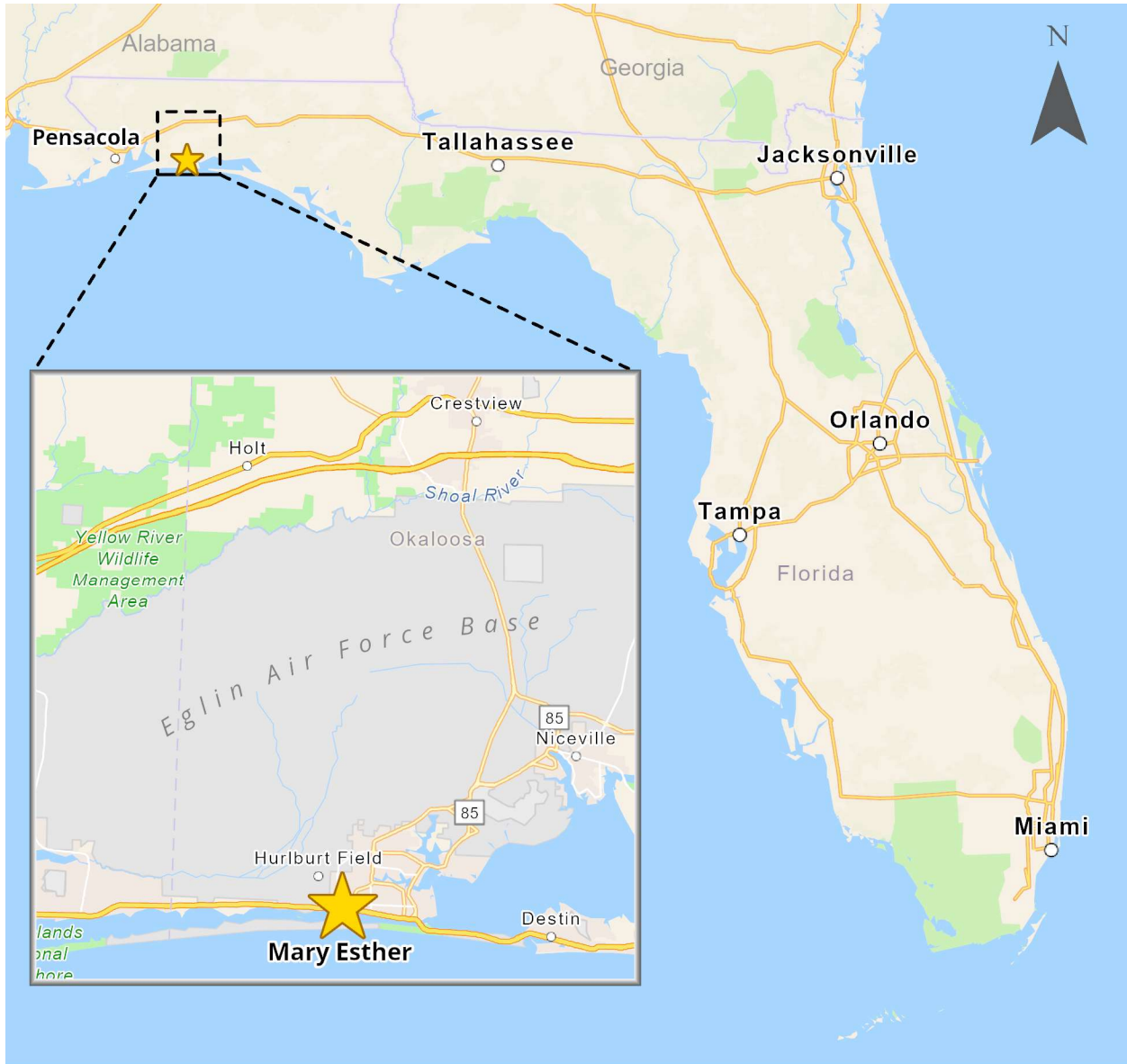
Future Land Use	Future Land Use Information			
	Purpose	Density: Dwelling Units (DU) per Acre	Density: Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	Uses Permitted
	May include shared amenities like parking structures and communal recreational areas.			
Historic Duplex Conservation District (HDCD)	This category reflects the City's intention to preserve the historic use of these properties as predominantly historic single-family detached, cottage, or duplex residential uses.	Up to ten (10.0) dwelling units per acre. Not to exceed the existing number of dwellings by more than two (2).	Not Applicable	Single-family detached residences, cottage, or duplex residential uses. Limited home-based occupations subject to the LDC may be appropriate
Commercial	Supports retail, office, and service businesses that serve residents and visitors. Compatibility measures address buffering, traffic impacts, and transitions to nearby residential areas.	Not applicable	Maximum FAR of 1.92	Retail, offices, restaurants, services, and other commercial activities
Mixed Use	Combines residential and commercial uses within the same structure or on the same site. Includes standards for orderly transitions from lower-density areas and requirements for distributing residential and commercial floor	Up to 20.0 DU per gross acre for residential	Maximum FAR of 1.92 for commercial	Mixed-use buildings with residential above commercial, or separate single-use structures on the same site. Development requires a PUD or PMDD approval process.

Future Land Use	Future Land Use Information			
	Purpose	Density: Dwelling Units (DU) per Acre	Density: Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	Uses Permitted
	area or acreage (65%/35%).			
Conservation	Preserves environmentally sensitive lands, limiting development to passive recreation and essential infrastructure. All activity must comply with environmental regulations.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Passive recreation, habitat conservation, essential infrastructure
Public Lands	Includes lands owned, leased, or operated by governmental entities (local, state, or federal). Permitted uses include facilities necessary to support public administration and services.	Not applicable	Not specified	Public buildings, administrative offices, schools, libraries, emergency services, and related public facilities
Recreation	Supports public and private recreational facilities with an emphasis on open space, public access, and environmental protection where necessary.	Not applicable	Not specified	Parks, playgrounds, sports fields, greenways, and similar recreational spaces

Table A:10 – Proposed Future Land Use Classifications by Acreage (2025)

Future Land Use (FLU)	Acres	Percentage
Low Density Residential (LDR)	435.7	24.5%
Medium Density Residential (MDR)	17.0	2.2%
Historic Duplex Conservation District (HDCCD)	31.8	4.1%
Commercial Use (C)	189.1	24.5%
Recreational Use (REC)	10.6	1.4%
Conservation (CON)	2.7	0.3%
Public Lands (PL)	51.2	6.6%
Recreation/Conservation (REC/CON)	33.9	4.4%
Total	772.0	
Data Source: Mary Esther FLUM, Proposed Changes		
Date Prepared: 5/2025		

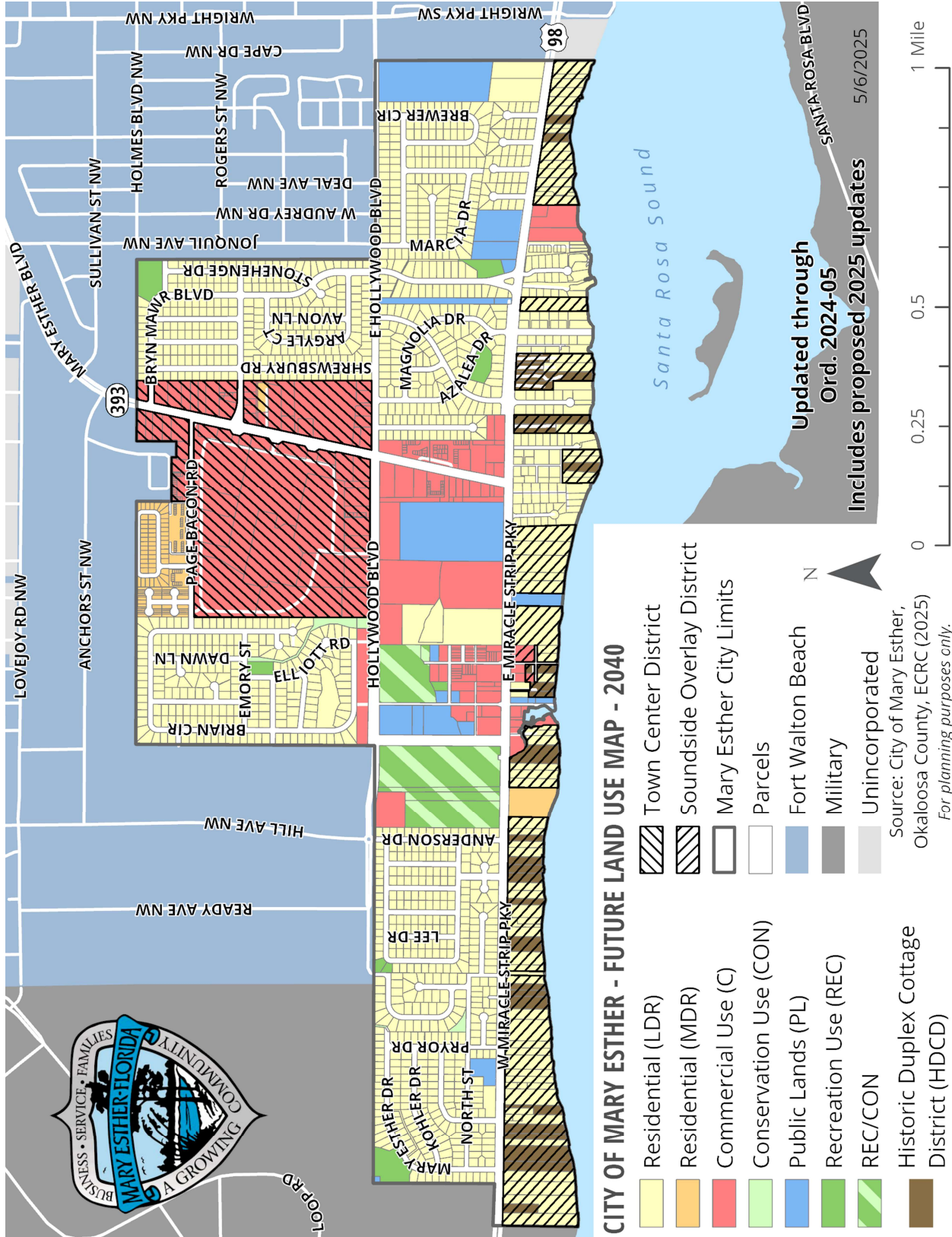
Map A:1 - City of Mary Esther - Location Map



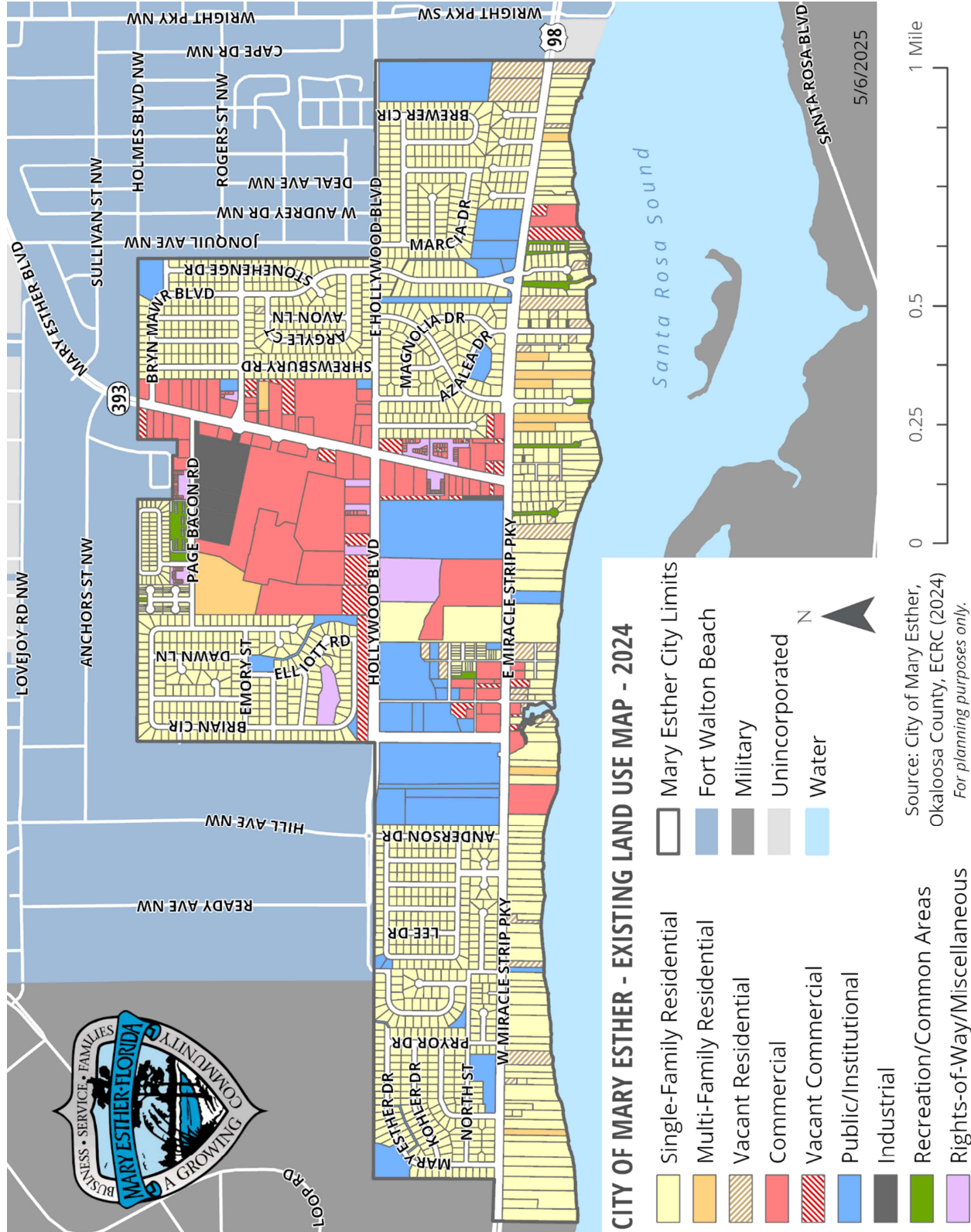
CITY OF MARY ESTHER - LOCATION MAP

Source: FDEP, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USFWS, FDEP, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA

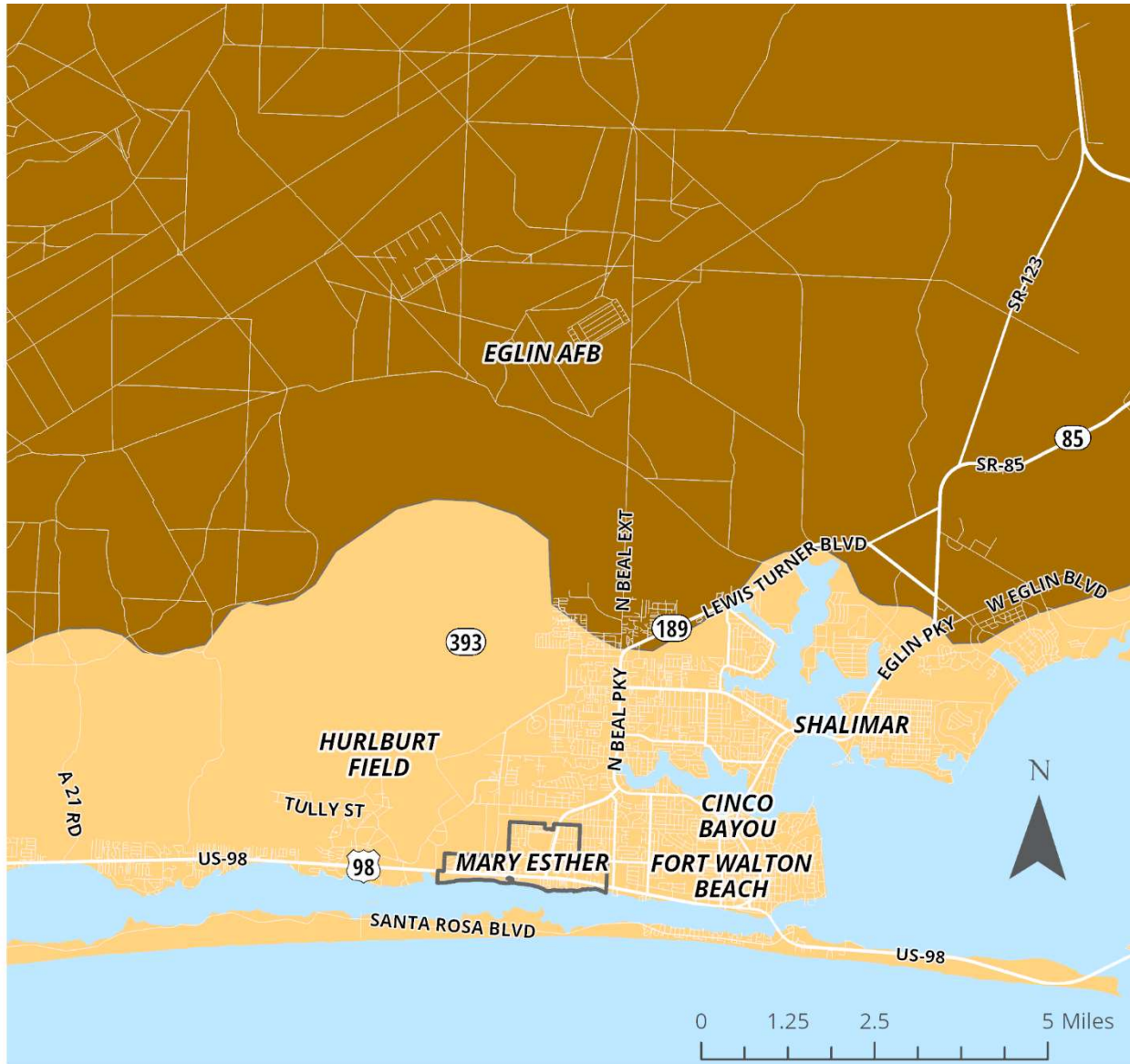
Map A:2 - City of Mary Esther - Future Land Use Map - 2040



Map A:3 - City of Mary Esther - Existing Land Use Map - 2024



Map A:4 - City of Mary Esther - Physiographic Provinces



CITY OF MARY ESTHER - PHYSIOGRAPHIC PROVINCES

-  Panhandle Coastal Lowlands
-  Western Highlands
-  Mary Esther City Limits
-  Water









Source: City of Mary Esther, Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024); FDEP (2023)

For planning purposes only.

Map A:5 - City of Mary Esther - Surficial Geology



CITY OF MARY ESTHER - SURFICIAL GEOLOGY

-  Alluvium
-  Citronelle Formation
-  Holocene sediments
-  Undifferentiated sediments (Pleistocene/Holocene)
-  Mary Esther City Limits
-  Water



Source: City of Mary Esther, Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024); FDEP Florida Geological Survey (2022)

For planning purposes only.

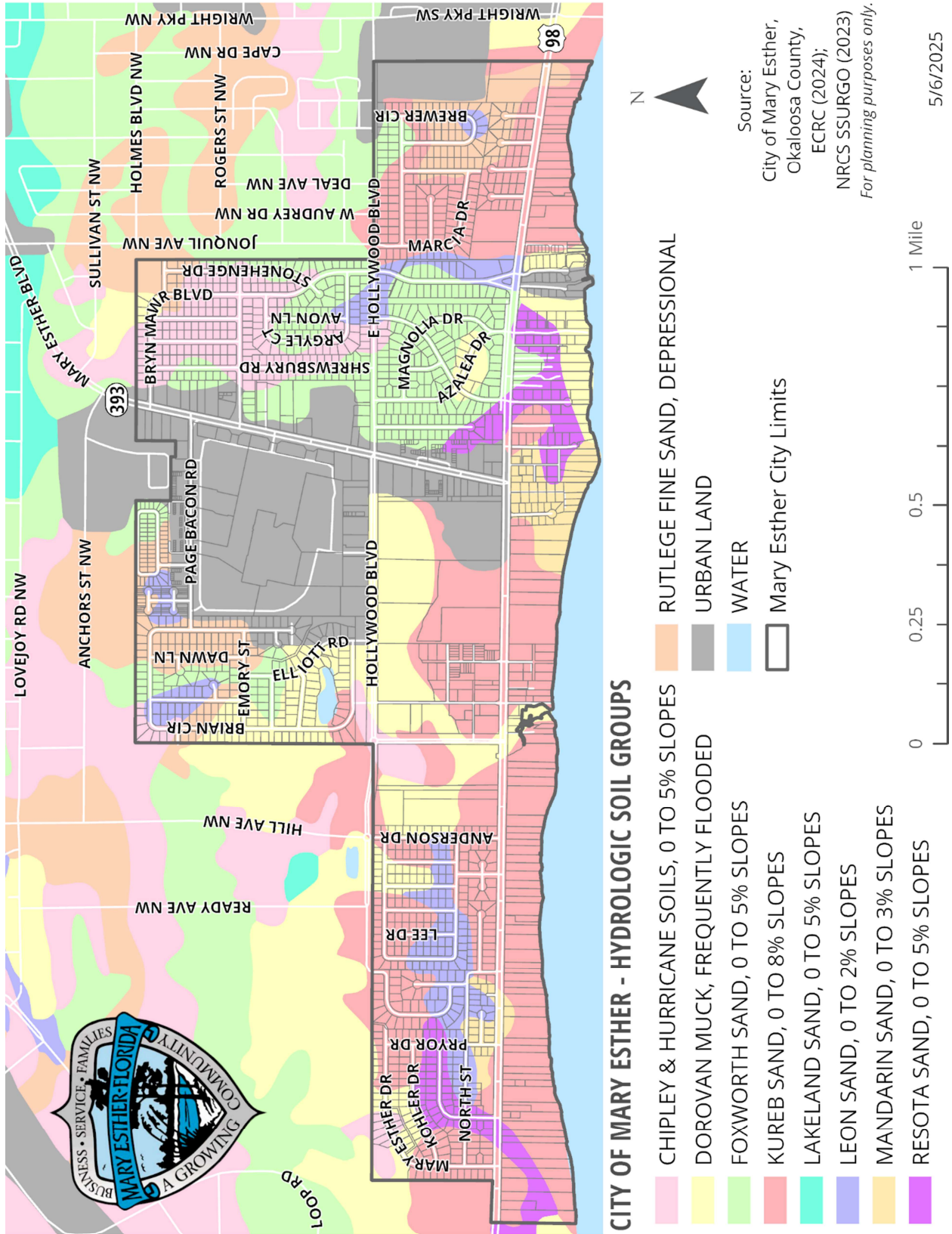
Map A:6 - City of Mary Esther - National Wetlands Inventory



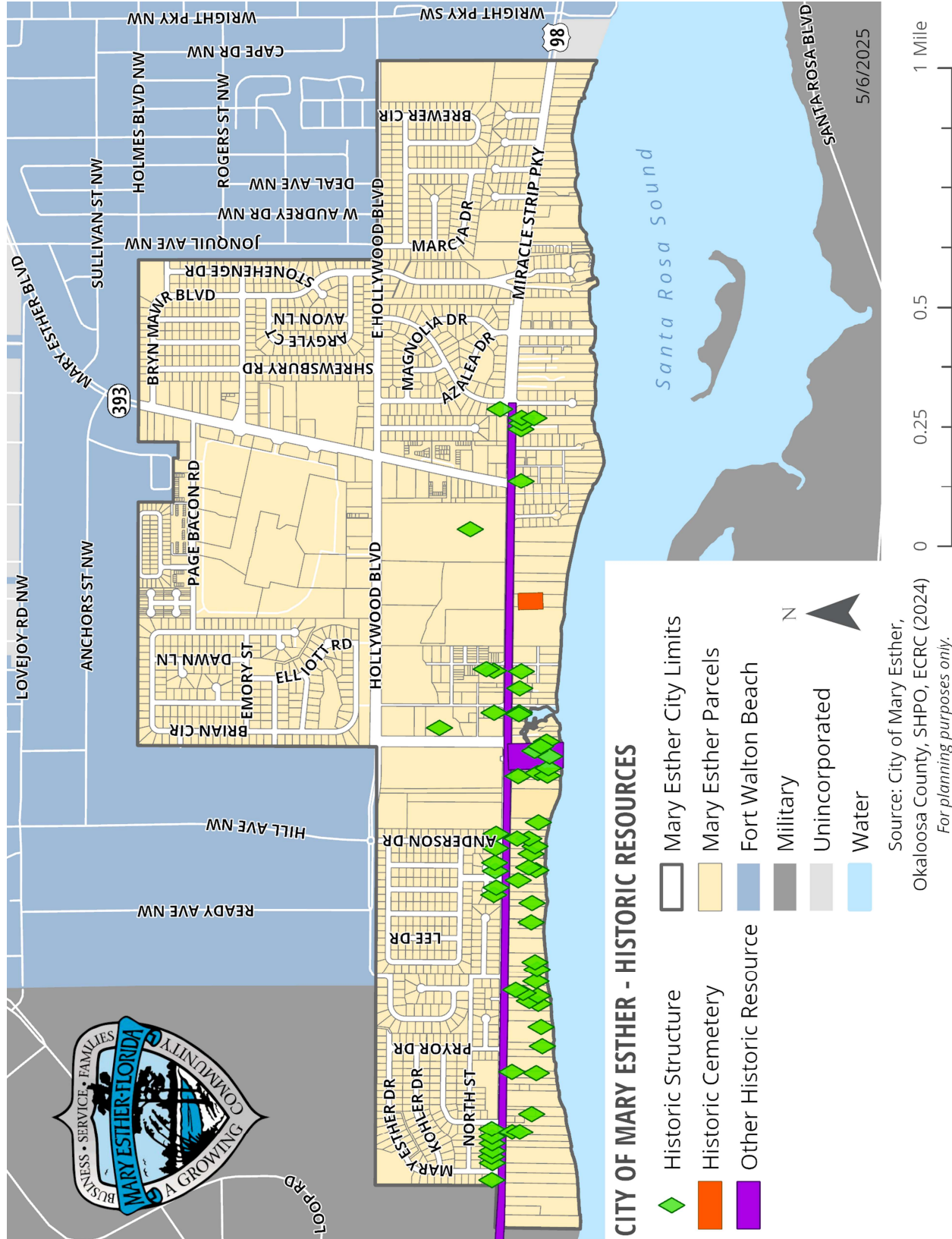
Map A:7 - City of Mary Esther - FEMA Flood Zones



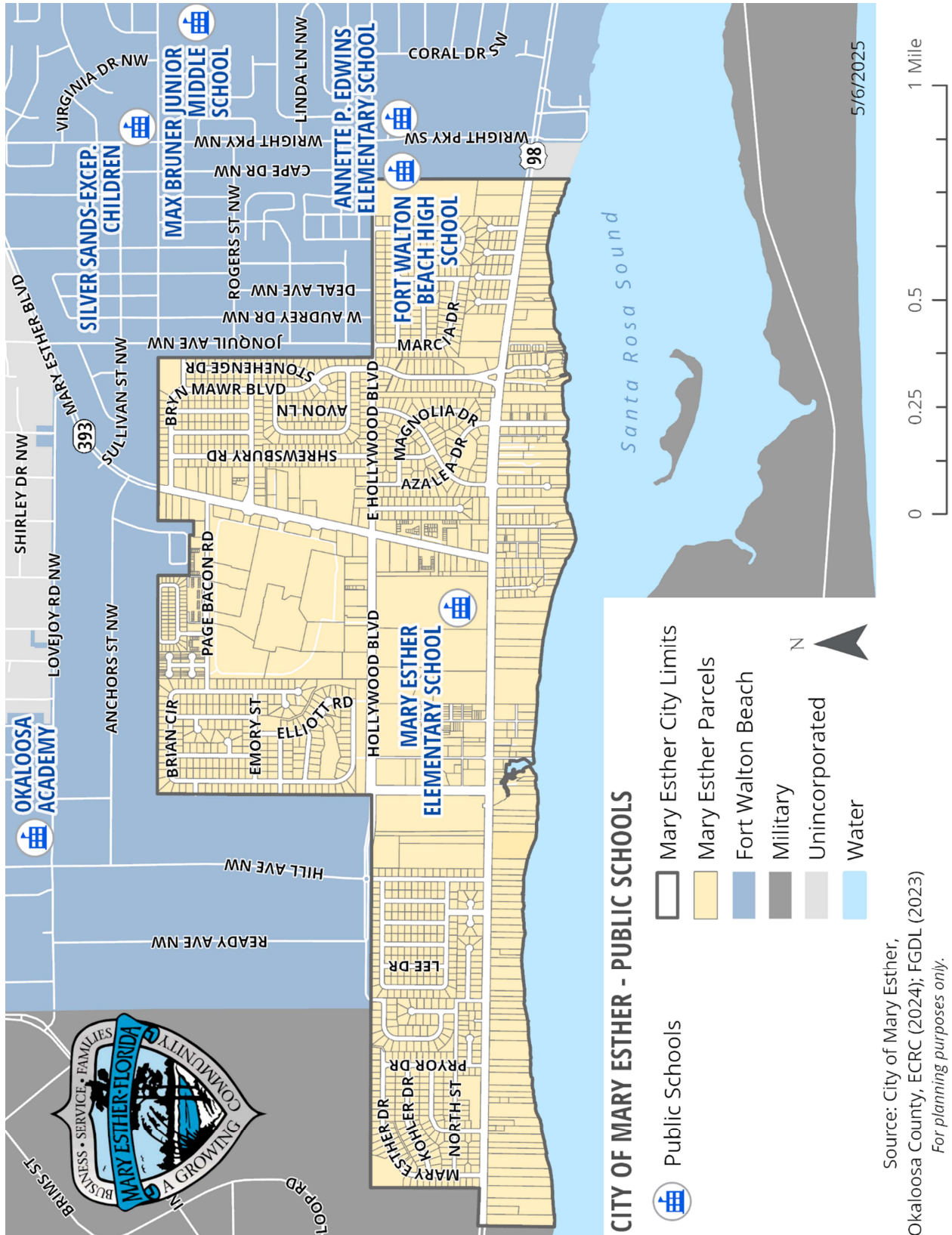
Map A:8 - City of Mary Esther - Hydrologic Soil Groups



Map A:9 - City of Mary Esther - Historic Resources



Map A:10 - City of Mary Esther - Public Schools



Source: City of Mary Esther, Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024); FGDL (2023) For planning purposes only.

Section B: Transportation Element



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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the Transportation Element is to plan for a multimodal transportation system that places emphasis on transportation systems for the City of Mary Esther. The Transportation Element addresses all public roadways, bicycle facilities, sidewalks, multi-use trails, and intermodal facilities (airports, park-and-ride lots, etc.) where applicable. The Element also assesses needs for current and future transportation systems.

The City seeks to provide a multimodal transportation system that is safe and easily accessible to all residents and visitors, energy-efficient, cost-effective to provide and maintain, and capable of serving existing and projected travel demand. This Element meets the requirements of section 163.3177(6)(b), Florida Statutes, and addresses, at a minimum, the mandatory components for a jurisdiction of less than fifty thousand (50,000) residents within a metropolitan planning area designated as a Metropolitan or Transportation Planning Organization (TPO). Mary Esther is located within the Okaloosa-Walton TPO and is part of the Navarre-Miramar Beach-Destin Urbanized Area.

The City of Mary Esther has an estimated 2024 population of four thousand and ninety-three (4,493) according to the University of Florida - Bureau of Economic and Business Research and a land area of approximately one and a half (1.5) square miles, making it a densely populated area. The primary mode of transportation is personal automobile, and the current roadway network serves the population with an average level of service but will require improvements in order to do so through the 2040 and 2045 timeframes of this comprehensive plan. The overall pace of growth and development in the City has remained slow over the past twenty (20) years. However there are opportunities new development and redevelopment especially in the town center overlay area, which could lead to increased traffic circulation.

The following data and analysis address statutory requirements and assess existing and future conditions so the City can better plan for the transportation needs of tomorrow. Understanding how well the roadways are operating now will determine where deficiencies exist and where system improvements may be needed. Transportation is inextricably linked to land use, therefore, freight, commute, and leisure trips generated by future growth patterns will be considered. A holistic approach to transportation that includes access for bicyclists, pedestrians, and the transportation disadvantaged will help to improve the quality of life in the City of Mary Esther.

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM INVENTORY

There are approximately five-point-seven (5.7) centerline miles of Florida State Highway System roads within the City of Mary Esther (including SR 393/Mary Esther Boulevard and both directions of divided U.S. Highway 98). Approximately two (2) miles of roadways (Hollywood Boulevard and Doolittle Boulevard) are maintained by Okaloosa County. An additional eighteen (18) miles of local roads exist within the City limits. The City's roadway network (with maintenance classification for major roads) is shown on **Map B:1**.

Designated SIS Facilities

In 2003, the Florida Legislature established the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) to enhance Florida's transportation mobility and economic competitiveness. The SIS is a statewide network of high-priority transportation facilities, including the State's largest and most significant airports, spaceports, deep-water seaports, freight rail terminals, passenger rail and intercity bus terminals, rail corridors, waterways, and highways. These facilities represent the State's primary means for moving people and freight between Florida's diverse regions, as well as between Florida and other states and countries. SIS Facilities are important because they receive significantly more funding than other state roads and issues on these roadways are likely to be addressed expeditiously.

SIS facilities accommodate high levels of people and goods movement, generally supporting the major flows of interregional, interstate, and international trips. The City of Mary Esther's SIS system includes U.S. Highway 98 along with the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (Santa Rosa Sound).

Major Transportation Network

U.S. Highway 98 (SR 30) – Principal Arterial: This highway runs from western Mississippi through southern Florida. It is the major east-west corridor in the southern Florida Panhandle Region, connecting Mary Esther to Fort Walton Beach to the east, and Pensacola to the west. A Target superstore and Mary Esther Elementary School (and its corresponding school zone) are located on U.S. Highway 98 near Mary Esther Boulevard. According to FDOT's Access Management Guidebook, U.S. Highway 98 exceeds the maximum median openings by spacing. U.S. Highway 98 is a significant feature of Northwest Florida's transportation system, a designated evacuation route, and part of the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS).

Mary Esther Boulevard (SR 393) – Minor Arterial: This road provides the arterial connection from U.S. Highway 98 to Fort Walton Beach to the north. It also connects to State Road 189 and is therefore indirectly one of the major connections to Interstate 10 to the north. It is classified as a Hurricane Evacuation Route. The major retail land uses within Mary Esther are located on Mary Esther Boulevard, including the Santa Rosa Mall.

Hollywood Boulevard – Major Collector: This route provides the primary east-west local connection between neighborhoods within Mary Esther. It also provides connections to Wright Parkway Northwest and Fort Walton Beach High School (and corresponding school zone) to the

east just beyond city limits, and Hill Avenue to the west, which transitions to the Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard bypass around the region. It includes a center turn lane and two lanes in each direction west of Mary Esther Boulevard, but only includes one lane in each direction east of Mary Esther Boulevard. This narrower segment between Mary Esther Boulevard and Wright Parkway Northwest includes approximately forty (40) feet of street width, including eight (8)-foot striped shoulders on both sides of the street. Some roundabouts are used as intersection control on Hollywood Boulevard. A small portion of Hollywood Boulevard, between Doolittle Boulevard and Hill Avenue, is a designated evacuation route.

Doolittle Boulevard – Major Collector: This road is a north-south connector between Hollywood Boulevard and U.S. Highway 98. It is also a designated evacuation route.

The Functional Classification, Level of Service, Number of Lanes, Speed Limit, and Annual Average Daily Traffic of Mary Esther’s major transportation network are shown in **Maps B:2 through B:6**, and in **Table B:1** below.

Table B:1 - Major Transportation Network Characteristics

Road Name - Segment	Classification (LOS)	Lanes	Speed Limit (mph)	AADT (2023)
US 98 (SR 30) – West of Doolittle Blvd	Principal Arterial (C)	4 + median	40	43,500
US 98 (SR 30) – Between Doolittle Blvd & Mary Esther Blvd	Principal Arterial (C)	4 + median	40	33,000
US 98 (SR 30) – East of Mary Esther Blvd	Principal Arterial (C)	4 + median	40	28,000
Mary Esther Blvd (SR 393) – South of Hollywood Blvd	Minor Arterial (D)	4 + median	40	18,100
Mary Esther Blvd (SR 393) – North of Hollywood Blvd	Minor Arterial (C)	4 + median	35	24,500
Hollywood Blvd – East of Mary Esther Blvd	Local	4	35	9,500
Hollywood Blvd – West of Mary Esther Blvd	Local	2	35	6,900
Doolittle Blvd	Local	4 + center turn lane	35	16,300
Data Source: FDOT, City of Mary Esther Vision Plan Date Accessed: 11/2024				

Public Transit

Public Transportation System: Emerald Coast Rider provides bus transit throughout Okaloosa County and includes multiple routes and stops servicing the City of Mary Esther along Hollywood Boulevard, Mary Esther Boulevard, and through the Santa Rosa Mall property. These routes provide connections to other routes and various destinations within the county. **Map B:7** shows the transit routes and stops within Mary Esther.

Airports: The nearest commercial airport to the City of Mary Esther is the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS), approximately twelve (12) miles to the northeast. VPS offers more than fifty (50) flights daily from leading airlines to cities across the nation and around the world (flyvps.com). Other nearby public airports include the Destin Executive Airport (twelve [12] miles east of Mary Esther) and the Bob Sikes Airport (thirty-five [35] miles north of Mary Esther in Crestview).

There are no rail facilities within the City of Mary Esther.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

The Okaloosa-Walton TPO, which serves the urbanized portions of Okaloosa and Walton Counties, including the City of Mary Esther, has worked with local stakeholders to strategize for the provision of multi-use trail facilities in the region. Additionally, the Emerald Coast Regional Pedestrian and Bicycle Committee currently strives to create connectivity and enhance mobility by encouraging coordinated development of regionally significant multi-use trail facilities. The Great Northwest Coast Connector, a Florida Greenways & Trails network priority, includes U.S. Highway 98 through Mary Esther, and currently exists as a gap in FDOT's SUN Trail network. As it develops, the regional trail system will be an economic driver through recreational tourism.

Bicycle Paths: Planning for bicycle paths stems from recognition of the growing number of cyclists in the planning region and a high bicycle/motor vehicle accident rate in the state. Section 316.2065, F.S. defines the bicycle as a "vehicle" with "all of the rights and all of the duties applicable to the drivers of any other vehicle." As such, FDOT, the Okaloosa-Walton TPO, elected officials, and transportation planners have an obligation to provide for the needs of cyclists as well as the needs of other road users. Additionally, Section 163.3177, F.S. requires the inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian ways in Local Government Comprehensive Plans. There are currently no designated bicycle paths within the City limits.

Pedestrian Paths and Sidewalks: The City requires sidewalk construction in conjunction with any new development where newly paved roadways are necessary to accommodate development. Accommodation may include the installation of signage, striping of roadways, widening of shoulders, installation of bike racks, installation of sidewalks, or the installation of bicycle and wheelchair ramps. There are currently twenty-two and a half (22.5) miles of sidewalks within the City (shown on **Map B:8**).

Parking

The existing regulations in the Land Development Code will continue to be followed with regard to parking requirements for new development. New developments will be required to provide adequate parking based on professionally accepted standards.

Evacuation Routes

The City of Mary Esther is located directly on the coast and can therefore experience evacuation orders during extreme storm events. The following roadways are designated evacuation routes within the City limits and can be heavily impacted during evacuation orders:

- U.S. Highway 98
- State Road 393 (Mary Esther Boulevard)
- Dolittle Boulevard (connection to Hollywood Boulevard and Hill Avenue)

Map B:9 includes the designated evacuation routes and shelters near Mary Esther. These routes play a major role in the evacuation of Mary Esther’s residents and others to safer points north. Florida’s Statewide Regional Evacuation Study Program (SRESP) develops clearance times, which is the time required for evacuees to secure their homes and prepare to leave, the time spent by all vehicles traveling along the evacuation route network, and the additional time spent on the road caused by traffic and road congestion. Clearance time does NOT relate to the time any one vehicle spends traveling along the evacuation route network, but for all evacuating vehicles to clear the roadway network.

The four clearance times that are calculated as part of the SRESP include: 1) Clearance Time to Shelter; 2) In-County Clearance Time; 3) Out of County Clearance Time; and 4) Regional Clearance Time. **Table B:2** includes these clearance times for all counties within the Emerald Coast Region, assuming a 100% evacuation response. Level A through Level E are equivalent to Category 1 through Category 5 hurricane events, but since these times could be assigned to events other than hurricanes, the term “Level” is used.

Table B:2 - Emerald Coast Region Evacuation Clearance Times, 2020

County	Evacuation Level A Base Scenario	Evacuation Level B Base Scenario	Evacuation Level C Base Scenario	Evacuation Level D Base Scenario	Evacuation Level E Base Scenario
Clearance Time to Shelter (Hours)					
Bay County	12.5	13.0	13.0	13.0	13.0
Escambia County	13.0	13.0	13.0	13.0	13.5
Holmes County	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5
Okaloosa County	12.5	13.0	13.5	14.0	15.0
Santa Rosa County	13.0	13.0	13.0	13.5	14.0
Walton County	13.0	13.5	14.0	14.0	14.0
Washington County	12.5	13.0	14.0	14.5	15.5
In-County Clearance Time (Hours)					
Bay County	16.5	20.0	21.5	33.5	35.0
Escambia County	15.5	17.5	19.5	32.5	33.5
Holmes County	15.5	19.0	21.5	34.5	36.0
Okaloosa County	15.5	18.5	20.5	33.0	34.5
Santa Rosa County	15.5	17.5	19.5	32.5	34.0
Walton County	16.0	19.0	21.0	33.5	35.0
Washington County	15.5	19.5	21.5	34.5	36.0
Out of County Clearance Time (Hours)					
Bay County	16.5	20.0	21.5	33.5	35.0
Escambia County	15.5	17.5	19.5	32.5	33.5
Holmes County	15.5	19.0	21.5	34.5	36.0
Okaloosa County	15.0	18.5	20.5	33.0	34.5
Santa Rosa County	15.5	17.5	19.5	32.5	34.0
Walton County	16.0	19.0	21.0	33.5	35.0
Washington County	15.5	19.5	21.5	34.5	36.0
Regional Clearance Time (Hours)					
Emerald Coast	16.5	20.0	21.5	34.5	36.0

Data Source: Florida Statewide Regional Evacuation Study Program (2021 Update)
<https://www.floridadisaster.org/dem/preparedness/regional-evacuation-studies>

Date Accessed: 11/2024

Note: The Base Scenarios presented in this table assume a 100% response rate from evacuating counties

Transportation for the Disadvantaged Program

The primary goal of community transportation is to provide residents with access to places for work, medical needs, and shopping so that they can live vital, productive, and rewarding lives. It is easy to take such access for granted, yet the lack of transportation resources is a major barrier for many people who are unable to drive or do not have access to a car and must depend on friends or family to help them meet their basic daily needs. The inability to travel often leads to isolation; withdrawal from society; and neglect of medical needs, nutrition, shopping, education, and other purposes necessary to lead a healthy lifestyle.

In compliance with Code of Federal Regulations 49 CFR Part 37, EC Rider’s Dial-A-Ride Program (Paratransit Service) is available to individuals with disabilities who are unable, as the result of physical or mental impairment, and without the assistance of another individual, to board, ride, or disembark public transportation for access to life sustaining activities, healthcare, employment, education, shopping, leisure, recreation, or general ventures.

- Persons with disabilities, either physical or mental, preventing independent transportation
- Individuals who are economically disadvantaged (Transportation Disadvantaged Program Only)
- Children before their 18th birthday and adults over 60 (Transportation Disadvantaged Program Only)
- Reside within Okaloosa County limits (Transportation Disadvantaged Program Only)

Reservations are required when using Dial-A-Ride Services and the price of the trip is determined by the distance traveled. Several agencies sponsor client transportation needs and pay all or most of the cost. (www.ecrider.org/dial-a-ride)

The Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan is an annually updated tactical plan jointly developed by the Emerald Coast Regional Council and the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners (the Community Transportation Coordinator, or CTC), which contains development, service, and quality assurance components. The Local Coordinating Board reviews and approves the Service Plan and it is submitted to the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged for final action. **Table B:3** presents a summary of the Development Plan for the Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP).



Table B:3 - 2024 Okaloosa County Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan

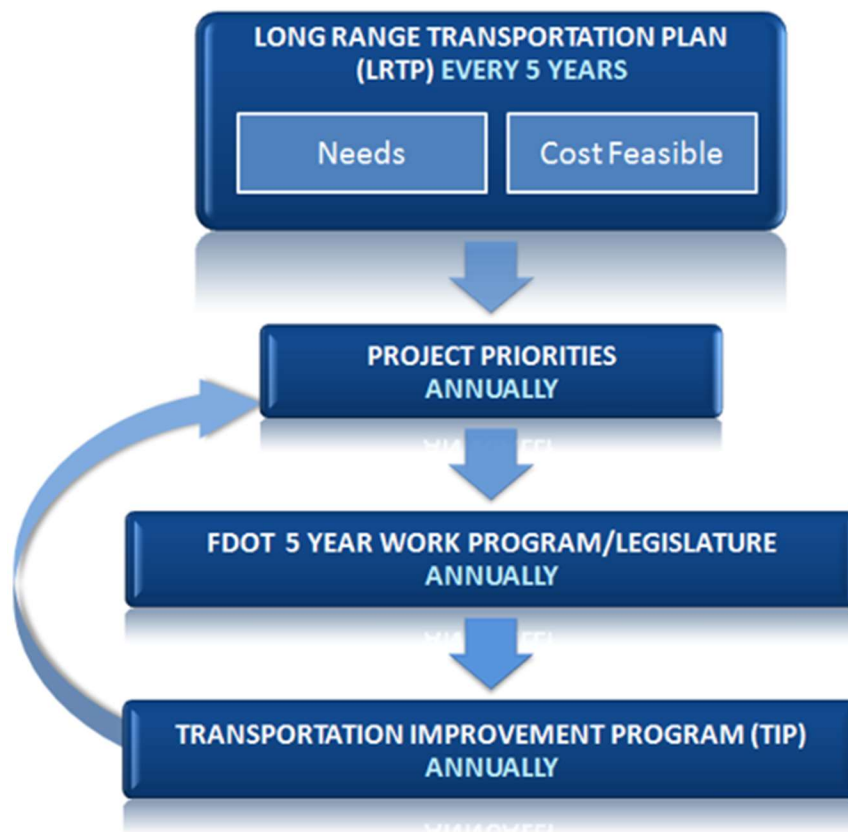
Project from FY 2022 - 2026	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Purchase replacement dial-a-ride vehicles to provide transportation for the elderly, disadvantaged and disabled citizens in Okaloosa County.	\$1,160,000	Urbanized Area - 5307 (capital)
Provide transportation services for disadvantaged and disabled citizens in Okaloosa County coordinated through the CTC.	\$300,000	Urbanized Area - 5307 (operating)
Formula (competitive) grant to enhance mobility for seniors and persons with disabilities by providing funds for programs to serve the special needs of transit-dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation services.	To be determined	Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities - 5310
Capital and/or operating assistance to provide rural transportation services in Okaloosa County coordinated through the CTC.	\$60,000	Non-Urbanized Area - 5311
Transit operating assistance for non-urbanized public Transportation in order to prevent, prepare for and respond to COVID-19.	-	Non-Urbanized
Capital funding to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses, vans, and related equipment, and to construct bus-related facilities. Funds are eligible to be transferred by the state to supplement urban and rural formula grant programs (e.g., 5307 and 5311).	To be determined	Bus & Bus Facilities (5339)
To determine whether a new or innovative technique or measure can be used to improve or expand public transit services. Service Development Projects specifically include projects involving the use of new technologies; services, routes, or vehicle frequencies; the purchase of special transportation services; and other such techniques for increasing service to the riding public.	To be determined	Public Transit Service Development Funds
Provide transportation services coordinated by the CTC to other human services organizations.	\$ 806,825	CTD-TD
	To be determined	Medicaid
	\$ 25,000	County
	\$ 52,020	Farebox
Data Source: <i>Okaloosa County Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan 20204 Annual Update</i> Date Accessed: 11/2024		

Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization

The Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization (TPO), staffed by the Emerald Coast Regional Council (ECRC), is the local, intergovernmental transportation policy board for Okaloosa County and Walton County. The board is comprised of local government officials who make decisions regarding transportation at a regional level. The Okaloosa-Walton TPO is required by state and federal law to establish a cooperative, comprehensive, and continuing planning process. The TPO also works to increase safety, security, accessibility, mobility, and connectivity for people and goods.

The TPO is tasked with developing Project Priorities. Project Priorities, which are essentially the Cost Feasible Plan element of the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), are usually approved in September each year and are due to the State Department of Transportation by October 1st. The adopted Project Priorities are used by the State Department of Transportation to develop a five-year Work Program. This five-year Work Program is then used by the TPO to develop its five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is adopted by the TPO at its June meeting each year. (See **Figure B:1.**)

Figure B:1 - The TPO Planning Cycle



City of Mary Esther Adopted Levels of Service

Roadway Levels of Service (LOS) have been established to ensure that adequate facility capacity for future development is concurrently sufficient with the issuance of development orders and development permits. The definition of LOS has evolved within Florida to a traveler-based perception of how well a service or facility is operating. The FDOT Multimodal Quality/Level of Service Handbook defines LOS as “a quantitative stratification of a performance measure or measures that represent quality of service, measured on an A-F scale, with LOS A representing the best operating conditions from the traveler’s perspective and LOS F the worst.”

These standards have been established for each roadway link consistent with the facility type and current FDOT LOS Analysis for State and County Roadways. **Table B:9** illustrates LOS and maximum traffic volumes for roadways with various characteristics.

The adopted peak hour (30th highest hour) level of service standards for arterial and collector roads within the City are as follows:

- Hollywood Boulevard (CR 602) through the city - **LOS E**
- SR 393 (Mary Esther Cut-Off) from SR 30 to city limits (north) - **LOS E**
- S.R. 30 (U.S. 98) from Hurlburt Field to city limits (east) - **LOS D**
- All other arterials and collector roads - **LOS D**

Standard Descriptions of LOS Standards: The LOS standards for all major road segments (facilities) shall be consistent with the letter standards per the descriptions in **Table B:4**. The overall intersection LOS standard is the same as the segment standard. The City of Mary Esther’s existing LOS is shown on **Map B:3**.

Table B:4 - Standard Descriptions of LOS Standards

LOS A	Highest LOS, which describes primarily free-flow traffic operations at average travel speeds. Vehicles are completely unimpeded in their ability to maneuver within the traffic stream. Stopped delay at intersections is minimal.
LOS B	Represents reasonably unimpeded traffic flow operations at average travel speeds. The ability to maneuver within the traffic stream is only slightly restricted and stopped delays are not bothersome. Drivers are not generally subjected to appreciable tension.
LOS C	Represents stable traffic flow operations. However, ability to maneuver and change lanes may be more restricted than LOS B, and longer queues and/or adverse signal coordination may contribute to lower average travel speeds. Motorists will experience noticeable tension while driving.
LOS D	Borders on a range in which small increases in traffic flow may cause substantial increases in approach delay, and hence, decreases in speed. This may be due to adverse signal progression, high signal density, extensive queuing at critical intersections, and inappropriate signal timing.
LOS E	Represents traffic flow characterized at extremely low speeds. Intersection congestion is likely at critical signalized locations, with high approach delays resulting. Adverse signal progression is frequently a contributor to this condition.
<p><i>Data Source: The Florida Department of Transportation's 2020 Quality/Level of Service Handbook</i> Date Accessed: 1/2021</p>	

Functional Classification Groups: Major thoroughfares are categorized into functional classification groups according to the character of service they provide. The four major functional classification groups are principal arterials, minor arterials, collectors, and local streets. The extent and degree of access control is a significant factor in defining the functional classification of a roadway. Regulated limitation of access is necessary on arterials to enhance their primary function of mobility, while the primary function of local streets is to provide access. FDOT's Functional Classifications are described in **Table B:5** and shown on **Map B:2**.

Table B:5 - FDOT Functional Classifications

<p>Principal Arterials</p>	<p>The principal arterial system serves the major centers of activity and the highest volume traffic corridors of urbanized areas. Principal arterials typically serve longer distance trips. Although principal arterials constitute a small percentage of the total roadway network, they carry a high proportion of the total urban area traffic. The principal arterial system also carries most of the trips entering and leaving the urban area. Service on principal arterials is normally continuous with relatively high traffic volumes, long average trip lengths, and high operating speed. Service to abutting lands is typically subordinate to the provision of travel service and major traffic movements.</p>
<p>Minor Arterials</p>	<p>The minor arterial system interconnects and supports the principal arterial system. It accommodates trips of moderate lengths at a lower level of mobility than provided by principal arterials. Minor arterials provide continuity among communities and may carry local bus routes. Ideally, minor arterials do not penetrate identifiable neighborhoods. The spacing of minor arterials is typically not much greater than a mile in developed areas.</p>
<p>Collectors (Major/Minor)</p>	<p>The collector street system provides vehicular access to and mobility within residential neighborhoods, commercial and industrial areas. It differs from the arterial system in that it penetrates neighborhoods and distributes trips from arterials to their ultimate destinations. Conversely, collectors also channelize vehicular traffic from local streets onto the arterial system. The collector street system may carry local bus routes. Service on collectors has relatively moderate average traffic volumes, average trip lengths and average operating speeds.</p>
<p>Local Streets</p>	<p>The local street system comprises all roadways not in one of the higher systems. It provides direct access to all land uses and densities and provides connections to the higher roadway systems. It offers the lowest level of vehicular mobility and usually only contains private vehicular travel except for school buses and delivery vehicles. Service on local streets has relatively low average traffic volume, short average trip length, and minimal through traffic.</p>

FDOT Level of Service (LOS): FDOT's generalized standards are consistent with the LOS requirements of Chapter 163.3177 (6)(b), F.S., and are used to analyze and project LOS volumes for state roadways within the City's transportation system. FDOT's LOS analysis utilizes the "Generalized Service Volume Tables" from the FDOT 2023 Multimodal Quality/Level of Service Handbook. The FDOT 2020 state and county LOS analysis is reproduced in **Table B:9**.

Summary of LOS and Needs: The FDOT LOS data provided in **Table B:9** shows that all segments within the City operate at adequate levels of service through 2026. For 2045, U.S. Highway 98 is expected to exceed its adopted LOS. **Table B:6** summarizes the future roadway deficiencies for 2026 and 2045.

Table B:6 - Future Roadway Deficiencies for 2026 and 2045

Roadway Segment	From	To	LOS for 2026 / 2045
SR 30/US 98	Cody Avenue	Doolittle Boulevard	D / F
SR 30/US 98	Doolittle Boulevard	SR 393 (Mary Esther Boulevard)	C / F
SR 393	SR 30/US 98	Hollywood Boulevard	D / D
			Data Source: FDOT Date Prepared: 11/2024

Vehicle Crashes

Analysis of vehicle crashes is critical as it provides a tool for the County, municipalities, and the state to use when recommending appropriate safety measures and prioritizing future roadway improvements. The University of Florida houses the Signal Four Analytics program, an online resource for analyzing crash statistics, that is available to Florida public agencies as a tool to understand the attributes of incidents.

Statistics for the City of Mary Esther from the five-year period ending in July 2024 indicate that there were approximately 1,137 vehicle crashes within the City limits. Of these, four resulted in fatalities (none of which were bicycle or pedestrian related), and 18 resulted in serious injuries. Of the serious injury crashes, one involved a bicyclist, and one involved a pedestrian. **Table B:7** breaks the crashes down by type and severity.

As may be expected, crashes are concentrated at major intersections. **Map B:10** depicts the crash locations and density from August 2019 through July 2024.

Table B:7 - Vehicle Crashes by Type and Severity, August 2019 - July 2024

Crash Type	Count
Rear End	436
Sideswipe	139
Left Turn	124
Off Road	74
Angle	67
Right Turn	40
Bicycle	8
Head On	8
Pedestrian	8
Unknown	8
Animal	6
Rollover	5
Other	214
Total	1,137
Data Source: UF Signal Four Analytics Date Prepared: 11/2024	

Crash Severity	Count
Fatality	4
Serious Injury	18
Injury	216
No Injury	899
Total	1,137
Data Source: UF Signal Four Analytics Date Prepared: 11/2024	

FDOT 5-Year Transportation Plan

The City's Capital Improvements Element schedule has incorporated FDOT's Work Program resulting in a prioritized list of projects for the City's roads, bridges, public transportation, maintenance, planning, research, and other transportation related projects. The FDOT Work Program lists all projects that the FDOT plans to develop, implement, and fund over a five-year period. It lists the projects by phases and shows the dollar amount that is associated with each of those projects. Each year, the Executive Committee reviews the Work Program and looks at funding levels for maintenance, right of way, capacity projects, and for the Florida Intrastate Highway System (FIHS) and makes necessary adjustments. FDOT funds are limited, budget constrained, and category specific. Work Program projects include the resurfacing the entire length of SR 30 (US 98) and SR 393 within the Mary Esther City limits (see **Table B:8**).

Table B:8 - FDOT District 3 Adopted 5-Year Work Program, FY 2025-2029 - Projects in Mary Esther

Item No	Project Description	Work Description	Length (Miles)	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Highways: State Highways								
4373661	SR 30 (US 98) FROM W OF JOSIE RD TO W OF BROOKS BRIDGE	RESURFACING	7.047	\$2,074 CST	-	-	-	-
4437442	SR 393 MARY ESTHER BOULEVARD FROM SR 30 (US 98) TO SR 189 BEAL PKWY	RESURFACING	1.833	\$765 CST	-	-	-	-
Data Source: FDOT 5-Year Work Program Date Prepared: 11/2024								

Notes: ROW = Right of Way, PE = Preliminary Engineering, CST = Construction, OPS = Operations
\$ amounts are in thousands

OPPORTUNITIES AND NEEDS FOR TRANSPORTATION

Future Land Use and Transportation System Interaction

This section is intended to fulfill the requirements of Section 163.3177 (6)(b)1, F.S. An essential basis for planning transportation systems is the Future Land Use Element and the Future Land Use Maps, which show where roadway facilities may be needed. The criteria for determining the extent of facilities needed are the adopted LOS standards. Therefore, the LOS standards contained in this element are directly related to the goals, objectives and policies of the Future Land Use Element as well as all other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. The City of Mary Esther staff and Local Planning Agency continually examine the functional relationship between the transportation system and the Future Land Use Maps to ensure that they adequately meet the needs of the City's existing and future populations. Development permits should only be issued where quality access is provided to ensure a safe and comfortable pedestrian environment as well as efficient movement of motorized traffic.

The City of Mary Esther is a densely-populated urban area characterized by low/medium-density residential and commercial development. The overall pace of growth and development in the City has remained slow over the past twenty years. However, because there are some opportunities for both new development and redevelopment, the City should be prepared for future growth and increased traffic circulation. The current roadway network serves the population with an average level of service but will require improvements in order to do so through the 2045 timeframe of this comprehensive plan.

Analysis of transportation and land use maps serves as a basis for determining the need for new roadway facilities and expansions to support planned development and to maintain adopted LOS standards. Analysis of the Future Land Use Map shows that future land use patterns are forecasted to generally follow historical patterns. Future traffic should also generally coincide with historical trends.

Travel Patterns, Population Characteristics, and Growth Trends

Availability of Multi-Modal Facilities and Services

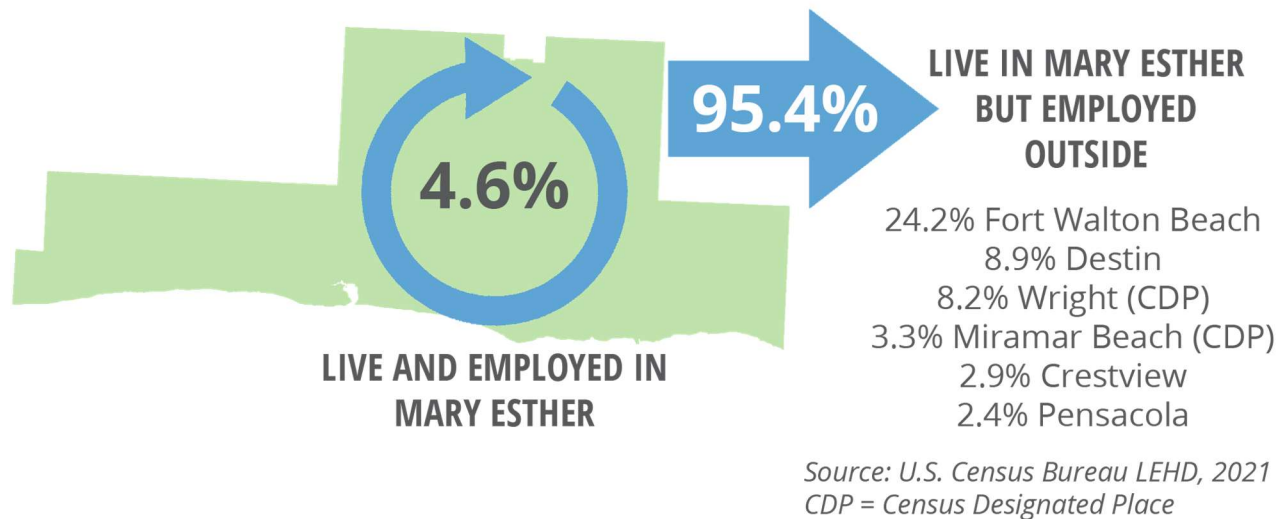
Availability refers to the extent to which the transportation system provides access to serve existing land uses. Access to serve existing land uses requires an efficient network of connections including roadways, public transit, bikeways, and pedestrian ways.

Commuter Trips

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates (2018-2022), the average commute for workers living in Mary Esther (and not working from home) is 24.1 minutes. It is estimated that seventy-nine-point-one (79.1%) of Mary Esther’s working population drives alone to work, fifteen-point-two (15.2%) carpool, five-point-seven percent (5.7%) work from home, and less than one percent (1%) take public transportation or walk/bike to work. (ACS 5-Year Estimates 2018-2022, Table S0801)

Only four-point-six percent (4.6%) of Mary Esther’s working population is employed within the City limits, while ninety-five-point-four percent (95.4%) are employed outside of Mary Esther. The majority of those working outside of Mary Esther are employed within Fort Walton Beach, followed by Destin, Wright, Miramar Beach, Crestview, and Pensacola (**Figure B:2**).

Figure B:2 - City of Mary Esther Work Destinations



Growth Impacts: The City of Mary Esther is fully built out with very little vacant land available for new development. As a result, any future growth would stem from the conversion or redevelopment of existing land uses. A primary area poised for such transformation is the site of the Santa Rosa Mall. Portions of this property present opportunities to be converted into residential or mixed-use developments, integrating housing, retail, and community spaces.

This redevelopment would significantly impact the roads surrounding the mall property, including

Mary Esther Boulevard (State Road 292), Hollywood Boulevard, and Page Bacon Road. These thoroughfares would experience changes in traffic patterns and potentially increased congestion due to the new land uses.

Evacuation Routes: Another concern during weather-related events is the safe evacuation of Mary Esther's residents, which when coupled with evacuees from east and west of the City has the potential of placing an inordinate amount of traffic on Mary Esther's evacuation road network. These demands increase the time needed to safely evacuate the local population from remote and low-lying areas that are vulnerable to flooding and lead to impassable roads. Traffic congestion along U.S. Highway 98 and SR 393/Mary Esther Boulevard, can drastically slow the evacuation process. Similarly, the potential for the influx of evacuees during major storms occurring elsewhere in Florida and the need for an efficient means of moving day-to-day traffic mandates that the County maintain high LOS standards to ensure safety for both out-of-area guests and Mary Esther residents.

All of Mary Esther's residents live within one-half mile of an evacuation route and have direct access through the local roadway network. The City will continue to seek funding for road paving and improvements to ensure LOS is maintained. Coordination with FDOT and the Okaloosa-Walton TPO is important in identifying inadequate facilities, seeking funding, and preparing a work program to ensure that roadways and bridges function efficiently not only during evacuations, but during normal daily operations. The City will continue to direct population growth away from areas that are particularly vulnerable to hazards such as flooding.

Evacuation routes and shelters near Mary Esther are shown on **Map B:9**.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION

Complete Streets

Complete Streets are planned, designed, constructed, operated, and maintained to safely and comfortably accommodate people of all ages and abilities. That includes, but is not limited to, pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, rideshare users, motorists, and freight and service operators. Efforts for incorporating Complete Streets policies begin at the local level and are commonly supported by roadway design guidelines at state and regional stages.

Elements of Complete Streets include a wide arrangement of components, such as bicycle lanes, sidewalks, crossing opportunities, median islands, pedestrian signals, curb extensions, streetscape, landscape, etc. The benefits of Complete Streets include improved safety, better access (particularly for residents with disabilities), economic development, enhanced public health through active transportation, and improved air quality. When well-designed Complete Streets have been found to reduce crashes involving vehicles and alternative modes of transportation. Future improvements along alternate US 98 routing, including Hollywood Boulevard would benefit from the incorporation of Complete Streets methodologies.

Bike Ped Facilities

Bicycling and walking have become both tools for healthy lifestyles and means of recreation. One of the visions outlined in the City of Mary Esther’s Vision Plan is to “become a walking and biking city, with a connected network of sidewalks, greenways, and multi-use trails.” The Great Northwest Coast Connector is a regional initiative that is continuing to advocate for construction of the infrastructure along the FDOT identified SUN Trail network. This long-distance trail can be an economic development tool through recreational tourism.

Protected sidewalk and greenways can provide great comfort and accessibility for bicyclists and pedestrians. Some smaller scale improvements could also be made to better serve alternative transportation modes. Permanent or temporary protection can be provided at transit stops. Wide streets can be restriped to include bicycle or multi-use. paths. Pedestrian crossings at signals can be improved, or midblock crossings added at common crossing points. *(Community Vision Plan: Public Infrastructure Assessment, October 2022)*

A growing senior population, the climate and terrain, and recent environmental, health, and social trends all serve as an impetus for development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Improvements that encourage the use of bicycles and foot traffic will be supported by the City, especially in areas where there are schools, commercial shopping areas, and employment centers. Additionally, roadway resurfacing and widening projects can be used to accommodate bicycle trips so that sharing the road is feasible. Restriping lanes to include bicycle lanes along with signage to alert drivers of a cyclist presence should be part of the transition to a safer network.

Access Management System

Access management is critical to ensure that roadways continue to function in the manner for which they were designed. Good access management can reduce or eliminate the need for more traffic control devices to be installed in developing areas and promotes smooth uninterrupted traffic flows, thereby preserving adopted LOS standards.

Traffic congestion generally worsens the more access (i.e., driveways and intersections) installed on a particular street. According to the Access Management Guidebook (FDOT, 2019), U.S. Highway 98 exceeds the allowed maximum median openings by spacing. These access points and corresponding median breaks can be reduced to improve traffic operations and multimodal safety. The primary way of doing this in a city like Mary Esther is to install medians and curbs to limit left turns. (*Community Vision Plan: Public Infrastructure Assessment, October 2022*)

Alternate Routes

U.S. Highway 98 already shows capacity issues, which will further worsen in future years. Since it is not likely that U.S. Highway 98 will expand beyond four lanes through the City limits, there are several options for potential alternative routes that could be further explored for public support and feasibility, as outlined in the *City of Mary Esther Vision Plan's Public Infrastructure Assessment (Map B:11)*.

Alternate #1 uses mostly existing facilities but would require an extension of Hollywood Boulevard. This extension of Hollywood Boulevard is included as partially funded within the Okaloosa-Walton TPO's 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan. Alternate #2 requires an extension of Hollywood Boulevard to an access road in Hurlburt Field, which would require further coordination but not interfere with neighborhood access streets. Alternates #1 and #2 both would use the existing Memorial Parkway connection outside the city limits. Alternate #3 uses only existing facilities within the city boundary but would provide a small alternate route around congestion at the retail in the area and for vehicles to and from Mary Esther Boulevard. All of these alternatives would include optimized signal timing, lane reconfiguration, and other small infrastructure improvements along their respective corridors. (*Community Vision Plan: Public Infrastructure Assessment, October 2022*)

Funding and Operational Responsibility

Transportation funding is crucial to land use, development, and transportation concurrency. The Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners and FDOT, the two agencies responsible for the state and county roads, receive most of their funding from the same sources – federal, state, county, and local taxes on motor fuels. State and federal grants have been and are expected to remain the largest financing tool for County roads.

State Road System: FDOT primarily determines new construction and major improvement

needs and takes construction and operational responsibility for the state road system in Okaloosa County. Funding for operation and maintenance of these roadways is provided by the State.

County Road System: The Okaloosa County Public Works Department has operational responsibility for the county road system, including some facilities located within the City of Mary Esther. Funding for improvements to the county road system is derived from a combination of state and local revenue sources. Maintenance and improvement of the County secondary road system is funded primarily through fuel taxes which are collected by the State and returned to the County. As growth occurs within the County, public-private partnerships under the proportionate fair share provision outlined in the Land Development Code could provide an additional funding source for transportation improvements.

City of Mary Esther Road System:

Transportation Concurrency: Concurrency is an optional, yet effective growth management concept intended to ensure that necessary public facilities and services are available concurrent with the impacts of development. To carry out transportation concurrency, local governments must define what constitutes an adequate level of service and measure whether the service needs of a new development outrun existing capacity and any scheduled improvements in the Capital Improvements Element.

To test transportation concurrency, the projected number of trips generated by the proposed development should be subtracted from the available capacity for the impacted roadway segment(s). If the demand is less than the available capacity on all roadway segments impacted by the project, then the project meets the test for transportation concurrency.

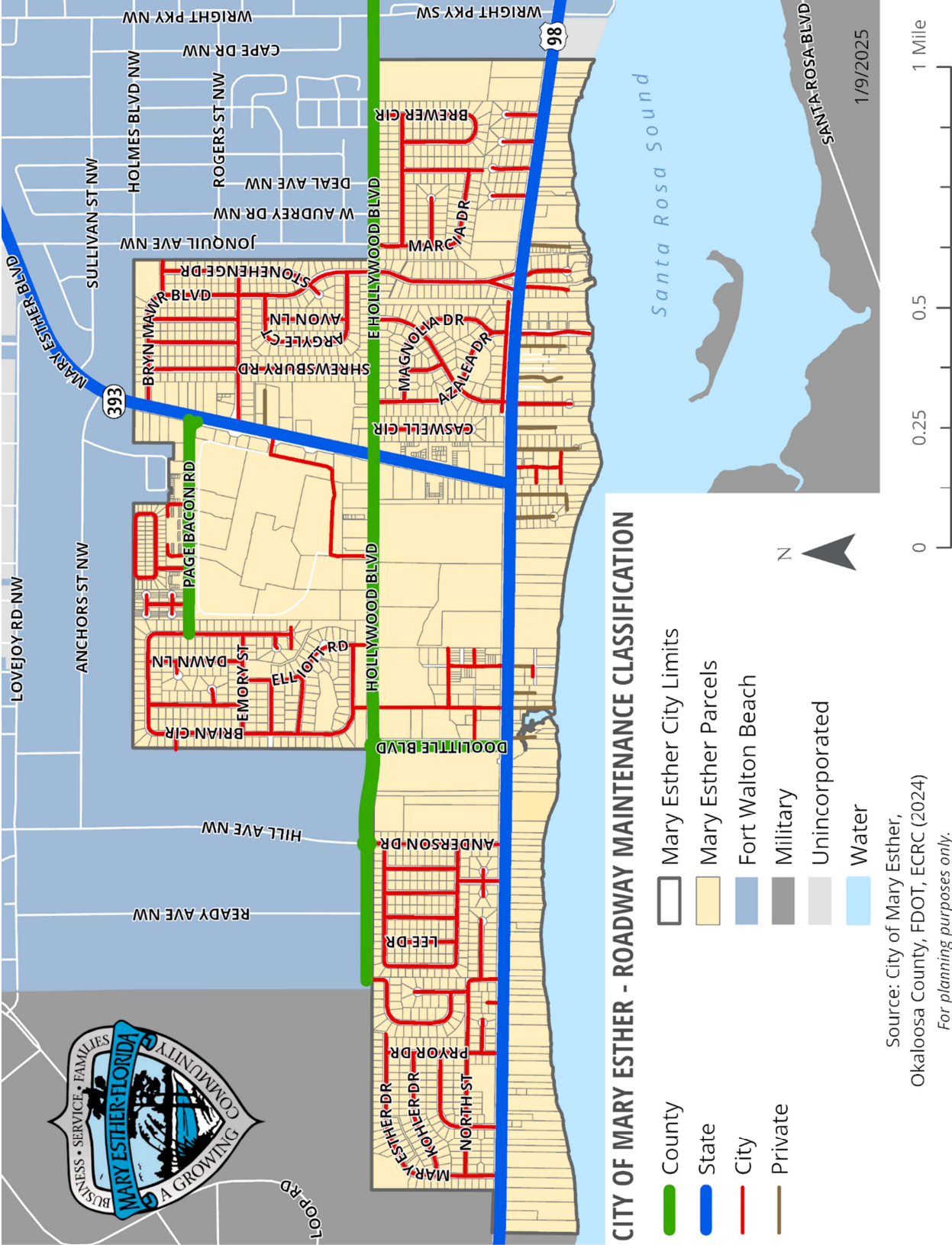
Table B:9 - City of Mary Esther Roadway Existing and Future Characteristics

Roadway Segment	From	To	Length	Number of Lanes	Maximum Volume	Adopted LOS	2020 AADT	2020 LOS	Future Lanes	2026 AADT	2026 LOS	2045 AADT	2045 LOS	Annual Growth ¹
US 98 (SR 30)	0.178 W OF 57030114 EB	DOOLITTLE BLVD	2.191	4	52,600	D	44,000	C	6	59,840	D	110,000	F	4%
US 98 (SR 30)	DOOLITTLE BLVD	SR-393 MARY ESTHER BLVD	0.543	4	39,795	D	35,500	C	6	38,557	C	48,235	F	1%
US 98 (SR 30)	SR-393 MARY ESTHER BLVD	MEMORIAL PKWY SW	1.492	4	39,795	D	30,500	C	4	32,330	C	38,125	C	1%
SR 393 (Mary Esther Blvd)	HOLLYWOOD BLVD	ANCHORS ST NW	0.583	4	39,795	E	25,000	C	4	26,500	C	31,250	C	1%
SR 393 (Mary Esther Blvd)	US-98/SR-30	HOLLYWOOD BLVD	0.285	4	14,500	E	18,300	D	4	19,398	D	24,681	D	1%

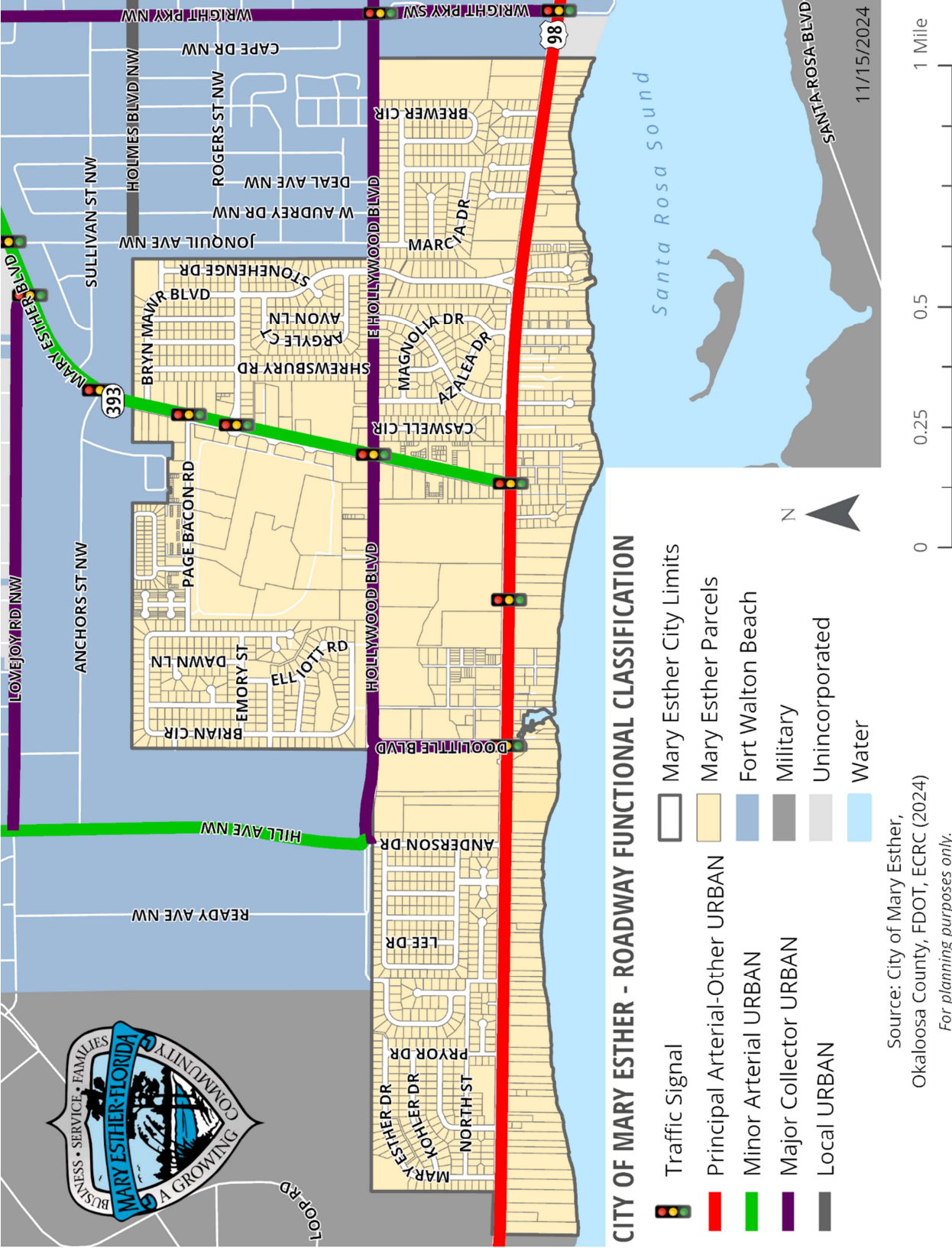
Data Source: FDOT
Date Prepared: 11/2024

Notes: ¹Where Annual Growth is > 6%, projections are reduced to a maximum of 6%. Where Annual Growth <1%, projections are increased to a minimum of 1%.

Map B:1 - Roadway Maintenance Classification



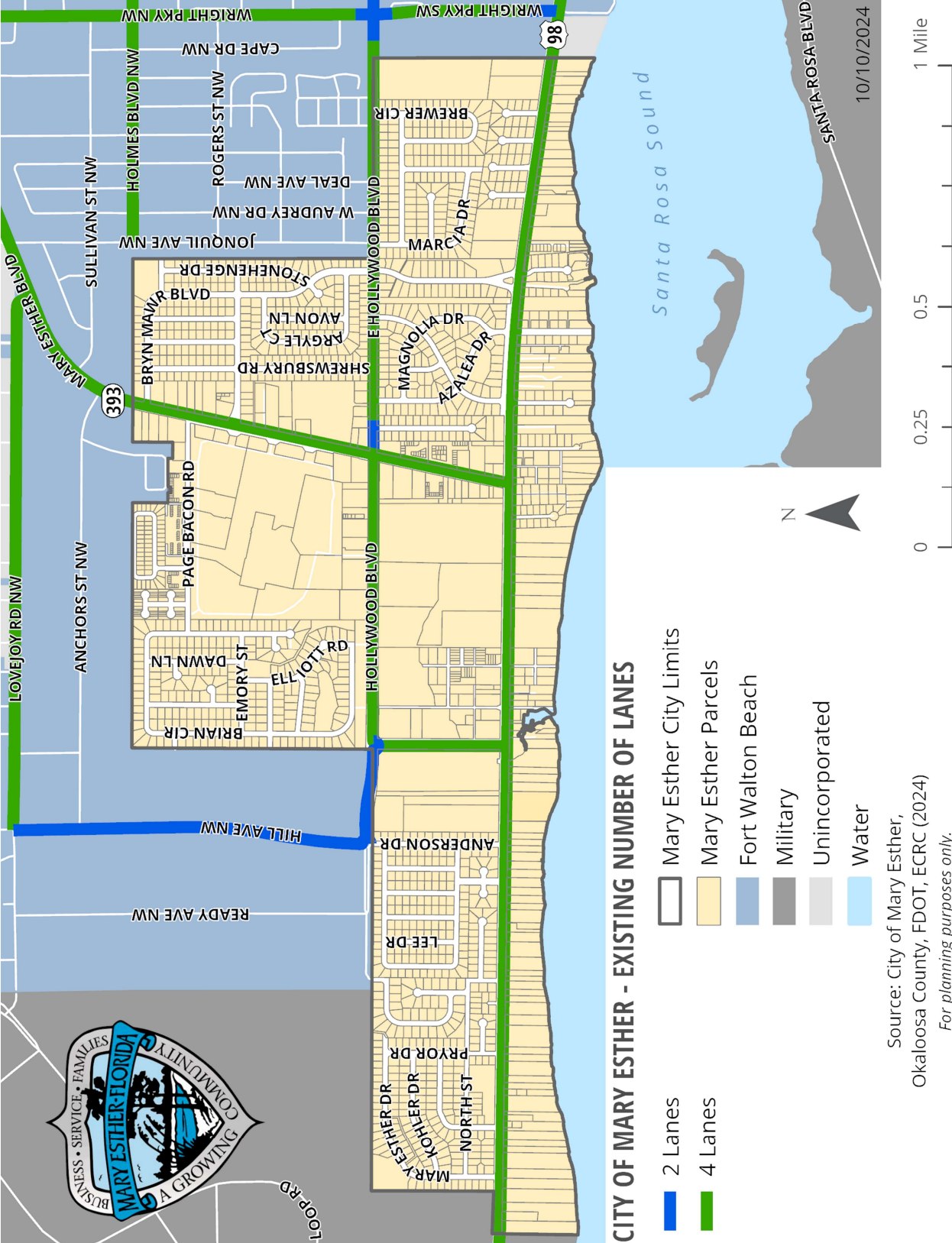
Map B:2 - Roadway Functional Classification



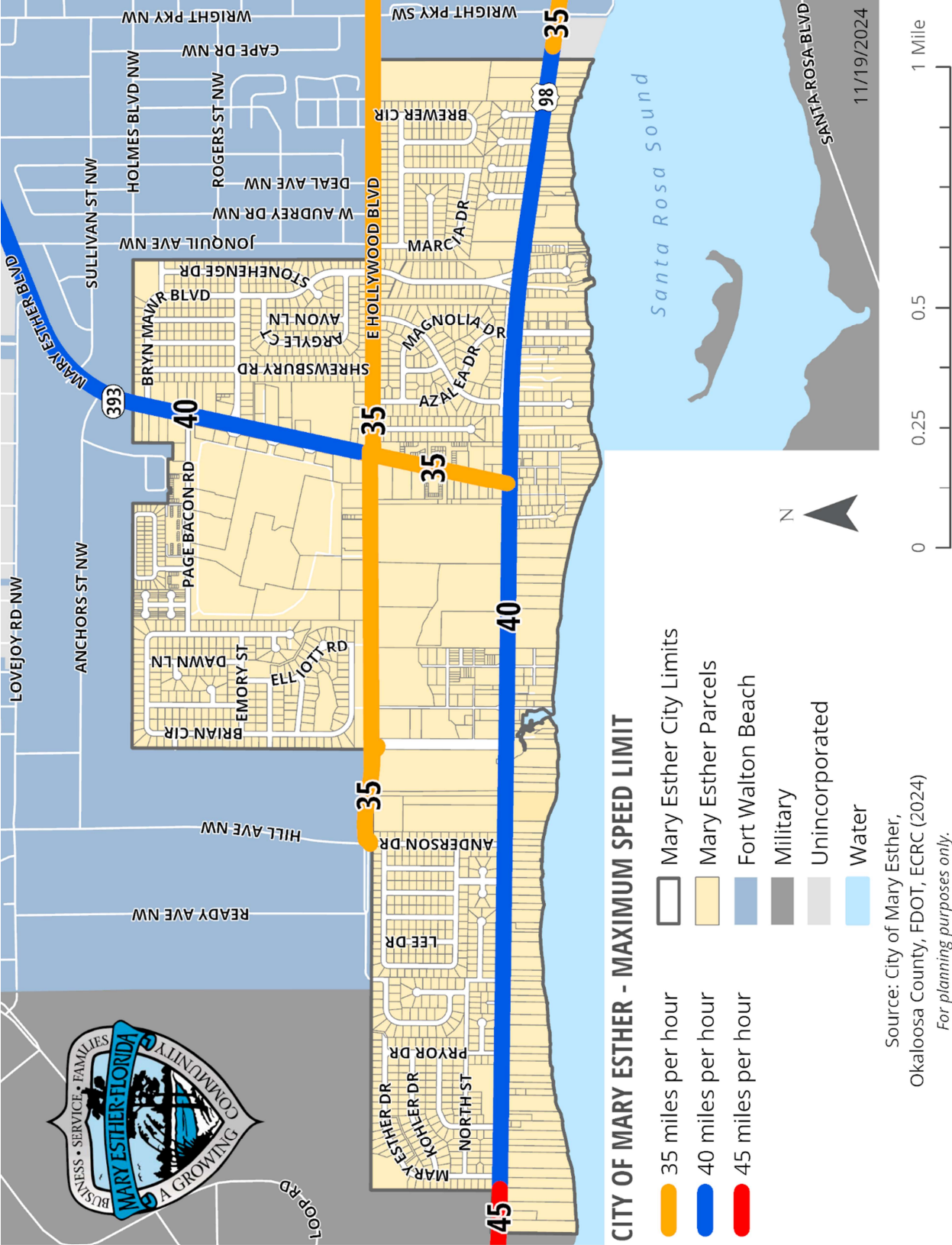
Map B:3 - Existing Level of Service (LOS)



Map B:4 - Existing Number of Lanes



Map B:5 - Maximum Speed Limit











Map B:6 - Average Annual Daily Traffic



Map B:7 - Transit Routes and Stops

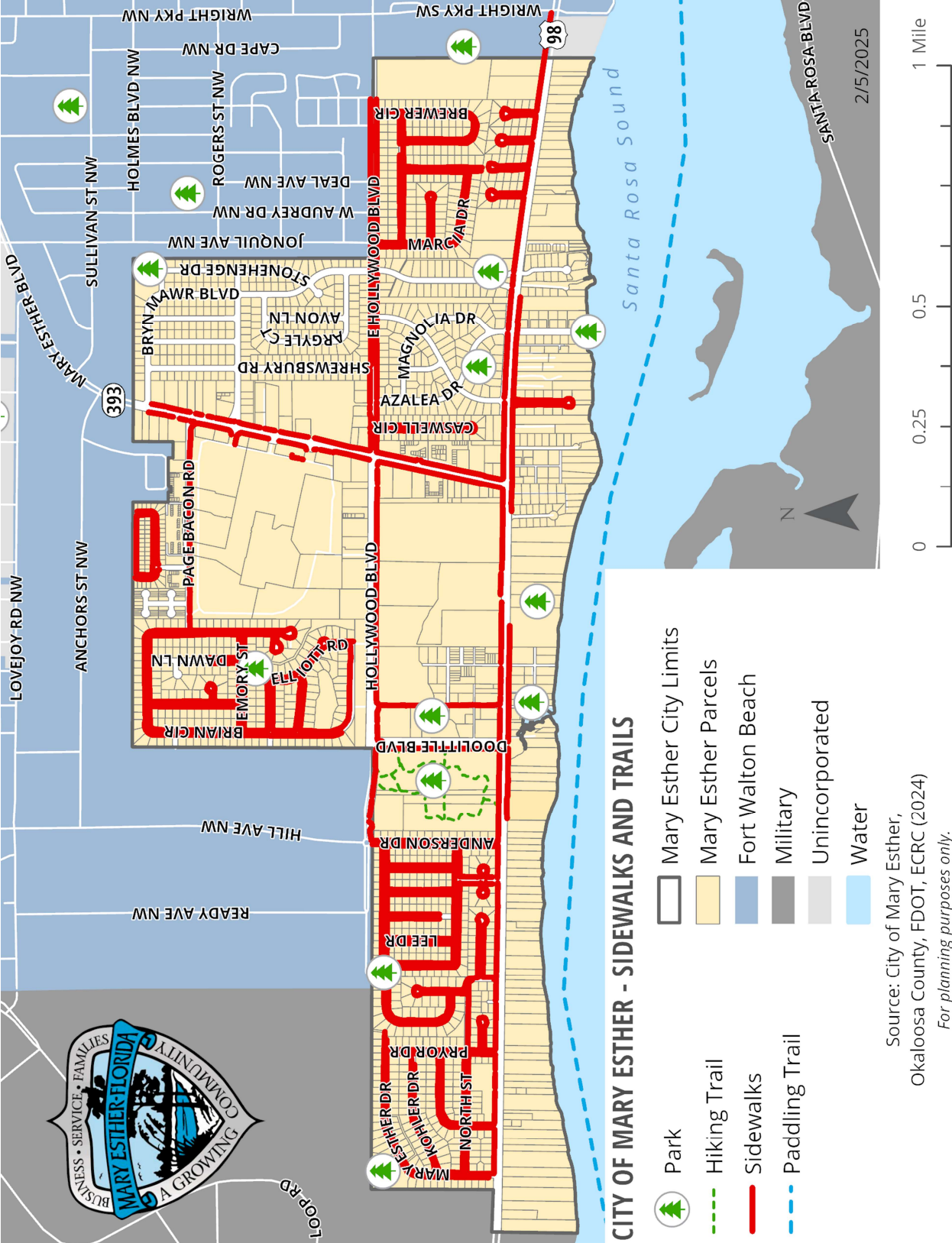


CITY OF MARY ESTHER - TRANSIT ROUTES AND STOPS

-  Transit Stop
-  Transit Route
-  Mary Esther City Limits
-  Mary Esther Parcels
-  Fort Walton Beach
-  Military
-  Unincorporated
-  Water

Source: City of Mary Esther, Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024)
For planning purposes only.

Map B:8 - Sidewalks and Trails

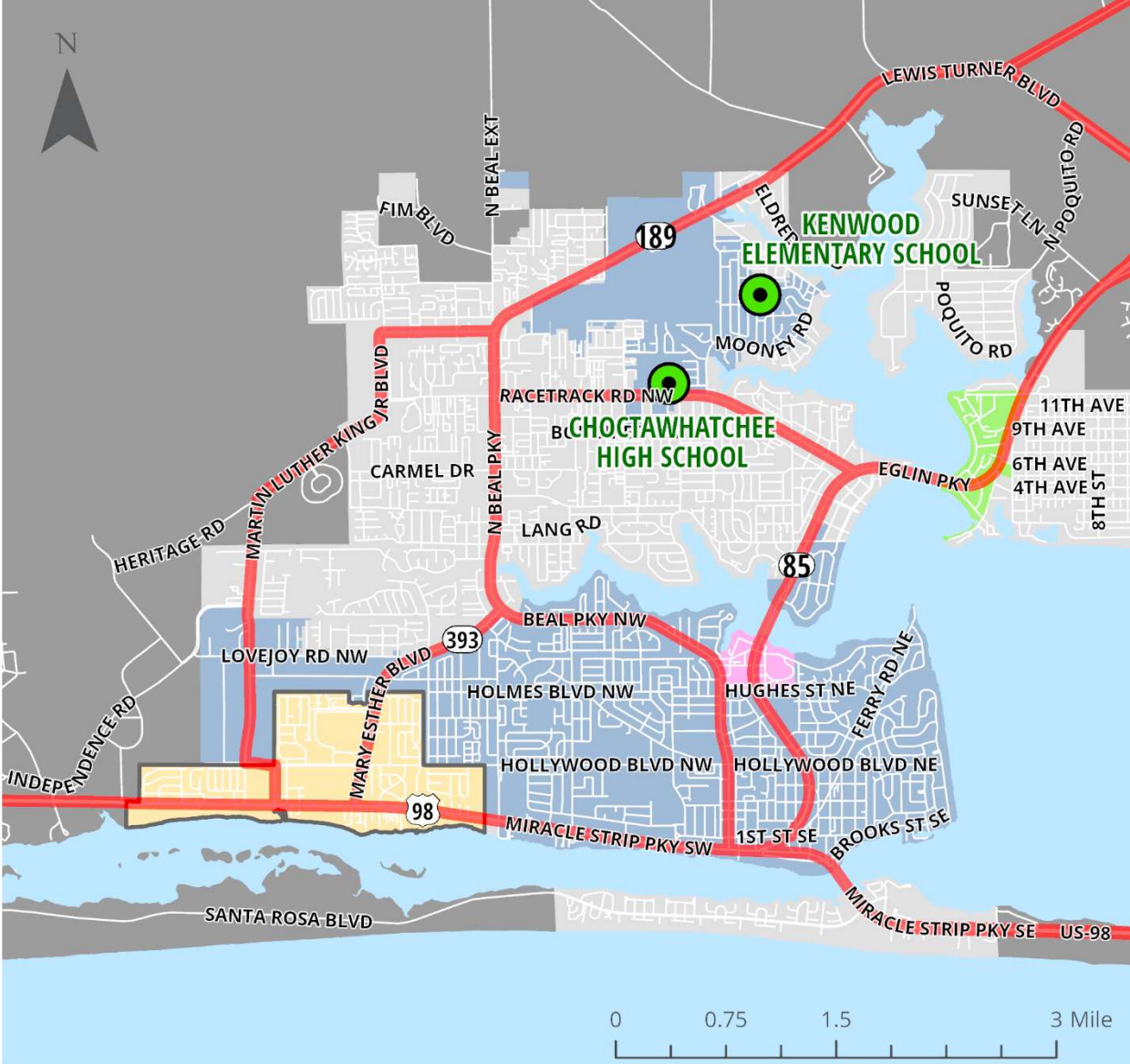


CITY OF MARY ESTHER - SIDEWALKS AND TRAILS










-  Park
-  Hiking Trail
-  Sidewalks
-  Paddling Trail
-  Mary Esther City Limits
-  Mary Esther Parcels
-  Fort Walton Beach
-  Military
-  Unincorporated
-  Water

Source: City of Mary Esther,
Okaloosa County, FDOT, ECRC (2024)
For planning purposes only.

Map B:9 - Evacuation Routes and Shelters



CITY OF MARY ESTHER - EVACUATION ROUTES AND SHELTERS

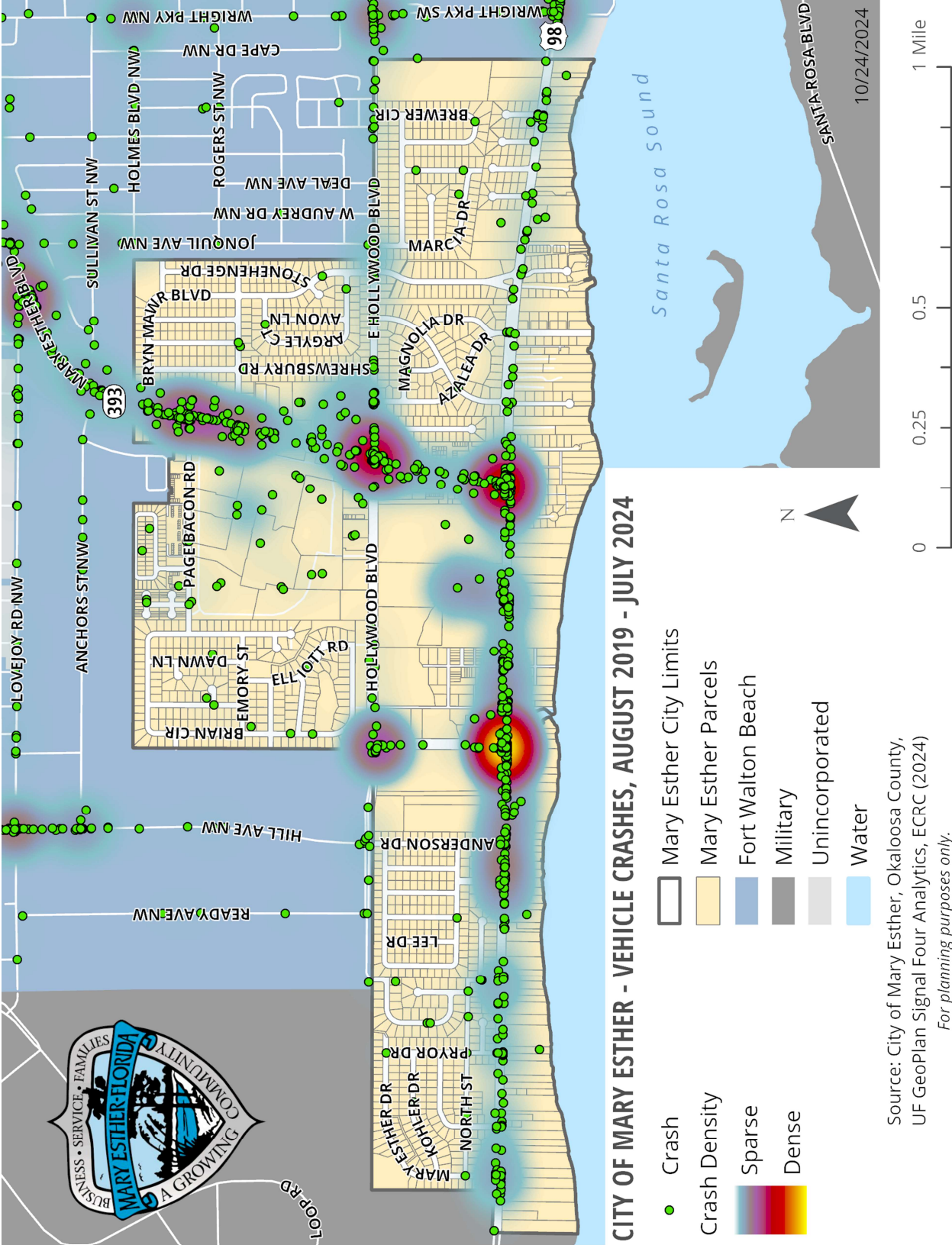
-  Shelter
-  Evacuation Route
-  Mary Esther City Limits
-  Shalimar
-  Cinco Bayou
-  Fort Walton Beach
-  Military
-  Unincorporated
-  Water



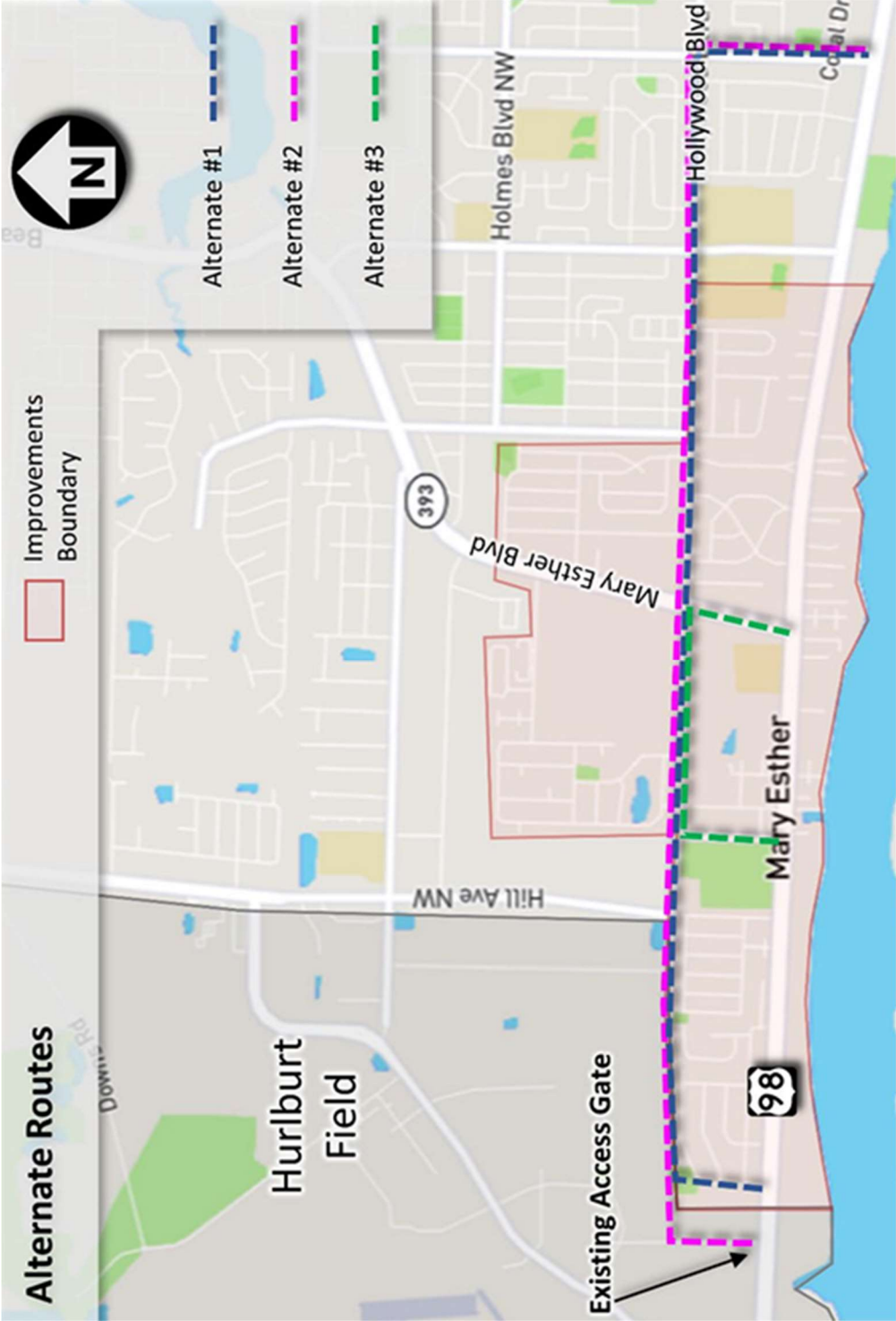
Source: City of Mary Esther, Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024)

For planning purposes only.

Map B:10 - Vehicle Crashes, August 2019 - July 2024



Map B:11 - Alternate Routes



Source: City of Mary Esther Vision Plan, 2023

Section C: Housing Element



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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The competitiveness of a community’s housing market is an important economic development objective. To build and maintain competitiveness, a community must offer a range of housing options, keeping with current and future demand.

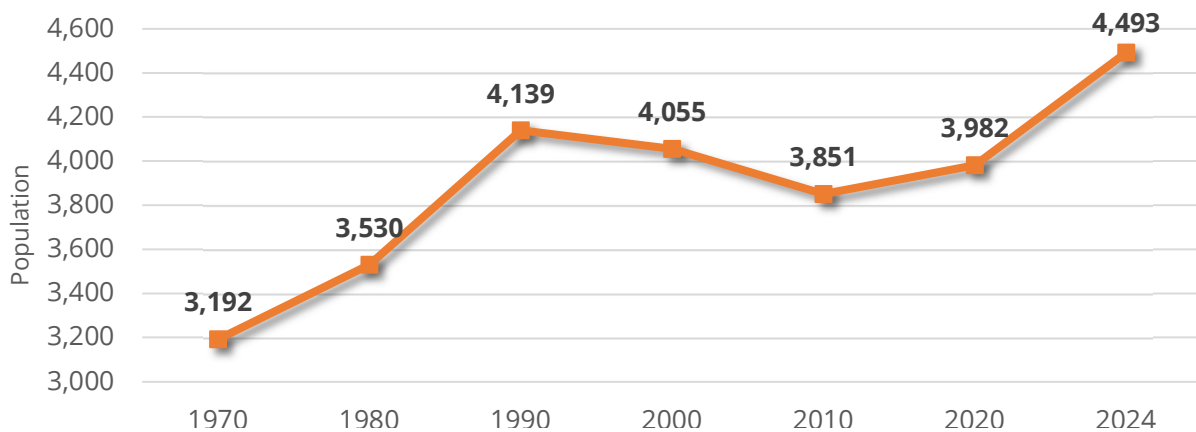
The Housing Element addresses the provision of adequate housing sites for the City of Mary Esther’s population including housing for very low, low, and moderate-income households; workforce housing; households with special needs; mobile and manufactured housing; residential care facilities for elderly residents; and group and foster care homes. While these categories are not exclusive of each other, the information can help tell the story of housing needs. The data within this Element can be utilized to create policies that support a diverse housing stock to serve the current and future residents of the City of Mary Esther.

Understanding demands and deficiencies is critical to create effective housing policies and strategies that elevate quality of life for all citizens. By planning for a variety of owner and renter opportunities, the City can retain and support current households while attracting people from across the income and skill spectrum, which is key to a healthy economy.

POPULATION

According to the most recent decennial Census (2020), approximately three thousand nine hundred eighty-two (3,982) people reside in the City of Mary Esther. The University of Florida’s Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) estimates the 2024 population at four thousand four hundred ninety-three (4,493) persons. **(Figure C:1).**

Figure C:1 – City of Mary Esther Total Population, 1970-2024



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau (1970-2020); BEBR Estimate (2024)

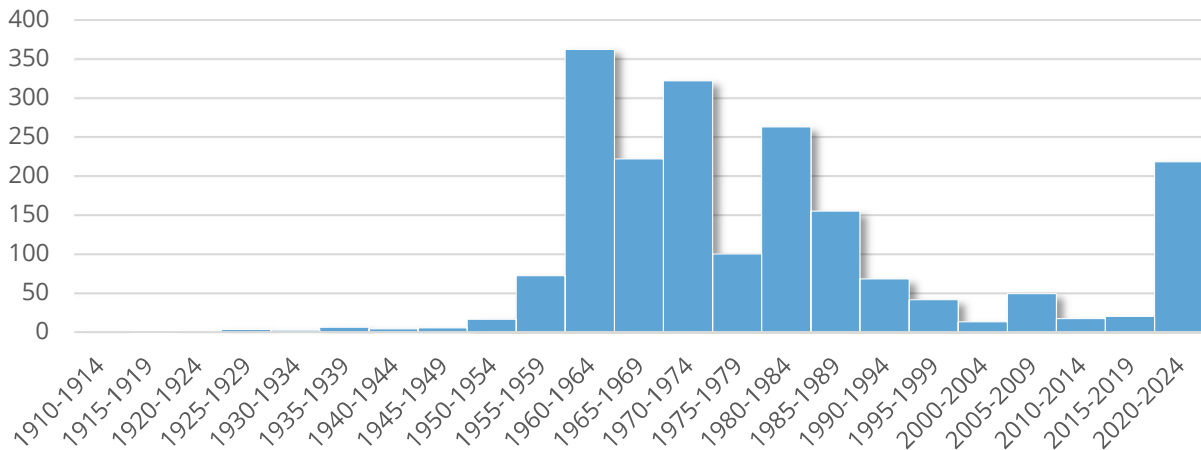
Date Prepared: 10/2024

HOUSING AND POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Dwelling Unit Construction

At the time of this document's writing, precise data on recent dwelling permits was unavailable. Instead, the year built of existing dwellings is used as a proxy. As shown in **Figure C:2**, the majority of Mary Esther's housing stock was constructed between 1960 and 1979, reflecting a period of rapid single-family home development. Over the past thirty (30) years, housing growth has been limited, primarily due to the lack of available undeveloped residential land within the City. Recent growth has largely been tied to redevelopment efforts, including the initial phase of the Renaissance Apartments on the Santa Rosa Mall property, which marked a significant increase in multi-family residential options. Future housing expansion will likely require the conversion of existing commercial properties into residential or mixed-use developments.

Figure C:2 – Existing Dwelling Units Built by Year



Data Source: Okaloosa County Property Appraiser
Date Prepared: 11/2024

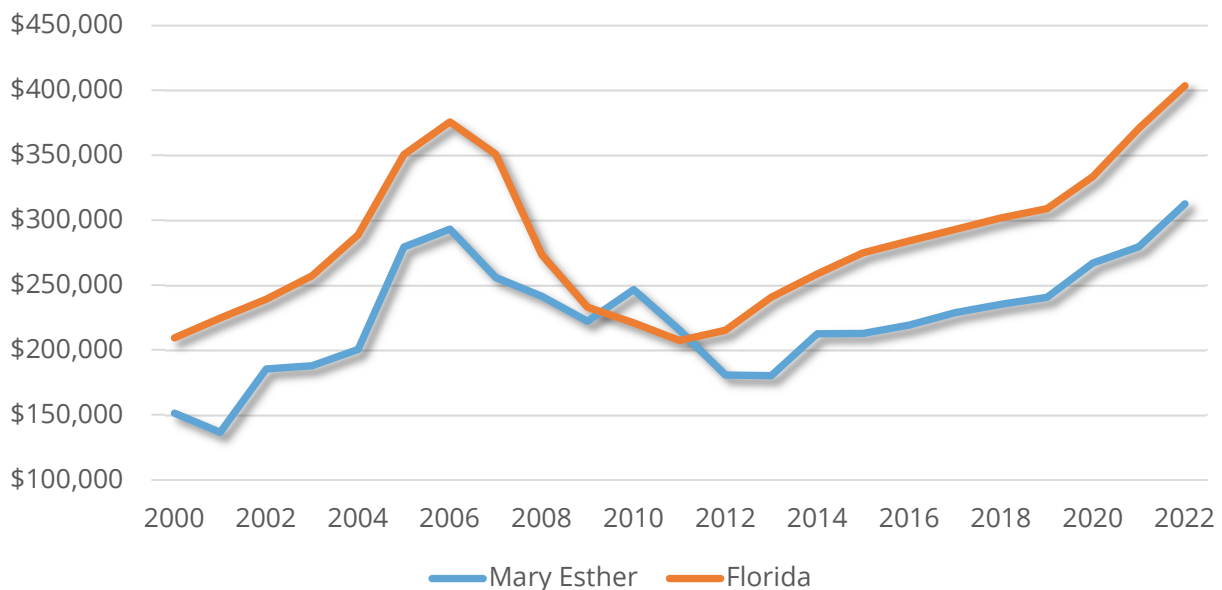
Median Home Prices

Rising home prices have been driven by strong demand and limited housing supply, which is exacerbated in Mary Esther by the lack of undeveloped residential land. While historically low mortgage rates have helped offset the affordability challenge for some buyers, the recent surge in interest rates could further limit access to homeownership. The disparity between Mary Esther and state-wide housing price growth demonstrates local market conditions shaped by proximity to military installations, limited land availability, and regional economic factors.

The median home value in the City of Mary Esther has risen significantly over the past two decades, as depicted in **Figure C:3**. Based on available data, the median home price in Mary Esther was approximately three hundred twelve thousand five hundred twenty-four dollars (\$312,524) in 2022, reflecting an upward trend in housing costs. This increase aligns with broader trends across Florida, where the median home price reached four hundred three thousand five hundred ninety-one dollars (\$403,591) in 2023.

These housing price trends highlight the importance of developing strategies to ensure housing accessibility, particularly for workforce housing and moderate-income households, to support the City's economic vitality and community resilience.

Figure C:3 - Median Home Price, Real (2023 \$)



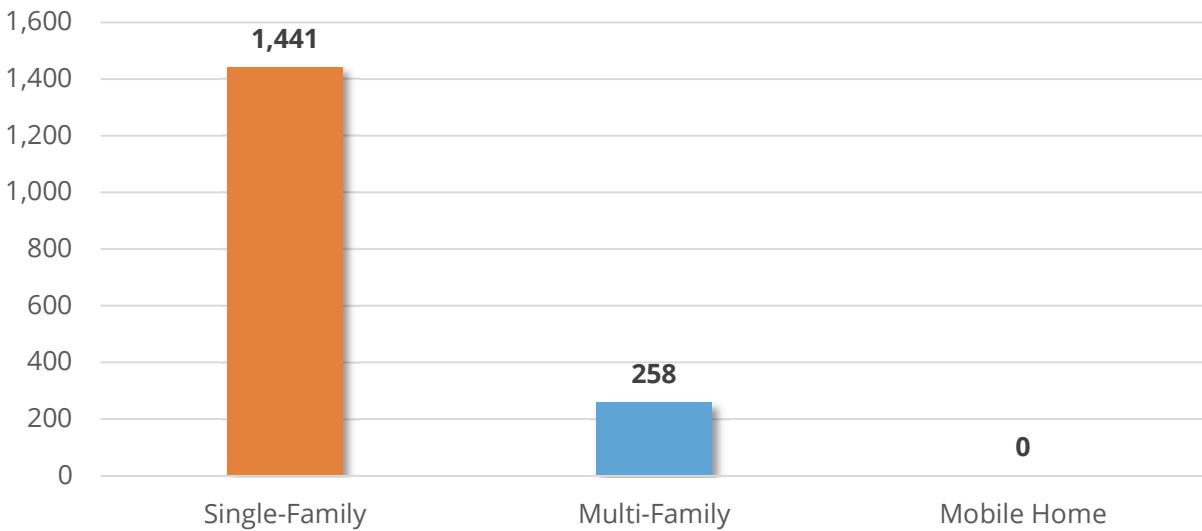
Data Source: Florida Department of Revenue Sales Data File; Shimberg Center for Housing Studies tabulation of County property appraiser data
Date Prepared: 10/2024

Notes: Nominal dollar amounts are not adjusted for inflation. Real dollar amounts are converted to the most recent year's dollars using the Consumer Price Index.

Housing Types

The current site-built single-family housing inventory for the City of Mary Esther is estimated at one thousand four hundred forty-one (1,441) units, or eighty-five percent (85%) of the housing stock (**Figure C:4**). There are an estimated two hundred fifty-eight (258) multi-family units, or fifteen percent (15%) of the housing stock. Mobile homes do not make up a significant part of the housing stock within the City of Mary Esther.

Figure C:4 - Housing Units by Type, 2018-2022



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04

Date Prepared: 10/2024

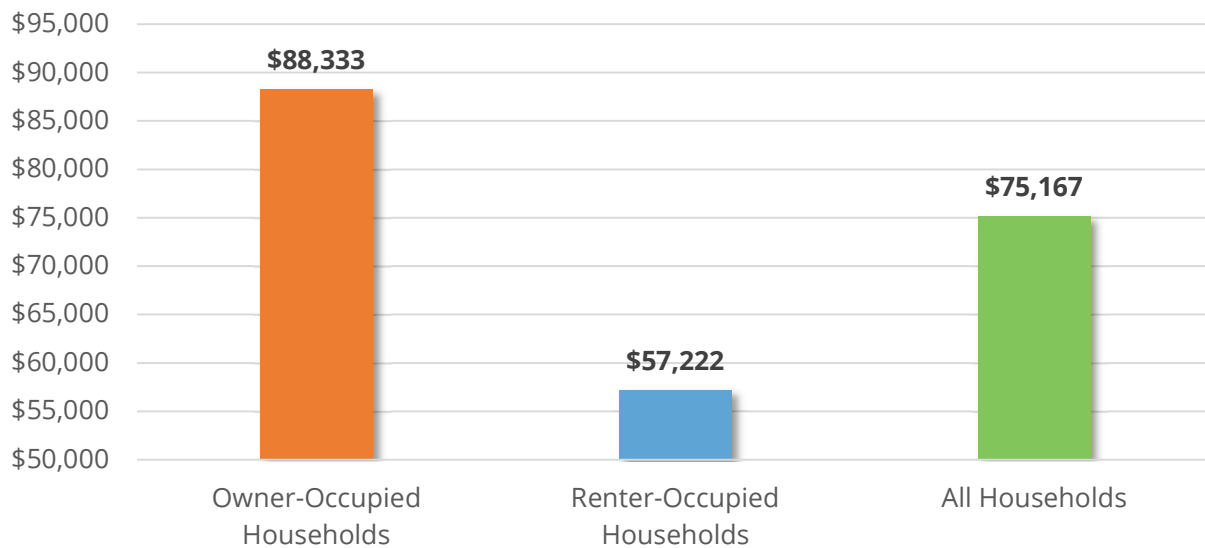
Notes: Counts refer to the number of dwelling units in each type of structure. The ACS is based on an annual sample of U.S. households

Median Income by Tenure

The median household income in the City of Mary Esther reflects a mix of owner-occupied and renter-occupied income patterns. Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018-2022 American Community Survey, the median income for all households in Mary Esther is seventy-five thousand one hundred sixty-seven dollars (\$75,167) (**Figure C:5**). This is slightly higher than Florida's median household income of seventy-three thousand three hundred eleven dollars (\$73,311) but lower than the overall median income for Okaloosa County, which stands at eighty-three thousand twenty-four dollars (\$83,024).

Owner-occupied households in Mary Esther have a significantly higher median income of eighty-eight thousand three hundred thirty-three dollars (\$88,333) compared to renter-occupied households, which have a median income of fifty-seven thousand two hundred twenty-two dollars (\$57,222). This disparity underscores the economic advantages of homeownership within the City.

Figure C:5 - Owner-Occupied Households by Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income, 2018-2022



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S2503

Date Prepared: 10/2024

Notes: The ACS is based on an annual sample of U.S. households.

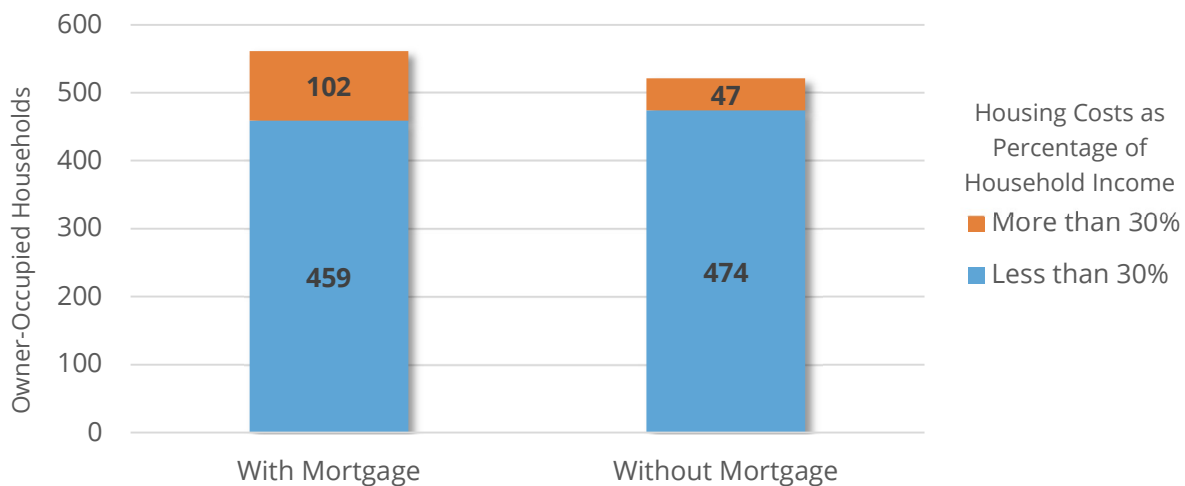
Owner-Occupied Housing Costs

In the City of Mary Esther, a significant majority of owner-occupied households spend less than thirty percent (30%) of their income on housing costs, adhering to affordability standards established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Specifically, eighty-two percent (82%) of owner-occupied households with a mortgage and ninety-one percent (91%) of those without a mortgage fall below the thirty percent (30%) threshold for housing cost burden (**Figure C:6**).

Conversely, eighteen percent (18%) of owner-occupied households with a mortgage and nine percent (9%) of those without a mortgage spend more than thirty percent (30%) of their income on housing, indicating a housing cost burden. These figures highlight the relative affordability of housing in Mary Esther, particularly for homeowners without a mortgage, but they also point to a need to monitor affordability challenges for a subset of residents with mortgages.

Addressing housing cost burdens through targeted policies could ensure continued housing affordability for all residents and enhance overall economic stability in Mary Esther.

Figure C:6 - Owner-Occupied Households by Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income, 2018-2022



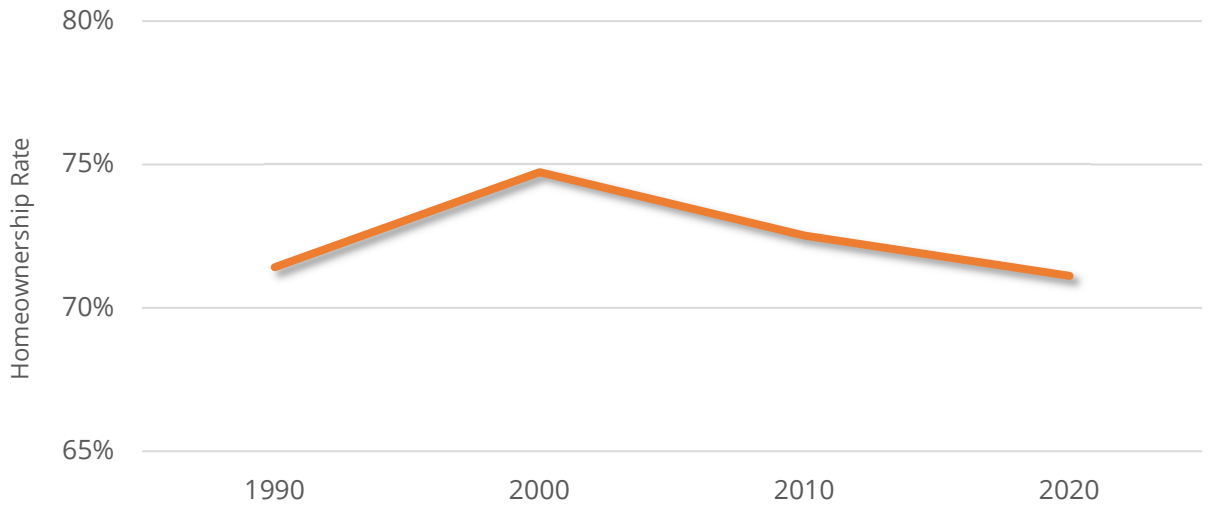
Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04
Date Prepared: 10/2024

Notes: The ACS is based on an annual sample of U.S. households.

Homeownership Rates

Homeownership rates in the City have decreased slightly since 1990. Unlike the State of Florida as a whole, the City of Mary Esther saw an overall decrease in homeownership from 1990 to 2019. **(Figure C:7)**

Figure C:7 – Homeownership Rate, 1990-2020



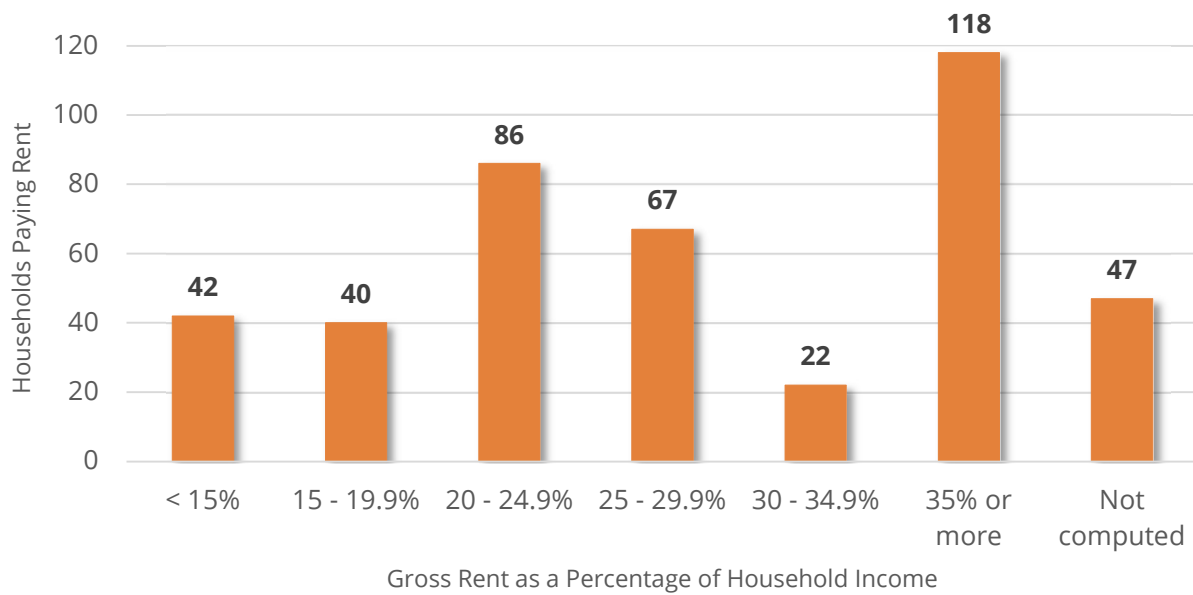
Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990/2000/2010/2020 Decennial Census
Date Prepared: 11/2024

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Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income

Approximately sixty-three percent (63%) of renter-occupied households in the City of Mary Esther spent less than thirty percent (30%) of their income on rent, a common measure of affordability. Approximately thirty-seven percent (37%) spent more than thirty percent (30%) of their income on rent. Rent percentages were not computed for an additional forty-seven (47) renter-households in the City. **(Figure C:8)**

Figure C:8 - Gross Rent as Percentage of Household Income, 2018-2022



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04

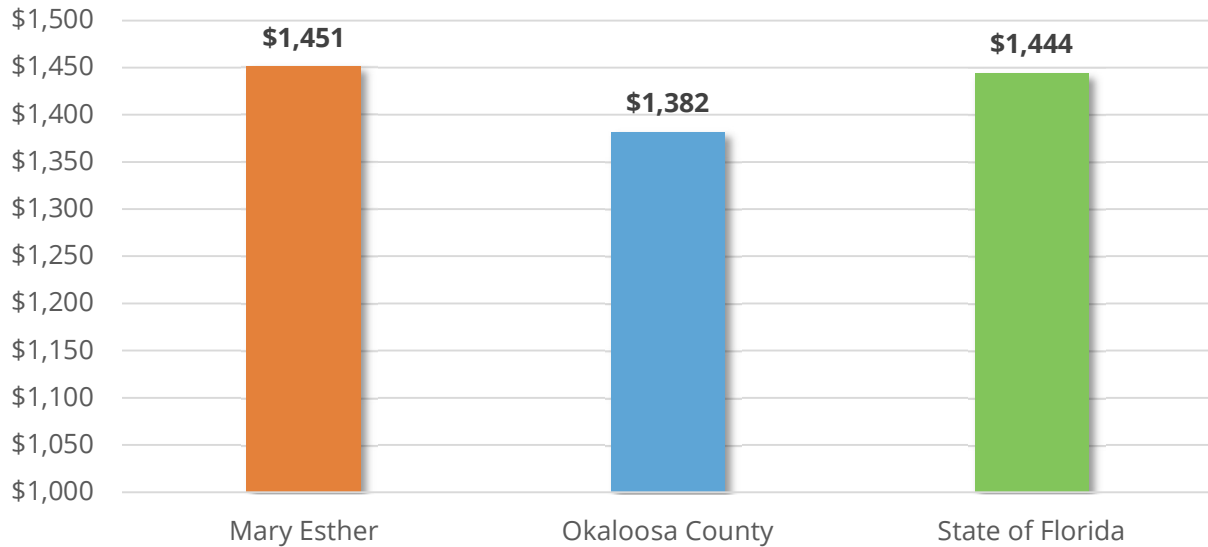
Date Prepared: 10/2024

Notes: Gross rent includes contract rent and utilities. The ACS is based on an annual sample of U.S. households.

Median Gross Rent

Median gross rent in the City of Mary Esther is one thousand four hundred fifty-one dollars (\$1,451), which is slightly higher than the median for the state of Florida as a whole at one thousand four hundred forty-four dollars (\$1,444) and the median for Okaloosa County, one thousand three hundred eighty-two dollars (\$1,382). **(Figure C:9)**

Figure C:9 - Median Gross Rent, 2018-2022



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04

Date Prepared: 10/2024

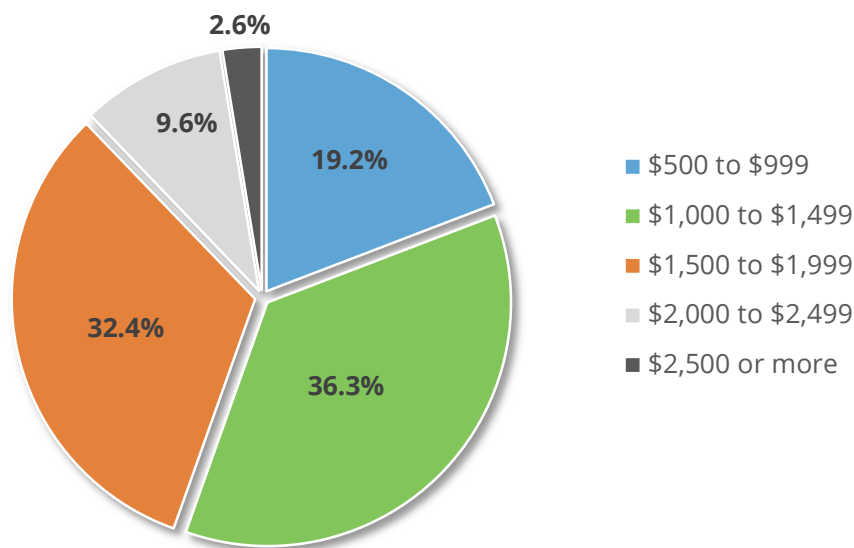
Notes: Gross rent includes contract rent and utilities. The ACS is based on an annual sample of U.S. households.

Renter-Occupied Households by Gross Rent

In the City of Mary Esther, rental housing costs are distributed across a range of price points, as shown in **Figure C-10**. Approximately nineteen-point-two-percent (19.2%) of renter-occupied households pay between five hundred dollars (\$500) and nine hundred ninety-nine dollars (\$999) per month in gross rent, while the largest proportion—thirty-six-point-three-percent (36.3%)—spends between one thousand dollars (\$1,000) and one thousand four hundred ninety-nine dollars (\$1,499). Another significant share of renters, thirty-two-point-four-percent (32.4%), pays between one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) and one thousand nine hundred ninety-nine dollars (\$1,999). A smaller proportion, nine-point-six-percent (9.6%), pays between two thousand dollars (\$2,000) and two thousand four hundred ninety-nine dollars (\$2,499), and only two-point-six-percent (2.6%) of renters report paying two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) or more per month.

These figures suggest that rental costs in Mary Esther are generally higher than those in Okaloosa County but still align with regional and statewide trends. As housing costs rise, the availability of rental units at lower price points becomes crucial for maintaining affordability for a diverse population. Addressing rental housing affordability through policies that support increased supply, will help ensure housing options for all residents.

Figure C:10 – City of Mary Esther Renter-Occupied Households by Gross Rent, 2018-2022



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04

Date Prepared: 10/2024

Notes: Counts refer to the percentage of households with monthly rents in each dollar range. The ACS is based on an annual sample of US households.

HOUSING ACCESS

Income Limits

The Area Median Income (AMI) in Okaloosa County for a family of four is ninety-five thousand seven hundred dollars (\$95,700) (U.S. HUD, 2024). Additional county income limits are highlighted in the **Table C:1**. Income limits qualify families for certain housing assistance programs.

Table C:1 - Okaloosa County Income Limits, 2024

Category	Area Median Income (AMI)	Income Limit (for 4-Person Household)
Extremely Low-Income	≥ 30% of AMI	≥ \$31,200
Very Low-Income	30.1 - 50% of AMI	\$31,201 - \$47,850
Low Income	50.1 - 80% of AMI	\$47,851 - \$76,550
		Data Source: HUD, 2024 Date Prepared: 11/2024

Workforce Housing

As sales and rental prices continue to rise in the City of Mary Esther, many households face challenges in affording housing within their community. While some households may qualify for housing assistance programs through HUD and other state initiatives, these programs have limited resources and cannot meet all needs. Workforce housing, generally defined as housing affordable to households earning sixty percent (60%) to one hundred twenty percent (120%) of the Area Median Income (AMI), is becoming increasingly inaccessible to those on the lower end of the income spectrum.

In Mary Esther, rental costs for many households earning sixty percent (60%) of AMI are nearing unaffordability, as median gross rents continue to rise. Median home prices are similarly challenging. According to the most recent data, the median home price in Mary Esther has increased significantly, with a sharp rise in statewide and regional prices. Interest rates have also risen, with thirty-year (30-year) fixed mortgage rates averaging seven-point-five percent (7.5%) in 2024 compared to much lower rates in prior years. Assuming households spend no more than thirty percent (30%) of their income on

housing, those earning sixty percent (60%) of AMI are increasingly unable to purchase a home at current prices, even with moderate down payments.

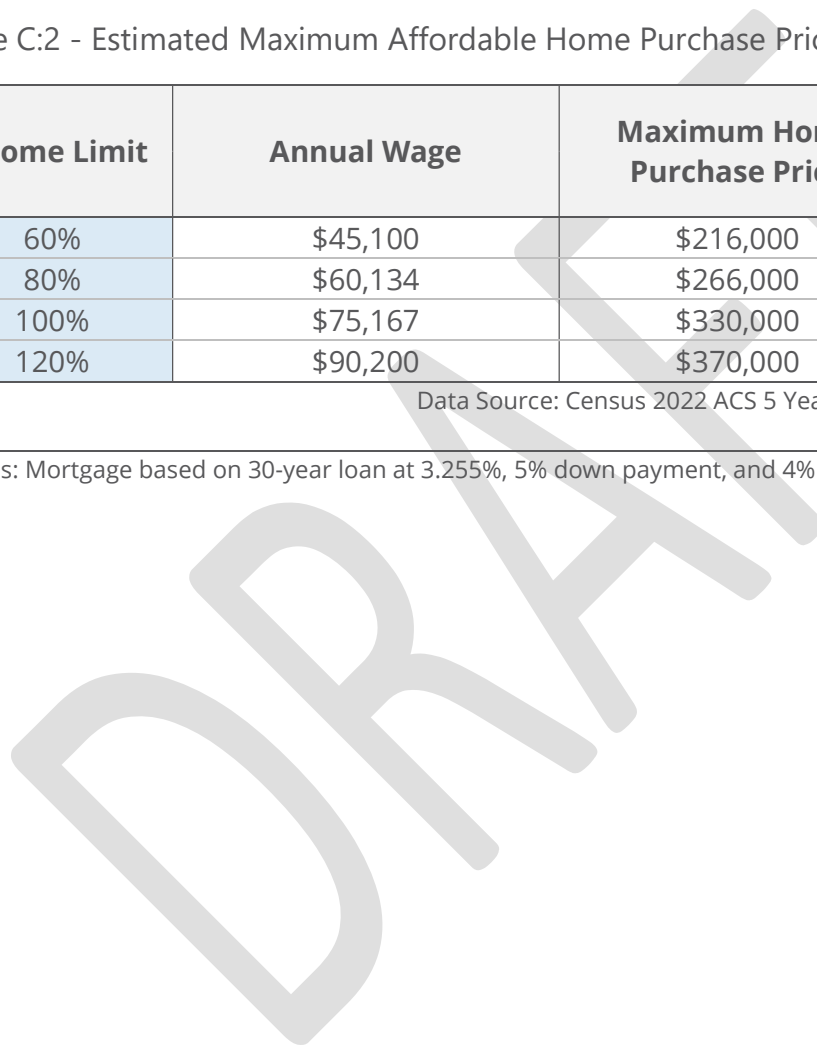
Efforts to address this issue should focus on supporting the development of workforce housing, maintaining affordable rental options, and ensuring that housing assistance programs are targeted effectively to meet local needs. Additionally, strategies to convert underutilized commercial properties into multifamily housing could help alleviate affordability pressures in the city.

Table C:2 - Estimated Maximum Affordable Home Purchase Price

Income Limit	Annual Wage	Maximum Home Purchase Price	Maximum Affordable Rent
60%	\$45,100	\$216,000	\$1,128
80%	\$60,134	\$266,000	\$1,503
100%	\$75,167	\$330,000	\$1,879
120%	\$90,200	\$370,000	\$2,255

Data Source: Census 2022 ACS 5 Year Estimate, Realtor.com, HUD
Date Prepared: 11/2024

Notes: Mortgage based on 30-year loan at 3.255%, 5% down payment, and 4% closing costs



Housing Cost Burden

According to the Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, in the City of Mary Esther, a significant portion of the population faces housing cost burdens. Among households earning thirty percent (30%) or less of the Area Median Income (AMI), approximately seventy (70) households (fifty-four percent (54%) of this group) spend more than fifty percent (50%) of their income on housing costs, indicating severe affordability challenges. Across all income groups in Mary Esther, a smaller but notable portion—approximately eleven (11) households earning fifty to eighty percent (50–80%) AMI and eleven (11) households earning eighty to one hundred percent (80–100%) AMI—also spend more than fifty percent (50%) of their income on housing.

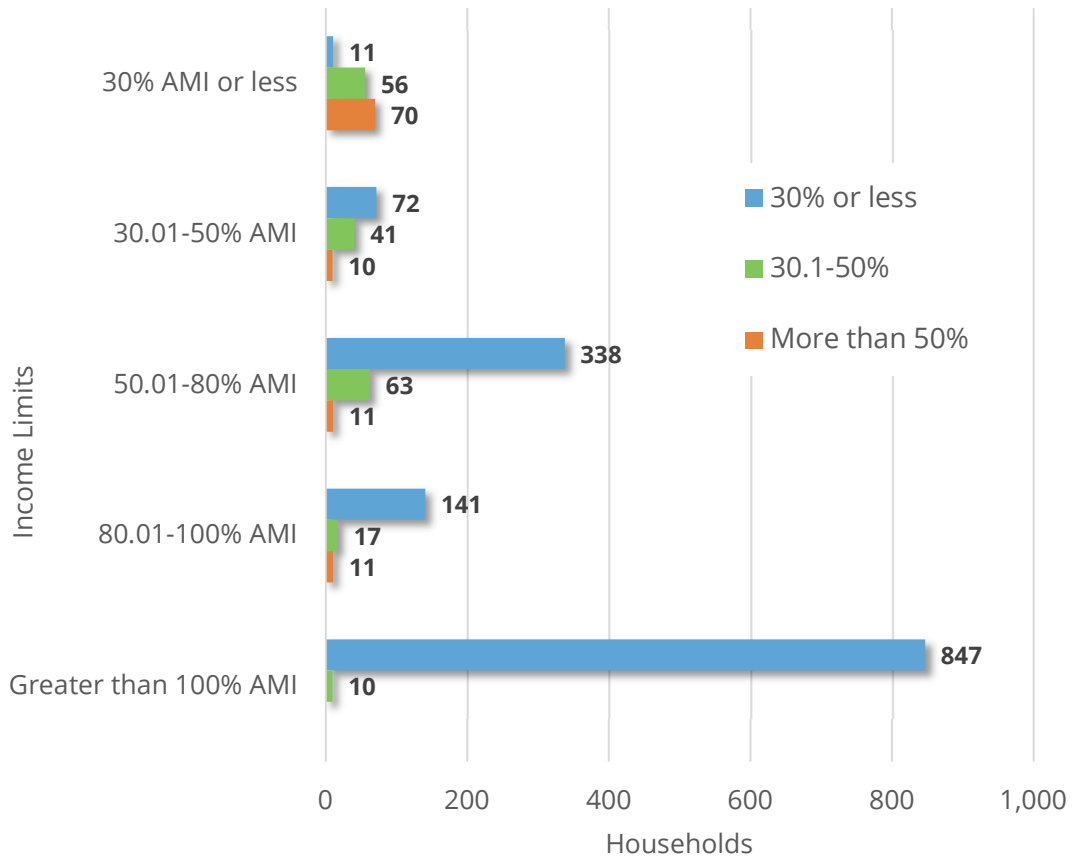
This data highlights that housing affordability is not only an issue for extremely low-income households but also affects those earning up to the median income. Addressing these burdens will require targeted interventions, including the development of affordable housing and housing assistance programs, to ensure that residents across income levels can maintain financial stability while accessing safe and adequate housing. (**Table C:3** and **Figure C:11**)

Table C:3 - All Households, Housing Cost Burden by Income, 2022

Household Income	Housing Cost Burden		
	30% or less	30.1-50%	More than 50%
30% AMI or less	11	56	70
30.01-50% AMI	72	41	10
50.01-80% AMI	338	63	11
80.01-100% AMI	141	17	11
Greater than 100% AMI	847	10	-

Data Source: Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, based on U.S. Department of Housing Development, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) dataset and population projections by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida

Figure C:11 – City of Mary Esther Housing Cost Burden by Income, 2022 Estimates



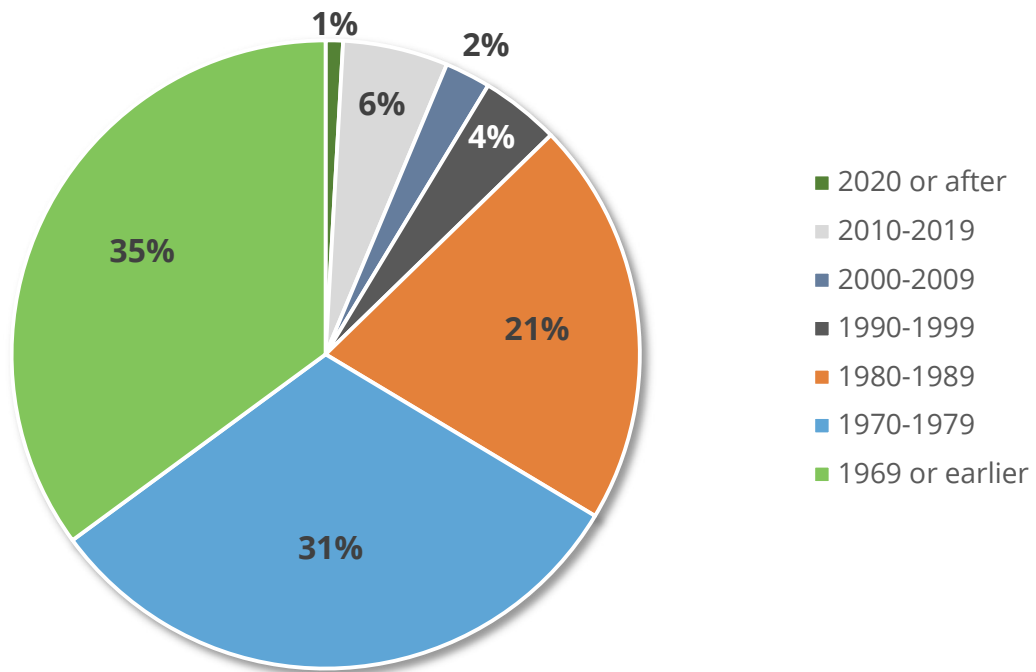
Data Source: Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, based on U.S. Department of Housing Development, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) dataset and population projections by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida
 Date Prepared: 10/2024

HOUSING CONDITION AND SPECIAL NEEDS

Age of Housing Stock

Thirty-five percent (35%) of the County’s housing stock was built prior to 1970 and four percent (4%) of the housing stock was built after 2000, with the remaining forty-one percent (41%) being built at some point in-between. Age is not sufficient to predict the condition of housing in a community, however, it does provide a look at the types of housing options in the community, which may inform future housing demand versus existing inventory. (Figure C:12)

Figure C:12 - Age of Residential Structures in Mary Esther by Decade Built



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04

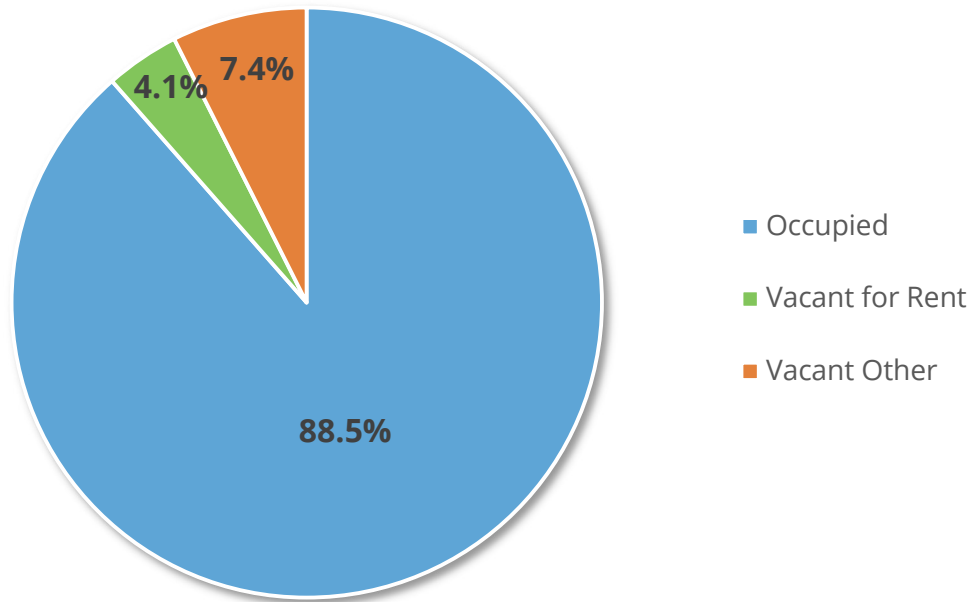
Date Prepared: 10/2024

Notes: The ACS is based on an annual sample of US households.

Vacancy & Occupancy Status

The overall vacancy rate in the City of Mary Esther is thirteen-point-five percent (13.5%), which is slightly higher than the State’s vacancy rate of ten-point-two percent (10.2%). (**Figure C:13**)

Figure C:13 - Housing Unit Vacancy and Occupancy Status, 2018-2022



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Tables DP04 & B25004

Date Prepared: 10/2024

Notes: The ACS is based on an annual sample of US households.

Substandard Housing

According to the 2018–2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, no units in the City of Mary Esther lack complete plumbing facilities or are without complete kitchen facilities. The ACS estimates that eleven (11) homes, or less than one percent (1%), have no available telephone service.

Assisted Housing

There are no assisted housing properties located in the City of Mary Esther. According to the Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, seventeen percent (17%) of the renting population within the City are considered cost-burdened. To provide adequate assisted housing opportunities in the City, there would need to be an additional two hundred eighty-nine (289) units to accommodate the current, cost-burdened population.

Historic Properties

The City of Mary Esther is home to approximately sixty-five (65) historic properties, with the vast majority being homes of historic or cultural value. Most of these properties are along U.S. Highway 98. Some of these properties were constructed in the early Twentieth Century, while others were built as recently as 1971. The City does not have any current historic districts or properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES AND NEEDS

Population Projections

Based upon the Shimberg Center’s population projections (**Table C:4** and **Figure C:14**), the City of Mary Esther will need approximately eight hundred fourteen (814) additional residential units by 2050. The Shimberg Center for Housing Studies uses the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) medium population projections and data from the 2010 and 2020 Census to estimate this need. There are currently one thousand six hundred ninety-nine (1,699) units in the City of Mary Esther.

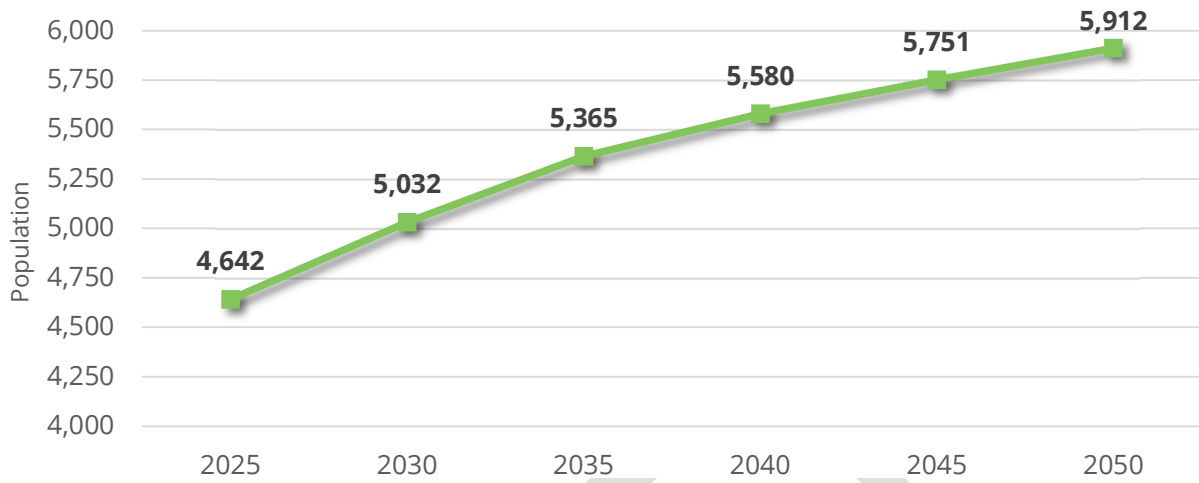
BEBR publishes three projections to account for uncertainty regarding future population growth. They believe the medium series is the most likely to provide accurate forecasts in most circumstances, but the low and high series provide an indication of the uncertainty surrounding future population growth. This means that future unit needs could range from a low of one hundred fifty (150) new units by 2050 up to a high of one thousand five hundred (1,500) additional units.

Table C:4 – City of Mary Esther Population Projections, Total, 2025-2050

Year	Population	% Change (5-Year)
2025	4,642	-
2030	5,032	8.4%
2035	5,365	6.6%
2040	5,580	4.0%
2045	5,751	3.1%
2050	5,912	2.8%

Data Source: Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, based on 2010 and 2020 U.S. Census data and population projections by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida
Date Prepared: 10/2024

Figure C:14 – City of Mary Esther Total Population Projections, 2025-2050



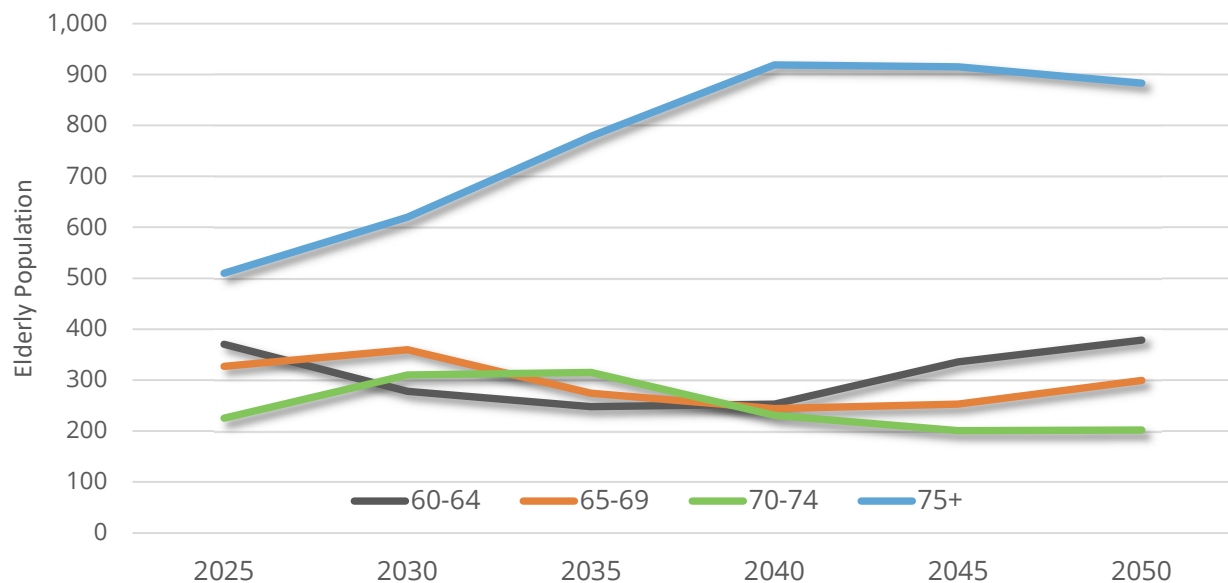
Data Source: Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, based on 2010 and 2020 U.S. Census data and population projections by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida
 Date Prepared: 10/2024

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The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines an elderly person as someone aged sixty-two (62) years or older. This demographic often begins to develop specific housing and care needs, necessitating strategies such as "aging in place." Aging in place is supported by national organizations like AARP, which advocate for policies and programs to enhance the quality of life for those aged fifty (50) and older.

In the City of Mary Esther, projections indicate that while the sixty-to-sixty-four (60–64) age group is expected to remain stable over the next fifteen (15) years, the population aged seventy-five (75) and older will nearly double, as shown in **Figure C:15**. This significant growth underscores the need to plan for housing options and support services tailored to this population. These include accessible housing designs, proximity to healthcare and community services, and initiatives to encourage social engagement and mobility for older residents. These strategies will help ensure that Mary Esther remains an inclusive and supportive community for its aging population.

Figure C:15 – City of Mary Esther Elderly Population Projections, 2025-2050



Data Source: Estimates and projections by Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, based on 2010 and 2020 U.S. Census data and population projections by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida
Date Prepared: 10/2024

Household Projections

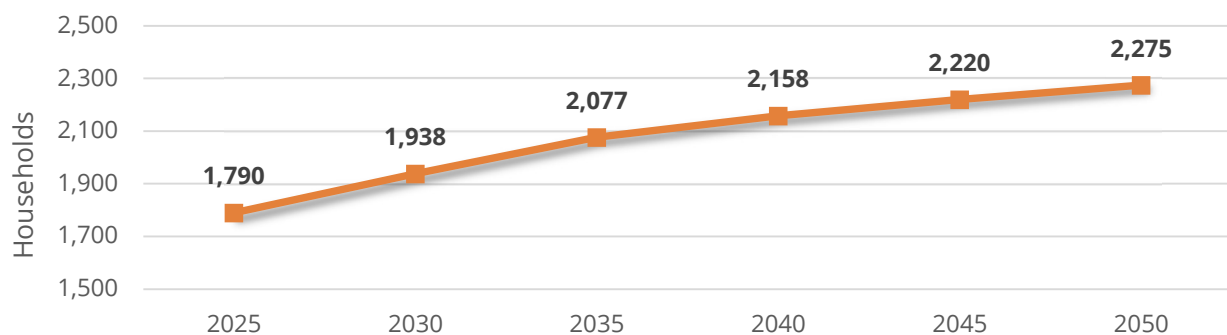
The number of households within the City is projected to grow steadily from one thousand seven hundred ninety (1,790) in 2025 to two thousand two hundred seventy-five (2,275) in 2050, representing an increase of approximately twenty-seven percent (27%) (**Table C:5** and **Figure C:16**). In comparison, Florida is projected to grow by twenty-point-six percent (20.6%) during a similar period. The higher growth rate in Mary Esther reflects its strategic location and potential to attract residents due to its quality of life, access to services, and economic opportunities.

Table C:5 - Household Projections, 2025-2050

Year	Households	Additional Units Needed
2025	1,790	125
2030	1,938	184
2035	2,077	178
2040	2,158	123
2045	2,220	105
2050	2,275	99

Data Source: Estimates and projections by Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, based on U.S. Department of Housing Development, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) dataset and population projections by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida
Date Prepared: 11/2024

Figure C:16 – City of Mary Esther Household Projections, 2025-2050



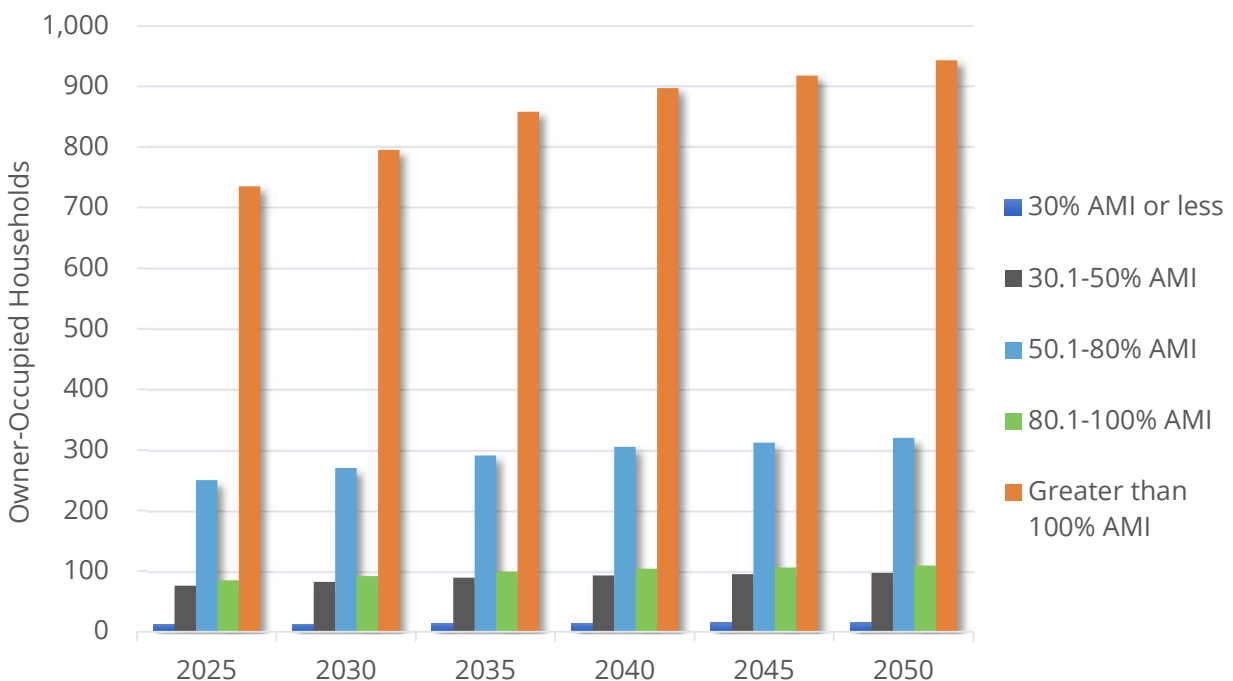
Data Source: Estimates and projections by Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, based on U.S. Department of Housing Development, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) dataset and population projections by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida
Date Prepared: 10/2024

Estimates and Projections of Need for Housing

Affordable Housing Estimates by Tenure and Cost Burden

By 2035, over fifty-one percent (51%) of owner-occupied households in the City of Mary Esther are projected to earn one hundred percent (100%) or more of the area median income (AMI) and spend thirty percent (30%) or less of their income on housing expenses. This indicates that housing affordability remains stable for a majority of residents in this income category. While there is a minor dip expected in this group by 2025, projections suggest a steady increase thereafter, exceeding 2020 levels by a small percentage. **(Figure C:17)**

Figure C:17 - Owner-Occupied Households 30% or Less Housing Cost Burden by Income



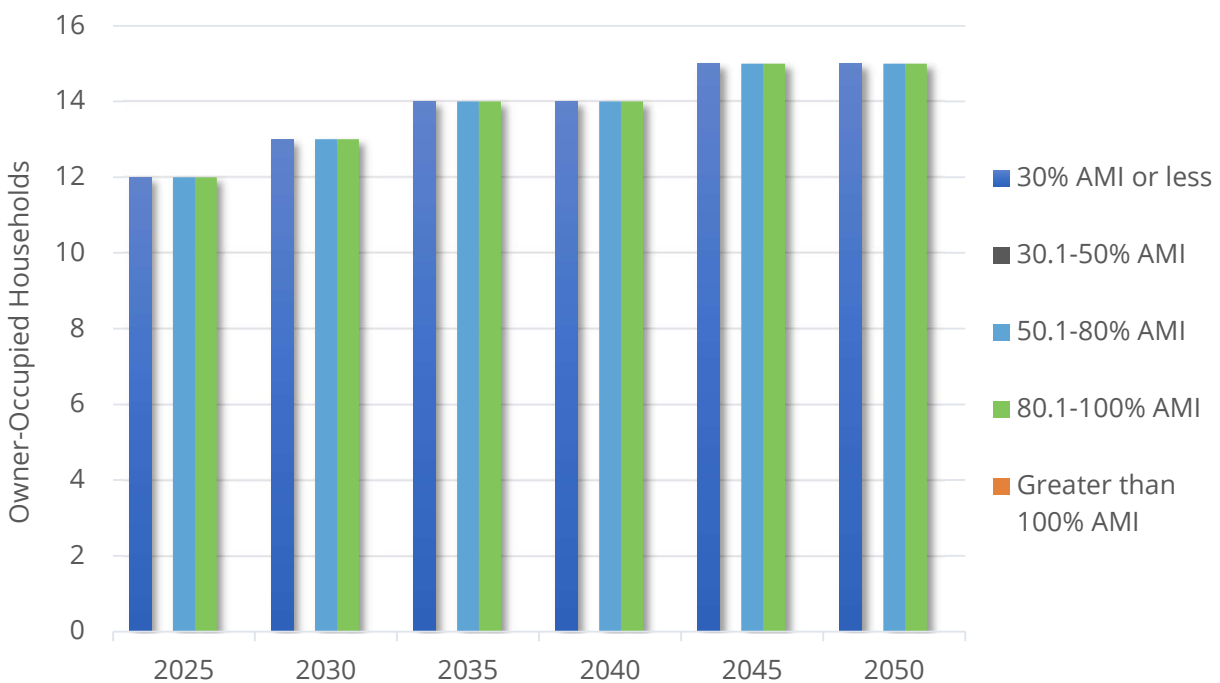
Data Source: Estimates and projections by Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, based on U.S. Department of Housing Development, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) dataset and population projections by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida
Date Prepared: 10/2024

Owner-Occupied Households: HUD defines households as severely cost-burdened when housing costs, including utilities, exceed fifty percent (50%) of their monthly income. In the City of Mary Esther, the majority of owner-occupied households spending over fifty percent (50%) of their income on housing fall within the thirty percent (30%) or less of Area Median Income (AMI) category. This group comprises approximately five percent (5%) of all owner-occupied households in the city, indicating that very low-income households face significant financial challenges related to housing. Over the next fifteen (15) years, the number of

owner-occupied households in this category is projected to increase by ten percent (10%), reflecting a growing demand for affordable housing solutions.

By 2035, the proportion of households spending less than thirty percent (30%) of their income on housing costs will remain stable for those earning more than one hundred percent (100%) of the AMI. However, households in the thirty-point-one percent to fifty percent (30.1%–50%) AMI and fifty percent to eighty percent (50%–80%) AMI ranges may experience a slight increase in cost burden, necessitating targeted policies to address affordability concerns. **(Figure C:18)**

Figure C:18 – Owner-Occupied Households 50% or More Housing Cost Burden by Income

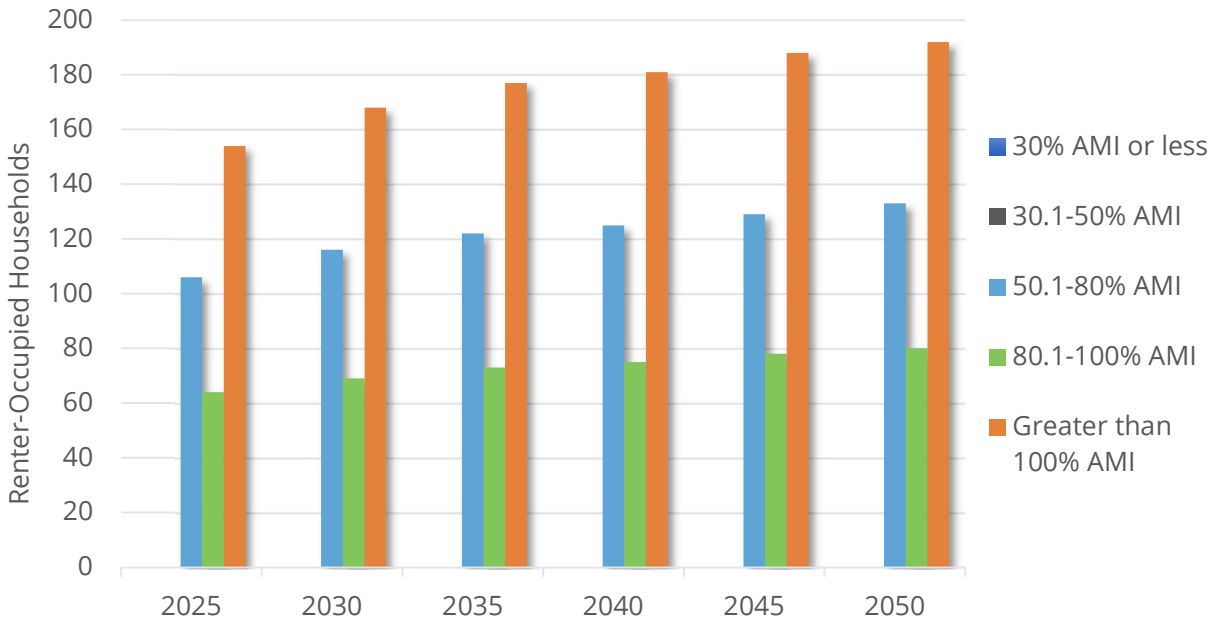


Data Source: Estimates and projections by Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, based on U.S. Department of Housing Development, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) dataset and population projections by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida
Date Prepared: 10/2024

Renter-Occupied Households: For renter-occupied households, cost burdens are most pronounced among those earning thirty percent (30%) or less of the AMI. These households represent the majority of renters dedicating more than fifty percent (50%) of their income to housing costs. Projections indicate an eight percent (8%) increase in the number of severely cost-burdened renters in this income category by 2035. As rental prices continue to rise, there will be a need to expand affordable rental housing options to accommodate the growing demand.

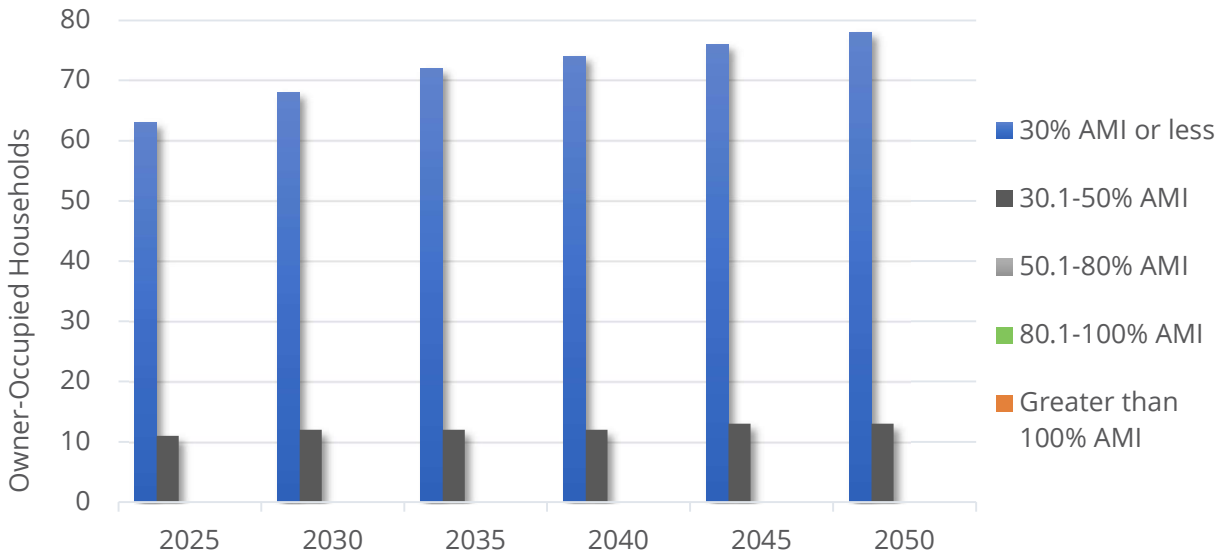
Renters earning more than one hundred percent (100%) of the AMI who allocate less than thirty percent (30%) of their income to housing costs currently make up about twenty-five percent (25%) of renter households. This figure is expected to remain stable through 2035, indicating that higher-income households face relatively low housing cost burdens. However, efforts should focus on bridging the gap for middle- and low-income renters who are more likely to experience cost burdens..

Figure C:19 –Renter-Occupied Households 30% or less Housing Cost Burden by Income



Data Sources: Estimates and projections by Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, based on U.S. Department of Housing Development, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) dataset and population projections by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida
 Date Prepared: 10/2024

Figure C:20 – Renter-Occupied Households 50% or more Housing Cost Burden by Income



Data Source: Estimates and projections by Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, based on U.S. Department of Housing Development, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) dataset and population projections by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida
 Date Prepared: 10/2024

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Policy Implications

Addressing these challenges requires collaboration between the City, private developers, and state and federal housing programs. Strategies such as incentivizing affordable housing developments, preserving existing affordable housing stock, and supporting mixed-income communities can help alleviate the housing cost burden for Mary Esther's most vulnerable populations.

Additional measures, such as increasing the availability of rental assistance programs and promoting the development of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), can also contribute to expanding affordable housing opportunities for renters and homeowners alike. A focus on equitable access to housing resources will ensure that all residents can benefit from stable, affordable housing options.

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HOUSING CONSIDERATIONS

The private sector housing industry will remain the principal provider of housing in the City of Mary Esther, serving the housing needs of moderate- and high-income households. The City’s principal role in the housing delivery system is to ensure adequate residential land for all income groups, address future population needs, and ensure that facilities and services are available concurrent with development impacts. Given the City’s limited vacant residential land, new growth will likely focus on redevelopment opportunities, particularly through converting underutilized commercial properties into multi-family housing or mixed-use developments.

The City of Mary Esther can address challenges such as high housing costs and increasing numbers of cost-burdened households through partnerships between public and private sectors. These partnerships can leverage resources and cost-saving measures to preserve and produce housing for residents, particularly for special-needs groups. Programs such as workforce housing initiatives, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and smaller-lot developments can help address housing needs across income levels.

Affordable Housing Resource Guide
Single Family Mortgage Revenue Bond
Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program
Project Based Vouchers – Section 8
Predevelopment Loan Program (PLP)
State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP)
Home Investments Partnership Program (HOME)
Community Development Block Grant
Community Contribution Tax Credit (CCTC)
USDA Rural Housing Service – Ownership and Rental
Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)
Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP)
Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)
State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) Program
Multi-Family Mortgage Revenue Bond Program (MMRB)
HUD Section 202
HUD Section 811
Data Source: Florida Housing Coalition’s Affordable Housing Resource Guide, 2020 Date Prepared: 3/2021

Housing and Infrastructure Coordination

The City's compact urban environment necessitates careful coordination of infrastructure and housing development. Opportunities for residential growth may focus on converting existing commercial areas, such as underutilized portions of the Santa Rosa Mall property, into housing or mixed-use developments. Extending water and sewer infrastructure along key corridors, where feasible, can support compact development and alleviate housing deficiencies.

Diversified Housing Inventory

A diversified housing inventory is critical to support the City's workforce and economic vitality. Mary Esther currently has limited multi-family housing options, which presents an opportunity for redevelopment. Strategies like Missing Middle Housing, including duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes, can address gaps in the market while maintaining compatibility with the City's character. Additionally, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) provide a viable strategy for increasing affordable rentals within single-family neighborhoods.

While Mary Esther's rental prices are relatively affordable compared to nearby areas, increased inventory will be needed to accommodate future growth and shifting housing preferences. Smaller footprint homes on modest lots and multi-story developments in appropriate areas can balance affordability and space efficiency, particularly for workforce and low-income households.



Location Efficiency

The City can further enhance housing affordability by prioritizing location-efficient development. By encouraging housing near amenities such as grocery stores, healthcare facilities, and employment centers, residents can reduce transportation costs, improving overall affordability and livability.

Through these strategies and leveraging State and Federal resources, the City of Mary Esther can ensure safe, accessible, and affordable housing options for its residents while preserving its unique identity and promoting sustainable growth.

DRAFT

Section D: Infrastructure Element



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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the Infrastructure Element is to examine the adequacy of the City of Mary Esther’s current infrastructure. This Element documents the future infrastructure needs within the City through 2050 based on the population projections of the Future Land Use Element (Section A: **Table A:3** and **Table A:4**). This Element is divided into the following sub-elements: Sanitary Sewer, Solid Waste, Stormwater Management, Potable Water, and Natural Groundwater Aquifer Recharge. The Infrastructure Element is to include all information required under Subsection 163.3177(6)(c), Florida Statutes (F.S.).

INVENTORY OF INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS

Sanitary Sewer Sub-Element

Introduction and Purpose: The purpose of the Sanitary Sewer Sub-Element is to ensure that residents of the City of Mary Esther have access to adequate wastewater collection and treatment facilities. These facilities should be cost-effective and environmentally sound. When possible, treatment facilities should reflect the water reuse goals of the Northwest Florida Water Management District. This document presents an analysis of conditions and alternatives designed to illustrate available options for sewage treatment and disposal.

Wastewater Treatment System: Wastewater consists of industrial waste, human waste, and rainfall runoff in some older systems. Sewer systems are generally designed to flow by gravity through sloped pipes until waste reaches either the treatment plant or a sewage pumping station. Currently, the entirety of the City of Mary Esther is served by the City’s Wastewater treatment plant.

Septic Tanks: The vast majority of residences within the City of Mary Esther have access to city sewer. There are a few parcels, mostly located south of U.S. Highway 98, which may be operating on septic (see **Map D:1**).

Solid Waste Sub-Element

Introduction and Purpose: The purpose of the Solid Waste Sub-Element of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide effective and safe disposal of solid waste for the present and anticipated future residents of the City of Mary Esther. Improper disposal of solid and hazardous waste in unauthorized areas can contaminate drinking water or expose residents to dangerous health risks. The proper management of solid waste is particularly important in its relationship to the Aquifer Recharge, Sanitary Sewer, and Potable Water Sub-Elements

of this Comprehensive Plan Element. Waste Management provides solid waste services for the City of Mary Esther.

Stormwater Management Sub-Element

Introduction and Purpose: The purpose of the Stormwater Management Sub-Element of the Comprehensive Plan is to properly manage stormwater runoff, protect ground and surface water quality, protect individuals, and prevent property damage from flooding.

In response to extensive flooding in the 1960s, Florida created five Water Management Districts (WMDs) that were intended to provide statewide management of flood flows. In the last 25 years, the WMDs have constructed channel improvements and flood control facilities to reduce/eliminate regional flooding from significant storm events. They have also developed a regulatory program that addresses the attenuation and treatment of off-site stormwater discharges. The current version of this program normally requires communities to secure Environmental Resources Permits that address stormwater management issues involved with both new facility construction and maintenance of existing facilities. The Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWWMD) works jointly with the FDEP to process environmental resource permits pursuant to the requirements of Part IV of Chapter 373, F.S.

The occurrence of stormwater runoff is highly variable, dependent on the amount of rain falling during each storm event and on conditions within the drainage basin. Since most storm events are relatively moderate, natural drainage features typically evolve to accommodate moderate quantities of stormwater runoff. Occasionally, severe storm events create runoff volumes higher than what these features can handle, resulting in temporary flooding of adjacent land. Periodic flooding is part of the natural cycle of events and often has beneficial effects on the basin ecosystem. Flooding is generally not perceived as a problem until development occurs in the flood prone areas.

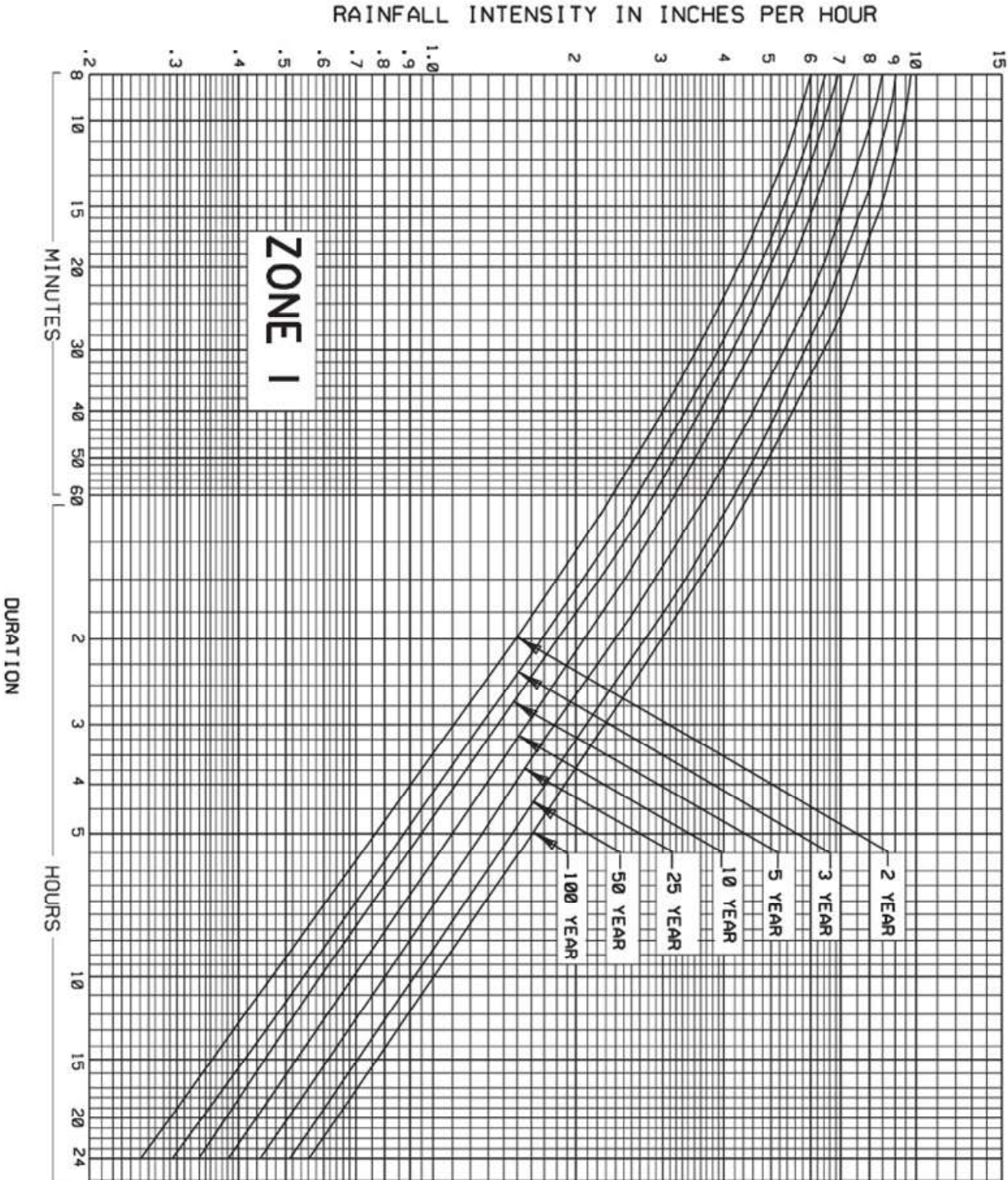
The term "stormwater management" refers to comprehensive strategies for dealing with stormwater quantity and quality. The central tenet of these strategies is to ensure that the volume, rate, timing, and pollutant load of runoff after development is similar to that which occurred prior to development. To accomplish this, combinations of structural and non-structural techniques are utilized. Structural techniques emphasize detention and retention of stormwater to reduce runoff rates and provide settling and filtration of pollutants. Non-structural techniques emphasize preservation or simulation of natural drainage features to promote infiltration, filtering, and slowing of runoff. The objective of stormwater management is to utilize the combination of techniques that provides adequate pollutant removal and flood protection in the most economical manner.

There are two basic factors involved in creating a successful stormwater management program: establishing and applying uniform design standards and procedures; and ensuring adequate maintenance of system components once they are constructed.

Design Standards: The design storm event standard specifies the intensity (rate of rainfall) and duration of the rainfall event to be used in the design of facilities. Data on rainfall intensity and duration have been summarized for various regions of the state by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) in graphs such as the one shown in **Figure D:1**.

The curved lines on the graph represent the frequency of occurrence of rainfall events of various intensities and durations (at intervals of two (2), three (3), five (5), ten (10), twenty-five (25), fifty (50), and one hundred (100) years) for this region. Average annual precipitation in the area is over sixty (60) inches, with most rainfall occurring between June and September. **Table D:1** depicts the monthly rainfall from 2015 to 2019 from the Destin recording station.

Figure D:1 - Rainfall Intensity-Duration-Frequency Curves - Zone 1



Source: FDOT Drainage Manual IDF Curves

Table D:1 – Rainfall and Average Precipitation by Month, (Destin, FL) 2015-2019

Month	Average High Temp	Average Low Temp	Average Precipitation
January	61° F	45° F	5.08 in
February	63° F	47° F	5.29 in
March	68° F	53° F	6.08 in
April	74° F	60° F	4.26 in
May	82° F	68° F	3.29 in
June	87° F	75° F	5.50 in
July	89° F	77° F	7.94 in
August	89° F	76° F	6.75 in
September	86° F	72° F	5.14 in
October	79° F	63° F	3.81 in
November	70° F	54° F	4.61 in
December	62° F	47° F	4.60 in
Average	76° F	61° F	Total 62.35 in

*Data Source: www.usclimatedata.com
Date Prepared: 11/2021*

The City of Mary Esther’s stormwater management system is depicted in **Map D:2**. Mary Esther’s stormwater system uses swales, retention ponds, and limited underground infrastructure to manage runoff. Streets and property edges feature open and filter swales, slowing and infiltrating stormwater while removing pollutants. Under some swales, perforated pipes improve infiltration and limit surface flow.

Retention ponds appear as dry basins in low-flow conditions or as permanent water bodies that remove pollutants before draining. Some incorporate gravel or other media to boost filtration. Privately maintained “cleansing lakes” and natural wetlands further protect water quality by settling out sediment and contaminants.

Catch basins at key street points direct water into underground pipes that feed into larger swale or pond networks. These systems collectively mitigate flood risk, maintain water quality, and preserve the city’s coastal environment through a blend of engineered and natural stormwater solutions.

Local Standards: Under Section 10.03.01 of the City’s Land Development Code, each development must retain the first inch of runoff on-site and keep post-development runoff rates from exceeding pre-development levels for a 25-year, 24-hour storm event. Performance and design standards in Section 10.03.02 require that stormwater runoff approximate the site’s natural or existing conditions, incorporate best management practices for the first inch of runoff, and comply with state water quality standards. Systems

must be engineered to function at least 20 years, use natural drainage where feasible, and ensure no surface water is channeled into sanitary sewers. Projects are also subject to certification by a Florida-licensed professional engineer, with detention and retention areas designed to meet flood prevention requirements.

Cash in Lieu and Maintenance: When on-site treatment is not feasible, Section 10.03.03 allows a “cash in lieu” option, provided a permitted stormwater facility in the same drainage basin can handle additional runoff. Developers must supply certified calculations of extra post-development runoff to set the payment, which is reserved for future stormwater improvements. If a stormwater system is intended as part of a city-maintained regional network, the infrastructure must be dedicated to the City. Otherwise, it must be operated by an approved entity such as a homeowner association or a special taxing district. The LDC mandates a Stormwater Management Plan for each new development, prohibits direct discharges into open water bodies or wetlands, and holds developers responsible for any drainage facilities needed to meet these requirements.

Potable Water Sub-Element

Introduction and Purpose: Consistent with Subsection 163.3177(6)(c), F.S., the purpose of the Potable Water Sub-Element is to ensure that necessary public potable water facilities and services correlate to future land use projections. The Potable Water Sub-Element support documents provide the data and analysis used as the basis for the goals, objectives, and policies included under the Infrastructure Element.

In the City of Mary Esther, potable water—defined as water safe for drinking, cooking, and other domestic uses—is sourced from the Floridan Aquifer via four municipal wells (**Map D:3**). Due to the high quality of this groundwater, treatment is minimal, involving aeration, a Calgon carbon unit at Plant #4, and chlorination for disinfection.

Existing Conditions: The City's water infrastructure includes treatment facilities, storage tanks, and a distribution network designed to maintain adequate pressure and meet quality standards. The system complies with regulatory requirements set by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and the Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD). The City's *2022 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report* indicates that the water system meets federal and state standards, with contaminants well below maximum contaminant levels.

Projected population growth will increase demand for potable water, necessitating system upgrades and capacity expansions to maintain service levels. Aging infrastructure requires maintenance and potential replacement to address leaks, reduce water loss, and enhance

efficiency. Additionally, Mary Esther's location in a hurricane-prone region underscores the importance of resilient water supply systems capable of withstanding extreme weather events to ensure uninterrupted service.

The Potable Water Sub-Element aims to align water supply planning with land use and population projections outlined in the Future Land Use Element. It seeks to ensure adequate funding and implementation of capital improvement projects to address capacity, maintenance, and resilience needs. Promoting water conservation through public education, incentives, and the adoption of best practices is also a priority.

In 2005, the Legislature enacted Senate Bills 360 and 444, which significantly changed Chapter 163 and 363, F.S. to improve coordination of water supply and land use planning. This legislation strengthened the linkage between the Regional Water Supply Plans prepared by the Water Management Districts and Comprehensive Plans prepared by local governments. A required work plan addresses the construction of public, private, and regional water supply facilities, including development of alternative water supplies and conservation and reuse programs. These programs are necessary to serve existing and new development for at least a 10-year planning period. The preparation of this Sub-Element utilizes data and information made available from NFWWMD's *2018 Water Supply Assessment Update* with special emphasis on Region II, in which the City of Mary Esther is located.

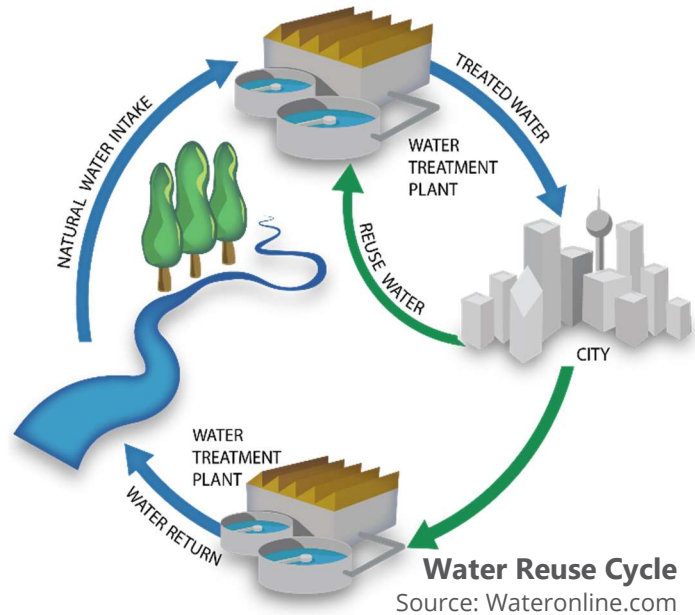
Northwest Florida Water Management Water Supply Planning Region II: The Northwest Florida Water Management District developed the Regional Water Supply Plan (RWSP) for Region II (Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Walton Counties) to identify future water demands, existing water sources, and alternative water supply sources to meet or exceed the Region's long-term water supply needs.

The Region II RWSP was first approved by the Governing Board on February 22, 2001. Updates to the plan were approved on October 26, 2006, February 23, 2012, and January 23, 2020. On December 14, 2023, the NFWWMD Governing Board determined the Region II RWSP should continue.

Mary Esther Water Supply System: The Mary Esther Water Treatment Plant, operated by Jacobs, routinely monitors for contaminants in drinking water according to Federal and State laws, rules, and regulations.

Water Reuse: Reclaimed water is water that has received at least secondary treatment and is reused after flowing out of a wastewater treatment facility. Reuse is the application of reclaimed wastewater for beneficial purposes. Reclaimed water is wastewater that has been thoroughly treated to remove harmful organisms and substances such as bacteria, viruses, and metals.

The District's reuse emphasis is placed on permittees located within the two Water Resource Caution Areas (WRCAs). The water use permittees located in a WRCA are required to use reclaimed water unless it is determined to be unfeasible. Large water permittees in a WRCA, who generate reclaimed water, are also required to develop, implement, and submit a detailed "Water Resource Master Plan." Currently, parts of Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton Counties qualify as a WRCA. (Map D:4). Reuse efforts are concentrated within WRCAs. NFWFMD considers this reclaimed water an important component in its overall resource management strategy. The intent of the State Water Policy (Chapter 62-40, F.A.C.) is for all water reuse applicants to use water of the lowest acceptable quality.



Natural Groundwater Aquifer Recharge Sub-Element

Purpose and Introduction: The purpose of this Sub-Element is to protect quality and quantity of natural groundwater found in the aquifer within the City of Mary Esther. Aquifers are water-bearing layers of porous rock, sand, or gravel. Several aquifers may be present below one surface location, separated by confining layers of materials, which are impermeable or semi permeable to water. The Floridan Aquifer system has been divided into an upper and lower aquifer separated by a unit of lower permeability. The Upper Floridan aquifer is the principal source of water supply in the City of Mary Esther. **Map D:5** depicts the potentiometric surface of the Floridan Aquifer in and adjacent to the City. The potentiometric surface is determined through the extensive study of well depths in the area.

The source of water in aquifers is rainfall. Under the force of gravity, rainfall percolates downward through porous surface soils to enter the aquifer strata. Because of the variable permeability of different soil types, the rate of aquifer recharge from rainfall may vary from one location to another. The areas of highest recharge potential are called prime recharge areas. The presence of overlying confining beds also determines which surface areas are effective recharge areas and is another factor in identifying prime recharge areas.

Since aquifer recharge areas are surface features, they are subject to alteration by development. Covering a recharge area with impervious surfaces, such as roads, parking lots, and buildings, reduces the area available for rainfall percolation, altering the total rate and

volume of recharge in that area. Increasing the rate at which stormwater drains from recharge area surfaces also decreases recharge potential.

A second concern related to development within aquifer recharge areas is the potential for contamination of groundwater within the aquifer. As stormwater runs off to surface waters, pollutants that are picked up by runoff can enter the aquifer and degrade the groundwater quality. Since water flows within an aquifer in a manner similar to surface water flow, downstream portions of the groundwater may be polluted over time. This becomes particularly significant when the aquifer is tapped as a potable water supply downstream.

The task of identifying the nature and extent of groundwater resources available within the State has been delegated to the Regional Water Management Districts. Each District must prepare and make available to local governments a Groundwater Basin Resource Availability Inventory (GWBEAI), which the local governments are to use in planning for future development. The criteria for the inventories and legislative intent for their use are in Section 373, F.S.

Chapter 163, F.S., the "Local Government Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulation Act of 1985," requires local government comprehensive plans to include a topographic map depicting the prime groundwater recharge areas for the Floridan Aquifer as designated by local Water Management Districts. The designation of prime recharge areas is required by Chapter 373, F.S.

Article 10.05.00 of the City of Mary Esther's Land Development Code addresses aquifer protection along with the Goals, Objectives, and Policies of this Element.

The groundwater system underlying the City of Mary Esther generally consists of three aquifers. The sand and gravel aquifer lies just below the land surface and extends throughout the City. It is open to infiltration from rainfall in varying degrees, depending on the percolation characteristics of surface soils and the extent of impervious surfaces, which have been constructed.

The Floridan Aquifer is not recharged within Okaloosa County. Protection of wells which draw potable water from the aquifer and their respective cones of influence is, however, a requirement of local government. Sand and gravel aquifers which overlie the impervious limestone strata covering the Floridan Aquifer yield water for irrigation purposes and are also subject to conservation and protective measures of local government.

OPPORTUNITIES AND NEEDS

Sanitary Sewer Wastewater

The establishment of efficient wastewater plants is essential to protect the public’s health, drinking water supply, and the natural environment. Unfortunately, adverse impacts can occur when facilities are damaged by wind, flooding, and excessive stormwater runoff during rain events. Aging and deteriorating facilities can have adverse impacts on the environment when plants do not function in an efficient manner and when the levels of service standards are allowed to fall to a level that allows the plant’s capacity to be exceeded. Inspections and testing are important to ensure that the water being discharged is treated water, that this is accomplished with trained personnel, and the treatment facilities perform satisfactorily in accordance with FDEP and FDOH standards. Standards established in the City’s Flood Ordinance are consistently applied to new development.

Septic Tanks

Suburban and rural areas with a high density of septic tanks can experience widespread degradation of groundwater due to increases in nitrates and other substances. Septic tanks are generally the most frequently reported sources of groundwater contamination. When densities are high, septic tanks have the potential to degrade groundwater on larger scales. For this reason, new septic tanks are not allowed in the City of Mary Esther and existing septic users are required to connect to central sewer within one year of sewer availability. Although there are no verified operational septic systems in use within the City, the Florida Department of Health data shown on **Map D-1** includes several parcels categorized as “likely septic.” These parcels are mostly concentrated south of U.S. Highway 98.

Stormwater

The relationship between land use management and stormwater management is inevitably linked. Historically, the typical strategy adopted in response to stormwater flooding of developed areas was to modify the drainage system to convey runoff away from developed sites more rapidly. Initially, this response results in limited success in reducing nuisance effects and property damage. However, as urbanization of a drainage basin increases, storm events produce proportionately more and faster runoff. This is primarily due to the increase in impervious surfaces in the basin as land is covered with structures, paved parking lots, newly paved roads, etc. As a result, the capacities of natural drainage features and previously constructed drainage facilities are exceeded more frequently and stormwater flooding problems increase, as do expenditures for further drainage improvements.

The coverage of land area by impervious surfaces allows pollutants to accumulate. The rain moves these accumulated pollutants into ground and surface waters, which reduces water quality. The conveyance systems used to channel the stormwater can become clogged, leading to flooding and property damage. It is when natural features are converted into urban land uses that development related problems occur. The development process disrupts our natural drainage patterns and requires that controls be instituted to protect water quality as well as residents and property from flooding.

In addition to exacerbating flood problems, stormwater runoff has detrimental effects on water quality. Soil eroding from development sites and materials such as oil, grease, pesticides, and fertilizers from urban land uses are washed away with runoff, increasing pollutant loads on receiving waters. The increased velocity of runoff also disrupts natural drainage features by destabilizing channels, leading to further sediment loading and debris accumulation.

The potential environmental and economic impacts of uncontrolled stormwater drainage have led to a management and regulatory framework established by local, state, and federal governments. Severe rain events create runoff exceeding what the drainage system can contain, and flooding is the result. Normally, this is not a problem unless development has occurred in the flooding area. Not only is there a detrimental effect on development when runoff is present, but water quality is affected. Soil carried from more developed areas contains oil, pesticides, fertilizers, and grease which ends up in surface waters.

Treatment and preservation of water quality is generally accomplished through retention or detention with filtration. Retention requires the diversion of runoff to an impoundment area with no subsequent direct discharge to surface waters. Pollutant removal by settling and by percolation of the stormwater through the soil is almost completely effective. Detention facilities are typically within the line of flow of the drainage system. Stormwater from a site passes through the detention facility and is filtered to remove pollutants prior to discharge.

Implementation of the State's stormwater regulations is achieved through a permitting process through FDEP. Exemptions to the permit requirements are provided for facilities serving individual sites for single family, duplex, triplex, or quadruplex residential units. Exemptions are also made for facilities serving dwelling unit sites which are less than ten acres in total land area, have less than two acres of impervious area, and comply with local stormwater management regulations or discharge to a permitted facility.

Water Supply

The City of Mary Esther operates its water utilities under state and federal regulations, ensuring compliance with the Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD) guidelines and permits. As part of Region II, which encompasses Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton Counties, Mary Esther relies primarily on the Floridan Aquifer for its potable water supply. This aquifer, a vital regional resource, has experienced significant drawdowns along the coast, creating a persistent cone of depression and raising concerns about saltwater intrusion. Over the years, efforts to shift water withdrawals from coastal to inland areas have resulted in some recovery of aquifer levels, though challenges remain.

Recent projections from the NFWFMD's Regional Water Supply Plan indicate a significant population increase in the region, leading to higher demands for potable water. Between 2015 and 2040, water demand in Region II is expected to grow by approximately 36 percent, underscoring the need for sustainable water resource management and infrastructure planning. For Mary Esther, this growth necessitates not only maintaining existing water systems, but also investing in resilient and efficient infrastructure capable of addressing future demand.

Aquifer

The City of Mary Esther does not contain identified prime potable groundwater or aquifer recharge areas within its jurisdiction, as established in the City's foundational planning documents. However, the surficial aquifer plays a critical role in local hydrology, supporting stormwater infiltration and contributing to groundwater systems that sustain regional water resources. Although no prime recharge zones are present, the City recognizes the importance of protecting and managing surficial aquifers to ensure their continued functionality. Policies addressing stormwater management, land use, and environmental conservation are aligned with state and regional guidelines to safeguard water quality and aquifer health. By integrating these considerations into its infrastructure and land use planning, the City seeks to maintain a balance between development and environmental sustainability.

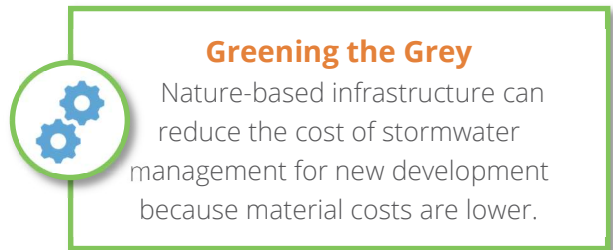
CONSIDERATIONS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Wastewater

The City of Mary Esther is facing a mandatory state order (FDEP Consent Order) for wastewater upgrades. The City must decide by December 31, 2025, whether to rehabilitate its existing plant or seek other long-term solutions. While examining potential sites and system upgrades, the City is also exploring collaborative opportunities with Hurlburt Field to ensure efficient, reliable service for both partners. Through these efforts, officials aim to modernize aging treatment processes, integrate new technologies, and address environmental safeguards. Evaluating a range of alternatives—ranging from on-site improvements to regional partnerships—positions the City to meet projected growth and regulatory requirements while maintaining a forward-looking approach to public health, sustainability, and fiscal responsibility.

Stormwater

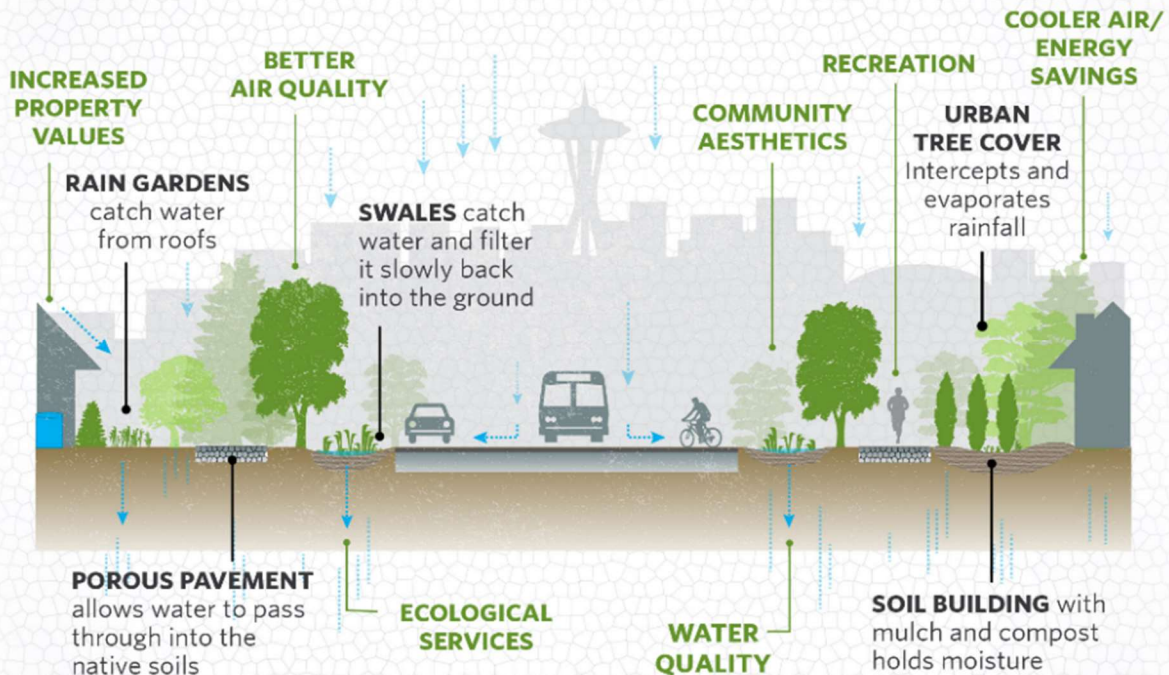
A key principle of stormwater management is recognition of the need for larger scale planning. A stormwater management system must be designed beginning with the final outlet point to ensure adequate capacity to handle all discharges from the upstream basin under conditions present at the time of design. It is then necessary to ensure that subsequent development upstream utilizes stormwater management techniques and systems which maintain pre-development runoff conditions so that the downstream system is not overloaded. By ensuring that all development within the basin is based on and supportive of the entire basin, the functions and useful life of both natural and constructed system components will be protected and extended. A hybrid approach to stormwater planning that includes nature-based solutions in conjunction with grey infrastructure is beneficial in capturing stormwater on site through natural design. This increases infiltration and improves water quality while reducing the load running through grey infrastructure. In turn, this approach may help increase the life expectancy of the grey system components. Low impact development regulations or incentives, along with green streets, can also lead to reduced stormwater impacts in greater density or mixed-use areas. The City could seek funding for a Master Stormwater Study. This will lead to more detailed standards and innovative stormwater systems.



Greening the Grey
 Nature-based infrastructure can reduce the cost of stormwater management for new development because material costs are lower.

HOW ARE WE RETHINKING THE PROBLEM?

Re-envisioning and re-designing cities to function more like forests so water is absorbed back into the ground, in addition to treating stormwater through traditional means, will solve our region-wide stormwater problem.



GREEN & GRAY STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE
A study by the city of Philadelphia has shown a hybrid approach of green and gray infrastructure can get the same freshwater solutions as gray infrastructure, plus additional benefits to the community.


Data Source: City of Philadelphia Water Department
Infographic © TNC\Erica Simek Sloniker

Water Supply

The City of Mary Esther relies on groundwater withdrawals from the Floridan Aquifer to meet its potable water needs, using a network of municipal wells, treatment facilities, and distribution lines. Operations follow state and federal standards, ensuring an adequate and safe supply for current and future demand. The City regularly evaluates well field capacity, treatment technology, and infrastructure resilience to accommodate projected growth, comply with regulatory requirements, and safeguard water quality. Collaboration with the Northwest Florida Water Management District remains integral to sustainable management of the regional water resource, and local conservation measures—including educational outreach and leak-reduction efforts—help maintain reliable service for residents and businesses.

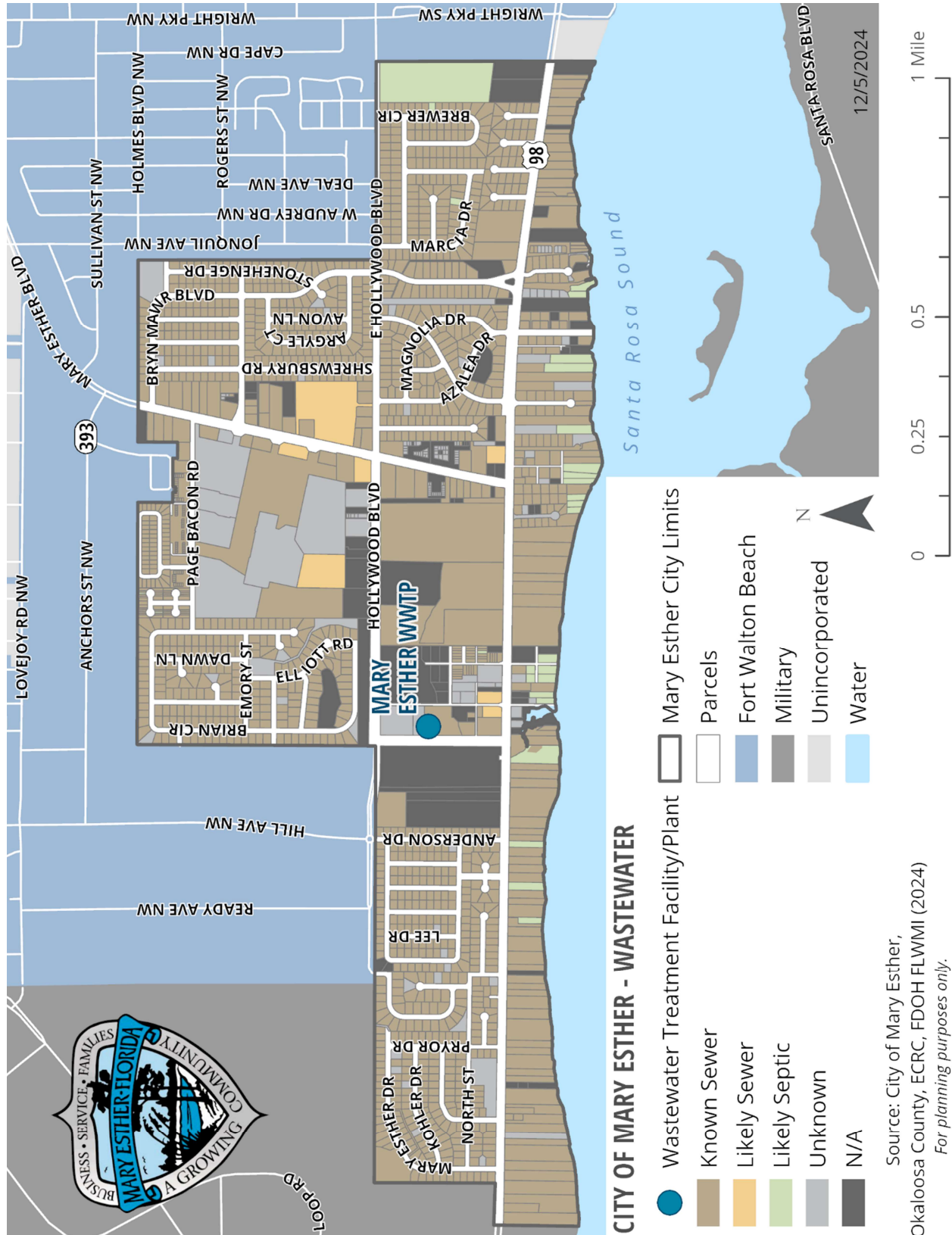
Broadband

Fiber internet connectivity is available within the City of Mary Esther, providing high-speed access for homes and businesses. This fiber backbone enables rapid data transfer, supporting telecommuting, online education, and cloud-based services. The City views broadband as a key component of its economic development strategy, facilitating new opportunities in e-commerce, remote work, and digital entrepreneurship. By encouraging private sector expansion of fiber infrastructure, Mary Esther aims to foster a technologically advanced community that meets the connectivity demands of both existing residents and future investments.

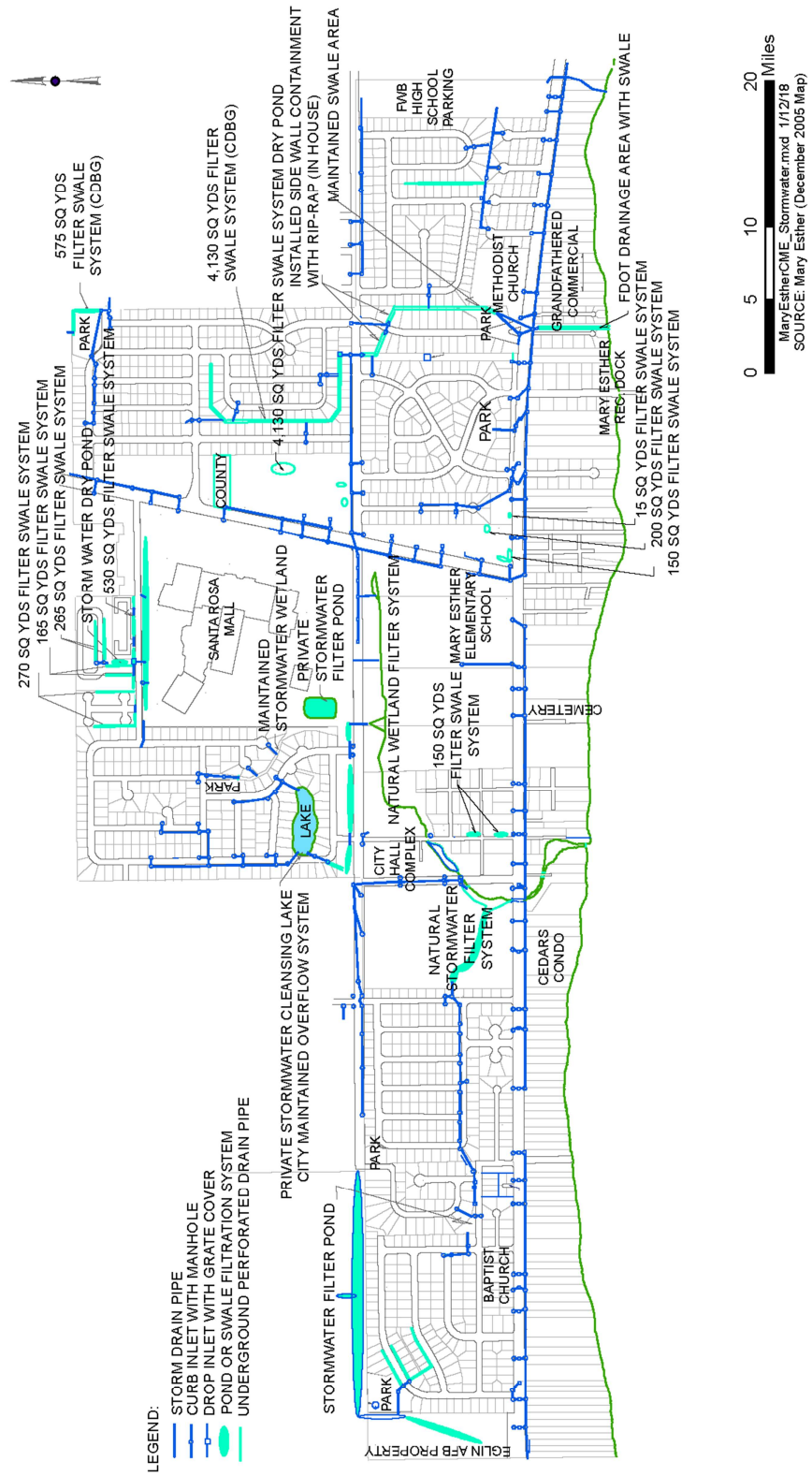


Connecting Communities
Fiber optic broadband uses fiber optic cables to send data. This technology ensures fast and reliable internet service.

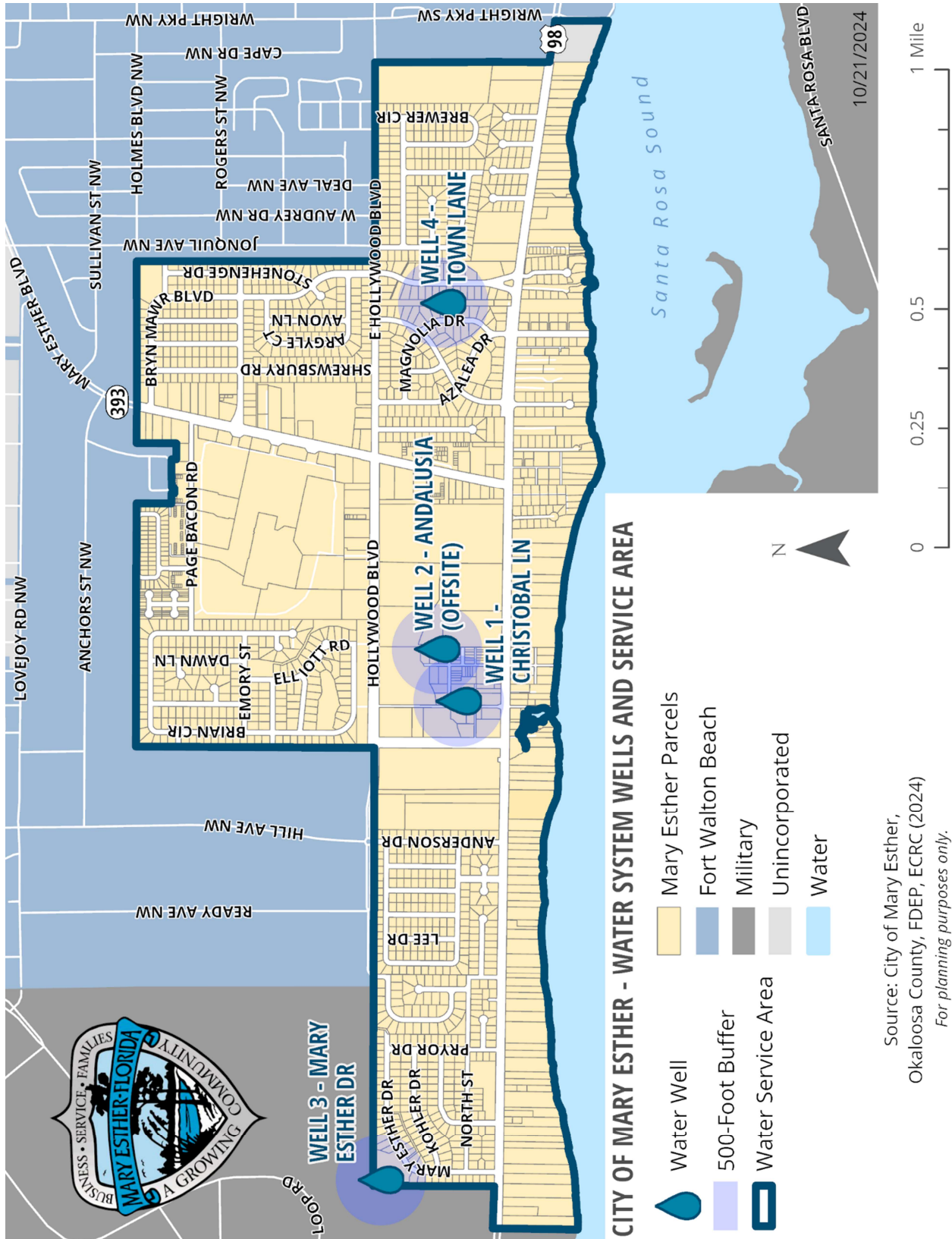
Map D:1 - Wastewater



Map D:2 - Stormwater Drainage System

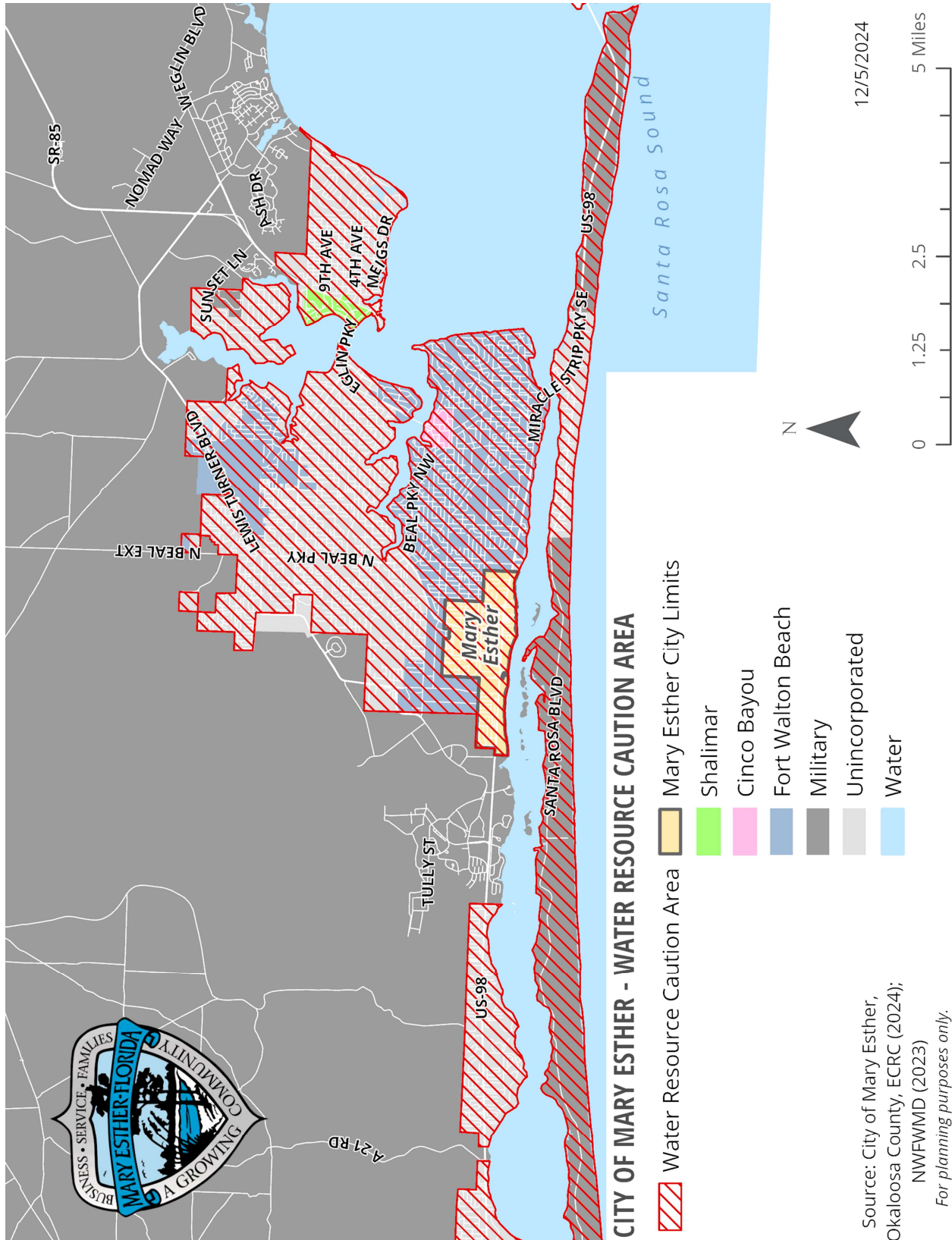


Map D:3 - Water System Wells and Service Area

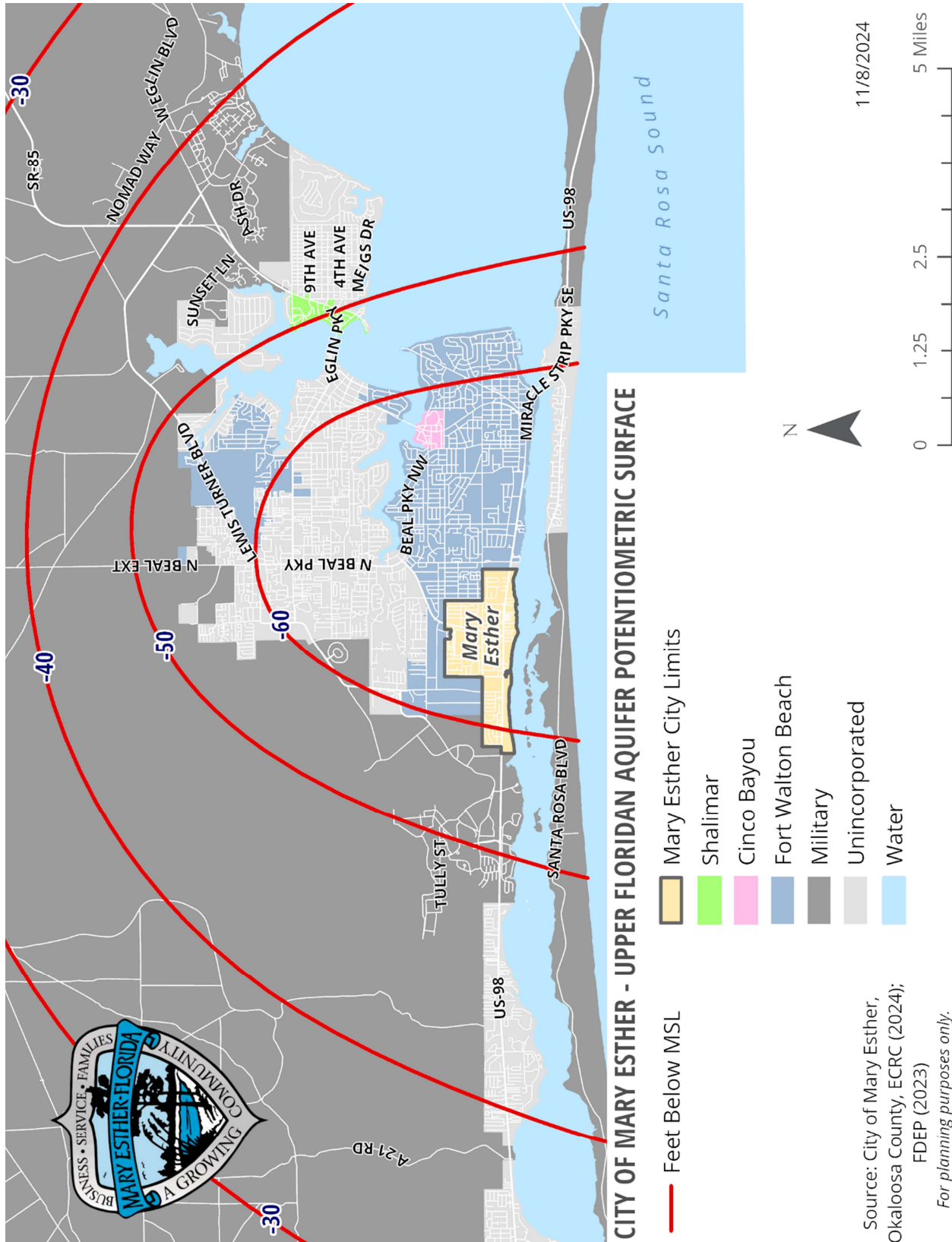


Source: City of Mary Esther,
Okaloosa County, FDEP, ECRC (2024)
For planning purposes only.

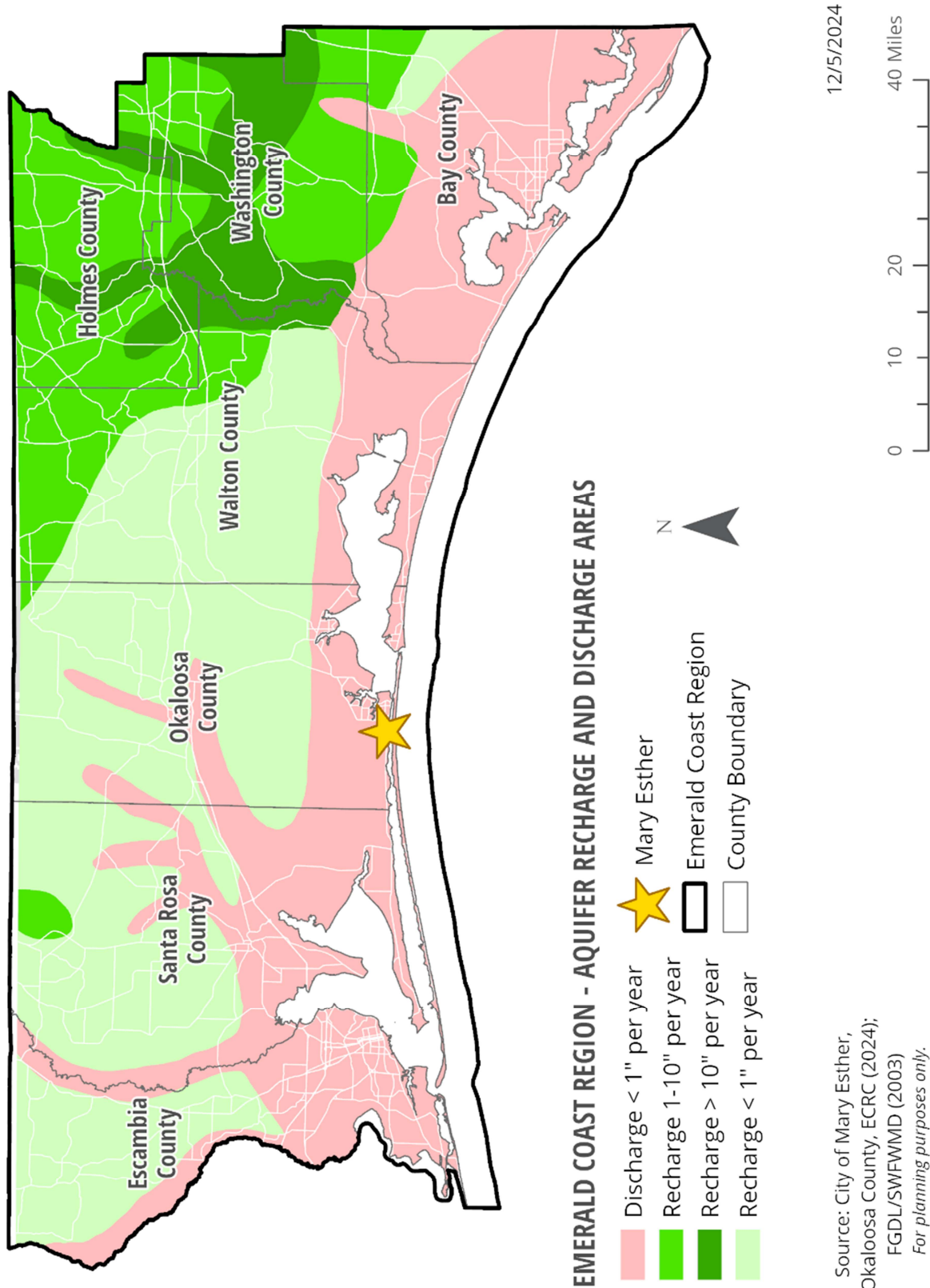
Map D:4 - Water Resource Caution Area



Map D:5 - Upper Floridan Aquifer Potentiometric Surface



Map D:6 - Aquifer Recharge and Discharge Areas



Source: City of Mary Esther,
Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024);
FGDL/SWFWMD (2003)
For planning purposes only.

Section E:
Coastal Management and
Conservation Element



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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the Coastal Management and Conservation Element is to guide the conservation, use, and protection of natural resources and coastal areas within the City of Mary Esther. This combined element seeks to promote the protection of public health, safety, welfare, and environmental quality while establishing a clear plan and policy direction for City officials and staff. As the City's population grows, the need for effective management of natural resources and coastal areas becomes increasingly critical.

This element provides a technical analysis and vulnerability assessment of current coastal conditions, including flood risks in coastal areas, while addressing the broader conservation needs of the City's natural resources. It incorporates the requirements of Chapter 163, Section 163.3177(6)(d)1-3, Florida Statutes, to identify and analyze natural resources, ensuring their best use, conservation, and protection. Conservation uses within the City include activities that manage or preserve areas for purposes such as flood control, groundwater and surface water protection, floodplain management, and the safeguarding of vegetative communities and wildlife habitats. Coastal and conservation lands also provide essential services, including recreational opportunities, water quality preservation, and habitat protection for threatened or endangered species.

By integrating coastal management and conservation considerations into a single element, the City can better address interconnected challenges such as flood risk, habitat preservation, and sustainable use of natural resources, ensuring long-term environmental resilience and quality of life for its residents.

INVENTORY OF CONSERVATION RESOURCES

Geology

The City of Mary Esther lies within the Panhandle Coastal Lowlands physiographic region, defined by coastal marine deposits (see Future Land Use Element **Maps A:4** and **A:5**). Mary Esther's landscape is relatively flat, with gently sloping sandy soils leading toward Santa Rosa Sound. Unconsolidated quartz sands dominate the surface geology, underlain by layers of clay and limestone that form part of the larger Floridan Aquifer system. These sandy deposits shape local drainage patterns and influence development by providing moderate permeability for stormwater infiltration. While substantial geologic studies in the region focus on areas with more diverse topography, the main geological characteristic in Mary Esther is this coastal plain environment—marked by low elevation, sandy substrates, and a high water table near the shore.



Drainage

Situated along the shore of Santa Rosa Sound, the City of Mary Esther relies on a relatively simple drainage network rather than large rivers or creeks. Shallow swales, underground stormwater pipes, and a few natural channels move runoff toward the Sound. This low-lying coastal setting means water tables are high, and any significant elevation changes occur only in a few localized spots. Together, these features shape a drainage system that must carefully manage stormwater to prevent flooding and protect water quality, particularly given Mary Esther's proximity to the Sound.

Soils

Soils in Mary Esther (**Tables E:1** and **E:2**) vary from well-drained sands suitable for urban development to very poorly drained muck found in low-lying floodplain areas. According to the USDA NRCS, Foxworth Sand, Kureb Sand, Resota Sand, and Mandarin Sand predominate upland portions of the City, offering favorable conditions for building and recreation. These sandy soils typically allow good infiltration, though Mandarin Sand is only moderately well drained where the water table remains deeper.

In contrast, Chipley and Hurricane soils, which are scattered near streams, are somewhat poorly drained. Dorovan Muck and Rutledge Fine Sand appear in depressions or floodplain zones, where water may remain at or above the surface for extended periods. Such areas support wetland conservation or wildlife habitat and require careful design if any development is proposed nearby. Finally, Leon soils, which occur sporadically in lower-lying zones, are also poorly drained and seasonally high in water content.

Overall, recognizing soil drainage traits is crucial for site planning and stormwater management. Projects in poorly drained or floodplain soils may need specialized engineering to address ponding and ensure stable foundations, particularly in areas close to wetlands or streams. The distribution of soils in The City of Mary Esther is shown in Future Land Use Element **Map A:8**.



Table E:1 - Soil Characteristics of the City of Mary Esther

Soil Type (Class/Subclass)	Characteristics			
	City Location	Favorable Land Uses	Drainage Class	Seasonal High-Water Table
Chipley and Hurricane	Scattered, typically near streams	Forestland, wildfire habitat, cultivated crops	Somewhat poorly drained	Apparent, at depth of 18-42" Jan-March, July-Sept
Dorovan Muck	Depressions and floodplains	Wildlife habitat, wetland conservation	Very poorly drained	Apparent at surface to 6" above, Jan-Sept
Foxworth Sand	Upland areas	Urban development, recreation	Well drained	Not present
Kureb Sand	Upland areas	Urban development, recreation	Well drained	Not present
Leon	Scattered, typically near streams	Forestland, wildlife habitat, cultivated crops	Poorly drained	Apparent, at depth of 6-18" Jan-March, July-Sept
Mandarin Sand	Upland areas	Urban development	Moderately well drained	Apparent at depth of 42-60" Jan-Sept
Resota Sand	Upland areas	Urban development	Well drained	Not present
Rutledge Fine Sand	Along rivers and creeks	Wildlife habitat	Very poorly drained	Apparent, at the surface to 12" above surface, Jan-Sept
Data Source: <i>Web Soil Survey</i> , USDA NRCS Date Prepared: 11/2024				

Table E:2 - Acreage and Proportionate Share of Soils, City of Mary Esther

Soil Name	Acres	Percent (%)
CHIPLEY AND HURRICANE SOILS, 0 TO 5 PERCENT SLOPES	64.6	6.9%
DOROVAN MUCK, FREQUENTLY FLOODED	116.7	12.5%
FOXWORTH SAND, 0 TO 5 PERCENT SLOPES	110.1	11.8%
KUREB SAND, 0 TO 8 PERCENT SLOPES	278.9	29.8%
LEON SAND, 0 TO 2 PERCENT SLOPES	52.2	5.6%
MANDARIN SAND, 0 TO 3 PERCENT SLOPES	26.1	2.8%
RESOTA SAND, 0 TO 5 PERCENT SLOPES	42.2	4.5%
RUTLEGE FINE SAND, DEPRESSIONAL	53.9	5.8%
URBAN LAND	187.3	20.0%
WATER	2.2	0.2%
WATERS OF THE GULF OF MEXICO	1.4	0.2%
Data Source: NRCS SSURGO, 2023 Date Prepared: 11/2024		

Ecological Communities

Although largely urbanized, the City of Mary Esther has several different ecological communities as defined by the data from the Florida Natural Areas Inventory. These ecological communities are comprised of flora and fauna, which provide many ecological functions and benefits. The wetland communities have important hydrologic functions, which affect water quality and quantity. They serve as noise barriers, reduce pollutants, modify temperature extremes, provide habitat for wildlife, and provide resources for recreation. Ecological communities within the City of Mary Esther, according to the Cooperative Land Cover Map Project, are summarized in **Table E:3** and shown on **Map E:19**.

Table E:3 - Ecological Communities

Community	Acres	Percentage
Urban Uses	800.24	85.5%
Wet Flatwoods	73.30	7.8%
Mixed Hardwood-Coniferous	25.23	2.7%
Mixed Hardwood-Coniferous Swamps	14.20	1.5%
Upland Hardwood Forest	11.98	1.3%
Artificial Impoundment/Reservoir	5.21	<1.0%
Coastal Scrub	2.62	<1.0%
Wet Prairie	1.79	<1.0%
Rural Open	0.50	<1.0%
Estuarine	0.41	<1.0%
Mesic Hammock	0.07	<1.0%
Salt Marsh	0.03	<1.0%
Scrub	0.03	<1.0%
Sandhill	0.03	<1.0%
Unconsolidated Substrate	0.01	<1.0%
Data Source: FNAI/FWC Cooperative Land Cover Map Date Prepared: 11/2024		

Wet Flatwoods: Flatland with sand substrate; seasonally inundated; statewide except extreme southern peninsula and Keys; frequent fire (two (2) to four (4) years for grassy wet flatwoods, five (5) to ten (10) years for shrubby wet flatwoods); closed to open pine canopy with grassy or shrubby understory; slash pine, pond pine, large gallberry, fetterbush, sweetbay, cabbage palm, wiregrass, toothache grass. (FNAI)

Mixed Hardwood-Coniferous: Mix of hardwood and coniferous trees where neither is dominant.

Dry Upland Hardwood Forest: Occurs on dry slopes or along upper slopes with sand/clay substrate; mesic; temperate; rare fire; closed canopy; laurel oak and/or live oak and/or pignut hickory, southern magnolia, shortleaf pine, loblolly pine, and/or mixed hardwoods. (FNAI)

Artificial Impoundment/Reservoir: Aquatic community of an artificial lake created by the impoundment of a river with a dam. Reservoirs are constructed to collect water for municipal and/or agricultural water use, to provide hydroelectric power, and to improve opportunities for recreational activities (e.g. boating, swimming), and development. (NYNHP)

Coastal Scrub: This scrub category represents a wide variety of species found in the coastal zone. A few of the more common components are saw palmetto, sand live oak, myrtle oak,



yaupon, railroad vine, bay bean, sea oats, sea purslane, sea grape, Spanish bayonet and prickly pear. This cover type is generally found in dune and white sand areas. (FLUCCS)

Salt Marsh: Estuarine wetland on muck/sand/or limestone substrate; inundated with saltwater by daily tides; statewide; occasional or rare fire; treeless, dense herb layer with few shrubs; saltmarsh cordgrass, needle rush, saltgrass, saltwort, perennial glasswort, seaside oxeye. (FNAI)

Wet Prairie: Flatland or slope with sand or clayey sand substrate; usually saturated but only occasionally inundated; statewide excluding extreme southern peninsula; frequent fire (two (2) to three (3) years); treeless, dense herbaceous community with few shrubs; wiregrass, blue maidencane, cutthroat grass, wiry beaksedges, flattened pipewort, toothache grass, pitcherplants, coastalplain yellow-eyed grass. (FNAI)

Rural Open: Herbaceous or shrubby vegetated areas in a rural setting. Ground typically appears improved or disturbed to some degree.

Estuarine: Deepwater tidal habitats and adjacent tidal wetlands that are usually semi-enclosed by land but have open, partly obstructed, or sporadic access to the ocean, with ocean-derived water at least occasionally diluted by freshwater runoff from the land. The upstream and landward limit is where ocean-derived salts measure less than point-five (0.5) ppt during the period of average annual low flow. The seaward limit is: one (1), an imaginary line closing the mouth of a river, bay, or sound; and two (2), the seaward limit of wetland emergents, shrubs, or trees when not included in one (1). (Cowardin et al. 1979)

Threatened or endangered species that are likely to occur within these communities are summarized in **Table E:4**.

Table E:4 - Federal and State Threatened/Endangered Species Likely to Occur in Okaloosa County

Group	Common Name	Scientific Name	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Status
Amphibian	Reticulated Flatwoods Salamander	Ambystoma bishopi	Endangered
Bird	Bald Eagle	Haliaeetus leucocephalus	BGEPA
Bird	Eastern Black Rail	Laterallus jamaicensis ssp. jamaicensis	T
Bird	Piping Plover	Charadrius melodus	T (CH)
Fish	Gulf Sturgeon	Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi	T (CH)
Insect	Monarch Butterfly	Danaus Plexippus	C
Lichen	Florida Perforate Cladonia	Cladonia perforate	E
Mammal	Tricolored Bat	Perimyotis subflavus	Proposed E
Mammal	West Indian Manatee	Trichechus manatus	T (CH)
Plant	Papery Whitlow-Wort	Paronychia chartacea minima	T
Plant	Gentian Pinkroot	Spigelia gentianoides	E
Reptile	Eastern Indigo Snake	Drymarchon couperi	T
Reptile	Alligator Snapping Turtle	Macrochelys temminckii	Proposed T
Reptile	Gopher Tortoise	Gopherus polyphemus	C
Data Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, IPaC Date Prepared: 11/2024			

Water Resources

Water resources found in the City of Mary Esther attract tourism, as well as residential and recreational development. Groundwater serves as an important source of drinking water, while surface waters are important for recreational purposes and contribute to a desirable and healthy environment. Care must be exercised to afford protection of groundwater, surface waters, and wetlands, as development remains the main contributor toward the deterioration of groundwater quality.

Floridan Aquifer: The Floridan Aquifer system, one of the most productive aquifers in the world, is the source of all of the City of Mary Esther’s water resources. This sediment/rock formation covers an area of about one hundred thousand (100,000) square miles and generally provides water for cities as far north as Savannah, Georgia and as far south as Miami, Florida. Several aquifers may be present below one surface location, separated by confining layers of materials that are impermeable or semi-permeable to water. The Floridan

Aquifer system is divided into an upper and lower aquifer separated by a unit of lower permeability. Under the force of gravity, rainfall, the source of water in aquifers, percolates downward through porous surface soils to enter the aquifer strata. Because of the variable permeability of different soil types, the rate of aquifer recharge from rainfall may vary from one location to another. The areas of highest recharge potential are referred to as prime recharge areas. The presence of overlying confining beds also determines which surface areas will be effective recharge areas for a given aquifer and is another factor in identifying prime aquifer recharge areas. Since aquifer recharge areas are surface features, they are subject to alteration by development, especially since they are generally the most desirable areas to develop. For a depiction of the aquifer recharge and discharge potential in the region, see **Map D:6** in the Infrastructure Element.

The Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD) serves as the water planning agency for Northwest Florida, and as such, monitors the developmental impacts and water quality of the aquifer for the seven (7) water supply planning regions in the district to efficiently manage water sources. Currently, Region II, of which the City of Mary Esther belongs, reports sufficient groundwater from the aquifer to support development demands. Based on water supply use estimates data from the NFWFMD (2025), Mary Esther’s water production allocation is zero-point-six-two-zero (0.620) MGD, and use was estimated at zero-point-four-one-two (0.412) MGD in 2020. The NFWFMD estimates only moderate increases in the total water used. (see **Table E:5**).

Table E:5 - Public Water Supply Use Estimates and Projections, City of Mary Esther

Year	Population	MGD	% Change
2020	3,982	0.412	-
2025	4,507	0.412	0 %
2030	5,032	0.417	1.21%
2035	5,306	0.420	0.72 %
2040	5,580	0.421	0.24 %
2045	5,596	0.421	0 %

Data Source: 2025 Regional Water Supply Plan, Northwest Florida Water Management District
CFAS
Date Prepared: 3/2025

Surface Waters: Mary Esther’s water resources center on Santa Rosa Sound, a brackish estuarine body that provides critical habitat for marine life, supports recreational activities, and contributes to the City’s coastal character. While there are no major rivers or large creeks within Mary Esther itself, limited local drainage channels and wetland areas convey runoff toward the Sound. These surface waters not only sustain fish and wildlife but also help recharge the broader Floridan Aquifer system regionally. Safeguarding water quality by



preventing contamination—through measures like proper stormwater treatment and wetland preservation—remains essential to maintaining both ecological health and the City's water supply.

Wetlands: There are approximately seventy (70) acres of wetlands in the City of Mary Esther which provide a multitude of ecological, economic, and social benefits. Wetlands provide habitat for fish, wildlife, and a variety of plants and serve as nurseries for many saltwater and freshwater fish and shellfish of commercial and recreational importance. Wetlands are also important landscape features because they hold and slowly release floodwater, recharge groundwater, act as filters to cleanse water of impurities, recycle nutrients, and provide recreation and wildlife viewing opportunities for millions of people. (See **Map A:6** in the Future Land Use Element.)

Floodplains: The City has approximately eighty-eight (88) acres of land in the 100-year and 500-year floodplains combined, located primarily south of U.S. Highway 98 along the Santa Rosa Sound (see **Map A:7** of the Future Land Use Element). Floodplains within the City can provide recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat preservation when maintained as parklands and open space. Development should occur at limited densities and intensities of use and should use construction practices designed to mitigate property damage while at the same time protecting the natural function of the floodplains.

Water Conservation

The City of Mary Esther obtains its potable water from the Floridan Aquifer, relying on withdrawals that remain within permissible limits set by the Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD). Although the City's population is relatively small and not experiencing the large-scale agricultural demands seen elsewhere in the region, continued vigilance is important to prevent aquifer stress and ensure sustainability. Data from the NFWFMD's 2023 Water Supply Assessment Update includes Mary Esther's projected demand through 2045, showing that existing supplies should remain adequate if resource management and conservation practices continue. (**Tables E:6** and **E:7**)

Local measures—such as promoting Florida-Friendly Landscaping and maintaining efficient water infrastructure—further protect against overuse and contamination. These initiatives help safeguard the aquifer, support future growth, and maintain the City's high-quality water supply without risking resource depletion.

Table E:6 - Estimated and Projected Public Water Demand, 2020-2045 – City of Mary Esther and Okaloosa County

Public Water Supply Utility	2020 Baseline Estimates			Average Demand and Production, Projections (GPD)				
	Gross Water Use (ADR, GPD)	Population Served	Gross Per Capita (GPCD)	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
City of Mary Esther	412,101	4,013	103	412,101	417,453	419,923	420,953	420,953
Okaloosa County Total	24,103,414	214,351	102	25,534,481	26,632,098	27,509,544	28,293,308	28,964,502

Data Source: NFWWMD 2023 Water Supply Assessment Update
Date Prepared: 12/2024

Notes: ADR = Average Daily Rate, GPD = Gallons Per Day, GPCD = Gallons Per Capita per Day

Table E:7 - Estimated and Projected Public Water Demand by Year, 2020-2045 – Okaloosa County

Use Category	Estimates	Future Demand Projections - Average/Normal Years					2020-2045 Change	
	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	MGD	%
Public Supply	24.103	25.534	26.632	37.510	28.293	28.965	4.861	20.2%
Domestic Self Supply (DSS)	0.888	0.692	0.615	0.540	0.461	0.386	(0.502)	-56.6%
Agriculture	0.408	0.413	0.413	0.414	0.414	0.429	0.021	5.1%
Recreational	5.453	5.738	5.968	6.150	6.310	6.446	0.993	18.2%
Industrial/Commercial/Institutional (ICI)	1.671	1.671	2.136	2.290	2.290	2.290	0.619	37.1%
Power	-	-	-	-	-	-	N/A	N/A
Total	32.523	34.048	35.764	36.903	37.768	38.516	5.993	18.4%

Data Source: NFWWMD 2023 Water Supply Assessment Update
Date Prepared: 12/2024



Air Quality

Ambient air quality is monitored through the State and Local Air Monitoring Stations (SLAMS) and National Air Monitoring Stations (NAMS) Network. The Florida Spatial Air Quality System (SAQS) Office of Air Monitoring displays the current Air Quality Index (AQI) for all ambient air quality monitors in the state. There are no monitoring stations in the City of Mary Esther or in Okaloosa County. A permit is required for the construction, modification, expansion, or operation of any facility or development that will emit pollutants into the air. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Bureau of Air Resources Management issues air quality construction permits for major developments causing possible air pollution.

Wildfires

According to the Florida Forest Service's "Significant Fires in Florida List," no significant wildfires have taken place in Okaloosa County between the years 2019 to 2024.

Commercially Valuable Minerals

According to FDEP's Mining and Mitigation program, there are no mining operations located in Mary Esther.

Hazardous Waste Management

Currently, no large quantity hazardous waste generators (i.e., those generating over two thousand two hundred (2,200) pounds of hazardous waste per month) operate within the City of Mary Esther. However, recent data shows thirty-seven (37) small quantity generators (SQGs) across the city—sixteen (16) active, twenty-one (21) inactive—most of which produce limited amounts of used oil, automotive parts-cleaning solvents, oil filters, and similar materials. As required by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), twenty percent (20%) of these SQGs are inspected on a rotating annual basis to ensure a licensed hauler or approved method is used for proper disposal.

All businesses that handle hazardous materials must keep records of how wastes are stored, labeled, and ultimately disposed. Acceptable disposal methods typically include incineration, onsite treatment (where permissible), recycling/reuse (e.g., used oil), or licensed waste haulers transporting material to approved treatment, storage, and disposal facilities. Common mismanagement issues often involve inadequate labeling, improper container types, or mixing of incompatible wastes. The City, in cooperation with FDEP and the Emerald Coast Regional Council, works to correct any such deficiencies by requiring clearer labeling, secondary containment, and routine site inspections. This approach helps minimize potential risks to public health, protect the environment, and ensure compliance with state and federal hazardous waste regulations.

State, Regional, and Regulatory Coastal Management Plans and Programs

Florida Statewide Regional Evacuation Study (SRES) Program: The Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM), Division of Community Planning, and Department of Transportation, in coordination with the Emerald Coast Regional Council (ECRC), have developed the Florida Statewide Regional Evacuation Study (SRES) Program¹ for the Emerald Coast Region. This report provides evacuation population estimates, evacuation clearance times and public shelter demands for the region. Updated in 2021, the study covers Bay, Escambia, Holmes, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton and Washington counties and their respective municipalities.

The SRES includes information on demographic characteristics, evacuation rates, vulnerable populations, public shelter demand, evacuating population, and clearance times for Okaloosa County. **Table E:8** indicates the total quantity and types of dwelling units that exist (2020) and are projected (2025) within the County. **Table E:9** indicates the population determined to be at risk per evacuation level in Okaloosa County for site-build homes and mobile/manufactured homes in 2020 and 2025.

Table E:8 – Okaloosa County Demographic Characteristic Summary

County	Characteristic	Year 2020	Year 2025
Okaloosa	Occupied site-built homes	73,700	77,675
	Population in site-built homes	187,157	197,315
	Occupied mobile homes	4,262	4,262
	Population in mobile homes	11,105	11,105
	Hotel/motel units	6,171	6,357
Data Source: Statewide Regional Evacuation Study (2021 Update) Date Accessed: 11/2024			

¹ Regional Evacuation Studies are available through the Florida Division of Emergency Management website (<https://www.floridadisaster.org/dem/preparedness/regional-evacuation-studies>).

Table E:9 - Population-at-Risk from Hurricanes by Evacuation Level, 2020 in Okaloosa County

Home Type	Evacuation Zone A	Evacuation Zone B	Evacuation Zone C	Evacuation Zone D	Evacuation Zone E
Site-Built Homes	946	26,846	11,395	33,549	8,872
Mobile/Manufactured Homes	47	1,088	197	909	475
Total	993	27,934	11,592	34,458	9,347
Data Source: Statewide Regional Evacuation Study (2021 Update) Date Accessed: 11/2024					

The SRES includes base and operational evacuation model scenarios. Base scenarios estimate worst-case scenarios that assume one hundred percent (100%) of the vulnerable population evacuates and include impacts from counties outside of the regional clearance area. Operational scenarios provide emergency management personnel with information to plan for different levels of storm events.

Calculated clearance times are used by county emergency managers as one input to determine when to recommend an evacuation order. This calculation can include the population-at-risk, shadow evacuees (those who evacuate voluntarily from outside of the declared evacuation area), as well as evacuees from other counties anticipated to pass through the county. Clearance time is developed to include the time required for evacuees to secure their homes and prepare to leave, the time spent by all vehicles traveling along the evacuation route network, and the additional time spent on the road caused by traffic and road congestion. Clearance time does not relate to the time any one vehicle spends traveling along the evacuation route network. The four (4) clearance times that are calculated as part of the evacuation transportation analysis include: one (1), Clearance Time to Shelter; two (2), In-County Clearance Time; three (3), Out of County Clearance Time; and four (4), Regional Clearance Time.

The base scenario levels correspond to the evacuation zones (Level A is Evacuation Zone A). The base scenarios one through five (1-5) used 2020 demographic data and highway network, no one-way operations, Fall/Spring levels of university population, the default tourist rate, primary shelters open, a twelve-hour (12-hour) response curve, no evacuation phasing, and one hundred percent (100%) evacuation behavioral response. The base scenarios six through ten (6-10) use the same criteria except for using 2025 demographic data and highway network.

The operational scenario levels also correspond with the evacuation zones (Level A is Evacuation Zone A). Operational scenarios use the same criteria as the base scenarios with

the exception that rather than using one hundred percent (100%) evacuation behavioral response, the operational scenarios use "Planning" behavioral response to estimate the likelihood of the population to evacuate when given an evacuation order. The planning behavioral response was established by a study conducted by Cambridge Systematics. **Table E:10** depicts the clearance times for Okaloosa County modeling 2020-Base, 2025-Base, 2020-Operational, and 2025-Operational scenarios.

Table E:10 - Clearance Times for Okaloosa County (2020/2025 Base and Operational Scenarios)

2020 Base Scenarios			
Evacuation Base Scenario/Level	Clearance Time to Shelter	In-County Clearance Time	Out of County Clearance Time
1/A	12.5	15.0	15.0
2/B	13.0	18.5	18.5
3/C	13.5	20.5	20.5
4/D	14.0	33.0	33.0
5/E	15.0	34.5	34.5
2025 Base Scenarios			
Evacuation Base Scenario/Level	Clearance Time to Shelter	In-County Clearance Time	Out of County Clearance Time
6/A	12.5	16.0	16.0
7/B	13.0	20.0	20.0
8/C	13.0	22.5	22.5
9/D	14.0	40.0	40.0
10/E	15.5	41.0	41.0
2020 Operational Scenarios			
Evacuation Base Scenario/Level	Clearance Time to Shelter	In-County Clearance Time	Out of County Clearance Time
1/A	12.5	15.0	15.0
2/B	13.0	15.5	15.5
3/C	13.0	19.5	19.5
4/D	13.0	24.5	24.5
5/E	13.5	28.5	28.5
2025 Operational Scenarios			
Evacuation Operational Scenario/Level	Clearance Time to Shelter	In-County Clearance Time	Out of County Clearance Time
6/A	12.5	15.0	15.0
7/B	12.5	16.5	16.5
8/C	13.0	20.0	20.0
9/D	13.0	26.5	26.5
10/E	13.5	33.5	33.5
Data Source: Statewide Regional Evacuation Study (2021 Update) Date Accessed: 11/2024			

Maximum Evacuating Population Clearances are the maximum proportion of the evacuation population that can be expected to evacuate at various intervals during an evacuation. The SRES Evacuation Transportation Analysis (2020) used base scenarios that assume 100% of the vulnerable population is evacuation, along with shadow evacuations and evacuations from adjacent counties. **Table E:11** shows the maximum evacuating population for each evacuation level given a specific time interval.

Table E:11 - Okaloosa County Maximum Evacuating Population Time Interval (2020 and 2025)

2020 Maximum Evacuating Population					
Time Interval	Evacuation Level A	Evacuation Level B	Evacuation Level C	Evacuation Level D	Evacuation Level E
12-Hour	33,772	45,839	55,063	47,832	51,168
18-Hour	42,215	68,758	82,595	71,749	76,753
24-Hour	42,215	70,668	94,066	95,665	102,337
36-Hour	42,215	70,668	94,066	131,539	147,109
2025 Maximum Evacuating Population					
Time Interval	Evacuation Level A	Evacuation Level B	Evacuation Level C	Evacuation Level D	Evacuation Level E
12-Hour	33,025	44,388	52,605	41,447	45,261
18-Hour	44,033	66,582	78,907	62,171	67,891
24-Hour	44,033	73,980	98,634	82,895	90,522
36-Hour	44,033	73,980	98,634	124,342	135,782
Data Source: Statewide Regional Evacuation Study (2021 Update) Date Accessed: 11/2024					

Note: These estimates take into account many variables, including roadway capacity, in-county evacuating trips, out of county evacuating trips, evacuating trips from other counties, and background traffic that is impeding the evacuation trips. For this reason, the maximum evacuation population by time interval will vary between evacuation level and either increase or decrease from one evacuation level to the next.

The Emerald Coast Regional Model Network Map (**Map E:1**) depicts the evacuation routes in Okaloosa County and the surrounding area that were used in the evacuation modeling.

Okaloosa County Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) and Public Safety Resources: The Okaloosa County Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) provides a risk and vulnerability assessment for natural hazards including hurricanes and tropical storms, storm surge, flooding, severe storms, tornados and waterspouts, thunderstorms and lightning, winter storms, heatwave and drought, wildfire, beach erosion and other hazards. This section discusses vulnerable populations, repetitive loss properties, and structure and infrastructure damages associated with these hazards.



Okaloosa Public Safety and Okaloosa County GIS departments maintain information on evacuation routes and shelters on their websites. The City of Mary Esther is included in Okaloosa County’s Evacuation Zone Area map of Fort Walton Beach; however, **Map E:2** was created by the ECRC to show Evacuation Zones specifically in the City of Mary Esther. Although all of the parcels south of U.S. Highway 98 are included in an evacuation zone, storm surge risk should also be reviewed. **Map E:3** depicts shelter locations and evacuation routes with directional arrows in Okaloosa County².

Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWMD) Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Plans: The Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) program’s primary focus is watershed management, water quality, and natural system protection and restoration. Cooperative activities conducted under SWIM also provide improvements for flood protection, water supply, and public recreation. Watershed priorities include water quality, natural systems, floodplain functions, and education and outreach. The City of Mary Esther is adjacent to the Santa Rosa Sound, an estuarine water body within the Pensacola Bay System. Most of the waters in the Pensacola Bay System watershed have a Surface Water Classification of Class III waters (designated for recreation and maintenance of a healthy, well-balanced population of fish and wildlife. Santa Rosa Sound is designated Class II waters to support shellfish propagation or harvesting.

The *Pensacola Bay System SWIM Plan* (2017) provides a watershed description including geographic and geological characteristics, hydrological characteristics, land use and population, and natural communities. The plan also reviews water quality, natural systems, and floodplain management in the area as well as protection and restoration management practices and funding sources. Recommended projects include the following (* indicates that Santa Rosa Sound is a geographic focus area):

- stormwater planning and retrofit*
- septic tank abatement*
- advanced onsite treatment systems
- agriculture and silviculture best management practices
- basinwide sedimentation abatement
- riparian buffer zones*
- aquatic, hydrologic and wetland restoration
- estuarine habitat restoration
- strategic land conservation
- watershed stewardship initiative
- sub-basin restoration plans*
- wastewater treatment and management improvements*
- interstate coordination
- analytical program support
- comprehensive monitoring program

²Evacuation routes and shelter information is available on Okaloosa County’s public safety website. Because all designated shelters are not automatically opened during an evacuation, Okaloosa County advises listening to local radio stations for updates.



The City of Mary Esther is listed as a permit holder of Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems for stormwater conveyance that discharges to waters of the state. Stormwater runoff is a primary source of nonpoint source (NPS) pollution. Stormwater runoff collects pollutants from across the landscape (lawns, pavement, highways, dirt roads, buildings, farms, forestry operations, construction sites, etc.) and deposits the pollution into the water systems. Medium- to high-density residential, commercial, and industrial urban land use generates the greatest NPS pollution per acre due to impervious surfaces that increase runoff. The City of Mary Esther is listed as an example of a municipal or fringe area with relatively dense development and significant areas of impervious surface; these areas have the greatest need and potential for stormwater retrofit efforts.

West Florida (Emerald Coast) Strategic Regional Policy Plan: The Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP), as required by Section 186.507, Florida Statutes, is a long-range guide for physical, economic, and social development of a planning district through the identification of regional goal and policies. The Emergency Preparedness section addresses man-made hazards and develops planning standards to reduce the risks from natural and technical hazards with the following goals:

- Developing a new hurricane evacuation, shelter, and behavioral analysis study for the region
- Reducing high-density residential development within the Coastal High Hazard Area
- Reducing risk of injury or death from release of chemical hazards

The Natural Resources of Regional Significance section aims to protect resources that retain or provide benefit of regional significance to the natural or human environment, regardless of ownership, through the following goals:

- Implementation of conservation plans to protect the region's surface and ground water resources
- Reestablishing a functioning dune system
- Restricting development in the Coastal High Hazard Area
- Continuing to appropriately use and protect the region's functioning natural systems

The Pensacola Bay System is an estuarine water body of state submerged lands. The system includes Pensacola Bay, Escambia Bay, East Bay, Blackwater Bay, and Santa Rosa Sound east to the City of Mary Esther.

Federal Coastal Management Zone Act (CZMA) and Florida Coastal Management Plan (FCMP): The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) encourages the nation's coastal regions to develop and implement federally-approved coastal management programs (CMPs) based on that state's unique coastal characteristics. The management programs



assist states in achieving wise use of the land and water resources of the coastal zone, emphasizing ecological, economic, cultural, historic, and aesthetic values. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) is the designated lead agency for the Florida Coastal Management Plan (FCMP) and it is overseen by DEP's Florida Coastal Office.

The CZMA requires a state CMP to identify the boundary of its coastal zone, which includes the area of land and water from the territorial limits landward to the most inland extent of marine influences. Following is a description of the seaward and interstate boundaries for the state of Florida:

- **Seaward Boundaries** – the CZMA defines the seaward extent of a state's coastal zone as "to the outer limit of state title and ownership under the Submerged Land Act...". Under the Submerged Lands Act, Florida's title and ownership extends three miles into the Atlantic Ocean and, in accordance with *United States vs. Louisiana, et.al.*, 364 U.S. 502 (1960), three marine leagues (approximately nine nautical miles) into the Gulf of Mexico.
- **Interstate Boundaries** – the western lateral boundary of the FCMP is defined by the adjudicated boundary between Florida and Alabama. The coastal zone boundary in Alabama is the continuous 10-foot contour in Mobile and Baldwin counties. The northern lateral boundary of the state coastal program is the adjudicated boundary between Florida and Alabama and Florida and Georgia. Each state, with the development of its own coastal management program, has consulted with one another to ensure compatibility between each state's respective boundary designations.

Based upon the geography of Florida and the legal basis for the state program, the entire State of Florida is included within the coastal zone³. Geographically, Florida has low land elevation, a generally high water table, and an extensive coastline with many rivers emptying into coastal waters. Few places in Florida are more than seventy miles from either the Atlantic Ocean or the Gulf of Mexico. The result is an interrelationship between the land and coastal waters, which makes it difficult to establish a boundary that would exclude inland areas. Because of this interrelationship, the state boundaries include the entire area encompassed by the state's 67 counties and its territorial seas. The only exceptions are lands the federal government owns, leases, holds in trust, or whose use is otherwise by law subject to the sole discretion of the federal government, its officers, or agents. Lands held by the Seminole and Miccosukee Indian Tribes are also exempted.

For planning and developing coordinated projects and initiatives relating to coastal resource protection and management and for completing federal consistency reviews of federally-licensed and permitted activities, only the geographical area encompassed by the 35 Florida

³ *Florida Coastal Management Plan Guide (2024)*, Florida Department of Environmental Protection

coastal counties and the adjoining territorial sea is utilized. This would include Okaloosa County as a coastal county.

Coastal Area, Existing Coastal Uses, & Undeveloped Areas

This section identifies coastal areas, existing land uses, and undeveloped areas in the coastal area within the City of Mary Esther. Chapter 163.3164(8), Florida Statutes, defines coastal areas as “the 35 coastal counties and all coastal municipalities within their boundaries.” For the purposes of this document, the entirety of the City of Mary Esther is considered a coastal area. The City of Mary Esther has approximately fourteen thousand twenty (14,020) feet of coastline. Existing land uses within the City of Mary Esther include Single-Family Residential, Multi-Family Residential, Vacant Residential, Commercial, Vacant Commercial, Public/Institutional, Industrial, Recreation/Common Areas, and Right-of-Way/Miscellaneous as indicated on **Map E:4**.

For the purpose of this report, an “undeveloped” area is defined as a property without a structure or significantly disturbed soil. Undeveloped areas may include protected areas and vacant lands. The city is substantially built out with only about forty-four (44) acres of undeveloped land (vacant residential and vacant commercial) remaining as shown in **Table E:12**. The majority of vacant properties along the shoreline, south of Miracle Strip Parkway (U.S. Highway 98), contain a residential future land use designation. Several vacant commercial properties are located north of U.S. Highway 98 with only four located south of U.S. Highway 98. **Table E:12** shows the existing land use categories and corresponding number of acres within the City of Mary Esther according to the Department of Revenue (DOR) land use codes.

Table E:12 - Existing Land Use by Acreage

Land Use Category	Acreage
Single-Family Residential	441.1
Multi-Family Residential	23.4
Vacant (Commercial & Residential)	44.0
Commercial	117.0
Public/Institutional	108.3
Industrial	14.3
Recreation/Common Areas	6.7
Rights-of-Way/Miscellaneous	17.2
Total	772.0

Future Land Uses in the Coastal Area

Over half of the land in the City of Mary Esther has a residential future land use designation, with commercial future land uses occupying about twenty-five percent (25%). Properties along the shoreline predominantly contain a residential future land use designation. Several single-family and multi-family homes are built along the shoreline, while very few commercial developments are located along the coast. Additionally, recreational and open space uses are limited along the shoreline. Future land uses in the City of Mary Esther are listed by acreage in **Table E:13** and illustrated on **Map E:5**.

Table E:13 - Future Land Use by Acreage

Land Use Categories	Acres
Low-Density Residential	465.4
Medium-Density Residential	17.0
Commercial	191.9
Public	50.5
Recreation	10.6
Conservation	2.7
Recreation/Conservation	33.9
Total	772.0

Wildlife Habitats, Wetland and Vegetative Communities

The City of Mary Esther is within a southern temperate zone consisting of broad alluvial riparian habitats as well as upland flats and ridges once dominated by longleaf pine communities. The Yellow River Basin (in Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton Counties) supports a large diversity of aquatic species including several endemic as well as threatened and endangered species including birds, turtles, frogs, and fish. Santa Rosa Sound is classified as a Critical Marine Habitat for the Gulf Sturgeon (State Wildlife Action Plan, 2019). Critical Habitat may include an area that is not currently occupied by the species, but will be needed for its recovery. In addition to the Gulf Sturgeon, the Pensacola Bay system includes federally designated critical habitat for several species of freshwater mussels, and the watershed also supports the threatened piping plover, the endangered reticulated flatwoods salamander, and the blackmouth shiner (NFWFMD Pensacola Bay System SWIM Plan, 2017).

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has identified certain natural areas within the Pensacola Bay Watershed as Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (SHCAs). These areas are important habitats that do not have conservation protection that would increase the security of rare and imperiled species. The SHCAs within the Pensacola Bay watershed



include habitat for several species including the pine barrens tree frog, seal salamander, and the Florida black bear (NFWFMD Pensacola Bay System SWIM Plan, 2017).

The City of Mary Esther is neighbored to the west and south (Santa Rosa Island) by the Eglin Air Force Base Wildlife Management Area, which is managed by the FWC in cooperation with the U.S. Air Force. Eglin is one of six core areas that contains populations of the Florida Black Bear. The occupied range has been reduced to six core areas (Eglin, Apalachicola, Osceola, Ocala, St. Johns, and Big Cypress) and two remnant areas (Chassahowitzka and Glades/Highlands). While bears can be found in areas outside of these ranges, evidence suggests that these areas are important for bears because these areas provide habitat containing water, shelter, and mast-producing trees and shrubs.

Map E:6 depicts the wetlands from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wetland Inventory within the City of Mary Esther. An approximate total of sixty-eight-point-seven (68.7) acres of wetlands were identified; approximately sixty-six-point-two (66.2) acres are covered by Palustrine wetlands, and approximately two-point-five (2.5) acres are Estuarine wetlands. Palustrine Systems are nontidal wetlands dominated by trees, shrubs, persistent emergent, emergent mosses or lichens, and all such wetlands that occur in tidal areas where the salinity due to ocean-derived salts is below zero-point-five percent (0.5%). These areas include marshes, wet meadows, fens, playas, potholes, pocosins, bogs, swamps, and small shallow ponds. An Estuarine System includes tidal waters of coastal rivers and embayments, salty tidal marshes, mangrove swamps, and tidal flats. Coastal wetlands play an important role in the following:

- **Flood Protection:** Coastal wetlands protect upland areas, including valuable residential and commercial property, from flooding due to sea level rise and storms.
- **Erosion Control:** Coastal wetlands can prevent coastline erosion due to their ability to absorb the energy created by ocean currents which would otherwise degrade a shoreline and associated development.
- **Wildlife Food & Habitat:** Coastal wetlands provide habitat for many federally threatened and endangered species, including Whooping Crane, Louisiana Black Bear, and Florida Panther. Two of North America's migratory bird flyways pass over the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, where coastal wetlands provide temporary habitat to waterfowl and shorebirds.
- **Commercial Fisheries:** Over fifty percent (50%) of commercial fish and shellfish species in the Southeastern United States rely on coastal wetlands.
- **Water Quality:** Wetlands filter chemicals and sediment out of water before it is discharged into the ocean.



- Recreation: Recreational opportunities in coastal wetlands include canoeing and kayaking, wildlife viewing and photography, and recreational fishing and hunting.
- Carbon Sequestration: Certain coastal wetland ecosystems (such as salt marshes and mangroves) can sequester and store large amounts of carbon due to their rapid growth rates and slow decomposition.

Flood Hazards and FEMA Flood Zone Designations

Flood hazards can be caused by storm surge, river flooding, or heavy rainfall. Low-lying or poorly drained areas can also increase the risk of flood. Types of flooding include flash floods, urban flooding, river floods, and areal flooding. Flash flooding occurs when the ground becomes saturated with water that has fallen too quickly to be absorbed. Flash flooding can also occur due to dam or levee failure, though the City of Mary Esther does not currently have any dams or levees. Flooding can be magnified in urban areas where paved areas prevent absorption of rainfall—urbanization can increase water runoff as much as two to six times over what would occur on natural terrain.

Map E:7 shows the City's stormwater drainage system, and the FEMA Flood Zones Map and Storm Surge Zones Maps (**Map E:8** and **Map E:9**, respectively) show areas that may be at risk of flooding. The topographic contour lines on **Map E:8** are in five (5)-foot increments; areas where the contour lines are closer together are areas where the grade change is steeper and may be more at risk of flood related erosion. However, in general the relatively shallow gradient in the City of Mary Esther reduces the risk of erosion. Water collected in the center of the city by the natural storm water filter system drains into Santa Rosa Sound near Christobal Road. Except for the natural storm water filter system, an FDOT drainage area, and the storm drainpipes on U.S. Highway 98 at the far eastern and western edges of the city, the remainder of the stormwater drainage system appears to be outside of FEMA Flood Zones and Storm Surge areas.

Floodplains protect water quality by preventing erosion and sedimentation through storing floodwater and reducing runoff velocity. Natural floodplains also provide an ecological link between aquatic and upland ecosystems and habitat for many species. Decreased water storage capacity and increased flooding caused by development into floodplains can have far reaching impacts beyond the area of encroachment itself. Flood protection needs are closely related to stormwater management, as well as land use planning and land development regulation; ideally, stormwater management systems provide both flood protection and water quality treatment⁴.

⁴ Northwest Florida Water Management District, Pensacola Bay System SWIM Plan, 2017

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) as an area that will be inundated by the flood event having a one-percent (1%) chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. The one-percent (1%) annual chance flood is also referred to as the base flood or one-hundred-year (100-year) flood. SFHAs are labeled as Zone A, Zone AO, Zone AH, Zones A1–A30, Zone AE, Zone A99, Zone AR, Zone AR/AE, Zone AR/AO, Zone AR/A1–A30, Zone AR/A, Zone V, Zone VE, and Zones V1–V30. Moderate flood hazard areas, labeled Zone B or Zone X, are the areas between the limits of the base flood and the zero-point-two-percent-annual-chance (0.2%) (or five-hundred-year (500-year)) flood. The areas of minimal flood hazard, which are the areas outside the SFHA and higher than the elevation of the zero-point-two-percent-annual-chance (0.2%) flood, are labeled Zone C or Zone X.⁵

Zone A includes the SFHA where no base flood elevation is provided. Zone AE includes the SFHA where base flood elevations are provided (used on new flood insurance rate maps (FIRMs) instead of A# Zones). Zone VE includes the SFHA subject to coastal high hazard flooding where base flood elevations are provided.

Several properties south of U.S. Highway 98 exist within Flood Zones AE and VE. **Table E:14** indicates the approximate number of acres within the City of Mary Esther in each FEMA Flood Zone, and **Map E:8** depicts the flood zones and parcel boundaries within the City of Mary Esther. Critical facilities are also depicted on **Map E:8**.

Table E:14 - Acreage in FEMA Flood Zones

FEMA Flood Zone	Approximate Acreage
A	0.64
AE	36.93
VE	7.29
Total	44.86

“Critical facilities” are structures from which essential services and functions for victim survival, continuation of public safety actions, and disaster recovery are performed or provided. Examples of critical facilities include drinking water facilities, environmental health facilities, health care facilities, petroleum storage tanks, schools, solid waste facilities, and facilities identified on the state facilities inventory. “Critical infrastructure” includes physical or virtual systems and assets that if destroyed or degraded, the security, economy, public health or safety of the community would be debilitated.⁶ No critical facilities or infrastructure were found to be in areas designated as FEMA Flood Zones.

⁵ Department of Homeland Security, 2017

⁶ Florida Division of Emergency Management



Historical structures are not considered critical facilities, however historical resources are important facilities that contribute to a community's character and economic base. The Florida Division of Historical Resources defines historical cultural resources as archaeological sites, historical structures, historical cemeteries, historical bridges and historic districts over fifty (50) years old. There is currently a historic cemetery in the City - the Jesse Rogers Memorial Cemetery. According to the Florida Master Site File, the cemetery was constructed in 1880 and is owned by the City. The cemetery is not in a vulnerable FEMA flood zone.

Storm Surge Impact Areas & Coastal High Hazard Area

Map E:9 depicts locations of anticipated storm surge associated with hurricanes rated by Categories 1-5. The Coastal High Hazard Area (CHHA) is the area below the elevation of the Category 1 storm surge line as established by a Sea, Lake, and Overland Surges from Hurricanes (SLOSH) computerized storm surge model.⁷ No critical facilities or historical sites were found to be in the CHHA; however, portions of U.S. Highway 98, an evacuation route, may be impacted by storm surge from a Category 5 hurricane.

The most significant surge recorded for Okaloosa County was associated with Hurricane Opal in 1995. The surge overtopped U.S. Highway 98 in the Mary Esther area, causing damage to the road system as well as other homes and structures.⁸ Although Hurricane Opal registered as a Category 3 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of one hundred and fifteen (115) mph when it made landfall, prior to making landfall, Hurricane Opal underwent a period of rapid intensification into a Category 4 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of one hundred and fifty (150) mph (just below Category 5 intensity)⁹.

Current Nuisance Flooding

"Nuisance flooding" is defined as shallow coastal flooding (also referred to as "sunny day flooding") that occurs during high tide events and leads to public inconveniences such as frequent road closures, overwhelmed storm drains, and compromised infrastructure. There have been no observations of nuisance flooding within the City of Mary Esther.

Strategies to Reduce Flood Risk

Communities can reduce flood risk in coastal areas which result from coastal dynamics through numerous adaptation strategies. The Florida Department of Commerce has categorized strategies into structural or physical, social, and institutional strategies.

⁷ The 2017 Florida Statutes, Section 163.3178(2)(f)6

⁸ Okaloosa County Local Mitigation Strategy (2016)

⁹ The National Weather Service (2016)



Strategies that are ecosystem-based or address the built environment are considered structural or physical strategies. Social strategies can have educational or informational components like knowledge sharing platforms or vulnerability mapping. Institutional strategies include those related to economics, law and regulations, or government policies or programs. Impacts from high-tide events, storm surge, flash floods, stormwater runoff, and related impacts of sea level rise can be reduced by implementing the following strategies¹⁰:

Accommodation: This strategy prepares and alters infrastructure to handle periodic flooding. Structures can specifically be designed to reduce the need for repairs after a flood event through techniques like elevation and stormwater retrofits. Development can also be designed to take advantage of advanced drainage systems and impervious areas that are natural defenses against flooding.

Avoidance: This strategy uses institutional regulations to direct new development away from vulnerable land. The Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code can identify areas of land conservation and use techniques such as transfer of development rights.

Procedural: Procedural strategies can include educational or informational components to help communities acquire the data to appropriately plan for coastal flooding. Examples include vulnerability assessments and mapping. This information supports comprehensive plan language and policies addressing coastal flooding and sea level rise.

Protection: This strategy uses natural and engineering solutions to mitigate impact of coastal flooding. There are soft protection strategies such as living shorelines and hard protection strategies like seawalls.

Historic Preservation: Historical resources are important to a community's character and economic base. The Florida Division of Historical Resources defines historical cultural resources as archaeological sites, historical structures, historical cemeteries, historical bridges and historic districts over fifty (50) years old. Planning for the needs of historic resources in preparation for and in response of a natural disaster can help mitigate the negative impact of property loss and preserve the character of communities. Creating a historic resources inventory can assist with categorizing and tracking properties that may need special assistance during post-disaster redevelopment. An inventory helps identify historic structures that may otherwise be demolished in a post-disaster cleanup plan. A comprehensive inventory engages emergency management staff to include information needed for identification, damage assessment, and stabilization after a disaster. An inventory can be compiled from states resources such as the Florida Master Site File and

¹⁰Department of Economic Opportunity (Florida Commerce): Adaptation Planning – Planning for Coastal Flooding and Sea Level Rise



through the Florida State Historic Preservation Offices. The inventory should be updated on a regular basis as facilities become eligible as a historical cultural resource.

Site Development Techniques

Coastal communities are subject to extreme weather conditions such as storm surge, flooding, sea level rise, and high winds which can have detrimental impacts to developments and infrastructure in coastal high hazard areas. As a result, it is paramount that local governments employ a proactive approach to become a resilient and sustainable community. The City of Mary Esther currently has regulations in place in its Land Development Code (LDC) for coastal management such as prohibiting development in certain areas, limiting the impervious surface area, and requiring extensive setbacks. The development techniques and best practices in this section can strengthen community resilience.

Setbacks: Establishing setbacks for properties from the water's edge in coastal areas is a common land use tool to reduce losses from natural disasters and sea level rise. Setback limits should reflect any potential damage that a major storm can cause to the beach and its surrounding areas. Some localities impose tiered setbacks based on flood risks, erosion-rates, or elevation. Additionally, setbacks can allow adaptation to sea level rise by preserving open space for the inward migration of beaches and wetlands. Currently, the City of Mary Esther requires a minimum setback of 100 feet landward of the reach of the mean high tide. To supplement the existing regulations, allowing a reduced front setback at a specified rate may encourage development away from the shore. In return, the property owner may still maximize the development potential of the site while also reducing the potential impacts from coastal flooding.

Beach Nourishment and Dunes: Beaches are capable of reducing impacts from coastal storms by acting as a buffer along the shoreline and absorbing and dissipating the energy of breaking waves. A beach's size, width, slope, shape, and sand volume help determine how well the beach can protect a developed area during a storm. Dunes serve as more of a barrier between the water's edge and inland areas, enduring the impact of larger storm surges. Healthy dune systems can serve as a repository for sand to naturally replenish beaches that have experienced significant erosion from coastal storms. The natural protection provided by beaches and dunes requires much more space than seawalls or other shoreline hardening strategies and may be relatively minimal in heavily developed areas with narrow beaches. The wider a beach or dune system is, and the more space between the sea and any developed areas, the more effective and efficient the system will be at reducing the impacts of coastal hazards. Beach nourishment is a soft engineering approach to coastal protection which involves the artificial addition of sediment of suitable quality to a beach area that has a sediment deficit. At this time, Mary Esther's coast is substantially developed and contains



narrow beaches. However, as a long-term strategy as sea level continues to rise and weather conditions intensify, beach nourishment along with acquiring the necessary properties will reduce losses to property owners and the City, while also providing the benefit of providing additional beach access and preserving the natural environment.

Property Acquisition: Properties along the City of Mary Esther’s coastline are significantly developed; however, the remaining vacant parcels that are vulnerable to coastal flooding could be acquired by the City. Property buyouts are a means by which communities can remove development from areas vulnerable to flooding by purchasing properties from willing owners. Property buyouts are especially useful after natural disasters to minimize or eliminate future losses to vulnerable properties and property owners that experience repetitive losses. Criteria to identify and prioritize properties for land acquisition may include undeveloped properties, properties subject to repetitive flood losses, environmentally sensitive properties, properties adjacent to the coastline, and properties adjacent to publicly owned land. Voluntary buyout programs following major flooding events can be funded with assistance from FEMA, which can then be coupled with additional state and local funds. This assistance can reduce the costs of buyouts for communities. Additionally, these properties can be utilized as a waterfront park or comparable use, which will reduce the impacts of flooding by creating a space that can capture and store floodwaters during flood events with minimal damage to the park infrastructure. Alternatively, the land could be deed restricted to prevent future development.

Elevated Structures: Many coastal communities require structures to be constructed well above the base flood elevation (BFE). The BFE is the computed elevation to which flood waters are anticipated to rise during the base flood event. Additionally, the relationship between the BFE and a structure's elevation determines the flood insurance premium. The City of Mary Esther mandates that new developments in the CHHA must be constructed at least one (1) foot above the level of the BFE or the development must be flood proofed. Key West requires structures to be elevated 1.5 feet above the BFE, while Leon County requires structures to be three (3) feet above the base flood level. The BFE in Mary Esther ranges from nine (9) to eleven (11) feet. Based upon the mean high water level and future conditions, increasing the required elevation of structures would reduce impacts to structures from natural disasters.

Other Methods: There are a variety of other methods of preparing for extreme events to increase coastal resilience including developing plans for evacuation, emergency response and recovery, and adapting infrastructure systems to the impacts of climate change. Collectively, these strategies can be part of a multi-layered approach to reduce risks and damages from natural disasters.

COASTAL FLOOD SCENARIO MAPS

This section identifies coastal areas within the City of Mary Esther that are vulnerable to future flooding and the related impacts of sea level rise (SLR).

A coastal flood scenario was devised to determine the potential impacts that sea level rise may have to people, property and infrastructure. The University of Florida GeoPlan Sea Level Rise Scenario Planning Tool was used to simulate impact in 2060 and 2080. The NOAA Intermediate Low and High projection curves were used for both years to show a conservative and high impact. On each map, land that is predicted to be inundated is illustrated by a darker blue overlay, and the depth in inches is shown on the scale in the legend. The extent of flooding from relative sea level rise (RSLR) is based on the respective projection curve, and the amount of RSLR is then added to the mean higher high water to determine the sea level rise depth inches on land. Mean higher high water (MHHW) is the average of the higher high water height of each tidal day observed over the National Tidal Datum Epoch. **Table E:15** shows the estimated relative sea level rise in 2060 and 2080 in Okaloosa County based per projection curve.

Table E:15 - Estimated Sea Level Rise

Year & Projection Curve	Relative Sea Level Rise (Feet)
2060 NOAA Intermediate Low	1.0
2060 NOAA High	2.9
2080 NOAA Intermediate Low	1.4
2080 NOAA High	4.7

Scenario Maps

City of Mary Esther: 2060 NOAA Intermediate Low

Map E:10 depicts a highest depth of twenty-two (22) inches (one-point-eight (1.8) feet) of sea level rise above land in 2060. Land with permanent flooding is located on the west side of the inlet near Windy Lane and Christobal Road. There is minimal projected inundation elsewhere in the city.

City of Mary Esther: 2060 NOAA Intermediate Low (Christobal Rd S)

Map E:11 focuses on the inlet near S. Christobal Rd which experiences the highest amount of rise utilizing the NOAA Intermediate Low projection curve in the year 2060. Most of the flooding occurs in a FEMA AE flood zone and is also identified as wetlands.

City of Mary Esther: 2060 NOAA High

Map E:12 illustrates the projected sea level rise and depth utilizing the NOAA High projection curve in the year 2060. Highest permanent flooding is projected to reach forty-four (44) inches (three-point-six (3.6) feet) in some areas. In this sea level rise scenario, there is impact to the inlet near North Christobal Road and surrounding the public boat ramp at the terminus of Misty Water Lane.

City of Mary Esther: 2060 NOAA High (Pier & Boat Ramp, Misty Water Lane)

Map E:13 focuses on the permanent inundation of areas surrounding the public boat ramp near the terminus of Misty Water Lane. Inundation occurs intermittently for approximately zero-point-two-five (0.25) miles along the coastline, east and west of the boat ramp. No roads appear to be impacted.

City of Mary Esther: 2080 NOAA Intermediate Low

Map E:14 illustrates the projected sea level rise and depth utilizing the NOAA Intermediate Low projection curve in the year 2080. It is estimated that the sea level rise will reach twenty-six (26) inches (two-point-one-seven (2.17) feet). In this scenario, many of the properties along the coast will not be significantly impacted by flooding; however, as shown on the map, low-lying areas and areas containing wetlands have a greater probability of experiencing flooding at higher levels.

City of Mary Esther: 2080 NOAA Intermediate Low (Christobal Rd S)

As shown in **Map E:15**, the wetlands bordered by Windy Lane and Christobal Road are projected to be impacted by flooding, with up to about twenty-six (26) inches (two-point-one-seven (2.17) feet) of sea level rise.

City of Mary Esther: 2080 NOAA High

Map E:16 illustrates the projected sea level rise and depth utilizing the NOAA High projection curve for the year 2080. This projection illustrates the worst-case scenario with the anticipation of a Category five (5) hurricane. Sea level rise is estimated to reach sixty-six (66) inches (five-point-five (5.5) feet), and as a result will cause flooding further inland. Scattered areas along the coast will be impacted, including a portion of Misty Water Lane.

City of Mary Esther: 2080 NOAA High (Christobal Rd S & Misty Water Lane)

Map E:17 shows the area around South Christobal Road and the boat ramp on Misty Water Lane. The area surrounding the boat ramp is located in Flood Zone VE, which are areas lower than the base flood elevation and are identified as a high risk coastal area; consequently, impacts are concentrated in this section along the coast. Additionally, areas containing wetlands will also be subject to flooding.

COASTAL INVENTORY MAP

Map E:18 depicts the coastal area and vulnerability area within the City of Mary Esther including the Coastal High Hazard Area (category 1 storm surge), beach access points (public water access), land uses, environmentally sensitive areas, historic preservation areas, and anticipated storm surge areas. There are no observed locations of current nuisance flooding.

There is one public water access illustrated by a boat ramp symbol that may risk damage from storm surge. Category 1-5 hurricane storm surge is depicted by colored outlines defined in the legend. At the farthest eastern and western sections of the City, the Category 5 storm surge line extends north of U.S. Highway 98, an emergency evacuation route. Two schools, one historic cemetery, and several parks are depicted on the map, all of which are outside of predicted storm surge areas. Refer to **Map E:9** for additional critical facilities including fire stations, law enforcement, public water supply, and hazardous materials facilities; all are shown to be outside of the predicted storm surge areas.

OPPORTUNITIES AND NEEDS

Table E:16 - Hazard Risks for Okaloosa County

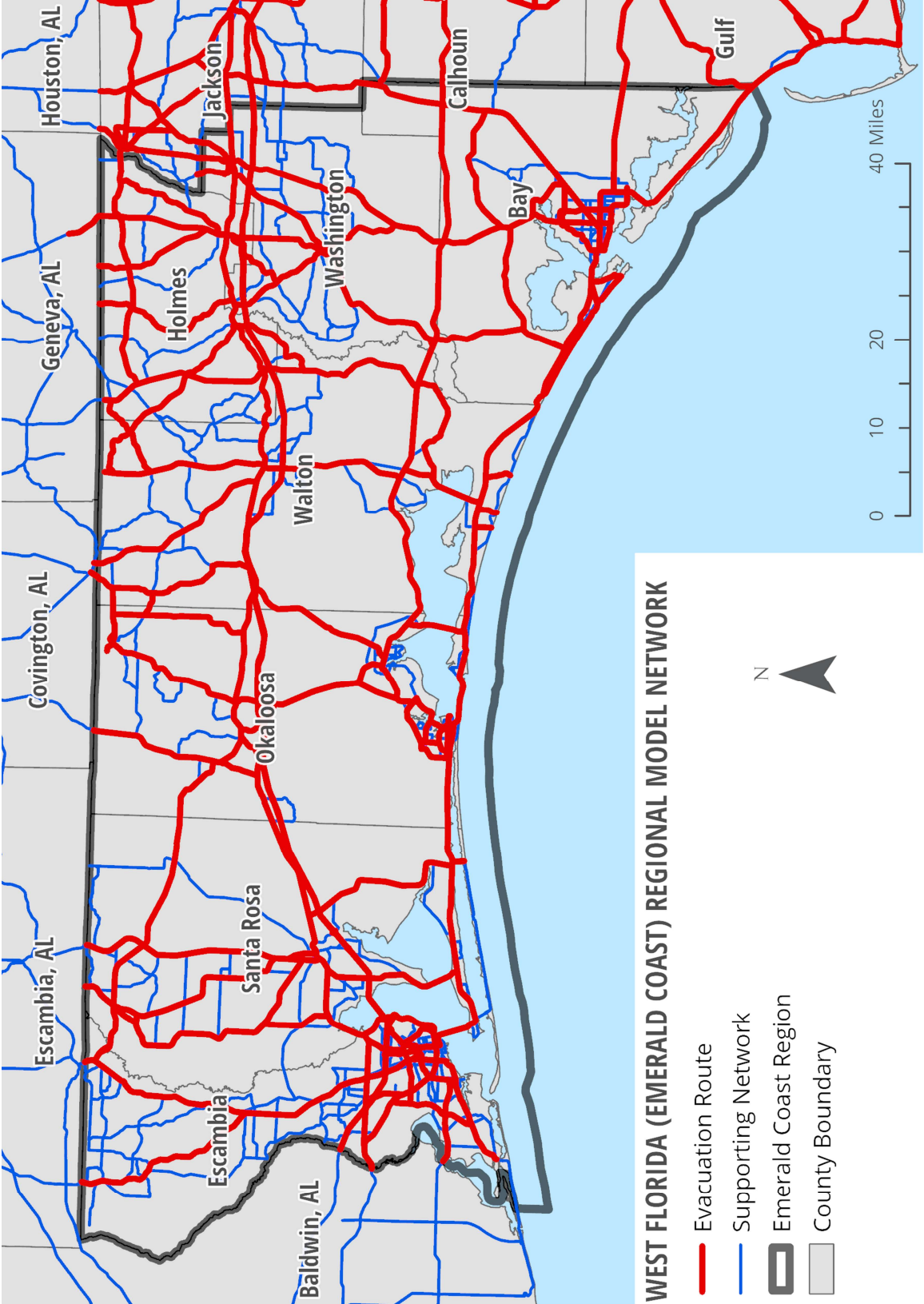
Hazard	Ranking
Flood	Medium-High (One occurrence every 3 years)
Dam Failure	Medium-High (One occurrence every 3 years)
Tropical Cyclone	Medium-High (One occurrence every 3 years)
Tornado	High (One or more occurrence each year)
Severe Thunderstorm	High (One or more occurrence each year)
Wildfire	High (One or more occurrence each year)
Drought	High (One or more occurrence each year)
Extreme Heat	Medium-High (One occurrence every 3 years)
Winter Storm	Low (one occurrence every 10 years)
Freeze	No Data
Erosion	No Data
Sinkhole	No Data
Earthquake	No Data
Algae Bloom	No Data
Tsunami	No Data
Domestic Security	No Data
Cyber	No Data
Mass Migration	No Data
Transportation	No Data
Hazardous Materials	No Data
Space Weather	No Data
Radiological	No Data
Agricultural Disruption	No Data
Human Health	No Data
Civil Disturbance	No Data

Data Source: 2023 Florida State Hazard Management Plan
Date Prepared: 11/2024

Based on hazard risk data from the 2023 Florida State Hazard Management Plan (Table E:16), Okaloosa County regularly experiences several significant natural hazards. Tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, wildfires, and droughts pose the highest risks, each occurring at least once per year. These frequent events necessitate continuous preparedness and response measures to mitigate impacts on community safety, infrastructure, and the natural environment.





In addition to these annual hazards, flooding, dam failure, tropical cyclones, and extreme heat events present medium-high risks, typically occurring once every three (3) years. Flooding, in particular, represents a notable concern due to its potential widespread impacts on transportation, property, and public safety. Given these recurring risks, proactive planning and infrastructure investments are critical for enhancing resilience and minimizing vulnerabilities within the County.

Map E:1: West Florida Regional Model Network



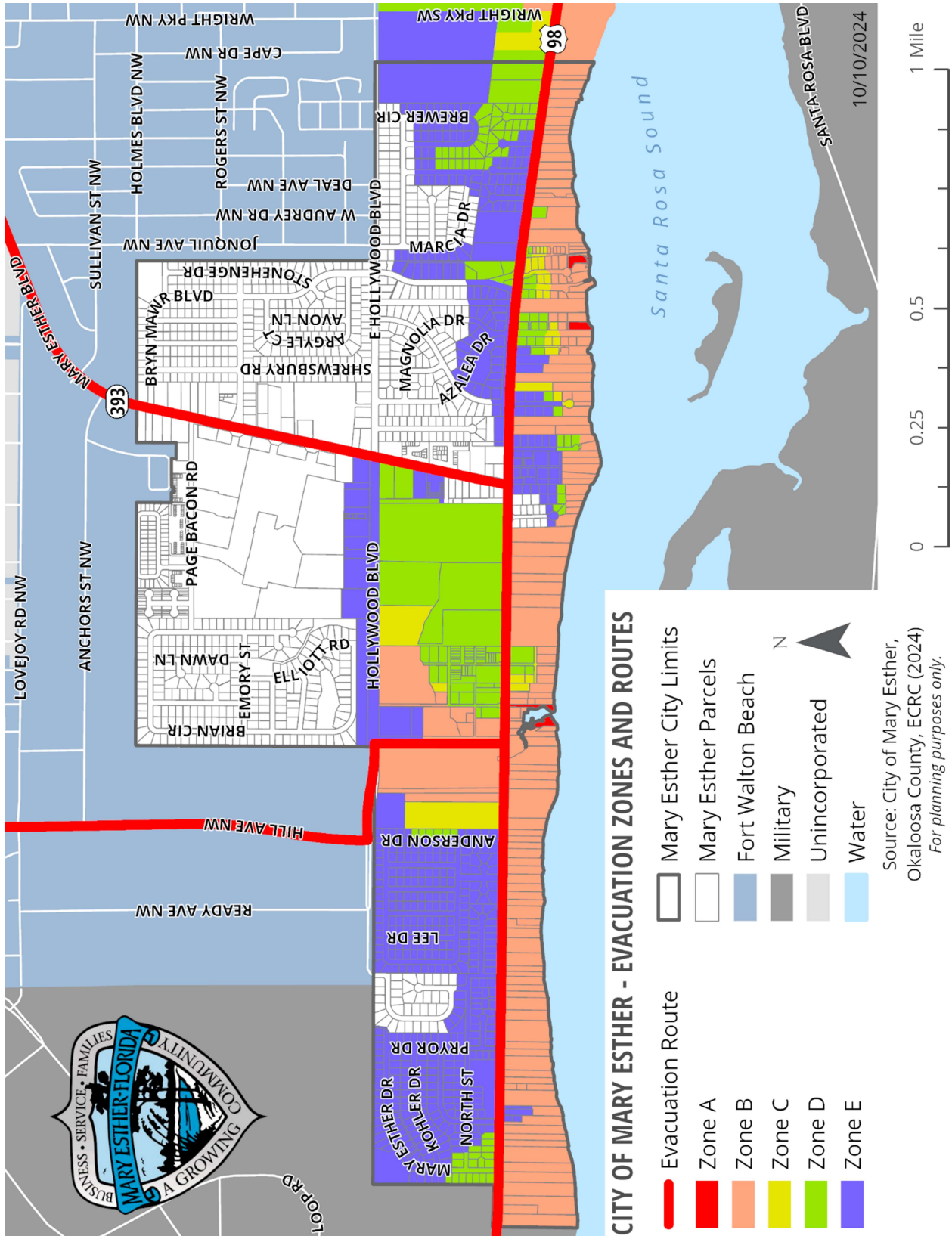
11/27/2024

WEST FLORIDA (EMERALD COAST) REGIONAL MODEL NETWORK

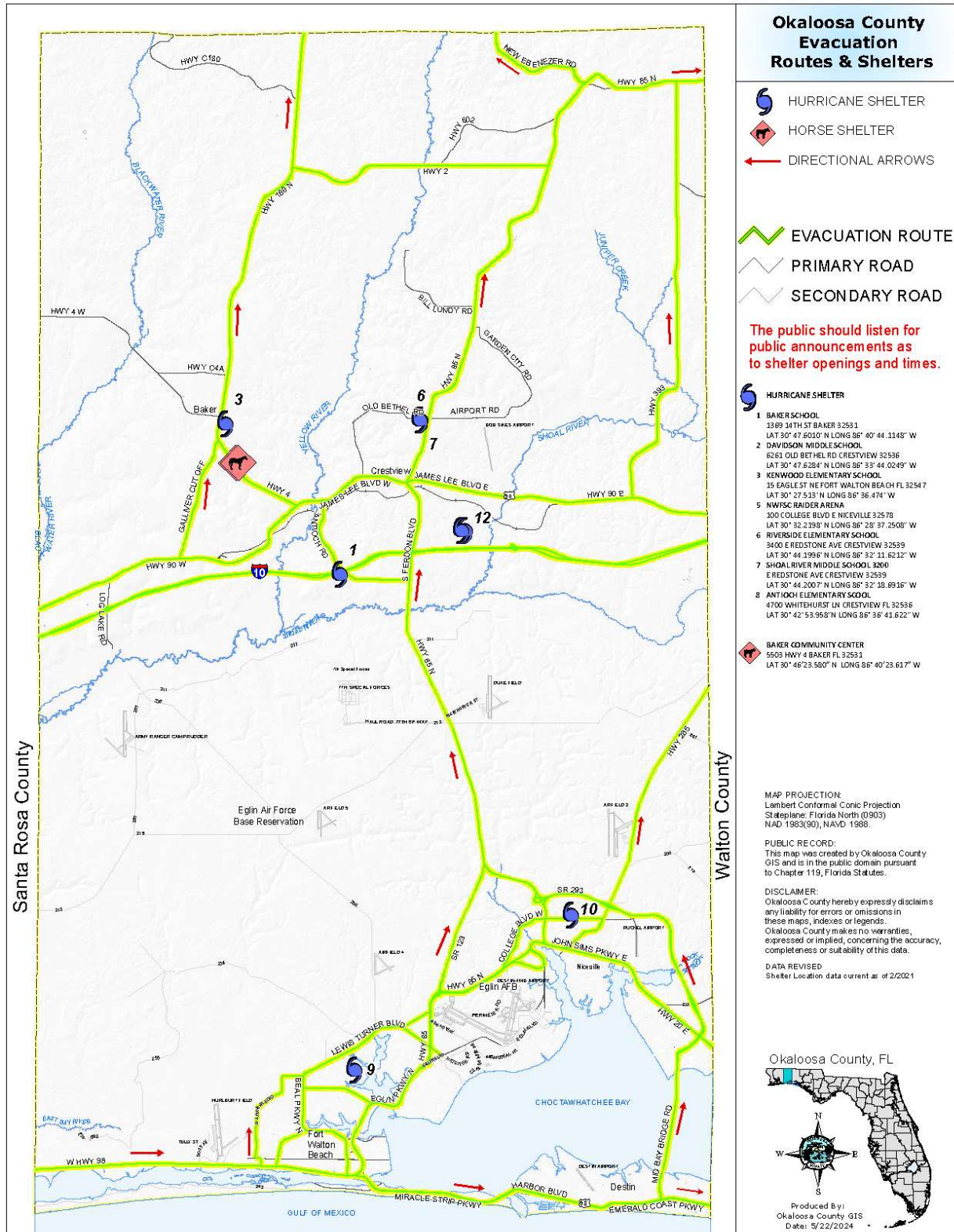
-  Evacuation Route
-  Supporting Network
-  Emerald Coast Region
-  County Boundary

Source: ECRC (2024);
 Statewide Regional Evacuation Study (2021)
 For planning purposes only.

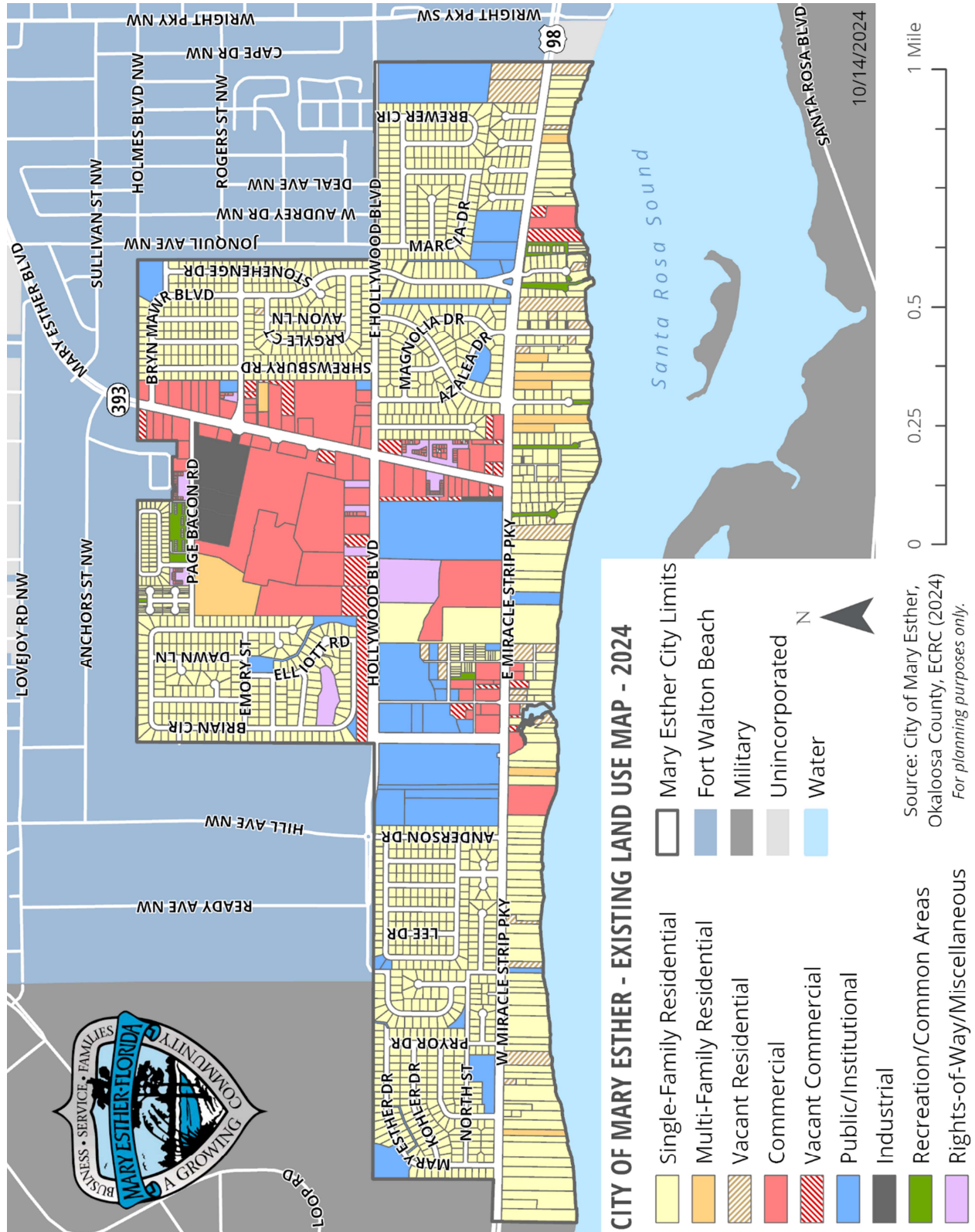
Map E:2: Evacuation Zones



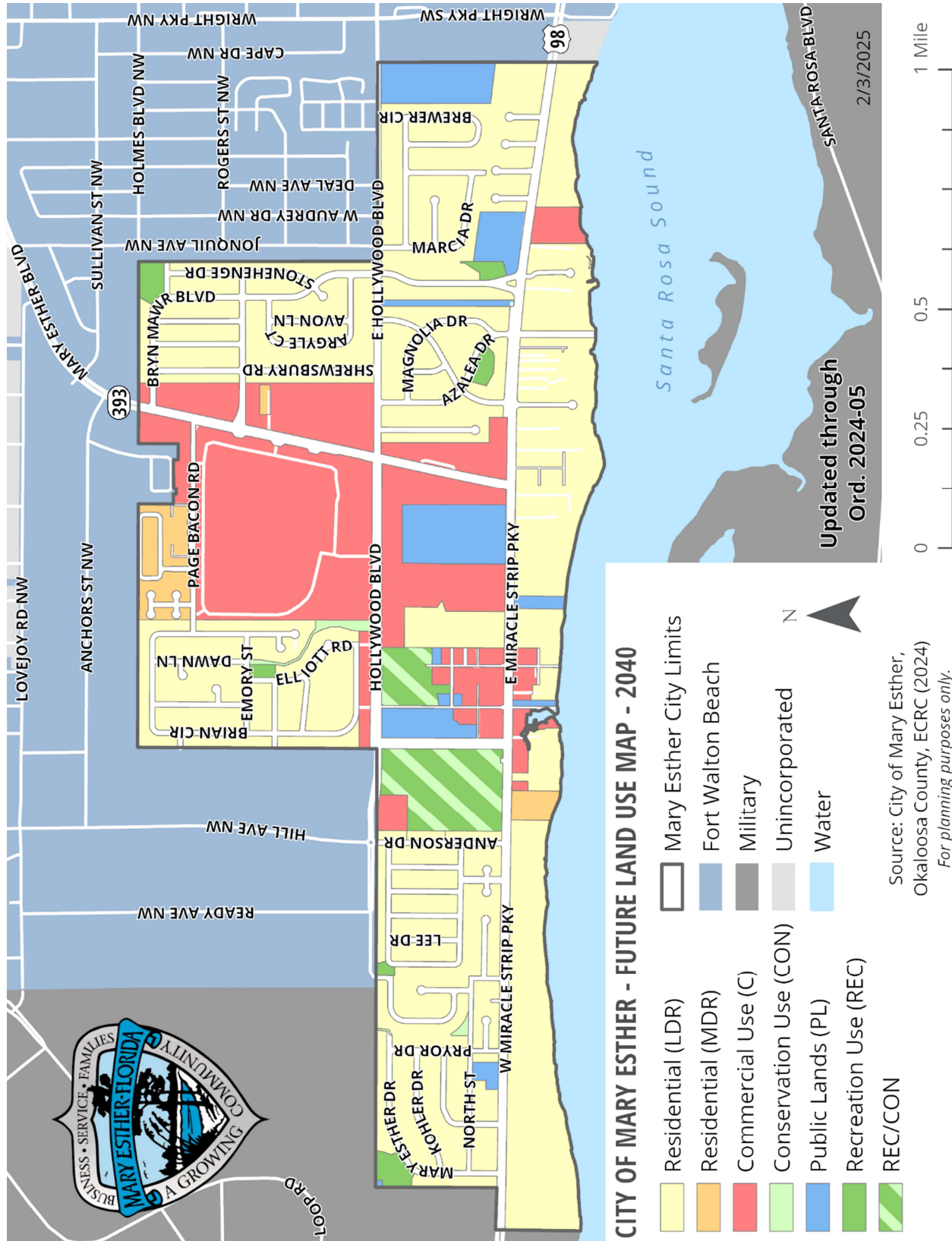
Map E:3: Okaloosa County Evacuation Routes & Shelters



Map E:4: Existing Land Use & Undeveloped Areas



Map E:5: Future Land Use



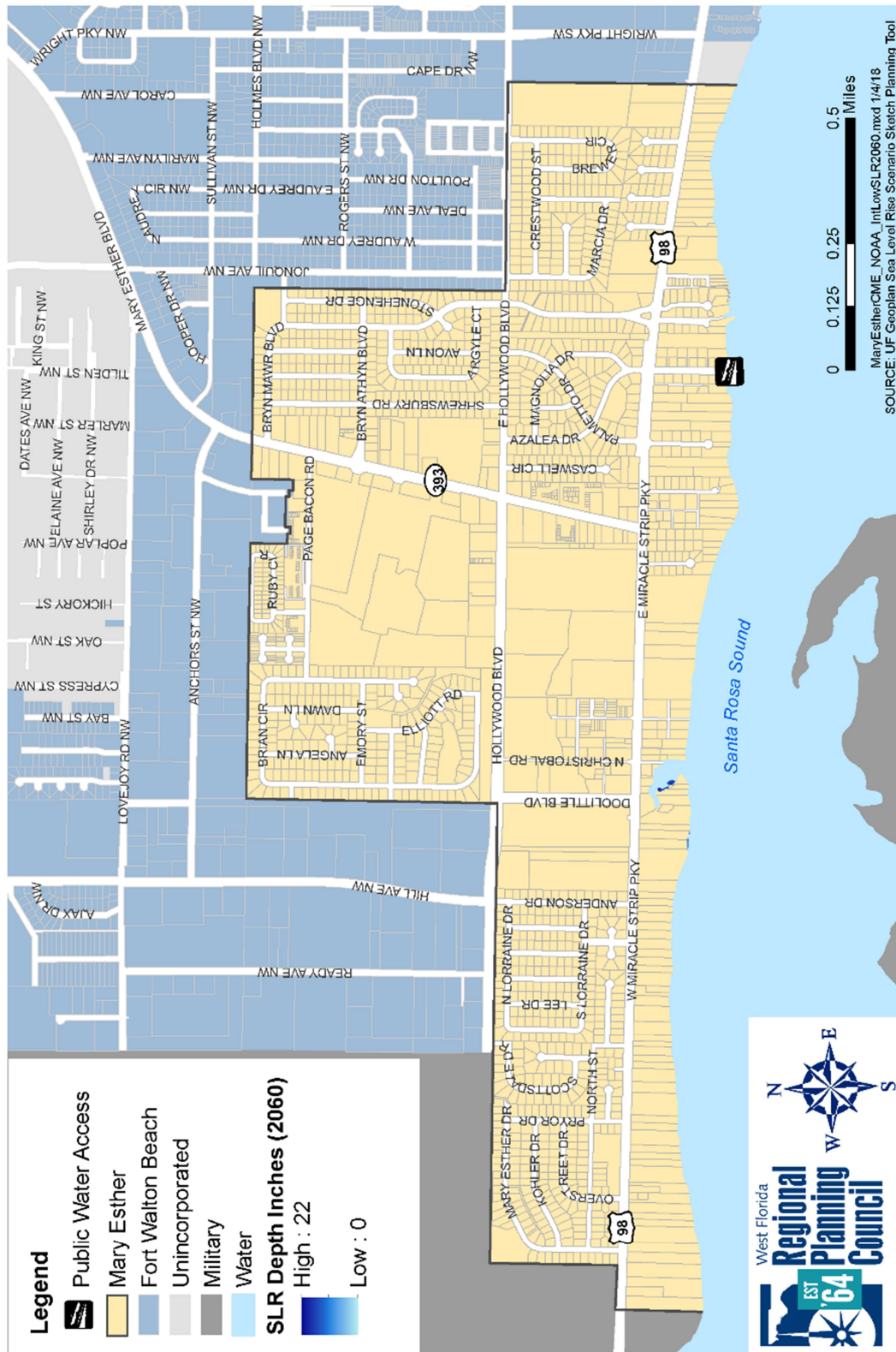
Map E:6: Environmentally Sensitive Areas (Wetlands)



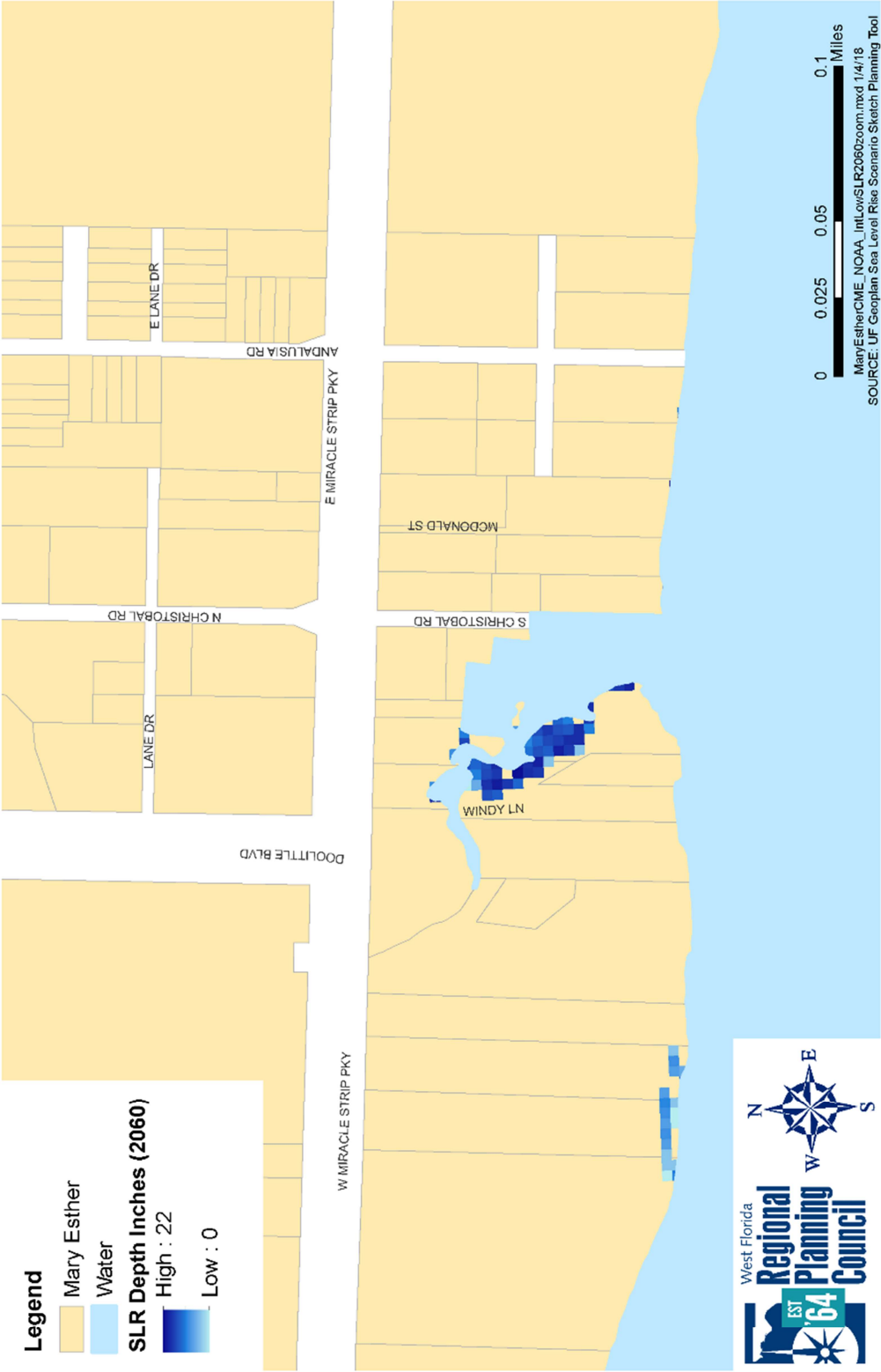
Map E:9: Storm Surge Zones and Coastal High Hazard Area (CHHA)



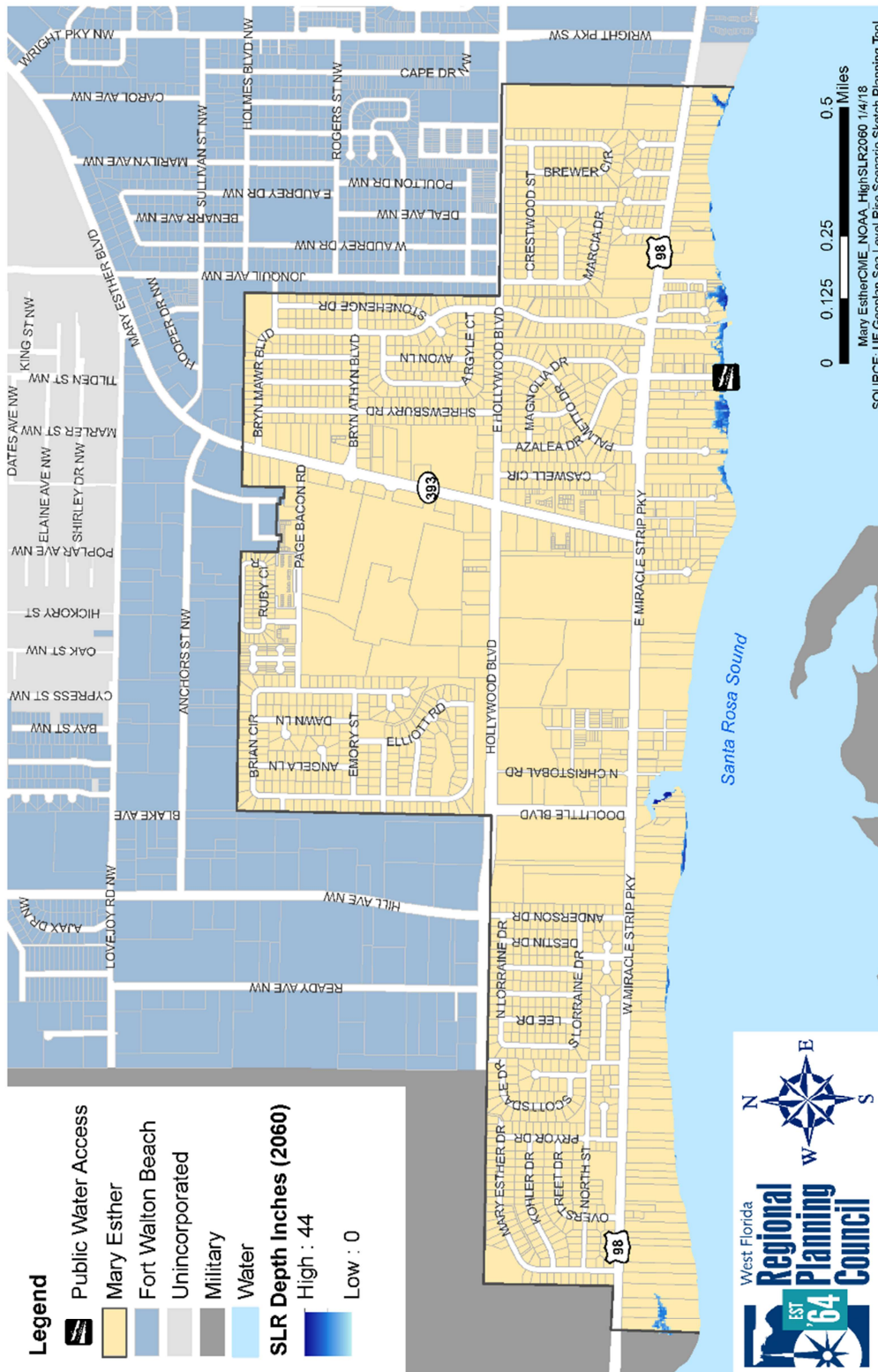
Map E:10: 2060 Sea Level Rise (NOAA Intermediate Low) (Mary Esther)



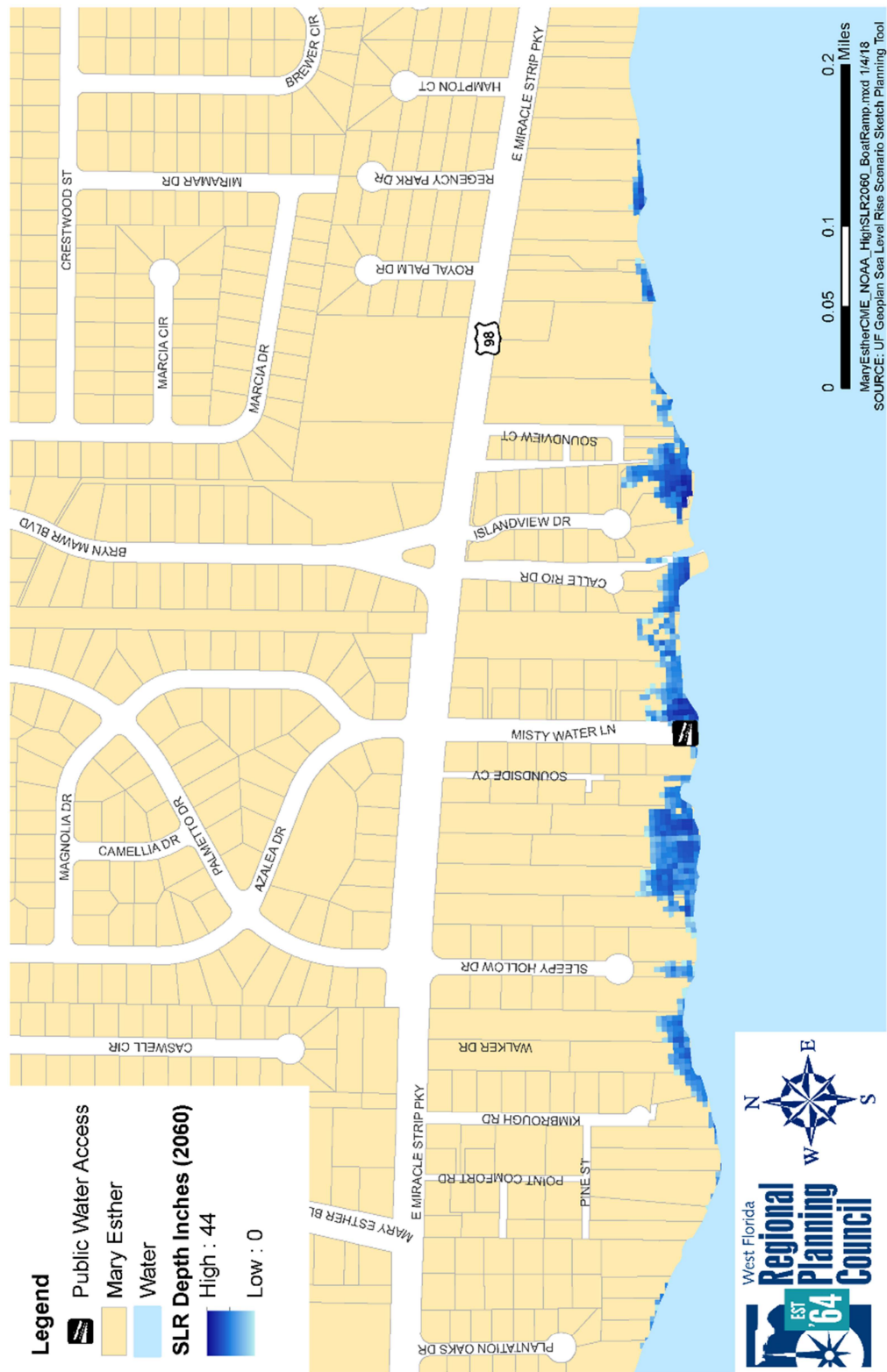
Map E:11: 2060 Sea Level Rise (NOAA Intermediate Low) (Christobal Rd)



Map E:12: 2060 Sea Level Rise (NOAA High) (Mary Esther)



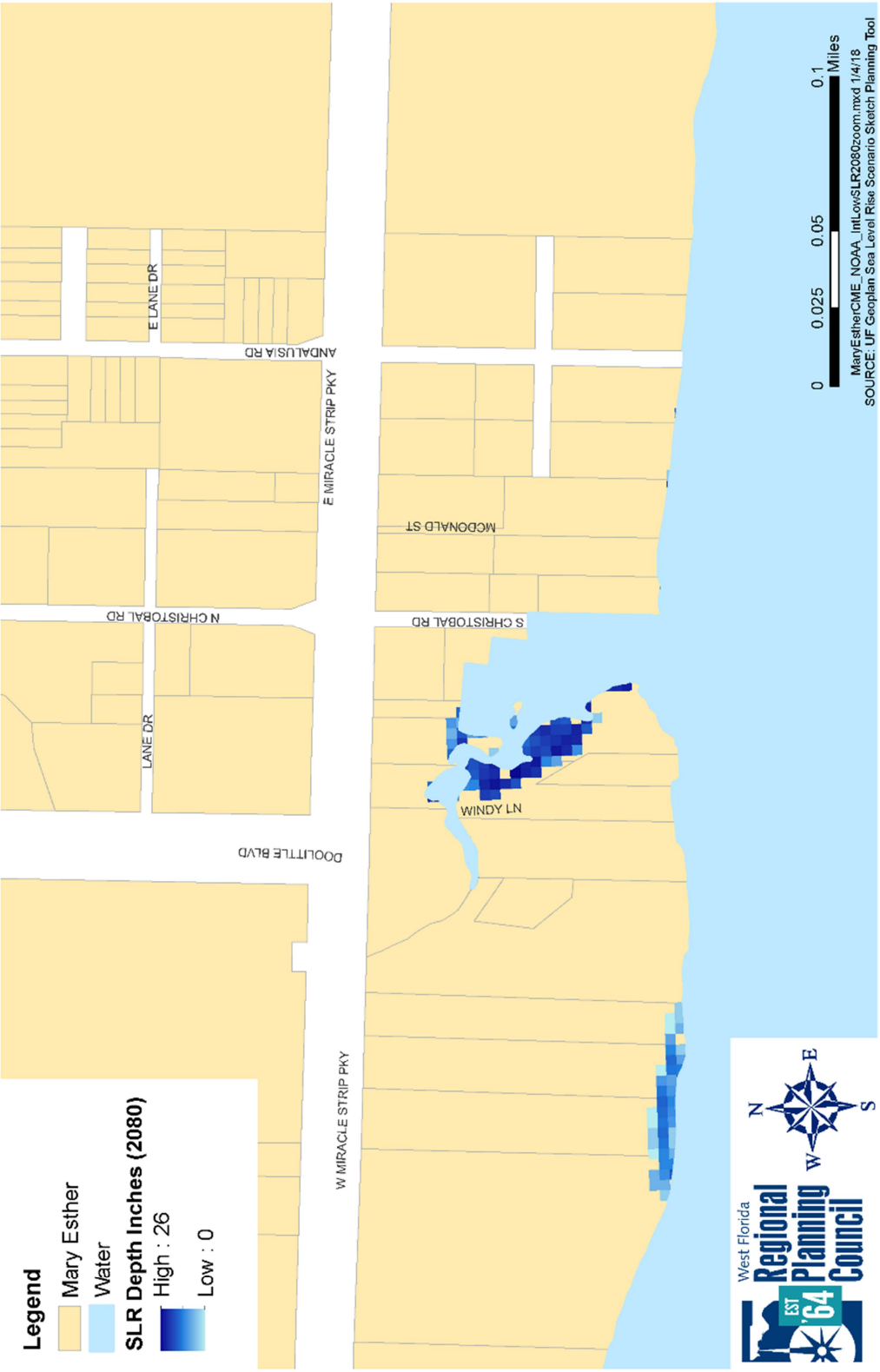
Map E:13: 2060 Sea Level Rise (NOAA High) (Misty Water Ln)



Map E:14: 2080 Sea Level Rise (NOAA Intermediate Low) (Mary Esther)



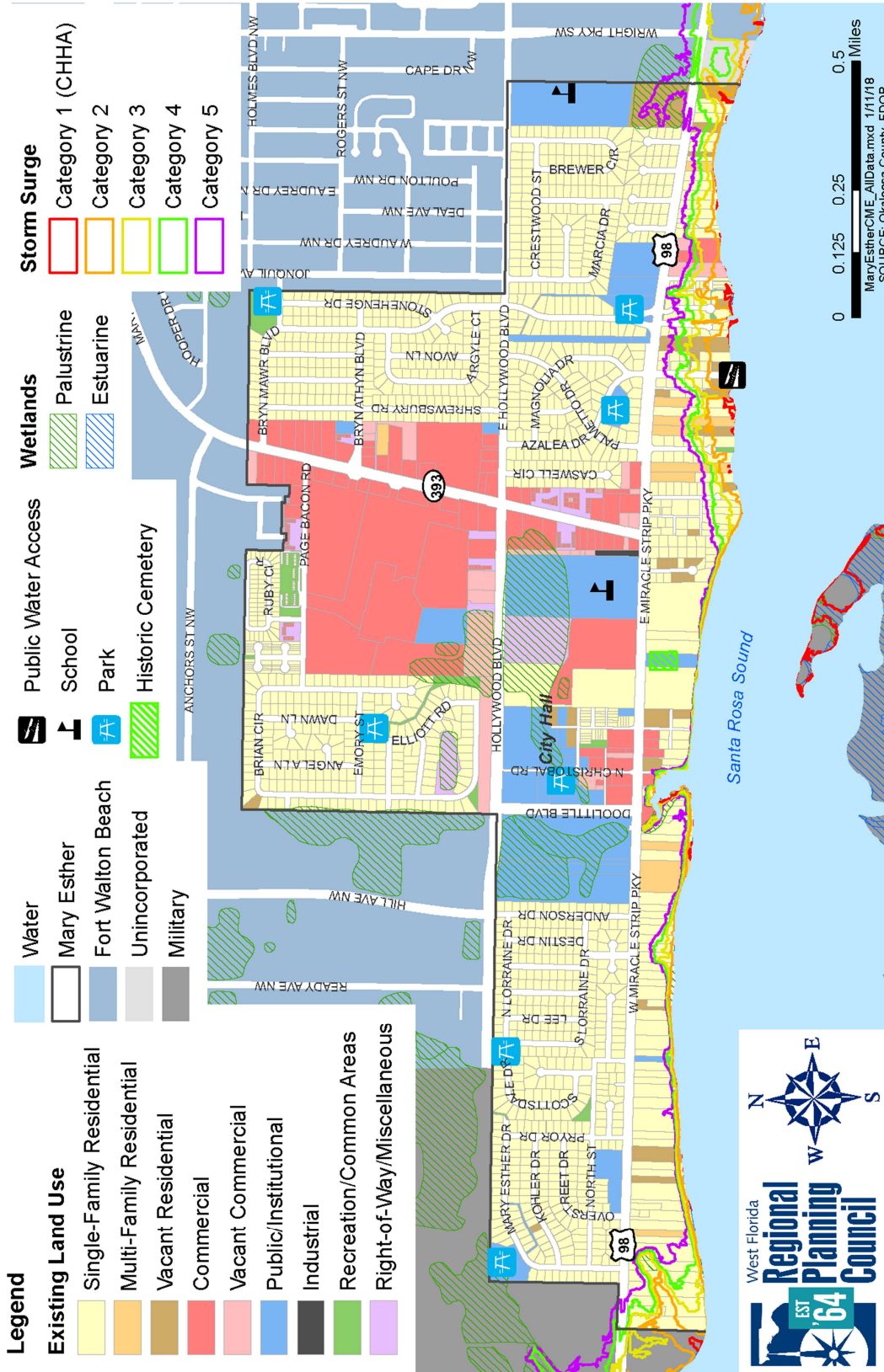
Map E:15: Sea Level Rise (NOAA Intermediate Low) (Christobal Rd)



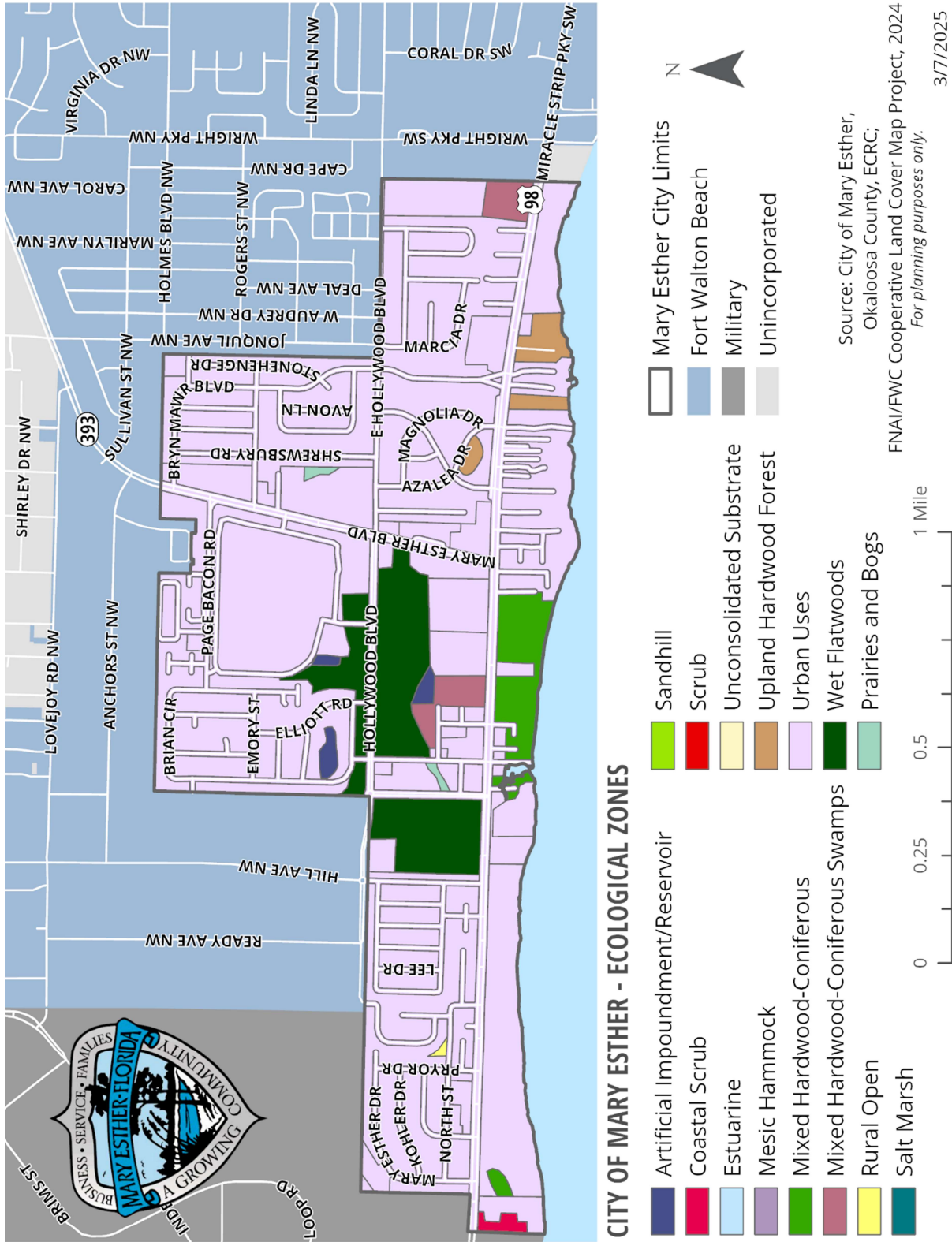
Map E:16: 2080 Sea Level Rise (NOAA High) (Mary Esther)



Map E:18: City of Mary Esther Coastal Inventory Map



Map E:19 - City of Mary Esther Ecological Zones



Section F: Recreation and Open Space Element





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PURPOSE AND INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Recreation and Open Space Element is to guide the planning and management of a comprehensive system of public and private recreation and open space facilities in the City of Mary Esther. This system is designed to provide accessible, high-quality recreational opportunities that meet the needs of the community, enhance the quality of life, and promote environmental stewardship. The City's recreation and open space offerings serve as essential components of its urban fabric, providing spaces for leisure, physical activity, social interaction, and connection to nature.

The City of Mary Esther maintains a diverse range of parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities that cater to residents of all ages and abilities. These include community parks, nature trails, playgrounds, sports fields, and picnic areas, as well as specialized amenities such as shuffleboard courts, basketball courts, and boat ramps. Collectively, these spaces contribute to the physical and mental well-being of the community and support the City's commitment to fostering a vibrant and sustainable environment.

As Mary Esther continues to grow, this element establishes a framework for the development, maintenance, and enhancement of recreational and open space facilities. By identifying current resources, future needs, and opportunities for improvement, the City ensures its recreation system remains a cornerstone of community life. This comprehensive approach emphasizes equitable access, environmental conservation, and strategic investments to sustain and expand recreational offerings for generations to come.

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Existing Recreation

Recreational sites in the City of Mary Esther are categorized as resource-based or activity-based. Resource-based sites leverage natural features to provide opportunities for activities such as picnicking, hiking, fishing, water sports, or simply enjoying the environment. Activity-based recreation, on the other hand, focuses on structured activities like basketball, baseball, or football, as well as recreational programs including aerobics, painting, senior citizen events, and spectator sports. However, these categories often overlap, as many resource-based recreation sites include facilities for activity-based programs.

Active Recreation: Mary Esther offers a variety of activity-based recreational opportunities through its parks and facilities. These include athletic courts and fields, fitness-focused programming, and community events hosted at local recreational sites. The City actively



maintains and upgrades these spaces to meet the diverse needs of its residents, fostering health and social engagement.

Passive Recreation: For those seeking a quieter form of recreation, the City provides passive recreational options such as walking trails, open green spaces, and natural observation areas. These amenities cater to individuals and families who value a slower pace of leisure, emphasizing tranquility and connection with nature.

Recreation Provided by the Private Sector: In addition to public facilities, private entities contribute significantly to recreational opportunities in Mary Esther. Fitness centers, dance studios, and specialized activity venues complement public offerings, giving residents access to a wide range of leisure options. Private recreational amenities enhance the overall recreational landscape by providing unique and tailored experiences for different age groups and interests.

Recreation for Visitors: Visitors to Mary Esther can also enjoy a variety of recreational opportunities. Resource-based sites near coastal areas and water bodies provide activities such as kayaking, paddleboarding, and birdwatching, appealing to both tourists and residents. Additionally, local parks and cultural events contribute to the City's appeal as a leisure destination.

Other Leisure Activities: Beyond traditional recreation, the City recognizes the value of non-conventional leisure activities that enrich the quality of life. Community programs such as arts and crafts workshops, music events, and cultural festivals offer residents and visitors unique ways to engage with the community and express creativity.

Existing Open Space

Open space in Mary Esther encompasses a wide array of resources, extending beyond traditional definitions. Open space is defined as "undeveloped land suitable for passive recreation and/or conservation uses." These areas include natural landscapes, floodplains, and undeveloped parcels that support conservation and ecological balance. The City integrates open space into its planning framework to preserve environmental resources and enhance passive recreational opportunities. Open spaces also serve as critical buffers, contributing to stormwater management, habitat protection, and overall urban resilience.

By balancing active and passive recreation with open space preservation, Mary Esther strives to meet the recreational needs of its residents while protecting the natural environment for future generations.

Table F:1 includes an inventory of parks and open spaces within the City of Mary Esther.



Table F:1 – Park and Open Space Inventory

Park	Acres	Location	Facilities
Springdale Park	3.3	25 Mary Esther Dr. off Hwy. 98	Renovated 2002; Picnic Area, Playground Equipment, T-ball Field, Little League Field, Bleachers, 40+ Parking Spaces
Oak Tree Park	0.6	300 N. Lorraine & W. Lorraine off Makron Dr. off Hwy. 98	Renovated 2001; Shuffleboard Court (equipment available at the Library), 3 Covered Picnic Shelters with Picnic Tables and BBQ grills, Basketball Court, Playground Equipment, 3 Parking Spaces, Handicap Accessibility
Oak Tree Nature Park	25.1	150 W. U.S. Hwy. 98, Doolittle Blvd. & Hollywood Blvd. by Post Office	Acquired 1999 & 2002 w/P-2000 Grants; 25 acres with Nature Trail, Picnic Pavilion, 4 Tables, Bike Rack, Grill, Signs identifying Foliage, Silver Sands Creek passes through mature woodlands, Archaeological Site
Elliott Park	3.0	254 Elliott Rd. off Hollywood Blvd.	Playground Equipment, Picnic Tables, BBQ Grill, Tennis Court, 4 Off-Street Parking Spaces, Renovated 2009
Thomas J. Pryor Park	1.4	195 Christobal Rd. at City Hall	Picnic Tables, BBQ Grill, 20 Parking Spaces
Jesse Rogers Memorial Cemetery	1.8	221 E. Miracle Strip Parkway (Hwy. 98)	None at this time, visitation only
Azalea Park	1.8	5 Azalea Dr. off Hwy. 98	Renovated 2004; Playground Equipment, Exercise/Jogging Trail, Picnic Tables, Basketball Court, ADA Parking
Mary Esther City Pier and Boat Ramp	0.3	17 Misty Water Dr. off Hwy. 98	Boat Ramp, Pier, Fishing, Swimming discouraged (No Lifeguard), 3 Covered Picnic Shelters, Very Limited Parking, in Residential Neighborhood
S. Bryn Mawr Park	1.1	108 S. Bryn Mawr Blvd. & Hwy. 98	Renovations 2005; 2 Picnic Tables, Covered Shelter, Playground Equipment, Limited Street Parking
Bryn Mawr Park	2.7	600 Sussex Road, Bryn Mawr Blvd. & Sussex Rd. off Mary Esther Blvd.	Renovated 2000; Playground Equipment, Ball Field, Basketball Court, Pavilion, 3 BBQ Grills, Picnic Tables, 30 Parking Spaces

Source: City of Mary Esther, UF GeoPlan Center



Projected Recreation and Open Space Needs

The City of Mary Esther is projected to grow by thirty-one-point-six percent (31.6%) between 2024 and 2050 and therefore must adapt its recreational planning to meet the growing needs of its residents. This projected population increase highlights the importance of aligning recreational facility supply with the evolving demands of the community. Mary Esther’s compact urban environment requires targeted strategies for efficient land use and accessible facilities.

Recreational Demand and Level of Service Standards: Recreational Demand and Level of Service Standards: Recreational demand in Mary Esther is assessed based on current facility supply and population growth projections. The City's level of service standard (LOS) for recreation and open space is one (1) acre per one thousand (1,000) population. Based on the 2024 population of four thousand four hundred ninety-three (4,493) (BEBR), the City needs four-point-four-nine-three (4.493) acres of parks to meet the LOS. The City will need five-point-nine-one-two (5.912) acres by 2050, based on the projected population.. As shown in **Table F:2**, the City currently has forty-one-point-one (41.1) acres of parks that will sufficiently meet the population’s recreational needs well into the future.

Table F:2 – Recreation and Open Space Projected Needs

Year	Population	Acres of Recreation/Open Space Required	Existing/Planned Acres of Recreation/Open Space
2024	4,493	4.493	41.1
2030	5,032	5.032	42.3*
2040	5,580	5.580	42.3**
2050	5,912	5.912	42.3**

Source: City of Mary Esther

*See Table F:3 for the addition of Cristobal Waterfront Park (1.15 acres)

**Future acreage unknown at this time

Planning Considerations: While the City enjoys a surplus of recreation and open space facilities, the following actions may still be prioritized:

1. **Strategic Land Acquisition:** Secure additional land for recreational development, focusing on areas accessible to underserved neighborhoods.
2. **Facility Upgrades:** Renovate and modernize existing recreational facilities to increase capacity and ensure ADA compliance.



3. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborate with private sector entities to develop and maintain specialized recreational amenities such as swimming pools, fitness centers, and community sports programs.
4. **Sustainability and Green Spaces:** Incorporate passive recreation areas, such as walking trails and natural preserves, to balance active recreational facilities with conservation goals.
5. **Community Engagement:** Involve residents in the planning process to ensure recreational development reflects community preferences and priorities.

By adopting a forward-thinking approach to recreational planning, Mary Esther can maintain a high quality of life for its growing population while preserving its unique environmental and cultural assets. This strategy aligns with the City's commitment to fostering an active, engaged, and healthy community.

Recreation and Open Space Standards

Recreation Standards: Standards play a vital role in recreation planning for the City of Mary Esther, ensuring that recreational facilities and open spaces meet the needs of the growing population. The City has an adopted Level of Service Standards (LOSS) that defines the numerical benchmark for recreational acreage per capita. This standard, outlined in **Policy F1-3b** of this element, provides the framework for maintaining and expanding recreational opportunities to support a high quality of life for residents.

Mary Esther's compact urban environment necessitates efficient land use to accommodate active and passive recreational facilities. Neighborhood parks, playgrounds, and activity-based resources are designed to meet current demands while accommodating future population growth, as reflected in projections through 2050.

Provision of Open Space: Open space plays a critical role in enhancing Mary Esther's urban landscape, offering aesthetic and functional benefits to residents and businesses alike. Unlike rural areas, where open space often provides a pastoral or natural retreat, urban open spaces in Mary Esther are essential for breaking up the dense urban form, providing relief from built environments and supporting community cohesion.

In residential areas, open spaces improve neighborhood design by creating buffers between conflicting land uses, preserving natural amenities, and offering recreational opportunities such as playgrounds and walking trails. Open space not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of neighborhoods, but also promotes health and wellness by encouraging outdoor activities for all age groups.



In commercial and industrial areas, open space serves as a visual and functional asset, offering a more inviting atmosphere for workers and visitors. Well-designed open spaces in these areas can attract new businesses and enhance the overall economic appeal of Mary Esther. Trees, landscaping, and green buffers soften the visual impact of development and provide a welcoming environment for customers and employees.

As development pressures increase and available land becomes more limited, the City's land development regulations ensure the reservation of open spaces in both residential and non-residential projects. These regulations prioritize open space in site design, incorporating features such as green corridors, buffer zones, and shared community spaces. By proactively setting aside open space, Mary Esther can sustain its reputation as a desirable and livable community, balancing growth with environmental preservation and aesthetic value.

Proximity and Access to Recreation Facilities: Recreational facilities in the City of Mary Esther are accessible to both residents and visitors, with no residency requirements restricting their use. While Mary Esther does not host expansive natural preserves or rural recreation spaces, its urban parks and activity-based facilities provide convenient options for leisure. The City's compact layout ensures most recreational facilities are easily accessible via its well-connected road network.

Accessibility for all residents, including those with disabilities and elderly individuals, is a key priority. Recreational sites are designed to meet barrier-free accessibility requirements, including ramps, railings, and restroom facilities that allow safe and easy use for individuals with mobility challenges. Future recreational planning will continue to integrate these accessibility considerations.

Although the City does not currently have a comprehensive recreation master plan, its focus remains on maintaining and enhancing existing facilities. Future planning efforts could benefit from a strategic recreational plan that inventories existing parks and programs, identifies future needs, and establishes standards for landscaping, signage, and maintenance. Such a plan would support grant applications and alternative funding initiatives, ensuring long-term sustainability for recreational offerings.

Recreational programming in Mary Esther is primarily community-driven, with non-profit organizations and community groups coordinating events and activities in City-managed spaces. Public access remains largely free, with any applicable user fees directed toward offsetting utility and maintenance costs for specific facilities, such as community centers and event spaces.

With steady population growth projected, the City may need to evaluate and expand its recreational offerings to meet future demand. Strategic upgrades to existing parks, new facilities, and accessible infrastructure will ensure Mary Esther continues to provide high-



quality recreational opportunities for all residents while maintaining its compact and vibrant urban character.

Table F:3 lists the applicable projects that appear in the City’s Capital Improvements Plan:

Table F:3 - City of Mary Esther Capital Improvements Plan - Recreation and Open Space Projects

Project	Budget Year					Funding Source	Project Total
	FY 2024-2025	FY 2025-2026	FY 2026-2027	FY 2027-2028	FY 2028-2029		
Azalea Park Neighborhood Infrastructure Improvements	\$7,493,600	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General, Utilities, and Sales Tax Funds; Water and Sewer Loans and State Grant	\$7,493,600
North Bryn Mawr Park ADA and Safety Improvements	\$30,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$30,000
Elliott Park ADA and Safety Improvements	\$42,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$42,000
Christobal Waterfront Park (1.15 acres)	\$3,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	Okaloosa County and Bed Tax Allocation	\$3,000,000
Ray's Pond Rehabilitation	\$1,110,200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	Sales Tax fund and State Loan	\$1,110,200
Sidewalk Improvements	\$10,000	\$10,500	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	General Fund	\$50,500
Mary Esther Boulevard Beautification	\$0	\$216,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$216,000

Project	Budget Year						Funding Source	Project Total
	FY 2024-2025	FY 2025-2026	FY 2026-2027	FY 2027-2028	FY 2028-2029			
Oak Tree Nature Park Rehabilitation	\$0	\$180,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$180,000	
Community Facilities Beautification	\$0	\$157,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$157,000	
Waterfront Park Development	\$0	\$0	\$20,000	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$20,000	
Oak Tree Park Neighborhood Infrastructure Improvements	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,364,618	\$0	Sales Tax Fund, Water and Sewer Loans	\$5,364,618	
Funding Total	\$15,794,291	\$12,191,583	\$609,070	\$6,143,142	\$26,041,525	N/A	\$60,779,611	

Data Source: City of Mary Esther
Date Prepared: 11/2024



Map F:1 - City of Mary Esther Parks



CITY OF MARY ESTHER - PARKS

- Park
- Mary Esther City Limits
- Mary Esther Parcels
- Fort Walton Beach
- Military
- Unincorporated
- Water

Source: City of Mary Esther,
Okaloosa County, FDOT, ECRC (2024)
For planning purposes only.

Section G:
Intergovernmental Coordination Element





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PURPOSE

The purpose of the Intergovernmental Coordination Element is to inventory and analyze the existing relationships between the City of Mary Esther and other governmental agencies, particularly those with service responsibilities affecting the City. This element identifies and evaluates intergovernmental coordination mechanisms to determine their effectiveness in addressing shared challenges and resolving conflicts. By reviewing these mechanisms, the City aims to identify potential problems or incompatible goals and work towards improved collaboration and efficiency in service delivery. This element supports the development of policies that foster strong partnerships with regional, state, and federal agencies to better serve the public and advance community objectives.

INTRODUCTION

Effective coordination among the various governmental entities influencing the City of Mary Esther is essential to meet the community's needs efficiently and equitably. The City interacts with a wide array of entities, including Okaloosa County, neighboring municipalities, the Okaloosa County School Board, the Northwest Florida Water Management District, and several regional and state agencies. These entities play a role in land use decisions, infrastructure planning, environmental management, and public services, all of which impact the City's development and growth.

Given the interconnected nature of these responsibilities, it is critical for Mary Esther to establish and maintain strong working relationships with these agencies. Successful coordination helps avoid conflicts, enhances cooperation, and ensures the delivery of high-quality services to residents. Conversely, a lack of communication and collaboration can lead to inefficiencies, duplication of efforts, and a loss of public trust.

Intergovernmental coordination is also vital because the City of Mary Esther does not operate in isolation. Mary Esther's growth and development is influenced by and also impacts neighboring jurisdictions. The Growth Management Act requires the Intergovernmental Coordination Element to demonstrate how the City's Comprehensive Plan aligns with the plans of adjacent municipalities, Okaloosa County, and regional and state agencies. This alignment ensures that all parties work together to achieve consistent and mutually beneficial outcomes, fostering trust and efficiency in governance.



INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION INVENTORY

Local Governing Authorities

The City of Mary Esther is governed by an elected City Council with an appointed City Manager responsible for day-to-day administration. Mary Esther regularly coordinates with neighboring municipalities, Okaloosa County, and various local agencies to address issues ranging from infrastructure and land use to public safety and environmental protection. Collaboration is critical as multiple entities have overlapping responsibilities and jurisdictions, which necessitates effective intergovernmental communication and cooperation.

The City also engages with several regional and state entities whose enabling legislation grants them authority to regulate, advise, or provide services impacting the City. These interactions influence development, land use, and quality of life in Mary Esther. The City prioritizes establishing clear lines of communication and cooperative agreements with these entities to ensure seamless service delivery and the effective implementation of shared goals.

Adjacent Local Governments: The City of Mary Esther is bordered by the City of Fort Walton Beach to the east and north, and Hurlburt Field to the west. These adjacent jurisdictions significantly influence Mary Esther's planning and development processes. Fort Walton Beach and Mary Esther collaborate on issues such as transportation, stormwater management, and economic development, while Hurlburt Field remains a vital partner in land use planning and resilience efforts.

Okaloosa County's governance structure impacts the unincorporated areas surrounding Mary Esther, requiring ongoing coordination to align municipal and county-level policies. This cooperation ensures that services, infrastructure, and development efforts are consistent and mutually supportive, avoiding conflicts and maximizing resource efficiency.

The City contracts with the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office for enhanced law enforcement services. This includes the services of two full-time deputies that conduct patrols, respond to calls, and provide crime prevention training to City staff and the public at-large.

Okaloosa County School Board: The Okaloosa County School Board operates primary and secondary educational facilities serving Mary Esther residents. The School Board is an independent agency but collaborates with the City to address the impacts of residential development on school capacity and infrastructure. These partnerships ensure that educational facilities meet the needs of current and future populations while supporting broader planning objectives, such as maintaining adequate levels of service and ensuring the proximity of schools to residential areas.

By fostering strong relationships with these local governing authorities, Mary Esther positions itself to address challenges effectively, promote efficient service delivery, and enhance the quality of life for its residents.

Regional Agencies

Emerald Coast Regional Council: The City of Mary Esther is located within the jurisdiction of the Emerald Coast Regional Council (ECRC), formally known as the West Florida Regional Planning Council (WFRPC). The ECRC serves as a regional planning agency for a seven-county district in the Florida Panhandle. Headquartered in Pensacola, the ECRC is charged with preparing a Strategic Regional Policy Plan in accordance with Chapter 186, Florida Statutes. This plan establishes regional issues, goals, policies, and standards that align with and further the goals of the State of Florida Comprehensive Plan. Local government comprehensive plans must demonstrate consistency with the objectives of the ECRC’s Strategic Regional Policy Plan.

In addition to its planning functions, the ECRC reviews **Developments of Regional Impact (DRI)** under Chapter 380, Florida Statutes. This review process assesses the potential positive and negative impacts of significant proposed developments on the region and provides advisory recommendations to affected local governments. The ECRC also plays a vital role in reviewing applications for federal domestic assistance that require area-wide clearinghouse reviews. This process ensures that proposed projects align with local and regional plans, fostering intergovernmental coordination between local, state, and federal entities. The City Manager’s office and Mary Esther’s Planning Department coordinate with the ECRC on these efforts, ensuring that the City remains aligned with regional priorities and objectives.

Northwest Florida Water Management District: The Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWWMD), established under the Water Resources Act of 1972, oversees water resource management and planning across the Florida Panhandle. Governed by a board appointed by the Governor, the NFWWMD is headquartered in Havana, Florida, with field offices in Marianna and Pensacola. The District’s responsibilities include water resource planning, permitting for water use, regulating well drilling, and managing surface water resources. The NFWWMD also acquires and manages environmentally sensitive lands to protect water quality and critical habitats.

The NFWWMD collaborates with local governments, including Mary Esther, to develop sustainable water resource strategies and ensure the protection of critical aquifers and wetlands. Coordination with the District is essential for permitting processes and the implementation of local and regional water management goals. The City’s Planning and Public Works departments work closely with the NFWWMD to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and the effective management of water resources. These efforts are integral to



maintaining the quality of life for Mary Esther residents and protecting the region's natural resources

State Departments

Governor's Office of Planning and Budgeting: The Governor's Office of Planning and Budgeting oversees the preparation of the State of Florida Comprehensive Plan, which establishes statewide goals and policies. Local and regional comprehensive plans, including Mary Esther's, must be consistent with this state plan. Coordination with this office ensures alignment between local initiatives and broader state objectives. The City Manager's office and Community Development Department are responsible for facilitating interactions with this agency.

Florida Department of Transportation - District 3: The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is responsible for the planning, construction, and maintenance of state roadways. Mary Esther is part of FDOT District 3, headquartered in Chipley, with additional administrative offices in Tallahassee. Given the interdependence between land use and transportation, the City collaborates closely with FDOT to align transportation improvements with development plans. Developers proposing projects that access state roads or impact the drainage systems must submit plans to FDOT for review. Mary Esther's Public Works Department and Planning Department manage coordination efforts to address transportation and stormwater considerations.

Florida Department of Commerce: The Florida Department of Commerce (FloridaCommerce) serves as the state's designated land planning agency, succeeding the former Department of Community Affairs, and later the Department of Economic Opportunity. FloridaCommerce is responsible for reviewing local government comprehensive plans and amendments to ensure consistency with Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, the Comprehensive Regional Policy Plan, and the State Comprehensive Plan. In addition to land use planning, FloridaCommerce administers several economic development and housing programs, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and initiatives aimed at promoting community and economic resilience. The City of Mary Esther coordinates with the FloridaCommerce through its Planning Department and City Manager's office to ensure compliance with state requirements, access grant funding opportunities, and align local development objectives with statewide priorities.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection - Northwest District: The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) regulates environmental quality including air and water standards, permitting for water discharge, and development in wetlands. The Northwest District office, based in Pensacola, oversees activities affecting Mary Esther. The FDEP's regulations significantly impact development by ensuring stormwater management



and pollution control. FDEP also manages state parks and programs such as the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) and the Florida Boating Improvement Program. The City coordinates closely with FDEP for permitting, environmental assessments, and funding for recreational and conservation projects.

Division of Forestry: The Division of Forestry, under the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, provides critical services to protect woodlands and open spaces. While Mary Esther has minimal forestland, the Division offers expertise and resources for fire prevention, land management, and urban tree canopy projects. Coordination with the Division is primarily conducted through the City Manager’s office and public works.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission: The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) ensures the protection of the state’s fish and wildlife and oversees recreational areas such as public boat ramps. In Mary Esther, the FWC plays a vital role in managing waterways, particularly Santa Rosa Sound, and supports conservation and recreational needs. The City collaborates with the FWC for habitat protection and recreational facility management, often through grant funding and technical assistance.

Florida Department of Health: The Florida Department of Health, through its Okaloosa County office, issues permits for septic systems, inspects their installation, and administers public health programs. These services include housing assistance, foster care, and substance abuse counseling. The City’s coordination with the Department of Health is managed through its Planning Department and Building Inspections to ensure compliance with health regulations.

Florida Department of State (Division of Historical Resources): The Division of Historical Resources assists local governments in preserving historical and archaeological resources. It reviews projects involving state or federal funding or permitting to evaluate their impacts on significant cultural sites. The Division maintains the Florida Master Site File, which documents historical and archaeological sites. Coordination with this agency ensures that Mary Esther’s development activities preserve the City’s cultural heritage, supported by the City Manager’s office and Planning Department.

Federal Agencies

United States Air Force: The City of Mary Esther is home to Hurlburt Field, a critical installation of the U.S. Air Force and a vital component of the regional military infrastructure. Hurlburt Field’s operations, focused on Special Operations missions, significantly influence the City’s development patterns and community planning. Mary Esther collaborates closely with Hurlburt Field on infrastructure projects, public safety initiatives, and community development efforts to ensure compatibility between the base’s mission and the needs of the City.



Additionally, an Air Force Recruiting Office located on Mary Esther Boulevard provides recruitment support and information for those interested in joining the military.

The City’s relationship with the U.S. Air Force extends beyond Hurlburt Field to Eglin Air Force Base (AFB), one of the largest military installations in the country. Eglin AFB’s influence on regional planning is substantial, and Mary Esther actively participates in initiatives such as the **Joint Land Use Study (JLUS)** and the **Military Installation Resilience Review (MIRR)** to address land use compatibility, infrastructure resilience, and shared community goals.

- **Joint Land Use Study (JLUS):** The JLUS identifies strategies to mitigate potential conflicts between civilian development and military operations. For Mary Esther, the study’s recommendations include managing lighting, building height, and noise impacts to maintain the operational effectiveness of Hurlburt Field and Eglin AFB.
- **Military Installation Resilience Review (MIRR):** The MIRR focuses on enhancing the resilience of military installations and surrounding communities to climate and environmental risks. For Mary Esther, this includes collaboration on critical projects such as wastewater infrastructure improvements and stormwater management to support both civilian and military needs.

The strong partnership between Mary Esther, Hurlburt Field, and Eglin AFB underscores the City’s commitment to supporting national defense while fostering a thriving community. These efforts ensure that local development and military operations remain mutually compatible, protecting mission readiness and enhancing the quality of life for residents and military personnel alike.

Existing Intergovernmental Mechanisms

Fire Protection and Emergency Services: Mary Esther has a mutual aid agreement with neighboring municipalities and Okaloosa County to provide fire protection and emergency services. The City’s Fire Department collaborates with adjacent jurisdictions, such as Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa County, to enhance response capabilities for emergencies. Agreements with Hurlburt Field also support emergency coordination, particularly for incidents affecting both civilian and military areas. The City Council and Emergency Services Director oversee this coordination to ensure the safety and security of residents.

Public Waterfront Property Development: An interlocal agreement exists between Okaloosa County and the City of Mary Esther for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of public waterfront properties. This partnership has facilitated projects such as park enhancements, demolition of old structures, and waterfront access improvements. These efforts aim to balance public use with environmental preservation.



Local Option Gas Tax Revenues: The City of Mary Esther participates in an interlocal agreement with Okaloosa County and other municipalities for the distribution of local option gas tax revenues. These funds are used to support road maintenance, transportation projects, and other infrastructure needs within the City. Coordination is managed through regular consultation with the County and other municipalities to ensure equitable distribution and efficient use of funds.

Tourist Development Tax Revenues: The City is part of an agreement with Okaloosa County municipalities regarding the allocation of twelve and one-half percent (12.5%) of annual tourist development tax revenues earmarked for municipalities. These funds support tourism-related projects such as marketing, infrastructure enhancements, and public improvements. Collaboration with the County ensures that Mary Esther's initiatives align with regional tourism strategies.

Emergency Operations: Emergency operations and 9-1-1 services for Mary Esther are coordinated through Okaloosa County's Emergency Management Office. The County oversees hurricane preparedness, 24-hour storm warnings, and the monitoring of hazardous materials. The City coordinates with the County to ensure emergency plans are updated and effective for both natural and man-made disasters. The City Council and Emergency Services Department act as liaisons to the County for emergency-related activities.

Redevelopment: Although Mary Esther does not have a formal redevelopment agency, the City works closely with Okaloosa County and neighboring jurisdictions to address redevelopment opportunities. Collaborative efforts focus on revitalizing key commercial corridors and enhancing infrastructure to support economic development. These initiatives are guided by comprehensive planning efforts and intergovernmental coordination.

By leveraging these intergovernmental mechanisms, Mary Esther ensures efficient service delivery, fosters regional collaboration, and enhances the quality of life for its residents. These agreements and partnerships form a foundation for addressing shared challenges and advancing mutual goals.

Utilities

Electricity: Electrical service in the City of Mary Esther is provided by Florida Power and Light (FPL), which acquired Gulf Power. FPL delivers electricity to both residential and commercial customers throughout the City.

Potable Water: The City of Mary Esther operates a central water system, sourcing potable water from the Floridan Aquifer and treating it to meet state and federal quality standards. Residents in nearby unincorporated areas typically rely on private wells for their water needs.



Sanitary Sewer: Mary Esther provides central sewer services through its municipal wastewater utility. The City also collaborates with Hurlburt Field on shared facilities such as spray fields. Septic systems are potentially present on some parcels in the City.

Natural Gas: Natural gas is provided to residents and businesses in Mary Esther by Okaloosa Gas, which operates across the region and ensures reliable delivery for heating, cooking, and other needs.

Telecommunications: Telephone, internet, and cable television services in Mary Esther are offered by several private providers, giving residents and businesses access to a range of options for connectivity and entertainment.

Mary Esther's utility infrastructure is essential to the community's functionality and quality of life, with services provided through a combination of municipal operations, partnerships, and private providers. These utilities are critical to supporting growth, development, and day-to-day needs within the City.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION ANALYSIS

Effectiveness of Existing Coordination Mechanisms.

The City of Mary Esther benefits from effective formal and informal intergovernmental coordination mechanisms. The compact size and close relationships with neighboring jurisdictions and agencies have facilitated collaboration across multiple areas. These mechanisms ensure that the City maintains essential services and aligns with regional, state, and federal goals.

Recreation: The City's collaboration with Okaloosa County and neighboring municipalities has effectively supported recreational services. While Mary Esther manages its own parks and facilities, coordination ensures access to broader recreational opportunities for residents.

Fire Protection and Emergency Services: Mutual aid agreements with neighboring municipalities and Okaloosa County have ensured effective fire and emergency response. Coordination with Hurlburt Field enhances readiness and response capabilities for incidents affecting both civilian and military areas.

Infrastructure and Development: Interlocal agreements, such as those related to local option gas tax revenues and waterfront property development, have demonstrated consistent success in supporting infrastructure and planning efforts. These mechanisms promote shared investment in public improvements.



Adjacent Jurisdictions: Coordination with neighboring municipalities and Okaloosa County has been effective in managing shared challenges, including transportation and stormwater management. Continued collaboration will be critical as growth occurs along shared boundaries.

The City's intergovernmental coordination mechanisms have historically supported efficient service delivery and effective planning. These mechanisms will remain vital as Mary Esther continues to grow, ensuring that the City addresses regional challenges and maintains a high quality of life for its residents.

Specific Problems, Needs, and Resolution

The following sections outline areas where intergovernmental coordination in Mary Esther requires additional focus, as identified in the elements of the City's Comprehensive Plan. These efforts aim to address shared challenges and ensure efficient service delivery while promoting growth and sustainability.

Future Land Use: Maintaining effective intergovernmental coordination is essential for land use consistency and development approvals. The City of Mary Esther works closely with Okaloosa County and neighboring municipalities to align development decisions with regional plans. Coordination with military installations, particularly Hurlburt Field, is critical to ensure that land use decisions remain compatible with military operations. Mechanisms such as the Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) and Military Installation Resilience Review (MIRR) provide frameworks for resolving conflicts and promoting sustainable development near military bases.

Transportation: Intergovernmental coordination is essential to address the City's traffic circulation needs. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has primary responsibility for state roadways, while the City collaborates with Okaloosa County and regional partners to improve local road networks. Preserving and protecting rights-of-way for future roadway improvements remains a priority, as escalating land values and acquisition costs make proactive planning vital. Coordination with FDOT on transportation improvement plans ensures that local and regional projects are aligned, maximizing efficiency and funding opportunities.

Infrastructure: Mary Esther collaborates with Okaloosa County and regional utility providers to ensure public services are extended to meet current and future needs. Monitoring development trends through permitting processes allows the City to identify areas requiring infrastructure expansion. Interlocal agreements, such as those for wastewater management and stormwater systems, help address shared challenges and improve service delivery.



Recreation: Existing recreational planning and facilities in Mary Esther meet the community's current and future needs with no specific problems requiring additional intergovernmental coordination. The City's collaboration with Okaloosa County and regional partners ensures that recreational services remain accessible and well-maintained.

Conservation: No significant intergovernmental coordination issues have been identified regarding conservation. However, coordination with agencies like the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and federal partners ensures that environmentally sensitive lands are protected. The City remains vigilant in addressing jurisdictional questions related to conservation areas and environmental permitting.

Housing: Housing-related intergovernmental coordination mechanisms are currently sufficient. The City continues to monitor housing needs and works with regional partners to address affordable housing initiatives as necessary.

Capital Improvements: The City of Mary Esther coordinates with Okaloosa County and regional agencies to implement the concurrency provisions outlined in the Capital Improvements Element. Ensuring adequate infrastructure to support development requires centralized oversight, managed by the City Manager's office and the Planning Department. These offices collaborate with other departments, including Public Works and Recreation, to ensure capital improvements align with the City's growth management objectives and maintain level-of-service standards.

By maintaining and strengthening these intergovernmental coordination mechanisms, Mary Esther ensures that shared challenges are addressed effectively, contributing to sustainable growth and enhanced quality of life for its residents.

Coordination Among Local Comprehensive Plans

Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, requires the Comprehensive Plan to "provide for procedures to identify and implement joint planning areas, especially for the purposes of annexation, municipal incorporation, and joint infrastructure service areas." In the City of Mary Esther, coordination with adjacent local governments and Okaloosa County is critical to ensure seamless land use planning and infrastructure development. While Mary Esther's compact geographic size minimizes the need for extensive joint planning areas, the City actively participates in regional planning efforts through coordination with the Emerald Coast Regional Council (ECRC) and neighboring municipalities.

The City also reviews amendments to the Comprehensive Plans of adjacent jurisdictions, including Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa County, to assess potential impacts on Mary Esther's development patterns and services. These reviews, conducted as part of the required



public participation process, ensure that local and regional planning efforts are aligned and mutually beneficial.

Recognition of Campus Master Plans

Chapter 163 requires the Comprehensive Plan to "provide for recognition of campus master plans prepared pursuant to s.1013.30, F.S." While no State University campuses currently exist within Mary Esther, the City will coordinate with relevant state and regional educational authorities if the development of such a campus becomes necessary. This includes the preparation of a campus development agreement as outlined in statutory requirements.

Comparison with the Strategic Regional Policy Plan

All goals, objectives, and policies in Mary Esther's Comprehensive Plan are evaluated for consistency with the Emerald Coast Regional Council's Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) and the State Comprehensive Plan. This ensures that Mary Esther's policies align with broader regional and state goals, promoting cohesive and sustainable planning across jurisdictions.

Coordination with School Board Plans

Mary Esther's Comprehensive Plan includes principles and guidelines for coordinating with the Okaloosa County School Board. These guidelines address population projections, school siting, and the provision of public educational facilities. The City participates in an interlocal agreement with the School Board, which specifies the use of the University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) mid-range population projections and identifies land use categories where public schools may be located. This collaboration ensures that school planning aligns with community growth and infrastructure needs.

Voluntary Dispute Resolution

Recognizing that disputes may occasionally arise between local governments over growth management issues, the City of Mary Esther supports the use of the Emerald Coast Regional Council's informal mediation process to resolve conflicts. This approach emphasizes collaboration and efficiency, ensuring that disputes are addressed constructively without resorting to more formal legal channels.

By maintaining these coordination mechanisms, the City of Mary Esther ensures consistency with state and regional requirements while fostering collaboration with local and regional partners. These efforts support sustainable growth, effective service delivery, and long-term community resilience.

Section H:
Capital Improvements Element



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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This section outlines the capital improvements planned for the City of Mary Esther to ensure the provision of essential public facilities and services. These include central water and sewer systems, stormwater management, solid waste, recreation, transportation infrastructure, and community amenities. The planned improvements are designed to maintain adequate levels of service (LOS), accommodate future growth, and support economic development while ensuring the City remains resilient and sustainable.

Infrastructure development is a critical function of local government, directly influencing community well-being, environmental quality, and economic growth. For Mary Esther, capital projects are carefully planned and documented for a five-year period, with updates made annually to reflect evolving needs and funding opportunities. While the City is smaller in scale compared to larger urban centers, its commitment to proactive planning ensures that infrastructure improvements align with the Florida Commerce’s requirements and regional priorities.

Funding Strategies for Capital Improvements

To implement its capital improvement projects, Mary Esther employs a robust and diversified funding strategy designed to balance fiscal responsibility with the maximization of investment impact. These strategies draw on local, state, and federal funding sources, as well as collaborations with regional agencies. By utilizing these varied mechanisms, the City ensures the efficient allocation of resources to meet its infrastructure and development needs.

Local Funding Sources: Mary Esther relies heavily on local funding mechanisms to support its capital improvement initiatives. These include:

- **Local Taxing Authority:** Ad Valorem Taxes authorized by the Constitution.
- **Home Rule Revenue Sources:** Comprising proprietary fees, regulatory fees, and special assessments, which provide flexibility for local government to address specific needs.
- **General Fund Allocations:** Covering a wide range of smaller capital improvement projects, such as infrastructure repairs and public facilities.
- **Utilities Fund:** Dedicated revenues from utility services are directed toward maintaining and expanding water and sewer infrastructure.
- **Sales Tax Fund:** Local discretionary sales surtaxes are allocated to fund critical projects, such as transportation improvements and public utilities.

State Funding Programs: The City also accesses funding through state-authorized revenue sources and grant programs, such as:

- **State-Authorized Revenue Sources:**
 - Shared state-imposed taxes and fees.
 - Local Discretionary Sales Surtaxes.
 - Tourist Development Taxes.
- **State-Specific Programs:**
 - **Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP):** Programs like the Clean Water State Revolving Fund Loan Program and the Small Community Wastewater Facility Grants Program provide essential support for water and sewer projects.
 - **Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (FDEO):** Offers both technical and financial assistance to local governments for capital improvement projects.

Federal Funding Sources: To further enhance its funding capacity, Mary Esther actively pursues federal grants and loan programs, including opportunities aligned with national priorities for resilience and infrastructure development. Key sources include:

- **U.S. Department of Defense (DoD):** The OLDCC Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP) and Installation Resilience Funding support projects that enhance military installation resilience and community infrastructure.
- **Federal Environmental Programs:** Various grants from federal agencies for projects addressing water quality, stormwater management, and coastal resilience.
- **State Revolving Loan Fund:** Augmented by federal contributions, this fund supports large-scale water and sewer infrastructure projects.

Collaborative and Regional Funding: The City partners with regional stakeholders to secure additional resources, leveraging shared goals to obtain funding through county allocations and cooperative programs. Examples include the use of Okaloosa County funding and bed tax allocations for tourism-related and regional infrastructure improvements.

Capital Improvement Program Funding Summary: Mary Esther's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) incorporates a variety of funding streams, ensuring the financial feasibility of both current and planned projects. Examples from the CIP include:

- Seven-point-five million dollars (\$7.5 million) funded through general, utilities, and sales tax funds, as well as water and sewer loans and state grants.
- Twenty-five-point-five million dollars (\$25.5 million) sourced from state revolving loans and state and federal grants.
- Three million dollars (\$3 million) from Okaloosa County and bed tax allocations.
- Multiple smaller projects financed by the general fund, utilities fund, and state loans, ranging from ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) to one-point-six million dollars (\$1.6 million).

By strategically combining local resources with state and federal support, Mary Esther maximizes the effectiveness of its capital improvement investments while maintaining a commitment to fiscal responsibility and community-focused development.

Private-Public Partnerships: Private-public partnerships (PPPs) play a vital role in addressing infrastructure needs while reducing the financial burden on the City. These partnerships can involve shared project costs, development incentives, or collaborative land-use agreements. PPPs offer an innovative way to attract private investment and achieve infrastructure goals while maintaining fiscal sustainability.

Capital Improvement Planning for Resilience: As Mary Esther grows, ensuring that infrastructure meets adopted LOS standards and remains resilient against environmental and development pressures is essential. Priority projects include upgrades to water and sewer systems, development of a Master Stormwater Plan, and enhancements to recreational and public facilities. Collaborative planning with regional agencies and neighboring municipalities strengthens these efforts and ensures alignment with broader infrastructure goals.

By leveraging diverse funding strategies, fostering partnerships, and maintaining a clear vision for its future, Mary Esther is well-positioned to meet current and future infrastructure needs. These efforts contribute to the City's long-term sustainability, support economic growth, and enhance the quality of life for all residents.



INVENTORY OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Table H:1 - City of Mary Esther Capital Improvements Plan

Project	Budget Year					Funding Source	Project Total
	FY 2024-2025	FY 2025-2026	FY 2026-2027	FY 2027-2028	FY 2028-2029		
New City Hall	\$3,004,491	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund and Loan	\$3,004,491
Azalea Park Neighborhood Infrastructure Improvements	\$7,493,600	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General, Utilities, and Sales Tax Funds; Water and Sewer Loans and State Grant	\$7,493,600
North Bryn Mawr Park ADA and Safety Improvements	\$30,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$30,000
Elliott Park ADA and Safety Improvements	\$42,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$42,000
Christobal Waterfront Park	\$3,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	Okaloosa County and Bed Tax Allocation	\$3,000,000
Ray's Pond Rehabilitation	\$1,110,200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	Sales Tax fund and State Loan	\$1,110,200



Project	Budget Year					Funding Source	Project Total
	FY 2024-2025	FY 2025-2026	FY 2026-2027	FY 2027-2028	FY 2028-2029		
Okaloosa County Sewer Force Main - Planning Phase	\$435,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	Utilities Fund and State Grant	\$435,000
Okaloosa County Sewer Force Main Engineering Phase	\$0	\$3,465,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	Sewer Loan and Other Loans	\$3,465,000
Okaloosa County Sewer Force Main - Construction	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$25,525,000	State Revolving Loan Fund, State and Federal Grants	\$25,525,000
Library HVAC Replacement	\$20,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$20,000
Spray/Squeegee Machine	\$70,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$70,000
Street Sweeper	\$230,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$230,000
Harley Rake Attachment	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$10,000
Well #1 Fence	\$15,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$15,000
High-Accuracy GIS Mapping Unit	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$10,000
Pavement Management - Area 2 (Mary Esther Manor)	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$100,000



Project	Budget Year					Funding Source	Project Total
	FY 2024-2025	FY 2025-2026	FY 2026-2027	FY 2027-2028	FY 2028-2029		
Pavement Management - Area 4 (Bryn Mawr)	\$0	\$175,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$175,000
Pavement Management - Area 1 (Springdale, Oak Tree, and Scottsdale)	\$0	\$0	\$150,000	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$150,000
Pavement Management - Area 3 (Azalea, Brewer, E. Highway 98)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$400,000	\$0	General Fund	\$400,000
Pavement Management - Area 5 (Christobal, Andalusia, S. Highway 98)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$150,000	General Fund	\$150,000
Sidewalk Improvements	\$10,000	\$10,500	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	General Fund	\$50,500
Water Distribution Improvements	\$83,000	\$88,400	\$94,070	\$98,024	\$75,000	Utilities Fund	\$438,494
Sewer Collections Improvements	\$131,000	231,000	\$210,000	\$220,500	\$231,525	Utilities Fund	\$1,024,025
Northwest Stormwater Ditch	\$0	\$1,644,700	\$0	\$0	\$0	Sales Tax Fund	\$1,644,700

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS



Project	Budget Year					Funding Source	Project Total
	FY 2024-2025	FY 2025-2026	FY 2026-2027	FY 2027-2028	FY 2028-2029		
Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI)	\$0	\$650,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	Water Loan	\$650,000
Mary Esther Boulevard Beautification	\$0	\$216,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$216,000
Public Works Roof Replacement	\$0	\$120,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$120,000
Oak Tree Nature Park Rehabilitation	\$0	\$180,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$180,000
Community Facilities Beautification	\$0	\$157,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$157,000
Highway 98 Water Main Replacement	\$0	\$5,193,983	\$0	\$0	\$0	State Grant	\$5,193,983
Vehicle Replacement	\$0	\$60,000	\$125,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	General Fund	\$285,000
Waterfront Park Development	\$0	\$0	\$20,000	\$0	\$0	General Fund	\$20,000
Oak Tree Park Neighborhood Infrastructure Improvements	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,364,618	\$0	Sales Tax Fund, Water and Sewer Loans	\$5,364,618
Funding Total	\$15,794,291	\$12,191,583	\$609,070	\$6,143,142	\$26,041,525	N/A	\$60,779,611

Data Source: City of Mary Esther
Date Prepared: 11/2024

Table H:2 provides the capital projects from the FDOT District 3 Five Year Work Plan within the City of Mary Esther.

Table H:2 - FDOT District 3 Adopted 5-Year Work Program, FY 2025-2029 - Projects in Mary Esther

Item No	Project Description	Work Description	Length (Miles)	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Highways: State Highways								
4373661	SR 30 (US 98) FROM W OF JOSIE RD TO W OF BROOKS BRIDGE	RESURFACING	7.047	\$2,074 CST	-	-	-	-
4437442	SR 393 MARY ESTHER BOULEVARD FROM SR 30 (US 98) TO SR 189 BEAL PKWY	RESURFACING	1.833	\$765 CST	-	-	-	-
Data Source: FDOT 5-Year Work Program Date Prepared: 11/2024								

Notes: ROW = Right of Way, PE = Preliminary Engineering, CST = Construction, OPS = Operations
\$ amounts are in thousands

OPPORTUNITIES AND NEEDS

The City of Mary Esther continues to make strides in addressing its infrastructure and community development needs, with several opportunities on the horizon to enhance public services and facilities.

Sewer System Upgrades and Planning

The City has made significant progress in addressing its sewer infrastructure through phased investments in the Okaloosa County Sewer Force Main project. With planning and engineering phases underway, the next major step involves securing construction funding to ensure the project remains on track. These upgrades will support long-term sustainability and resilience for Mary Esther’s wastewater management system, benefiting both residents and nearby military installations.

Stormwater Management Planning

A critical unmet need is the development of a comprehensive Master Stormwater Plan for the City. As urban growth continues, enhanced stormwater management strategies are essential to reduce flooding risks and ensure compliance with environmental standards. This plan would provide detailed guidance on stormwater facility construction requirements, particularly in coordination with private developments. The City must prioritize securing state and federal funding to initiate this effort during the planning period.

Parks and Recreation Improvements

Mary Esther has identified numerous opportunities to enhance its parks and recreational facilities, including ADA and safety improvements at North Bryn Mawr and Elliott Parks, as well as the development of Christobal Waterfront Park. These initiatives reflect the City's commitment to accessibility and quality-of-life improvements. Additional funding opportunities, such as tourism-related grants, should be explored to expand and sustain these efforts.

Water System Upgrades

The City is actively pursuing water infrastructure improvements, including the U.S. Highway 98 Water Main Replacement and the implementation of Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI). These projects represent essential upgrades to ensure system reliability and

efficiency. Continued collaboration with state and federal agencies will be crucial for funding these initiatives.

Disaster Recovery and Resilience

Although the City has not faced recent major hurricanes, resilience planning remains a key need. Strengthening partnerships with FEMA and state agencies will position Mary Esther to respond effectively to future emergencies. Investments in stormwater and utility infrastructure will further enhance the City's overall resilience.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

As the City of Mary Esther advances its capital improvement projects, collaboration with regional and state stakeholders will be essential to ensure efficient planning and resource allocation. The following are key considerations for the City.

Coordination of Regional Infrastructure Projects

The City will continue to engage in discussions with Okaloosa County and nearby municipalities, particularly regarding linkages between shared infrastructure systems such as sewer and water facilities. Ongoing collaboration with regional partners will help streamline planning and avoid redundancies in infrastructure investments.

Regular Engagement with Stakeholders

Mary Esther will establish a schedule for bi-annual meetings between City officials and representatives from neighboring municipalities, state agencies, and regional planning organizations. These meetings will provide a forum to discuss upcoming capital projects, share best practices, and identify opportunities for joint funding applications.

Transparency in Capital Planning

While the City maintains a five-year capital improvement program, it will ensure that details of annual budgets and updates to major projects are shared with the Florida Department of Commerce Division of Community Planning. This transparency supports compliance with state requirements and enhances opportunities for grant funding.

Alignment with Regional and State Goals

The City will actively seek to align its capital improvement priorities with broader regional and state infrastructure goals, such as resilience planning, water quality improvement, and transportation enhancements. Collaboration with agencies such as the Northwest Florida Water Management District and the Florida Department of Transportation will be critical.

By focusing on coordinated planning, regular stakeholder engagement, and transparent communication, Mary Esther can efficiently implement its capital improvement initiatives while strengthening regional partnerships and maximizing funding opportunities.

Section I: Public School Facilities Element



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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Public School Facilities Element ensures that the City and the Okaloosa County School District maintain coordination and consistency in their planning efforts. Although Mary Esther has only two public schools located within City limits, Mary Esther Elementary School and a portion Fort Walton Beach High School (see **Map I-1**), this Element addresses the need for collaboration on land use and facility planning to meet current and future needs of the wider community across grade levels.

Data Inventory

The Public School Facilities Element is based on a robust collection of data and analysis designed to inform the Element’s goals, objectives, and policies. This data includes demographic trends, school capacity, and infrastructure needs, along with legal and regional frameworks for planning coordination.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

Chapter 163.3177, Florida Statutes: The statutory requirement for public school facilities planning ensures coordination between local governments and school districts. This law mandates procedures for joint planning and shared responsibilities, which are reflected in the City’s Interlocal Agreement with the Okaloosa County School Board.

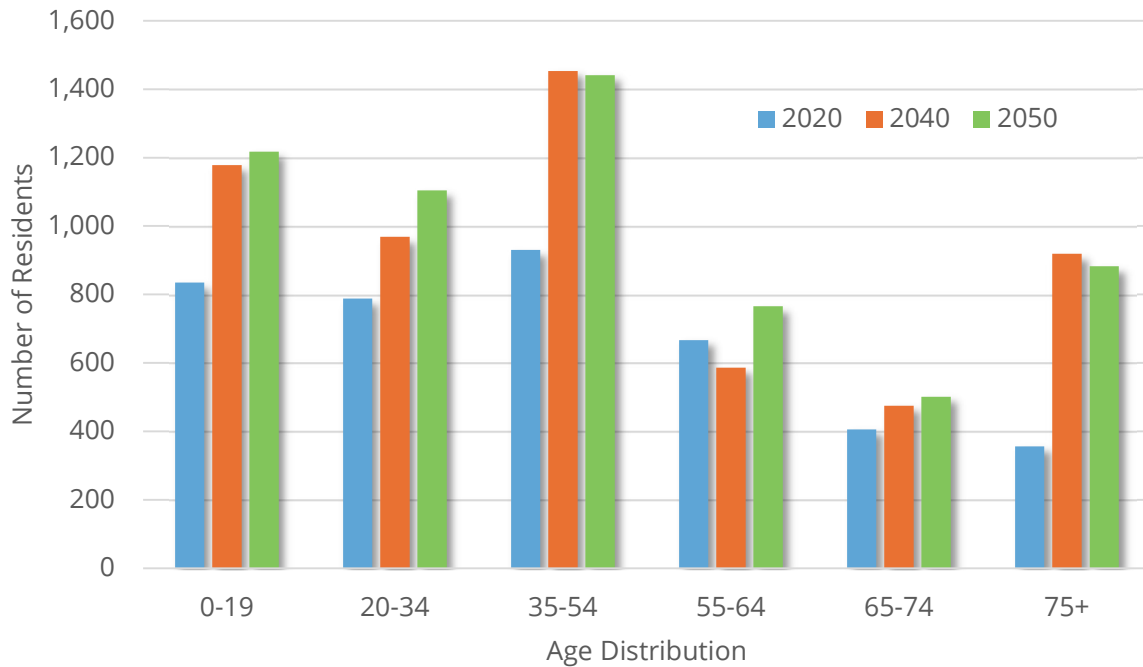
Chapter 1013.33, Florida Statutes: This statute governs public school facility concurrency, requiring local governments to ensure adequate school capacity is available to support proposed developments.

City of Mary Esther Ordinances: The City of Mary Esther restricts conflicting development around schools. Sec. 3-3 and Sec. 13.5-2 of the City’s ordinances establish minimum distances from schools are provided for alcoholic beverage sales and medical marijuana treatment centers.

School Capacity and Demographics: Mary Esther Elementary School and Fort Walton Beach High School, within the City limits, serve the local population with sufficient capacity for current enrollment levels. While no additional schools are planned during the foreseeable future, the City must coordinate with the School District to ensure that any changes in population or development are reflected in updated capacity analyses and infrastructure planning.

Overall, as shown in **Figure I-1**, the school age population is expected to grow during the planning period considered in this document.

Figure I:1 - Age Distribution, 2020, 2040, and 2050



*Data Source: Estimates and projections by Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, based on 2010 and 2020 U.S. Census data and population projections by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, UF
Date Prepared: 11/2024*

Schools Serving the Residents of Mary Esther: In addition to Mary Esther Elementary School and Fort Walton Beach High School, residents of the City of Mary Esther are also served by Annette P. Edwins Elementary School and Max Brunner Junior Middle School. Silver Sands School and Okaloosa Academy, a public charter school, also serve the area.

Interlocal Agreement for Public School Facility Planning: An Interlocal Agreement between the City and the Okaloosa County School Board was first adopted in 2003 and updated in 2008. The agreement provides the framework for collaborative planning and coordination among the Okaloosa County School Board, Okaloosa County, and all local municipalities.

The agreement aims to ensure that adequate school capacity is available to meet adopted Level of Service (LOS) standards, set at one hundred percent (100%) of Department of Education (DOE) permanent capacity for all school types. The agreement mandates school concurrency, requiring residential developments to align with available school capacity and, if necessary, contribute a proportionate fair share to address capacity needs. Coordination between the County, municipalities, and the School Board is central to this effort, with joint meetings and annual updates to the Board's Five-Year Capital Facilities Plan. School siting

decisions prioritize compatibility with local comprehensive plans and opportunities for co-location with other public facilities to support community development.

Infrastructure and Transportation Data: The City has a network of sidewalks and trails that provide safe access to Mary Esther Elementary School, consistent with Florida’s Safe Routes to School program. Additional data on transportation infrastructure is incorporated into long-range planning through the Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization (TPO).

Through the Vision Plan public engagement process, the citizens of Mary Esther identified relocating the driveway for Mary Esther Elementary from the Miracle Strip to Hollywood Boulevard, with a generous carpool queuing lane, as a priority. This would alleviate congestion at pick-up and drop-off times and would improve safety for children accessing the school.

Currently, cars queue along U.S. Highway 98, temporarily eliminating one of the eastbound lanes and causing traffic slowdowns during rush hour periods and potentially dangerous conditions for children. The potential new entry/exit shown in **Figure I-2** faces some challenges due to wetlands.

Additionally, the City of Mary Esther aims to connect Mary Esther Elementary School with Oak Tree Nature Park by a greenway.

Figure I:2 - Mary Esther Elementary School Potential Entry/Exit



OPPORTUNITIES AND NEEDS

This analysis evaluates the effectiveness of the City's coordination with the Okaloosa County School Board and the broader implications of school facilities planning on land use, transportation, and community development. It identifies areas of strength, challenges, and opportunities for enhancement.

The City's compliance with statutory requirements reflects a strong commitment to ensuring that school facilities are planned in tandem with local land use and development policies. By participating in joint planning efforts with the School Board, the City aligns its Comprehensive Plan with the District's Education Plant Survey and Five-Year District Facilities Work Plan. This ensures consistency in addressing both current and long-term needs for school capacity, infrastructure, and funding.

Despite its strengths, the City faces challenges in balancing the demands of residential development with the need to maintain adequate school capacity. Policies requiring school concurrency help manage these demands, but close coordination with the School Board remains essential to avoid delays or conflicts in approving new developments. The City's proactive approach to school concurrency ensures that residential growth does not outpace the ability to provide necessary educational services.

Transportation and infrastructure planning are critical areas of coordination. The City's commitment to safe access to Mary Esther Elementary School, supported by the Safe Routes to School program, highlights its dedication to student safety. Ongoing collaboration with the Okaloosa-Walton TPO ensures that transportation improvements align with broader regional goals, enhancing access and connectivity.

Opportunities for enhancement include the creation of a new entry/exit for Mary Esther Elementary School and expanding the shared use of school properties for public recreation. These measures can reduce costs, improve community engagement, and maximize the utility of existing resources. Additionally, the City and the School Board could explore the feasibility of implementing school impact fees to address the costs of future development on educational infrastructure.

Finally, the City's evaluation mechanisms, including annual reviews of this Element, ensure that its goals and policies remain relevant and effective. This continuous improvement process supports best practices in joint planning and coordination, fostering a strong partnership between the City and the School Board.

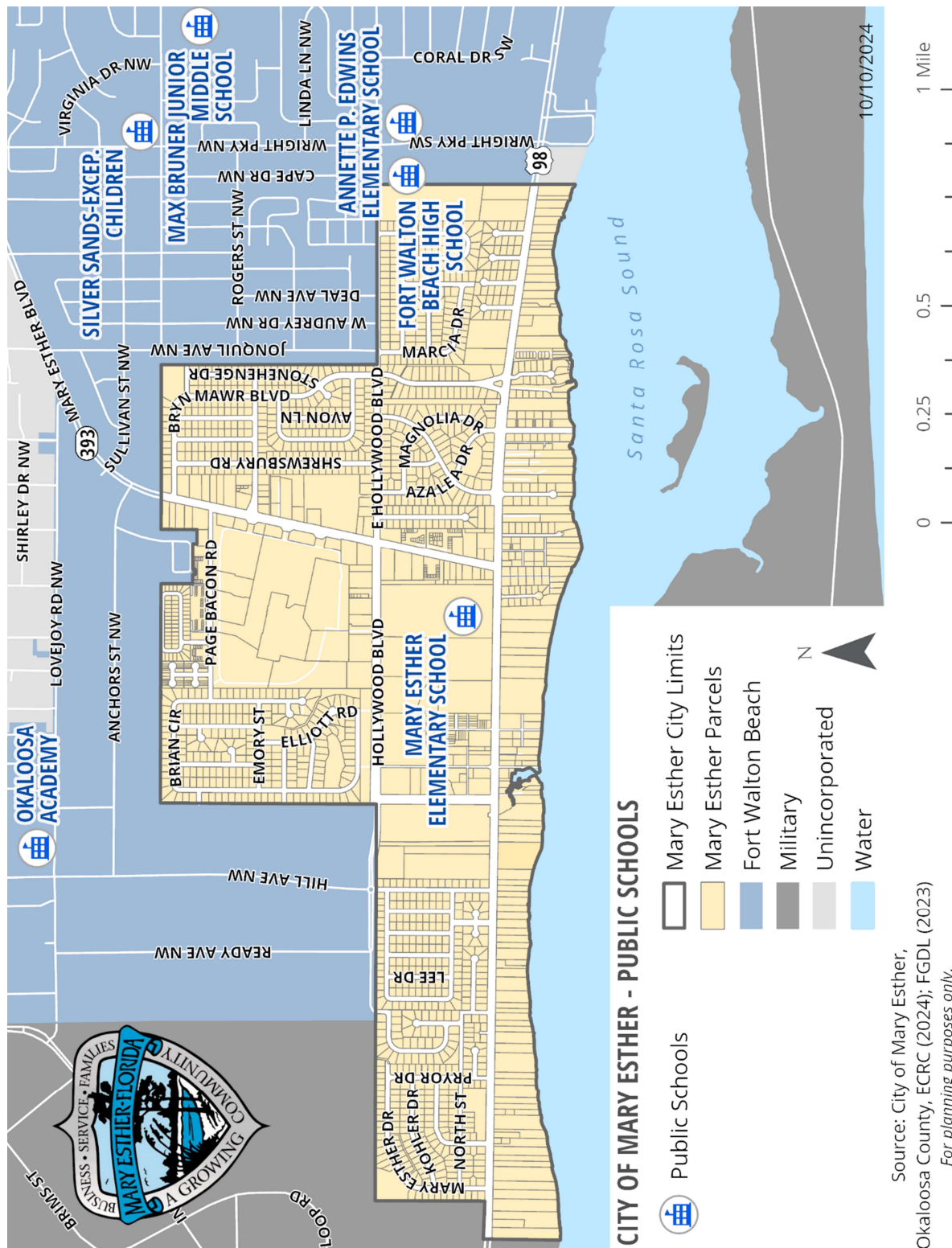
PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The Public School Facilities Element provides a comprehensive framework for aligning the City's planning efforts with the needs of Mary Esther Elementary School and the Okaloosa County School District. By integrating data on school capacity, infrastructure, and transportation with robust interlocal coordination mechanisms, the Element ensures that educational facilities remain accessible, efficient, and aligned with community goals.

Through collaboration, proactive planning, and a commitment to continuous improvement, the City of Mary Esther is well-positioned to address the challenges and opportunities of public school facilities planning. This Element strengthens the City's ability to support high-quality education while promoting sustainable growth and community development.



Map I:1 - Public Schools



Source: City of Mary Esther, Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024); FGDL (2023)
For planning purposes only.

Section J: Property Rights Element



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- DATA INVENTORY 2**
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- ANALYSIS 3**
 - Consistency with State Requirements 3
 - Integration with Existing Policies..... 4
 - Opportunities for Enhancement..... 4
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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Property Rights Element of the City of Mary Esther’s Comprehensive Plan is designed to integrate property rights considerations into the local government decision-making framework while ensuring compliance with state requirements, addressing community needs, and aligning with regional planning goals. This section presents the data inventory and contextual analysis that support the Element, as well as an evaluation of its consistency, challenges, and opportunities.

DATA INVENTORY

The foundation for the Property Rights Element is built upon legal, community, and planning data that highlights the importance of respecting property rights within the context of sustainable growth and regional compatibility.

The inclusion of the Property Rights Element complies with Chapter 163.3177, Florida Statutes, which mandates that local comprehensive plans explicitly address property rights. These rights are grounded in the U.S. Constitution and the Florida Constitution, which provide robust protections for private property ownership. Additionally, judicial precedents affirm the importance of property rights and guide their application in land use and planning decisions.

Mary Esther’s compact urban environment and largely developed character create specific dynamics for property rights considerations. With limited undeveloped land available, the City’s planning efforts often focus on redevelopment and maximizing the efficient use of existing parcels. Land use patterns feature established residential neighborhoods and commercial corridors along U.S. Highway 98, while the proximity to Hurlburt Field introduces unique zoning and development constraints. These factors require a balanced approach to protect property rights while accommodating the needs of the broader community. Through the public workshop and stakeholder meetings, residents and elected officials had the opportunity to discuss the protection of property rights, transparency in decision-making, and thoughtful growth management.

Existing Mechanisms for Public Participation

The public notice procedures currently outlined in the City of Mary Esther's ordinances establish a framework to ensure transparency and citizen participation in various planning and zoning matters. The ordinances outline specific requirements for notifying affected parties and the general public about hearings, meetings, and workshops that address rezonings, variances, and other land development or planning initiatives.

For rezonings and variance requests, the City requires multiple forms of notification. Sections 21-17 and 21-18 specify that the applicant must notify all property owners within a three hundred-foot (300') radius of the property. Additionally, the applicant must post signs on the affected property at least fourteen days before the hearing, displaying the nature of the rezoning, the current and proposed uses, and the time, date, and location of the public hearing. The ordinances also mandate advertising twice in a local newspaper of general circulation, with the first notice appearing at least fourteen days before the hearing and the second by five days prior. These steps ensure that both the immediate stakeholders and the broader community are informed.

Public participation in the comprehensive planning process is governed by Section 17-45, which applies to adoption and amendment of comprehensive plans, developing land use regulations, and related matters. For these hearings, the City also advertises twice in a newspaper, providing information about the hearing, meeting, or workshop and instructions on how the public can access relevant documents and participate through written or verbal comments. Notices must be posted in a conspicuous location at City Hall at least seven days prior to the event, and registered groups, agencies, or governments must receive direct notification at least fourteen days in advance. The code also encourages broader media engagement by requiring periodic updates about matters under consideration.

Public hearings are typically held after 5:00 PM, Monday through Thursday, to accommodate citizen participation. During hearings, the City provides opportunities for public input and ensures compliance with Chapter 163 of the Florida Statutes, particularly for matters related to comprehensive planning. For rezonings and variances, the Local Planning Agency plays a significant role, holding quasi-judicial hearings and reviewing applications by the notification requirements in Sections 21-16 and 21-18. These procedures collectively ensure the public participation process and compliance with state and local laws.

ANALYSIS

This analysis evaluates how the City's Property Rights Element aligns with legal mandates, addresses community needs, and supports regional planning objectives. It also identifies potential challenges and opportunities for enhancement.

Consistency with State Requirements

The Property Rights Element complies with Chapter 163.3177, Florida Statutes, ensuring that property rights are explicitly recognized within the Comprehensive Plan. This compliance reflects the City's commitment to integrating property rights into its planning processes and aligning with statewide growth management policies.

Integration with Existing Policies

The City's established public participation and transparency measures complement the policies proposed in the Property Rights Element. These existing practices, including public hearings, stakeholder engagement, and inclusive decision-making, create a strong foundation for implementing this Element. By building on current frameworks, the City ensures seamless alignment between existing efforts and statutory requirements.

Opportunities for Enhancement

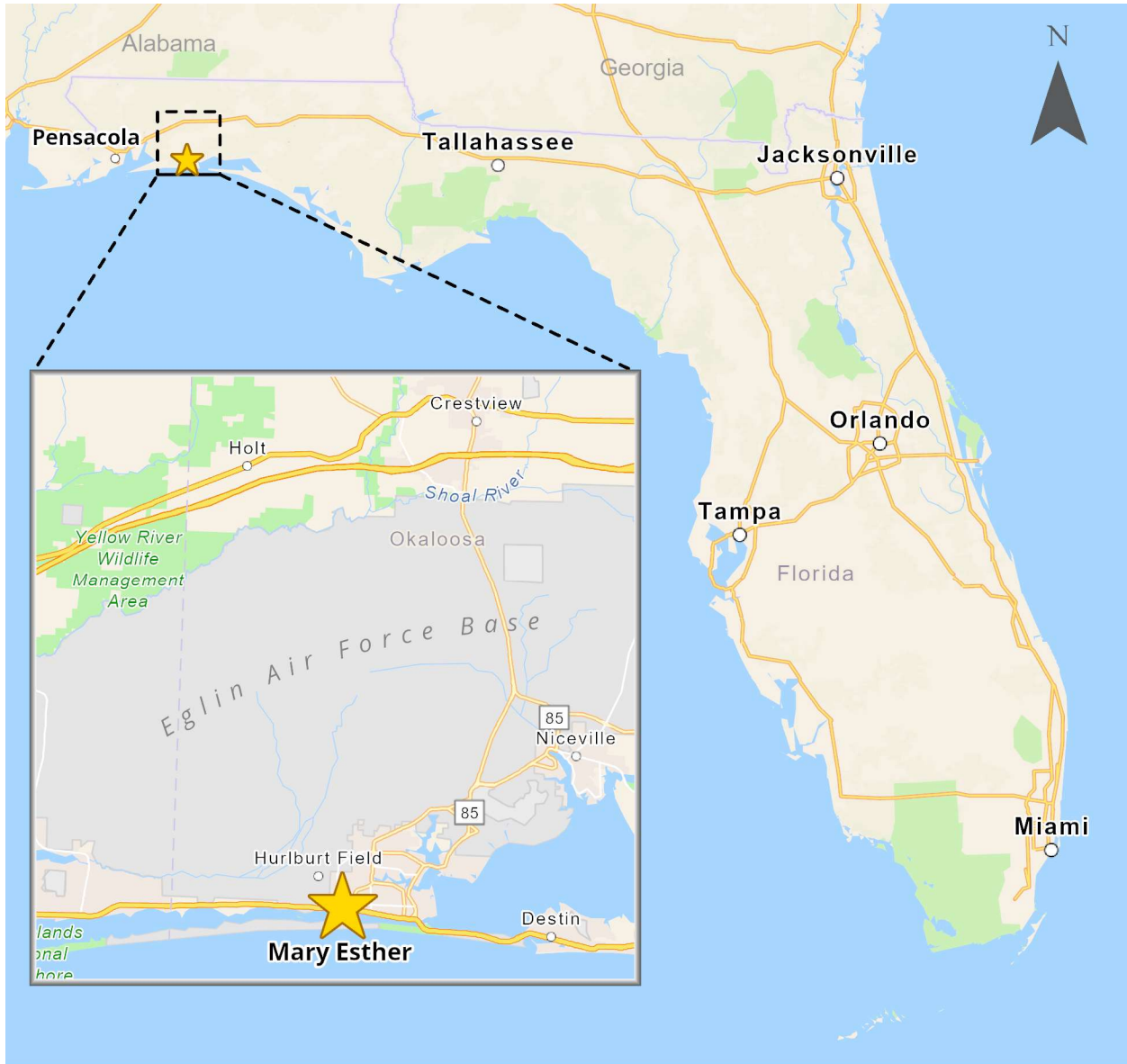
The Property Rights Element offers opportunities to enhance public engagement and decision-making processes. Expanding public notification procedures can ensure that all affected residents and stakeholders are informed of planning decisions that may impact their property rights. Educational materials about property rights and the City's policies can further build community understanding and support.

Encouraging early stakeholder involvement is another key opportunity. By engaging property owners, developers, and residents early in the planning process, the City can identify and address potential conflicts before they escalate to formal hearings. This proactive approach fosters collaboration, reduces disputes, and streamlines decision-making.

CONCLUSION

By leveraging a strong legal framework, integrating with existing policies, and addressing potential challenges, the City ensures that this Element provides robust protections while promoting transparency and community involvement. This approach positions the City to meet current and future challenges while maintaining a commitment to fairness and respect for property rights.

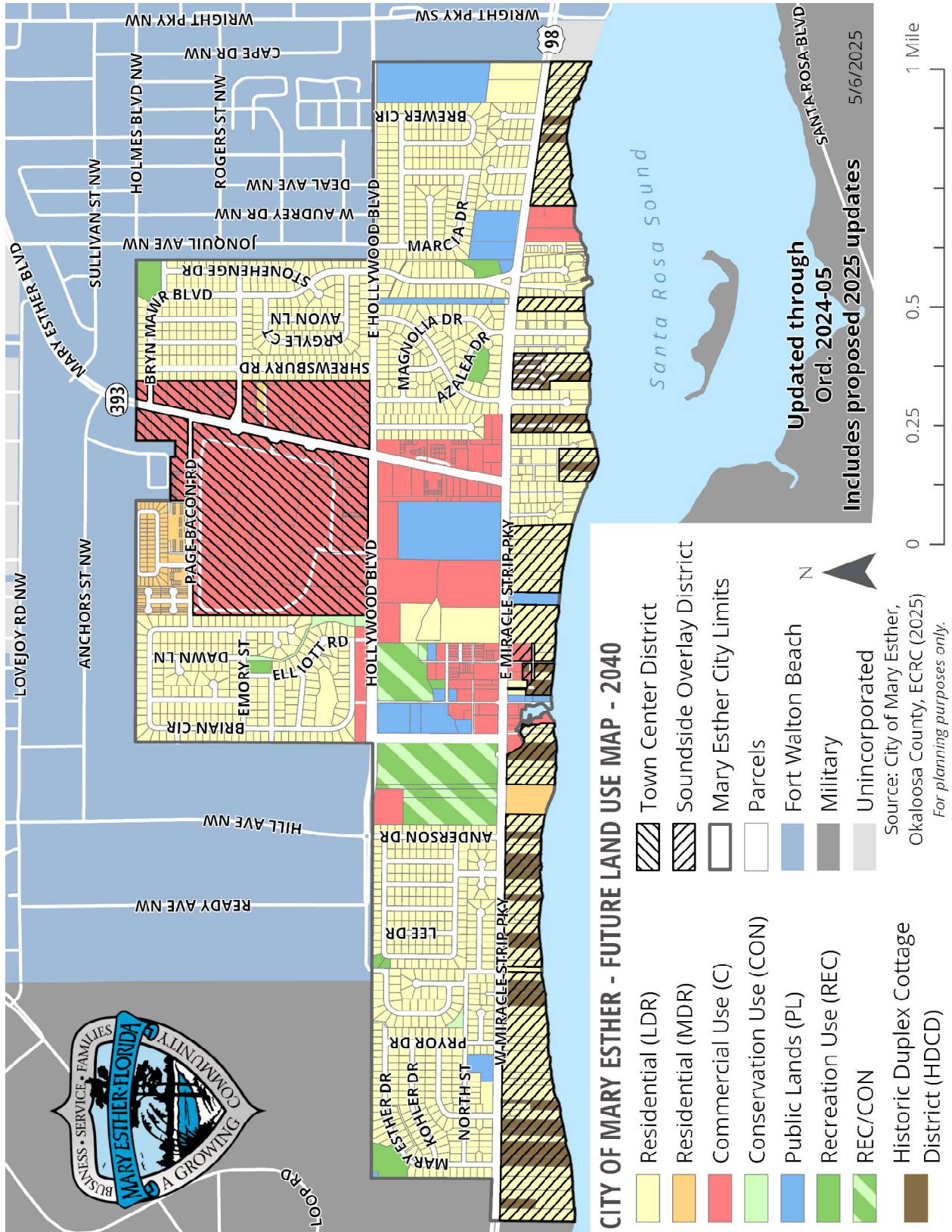
Map A:1 - City of Mary Esther - Location Map



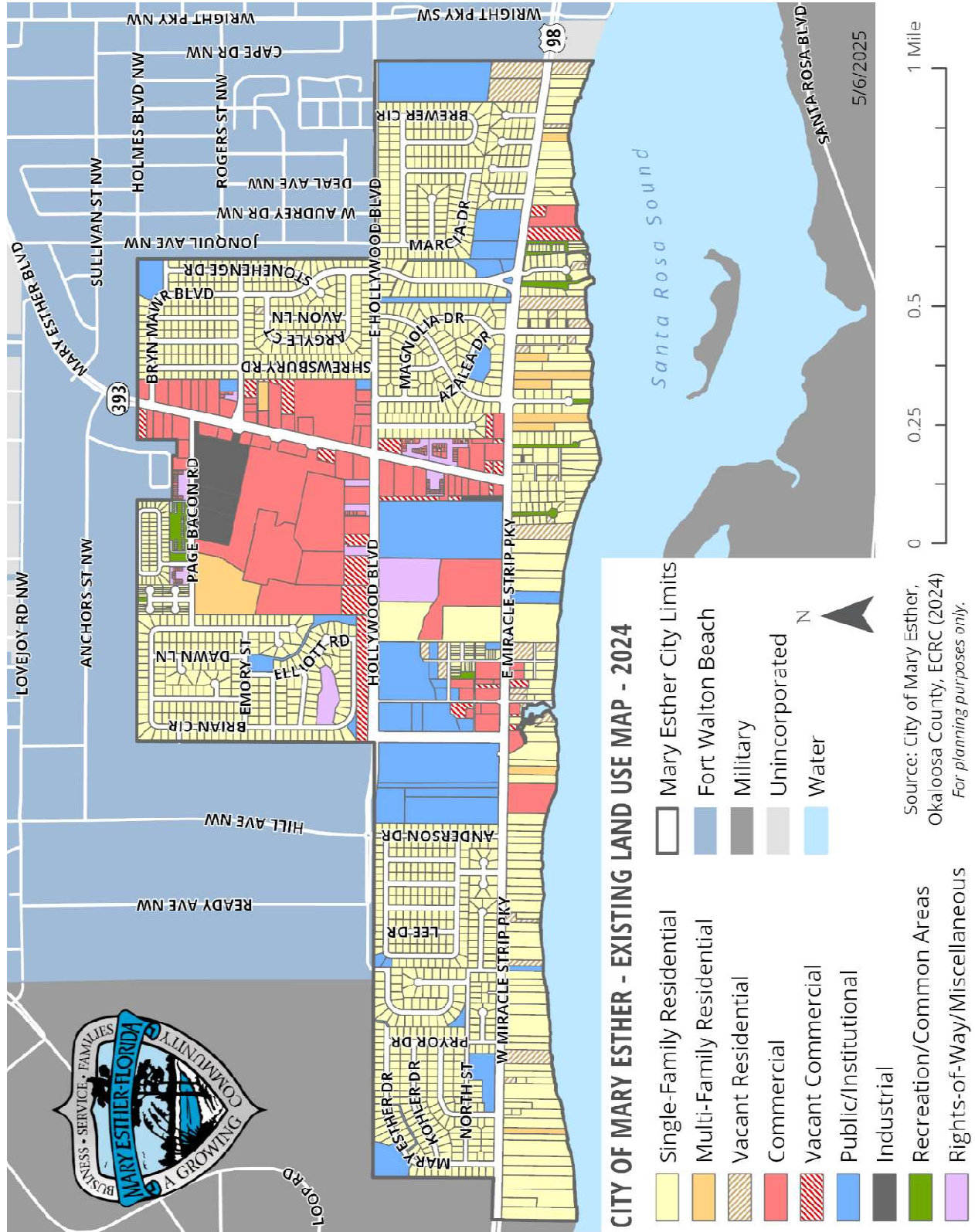
CITY OF MARY ESTHER - LOCATION MAP

Source: FDEP, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USFWS, FDEP, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA

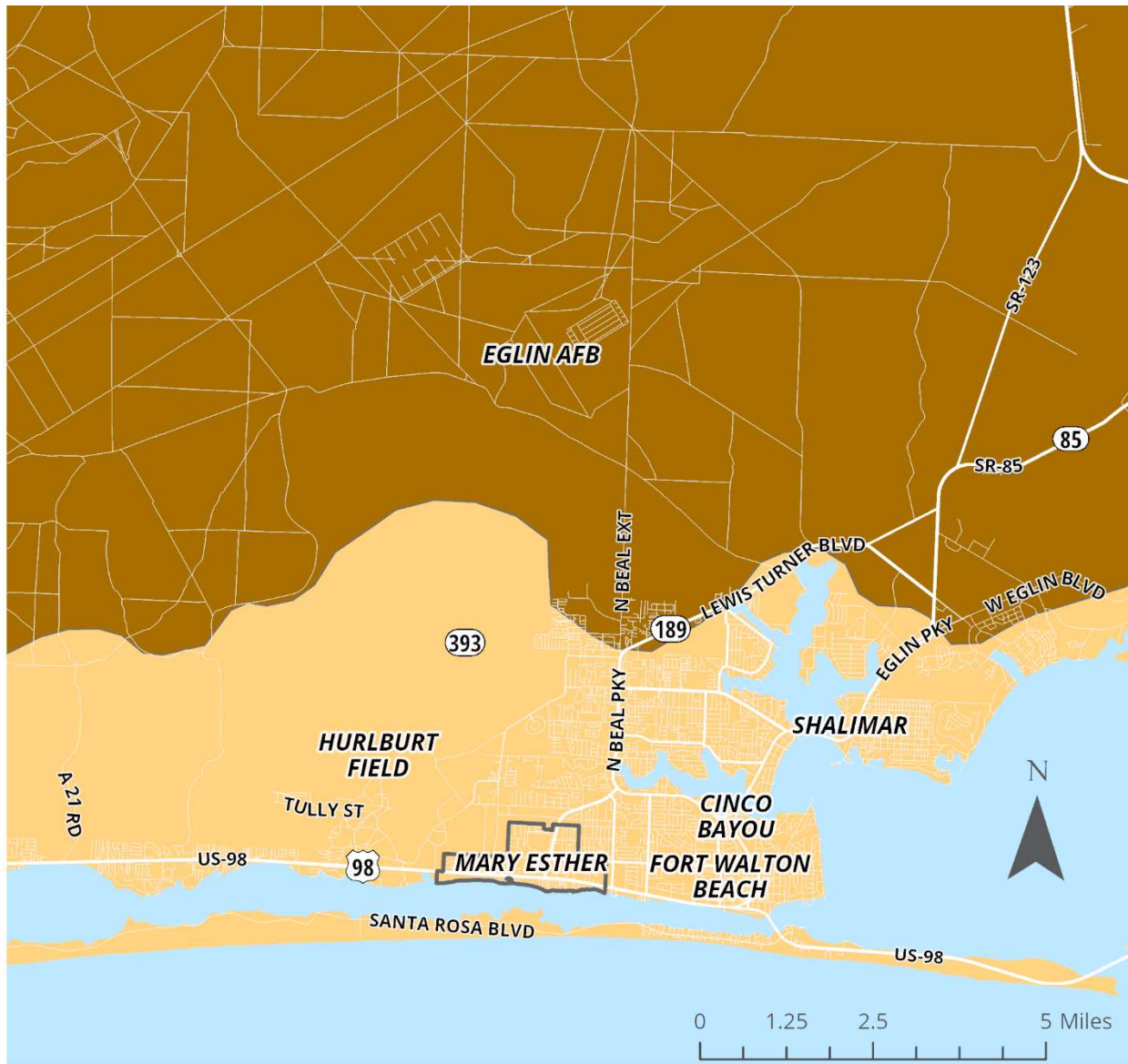
Map A:2 - City of Mary Esther - Future Land Use Map - 2040



Map A:3 - City of Mary Esther - Existing Land Use Map - 2024



Map A:4 - City of Mary Esther - Physiographic Provinces



CITY OF MARY ESTHER - PHYSIOGRAPHIC PROVINCES

- Panhandle Coastal Lowlands
- Western Highlands
- Mary Esther City Limits
- Water



Source: City of Mary Esther, Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024); FDEP (2023)

For planning purposes only.

Map A:5 - City of Mary Esther - Surficial Geology



CITY OF MARY ESTHER - SURFICIAL GEOLOGY

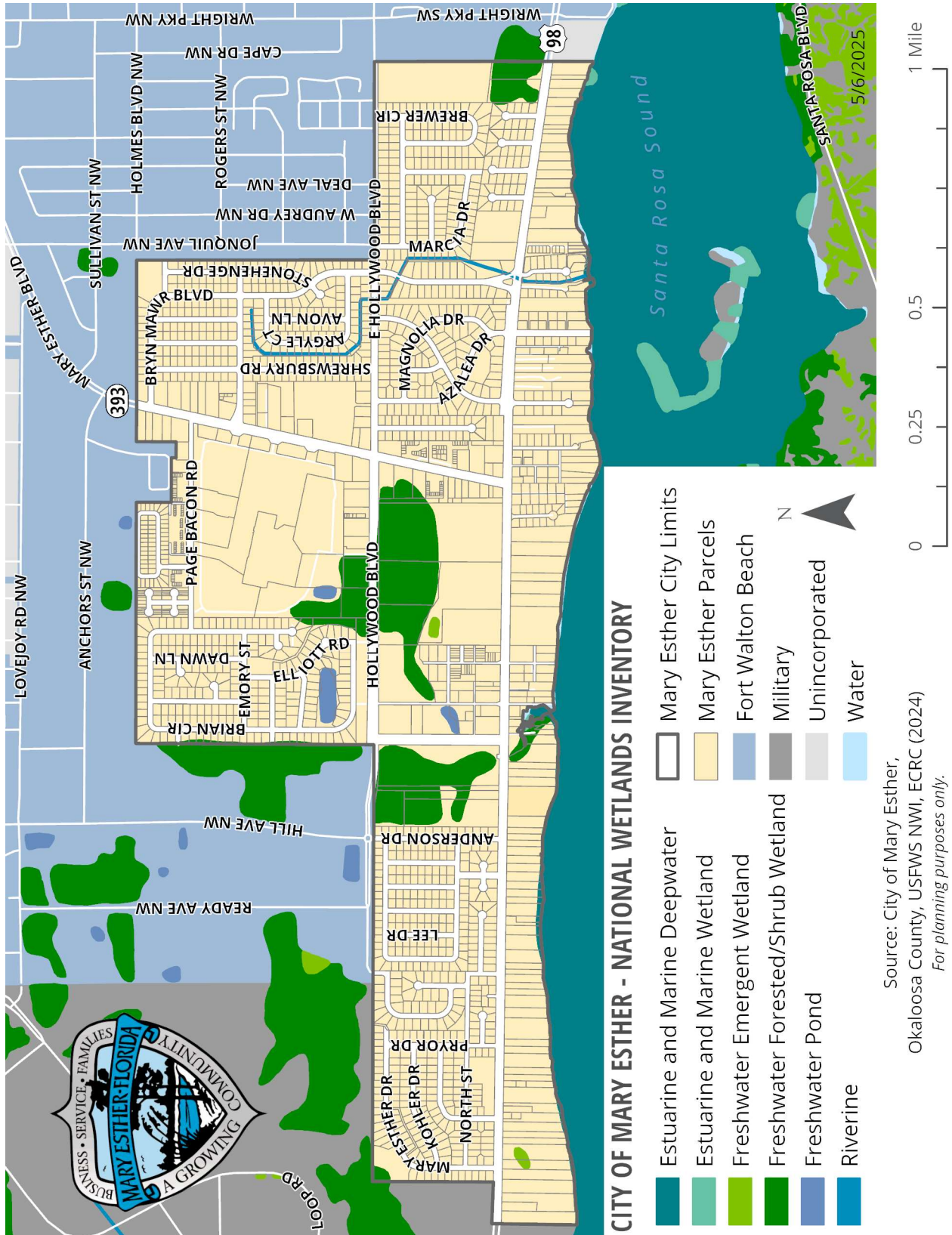
- Alluvium
- Citronelle Formation
- Holocene sediments
- Undifferentiated sediments (Pleistocene/Holocene)
- Mary Esther City Limits
- Water



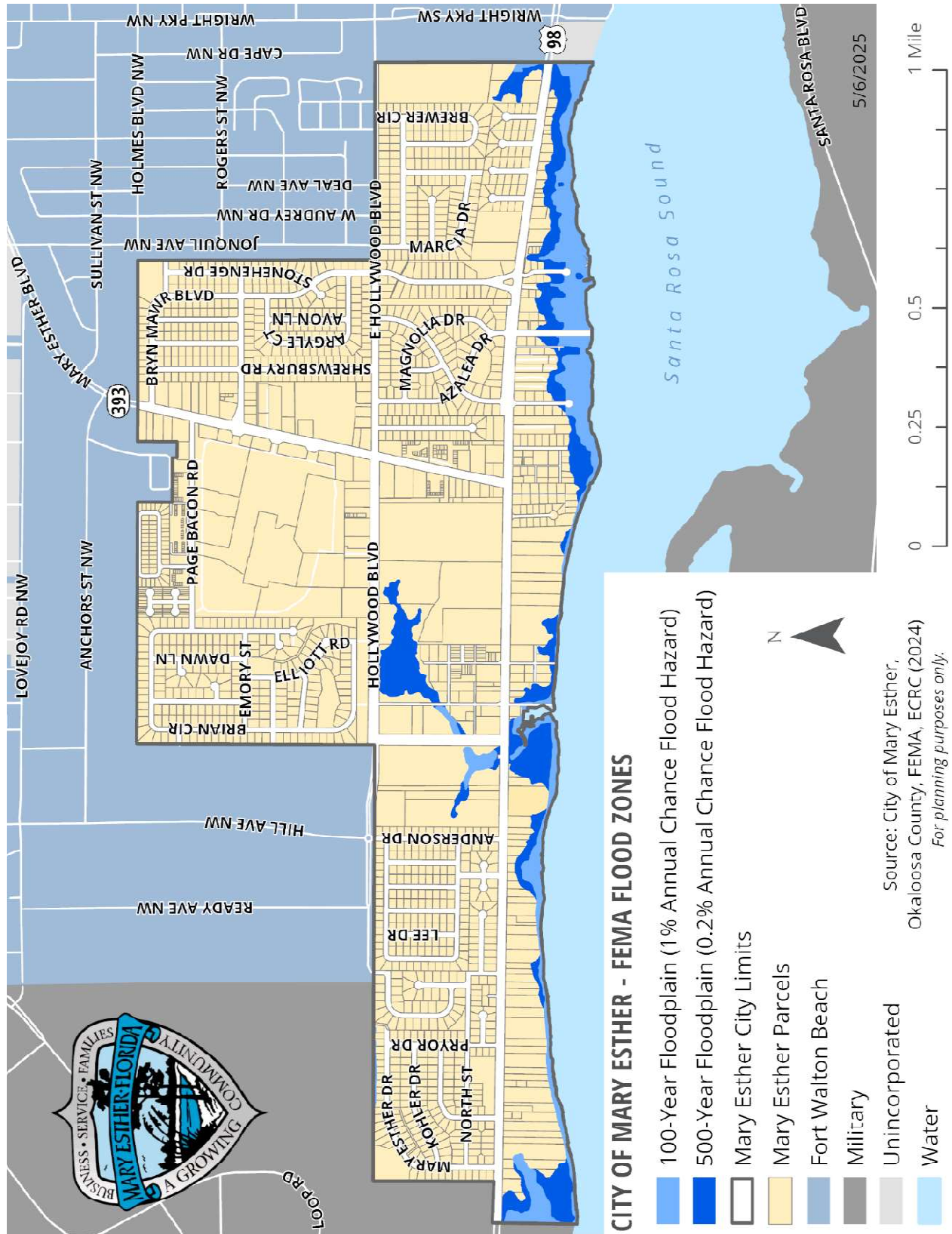
Source: City of Mary Esther, Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024); FDEP Florida Geological Survey (2022)

For planning purposes only.

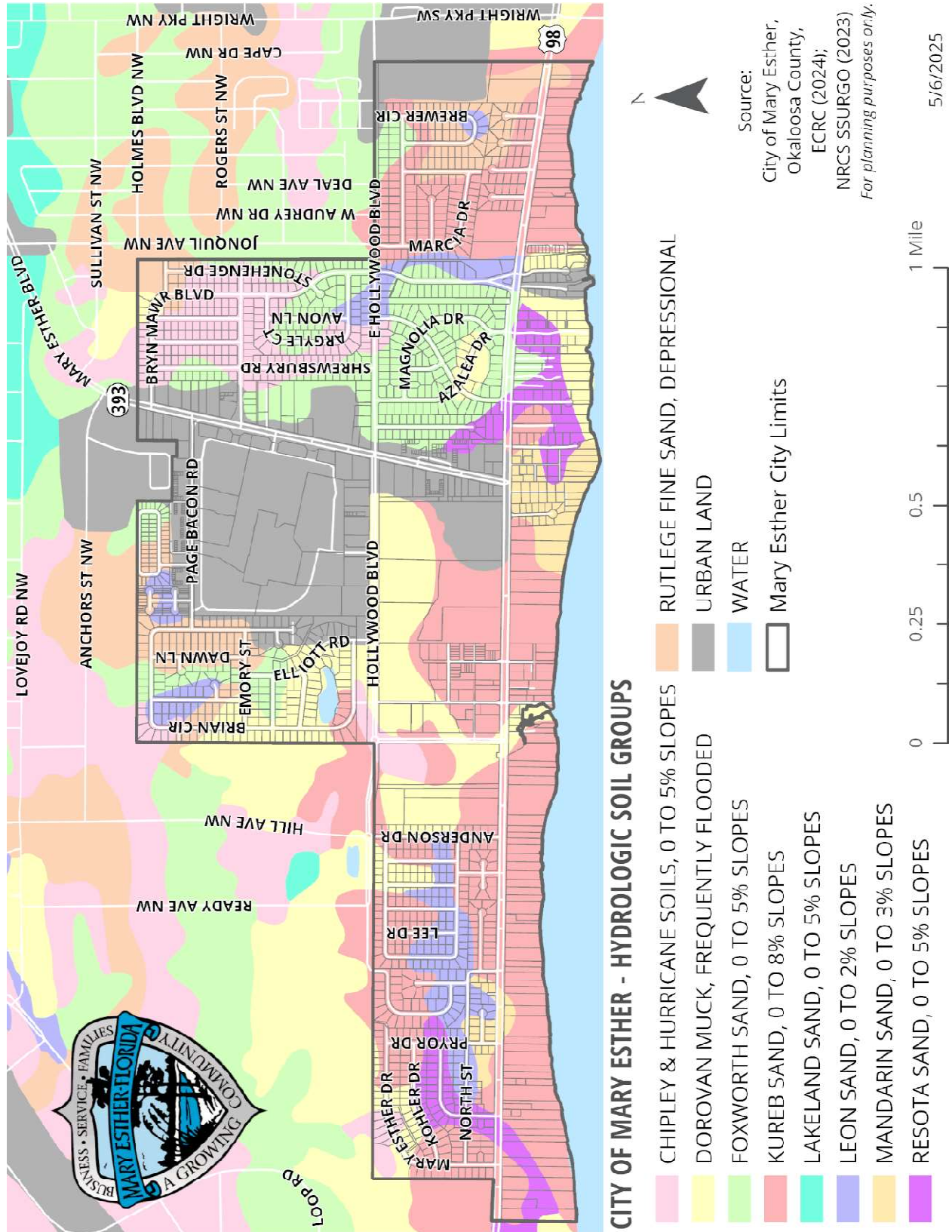
Map A:6 - City of Mary Esther - National Wetlands Inventory



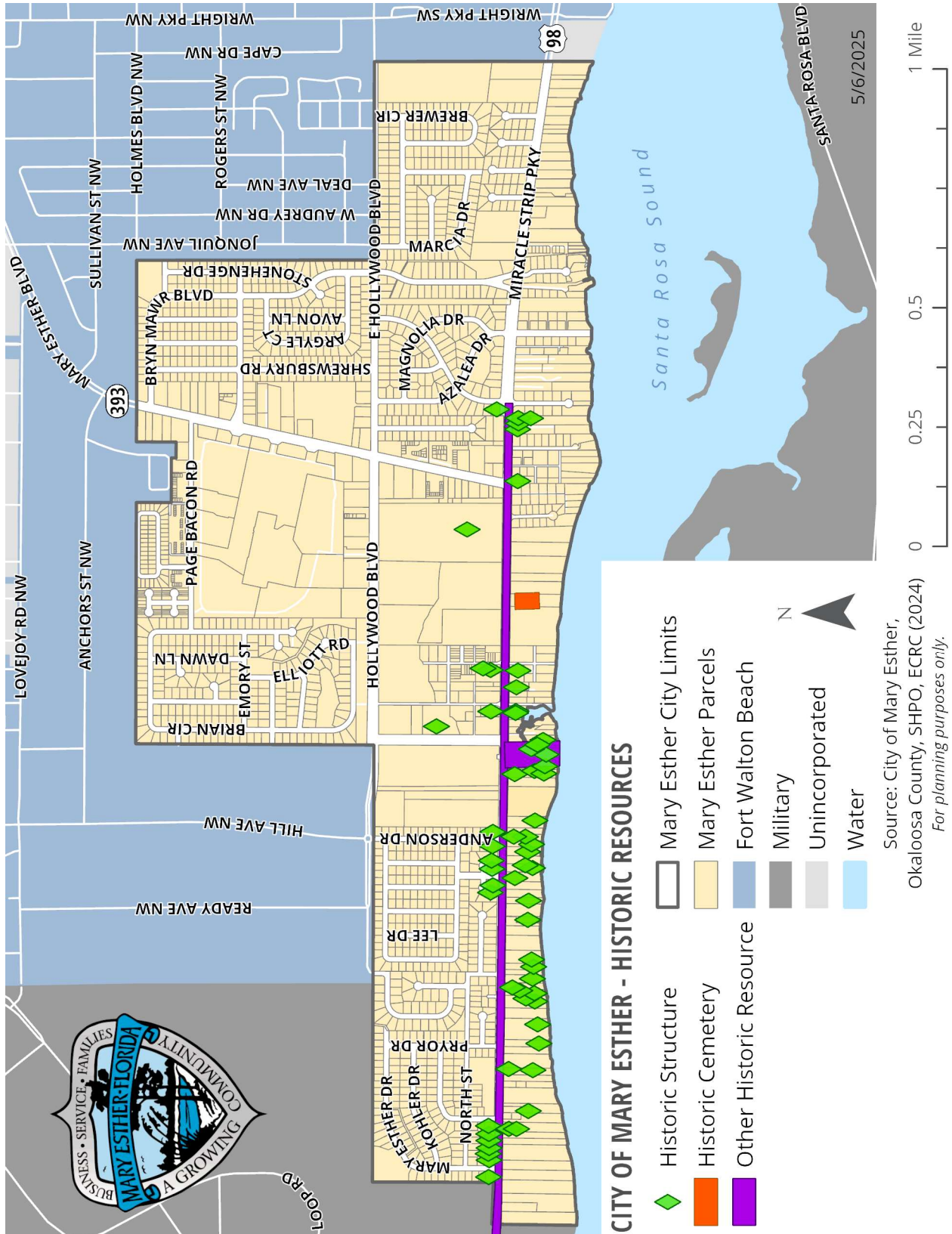
Map A:7 - City of Mary Esther - FEMA Flood Zones



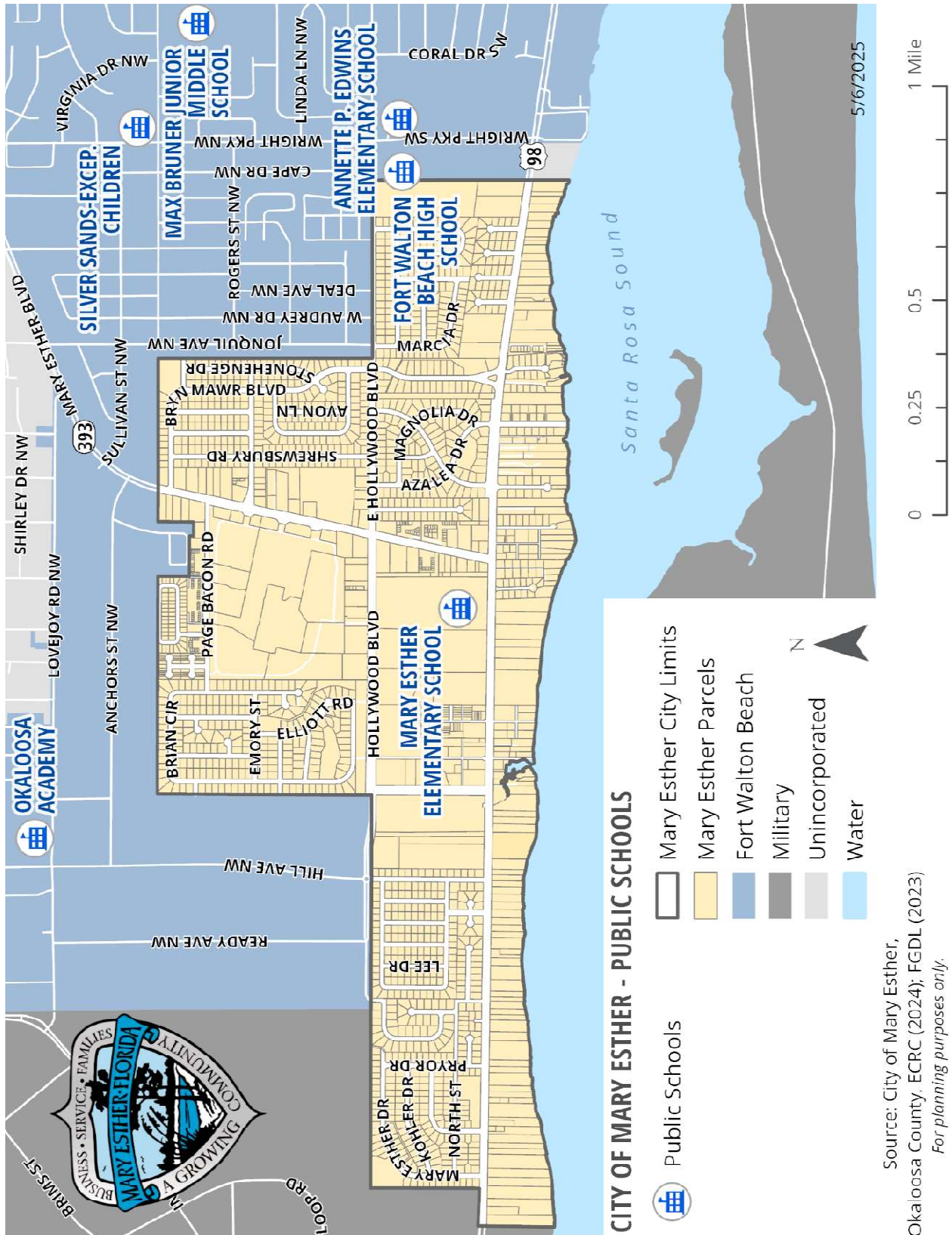
Map A:8 - City of Mary Esther - Hydrologic Soil Groups



Map A:9 - City of Mary Esther - Historic Resources



Map A:10 - City of Mary Esther - Public Schools



CITY OF MARY ESTHER - PUBLIC SCHOOLS

-  Public Schools
-  Mary Esther City Limits
-  Mary Esther Parcels
-  Fort Walton Beach
-  Military
-  Unincorporated
-  Water

Source: City of Mary Esther,
Okaloosa County. ECRC (2024); FGDL (2023)
For planning purposes only.

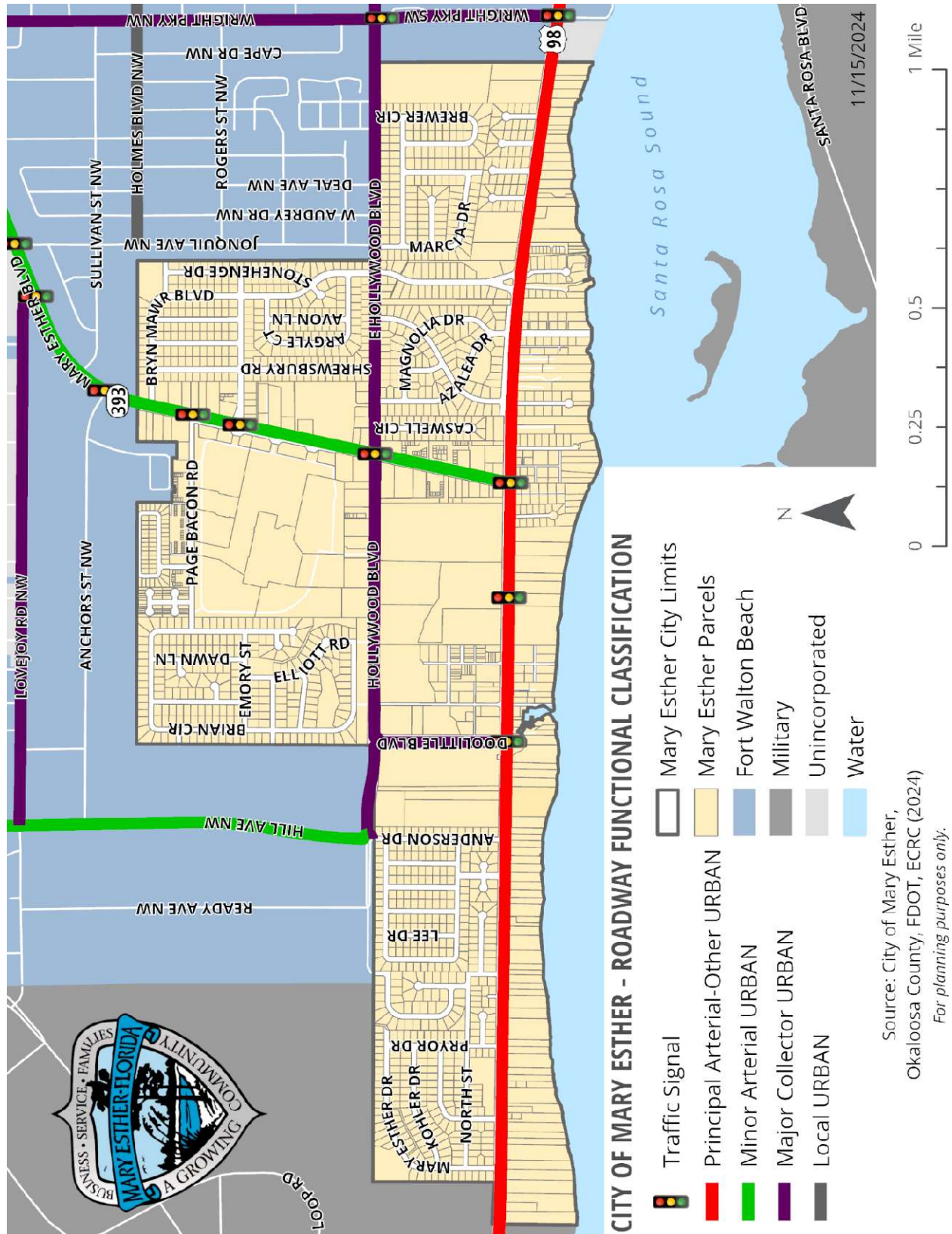
0 0.25 0.5 1 Mile

5/16/2025

Map B:1 - Roadway Maintenance Classification



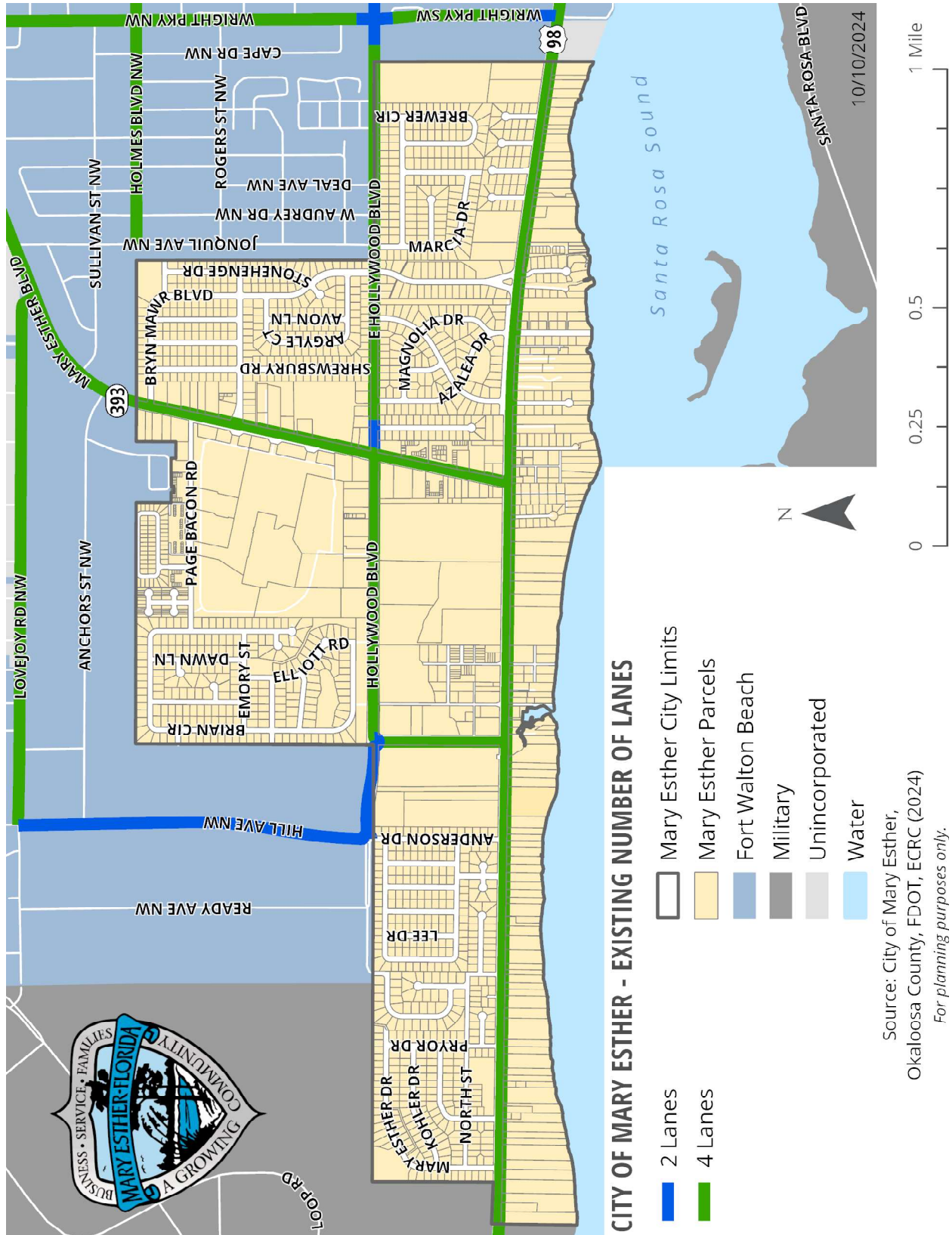
Map B:2 - Roadway Functional Classification



Map B:3 - Existing Level of Service (LOS)



Map B:4 - Existing Number of Lanes

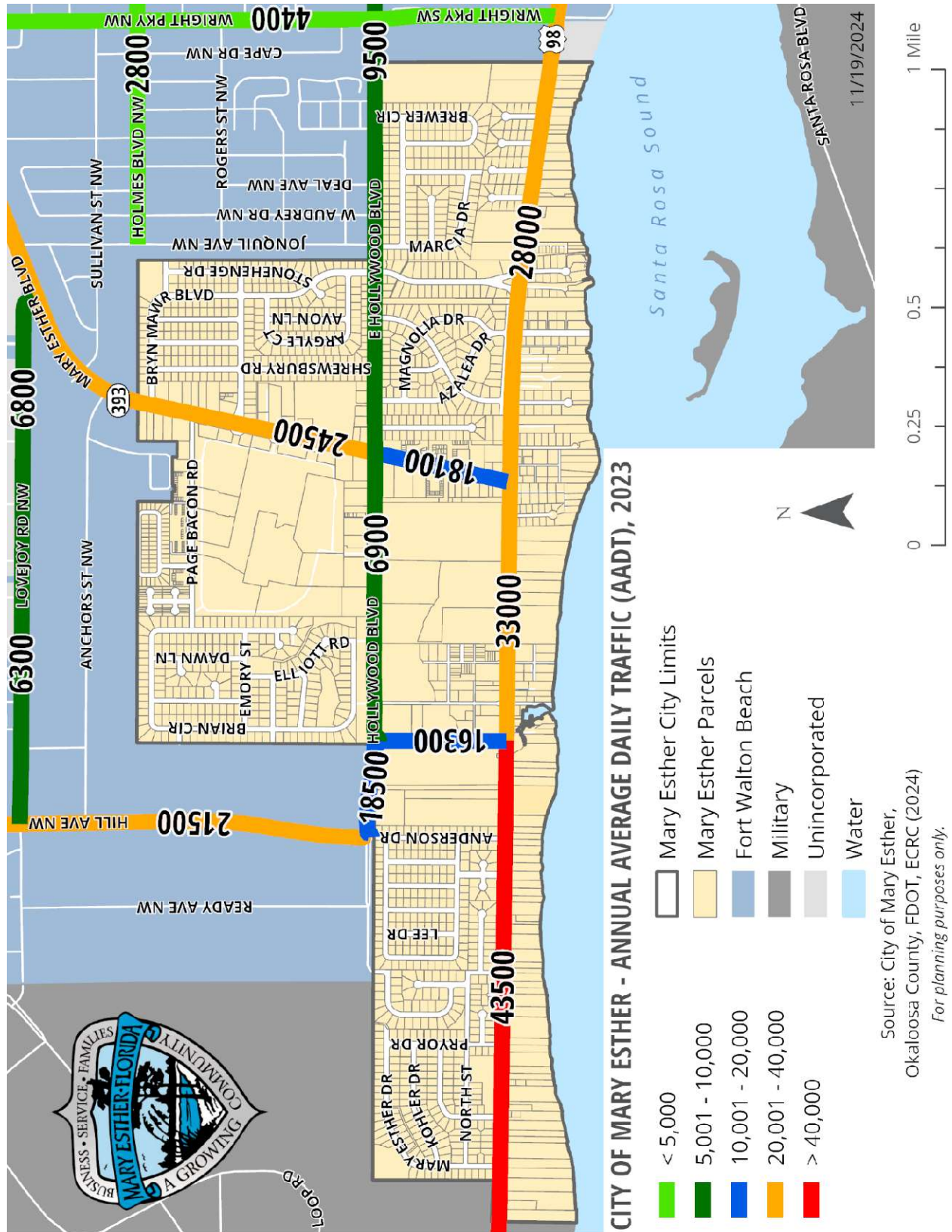


Source: City of Mary Esther,
Okaloosa County, FDOT, ECRC (2024)
For planning purposes only.

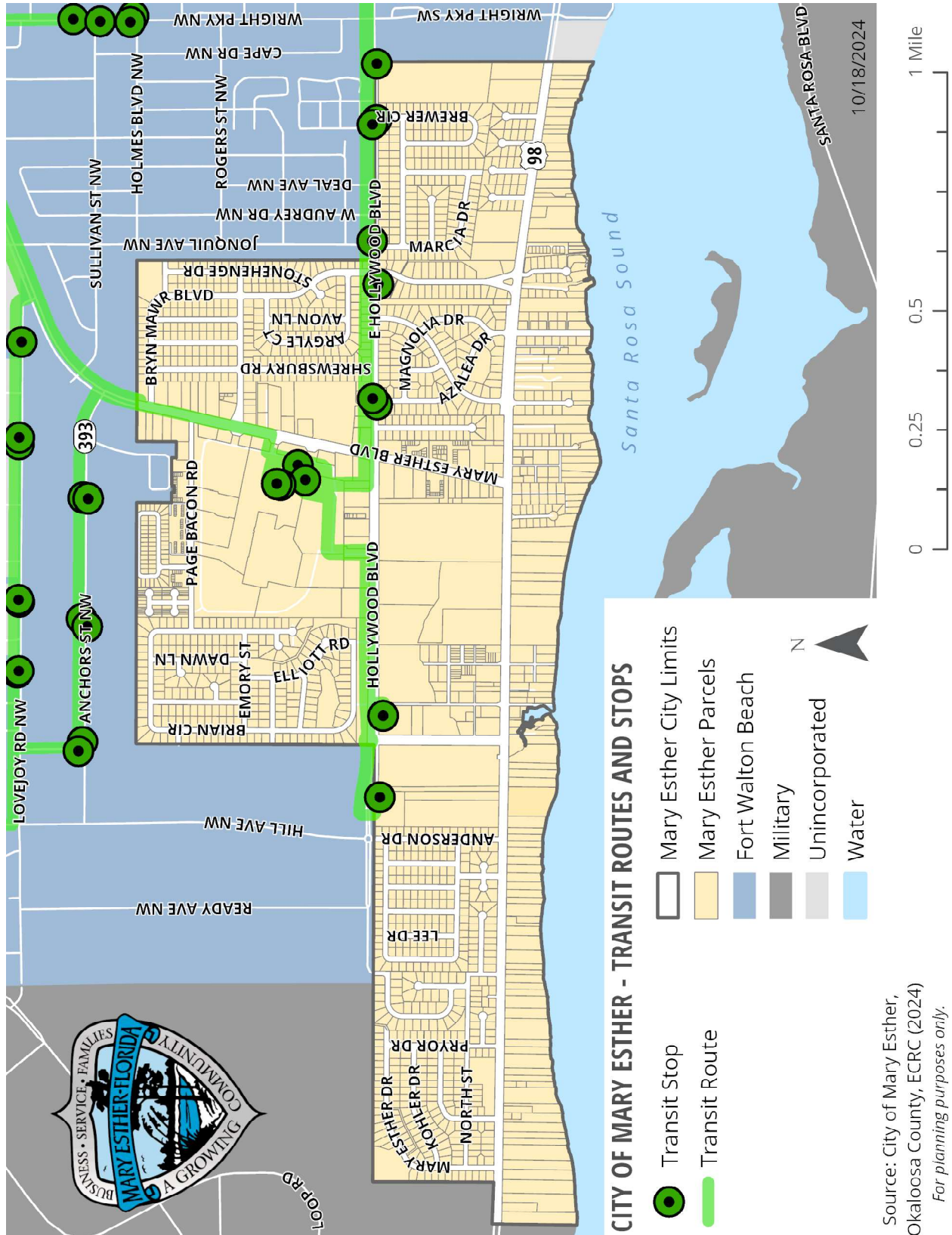
Map B:5 - Maximum Speed Limit



Map B:6 - Average Annual Daily Traffic

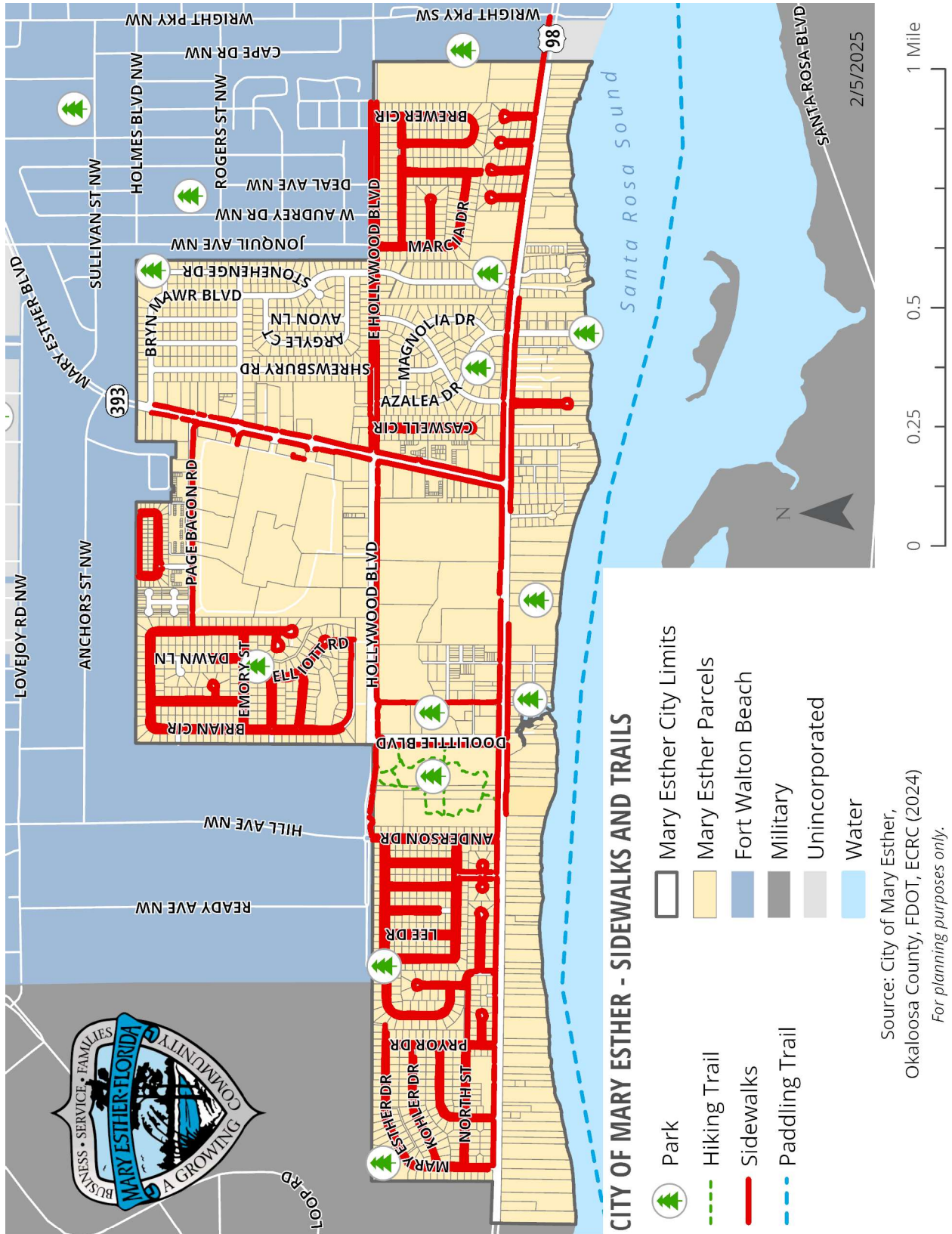


Map B:7 - Transit Routes and Stops



Source: City of Mary Esther, Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024)
For planning purposes only.

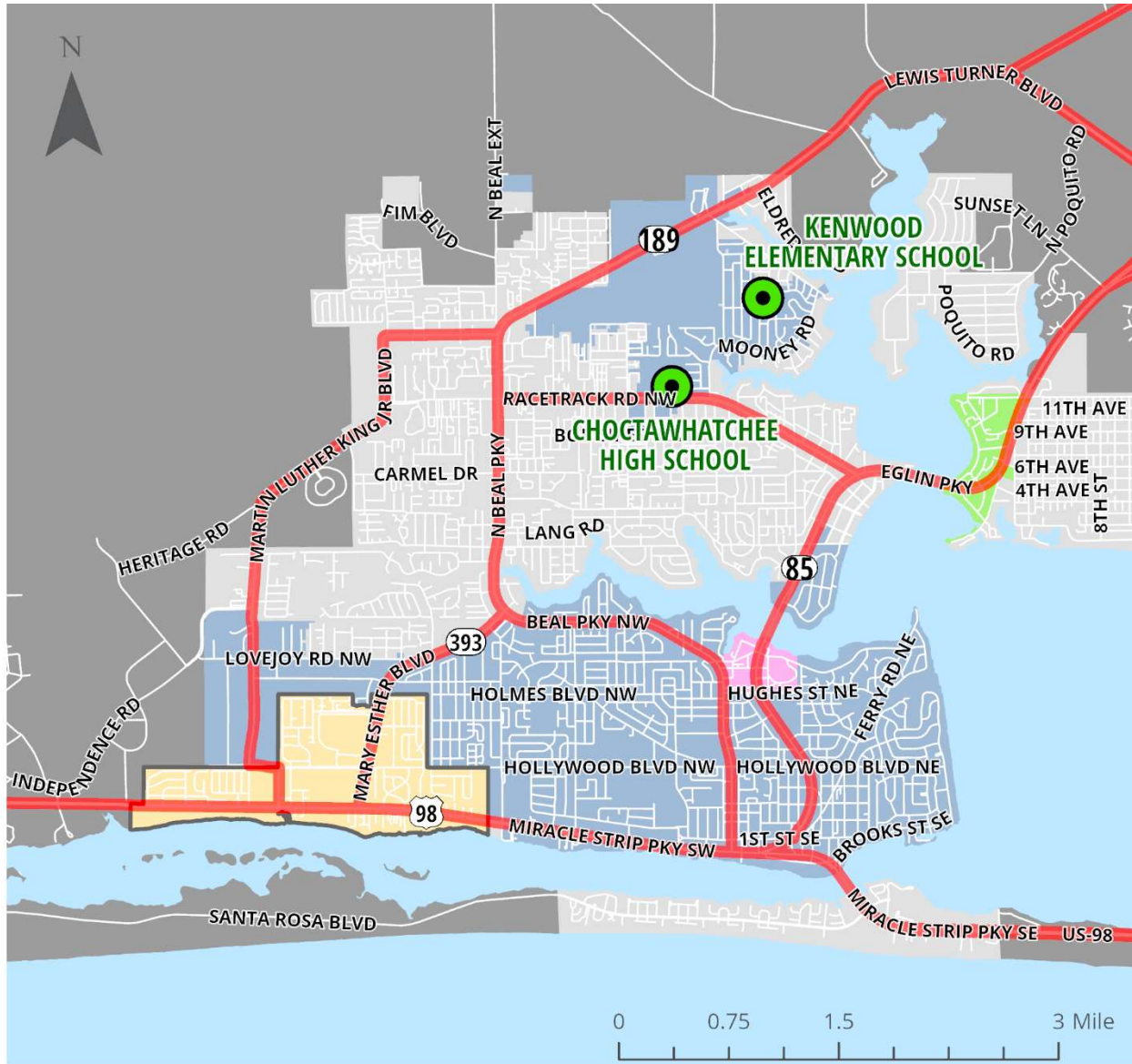
Map B:8 - Sidewalks and Trails



CITY OF MARY ESTHER - SIDEWALKS AND TRAILS

Source: City of Mary Esther,
Okaloosa County, FDOT, ECRC (2024)
For planning purposes only.

Map B:9 - Evacuation Routes and Shelters



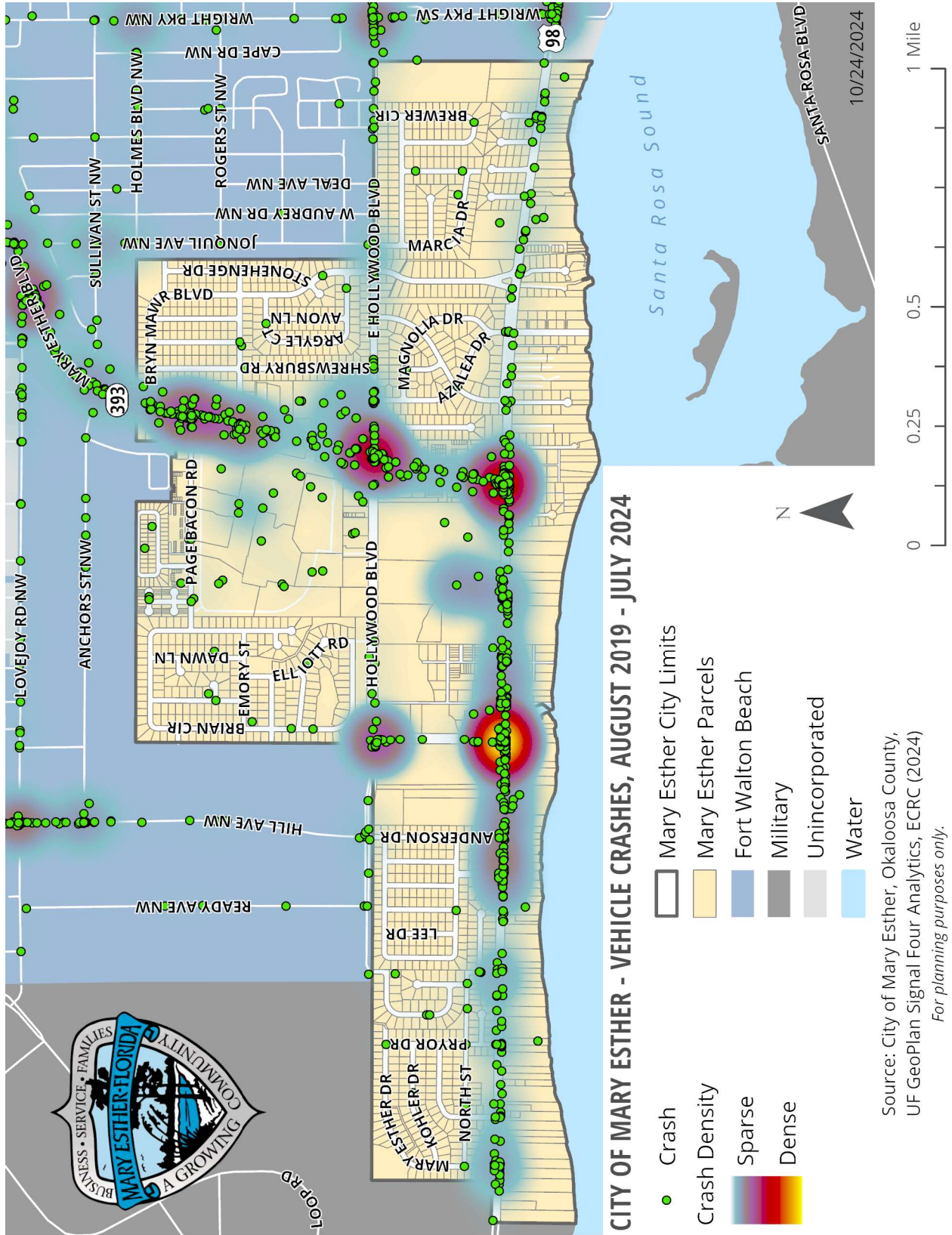
CITY OF MARY ESTHER - EVACUATION ROUTES AND SHELTERS

-  Shelter
-  Evacuation Route
-  Mary Esther City Limits
-  Shalimar
-  Cinco Bayou
-  Fort Walton Beach
-  Military
-  Unincorporated
-  Water

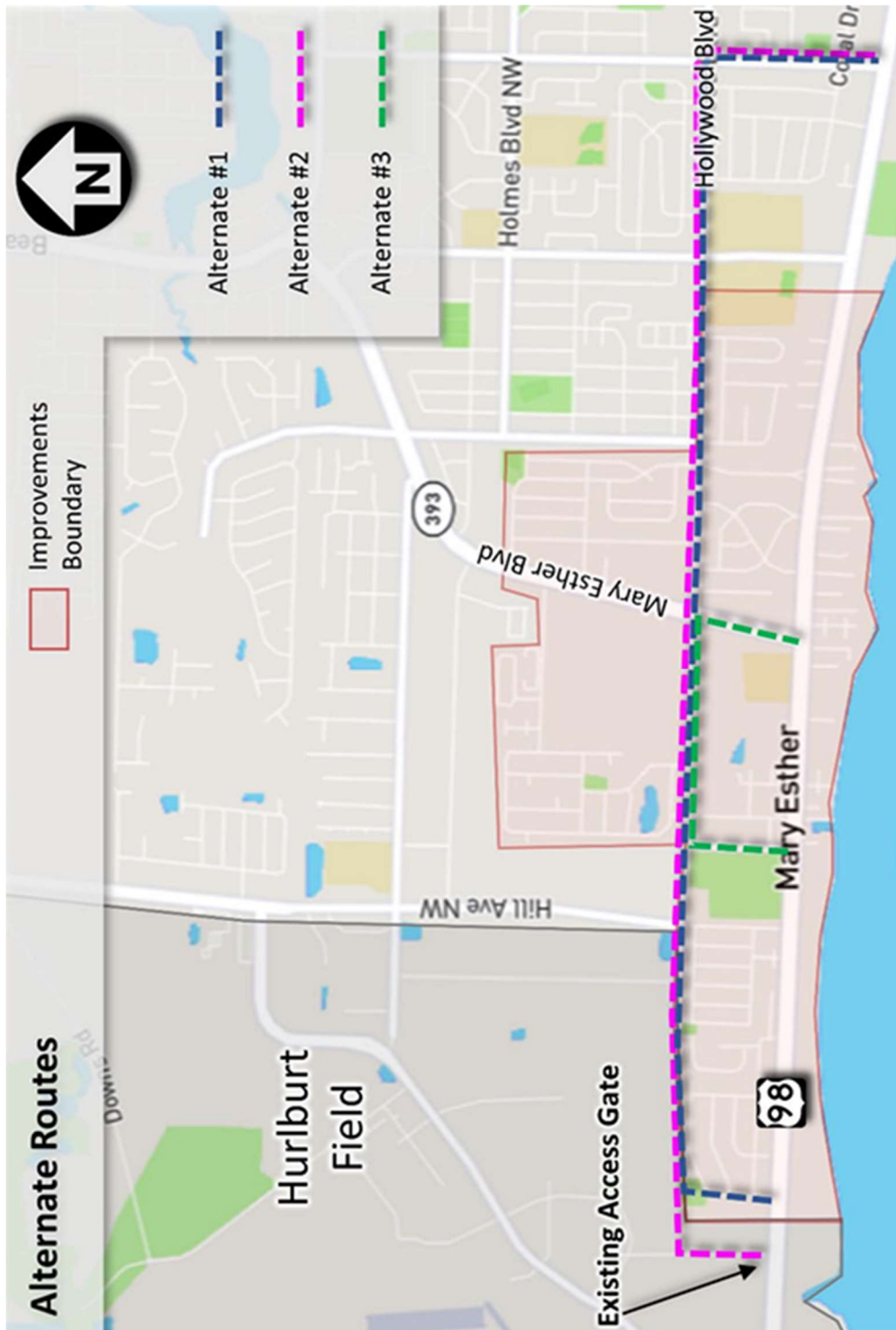


Source: City of Mary Esther, Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024)

For planning purposes only.

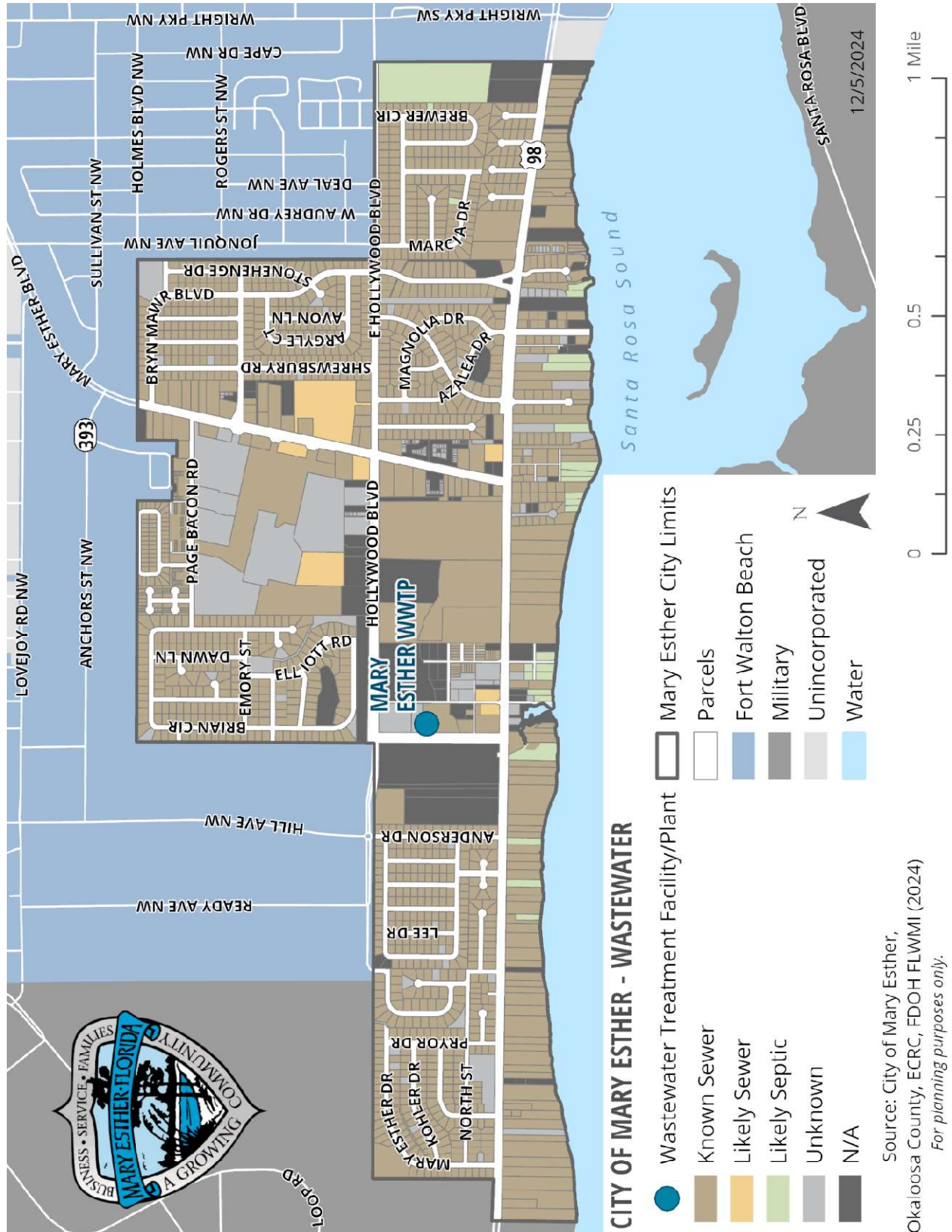


Map B:11 - Alternate Routes

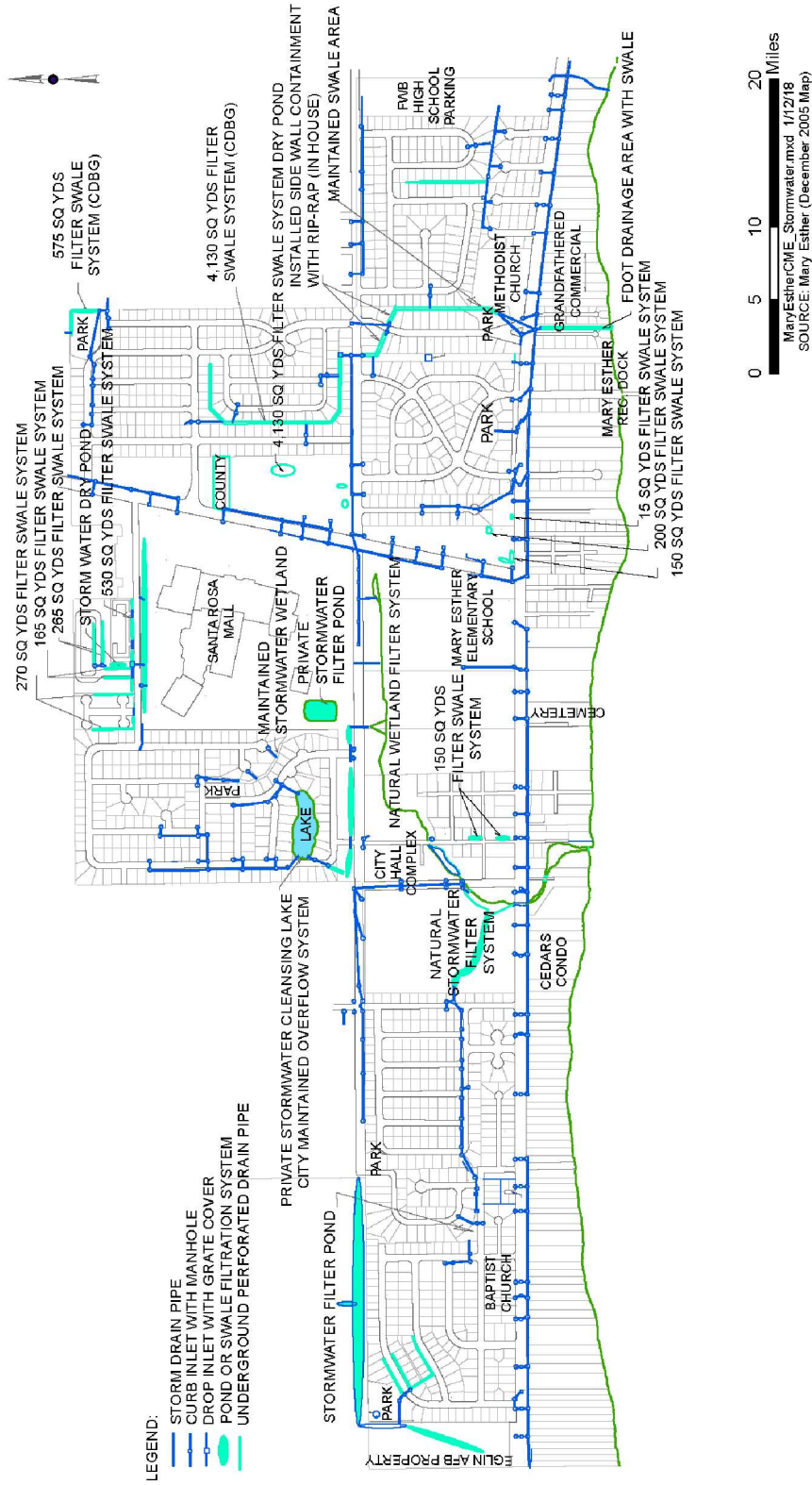


Source: City of Mary Esther Vision Plan, 2023

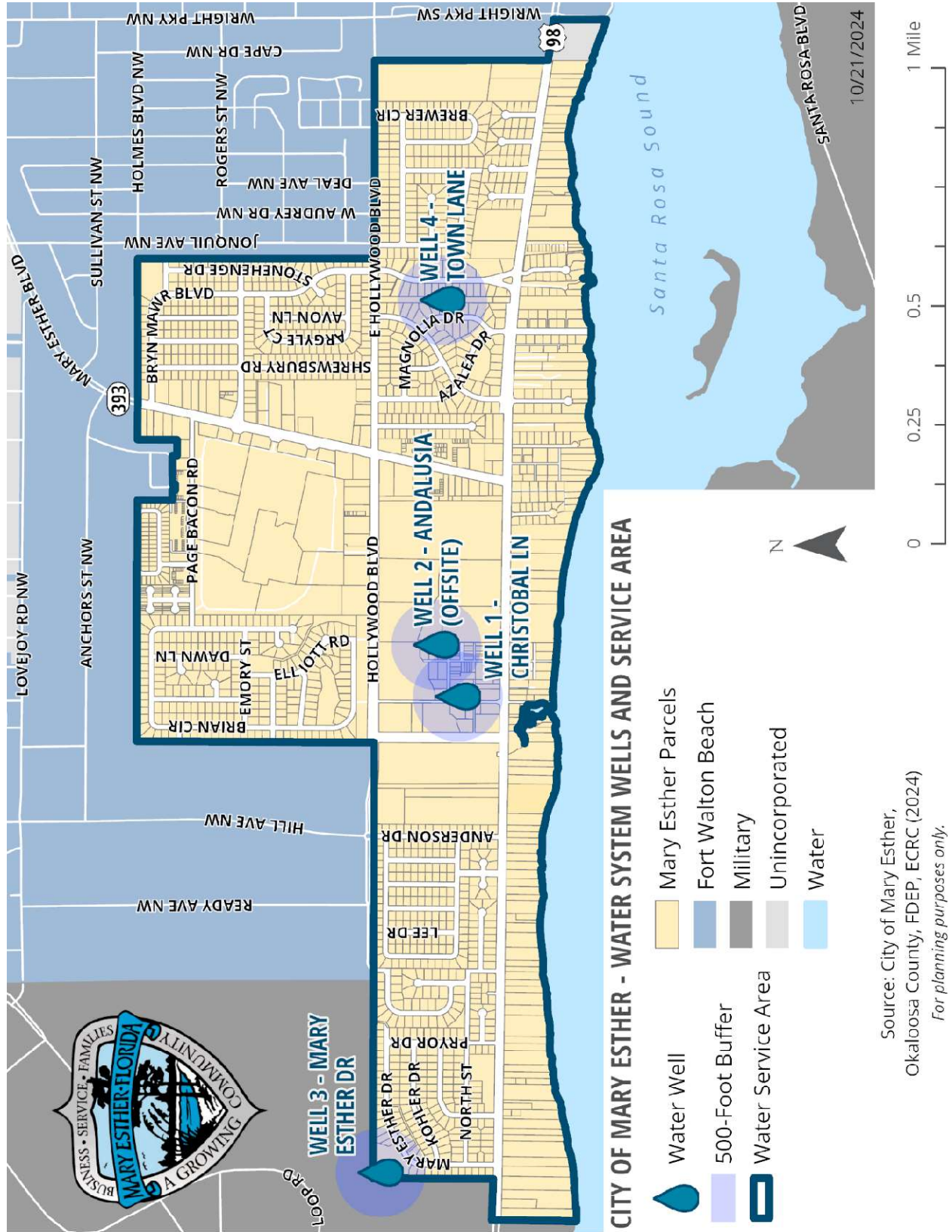
Map D:12 - Wastewater



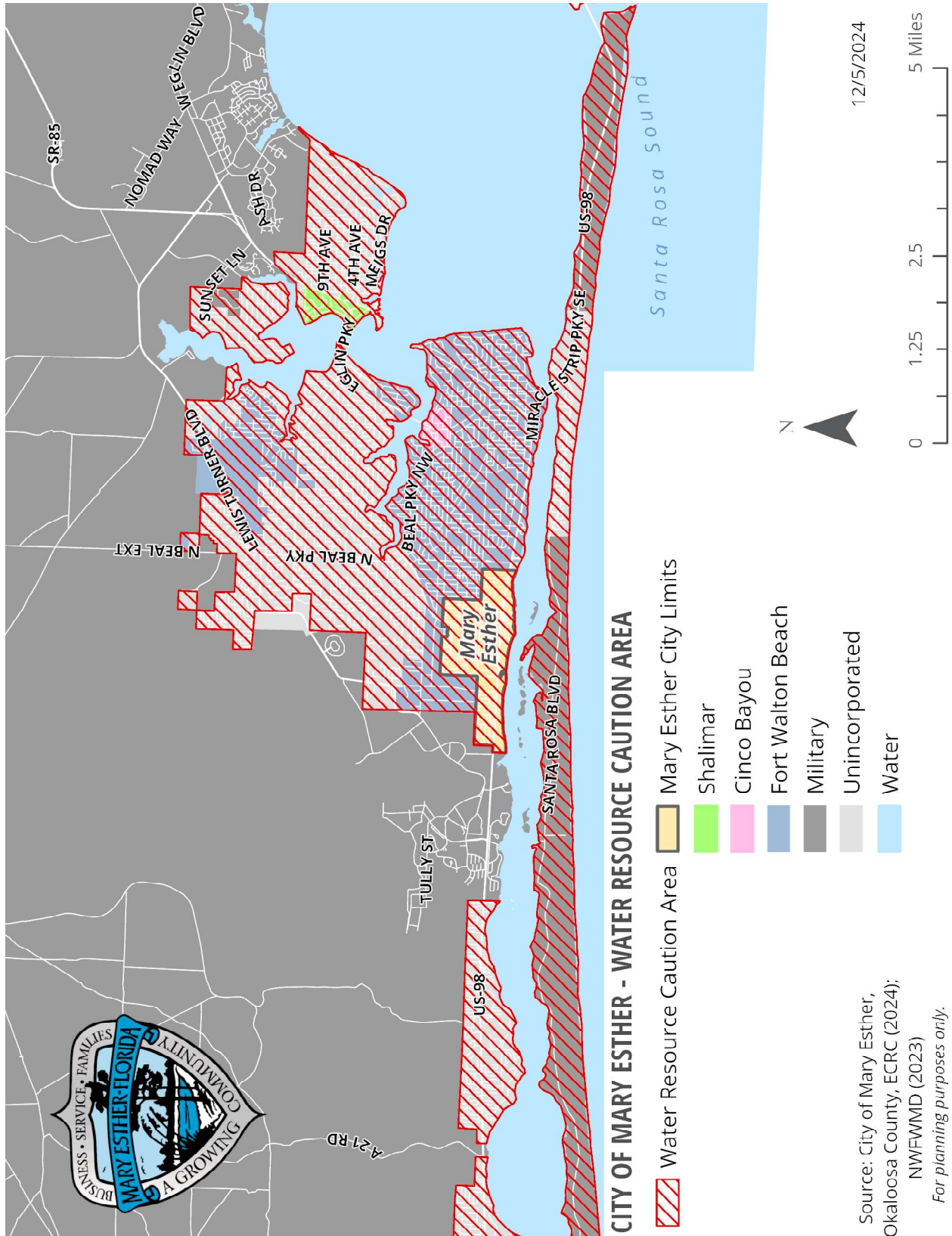
Map D:13 - Stormwater Drainage System



Map D:14 - Water System Wells and Service Area

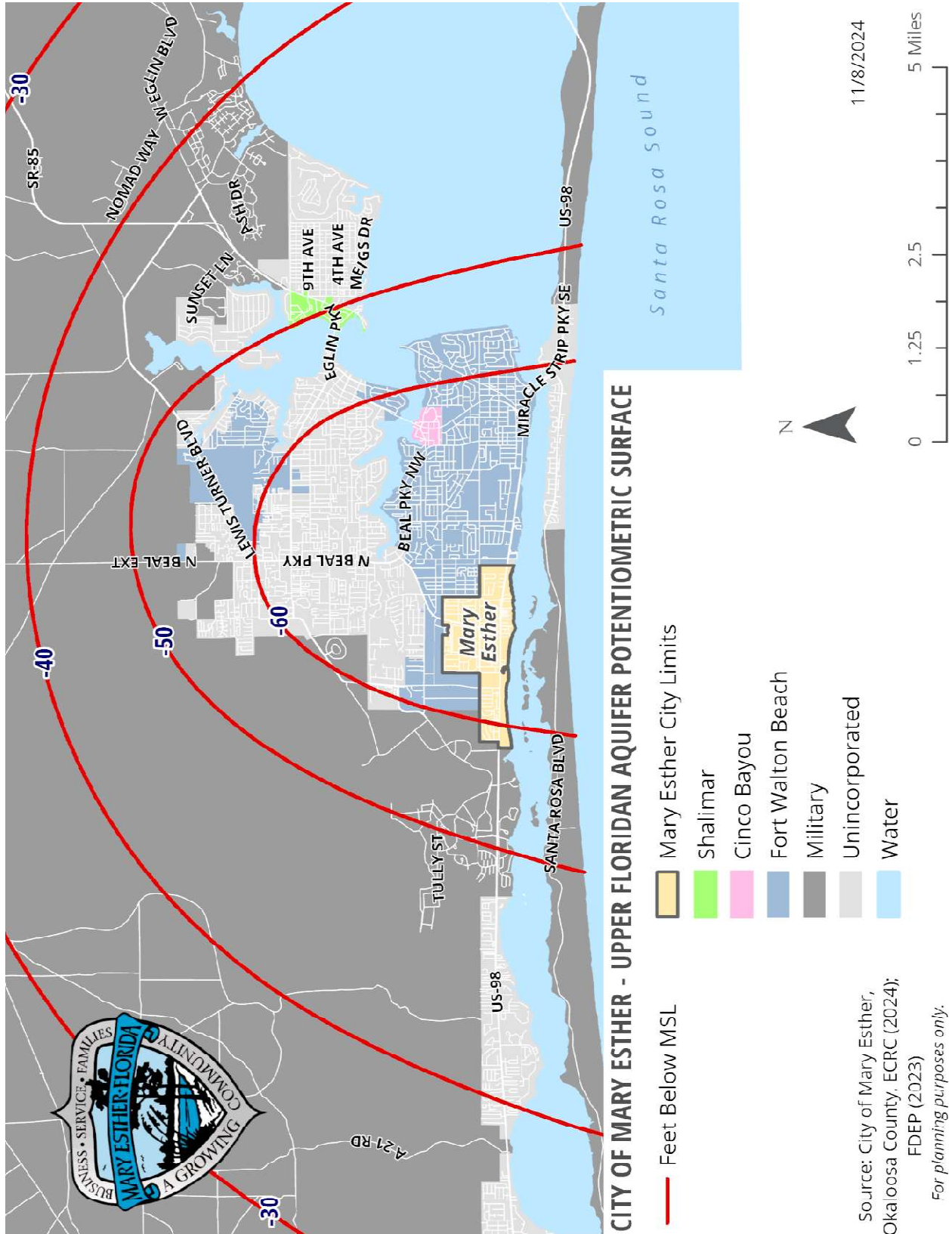


Map D:15 - Water Resource Caution Area

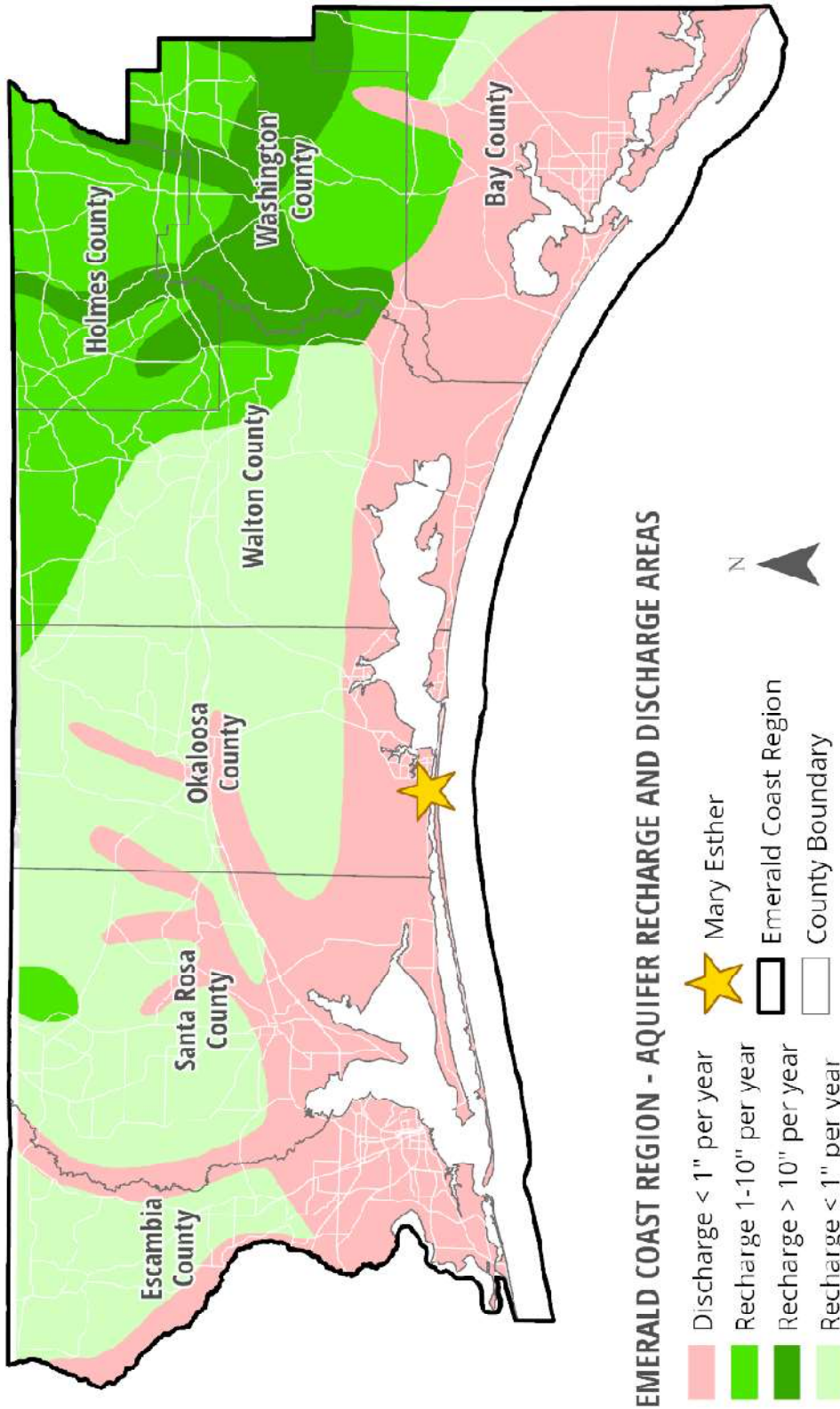


Source: City of Mary Esther,
Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024);
NWFWMMD (2023)
For planning purposes only.

Map D:16 - Upper Floridan Aquifer Potentiometric Surface



Map D:17 - Aquifer Recharge and Discharge Areas

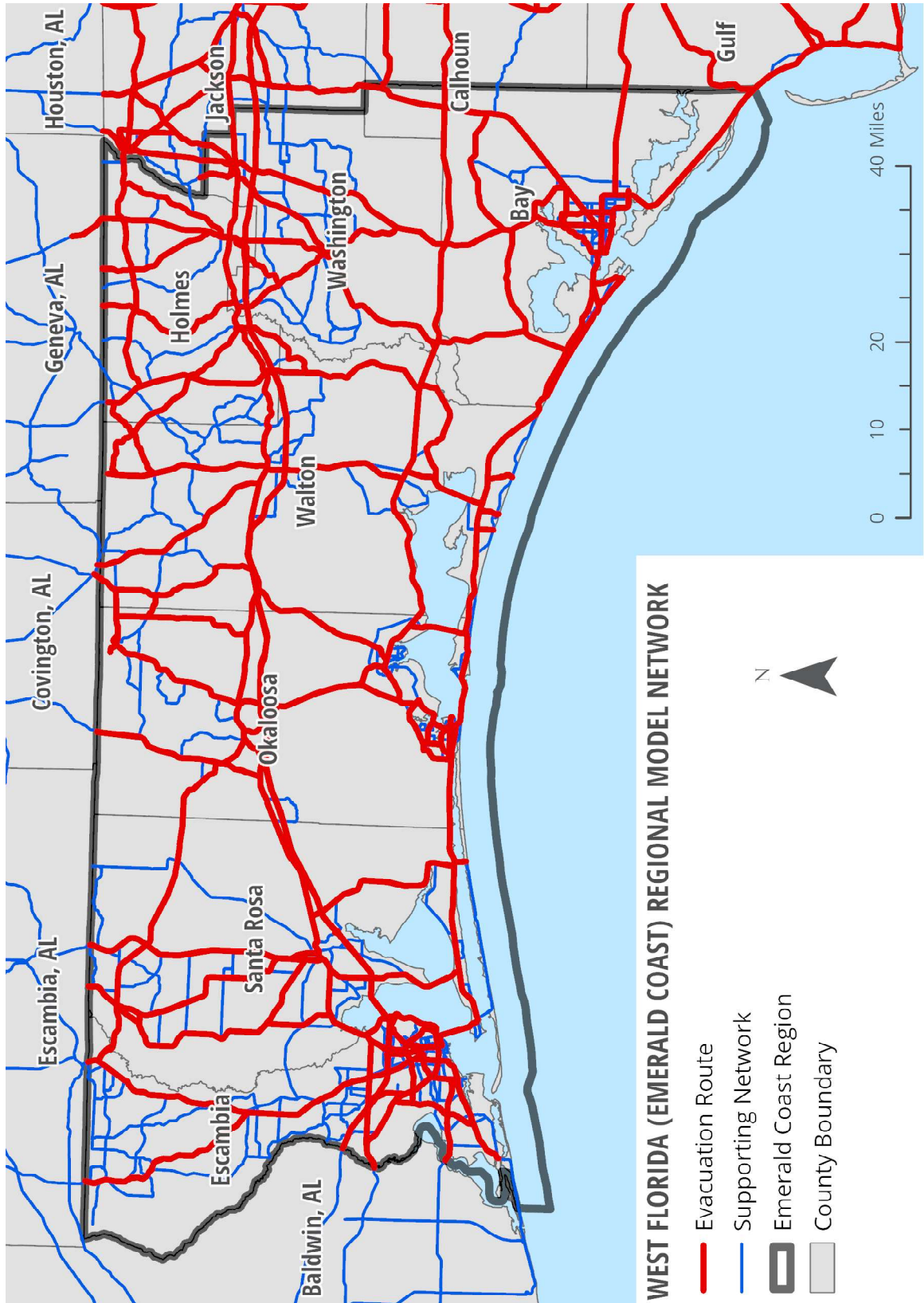


12/5/2024



Source: City of Mary Esther,
Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024);
FGDL/SWFWMD (2003)
For planning purposes only.

Map E:18: West Florida Regional Model Network



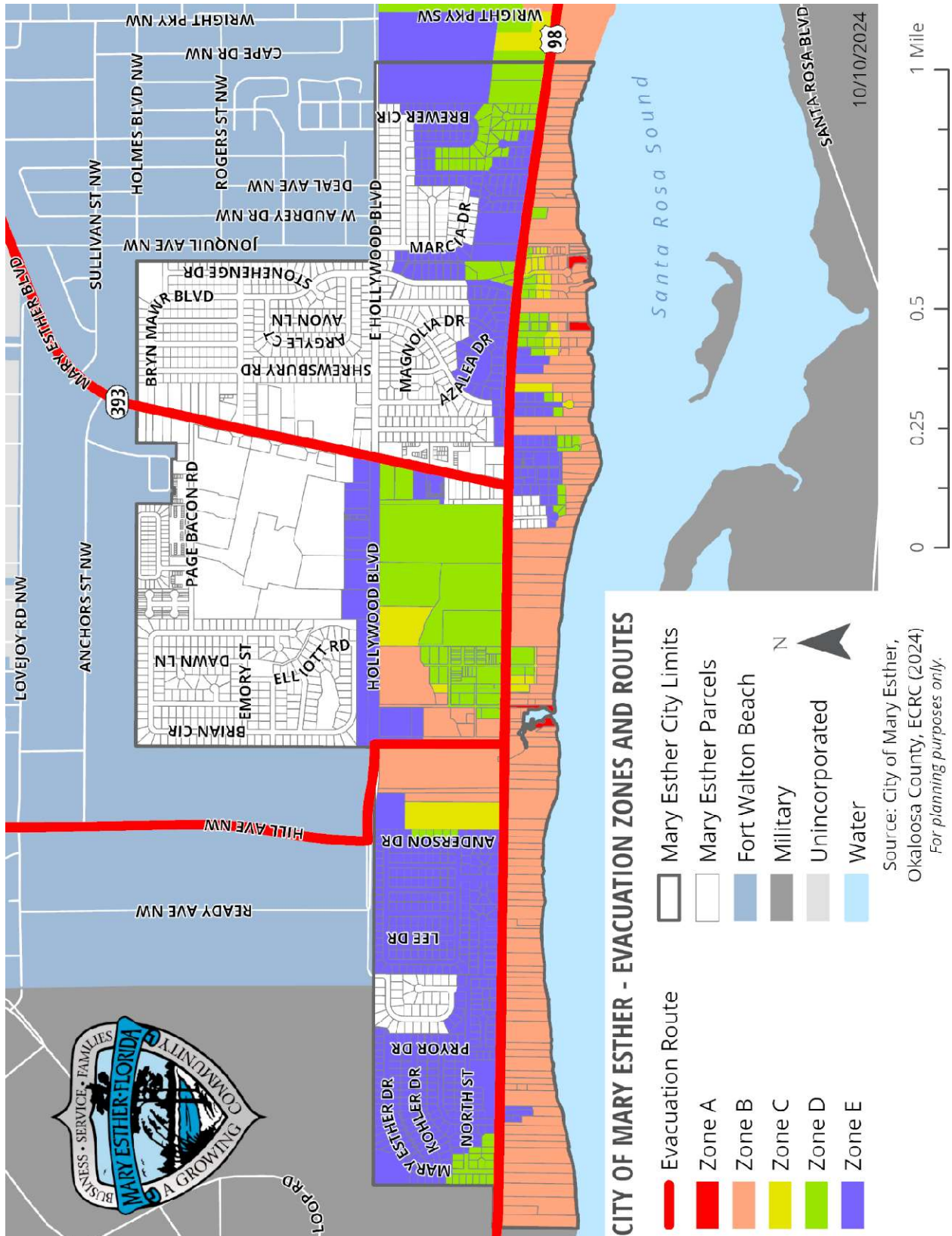
11/27/2024

WEST FLORIDA (EMERALD COAST) REGIONAL MODEL NETWORK

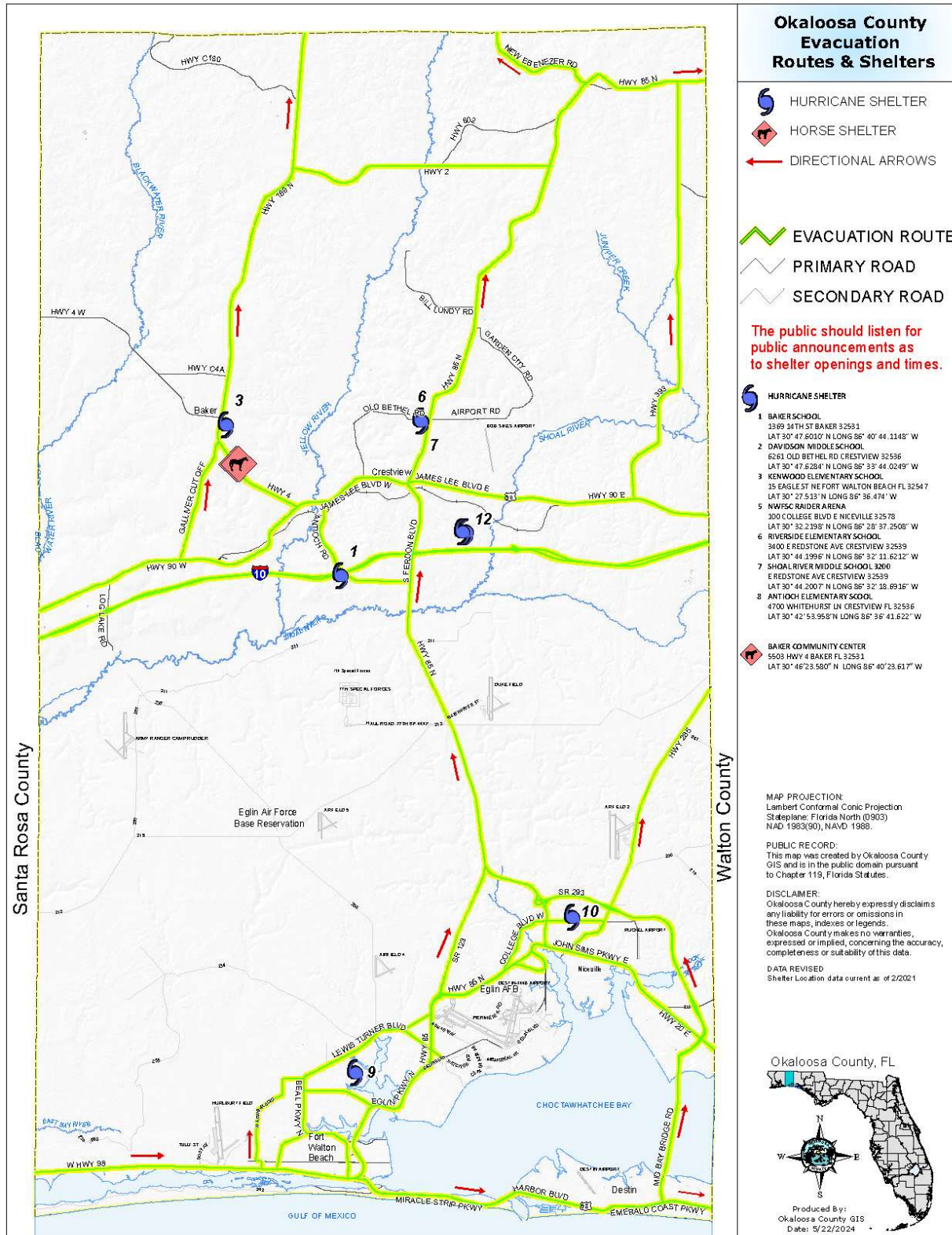
- Evacuation Route
- Supporting Network
- Emerald Coast Region
- County Boundary

Source: ECRC (2024);
 Statewide Regional Evacuation Study (2021)
 For planning purposes only.

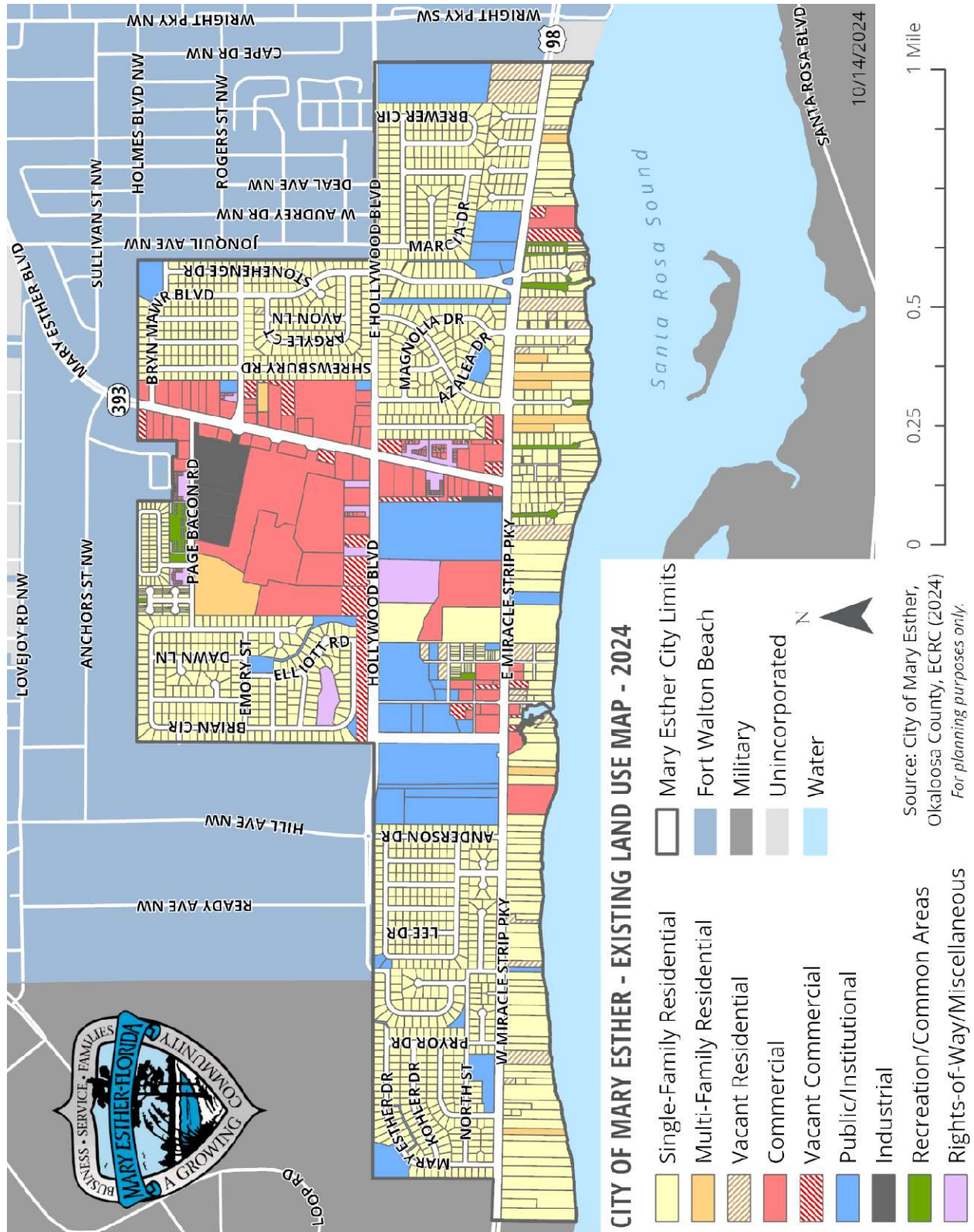
Map E:19: Evacuation Zones



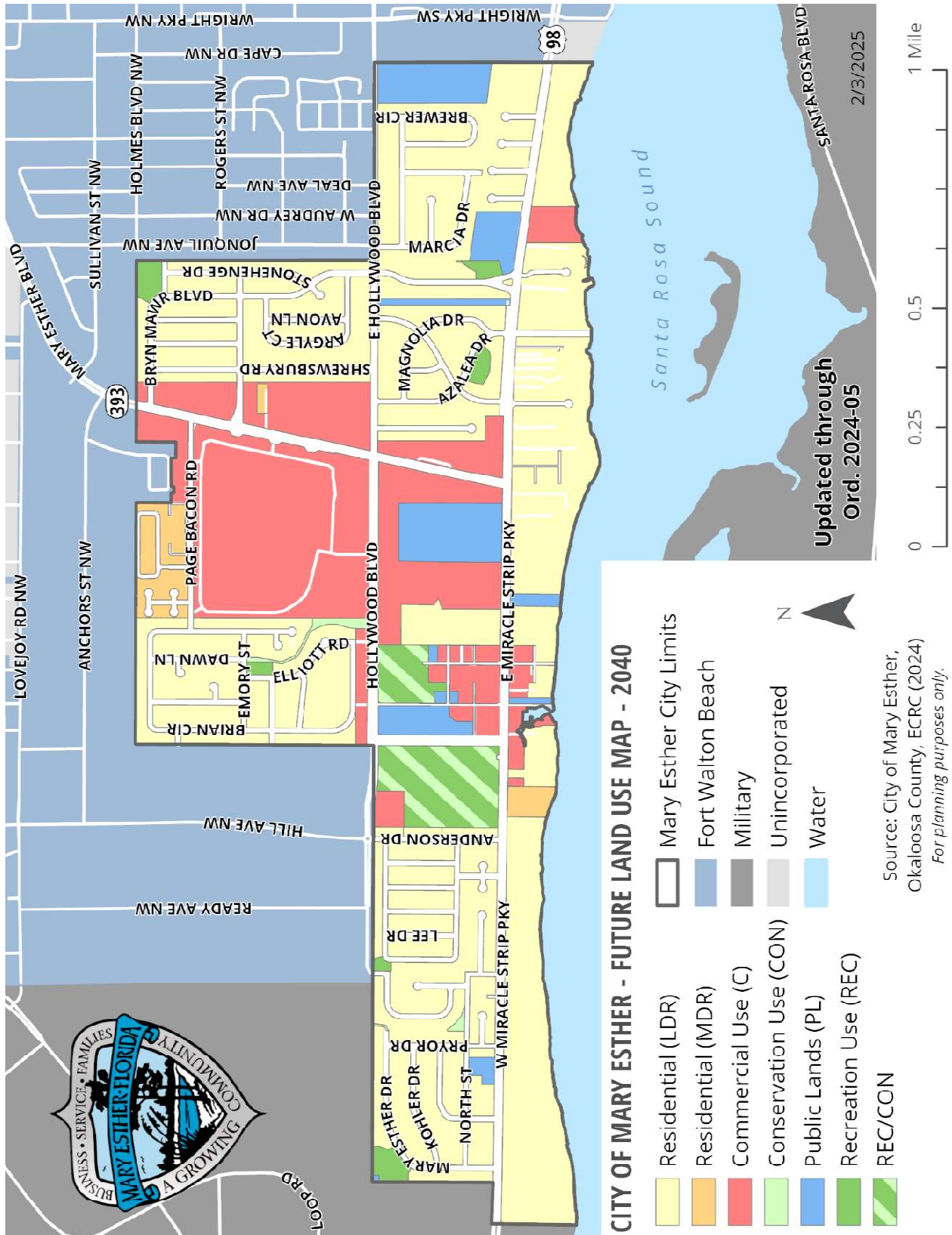
Map E:20: Okaloosa County Evacuation Routes & Shelters



Map E:21: Existing Land Use & Undeveloped Areas



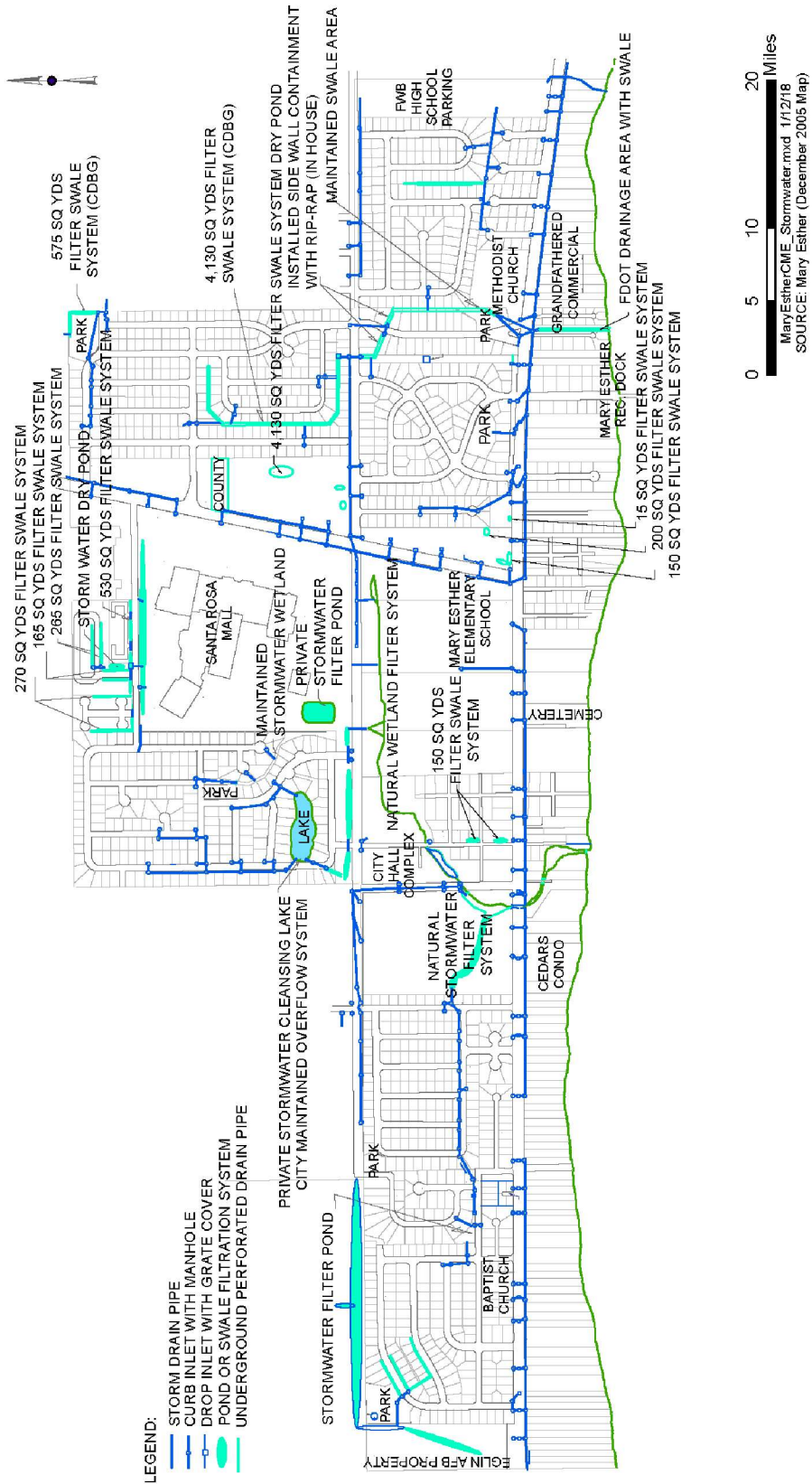
Map E:22: Future Land Use



Map E:23: Environmentally Sensitive Areas (Wetlands)



Map E:24: Stormwater Infrastructure



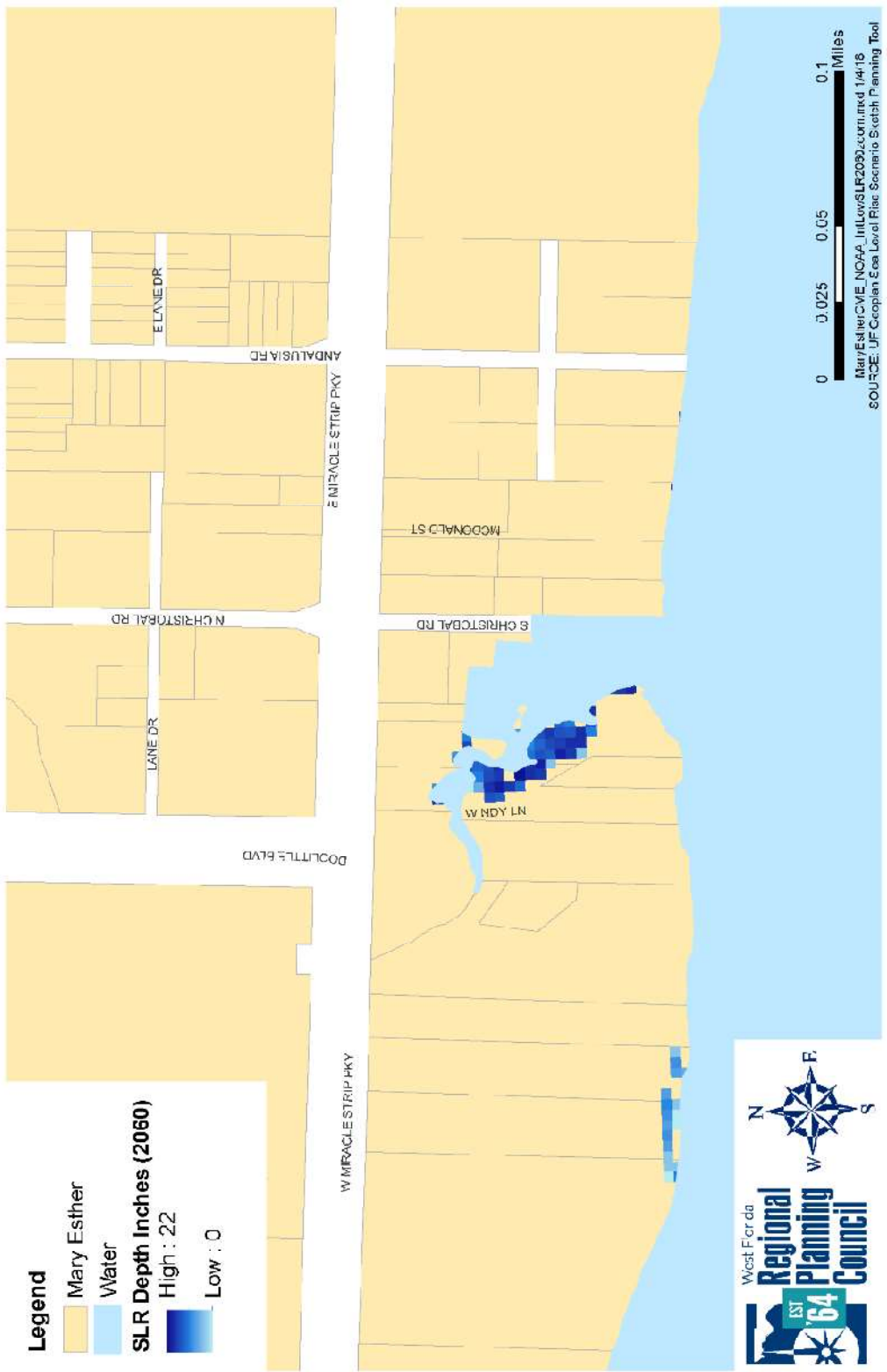
Map E:25: FEMA Flood Zones



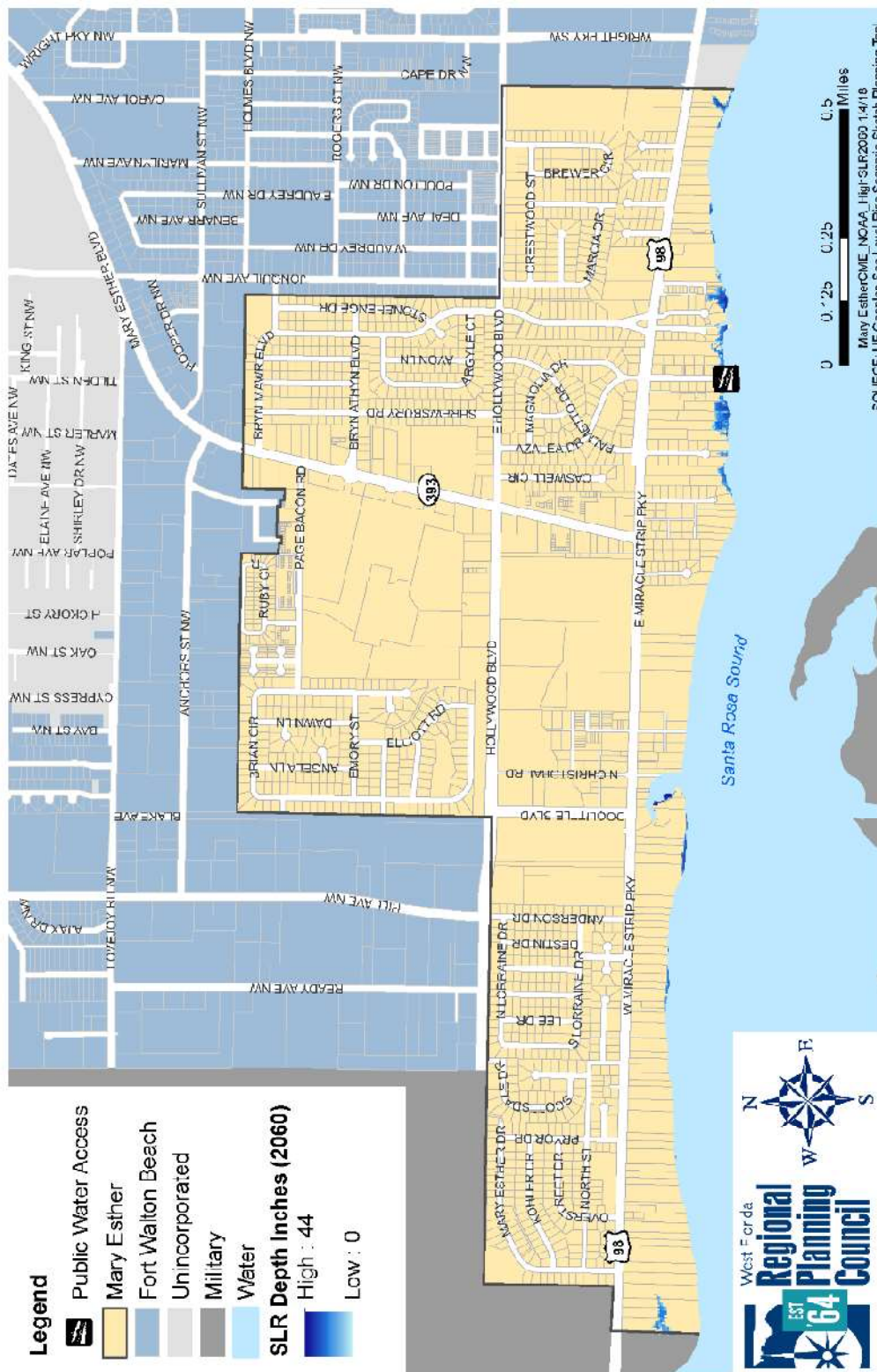
Map E:26: Storm Surge Zones and Coastal High Hazard Area (CHHA)



Map E:28: 2060 Sea Level Rise (NOAA Intermediate Low) (Christobal Rd)



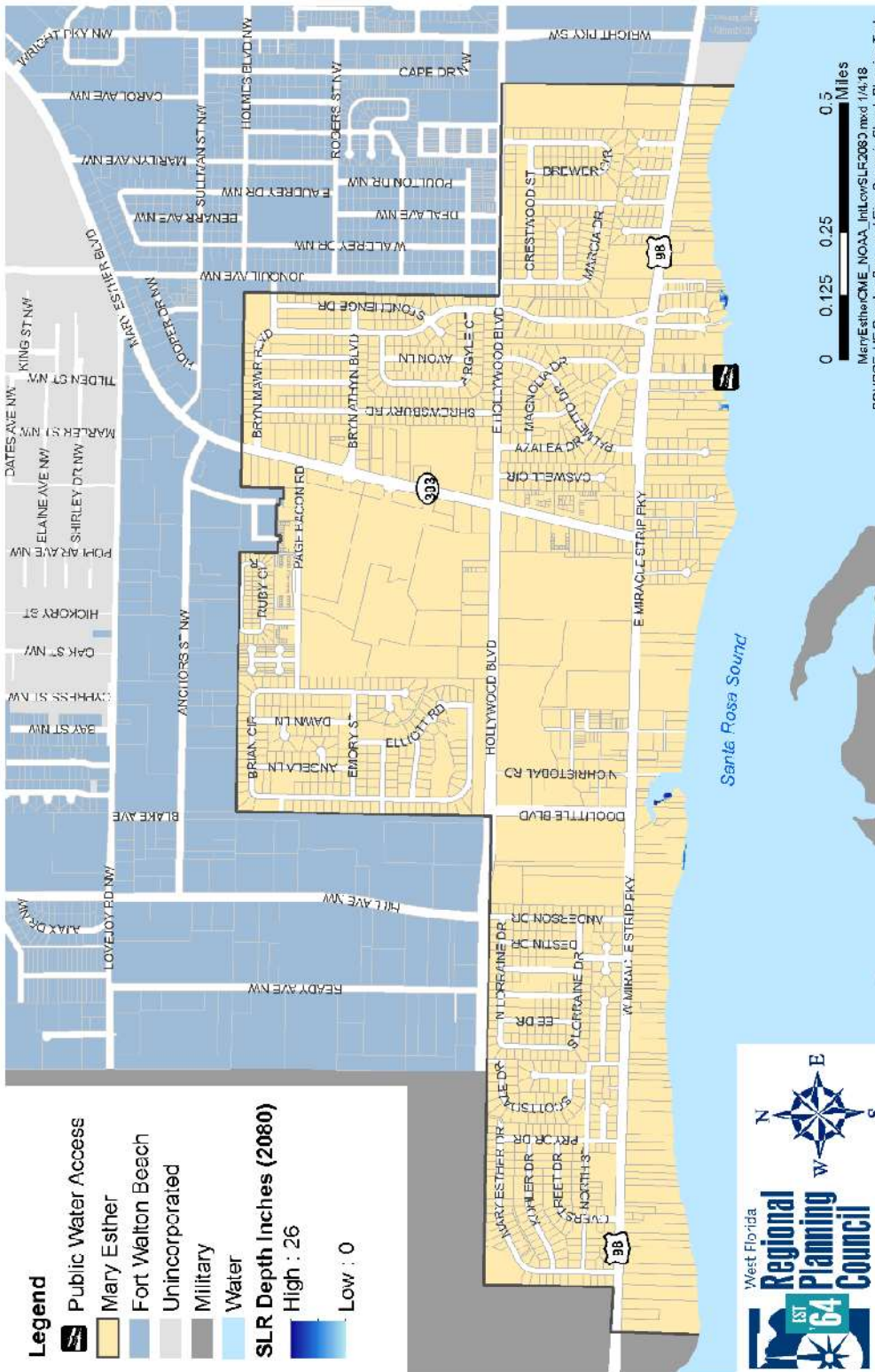
Map E:29: 2060 Sea Level Rise (NOAA High) (Mary Esther)



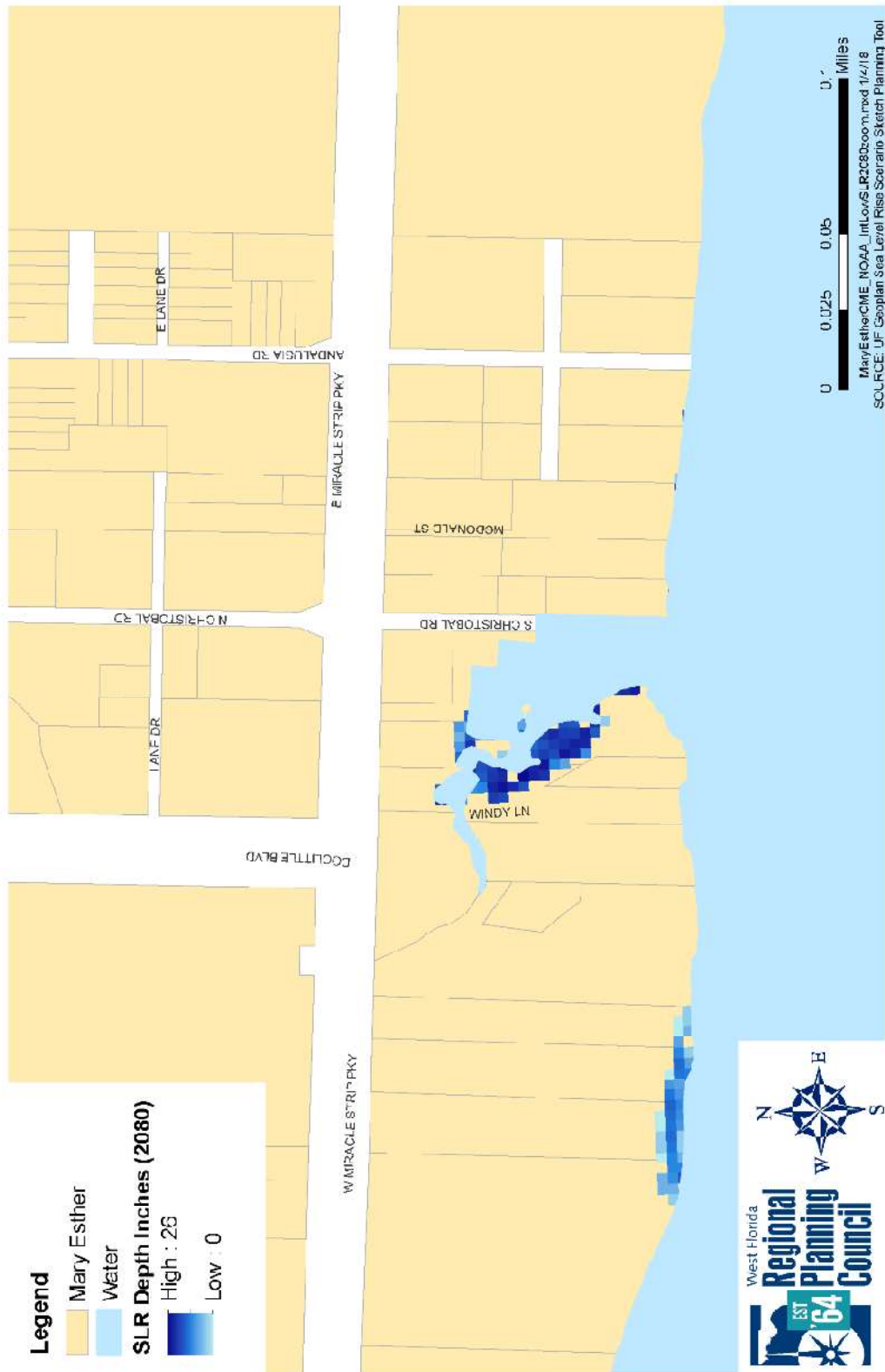
Map E:30: 2060 Sea Level Rise (NOAA High) (Misty Water Ln)



Map E:31: 2080 Sea Level Rise (NOAA Intermediate Low) (Mary Esther)



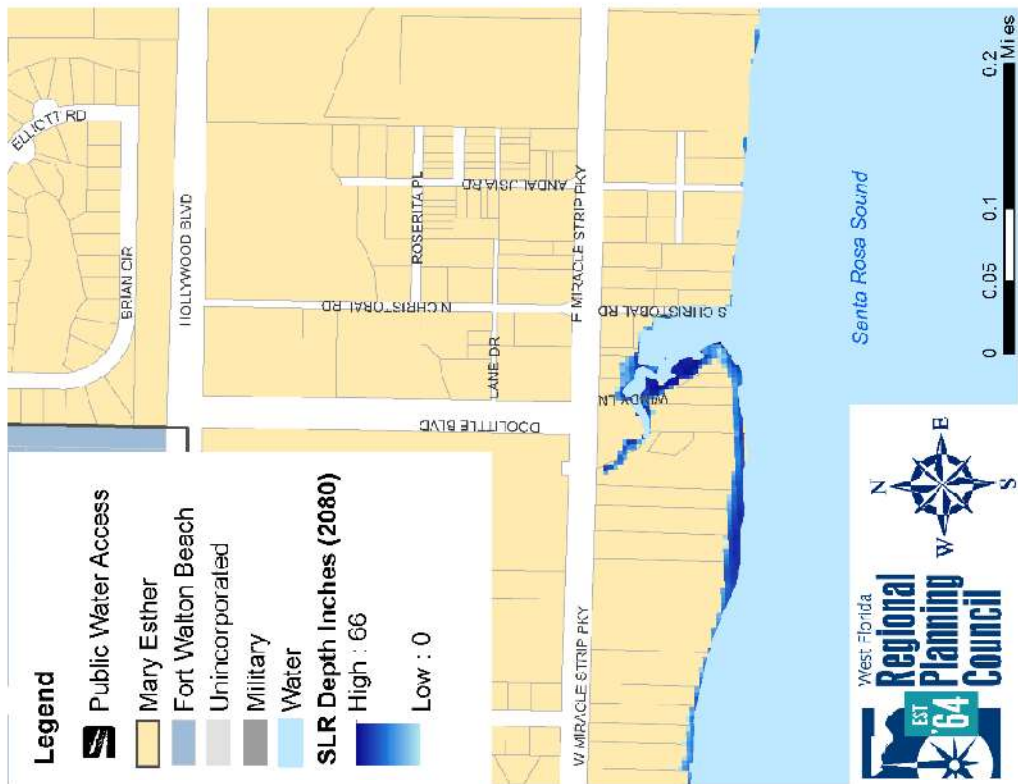
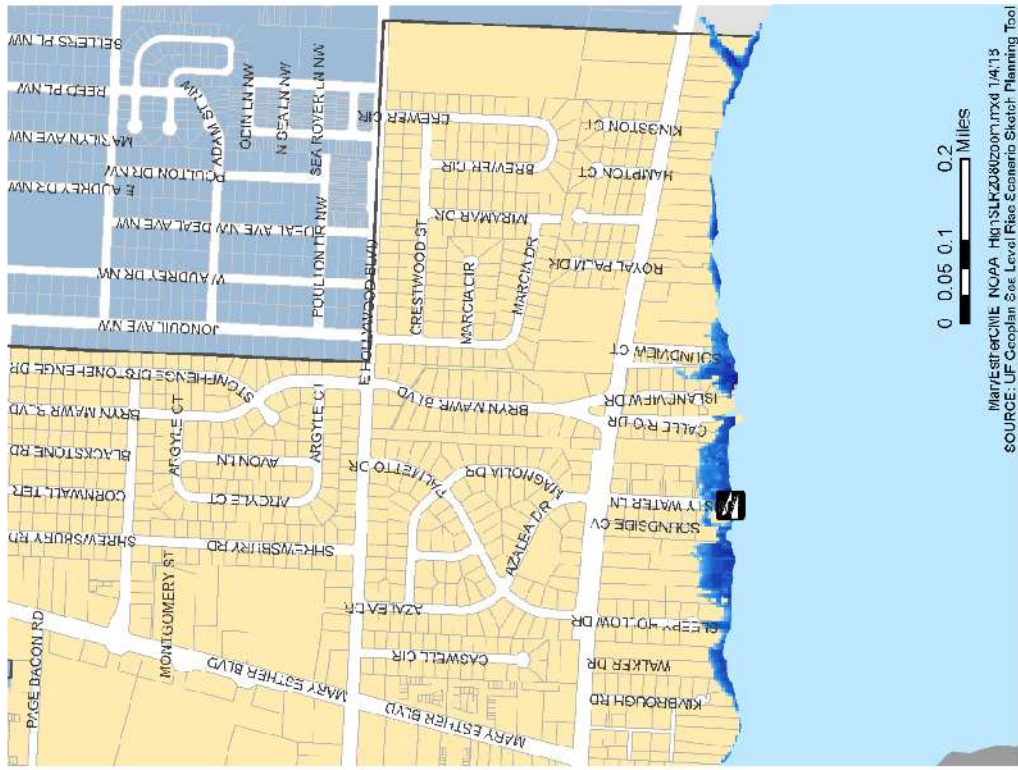
Map E:32: Sea Level Rise (NOAA Intermediate Low) (Christobal Rd)



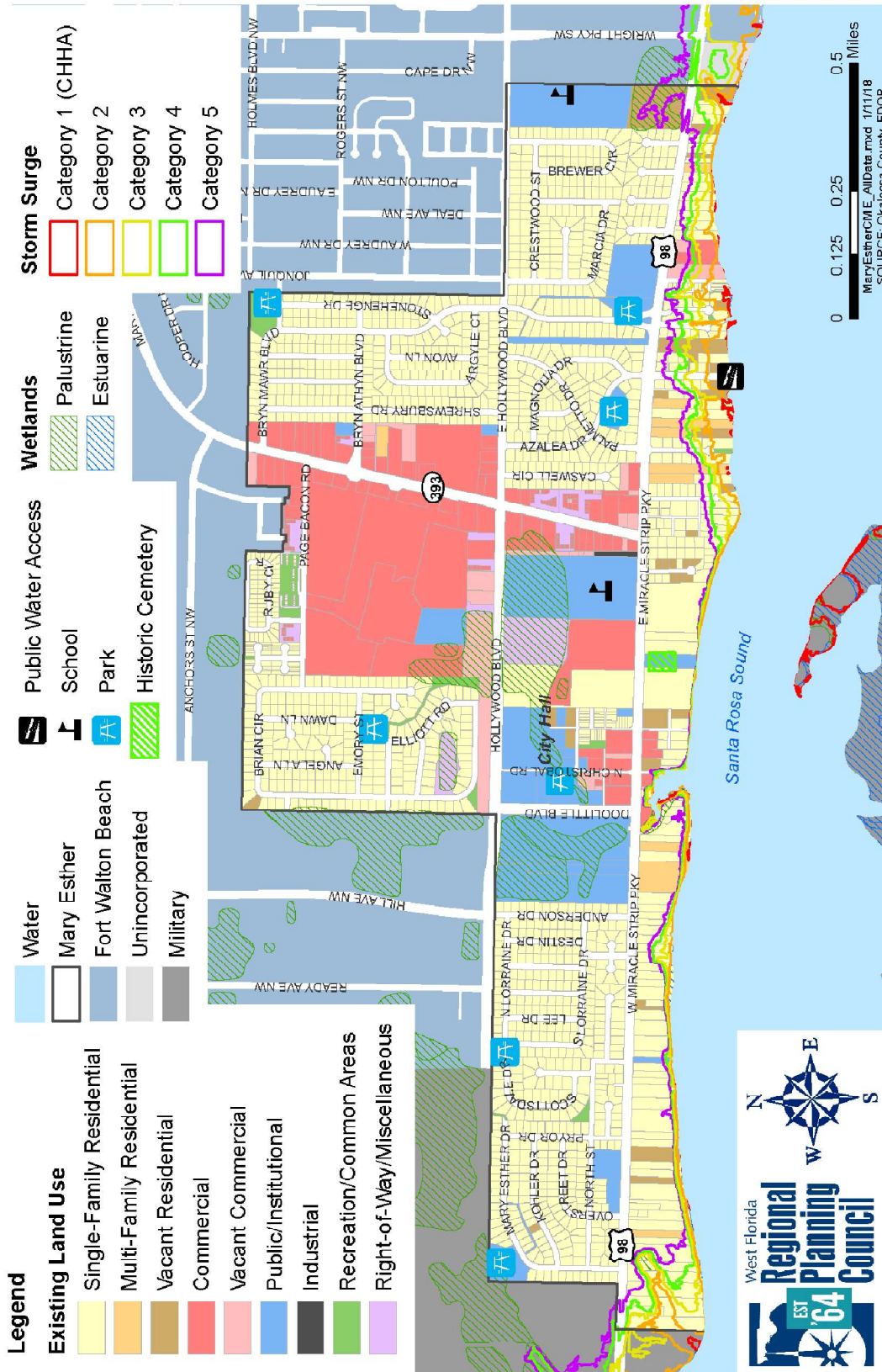
Map E:33: 2080 Sea Level Rise (NOAA High) (Mary Esther)



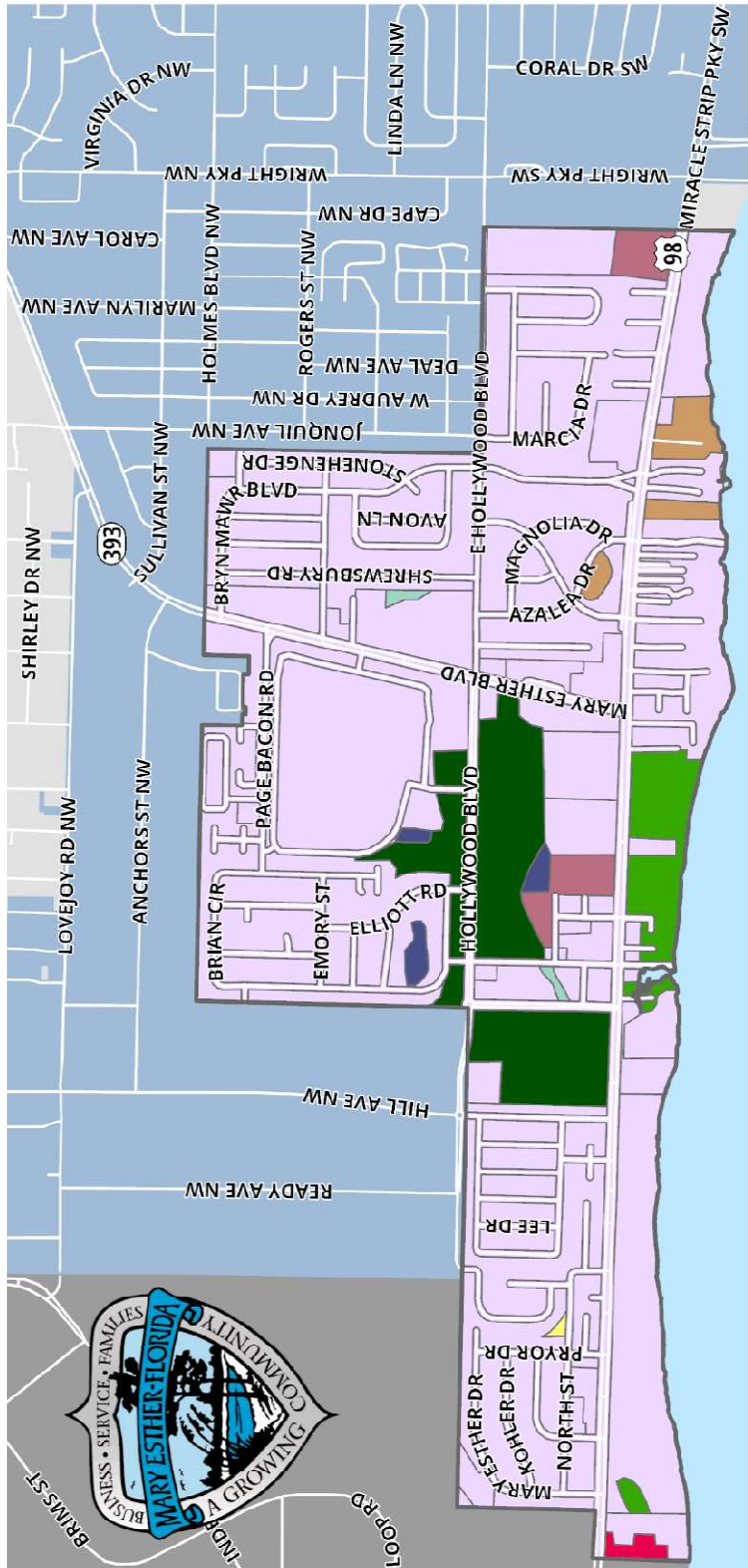
Map E:34: 2080 Sea Level Rise (NOAA High) (Christobal & Misty Water)



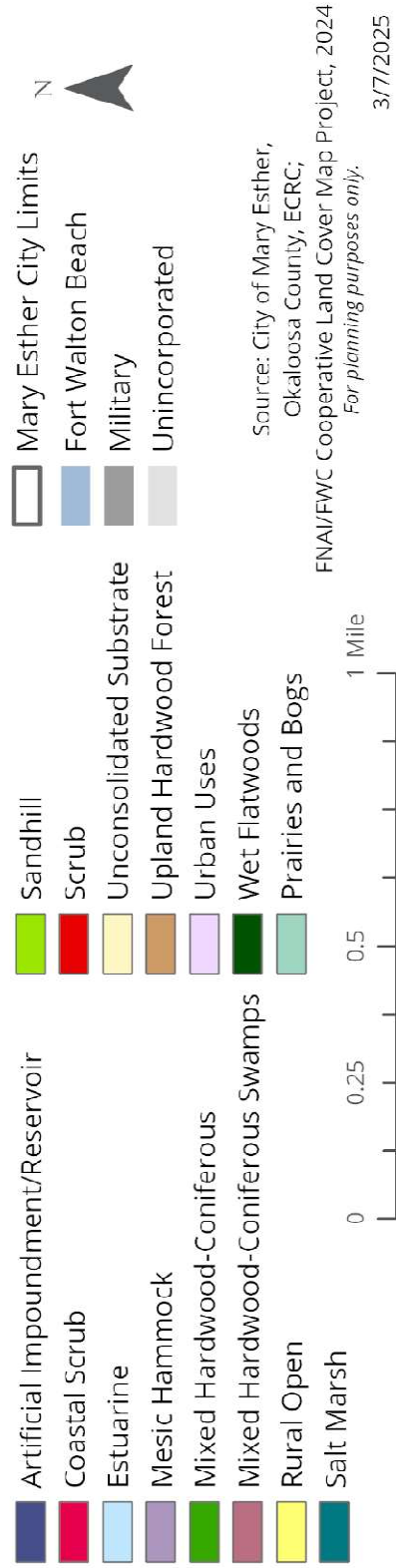
Map E:35: City of Mary Esther Coastal Inventory Map



Map E:36 - City of Mary Esther Ecological Zones



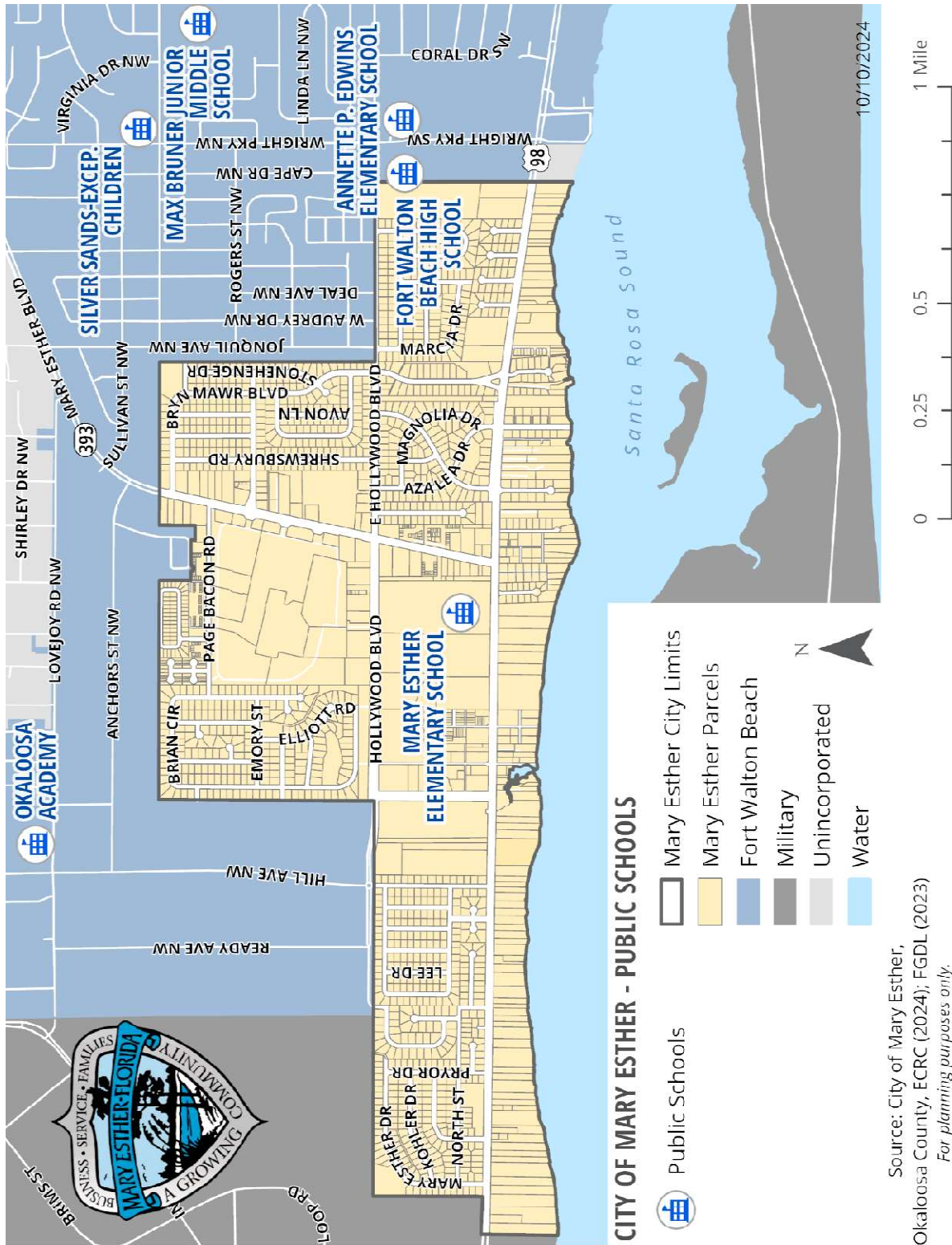
CITY OF MARY ESTHER - ECOLOGICAL ZONES



Map F:37 - City of Mary Esther Parks



Map I:38 - Public Schools



Source: City of Mary Esther, Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024); FGDL (2023)
 For planning purposes only.

Business Impact Estimate

This form should be included in the agenda packet for the item under which the proposed ordinance is to be considered and must be posted on the City's website by the time notice of the proposed ordinance is published. This Business Impact Estimate may be revised following its initial posting.

Proposed ordinance's title/reference: An Ordinance of the City of Mary Esther amending the Comprehensive Plan in its entirety, pursuant to 163.3184 (3), Florida Statutes, providing for statutory changes, updating the planning horizon, aligning the comprehensive plan update with current local conditions and community vision, and integrating findings from the City's Evaluation and Appraisal process to include amendments to the following elements: Introduction, Definitions, Future Land Use, Future Land Use Map, Transportation, Housing, Infrastructure, Coastal Management and Conservation, Recreation and Open Space, Intergovernmental Coordination, Capital Improvements, and Public School Facilities, with the addition of a new Property Rights Element.

Ordinance 2025-04

This Business Impact Estimate is provided in accordance with section 166.041(4), Florida Statutes. If one or more boxes are checked below, this means the City is of the view that a business impact estimate is not required by state law¹ for the proposed ordinance:

- The proposed ordinance is required for compliance with Federal or State law or regulation;
- The proposed ordinance relates to the issuance or refinancing of debt;
- The proposed ordinance relates to the adoption of budgets or budget amendments, including revenue sources necessary to fund the budget;
- The proposed ordinance is required to implement a contract or an agreement, including, but not limited to, any Federal, State, local, or private grant or other financial assistance accepted by the municipal government;
- The proposed ordinance is an emergency ordinance;
- The ordinance relates to procurement; or
- The proposed ordinance is enacted to implement the following:
 - a. Part II of Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, relating to growth policy, county and municipal planning, and land development regulation, including zoning, development orders, development agreements and development permits;
 - b. Sections 190.005 and 190.046, Florida Statutes, regarding community development districts;
 - c. Section 553.73, Florida Statutes, relating to the Florida Building Code; or
 - d. Section 633.202, Florida Statutes, relating to the Florida Fire Prevention Code.

¹ See Section 166.041(4)(c), Florida Statutes.

If no exemption applies, in accordance with the provisions of controlling law, the City hereby publishes the following information:

1. Summary of the proposed ordinance (must include a statement of the public purpose, such as serving the public health, safety, morals and welfare):
To provide update the Comprehensive Plan to provide the goals, objectives, and policies to guide the City of Mary Esther in guiding future land use, and to align with the Community Vision Plan.

2. An estimate of the direct economic impact of the proposed ordinance on private, for-profit businesses in the City if any:
(a) An estimate of direct compliance costs that businesses may reasonably incur;
(b) Any new charge or fee imposed by the proposed ordinance or for which businesses will be financially responsible; and
(c) An estimate of the City's regulatory costs, including estimated revenues from any new charges or fees to cover such costs.

No direct economic impacts are anticipated.

3. Good faith estimate of the number of businesses likely to be impacted by the proposed ordinance:
No business will be impacted. This ordinance applies to private property in commercial or residential zoning districts, and must be initiated by the property owner.

4. Additional information the governing body deems useful (if any):



Mary Esther Comp Plan Update

Eric Christianson, Planner

Agenda

- Comprehensive Planning Overview
- Policy Changes
- Plan Implementation
- Adoption



CITY OF MARY ESTHER

Comprehensive Plan: 2020

Ordinance No. 99-02
(As Amended)

March 9, 2010

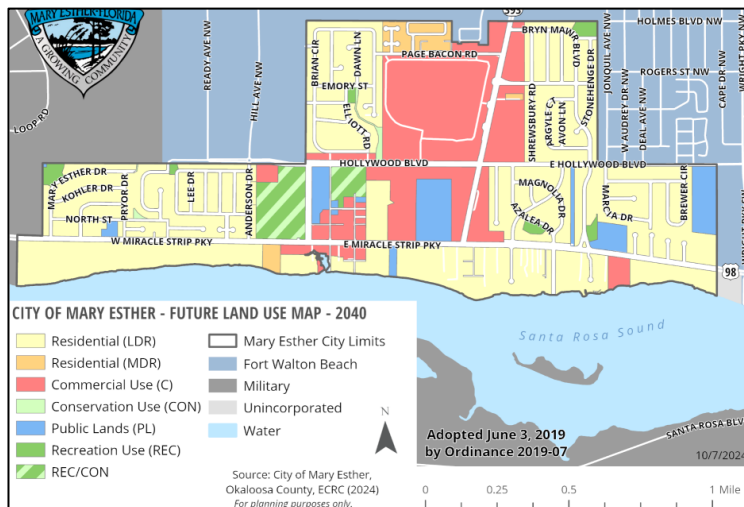
What is a Comprehensive Plan?

Your Comprehensive Plan serves as a long-term blueprint for guiding growth and development. It ensures that land use, housing, transportation, and public facilities are planned in a way that meets current needs while accommodating future changes.

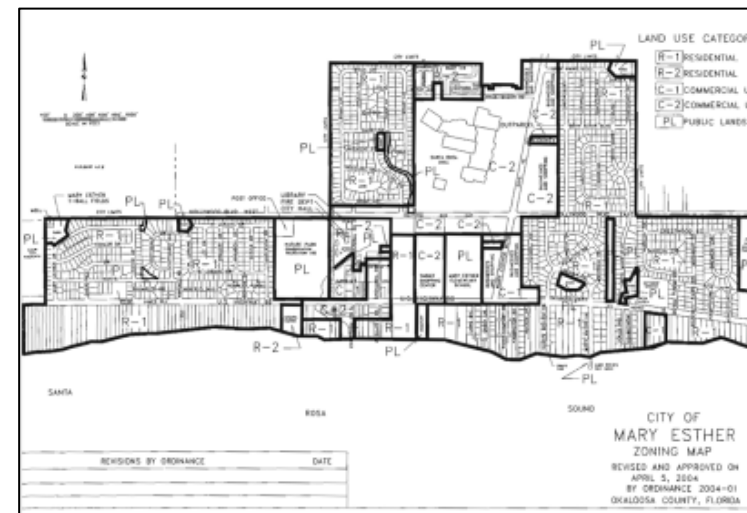
A well written plan simplifies the task of approving individual development requests and ordinance changes.



Comp Plan v. Zoning



- Regulates Future Land Uses
- High level vision



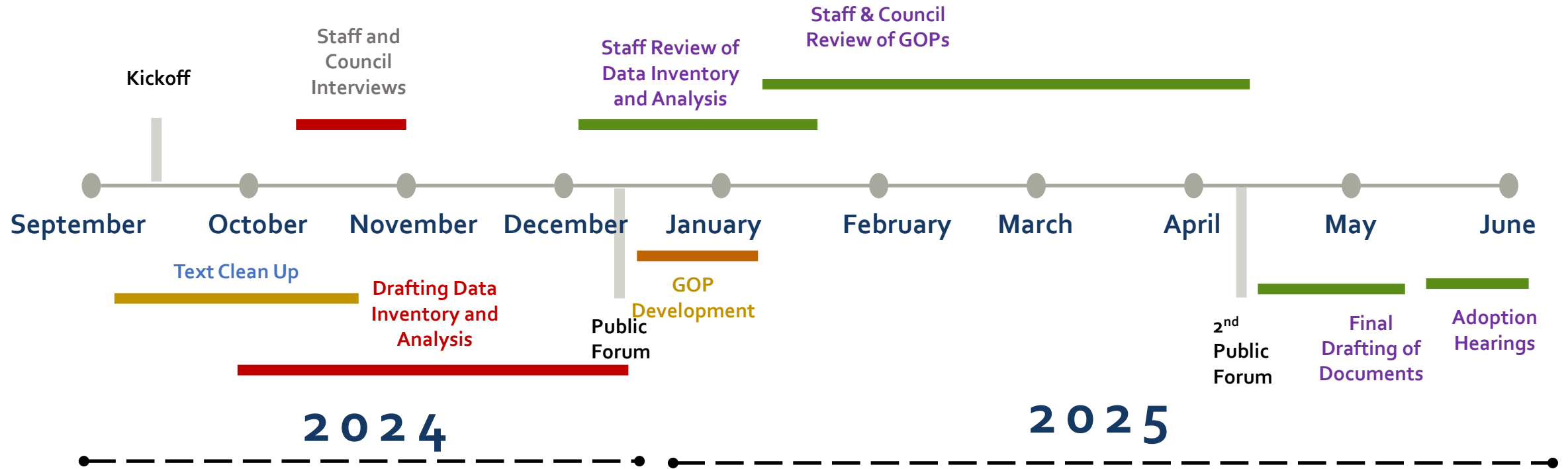
- Regulates the way land is used today
- Specific Application

1. Update Planning Horizon
At least 10-year and 20-year planning horizons
2. Add in the required 2021 Property Rights Element
3. Overall updates to reflect changes in the City since last major update in 2010
4. State Deadline of February 28





Timeline (Updated)



- Grammar and clarity changes
- Restructured and simplified document
- Removed references to outdated City Land Development Code and Florida Statutes
- Updated best practices where appropriate
- Creates new Annual Comprehensive Plan Review and Goal Setting Session

Introduction

Definitions

A – Future Land Use Element

B – Transportation Element

C – Housing Element

D – Infrastructure Element

E – Coastal Management and Conservation Element

F – Recreation and Open Space Element

G – Intergovernmental Coordination Element


H – Capital Improvements Element

I – Public School Facilities Element

J – Property Right Element (new)

Major Updates:


- Clarified descriptions and creation of new Future Land Use Categories
- Creation of **Town Center** and **Soundside Overlay**
- Inclusion of Concurrency Management (previously a separate section)
- Updated Future Land Use Map

FUTURE LAND USE 

ELEMENT A - FUTURE LAND USE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Pursuant to Section 163.3177(6)(a), F.S., the following represents the Future Land Use Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the City of Mary Esther. In addition to statutory requirements, the Goals, Objectives, and Policies were developed in keeping with the character, conditions, both environmental and social, and desires of the community. Goals, Objectives, and Policies are intended to address the establishment of a long-term end towards which the land use programs and activities of the community are ultimately directed.

The included Future Land Use Map Series is, by reference, made a part of this Ordinance including all future amendments, revisions, and updates. The Future Land Use Map Series may be amended by following the requirements in Florida Statutes Section 163.3184.

GOAL A1
 **Manage and regulate land uses, locations, and densities to ensure the promotion, protection, and improvement of public, health safety, and welfare of the residents of the City of Mary Esther.**

Objective A1-1 - Coordinate future land growth and development with the appropriate topography, soil conditions, and availability of facilities and services to protect the public health, safety, and welfare through the adoption, implementation, and enforcement of land development regulations.

Policy A1-1a - The City's Land Development Regulations shall be maintained in the City's adopted Land Development Code (LDC).

Policy A1-1b - The LDC shall contain specific and detailed provisions to implement this Ordinance including, as a minimum, the following:

- a. Regulation of the subdivision of land (reference Article 2, Section 13 - Land Development Code);
- b. Regulation of the use of land by zoning districts which implement the land use categories shown on the Future Land Use Map (reference Chapter 21 - City Code);
- c. Ensure compatibility of adjacent land uses (reference Chapter 21 - City Code);
- d. Provide for open space (reference **Element F** of this Ordinance);
- e. Protect potable water wellfields and sources (reference **Policy E2-2a**);

City of Mary Esther Vision 2040 - Volume 1: Goals, Objectives, and Policies
Page 400

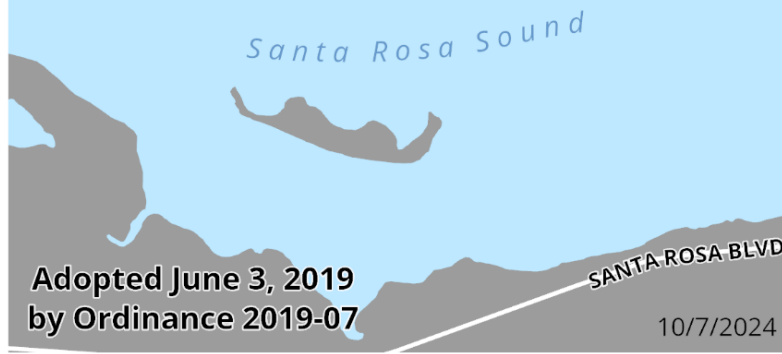
Future Land Use Map (Current)



CITY OF MARY ESTHER - FUTURE LAND USE MAP - 2040

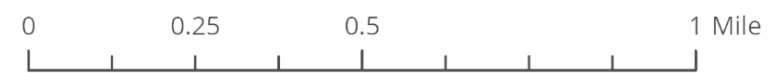
- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Residential (LDR) | Mary Esther City Limits |
| Residential (MDR) | Fort Walton Beach |
| Commercial Use (C) | Military |
| Conservation Use (CON) | Unincorporated |
| Public Lands (PL) | Water |
| Recreation Use (REC) | |
| REC/CON | |

Source: City of Mary Esther,
Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024)
For planning purposes only.

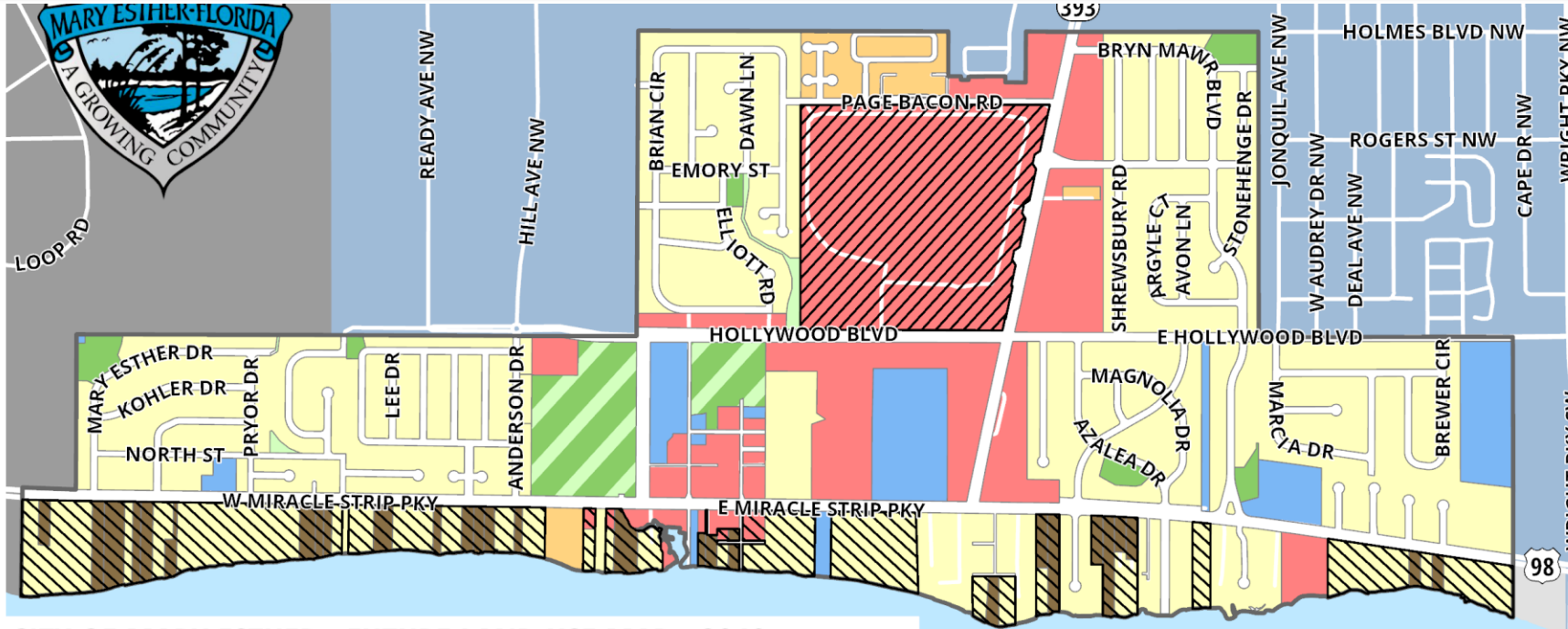


Adopted June 3, 2019
by Ordinance 2019-07

10/7/2024



Future Land Use Map (Proposed)



CITY OF MARY ESTHER - FUTURE LAND USE MAP - 2040

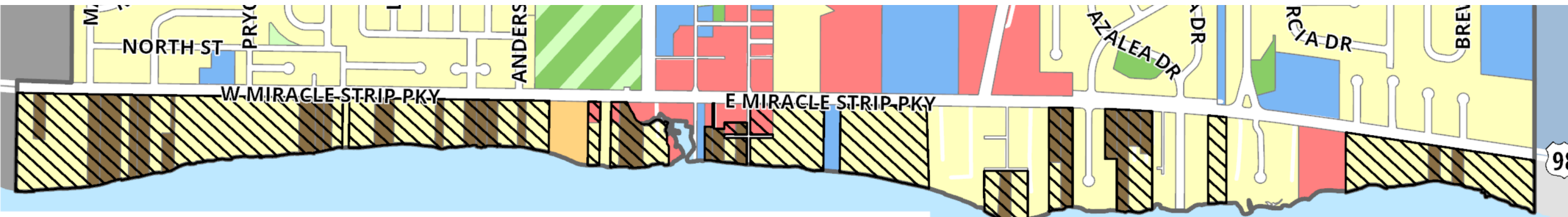
- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| Residential (LDR) | Town Center District |
| Residential (MDR) | Soundside Overlay District |
| Commercial Use (C) | Mary Esther City Limits |
| Conservation Use (CON) | Fort Walton Beach |
| Public Lands (PL) | Military |
| Recreation Use (REC) | Unincorporated |
| REC/CON | |
| Historic Duplex Cottage District (HDCD) | |



Source: City of Mary Esther, Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024)
For planning purposes only.

Updated through Ord. 2024-05
4/4/2025

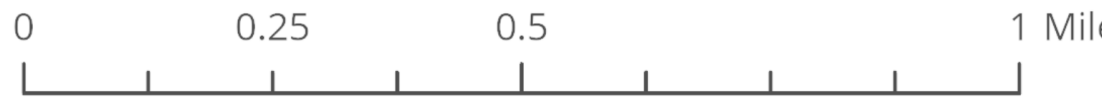
Future Land Use Map (Current)



CITY OF MARY ESTHER - FUTURE LAND USE MAP - 2040

- | | |
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| Historic Duplex Cottage District (HDCD) | |

Source: City of Mary Esther, Okaloosa County, ECRC (2024)
For planning purposes only.



Updated through
Ord. 2024-05

4/4/2025

Major Updates:

- Clarified and strengthened references to nonmotorized transportation.
- New Policy on working with FDOT and the OCSD to alleviate queuing on US 98.
- Inclusion of new transportation technologies
- References to an encouragement of bike and pedestrian infrastructure in the new Town Center overlay.



Major Updates:

- Promotion of a wide variety of housing types including “missing middle” housing, mixed-use development, and adaptive reuse.
- Dedication to reviewing and improving the city’s regulatory and permitting program.



Major Updates:

- Updated goals surrounding wastewater disposal to allow for flexibility in exploring future solutions.
- Clarified current solid waste management practices.
- Removed specific recycling goals.
- Removed water saving device ordinance reference previously required by state statute



Major Updates:

- Updated goals to reflect the statewide Resilient Florida standards.
- Updated references to the County's Local Mitigation Strategy and regional Hurricane Evacuation Study.
- Added Florida Friendly Landscaping as a potential alternative to current xeriscape requirements



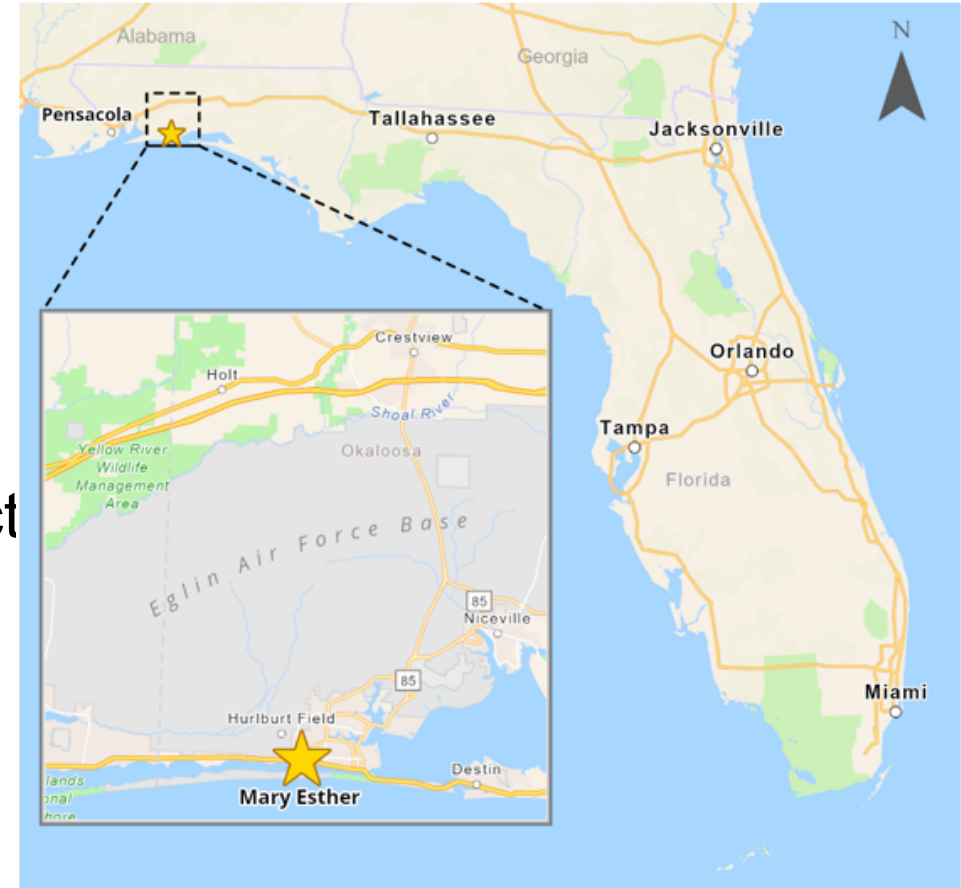
Major Updates:

- Creates new category of Park ‘Town Center Park’
- Updated references to upcoming Bike, Ped, Trail Plan for Okaloosa-Walton TPO.
- Added references to community gardens and the farmer’s market.
- Modified references to tourism development organizations.



Major Updates:

- Clarified importance of intergovernmental coordination and updated references to recent coordination efforts.
- Eliminated or modified references to defunct organizations, plans and agreements.



CITY OF MARY ESTHER - LOCATION MAP

Source: FDEP, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USFWS, FDEP, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA

Major Updates:

- Added in updated inventory of capital improvements
- Included Level of Service standards for Roadways, Sewer, Solid Waste, Drainage, Potable Water, Recreation and Open Space, and Public School Facilities
- Establishes new Annual Goal Setting Process



Major Updates:

- Added a direct reference to support the development of a new primary access drive for Mary Esther Elementary School.
- Clarified support for Safe Routes to School
- Removed references to outdated schools plans and maps



Major Updates:

- Added in state recommended language to protect property owner's rights.
- Clarified current notice and hearing procedures.





Formal Adoption

- LPA Public Hearing and Recommendation
- Council Transmittal Hearing (First Reading)
- Transmittal to State and Agency Review (expedited review)
- Adoption Hearing (Second Reading)
- Final Submittal and Appeal Window

Thank You

Ada Clark, Community and Economic Development Director
Ada.Clark@ECRC.org

Eric Christianson, Planner
Eric.Christianson@ECRC.org