2026
Conservation Lands Management Plan
for
Temple Mound Park

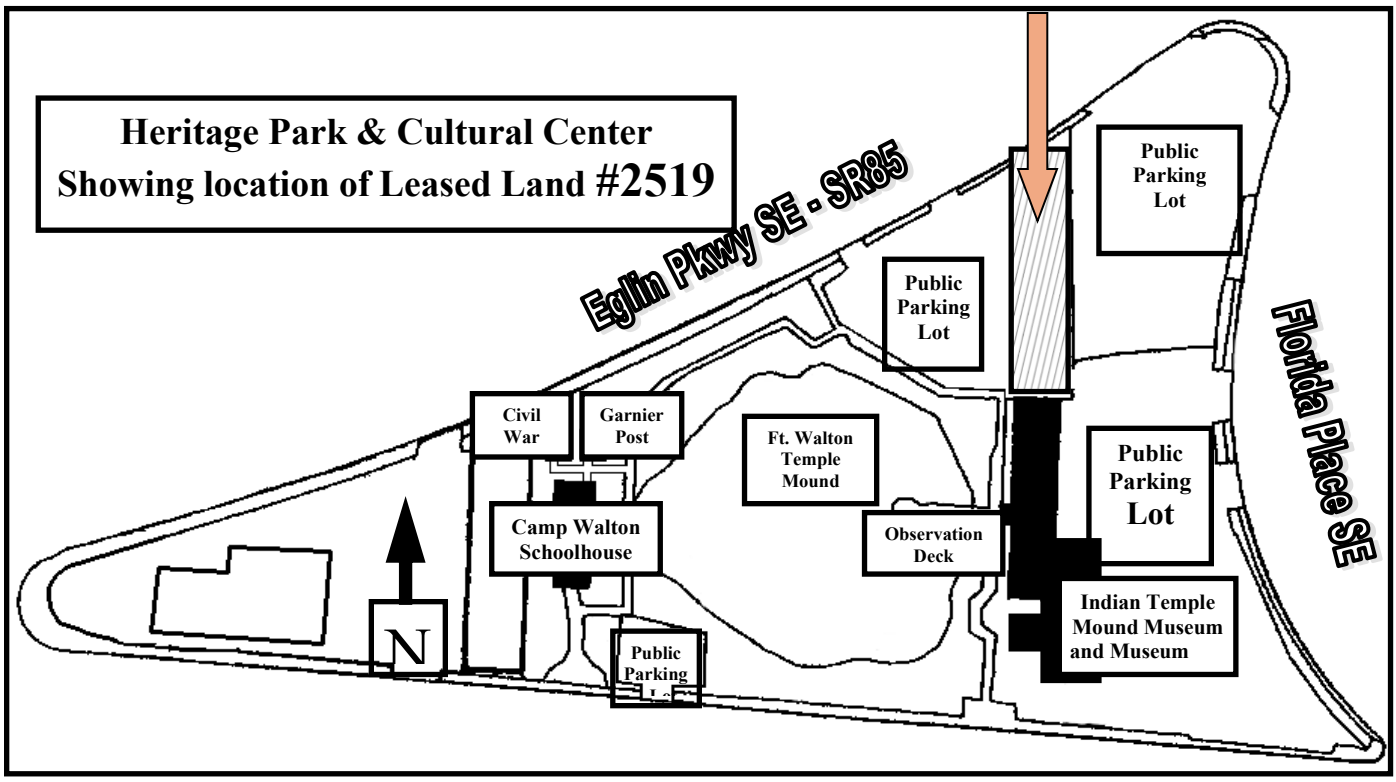


Common Name of the Property: Temple Mound Park

Lease Number: 2519 **Acres**: less than .30 acres

Managing Agency: The City of Fort Walton Beach and the City of Fort Walton Beach Heritage Park & Cultural Center

Property Manager: Gail Lynn Meyer, Museum Manager
City of Fort Walton Beach Heritage Park and Cultural Center
139 Miracle Strip Parkway SE, Fort Walton Beach, Florida 32548
(850) 833-9595 FAX (850) 833-9675



Conservation Management Plan 2026

This management plan form is intended for Board of Trustees leases and subleases of conservation properties that are less than 160 acres. It is intended to address the requirements of Chapter 253.034, 259.032259.105, and rule 18-2.021. Attachments to, or expansion of this form are welcome, if the space provided below is not sufficient. Please answer all of the items below and number all attachments and reference them in the appropriate location below. You are under no obligation to use this form. Any plan format is acceptable, provided it includes all of the appropriate items from the above-mentioned statutes and rules. This form is available in electronic format upon request. For additional information pertaining to management plans, please visit the Division of State Lands Stewardship page on the web at https://floridadep.gov/lands/environmental-services/content/land-stewardship.



A. General Information

1. **Common name of the property**: Temple Mound Park. The Temple Mound Park Conservation Area is named after the Fort Walton Temple Mound which is a National Historic Landmark located immediately adjacent west of the park.

2. **Lease number**: #2519

3. **Acres**: 0.30

4. **Managing Agency:** The City of Fort Walton Beach Heritage Park and Cultural Center (HPCC) operates and manages the property. HPCC is a division of the City of Fort Walton Beach Recreation & Cultural Services Division

5. **Provide an executive summary/description of this property that includes a brief description of the resources, uses and proposed uses, outstanding features etc.**

   The property is located in Okaloosa County, Florida, slightly north of the Santa Rosa Sound within the city of Fort Walton Beach. The 3.3-acre property contains hardwood hammock vegetation dominated by live oak, pignut hickory. The adjacent property contains the Fort Walton Temple Mound, a flat-topped, truncated pyramid. It was built by the Prehistoric People living here between AD700 and AD1650 during the Mississippian Time Period. The mound is approximately 1 square acre at its base and is 12-15 feet high. It was made from sand, shell and clay from the surrounding area.

   This temple mound is one of the most outstanding artifacts made by the people living here along the coast. About 40% of the mound has been examined and many artifacts from the surrounding area are on exhibit inside The Indian Temple Mound Museum.

See Attachment 1: Map: The City of Fort Walton Beach, Park Areas



Temple Mound Park is part of a larger complex called the City of Fort Walton Beach Heritage Park and Cultural Center

(Picture at left: Shows the Leased Land as it is seen from Highway 85. Looking South – the building at the center of the picture is the Indian Temple Mound Museum)

The City of Fort Walton Beach Heritage Park & Cultural Center consists of:
The Indian Temple Mound Museum (picture 1)
The Camp Walton Schoolhouse Museum (picture 2)
The Garnier Post Office Museum (picture 3)
The Civil War Exhibits Building (picture 4)
The Fort Walton Temple Mound (picture 5)
The Temple structure (picture 6)
Storage area (picture 7)
Restroom Facilities (picture 8, demolished 2024)
Museum Store (picture 9, built 2025)



Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3



Picture 4



Picture 5



Picture 6



Picture 7



Picture 8



Picture 9

The northmost section of the Temple Mound Park is a shell and gravel parking area used as overflow for the museum complex asphalted parking area. It is primarily used to park buses for the nearly 4000 school children who visit the museum complex each year for fieldtrips. (picture 10)



Picture 10



Picture 11

A lift station for sewage was added to the southeastern edge of the property. Please note that a wooden property fence has been removed since last report. (picture 11)



There is a small capacity garbage container with a cement platform located on the western edge of the property. (picture 12)



There is a 12x20 foot metal storage shed on skids (no cement platform or footers) located approximately in the middle of the property. (picture 13)



At the northernmost portion of Temple Mound Park is an asphalted drive that brings handicapped visitors to the main museum entrance boardwalk. This asphalted area also contains the steps to the staff entrance to the Indian Temple Mound Museum building and the air units for the complex. There are two staff parking spots adjacent to the air unit. (picture 14)



There is a stormwater drain (1-foot-deep box) that begins at the very northern edge of the Temple Mound Park property and continues approximately 140 feet due south towards Highway 98 meaning that only the box itself is on the property. (picture 15)

6. **Attach a map showing the location and boundaries of the property including:**
   a) The location and type of structures or improvements currently on the property. **See Attachment 2: Map of "Heritage Park & Cultural Center Map of Facility and Site Use."**
   b) The location and type of proposed improvements. There are no proposed improvements to the property at this time.

7. **A map showing the proximity of this managed area to other conservation areas within 10 miles. (see Attachment 3)**

8. Please attach a **legal description** of the property**.** (see **Attachment 4** lease agreement)

To determine a point of beginning, start at a point 2,323.00 feet east of northwest corner of Section 24, Township 2 South, Range 24 West, Fort Walton Beach, Okaloosa County, Florida. Then proceed South to the South right-of-way line of State Road 85, thence South 276.65 feet, thence West 50 feet, thence North 241.73 feet to the South line of State Road 85, thence in a Northeasterly direction along said right-of-way line (R=2,222.84') 61.02 feet to the point of beginning.

9. **Provide a physical description of the land including a quantitative data description of the land which includes an inventory of forest and other natural resource, exotic and invasive plants, hydrologic features, infrastructure including recreational facilities, and other significant land, cultural or historical features.**

Temple Mound Park is partially wooded and is comprised primarily of a mixed hardwood forest. Due to the relatively small size of the property, biodiversity is limited. Adjacent property supports a small urban wildlife population, subsisting primarily on the generous nuts available from the live oak and pignut hickory. The nutrient rich nature of these hardwoods means that future management of this partially forested Conservation Area will be focused on invasive plant removal. The property consists of a mature stand of trees including pignut hickory, southern magnolia and live oak. Longleaf pines, cabbage palms, sable palms and cedar trees are also present. There is minimal ground cover consisting of saw palmetto, leaf deposit and small live oak fingerlings.

The infrastructure consists of underground cable and fiber optic lines, a no-longer active gas line that remains underground, a storm drain box, asphalted and shell/gravel capped parking areas. A sewer lift station is located on the property, but feeds to the east away from the property. The most significant land features are the fully mature live oak trees.

The tree canopy of this area is made up of pignut hickory, live oak, southern magnolia, buckeye and several species of palm. An inventory of Invasive – Non-Native Plant Species has not been completed for this area, but it cherry laurels have been removed. The property is plagued by a small but persistent growth of invasive wild sunflowers, Boston Fern and wisteria. All are removed when found.

Animals typically found in this type of urban environment include box turtle, eastern glass lizard, green anole, broadhead skink, ground skink, wood rat, feral cats, raccoons, gray squirrels and armadillos. At present, a more detailed inventory of mammals and birds is not planned for this area. We have partnered in the past with local Audubon bird watchers for bird counts and night bat watches. There is an osprey nest to the north of the property and a red-tailed hawk who finds our squirrels particularly tasty or easy to catch. We realize that urban parks such as this provide an especially important role to adults and children as they become "city intensive." For too many the possibility of encountering birds or seeing a raccoon or an opossum is becoming all too uncommon. As wildlife habitat is fragmented, oasis environments like these take on critical importance. That means it is doubly important for the urban plants and animals to be protected from people. These pockets of forest in the center of a city can become learning environments with no parallel. Developing an appreciation of and an understanding of urban wild plants and animals can help students to see the workings of their world and its fragile nature.

The .30acre Temple Mound Park is within the larger City of Fort Walton Beach Heritage Park & Cultural Center's property of 3.3 acres. Typical park, museum and downtown activity centers are located of the 3.3-acre parcel including 4 museums structures. Passive Recreational Resources are centered on bird watching and access to other areas for picnicking, museum visits, mound exploration and the like. Cultural resources include deposits dating from the Archaic to the Mississippian Time Periods. Recreational resources include parking areas, access areas, information kiosks, museum facilities, benches and walkways and a handicap accessible informational trail with plant signage.

Recreational outdoor activities are felt to be a great way to teach about wildlife conservation. Using a conservation area, no matter how small, to teach about protecting resources is the responsibility of every staff member. Visitors to the complex are shown how necessary it is to protect such sites to ensure safe and sustainable outdoor use. The museums support scout projects, urban wildlife viewing and local bird counts. Wildlife viewing activities, especially birding, is a popular activity among residents and nonresidents alike. Such activities bring customers not only to the museum complex, but the downtown merchants as well.

10. **A brief description of soil types**, attaching USDA maps when available.
In general, mixed hardwoods occur on generally sandy-clays or clayey sands with substantial organic components. There is a layer of leaf mulch which helps conserve soil moisture and retain soil use. The following soil information for on-site soils was gathered from the field notes of Dr. Charles Fairbanks, Florida State University. The subsoil of the vicinity is primarily white beach sand cut by a complex of root disturbances. Dense, black soils result from the extended periods of occupational site use. Locally there are heavy deposits of tan, hard sand called hardpan. As tree roots penetrate this hardpan the roots create black deposits of organic materials. The white sands are often capped by a black, humic stained deposit represented a buried horizon. These bands average 4-6 inches in depth. This area is nearly level and well-drained. Typically, the surface layer is 4-6 inches in depth. The subsurface layer is white beach, fine sand to a depth of often 40-60 inches before water table is reached.

11. **Is the property adjacent to an aquatic preserve or designated area of critical state concern?** YES ____ NO __X___

There are no aquatic preserves nearby, but the property is immediately adjacent to the Fort Walton Temple Mound (8OK6) which is a National Historic Landmark and a Blue Star Memorial. This archaeological site is a temple mound dating to the Mississippian Time Period and is the cultural type site for the Fort Walton Culture. The Indian Temple Mound Museum is also in the area and although of itself has no archaeological value, does contain educational displays, exhibits or hosts programs with direct relation to the archaeological site itself.

12. Was the property acquired by a conservation land acquisition program?
YES ____ NO __X___ **If YES, please identify.**

13. **Do any agency-specific statute requirements or legislative/executive directives constrain the use of the property?** (These restrictions can frequently be found in the lease) YES _____ NO _X____ If YES, please identify: _____

14 Are **there any reservations or encumbrances on the property?**
YES __X___ NO _____
If YES, please identify: Simple reverter clause for the temple mound itself stating that it must be used a city park or for recreational uses or it will revert from City ownership to prior donor. This clause pertains to the temple mound property only but would provide guidelines for use of the property as a whole.

B. Natural and Cultural Resources

15. Are there any archeological or historical sites on this property?

YES _X____ NO _____

If YES,

A) **How do you plan to locate, protect and preserve these resources**?

The leased property has been affected by its position between two major roadways (Highway 98 to the south and Highway 85 to the north). Prior to the 1950's the northern portion of the property was leveled and shaped to prepare for the construction of Highway 85. However, when Highway 98 to the south was widened to 4 lanes in 1966, archaeological monitoring showed that deposits were heavily disturbed in the upper layers but were consistently intact at lower levels. There is sufficient reason to believe that a similar situation will exist on this property and that intact archaeological remains should be present at depth. Mature trees are now to be found on the property and there is no expectation that further construction will take place. The mature trees show that in the past there has been at least 10-18 inches of soil removal and the existing parking area is a crushed shell and gravel lot with no water runoff issues and is not actively graded or leveled. There is no expectation of further disturbance on this property. The museum complex agrees with others that the excavation of a non-endangered archaeological site is to be discouraged. This site faces no threat of development. The temple mound itself functions as a time capsule left undisturbed for the future, so do the surrounding park areas. In the past the Heritage Park Staff has worked with The Emerald Coast Archaeological Society (local FAS chapter) and the cultural resources management firm Prentice Thomas and Associates, Inc. Both of these organizations are closed/retired. Heritage park now has a working partnership with the University of West Florida and has access to advice from the Southeastern Division of the Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN). Staff and city police watch for looting and vandalism and illegal site use activities with walked rounds and nightly patrols.

Locating, protecting and preserving resources is all about generating awareness and utilizing the above partnerships. It must include cooperation with federal and state agencies, local governments, organizations and individuals who have a stake in and an interest in ensuring that historic resources are planned for and made a part of the development process. The City of Fort Walton Beach has a Planning and Zoning Division and a Land Development Code which addresses these issues.

The City must work in partnership with its citizens to take appropriate action to protect, preserve, interpret, and promote areas where heritage tourism and conservation areas can benefit the community. They already recognize that

interpretation of historic resources, by supporting the museum complex, can be used to foster an appreciation of Florida history and culture.

The City has procedures in its Land Development Code that address the use of historic properties and realize that there are professional standards for the preservation of historic resources. There is an archaeologically sensitive area map which governs development in the area. The City realizes that all planned activities involving known archaeological or historic sites must be coordinated with the Division of Historical Resources. As per 267.061(2) and 267.13, F.S., combined with those in 267.061(3) and 253.034(4), F.S. it is known that plans must be coordinated at a sufficiently early stage to preclude inadvertent damage or destruction to known or potentially occurring archaeological and historic sites.

Our archaeological area is a known significant site and as such is viewed especially critically by both the City and the public who respect its current uses and would wish to be a part of any future planned activities differing significantly from the present use. The City staff and site manager are always looking for ways to minimize damage to the site. The City is also aware of the provisions pertaining to human burial sites and follows them. No excavation or collection of historical or archaeological materials is allowed on the managed properties and the use of metal detectors is not allowed in any City parks.

Our site already contains interpretative signage which was monitored when placed and increases public understanding of the site. Staff has developed interpretive programs for scouts and students and uses its exhibits to increase awareness of the importance of the archaeological site and its place in the community.

B) **Please describe the actions the agency plans to take to locate and identify unknown resources such as surveys of unknown archeological or historical sites.** Temple Mound Park was placed in Conservation to provide controlled access to the Fort Walton Temple Mound and Indian Temple Mound Museum. As such, this partially forested area will be managed as a recreational space with controlled public access. Future improvements that have been identified are management of invasive plant species that may harm the long-term health of the plant communities. There are currently no plans to locate and identify unknown resources on the property. There are no plans for disturbance, construction, excavation or other ground penetrating activities on the property in the foreseeable future. Should this change, archaeological advisors would be brought in and contact would be made with SHPO to determine the best course of action prior to start of project.

The property is within the City of Fort Walton Beach Archaeologically Sensitive Zone **(see Attachment 5:** Archaeologically Sensitive Zone within Fort Walton Beach City Limits**)** and has had baseline archaeological surveys conducted in the area. Whenever activities of archaeological interest take place in the area staff try to be involved and have worked to encourage local university staff to be involved in archaeological and historic surveys of the area.

16. **Are there any buildings on the property that are fifty or more years old?**
YES _____ NO __X___

If YES

A) Please identify_____

NOTE: Although the State Leased Lands do not contain historic structures, The Indian Temple Mound Museum was constructed in 1970 making it currently 56 years old. Less than 100 yards adjacent to the leased property is the Camp Walton Schoolhouse Museum. It was constructed in 1912 and is 114 years old. However, it is not on its original location and has been moved to the property to secure its future and make it a part of the museum complex. Near the schoolhouse is the Garnier Post Office Museum which was constructed in 1918 making it 108 years old. However, it is not on its original location and has been moved to the property to secure its future and make it a part of the museum complex. Both properties along with the Fort Walton Temple Mound are recorded in the Florida Site files.

B) **Have these buildings been evaluated by a historian or historic architect to determine their historical and/or architectural significance.**
If YES, please identify both the building(s) and the evaluators(s)
_NA_____

C) Please state whether any such buildings are listed in the Florida Master Site File, National Register of Historic Places or a local register of historic places and identify such buildings.
__NA_____

By law, the managing agency must consult with the Division of Historical Resources with regard to any proposed land clearing or ground disturbing activities or with regard to any proposed rehabilitation, restoration or demolition of structures 50 or more years old.

Please contact the Division of Historic Resources if you would like to obtain information on archeological/historical sites. Division of Historical Resources, Florida Department of State, R.A. Gray Building, MS-8, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250 (850) 245-6312

17) **Please identify natural resources on the property that are listed in the Florida Natural Areas Inventory**.
With the exception of Bear Grass located on the adjacent Fort Walton Temple Mound, there are no known threatened or endangered species on the Temple Mound Park property.

18. **Are any imperiled natural communities, unique natural features, or any State and federally listed endangered or threatened plant or animal species, on site?**
YES _X____ NO _____

If YES, please provide a specific description of how you plan to identify, locate, protect and preserve these species. One of the mature hickorys on the property is a feeding and resting area frequented by a mated pair of red-tailed hawks. They also rest in a mature hickory atop the temple mound. There is evidence of owl and osprey on the property, although their nesting areas must surely be to the south of the property along Santa Rosa Sound. There are no nests to monitor, but the birds are frequently in the area, and the staff are aware of and acknowledge their presence. The local Audubon Society has urban bird watching activities in the area and are also aware of their presence. Two of our volunteers are avid bird watchers and members of the local society.

If you would like further information regarding natural resources or endangered species please contact the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI)

Florida Natural Areas Inventory
1018 Thomasville Road, Suite 200-C, Tallahassee, Florida 32303
(850) 224-8207

19. **Please identify the water resources including swamps, marshes or other wetlands, on the property including the water quality classification for each water body and if the water body has been designated "Outstanding Florida Waters".**
There are no standing or flowing water sources on the property. Santa Rosa Sound is located less than one mile to the south. A streamlet is present on the property, which prior to 1946 and the creation of the highway, was redirected into underground channels and drains into the Santa Rosa Sound. This streamlet appears to have been the natural water source present during the use of the Fort Walton Temple Mound prior to European contact. The area hydrology of the area**:** occasionally inundated. This means that surface water is present only after heavy rains.

20. **Are any known mineral resources, such as oil, gas and phosphates, or any unique natural features, such as coral reefs, beaches, dunes, natural springs, caverns, large sinkholes, virgin timber stands, scenic vistas, and natural rivers and**

streams, and outstanding native landscapes containing relatively unaltered flora, fauna, and geological features on site? YES _____ NO _X____

If YES, please identify and provide locations on a map. __NA _____

21. Are there fish or wildlife resources (both game and non-game) on the property?
YES _____ NO _X____
If Yes- Please describe-__NA _____

C. Use of the Property

22. Please provide a statement of the purpose for which the lands were acquired, the projected use or uses as defined in s. 253.034, and the statutory authority you have for such uses.

Lease #2519 clearly states that the property agreement "is for the specific purpose of public outdoor recreational, park, conservation and related purposes."

Chapter 7 of the City of Fort Walton Beach Code of Ordinances establishes the existence of Cultural Centers and Museums as well as parks and outdoor spaces and controls the uses and mission of them.
www.fwb.org/images/fwb/City_Clerk/Code_of_Ord/VOL_II_CODE/Chapter_7_-_Leisure__Recreation_Services

23. Please state the desired outcome for this property, and key management activities necessary to achieve the desired outcome, including public access.

This property provides support capabilities for the larger complex and is an essential component of the appearance of the property as a whole and of the community at large. This area provides a forested oasis in the heart of an urban center. It is an entrance which sets the tone for the museum visit. It is used for picnicking and parking and to enjoy the space as a whole. It is freely open to the public and is utilized as a park or outdoor recreational area. Management of the property must be centered on maintaining its appearance, usefulness and sustainability by controlling use and balancing preservation of the archaeological nature of the property with its conservation possibilities in the heart of downtown Fort Walton Beach.

24. **Please state the single or multiple uses currently made of the property and if the property is single use, please provide an analysis of its potential for multiple-use.**
Single _____ multiple _X____ use/s is/are:

Temple Mound Park is part of a larger complex called the City of Fort Walton Beach Heritage Park and Cultural Center. Recreational resources include parking areas, public restrooms, access areas, information kiosks, benches and walkways and a handicap accessible informational trail with plant signage. This property provides support

capabilities for the larger complex and is an essential component of the appearance of the property as a whole and of the community at large. It is an entrance which sets the tone for the museum visit. This property:

- Contains hardwood hammock vegetation dominated by live oak, pignut hickory.
- Contains a crushed shell/gravel parking area used as overflow for the museum complex asphalted parking area. It is primarily used to park buses and larger RVs.
- Contains a lift station for sewage
- Contains a small capacity garbage container
- Contains a 12x20 foot metal storage shed on skids
- Contains an asphalted drive that brings handicapped visitors to the main museum entrance boardwalk. This asphalted area also contains the steps to the staff entrance to the Indian Temple Mound Museum building and the air units for the complex. There are two staff parking spots adjacent to the air unit.
- Contains a stormwater drain
- Contains underground cable and fiber optic lines and a no longer active gas line
- Contains areas for bird watching
- Is the access point to other areas used for picnicking, museum visits, mound exploration, lunch break area, and for walking for exercise.
- Contains cultural resource deposits dating from the Archaic to the Mississippian Time Periods.

The property is part of a larger whole:

- Adjacent to the Indian Temple Mound Museum (constructed in 1970 making it currently 42 years old), the Camp Walton Schoolhouse Museum (constructed in 1912 making it currently 100 years old. Moved to this location in 2006.), the Garnier Post Office Museum (constructed in 1918 making it currently 94 years old. Moved to this location in 2006), and the Civil War Exhibits Building (new construction).
- Adjacent to public restroom facilities (inside Museum Store).
- Adjacent to the Fort Walton Temple Mound and the temple structure atop the mound. This adjacent property supports a small urban wildlife population. The Fort Walton Temple Mound is a National Historic Landmark and a Blue Star Memorial. Dates to the Mississippian Time Period and is the type site for the Fort Walton Culture.

25. **Were multiple uses considered but not adopted?** YES _____ NO __X___

If YES, please describe why. __NA _____

26. **Please provide an analysis of the potential use of private land managers to facilitate the restoration or management of these lands**. The City of Fort Walton Beach is the intended use manager and other private managers are not needed at this time.

27. Please provide an analysis of the potential of the property to generate revenues to enhance the management of the property.

This property appears to have no intended use designed to generate revenue. It is available without charge and without restriction (no locked gates). However, recreation and tourism have formed an economic base and have been an economic driver in our community since the early 1900's. The Indian Temple Mound Museum is a destination location for local visitors as well as national and international tourism. These visitors represent billions in tourist spending and multiple jobs that support the tourism industry. In this light, the small, leased land contributes to the overall revenue of the museum complex by providing tree-shaded parking and larger school bus and RV parking. School fieldtrips are a major source of revenue for the museum complex with over 4000 students visiting and generating close to $8,000.00 in admission revenue each year. As overflow parking the lot contributes to the nearly 10,000 visitors who generate $30,500 in admissions and an addition $45,000 in sales each year. In addition, the lot is used for community downtown festivals, art walks, fireworks, parades, etc., generating a huge influx of community money. The museum complex is owned and operated by the City of Fort Walton Beach and all monies generated in revenues go directly into the financial accounts which provide landscaping, maintenance, mowing, weed control, etc. and provide the salaries to museum staff which support the exhibits and complex which bring visitors into the area.

28. **Describe the projected, current and recent past uses of the property, and any unauthorized uses, if known**. This property was used as support for the museum complex from the very beginning. Local area parks are known to offer year-round outdoor activities for all ages while offering a glimpse into Florida's historic and cultural heritage. The goal of the City of Fort Walton Beach Heritage Park & Cultural Center is to create a sense of place by showing visitors the rich history of this cultural site. The property and adjacent areas are managed and preserved for enjoyment by this and future generations through providing appropriate resource-based recreational opportunities, interpretation and education experiences.

The use of this area as a park was designed to enhance quality of life, making the area a more desirable and attractive place to live, work and raise a family. The downtown park and museum complex has anchored the community business district and encouraged businesses to relocate here. Employees enjoy the area for lunch breaks while others use the stairs and paved walking areas for exercise. Tourists are here mostly for beach activities but viewing wildlife and visiting a cultural site are known to be additional activities for tourists and this site plays a role in that larger picture.

The use of this property as bus parking developed 10+ years ago when repaving of Highway 85 eliminated the on-road parking areas used for bus parking since the 1970's. The lift station is a recent addition to support growth of the complex as well as the surrounding community.

Although unauthorized garbage dumping and homeless camping has taken place in the past, these activities have been curbed with the addition of area street lighting and aggressive police patrols in the area.

29. **Do the planned uses impact renewable and non-renewable resources on the property?** YES _____ NO __X___

If YES, please describe what specific activities will be taken to protect or enhance and conserve those resources and to compensate/mitigate the damage that is caused by the impacting use. _NA _____

30. **Should any parcels of land within or adjacent to the property be purchased because they are essential to management of the property?**
YES _____ NO _X____ IF YES, please attach a map of this area.

31. **Are there any portions of this property no longer needed for your use?**
YES _____ NO _X____ IF YES, please attach a map of this area.

32. **Please describe what public uses and public access that would be consistent with the purpose for which this property was acquired.**
In the future it is conceivable that the Indian Temple Mound Museum could wish to add additional exhibit/work/storage space. Such a proposed addition would reach into the asphalted non-forested part of the property and would enhance overall use of the property. It is conceivable that additional historic structures could be added to the complex and this area could provide additional space for their relocation and preservation.

33. **Assess the feasibility of managing the lands >40 contiguous acres as a recipient site for gopher tortoises** consistent with rules of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, as prepared by the agency or cooperatively with a Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission wildlife biologist. Not Applicable.

34. **Economic feasibility of establishing a gopher tortoise recipient site, including the initial cost, recurring management costs and the revenue projections**. Not Applicable.

D. Management Activities

35. **If more than one agency manages this property, describe the management responsibilities of each agency and how such responsibilities will be coordinated.**

The City of Fort Walton Beach owns and operates Heritage Park & Cultural Center. The museum staff have access to all areas of service maintenance, building maintenance, and grounds crews whose specialize in weed control and landscaping issues. All are coordinated under the direction of the Parks and Cultural Services Director, David Flaherty, and with the approval of Museum Manager, Gail Lynn Meyer. Needs beyond the abilities of the City staff (large tree removal as an example) would be coordinated by the City but contracted out.

36. **Please discuss management needs and problems on the property including conservation of soil and water resources and control and prevention of soil erosion and water and soil contamination.**

Soil erosion is the property's biggest issue. Portions of the site are used as an overflow parking area so compacted soil must be considered. This area has been covered with crushed shell and gravel. It drains well and is a user-friendly surface for human activity. It must be maintained which we do without heavy grading – allowing the use of the area without added fill. The largest source of potential soil contamination is the presence of the Highway. Road contaminants are possible, but the City has crews capable of handling any issues on an as needed basis.

37. **Identify adjacent land uses that will conflict with the planned use of this property, if any.**

Immediately to the east of this property is land which could become available for sale. It is impossible to predict what business will purchase the land, but this could be a potential issue. Immediately north of the property is Highway 85. This means that pollution and thrown garbage are always an activity to be monitored. As part of a larger property, the land use is controlled on the other two sides and will remain City property utilized as a public park. New construction immediately to the north of the property taking place right now, will be multiple large commercial housing units. Increased runoff, garbage and urban contaminants are possible.

38. **Please describe measures used to prevent/control invasive, non-native plants.**

Because the property is maintained by City of Fort Walton Beach, we have access to Parks and Recreation crews who maintain ball fields and playgrounds and parks throughout the City. They are well versed in control of invasive plants and are available whenever needed. Properties are monitored and when the need arises the crews are notified of specific problems. The small size of the property means that

monitoring and awareness are the best preventative measure. Several of our volunteers are Master Gardeners and offer their advice and help freely.

39. **As required by Chapter 253.034, please describe the public or local government involvement/participation in the development of this plan.** Please provide the location and date of this public hearing. Please provide a meeting summary/minutes as an appendix. The meeting minutes will be added as part of the appendix after presentation on September 15, 2026.

40. **If an arthropod control plan has been established for this property, please include it as an attachment. If one does not exist, provide a statement as to what arrangement exists between the local mosquito control district and the managing agency. See Chapter 388.4111 regarding mosquito control on public lands.** The City of Fort Walton Beach has a partnership with Okaloosa County and they have a mosquito control program that runs from late May through October. The museum property is within the Fort Walton Beach areas that are sprayed weekly throughout that time frame.

41. Management Goals **-The following 8 goals may not all be applicable to your site. Write N/A where appropriate. Also please add as many additional goals, objectives and measures as you wish.**

	Core Objectives	Measure	Timeframe	Expenses and Manpower Budget
1	**Habitat restoration and improvement Description-**			
	Prescribe burn__NA _ acres per year	_____ acres burned per year	in 2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
	Maintain __NA __ acres per year within target fire return interval.	_____ acres within fire return interval target	in 2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
	Conduct habitat/natural community improvement on __NA____ acres	____ acres with restoration underway	in 2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
	Conduct habitat/natural community restoration activities on __NA ____ acres.	_____ acres restored	in 2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
	Conduct timber harvest for the purposes of habitat restoration on ___NA ___ acres	_____ acres harvested	in 2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____

2	**Public Access and recreational opportunities Description-**			
	Maintain public access and recreational opportunities to allow for a recreational carrying capacity of 10,000 visitors per year	Reach 10,000 visitor opportunities/year	in 2 yrs	As budgeted Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
	Develop additional public access and recreational opportunities to allow for a carrying capacity of __NA_____ visitors/day	_____ visitor opportunities/day	in 2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
	Continue to provide 250 interpretive/education programs annually	Reach 275 interpretive / education programs	in 2 yrs	As budgeted Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
	Develop at least 1 new interpretive/education program annually	Create 1 new interpretive/education programs	in 1 yr	As budgeted Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
3	**Hydrological preservation and restoration. Description-**			
	Conduct or obtain a site assessment/study to identify potential hydrology restoration needs NA	Assessment conducted? y/n	in 2 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
	Restore natural hydrologic condition and functions to __NA __ acres on site	____ acres for which hydrologic restoration is underway (planning, grant writing, earth moving, etc.)	in 2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
		____ acres for which natural hydrologic conditions and function are restored	in 2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
4	**Sustainable forest management. Description-**			
	Prepare& implement a silviculture management plan including reforestation, harvesting, prescribed burning, restoration, and timber stand improvement activities and goals. NA	Silviculture management plan complete? y/n _____acres treated	in 2 years	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
	Develop and implement a process for conducting stand descriptions and forest inventory including a GIS database containing forest stands, roads & other attributes (including but not limited to: threatened & endangered species, archeological resources, exotic species locations, historical areas)	Complete GIS database and reinventory all attributes every 3-5 years or as needed.	in 2 years	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
		____ acres of forest inventoried annually	in 2 years, and 10 years	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____

5	**Exotic and invasive species maintenance and control. Description-**			
	Annually treat _NA _ acres of EPPC Category I and Category II invasive exotic plant species.	_____ acres treated	in 2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
	Implement control measures on _NA___ exotic and nuisance animal species	_____ nuisance and exotic species for which control measures are implemented	in 2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
6	**Capital facilities and infrastructure Description-**			
	To maintain ___NA facilities, _NA ___miles of roads, and _NA___miles of trails existing on site (as applicable)	____ facilities,_____ miles roads, _____ miles trails maintained	2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
	To construct _NA____ facilities. _____miles of roads, and ____miles of trails (as applicable)	_____ facilities, _____ miles roads, _____ miles trails constructed	2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
	To improve or repair__ NA facilities. _____miles of roads, and ____miles of trails existing on site (as applicable)	_____ facilities, _____ miles roads, _____ miles trails improved or repaired	2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
7	**Cultural and historical resources Description-**			
	Ensure all known sites are recorded in the FL Division of Historical Resources Master Site file	There are 9 recorded sites within two miles on the property. We work with local archaeological groups as needed to assist in site location and preservation.	Yearly as needed	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
	Monitor 3 recorded sites and send updates to DHR Master Site file as needed	_3___ of sites monitored	as needed	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
	Bring _NA__ of ____ recorded sites/cultural resources into good condition	_____ of sites in good condition	in 2yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
8	**Imperiled species habitat maintenance, enhancement, restoration, or population restoration. Description-**			
	Develop baseline imperiled species occurrence inventory list NA	Baseline imperiled species occurrence inventory list complete y/n	in 2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
	Develop monitoring protocols for _NA_____selected imperiled species	_____ imperiled species for which monitoring protocols are developed	in 2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____
	Implement monitoring protocols for __NA_____ imperiled species	_____ species for which monitoring is ongoing	in 2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____

	[If applicable, provide additional measurable objective(s) for new or ongoing species-specific management activities for each of the priority species such as population augmentation, translocations, nest box projects, etc.]	Examples: Project-specific quantity, _____ of nestboxes, # of individuals introduced or translocated, etc.	in 2 yrs, and 10 yrs	Expense $_____ Personnel $_____

Chart 7: The property is known to contain Archeological and Historical Resources, and the museum complex already has a relationship with Department of State, Division of Archives, History and Records Management. We know how to coordinate proposals for changes in the character or use of state lands, with the Division of Archives, History and Records Management, in order to mitigate potential damage or disturbance of, or to preserve, archaeological and historical sites and properties. Although no surveys are planned for this property, the museum has been a leader in encouraging the systematic location and evaluation of significant archaeological and historical sites in the area. No digging, excavation or construction is allowed on this property due to the potential of disturbance of archaeological and historical remains.

Chart 8: The property contains vegetation that should be managed for multiple uses and reasons (aesthetics, wildlife habitat improvement, recreation). This is done by balancing use needs and site needs in a way that allows desirable vegetation cover while allowing multiple-use benefits to the citizens of the State of Florida. The museum complex needs to develop steps to reestablish indigenous species wherever possible. This is already done as the mound itself is managed. While recognizing that plants and plant communities serve as important food sources and habitat for wildlife, it has never been a specific goal and should be. The museum complex already strives to utilize the expertise of local Master Gardeners in the removal of invasive plant species.

Chart 8: Wildlife habitat is diminishing in quantity and quality due to the direct and indirect effects of urbanization. The property encourages uses such as birding and passive recreational uses that maintain habitat in an urban setting.

40. Costs: All costs are currently budgeted on an as needed basis determined by priority. Costs are absorbed by the Heritage Park organization, and unscheduled or unanticipated costs are handled by the Friends of the Museums, Inc. Additional financial support is provided by Emerald Coast Archaeological Society, Musical Echoes Native American Flute Festival and the Thunderbird Intertribal Pow Wow committee as well as generous donations from the community at large.

Activity	Yearly Estimated Cost		
	Priority Cost	Other Management Cost	Cost Effective Methods
Resource Management			
Administration			
Support			
Capitol Improvements			
Recreation Visitor Services			
Law Enforcement Activities			

43. **A finding regarding whether each planned use conforms with the appropriate policies and guidelines of the State Lands Management Plan is required.** The Plan can be found at http://www.dep.state.fl.us/lands/oes/slmp.pdf , or by writing to the State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of State Lands, Office of Environmental Services, 3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, Mail Station 140, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000, or by calling (850) 245-2784. Does this plan conform to the State Lands Management Plan.
YES __X___ NO _____

Management Plans should include at least one short-term goal accomplishable within 2 years. Heritage Park believes that a Tree Plan put together with the assistance of an arborist would provide a working document to guide staff in caring for the property trees. There are over 150 trees on the entire Heritage Park property (including the conservation property) and understanding their condition, their needs, their usefulness/not, and the need to remove invasives would be an achievable goal with lasting benefit.

Management Plans should include at least one long-term goal accomplishable within 10 years. The longer-term goal for the Heritage Park conservation property is wrapped around anticipated expectations for the future. Although there are no activities expected to take place on the leased land in the near future, there are plans for properties immediately adjacent to the property. "Around the Mound" is a community plan discussed with the DOT in conjunction with the building of the Brooks Bridge and ideas for moving traffic through the downtown Fort Walton Beach area. No details are available yet, the project is unfunded, and it has been discussed for literally 20+ years, so immediate action is not a factor, however, monitoring this situation should be a goal of Heritage Park. Moving traffic, closing entryways, potential disturbances to wildlife and flora adjacent to the park property should require diligent awareness over time.

Heritage Park & Cultural Center has provided legal evidence of the type and degree of state title interest (see lease agreement). An analysis of outstanding leases, easements, reverter clauses or other legal encumbrances or liabilities has been explored. The museum complex functions under the body of the City of Fort Walton Beach which maintains a Code of Ordinances, Land Development Codes and other legal means to provide protection to the culturally sensitive areas of the leased property. There is a relationship to local government comprehensive plans adopted pursuant to Chapter 163, Florida Statutes.

The physical location, size and configuration of the property have been addressed. The location is known and maintained; there is public access and public use is open and available to all. There are no known encroachments to the property, and the leased lands are known to be near several other public lands in the form of parks and recreation centers, and near to other conserved areas such as the Eglin Air Force Base and the National Seashore Lands and located near population centers in the form of Fort Walton Beach itself.

The environmental issues have been addressed. The property is not considered wetlands, beaches or dunes and contains no unique, threatened or endangered species or habitat. There are no unique features such as caves, sinkholes or springs. There are no water resources or submerged lands. The land is not considered a natural hazard area, although it is subject to hurricanes. There are no prime or unique agricultural lands. The wildlife resources are addressed as habitat and are managed to encourage protection. There are no areas of special environmental concern.

The economic factors have been addressed. There are no oil, gas or mineral resources. There are no agricultural resources such as timber, prime or unique agricultural lands or grazing. There are no prime development areas such as institutional, industrial, research or development parks on or in the area. There are no aquaculture facilities. There are public transportation facilities in the form of highways immediately near the property, but their use is limited and do not seem to have had an adverse reaction to the plant or animal species in the area. The pollution is minimal and regulated by the property's close location to the Gulf of Mexico and offshore breezes.

The cultural resources are of utmost importance to this property. There are archaeological and/or historical resources in the form of buried deposits, the mound itself, the historic buildings which are managed to encourage use and protection while balancing the sensitive nature of the property and the fragility of the complex as a whole. There are passive recreational resources such as walking trails and birding areas and the site is an overall location with a sense of place, a step into the past which comes from the ability to stand where the past comes to life. The City of Fort Walton Beach and the citizens of the

community recognize this and strive to maintain this property as a cultural treasure for the people of today and of the future.

41. Contact person and address.
Gail Lynn Meyer, Museum Manager
City of Fort Walton Beach Heritage Park and Cultural Center
139 Miracle Strip Parkway SE
Fort Walton Beach, Florida 32548
(850) 833-9595

Please send this form to:

james.parker@dep.state.fl.us, Or
to: Division of State Lands
D.E.P. M.S. 140
3900 Commonwealth Blvd.
Tallahassee Fl. 32399-3000
850-245-3045

Attachments for Temple Mound Park Plan 2026

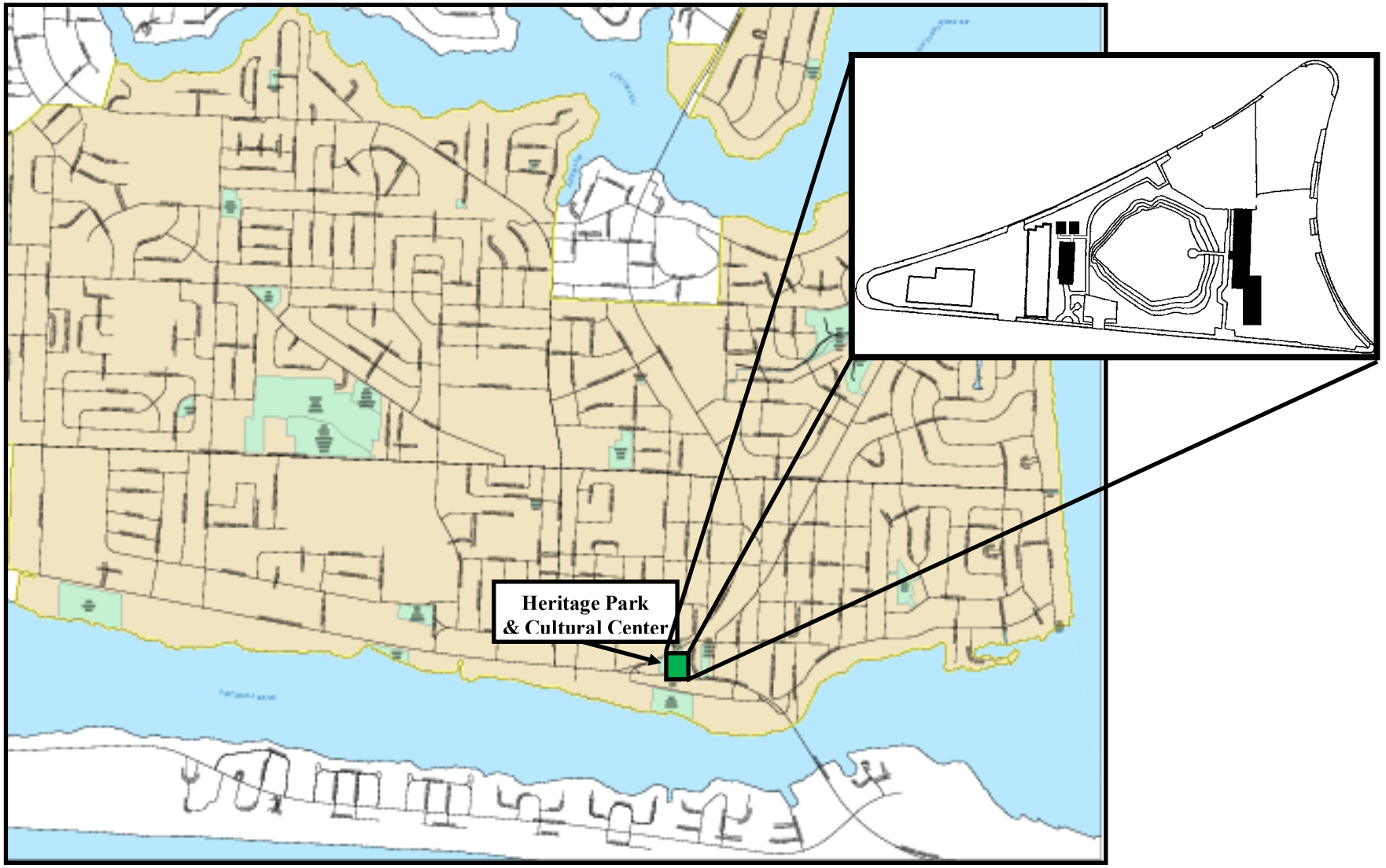
1. **Map: The City of Fort Walton Beach, Park Areas**
   This is included in response to Question 5: To show the location of the property within the larger City of Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

2. **Map: Heritage Park & Cultural Center Map of Facility and Site Use**
   This is included in response to Question 6: attach a map showing the location and boundaries of the property including a) the location and type of structures or improvements currently on the property.

3. **Map: Google generated map**
   This is included in response to Question 7: attach a map showing the proximity of this managed area to other conservation areas within 10 miles. Discussion of areas included in report.

4. **Documents: Indian Mound Property Map of Leased Property and Deeded Properties** that make up the whole of the City of Fort Walton Beach Heritage Park & Cultural Center. Also included is a copy of the lease document. This is included in response to Question 8: please attach a legal description of the property.

5. **Documents: Meeting Minutes from City of Fort Walton Beach City Council.** This Management Plan will be presented at the City of Fort Walton Beach Council Meeting on September 15m 2026. This is a public meeting held within the City Council Chambers located at 107 Miracle Strip Parkway SE, Fort Walton Beach, Florida. These meetings may be attended in person or are available live as well as recorded and available on-line. The item will be on the public agenda and will have time for Staff presentation, Council discussion, and public input and comment. The meeting summary/minutes will be provided as an appendix after presentation on September 16, 2026 and their approval shortly thereafter.



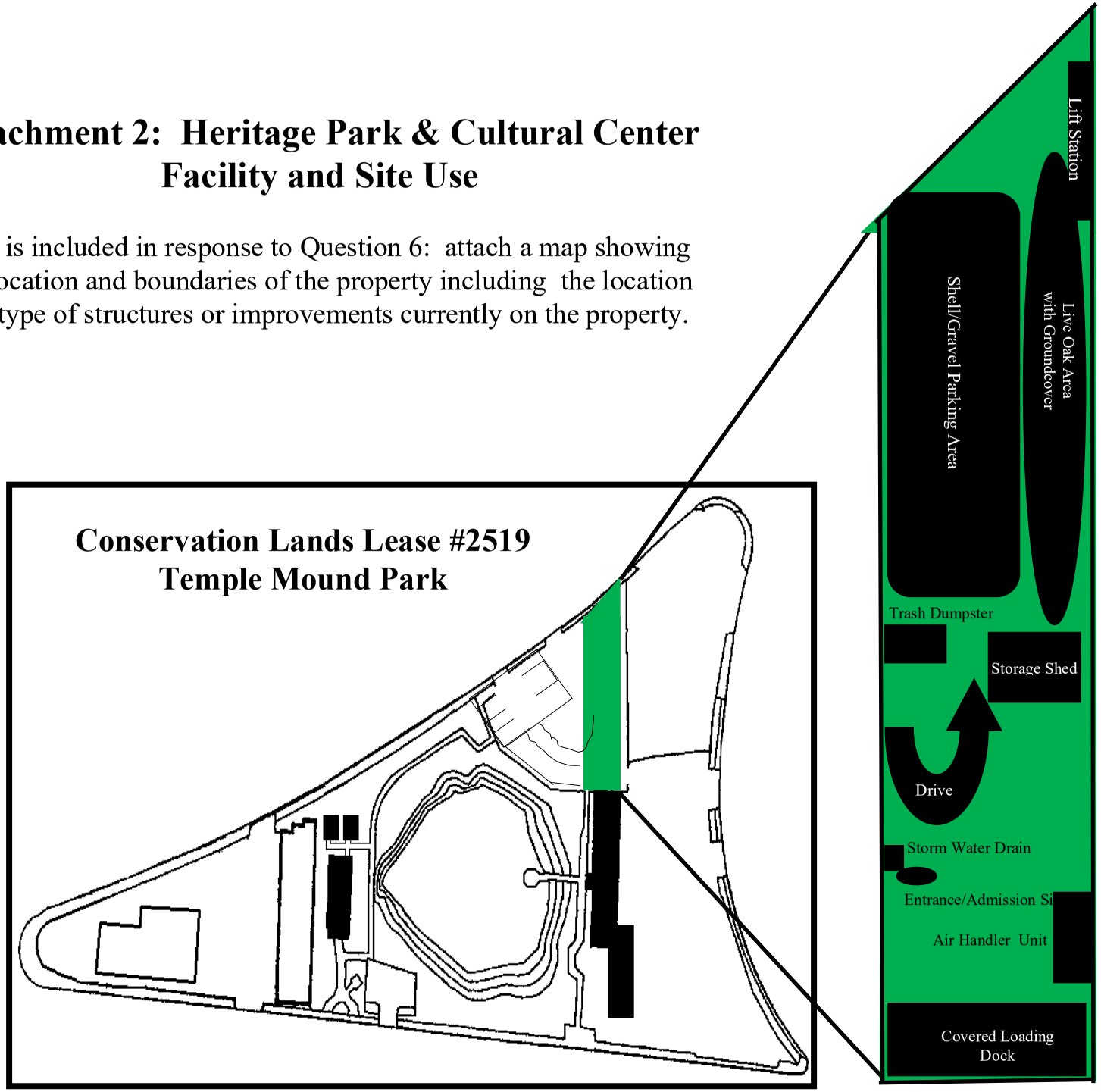
Attachment 1: The City of Fort Walton Beach Park Areas

This is included in response to Question 5: To show the location of the property within the larger City of Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

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Attachment 2: Heritage Park & Cultural Center Facility and Site Use

This is included in response to Question 6: attach a map showing the location and boundaries of the property including the location and type of structures or improvements currently on the property.



Attachment 3. Map: Google generated map

This is included in response to Question 7: attach a map showing the proximity of this managed area to other conservation areas within 10 miles. Discussion of areas included.



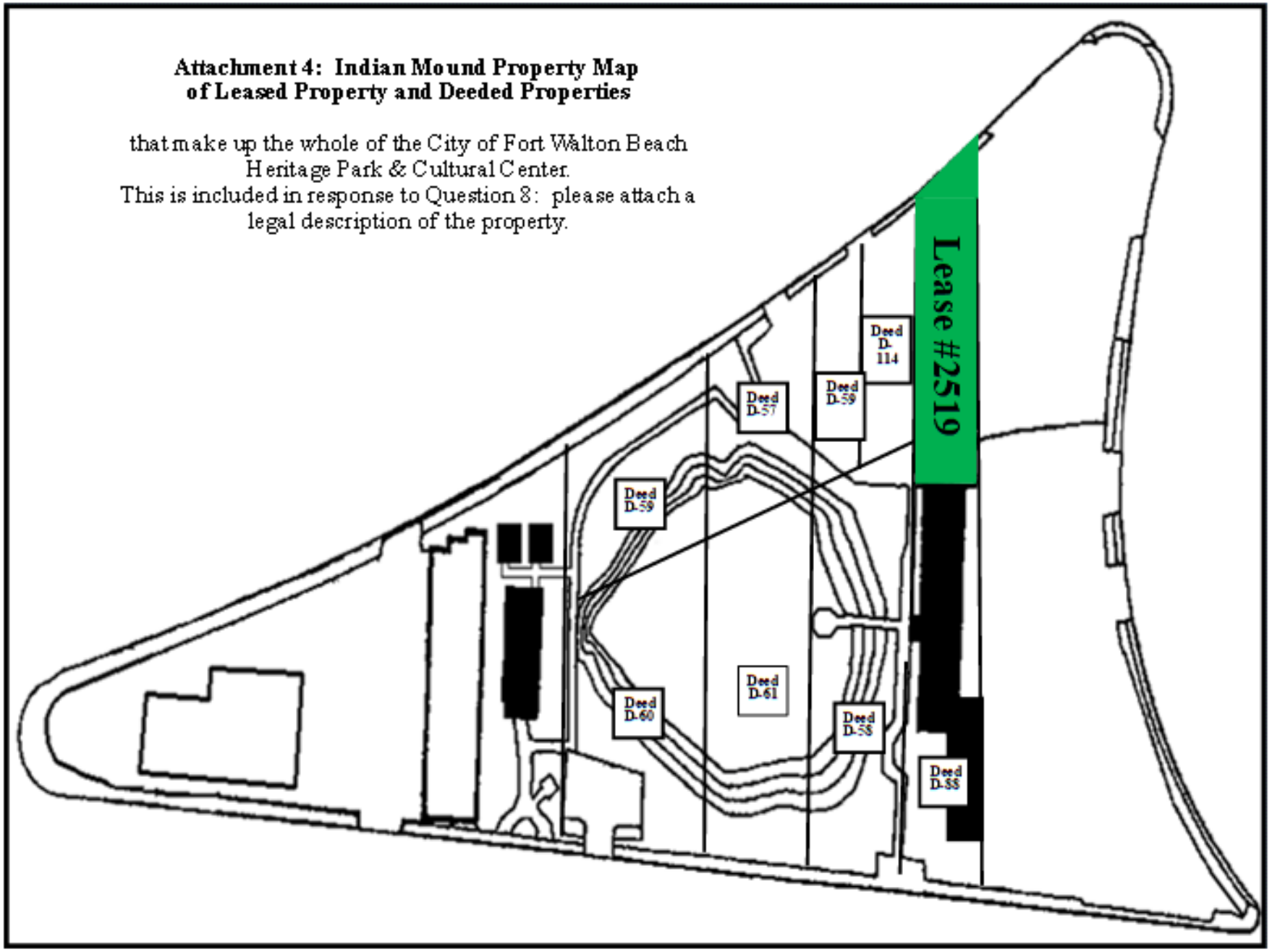
Florida's Conservation Lands

Okaloosa County 11 found

Conservation Land	Owner	County	Size (acres)
Air Force Special Operations Command, Hurlburt Field	US Air Force	Okaloosa	6634
Blackwater River State Forest	Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund	Okaloosa, Santa Rosa	210423
Choctawhatchee National Forest	US Forest Service	Okaloosa, Santa Rosa	218.44
Eglin Air Force Base	US Air Force	Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton	463448
Fred Gannon Rocky Bayou State Park	Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund	Okaloosa	346.42
Gulf Islands National Seashore	Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund	Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa	66549.24
Henderson Beach State Park	Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund	Okaloosa	221.68
Patterson Natural Area	US Air Force	Okaloosa	300
Rocky Bayou State Park Aquatic Preserve		Okaloosa	
Shoal River Land Acquisition	Okaloosa County	Okaloosa	353
Yellow River Water Management Area	Northwest Florida Water Management District	Okaloosa, Santa Rosa	17742.03

Attachment 4: Indian Mound Property Map of Leased Property and Deeded Properties

that make up the whole of the City of Fort Walton Beach Heritage Park & Cultural Center.
This is included in response to Question 8: please attach a legal description of the property.



LEASE AGREEMENT

No. 2519
Temple Mound Park, Okaloosa County
Management Project No. 24

WHEREAS the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund of the State of Florida, (successor in title to Trustees of Internal Improvement Fund heretofore existing) hold title to certain lands and property for the use and benefit of the Division of Recreation and Parks, Department of Natural Resources, State of Florida (successor of Outdoor Recreational Development Council of the State of Florida); and

WHEREAS the Outdoor Recreational Development Council of the State of Florida, while existing as such, by formal action on June 17, 1969, authorized and requested the said Trustees to enter into an agreement with the City of Fort Walton Beach, Okaloosa County, State of Florida, to permit certain use of and activities on the lands and properties hereinafter describ for the purpose of preserving, developing, operating, and maintaining said lands and property for outdoor recreational, park, conservation and related purposes.

NOW, THEREFORE, this agreement made this 10th day of October A.D., 1969, between the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund of the State of Florida for and on behalf of the Division of Recreation and Parks, Department of Natural Resources, State of Florida, hereinafter referred to as the lessor, and the City of Fort Walton Beach, Okaloosa County, of the State of Florida, hereinafter referred to as lessee.

W I T N E S S E T H:

The parties hereto, for and in consideration of the mutual covenants and agreements hereinafter contained, do hereby covenant and agree as follows:

34

August 11 1969

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY
EARL FAIRCLOTH, Attorney General
BY [signature]
Asst Attorney General

No. 2519

1. The lessor does hereby lease to the said lessee the following described land, situate, lying and being in Okaloosa County, Florida, to-wit:

To determine point of beginning, start at a point 2,323.00 feet east of northwest corner of Section 24, Township 2 South, Range 24 West, Fort Walton Beach, Okaloosa County, Florida, proceed South to the South right-of-way line of State Road 85, thence South 276.65 feet, thence West 50 (fifty) feet, thence North 241.73 feet to the South line of State Road 85, thence in a Northeasterly direction along said right-of-way line (R = 2,222.84') 61.02 feet to the point of beginning.

2,068

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the same, together with the hereditaments and appurtenances for a period of ninety-nine (99) years from the date hereof, for the purposes of preserving, developing, improving, operating, maintaining and otherwise managing said land for public outdoor recreational, park, conservation and related purposes.

2. The lessee shall have the right to enter upon said land for all purposes necessary to the full enjoyment by said lessee of the rights herein conveyed to it.

3. The lessee hereby agrees to submit plans and specifications on any proposed future development to the Division of Recreation and Parks, Department of Natural Resources, State of Florida, for its review and approval before any future development is started.

4. The lessee shall through its agents and employees cooperate to prevent the unauthorized use of said land or any use thereof not in conformity with this lease.

(5.) This agreement is for the specific purpose of public outdoor recreational, park, conservation and related purposes, and the lessee shall have the right to enter into further agreements or to sublease all or any part of the within land so long as the agreement and/or sublease shall effectively carry out further the general purposes herein described. Also, leasee named herein is authorized to grant concessions and leases for

facilities built or to be built on said land for a period of time not in excess of thirty (30) years, subject to the approval of the lessor. All such concessions and leases shall provide for the strict regulation and control by lessee herein and shall include a reverter clause to provide for a reversion to lessee of all improvements upon termination of the concession or lease agreemen

6. This agreement is subject however, to the automatic reve to the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund o the State of Florida of the lands described herein and the cessat and termination of this lease when, in the opinion of the Board o Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund of the State of F said lands are not utilized for the purposes outlined in this lea any any costs or expenses arising out of the implementation of th caluse shall be borne completely, wholly and entirely by the less

7. The lessee shall, at the end of each State fiscal year, an accounting of its operation to the lessor, showing its operati expenditures and receipts during said year in connection with sai property, and shall no later than the 45th day of the succeeding State fiscal year, tendor to the lessor fifty per cent (50%) of a receipts in excess of the operating expenses incurred not needed additional development in accordance with the plans and specifica approved by the Division of Recreation and Parks, Department of Natural Resources, State of Florida, for deposit in the Land Acqu tion Trust Fund established by law.

8. The lessor or its duly authorized agent shall have the right at any time to inspect the said land and the works and operations thereon, and the fiscal records of the lessee in any matter pertaining to this agreement.

9. The lessee certifies and guarantees that the facilities when open to use by the public, will be available for use by the entire general public and will be operated in accordance with th policies of the Division of Recreation and Parks, Department of Natural Resources, State of Florida.

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No. 2519

10. The lessee hereby covenants and agrees to investigate all claims of every nature at its own expense, and to indemnify, prote defend, hold and save harmless the Board of Trustees of the Intern Improvement Trust Fund of the State of Florida and/or the State of Florida from any and all claims, actions, lawsuits and demands of any kind or nature arising out of this agreement.

11. Any inequities that may subsequently appear in this lease shall be subject to negotiation upon written request of either par and the parties agree to negotiate in good faith as to any such inequities.

12. This agreement is executed in duplicate, each copy of whi shall for all purposes be considered an original.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF the said Board of Trustees of the Intern Improvement Trust Fund of the State of Florida, for and on behalf the Division of Recreation and Parks, Department of Natural Resources, State of Florida, have hereunto set their hands and official seals at Tallahassee, Florida, this 10th day of October, 19 69, and the City of Fort Walton Beach, Okaloos County, State of Florida, has duly executed the same by its authorized agent this 10th day of October, 1969.

(SEAL)
STATE OF FLORIDA
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE INTERNAL
IMPROVEMENT TRUST
FUND

Governor

Secretary of State

Attorney General

Comptroller

Treasurer

Commissioner of Education

No. 2519

Doyle Conner
Commissioner of Agriculture

As and Constituting the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund of the State of Florida, lessors

City of Fort Walton Beach, Okaloosa County, Florida

Winston G. Walker
WINSTON G. WALKER, City Manager

Attest:
Charles H. Evans
CHARLES H. EVANS, City Clerk

Attachment 5: Documents: Meeting Minutes from City of Fort Walton Beach City Council. This Management Plan will be presented at the City of Fort Walton Beach Council Meeting on September 16, 2026. This is a public meeting held within the City Council Chambers located at 107 Miracle Strip Parkway SE, Fort Walton Beach, Florida. These meetings may be attended in person or may be watched online. They are recorded and later made available on-line. The Land Management Plan Review will be on the public agenda, and the meeting will have time for Staff presentation, Council discussion, and public input and comment. The meeting summary/minutes will be provided as an appendix after presentation on September 16, 2026 and their approval shortly thereafter.

~ Draft Minutes ~

City of Fort Walton Beach
Regular Meeting of the City Council of Fort Walton Beach

Tuesday, September 15, 2026 **6:00 PM** **Council Chambers**
107 Miracle Strip Parkway SW
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Tuesday, September 15 meeting of the City Council of Fort Walton Beach was called to order at 6:00 PM by Mayor Nic Allegretto.

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Nic Allegretto	Mayor	Present
Logan Browning	Council Member	Present
Gloria DeBerry	Council Member	Present
Bryce Jeter	Council Member	Absent
Ben Merrell	Council Member	Present
Debi Riley	Council Member	Present
David Schmidt	Council Member	Absent
Payne Walker	Council Member	Present

2. INVOCATION

Led by Council Member Payne Walker

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Council Member Jeter made a motion to approve the agenda with the modification to move **Item 12.2.** and **Item 14.2.** to be heard directly after the Consent Agenda. Council Member DeBerry seconded the motion.

Council Member Browning offered a friendly amendment to additionally move **Item 11.1.** to follow those items. Council Member Jeter seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

RESULT:	**ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Logan Browning, Council Member
SECONDER:	Bryce Jeter, Council Member
AYES:	Browning, DeBerry, Jeter, Merrell, Riley, Walker

5. PROCLAMATIONS

5.1. Italian American Heritage Month October, 2026

Mayor Allegretto presented a proclamation designating October 2026 as Italian American Heritage and Cultural Month in the City of Fort Walton Beach, recognizing the contributions of Italian Americans to the state and the City. Representatives of the Sons and Daughters of Italy from the Joseph B. Franzalia Lodge were in attendance to receive the proclamation.

5.2. Fire Prevention Week October 4 - 10, 2026

Mayor Allegretto presented a proclamation declaring October 4 through 10, 2026, as Fire Prevention Week in the City of Fort Walton Beach. This year's theme is “Charge into Fire Safety” and focuses on fire risks associated with lithium-ion batteries. The proclamation encouraged residents to practice safe charging habits and recognized Fort Walton Beach firefighters and first responders for their ongoing commitment to public safety. Fort Walton Beach Fire Chief Thearon Shipman accepted the proclamation on behalf of his department.

5.3. Florida Redevelopment Week September 14 - 18, 2026

Mayor Allegretto read a proclamation designating September 14 through September 18, 2026, as Florida Redevelopment Week, as designated by the Florida Redevelopment Association. The proclamation recognized the vital role of the Fort Walton Beach Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) in revitalizing neighborhoods, addressing blight, improving quality of life, and fostering vibrant communities.

6. RECOGNITIONS

6.1. City of Fort Walton Beach Police Department Life Saving Award - Cpl. Thomas Zbikowski

Police Chief Robert Bage presented the Life Saving Award to Corporal Thomas Zbikowski. Chief Bage described the events of April 14, 2026, when Corporal Zbikowski responded to assist Emergency Medical Services (EMS) at the Boeing facility on the west side of the City where a patient was in cardiac arrest. After 30 minutes of combined life-saving measures, Corporal Zbikowski stepped in for the final round of CPR just as the team was nearing the point of giving up, ultimately delivering the compressions credited with saving the patient's life. Chief Bage noted that the same CPR training program administered by the Fire Department trained Corporal Zbikowski, who also serves as the Department's Tactical First Aid Instructor. Chief Bage used the occasion to recommend that the City Council consider continuing the Fire Department's CPR training program and suggested that photo enforcement funds could be pledged as a funding source, given that the program also trained law enforcement officers.

6.2. Student Award for Civic Excellence - Isabella Tran of Chotawhatchee High School

Mayor Allegretto recognized Isabella Tran, a student of Choctawhatchee High School, for receiving the Student Award for Excellence ("ACE" Award) for September 2026.

6.3. Student Award for Civic Excellence - Jenna McClenahan of Fort Walton Beach High School

Mayor Allegretto recognized Jenna McClenahan, a student of Fort Walton Beach High School, for receiving the Student Award for Excellence ("ACE" Award) for September 2026.

7. CONSENT AGENDA

Council Member Jeter made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Council Member Browning seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

RESULT:	**ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Bryce Jeter, Council Member
SECONDER:	Logan Browning, Council Member
AYES:	Browning, DeBerry, Jeter, Merrell, Riley, Walker

7.1. City Council of Fort Walton Beach Workshop Minutes from Tuesday, August 11, 2026 at 4:00 PM

7.2. City Council of Fort Walton Beach Regular Meeting Minutes from Tuesday, August 11, 2026 at 6:00 PM

7.3. City Council of Fort Walton Beach Regular Meeting Minutes from Tuesday, August 25, 2026 at 6:00 PM

7.4. City Council of Fort Walton Beach Special Meeting Minutes from Wednesday, August 26, 2026 at 4:00 PM

7.5. FY2 2026-27 Property, Casualty and Worker's Compensation Insurance Renewal

City Council authorized renewal of Property & Casualty, General Liability and Worker’s Compensation Insurance with Risk Management Associates, Inc. using Preferred Governmental Insurance Trust (PGIT) through Brown & Brown, Inc. for FY 2026-27.

7.6. Award of Potable Well No. 5 Abandonment & Demolition

City Council authorized award of Potable Well No.5 Abandonment and Demolition to Donald Smith Company, Inc. of Headland, Alabama in the amount of $209,312.50.

7.7. Report on Land Management Plan concerning Lease of State Managed Lands located on Heritage Park and Cultural Center Property

City Council approved the Conservation Lands Management Plan for Temple Mound Park and authorized Staff to submit it to the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund, State of Florida, for their review and approval.

ITEM 12.2. WAS MOVED AFTER CONSENT AGENDA

12.2. 2228 Amending Cemetery Investment Policy to authorize loan to General Fund

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FORT WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA, AMENDING SECTION IV OF THE BEAL MEMORIAL CEMETERY INVESTMENT POLICY ADOPTED BY ORDINANCE NO. 1922; AUTHORIZING A ONE-TIME INTERFUND LOAN IN THE PRINCIPAL AMOUNT OF $3,870,000.00, WITH INTEREST AT 3.53% PER ANNUM, A TWENTY-YEAR TERM, AND NO PREPAYMENT PENALTY, FROM THE BEAL MEMORIAL CEMETERY PERPETUAL CARE FUND TO FINANCE THE PURCHASE, RELEASE, AND EXTINGUISHMENT OF THE REVERTER CLAUSE OR REVERSIONARY INTEREST AFFECTING THE CITY HALL PROPERTY; REQUIRING REPAYMENT WITH INTEREST; MAKING LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS; PROVIDING FOR IMPLEMENTATION; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

City Attorney Kim Kopp read Ordinance 2228 by title.

The City Manager introduced the second reading of the proposed ordinance, and confirmed that due diligence had been completed and that the approach had been reviewed and approved by the relevant legal entities. The City Manager noted that if the Council was not comfortable proceeding, an alternative could be brought back. Mr. Walker raised questions regarding the negotiation process, asking whether staff had explored alternatives such as having the Jackson Family Trust finance the transaction or hold the note until the time of the sale. The City Manager stated the negotiations had resulted in the family insisting on the full $3,270,000 by September 2026 and declining to negotiate further.

Mr. Walker made a motion to direct staff to return to the Jackson family and ask whether they would release the reverter clause at the time of sale. The motion failed for lack of a second.

Mr. Jeter noted that the City was in active litigation and that the proposed ordinance represented the path to resolving it. Mr. Walker voiced concerns about the precedent of opening the Cemetery Fund to future borrowing, the total cost to taxpayers when interest and related transfers were factored in, and the legal advice underpinning the process. Council Member Merrell clarified that no Council member was personally benefiting from the transaction and that the City would hold approximately $6 million in equity in the property as a result of the purchase, calling it a sound investment for residents. Mr. Walker asked whether injunctive relief had ever been discussed as an option, and the City Attorney explained that injunctive relief, in the present context, could result in the court ordering the City to cease using the property in a manner the family contended violated the reverter clause, such as paid parking use, rather than the property reverting back to the family, and confirmed that a judge could potentially rule that the parking use did not trigger the reverter clause at all. The City Manager reiterated that the family's position was unambiguous.

Chuck Halverson, 16 Memorial Parkway SW, stated that he did not necessarily oppose the City purchasing the property, but strongly objected to using the Cemetery Fund as the financing mechanism. Mr. Halverson said that the ordinance lacked sufficient language requiring a super majority or a public referendum for any future borrowing, and noted that by moving nearly 80% of the fund's assets into something equivalent to a low-yield

cash instrument would no longer be investing the fund in accordance with its own policy allocations. Ms. Nabors clarified that the asset allocation percentages within the policy would not change, and the external investment managers would continue to apply those ratios to whatever balance remained after the loan.

Jeff Pendleton, 11 Higdon Court NW, argued that City funds were not interchangeable and detailed concerns that the original promise to plot purchasers who paid into the Cemetery Fund expecting perpetual care for their loved ones would be broken, and that redirecting restricted funds to an unrelated City Hall purpose set a dangerous precedent. Mr. Pendleton felt public trust would be eroded when residents who purchased cemetery plots see their funds used for a political real estate settlement, and urged the Council to carefully consider the public trust implications.

Mr. Jeter thanked all who had participated in the public process, nothing that the path from the initial parking dispute to litigation in the present moment had been a long one. Mr. Walker stated that the full cost to taxpayers was not the $3,870,000 purchase price, but also included the $1,150,000 transfer from the Cemetery Fund to the General Fund's Capital Improvement Plan, approximately $1,530,000 in interest to be paid over 20 years, and $525,000 already paid to the family through the donation of a small parcel of property adjacent to the City Hall property. Mr. Walker stated he would not be supporting a motion and predicted future legal challenges related to the Council's fiduciary duties.

Council Member Jeter made a motion to adopt Ordinance 2228, amending the Cemetery Investment Policy to authorize a one-time interfund loan to the General Fund in the amount of $3,870,000 at 3.53% per annum over 20 years. Council Member Merrell seconded the motion, and it passed 5-1.

RESULT:	**ADOPTED [5 TO 1]**
MOVER:	Bryce Jeter, Council Member
SECONDER:	Ben Merrell, Council Member
AYES:	Browning, DeBerry, Jeter, Merrell, Riley
NAYS:	Payne Walker

ITEM 14.2. WAS MOVED AFTER CONSENT AGENDA

14.2. Request for City Council Approval of the City Hall Reverter Purchase Agreement and Authorization to Close on Purchase

The City Attorney presented the City Hall Reverter Clause Purchase Agreement, explaining that it would result in the dismissal with prejudice of the Jackson Land Trust's pending lawsuit and formalize the $3,870,000 payment funded through the interfund loan previously authorized. The closing was anticipated on or around November 1, 2026, unless otherwise agreed upon by the parties. All details were included in the staff report and the agreement was made available to the public. Mr. Jeter noted that the path from parking disputes to litigation to this resolution had spanned years, and expressed confidence that the purchase would ultimately prove to be a positive outcome for the City. Mr. Walker reiterated his dissent.

Council Member Jeter made a motion to approve entering into an agreement with the Jackson Land Trust to close on the purchase of the City Hall reverter for $3,870,000, with the Jackson Land Trust dismissing with prejudice their pending lawsuit against the City, and to authorize the City Manager and Mayor to execute an agreement substantially similar to the one included in the agenda packet. Council Member Merrell seconded the motion, and it passed 5-1.

RESULT:	**ADOPTED [5 TO 1]**
MOVER:	Bryce Jeter, Council Member
SECONDER:	Ben Merrell, Council Member
AYES:	Browning, DeBerry, Jeter, Merrell, Riley
NAYS:	Payne Walker

ITEM 11.1. WAS MOVED AFTER CONSENT AGENDA

11.1. 2222 Ordinance Amending COO Chapter 11 Wrecker Operations and Services

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FORT WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA; PROVIDING FOR AUTHORITY AND FINDINGS OF FACT; AMENDING SECTION 11.12.02 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES TITLED WRECKER OPERATIONS; AMENDING SECTION 11.12.03 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES TITLED ROTATION WRECKER SERVICES; AMENDING SECTION 11.12.04 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES TITLED CONTRACT WRECKER SERVICES; AMENDING SECTION 11.12.06 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES TITLED PENALTIES; AND ADDING NEW SECTION 11.12.07 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES TITLED CITY ADMINISTRATIVE FEE; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE

The City Attorney read Ordinance 2222 by title.

Chief Bage provided background on the proposed ordinance and reported on the outcomes of a public workshop held with towing companies at the Council's request. Approximately twenty representatives from seven towing companies attended, and raised concerns centered on the proposed administrative workflow change moving contract oversight from the Police Department to the Finance Department, the desire to retain the rotation program's existing city limits eligibility, the proposal of an added administrative fee, and considerations for electric vehicle towing requirements. Chief Bage confirmed that no substantive changes were made to the ordinance from its prior presentation, and summarized that the two major changes included shifting contract administration from the Police Department to Finance/Purchasing, and providing Council with the authority to set an administrative fee if desired.

Mike Holmes, 114 Edwards Lane, represented the towing industry and addressed the Council and acknowledged that none of the towing companies that attended the workshop supported any of the changes, stating that the existing system had functioned without complaints for approximately 40 years. Mr. Holmes' primary objection was to the administrative fee concept, questioning what service the City was providing that would justify charging vehicle owners an additional fee simply because a police officer called for a tow. Mr. Holmes raised practical concerns, including how the fee would be collected and remitted, how credit card processing fees would be handled, whether the

fee would constitute taxable income to the towing company, and whether the fee would apply only to the base tow rate or to additional charges such as storage or extra mileage. Mr. Holmes added that including the Finance Department to the approval chain created unnecessary layers of government in a process that was already working well.
Mr. Merrell asked Mr. Holmes to identify his single greatest concern, and Mr. Holmes replied that his greatest concern was requiring tow companies to collect a fee on the City's behalf for a service the City did not provide. The City Manager explained that the Council had the authority to set the administrative fee at zero in the City's fee structure, meaning the ordinance would simply establish the framework without obligating any fee to be charged. The City Manager emphasized that his personal motivation for the ordinance was not revenue generation but rather the removal of a potential conflict of interest inherent in any department overseeing its own contracts, and noted that the operation process for tow companies would essentially remain seamless by submitting paperwork to the Finance Department rather than the Police Department. Ms. DeBerry asked for clarification on the nature of the fee, inquiring whether it would apply to all tows, and Chief Bage clarified that it would only apply to non consensual tows. Mr. Walker raised the point that the fee would place towing companies in the position of acting as collection agents for the City, and suggested that like the school zone camera program, the City could bill vehicle owners directly rather than burdening tow companies. The City Attorney clarified that the fee did not have to be set in the ordinance but through a resolution at a future meeting, and noted that if the maximum was set at 0% in the ordinance, the Council would need to return to a first reading to increase the fee in the future, whereas if the ordinance retained its existing language and the fee were simply set at $0 in the fee resolution, the Council could adjust the fee in the future by resolution alone.

Council Member Merrell made a motion to adopt Ordinance 2222 on first reading while declining to set any administrative fee at that time, proposing to establish the fee at a subsequent meeting.

Council Member Browning made a subsequent motion to adopt Ordinance 2222 on first reading, amending Chapter 11 Wrecker Operations and Services, with the administrative fee set at 0%. Council Member Merrell seconded the motion, and it passed 4-1.

RESULT:	**ADOPTED [4 TO 1]**
MOVER:	Logan Browning, Council Member
SECONDER:	Ben Merrell, Council Member
AYES:	Logan Browning, Gloria DeBerry, Ben Merrell, Debi Riley
NAYS:	Payne Walker

8. MAYOR/COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member DeBerry commended the Fort Walton Beach Library for its collaboration with Suds N Cinema to screen Dolly Parton's *Steel Magnolias*. Ms. DeBerry stated that the event allowed community members to donate to the Library and expressed pride in the initiative.

Council Member Riley addressed comments made by Mr. Robert Grant, identifying her work in the nonprofit sector for over 25 years, engaging with homelessness and single-parent family issues. Ms. Riley expressed that all members of the Council were sensitive to the issue and stated

that homelessness was a concern for everyone in the community. Ms. Riley committed to providing Mr. Grant with a resource directory for services available to homeless individuals in the community.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

James Lebovitz, representing the Fort Walton Beach Bucs Youth Football program, addressed the Council to promote the upcoming Battle of the Bridge youth football game scheduled for Saturday, September 26, 2026, at 10:00 AM at Fort Walton Beach High School. Mr. Lebovitz noted that 25 players and 6 cheerleaders had been waiting for much of the evening but many had departed by the time the group was called in before the Council. VIP guests for the event included Billy Bowlegs, Coach Josh Pulliam as honorary captain, and Colonel Ed Hubbard, a prisoner-of-war who spent over 6 years in Vietnam who would be presenting the trophy to the winning City's Mayor. The Mayor and Council Members were invited to attend.

Robert Grant, a registered voter residing on Shore Street, addressed the Council with concerns about the treatment of homeless individuals in City parks. Mr. Grant alleged that police officers had verbally banned homeless individuals from parks for periods of up to one year without written citations, without providing the means for those individuals to contest such bans in court, and without following the written park rules and regulations. Mr. Grant cited specific incidents including individuals being banned for sitting on benches with their heads down, having phone chargers removed, and being told they could not remain in the park for more than 3 hours, a restriction that did not appear in posted rules. The Mayor stated that the Council was not present during the specific incidents and could not fairly address them without full information, and invited Mr. Grant to contact Chief Bage directly.

David Hancock, 113 Brooks Street SE, asked for clarification on rumors that the Fort Walton Beach Library might be closed. The Mayor confirmed that the Library was funded through the upcoming budget cycle and was not slated for closure.

10. RESOLUTIONS

10.1. 2026-19 Accepting Bureau of Justice Grant Funding for Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vests

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FORT WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA, ACCEPTING FUNDING THROUGH THE 2026 PATRICK LEAHY BULLETPROOF VEST PARTNERSHIP (BVP); AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO EXECUTE THE ACCEPTANCE DOCUMENT(S); AUTHORIZING A BUDGET AMENDMENT; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE

Chief Bage presented Resolution 2026-19, noting that the City's eligibility for this grant cycle was $4,258.27, which required a 50% match from City funds that was already budgeted into the Police Department's budget. The Chief explained that bulletproof vests had a five-year shelf life and must be continuously replaced.

Council Member Browning made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-19, accepting Bureau of Justice grant funding for the Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership. Council Member DeBerry seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

RESULT:	**ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Logan Browning, Council Member
SECONDER:	Gloria DeBerry, Council Member
AYES:	Browning, DeBerry, Merrell, Riley, Walker

10.2. 2026-20 Supporting the Okaloosa County Half-Cent Surtax

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FORT WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA, SUPPORTING THE OKALOOSA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' INITIATIVE TO PROPOSE LEVYING A HALF-CENT LOCAL OPTION SURTAX FOR A PERIOD OF TEN YEARS TO FUND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS; SUBMITTING THE SUPPORT OF THE HALF-CENT LOCAL OPTION SURTAX PROPOSAL TO THE OKALOOSA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS FOR CONSIDERATION OF PLACING THE REFERENDUM ON THE NOVEMBER 2026 GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

The City Manager presented Resolution 2026-20, explaining that the existing Okaloosa County Half-Cent Surtax was set to expire in 2028, and that Okaloosa County was seeking to place a ten-year renewal on the November 2026 general election ballot. The City Manager noted that approximately 30% of the surtax revenue was funded by out-of-town visitors and that proceeds were used for infrastructure and first responder related capital projects. The resolution expressed the City's support for Okaloosa County's initiative, consistent with how the City has supported prior surtax renewals.

Mr. Walker inquired as to why City support was necessary, and the City Manager responded that Okaloosa County had historically requested such resolutions and that the City had consistently provided them. Ms. DeBerry stated that the surtax captured revenue from visitors using City amenities and returned it in the form of capital investment.

Chuck Halverson, 16 Memorial Parkway SW, asked whether the timing of the resolution was intended to provide certainty ahead of a potential uncertain November election environment, and inquired which fund the surtax flowed into. The Mayor noted it was being presented now at the request of Okaloosa County, and Ms. Nabors announced that the funds went into a restricted special revenue fund dedicated to infrastructure and public safety.

Jeff Pendleton, 11 Higdon Court NW, asked whether the funds could have been used instead of cemetery funds for the City Hall reverter purchase, and the City Manager clarified that those funds were governed by a separate Okaloosa County process and were not available for the City to redirect.

Council Member Browning made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-20 supporting the Okaloosa County Half-Cent Surtax Initiative. Council Member DeBerry seconded the motion, and it passed 5-1.

RESULT:	**ADOPTED [4 TO 1]**
MOVER:	Logan Browning, Council Member
SECONDER:	Gloria DeBerry, Council Member
AYES:	Logan Browning, Gloria DeBerry, Ben Merrell, Debi Riley
NAYS:	Payne Walker

10.3. 2026-21 Declaring a Moratorium on Data Centers

A RESOLUTION DECLARING A MORATORIUM ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF APPLICATIONS RELATING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DATA CENTERS

The City Manager introduced Resolution 2026-21, acknowledging that numerous community members had appeared at the previous meeting to express deep concerns about data centers. Council had directed staff to draft a resolution declaring a moratorium on the acceptance of applications for the establishment of data centers within city limits. The City Manager noted that language was drawn from other Florida communities that had enacted similar measures, and noted that the topic was generating considerable public attention statewide. Mayor Allegretto raised a practical concern that the definition of data centers mattered significantly and asked whether the moratorium might inadvertently capture future businesses that housed open servers or computing equipment at a smaller, more beneficial scale without the high water and energy demands associated with hyperscale facilities. The City Manager acknowledged the definitional challenge and stated that any applicant characterizing a project differently from a data center would still be subject to review through Growth Management. Mr. Walker inquired whether the Council could request a supporting resolution from Okaloosa County, and the City Manager confirmed that the Council could make any such request it wished.

Jared Sager, 1004 Holton Avenue, offered a detailed counter-perspective, describing the distinction between open-loop cooling systems that use large volumes of water, and closed-loop systems that recycle the majority of their cooling medium. Mr. Sager noted that water usage concerns could be addressed by requiring specific cooling technologies in local regulations rather than banning facilities outright. Mr. Sager cited Florida Senate Bill 484, which required data centers to either self-generate power or prearrange capacity with local utilities before construction may begin. Mr. Sager clarified that the figure noting that 4,000 data centers already existed in the United States encompassed facilities built 30 years ago to present and that critics who were specifically concerned about hyperscale artificial intelligence (AI) facilities used the misleading broader statistic. Mr. Sager clarified that banning data centers domestically would push construction to jurisdictions with far less transparency and accountability, and urged the Council to invest in genuine research before making a blanket prohibition.

Ms. Riley articulated a firm position opposing data centers in Fort Walton Beach, expressing concern that existing land development code categories could allow larger data centers to be sited adjacent to residential neighborhoods or business districts. Ms. Riley referenced the strain that such facilities could place on the municipal grid and noted that communities across Florida, from Crestview to South Florida, were seeking to protect themselves.

Council Member Riley made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-21, declaring a moratorium on the acceptance of applications relating to the establishment of data centers. Council Member Walker seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

RESULT:	**ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Debi Riley, Council Member
SECONDER:	Payne Walker, Council Member
AYES:	Browning, DeBerry, Merrell, Riley, Walker

11. ORDINANCES-FIRST READING

Item 11.1. 2222 Ordinance Amending COO Chapter 11 Wrecker Operations and Services

11.2. 2229 Ordinance to Reduce Water & Wastewater Impact Fees

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FORT WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO WATER AND WASTEWATER IMPACT FEES, REDUCING THE IMPACT FEES BY 25% FOR PROPERTIES LOCATED WITHIN THE INCORPORATED AREAS OF THE CITY OF FORT WALTON BEACH AND REDUCING THE IMPACT FEES FOR PROPERTIES IN THE UNINCORPORATED AREAS BY 50% FOR PROPERTIES VOLUNTARILY ANNEXING INTO THE CITY LIMITS OF THE CITY OF FORT WALTON BEACH FOR A PERIOD OF TWO YEARS; PROVIDING SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE

The City Attorney read Ordinance 2229 by title.

Public Works and Utilities Director Daniel Payne presented the proposed ordinance, which sought to reduce water and wastewater impact fees by 25% for properties within the incorporated city limits and by 50% for properties in unincorporated areas that voluntarily annex into the City, for a period of two years. Mr. Payne explained that the City had periodically offered similar impact fee reductions in the past, when such incentives were used to stimulate development and annexation. The reductions had eventually sunset and the City had since been collecting full impact fees. Mr. Payne recognized the business value to development and annexation incentives, and noted that impact fees were strictly enforced by Florida Statute and could only be used for capital projects that expand system capacity rather than for operational costs or to subsidize other programs. Mr. Walker asked whether the tiered structure created a disparate benefit between those already in the City and newcomers annexing in. Mr. Payne confirmed that the deeper incentive for annexing properties was intentional and consistent with the City's historical approach to encouraging annexation. Mr. Merrell expressed support and pointed to Freedom Tech Center as an example of a prior annexation incentive that had worked well.

Council Member Browning made a motion to adopt Ordinance 2229 on first reading. Council Member Merrell seconded the motion, and it passed 4-1.

RESULT:	**ADOPTED [4 TO 1]**
MOVER:	Logan Browning, Council Member
SECONDER:	Ben Merrell, Council Member
AYES:	Logan Browning, Gloria DeBerry, Ben Merrell, Debi Riley
NAYS:	Payne Walker

12. ORDINANCES-SECOND READING

12.1. 2224 Ordinance Amending COO Section 8.02 Alarm Systems

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FORT WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA, AMENDING CODE OF ORDINANCES SECTION 8.02 ALARM SYSTEMS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY ; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

The City Attorney read Ordinance 2224 by title.

Chief Bage presented the proposed ordinance and noted no public comments had been received since the first reading and that no changes were made to the ordinance.

Council Member Merrell made a motion to adopt Ordinance 2224, Amending Code of Ordinances (COO) Section 8.02 regarding alarm systems. Council Member Browning seconded the motion, and it passed 4-1.

RESULT:	**ADOPTED [4 TO 1]**
MOVER:	Ben Merrell, Council Member
SECONDER:	Logan Browning, Council Member
AYES:	Logan Browning, Gloria DeBerry, Ben Merrell, Debi Riley
NAYS:	Payne Walker

Item 12.2. 2228 Amending Cemetery Investment Policy to authorize loan to General Fund was moved after Consent Agenda

13. APPOINTMENTS

13.1. FWB Housing Authority Board Appointment

City Clerk Kim Barnes reported that a vacancy had arisen on the Fort Walton Beach Housing Authority Board due to a resignation, noting that Housing Authority Executive Director Gail Sansbury had recommended Ms. Angelia Huff to fill the expired term which was set to expire on February 15, 2030. Ms. Barnes recognized the outgoing member, Linette Wolfgram, who had served on the Board for 15 years and thanked her for her commitment.

Council Member Browning made a motion to approve the appointment of Ms. Angelia Huff to the Fort Walton Beach Housing Authority Board to fill an unexpired term set to expire on February 15, 2030. Council Member Merrell seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

RESULT:	**ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Logan Browning, Council Member
SECONDER:	Ben Merrell, Council Member
AYES:	Browning, DeBerry, Merrell, Riley, Walker

14. ACTION-DIRECTION-DISCUSSION

14.1. Request for Major Development Order for Greater Peace Townhomes (102 Fourth Street SE)

Growth Management Director Tim Gibson presented a major development order for the Greater Peace Townhomes at 102 Fourth Street SE. Mr. Gibson explained that the project had been in progress for several years, originating with a Workforce Housing Incentive Fund commitment. A development order timeline was established with a 12-month deadline, extended from June 2026 to October 2026, and the completed development order was now before the Council ahead of the deadline. Staff reviewed the project and it was found to meet all Land Development Code (LDC) requirements. Mr. Gibson pointed out that the development order did not address financial obligations as those would be contained in a separate development agreement to be brought forward no later than June 2027.

Council Member Browning made a motion to approve the major development order for the development of an 8-unit townhome development at 102 Fourth Street SE. Council Member DeBerry seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

RESULT:	**ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Logan Browning, Council Member
SECONDER:	Gloria DeBerry, Council Member
AYES:	Browning, DeBerry, Merrell, Riley, Walker

Item 14.2. Request for City Council Approval of the City Hall Reverter Purchase Agreement and Authorization to Close on Purchase

14.3. Discussion of License Plate Readers

Chief Bage delivered a comprehensive presentation on the history, legal framework, operational use, and recent policy changes to the City's License Plate Reader (LPR) program. The state statutory framework for LPR's was established in 2014 and made permanent in 2019, with the City's LPR program being approved unanimously by Council in 2020 with an initial investment of $100,000 in the Vigilant LPR system. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) issued a letter in August 2026 revoking permits for LPR devices on State rights-of-way, and Chief Bage stated that the four affected devices within the City would be removed within the 30-day compliance window. Chief Bage noted that 38 Federal and 8 State court cases had upheld LPR use as not constituting a search under the Fourth Amendment. The Fort Walton Beach Police Department had recently updated its LPR standard operating procedure, reducing the data retention period from one year to 30 days and increasing audit frequency to 10% of all LPR usage monthly, with a full audit conducted twice per year. Chief Bage highlighted 5

recent cases in which LPR's assisted in recovering a stolen vehicle, identifying a road rage shooter, making a retail theft arrest, identifying a shooter subsequently adjudicated as an adult, and locating a missing 15 year-old child. Chief Bage confirmed that LPR data is stored in a Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) compliant government cloud and was contractually prohibited from being sold on the commercial market.

The Mayor urged the Council and public to focus on questions that Chief Bage could answer rather than litigating constitutional questions. Mr. Walker expressed concerns about the technology, including the risk of mosaic surveillance, a concept he noted was being actively examined by courts. Mr. Walker acknowledged Chief Bage's efforts to respond quickly to written questions from him and credited the reduction in retention records and increase in auditing as being responsive to public concerns.

Council Member Walker made a motion to end the City of Fort Walton Beach's License Plate Reader Program. The motion failed for lack of a second.

Mr. Merrell expressed interest in hearing more from the broader community before making any significant policy change, noting the relatively limited public turnout on the item, and appreciated the safeguards in place. Ms. Riley acknowledged support for the Police Department and stated that she was willing to support the LPR program, describing it as a best practice if properly managed. Mr. Browning supported the 30 day retention period and the existing safeguards, noting that much of the other sensitive data that the Police Department managed is stored in the same cloud environment without generating similar controversy. Ms. DeBerry also supported the LPR program, sharing that she had indirect personal experience with a situation where being caught by an LPR led to a positive outcome.

Denise Dierker, 33 Pryor Road SE, supported the safeguards described but recommended that the LPR policy and all relevant safeguards be published on the Police Department's website in an easily accessible location. Chief Bage committed to posting the policy to the website by the end of the week.

Jeff Pendleton, 11 Higdon Court NW, sought clarification whether the count of 8 or 9 operational units included mobile vehicle-mounted units or only fixed installations. Chief Bage confirmed the count referred to fixed units.

Jared Sager, 1004 Holton Avenue, asked whether it was as easy to relax safeguards, such as extending the retention period or reducing audit frequency, as it had been to tighten them. Chief Bage confirmed that the standard operating procedure (SOP) was a policy document and could be changed at the direction of the City Manager or City Council.

No formal motion was made.

14.4. Photo Speed Enforcement 2025/2026 school year report

Chief Bage presented the annual Photo Speed Enforcement 2025-2026 School Year Report as required by Florida Statute 316.0776. Chief Bage provided a legislative history of the program, beginning with Governor DeSantis signing House Bill 657 into law on May 31, 2023, which created the authority for school zone photo speed enforcement. The City Council enacted its local photo enforcement ordinance in September 2024 and

entered into a contract with RedSpeed on November 19, 2024. Chief Bage noted that the City operated photo enforcement in 9 school zones. Speeding was down by 97% compared to baseline volumes of vehicles traveling through school zones, and 88% of those did not receive a second violation, demonstrating meaningful behavior change. Chief Bage added that 68% of citations by zip code were issued to individuals with addresses outside of the City of Fort Walton Beach.

During the school year, 23,066 notices of violation were issued. Of those, 4,969 were administratively discharged, 15,064 were paid, 79 individuals requested a local hearing before the Special Magistrate of which 70 were upheld, and 5,965 were referred to Uniform Traffic Citation's. Financially, the City received a total revenue of $1,506,200. Funds were distributed as follows, $310,240 was transferred to the State of Florida, $180,744 to the Okaloosa County School Board, $45,186 to the State of Florida's Criminal Justice Trust Fund, $75,310 was collected for the school crossing guard program with bi-annual stipends of up to $7,500 paid to crossing guards, $316,302 paid to RedSpeed, and $587,418 collected for public safety initiatives which included improved school zone markings, traffic radar and surveying equipment, traffic cones, a public safety video surveillance trailer, and additional school zone signage recommended by Public Works. $2,237 was collected in hearing fees. Chief Bage confirmed the expenditures fell outside the scope of the recent Charter amendments and did not impact the general budget. Chief Bage reported two operational improvements made in response to community feedback. Hospital Road, which had a 20 mph speed limit inconsistent with the surrounding 25 mph network, was adjusted to 25 mph. The two school zones located at Silver Sands School and Bruner Middle School, which were 400 feet apart and were generating confusion among drivers, had been consolidated into a single unified school zone, eliminating the possibility of a driver receiving citations at both locations during a single pass. Staff recommended that the Council accept the findings of the report for transmission to the State of Florida.

Mr. Walker requested comparison of the financial structure of the photo enforcement program to traditional officer-written citations. Chief Bage confirmed that officer-written tickets would result in a higher distribution to the State with no direct benefits to the Okaloosa County School Board or RedSpeed. Mr. Walker asserted that the photo enforcement tickets inverted the presumption of innocence by holding the registered owner liable and maintained that the school zone cameras were unconstitutional. Mr. Walker noted that the two cases challenging the constitutionality of the program at the Okaloosa County court level had been dismissed by the City before a judge could make a ruling. The City Manager explained that on both occasions, the City Attorney had advised that it would be more cost-effective to administratively dismiss a $100 fine than to spend significant attorney's fees in litigation.

Council Member Walker made a motion to direct staff to adopt a policy that when a school zone photo speed enforcement citation proceeded through the Special Magistrate to Okaloosa County traffic court and the defendant raised a constitutional challenge, that the City shall not dismiss the case, allowing the constitutional challenge to be heard by an Okaloosa County judge. Council Member Merrell seconded the motion. The vote was 3-2.

Mr. Browning raised a procedural question about whether the motion required a super majority given it was not specifically noticed on the agenda. Mr. Walker argued that the motion arose directly from the noticed agenda item, but the City Attorney agreed to review Resolution 2026-03 and provide a legal opinion on the matter.

The motion failed due to a lack of a supermajority vote which was confirmed by a legal opinion provided by the City Attorney following the meeting.

RESULT:	**~~ADOPTED [3 TO 2]~~ Failed due to lack of supermajority vote.**
MOVER:	Payne Walker, Council Member
SECONDER:	Ben Merrell, Council Member
AYES:	Gloria DeBerry, Ben Merrell, Payne Walker
NAYS:	Logan Browning, Debi Riley

14.4.1. Photo Speed Enforcement 2025/2026 school year report

Council Member Walker made a subsequent motion to accept and approve the Photo Speed Enforcement Annual Report for the 2025-2026 School Year for transmission to the State of Florida. Council Member Riley seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

RESULT:	**ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Payne Walker, Council Member
SECONDER:	Debi Riley, Council Member
AYES:	Browning, DeBerry, Merrell, Riley, Walker

15. CITY MANAGER REPORTS

The City Manager provided several updates to the Council and to the public:

- Employees recognized for length of service awards who were not in attendance included Robert Palm for 5 years with the Golf Course and Shane Acree for 10 years in Public Works.
- The Police Department ratified a new contract following a productive collaboration with the new Police Union that would be available to the public on October 1, 2026.
- The Fire Department had an outstanding 9/11 memorial event.
- An email was received that complimented Glenn Jones' work at events at the Landing.
- Three individuals from the Jada House Program had been successfully hired to fill long-vacant lawn maintenance positions within Parks and Recreation.
- The Elk's Lodge will be holding an Oktoberfest event supporting 501(c)(3) organizations within the city.
- The CRA Public Input meeting, typically held in the morning, would be held on

Wednesday, September 16 from 5:00 to 6:00 PM to attract more community participation.

- The upcoming budget hearing was scheduled for Wednesday, September 23, 2026, rather than the usual Tuesday evening timeframe.

15.1. City Council Special Meeting - Wednesday, September 23, 2026 @ 5:01 p.m. - FY 2026-27 Final Millage Rate and Budget Hearing 2 of 2

15.2. City Council Regular Meeting – Tuesday, October 13, 2026 @ 6:00 pm

15.3. Community Redevelopment Agency Meeting - Tuesday, October 27, 2026 @ 4:00 p.m.

15.4. City Council Regular Meeting – Tuesday, October 27, 2026 @ 6:00 pm

16. CITY ATTORNEY REPORTS

Monthly City Attorney Status Report - September 2026

City Attorney Kimberly Kopp announced that she had no additional updates not already included in the meeting's agenda packet.

17. MAYOR/COUNCIL FINAL COMMENTS

Council Member Walker congratulated the Jackson Family and the taxpayers in reference to the evening's vote on the City Hall reverter purchase. Mr. Walker noted that he would not be in attendance at the September 23, 2026 budget hearing.

Council Member Riley expressed appreciation to all Department Heads and staff, recognizing their hard work and the quality of leadership demonstrated under the City Manager.

18. ADJOURNMENT