

# To Annex or Not to Annex

## If, Why, & Where

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This is an analysis of Alachua County looking at the possible incorporation of unincorporated lands into the municipalities within Alachua County. The goal of this analysis is to look at unincorporated lands around the nine municipalities within Alachua County and determine if any of these lands should be annexed by a municipality. We will be assessing the pros and cons of extending the boundaries of these municipalities into different portions of unincorporated land. To complete this analysis we will be looking at a five mile buffer around each of the municipalities, unless they are adjacent to one another then we will apply a 5 mile buffer around both municipalities. We will be analyzing these buffers around the municipalities to obtain current detailed information on property values, land usage, and economic status of the population.

### **Background of Alachua County**

#### **Population Information**

Alachua County's population as of 2007 was 240,082. 75% of that population lives in urban areas, while only 25% of the population lives in rural areas. The projected population for Alachua County in 2015 is 269,900.

#### **Employment & Wages**

The three largest areas of employment in Alachua County are Education and Health Services employing 18.8% of the residents of the county, Trade, Transportation, and Utilities with 15.1%, and Leisure and Hospitality 10.7%. Alachua County has 3,746 residents on unemployment giving the county an unemployment rate of 3.0%.

The annual income for Alachua County in 2006 was \$31,391, while the annual income for the State of Florida in 2006 was \$36,720, leaving Alachua County's residents annual income \$5,329 lower than the overall State of Florida.

In 2007 23.6% of Alachua County's residents were living below the poverty line which in 2006 was \$10,787 for an individual and \$21,027 for a family of four, while only 12.1% of the overall State of Florida's residents were living below the poverty line.

#### **Land Uses**

Alachua County is mostly rural Agriculture lands consisting of pasture land, cropland, timberland, orchards, groves, dairies, goats, horses, poultry, bees, and fish production. Within the county 90.56% of the farms operated inside the county boundaries are family owned and operated. The county wide average of the farmers operating farms is 57 years of age.

Within the county there are 777 acres being harvested for corn, 5,887 acres are being harvested for vegetable, and 2,179 acres are in orchards.

### **Alachua County Governments finances for 2004**

These financial figures are only for the County wide government. They do not include figures for the nine municipalities found inside the county. The county collected \$71,901,000 in property taxes, \$9,212,000 in general sales taxes, \$4,835,000 in Motor fuels sales taxes, which equals out to \$85,948,000 in taxes collected in 2004.

Services are a very large part of the counties yearly expenses in 2004 Alachua county spent \$28,505,000 on police protection, \$636,000 on Fire Protection, \$20,430,000 on Health

Service, \$12,961,000 on solid waste management, \$2,548,000 on Parks and Recreation, \$2,191,000 on Natural Resources, and \$1,644,000 on Housing & Community Development. These are just a few of the services that a county or municipality funds, and for Alachua County all of those services combined cost them \$68,915,000.

### **Scope and Criteria**

The original scope of this project is all of Alachua County, looking at the unincorporated land and analyzing these tracks of land for potential annexation by the nine municipalities within the county. In order to make our analysis more relevant for each individual municipality within Alachua County we limited our analysis to a five mile buffer around each municipality or around two touching municipalities. Beyond the amount of land being surveyed, we also have a very broad scope of available data. The available data includes for the entire county: group homes, hazardous waste, sewage treatment, fire departments, schools, hospitals, UF students 2008, substandard housing, employment, trails, ecological inventory, wetlands, lakes, agricultural tax parcels, all tax parcels, Fema, rural clusters, sewers, superfund, transit routes, urban cluster, urban services, rural cluster, and water. Our analysis team will narrow down that list to focus on: group homes, hazardous waste, sewage treatment, fire departments, schools, hospitals, UF students 2008, substandard housing, employment, trails, ecological inventory, wetlands, lakes, agricultural tax parcels, all tax parcels.

We narrowed down the original data pool because of specific criteria that we are looking for in each analysis area. Starting with tax parcels, we are looking to incorporate those pieces of lands with the highest taxes that would payback to the municipality. We are looking at substandard housing because this will bring down the property values of the surrounding properties, and also can increase the amount of police services needed. We are going to look at group homes, fire departments, schools, hospitals, hazardous waste, and sewage treatment because these are all services that the municipality will have to provide for, if these facilities are incorporated into the municipality. We will also look at UF students for 2008 and employment, as these factors are important because students pay sales taxes and require little services so mostly they benefit the municipality they live in. Employment also generates a lot of tax revenue. Good job opportunities are also a strong draw that will attract people to live within a particular municipality. We will also look at trails, ecological inventory, wetlands, and lakes these areas are not taxable so they only consume monetary resources they do not really contribute monetary resources, so we would like to minimize the amount of environmental protected lands a municipality incorporates. Lastly, we will look at agricultural tax parcels; this will show potential development areas. They will also contribute taxes as long as they are in agricultural use, but they can eventually be transformed into developments which can increase their property value and increase their overall value to the municipality.

### **Methods**

For the overall process, we wanted to figure out how best to benefit the municipalities and its constituents with annexing new areas. Several things needed to be considered in order to do so. Services like substandard housing, group homes, hospitals, schools, fire departments, and waste facilities were best avoided in this case because they would cost extra money to the government, so annexing areas with these variables already present or needing to be implemented would be a poor financial move. This would just leave the municipality with a

deficit instead of any financial gain. Natural areas such as strategic ecosystems, lakes, and wetlands we avoided as well since such areas would require government service and resources. Finally, what we were aiming to include were variables like high tax parcels, places of employment, and students that will provide sales tax and free service through volunteer and other work.

We decided to look at an area of five miles around each of the nine municipalities – a five mile “buffer zone.” Within this buffer zone, we wanted to analyze the different variables, avoiding those that would cost the government and favoring those that would add value, as previously mentioned. To create this buffer zone, we first needed to separate each of the municipalities. We selected by attributes – by name of the municipality – in order to create new layer file for each of the nine municipalities. Each was named representative of their name. Of these nine new layers, we decided to combine Alachua with High Springs and Archer with Newberry because the municipalities were so close to each other already. If they were analyzed separately, the buffer zone would overlap so much that it would not be very efficient. Therefore, we looked at those four municipalities as paired entities.

Next, to actually create the buffer zone, we utilized the Buffer tool in ArcToolbox. We used the newly created individual municipality layers as the input and set the distance to a unit of five miles. This made an area of five miles surrounding the original municipality area. All the variables contained in this zone will be analyzed for possible annexing. In order to see the variables within the buffer, we used the Clip tool in ArcToolbox. With this feature, we put the particular variable layer (tax parcels, schools, hospitals, employment, etc. that was regarded earlier) as the input and the municipality buffer as the clip. This selected the variables within the buffer zone, where we were able to make a new layer of that selection to analyze. We did this 13 times for the 13 variable layers previously mentioned we wanted to analyze.

In regards to the tax parcels, we wanted to only consider annexing high tax parcel blocks. To distinguish the tax amount range of the parcels, we formatted the symbology to show the quantities. This made a gradient of colors representing different tax amount ranges. We considered the agriculture tax parcels as well as an indication of potential growth. It was also highly correlated that high tax parcels were high agriculture tax parcels. The ranges differed for each municipality. For the highest tax amount range, LaCrosse and Micanopy had a minimum of \$5,000; Waldo was \$8,000; Alachua/High Springs was \$57,000; Archer/Newberry was \$140,000; Gainesville was \$50,000; and Hawthorne was \$38,000.

### **Results/Discussion**

All the municipalities had unique features that we took into consideration when deciding on which portions we should annex. Many of the smaller municipalities possessed greater amounts of agriculture land while the larger municipalities had more employment and student clusters.

Waldo has a lot of high-end agriculture land especially in the southern end of the five mile buffer. The non-agriculture tax parcels were scarce and didn't have much to offer; in fact, most of them were in the lowest tax bracket. There is no need for more services since the area is not well populated and the buffer is only five miles. The residence could easily use the existing

services. The area we decided to annex is located in the southern portion near the end of the buffer.

La Crosse did not have much favorable area and had many low end agriculture and regular tax parcels that were scattered far away from the main municipality. In the southwestern portion there are a few high parcels that range from \$64,000 to over \$100, 000. It also had a lot of employment so we decided to annex it. Another area we felt would be favorable to annex is a small part in the northeast, this area offered high end agriculture land. Neither area had many students, and they both have some substandard housing.

Alachua has many good attributes available for us to choose from. Out of all the land available, the area located at the southern tip that connects to Gainesville was the most promising. This area has a lot of students and substandard housing. We decided the benefit of having the students will outweigh any negatives that accompany substandard housing. There are quite a few services in the area but we think the costs will be less than the benefits we will gain with these as well.

High Springs has a more limited potential as far as areas to annex because it is right up against the county boundary. Most of the lands that surround High Springs are agricultural lands with very little residential or commercial tax parcels. There are not many jobs or students out of the already existing municipality boundary. Taking these factors into consideration, the best area to annex is the area on the west side between SW 182 Ave down to NW 142 Ave. The benefits of this area are moderately high agricultural lands that have few services attached.

Micanopy is another region that is filled with a larger number of agriculture parcels. The area does not have very many service or students and there are a few substandard housing units located in the southern end. We have proposed to annex most of the western side of the buffer excluding a small section in the south. This was the best choice because it incorporated all of the high end tax parcels along with the student and employment cluster.

Archer is not a promising area since most of what met our criteria was already part of the municipality. The agricultural tax parcels are on the low end of the bracket with the exception of some small parcel in the northeastern tip, and the center and the southeastern side. There is a large cluster of UF student located in the center of the eastern side. The employment level is very low with the highest concentration in the same area as the UF students. Archer is filled with substandard housing and one group home on the western side and there are a few schools and fire departments in the location. A large section on the eastern side near the end of the buffer was chosen because it has an enormous student cluster.

Gainesville resembled Archer in a way because many of the favorable areas have already been annexed most likely because of the high levels of student population. The 20th Ave corridor is a good candidate for annexation because of its high density of commercial and residential parcels that would not need the addition of services.

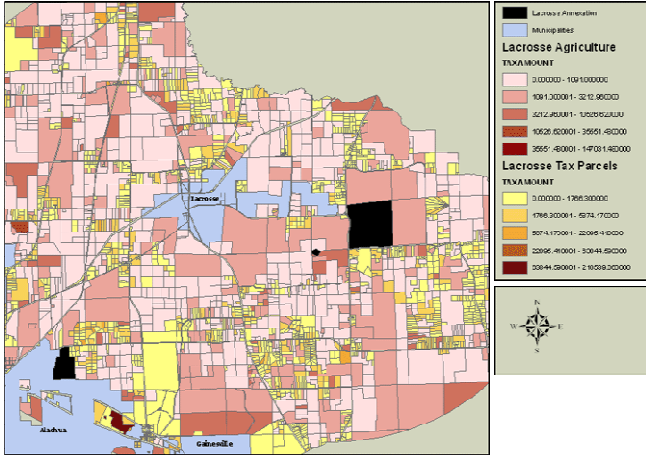
Due to Hawthorne's low density of residential and commercial areas the proposed area for annexation has been selected in the attempt to stimulate growth around the downtown area.

Creation of government services in the proposed area for annexation will add infrastructure which will both attract new people to the area and prepare the area for the natural growth expected in the area.

We have done our best to choose areas to annex that will gain benefits for our local governments while providing all the necessary services for the residents. Florida has been experiencing a large amount of population growth for some time that will most likely continue on the future. Alachua County has a very large amount of land that can be used in the future for development. The county has both large quantities of agricultural land and nature Florida ecosystems. Depending on their location, these areas could be very profitable to develop or the ecosystems could be preserved. We were especially concerned with the scrub habitats that we encountered since it is such a scarce habitat that many endemic species to Florida rely on. Alachua County sits on top of a wetland which will have to be taken into consideration if any new areas are chosen for future development. The University of Florida will be an important factor in the growth of Alachua County because as the student population grows so will the need for more housing and services.

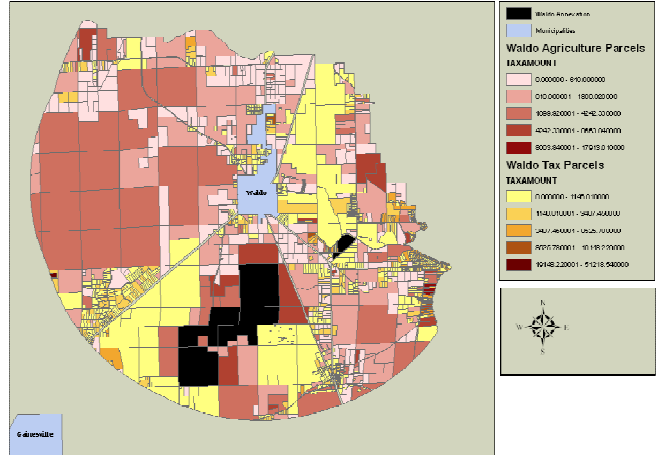
**Maps**

**Proposed Annexation for La Crosse**



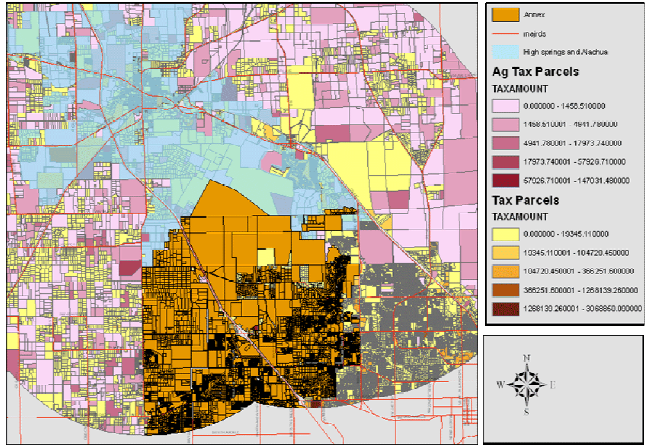
**La Crosse Municipality- Potential Annexation**

**Proposed Annexation for Waldo**



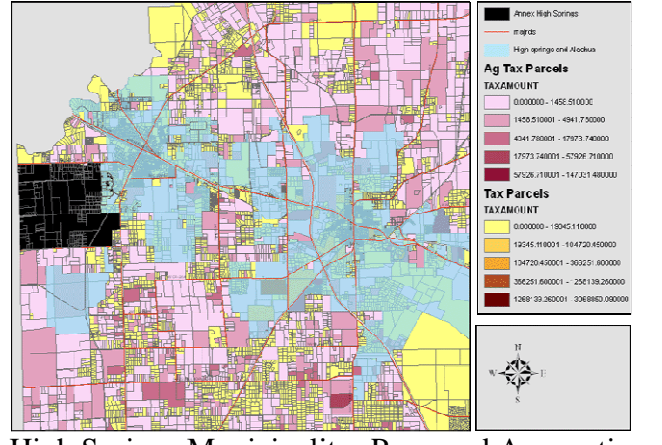
**Waldo Municipality- Potential Annexation**

**Proposed Annexation for Alachua and High Springs**



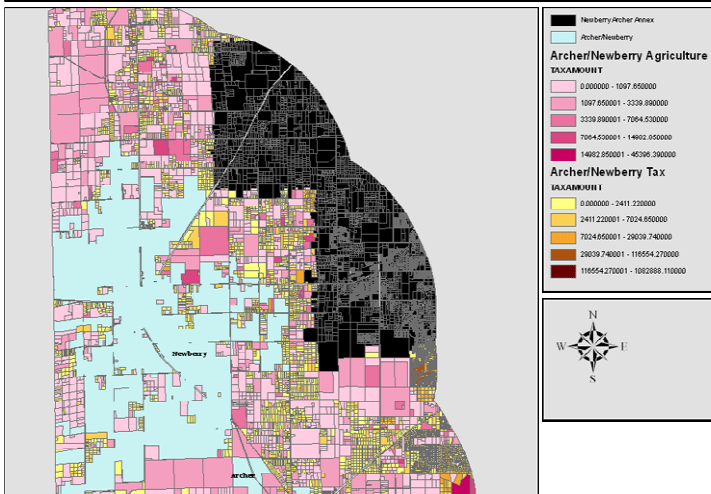
**Alachua Municipality- Proposed Annexation**

**Proposed Annexation for Alachua and High Springs**



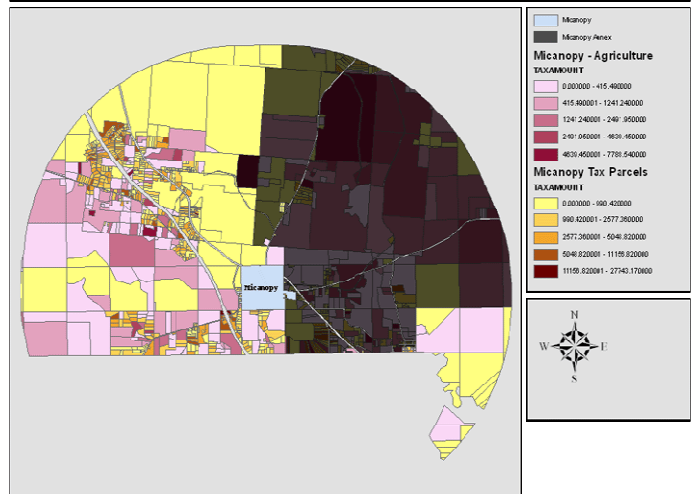
**High Springs Municipality- Proposed Annexation**

**Proposed Annexation for Archer and Newberry**



**Archer/Newberry Municipalities- Potential Annexation**

**Proposed Annexation for Micanopy**



**Micanopy Municipality- Potential Annexation**



