



CITY OF
ST AUGUSTINE
EST. 1565

WEST CITY



April 2024

**FINDING
OF
NECESSITY**

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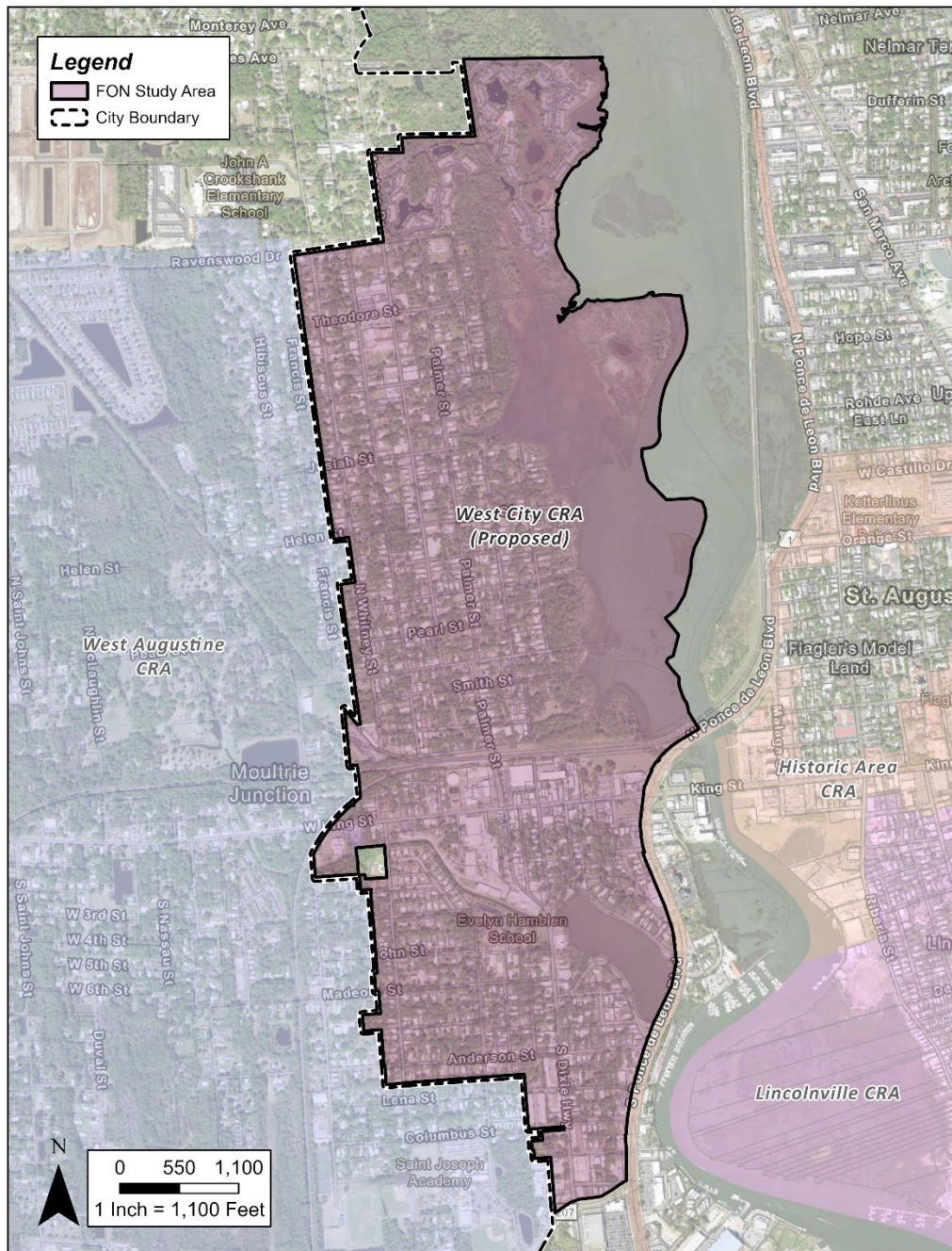
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1.0 Introduction

This Finding of Necessity (FON) Study evaluates the conditions of the proposed establishment of a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) in the western portion of the City of St. Augustine. The evaluation of the Study Area is to determine if conditions satisfy the definitions of “slum and blight” per Section 163.340(7), Florida Statutes to establish the Study Area as a CRA. The Study Area is depicted in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1. Study Area



Sources: City of St. Augustine, St. Johns County, St. Johns County Property Appraiser, Florida Geographic Data Library (FGDL), 2023

2.0 Study Area Boundaries

The general boundaries of the Study Area are as follows: Ravenswood Drive and Vista Cove Road to the north, San Sebastian River and N. Ponce De Leon Boulevard to the east, the City boundary to the west, and SR 207 to the south. The Study Area is approximately 604 acres.

3.0 Historical Context

The Study Area is directly west of St. Augustine's Historic Downtown, separated by the San Sebastian River. In the early 20th century, this area, along with parts of West Augustine, was known as "New Augustine," a suburb of St. Augustine. With direct access to the river and an active railway (the Florida East Coast Railway), industry thrived in the area. In 1910, New Augustine's population had grown to nearly 1,300 residents with the railroad and tourism driving most of the population growth. In 1922, the City of St. Augustine annexed the eastern part of New Augustine into its municipal limits. The Study Area had a prominent population of African American residents with strong community ties through commercial, industrial, and institutional development. Over time the Study Area has become primarily residential, apart from a commercial strip along West King Street and near SR 207.

4.0 The Redevelopment Act

The Community Redevelopment Act of 1969 (Chapter 163, Part III, Florida Statutes) gave local governments the ability to eliminate and/or prevent blighted conditions that are detrimental to the sustainability of economically and socially vibrant communities through economic development projects. The following sections expand on the administrative processes for creating or expanding a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA), as well as the criteria used to determine whether an area qualifies to become a Redevelopment Area.

4.1 Community Redevelopment Area Creation or Expansion Procedures

4.1.1 *Declaration and Process*

The first step in assessing whether the Study Area meets the criteria for the creation of the West City Community Redevelopment Area is determining the presence of "slum and blight" conditions. The Finding of Necessity (FON) Report will document the analysis of these conditions by describing the physical and economic conditions within the Study Area which are associated with blight or its causes and evaluating whether the Study Area qualifies for the creation of a Redevelopment Area. Inspire staff, working closely with City of St. Augustine staff, inspected the Study Area through an on-site field assessment and conducted desktop and GIS assessments of available data relating to the Study Area.

4.1.2 *Adoption of Finding of Necessity (FON) Report ("Slum & Blight" Study)*

Under the Community Redevelopment Act, if an area is deemed blighted, a resolution must be adopted by the local governing body, or municipal subdivision. The resolution must find that blighted conditions are present within the defined Study Area and that the repair, rehabilitation, and/or the redevelopment of said areas are in the interest of public health, safety, and welfare. If an area has such blighted conditions, the governing body is empowered to establish a CRA or expand an existing Community Redevelopment Area to include the blighted area(s). After the **(1) adoption of a Resolution** by the St. Augustine Community Redevelopment Agency acknowledging the documented conditions of blight and creating the Community Redevelopment Area, the St. Augustine City Commission & St. Johns County Board of Commissioners will **(2) adopt an Ordinance** formally acknowledging the new Community Redevelopment Area.

The ordinance will also establish the taxable-value base-year for the calculation of tax-increment financing (TIF) revenue and the duration of the Redevelopment Area. The ordinance will also authorize the contribution of the TIF revenue collected from participating taxing authorities from the newly adopted area's participating parcels for placement in the Community Redevelopment Agency's redevelopment trust fund. The most recent real property certified tax roll, prior to the effective year of the ordinance, shall be used to establish the "base year." These taxable values within the Redevelopment Area will be used to calculate the future tax increment. For the West City Community Redevelopment Area, the assumed timetable to adopt the Study Area as a Redevelopment Area implies that the tax increment calculation will utilize the 2023 certified rolls for the proposed Redevelopment Area.

4.1.3 *Redevelopment Plan*

After the approval of the Finding of Necessity report and subsequent establishment of a Community Redevelopment Area, it is likely that the City will authorize the preparation of a Community Redevelopment Plan to identify potential programs and projects to address the identified conditions of "slum" and "blight."

The Community Redevelopment Act requires that redevelopment plans be subjected to a compliance review conducted by the Local Planning Board before it may be submitted to the City Commission and County Commission for approval. The Planning Board has sixty (60) days to review the redevelopment plan for its conformity with the City's Comprehensive Development Plan, addressing the development of the City, and provide comments to the Community Redevelopment Agency. After receiving comments and recommendations from the Planning Board, the local governing body shall hold a public hearing on the approval of the Community Redevelopment Plan, after appropriate public notice has been provided and appropriate advertisements placed within the accepted general circulation newspaper of the area.

Before the City can adopt any resolution or ordinance to establish a community redevelopment plan or redevelopment trust fund, the governing body must provide public notice of the proposed actions to each of the taxing authorities that have the power to levy ad-valorem taxes within the redevelopment area. Such notices serve as an alert to these taxing authorities to any possible changes in their budgets that may occur because of the redevelopment action. As a policy matter, it is assumed that the following entities with ties and relationships to the City of St. Augustine will receive notice of any actions arising from either the findings of necessity (FON) analysis or subsequent programs or initiatives should they be authorized under the terms of the Redevelopment Act:

- St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners
- St. Johns County Property Appraiser's Office
- St. Johns County Tax Collector
- St. Johns County Emergency Management
- St. Johns County School District
- St. Johns River Water Management District
- Anastasia Mosquito Control
- FL. Inland Navigational District
- St. Augustine Port Waterways and Beach District

4.2 *Slum & Blight Criteria*

The Community Redevelopment Act establishes two similar, but discrete, pathways to determine if a Study Area is considered to be a "slum" or "blighted," sufficient to warrant the full application of the redevelopment powers conveyed by such a designation.

- **Alternative One** involves the layering of two tests. The first test is broadly conditional, and the second test is criteria specific. Both tests must conclude that the described conditions exist affirmatively.
- **Alternative Two** involves a specific agreement among parties subject to a prospective trust fund agreement. Where such an agreement exists, the jurisdiction seeking to designate a redevelopment area will be allowed to pass a less rigorous test. As in the first alternative, this test relates to specific criteria, and it must conclude affirmatively.

4.2.1 *Alternative One*

The first test for Alternative One requires that a Study Area identified as a “slum¹” or “blighted²” area contains a “substantial number of deteriorated or deteriorating structures, in which conditions, as indicated by government-maintained statistics or other studies, are leading to economic distress or endanger life or property.”

The second test for Alternative One must prove that the area must be one in which “two or more of the following [blight] factors are present” (Section 163.340(8), F.S.):

- Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, parking facilities, roadways, bridges, or public transportation facilities.
- Aggregate assessed values of real property in the area for ad valorem tax purposes have failed to show any appreciable increase over the 5 years prior to the finding of such conditions.
- Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness.
- Unsanitary or unsafe conditions.
- Deterioration of site or other improvements.
- Inadequate and outdated building density patterns.
- Falling lease rates per square foot of office, commercial, or industrial space compared to the remainder of the county or municipality.
- Tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land.
- Residential and commercial vacancy rates higher in the area than in the remainder of the county or municipality.
- Incidence of crime in the area higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality.
- Fire and emergency medical service calls to the area proportionately higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality.
- A greater number of violations of the Florida Building Code in the area than the number of violations recorded in the remainder of the county or municipality.
- Diversity of ownership or defective or unusual conditions of title which prevent the free alienability of land within the deteriorated or hazardous area.
- Governmentally owned property with adverse environmental conditions caused by a public or private entity.
- A substantial number or percentage of properties damaged by sinkhole activity which have not been adequately repaired or stabilized.

¹ Florida Statutes, Section 163.340 (7)

² Florida Statutes, Section 163.340 (8)

4.2.2 *Alternative Two*

The Redevelopment Act also allows that a slum or blighted area may be “any area in which at least one of the factors identified in paragraphs (a) through (o) of Section 163.340 (8), F.S. are present and all taxing authorities (as such term is defined in the Redevelopment Act) subject to Section 163.387 (2)(a), F.S. agree, either by interlocal agreement, agreements with the CRA or by resolution, that the area is blighted.”

5.0 Slum & Blight Conditions Observed

5.1 Conditions of Slum Observed

5.1.1 *Conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes*

In portions of the Study Area, there are conditions which endanger life by means of fire or flooding. Overgrown vegetation, especially when near overhead powerlines or other power sources, pose fire risks to surrounding properties. Without regular maintenance to the vegetation, generally in right-of-way or greenbelt areas, lightning or downed powerlines could easily cause a fire that can easily spread. Stormwater drainage areas and waterways can cause flooding, risk to properties, and risk to human life. Along Lewis Boulevard, Oyster Creek flows into San Sebastian River. At this confluence, the creek flows very closely to neighboring roadways (US-1, Lewis Boulevard, and Rio Vista Drive). During heavy rains, these roadways are at risk of flooding, as are neighboring residential and commercial properties.





5.2 Conditions of Blight Observed

5.2.1 *Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, parking facilities, roadways, bridges, or public transportation facilities*

Defective or inadequate transportation infrastructure is determined by the size and arrangement of transportation infrastructure and supporting facilities, including pedestrian and public transit infrastructure. Parking facilities are in short supply in the Study Area, which impacts the ability of residents and visitors to visit local businesses or institutions. Pedestrian infrastructure is also lacking. West King Street is a busy thoroughfare connecting western St. Johns County to St. Augustine's downtown core. There is insufficient pedestrian and biking infrastructure to protect residents and visitors from vehicles. Many people bike through the Study Area, particularly along West King Street into historic Downtown St. Augustine, yet there is very little biking infrastructure. Cyclists must hug the shoulder of a busy road to be able to reach their destinations. Many roads do not have marked or signalized pedestrian crossings. When sidewalks are present, they tend to be in disrepair or have accessibility challenges, as can be seen in the images on the next page. Where pedestrian and biking infrastructure exists, it is inadequate to the number and speed of vehicles moving through the commercial corridor. The observed defective transportation facilities within the Study Area satisfy the definition for a condition of "blight."





5.2.2 *Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness*

Lot layouts are classified as faulty if their sizes, adequacy, accessibility from roadways, or usefulness serve as a deterrent to successful redevelopment activity. Accessibility of lots is the primary challenge identified within the Study Area, specifically regarding commercial lots along major corridors. Commercial lots in the Study Area generally have small parking lots in the front of the building which are challenging to navigate, and over time this condition may impact consumers' willingness to visit certain businesses.



5.2.3 *Unsanitary or unsafe conditions*

Some infrastructure in the Study Area causes unsafe and unsanitary conditions. Roadways are in differing states of repair, some with cracked asphalt and potholes. Parking lots and sidewalks have large potholes and cracks, as well. These conditions are unsafe for pedestrians, as well as vehicles. Stormwater infrastructure is also creating unsafe and unsanitary conditions with flooding and standing water which can provide ample breeding grounds for mosquitos, other insects, and the diseases they can carry. Standing water can also create fall risks which can result in drowning, especially for children.



5.2.4 *Deterioration of site or other improvements*

The deterioration of site or other improvements is primarily determined by the physical conditions of buildings or site improvements, including their evaluated useful lives. Several commercial sites within the Study Area have been left to deteriorate and are either abandoned or waiting to be sold or leased. Buildings have graffiti and boarded windows and doors. Residential structures, as observed during the field study, have damaged roofs, dilapidated structural elements, and other signs of lacking maintenance. The deterioration is also seen in parking lots, sidewalks, and roadways. Roadways have potholes and cracks, and the shoulders of the roads have vegetation growing throughout. Sidewalks are broken, uneven, and have large holes in them. Parking lots at commercial sites have large missing pieces of asphalt and cracks. These conditions impact the perception of the Study Area and may prevent business owners or potential residents from choosing to locate in the area. The observed deterioration of sites or other improvements within the Study Area satisfy the definition of a blighted condition.



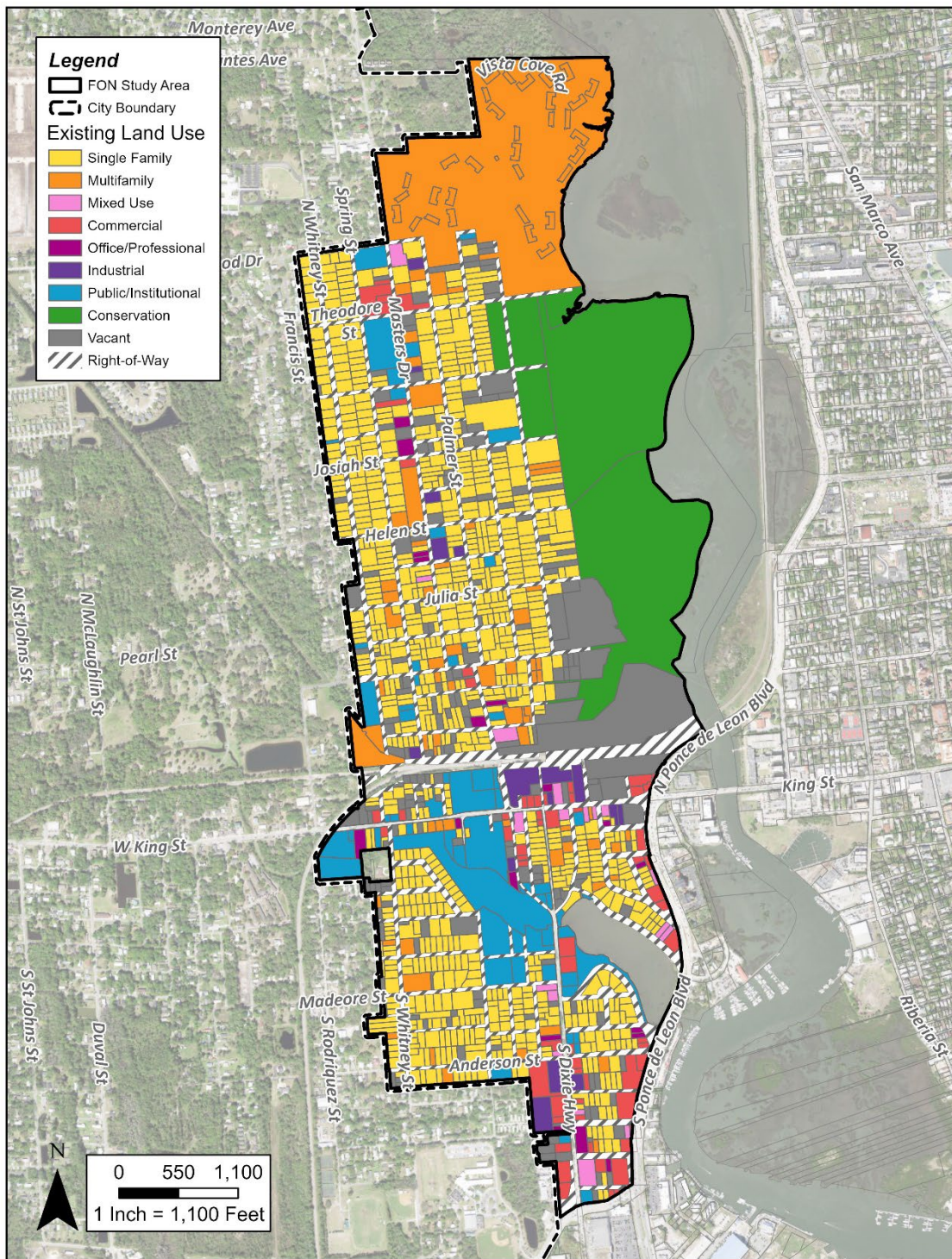


5.2.5 *Inadequate and outdated building density patterns*

Less than five percent of the Study Area is currently being used for commercial or office/professional uses, and almost half of the Study Area (47%) is used for residential purposes. This separation of uses prevents residents from being able to shop in their neighborhoods for everyday goods and increases the dependence upon personal vehicle use. In conjunction with the separation of uses in the Study Area, lot sizes are generally small making them difficult to maneuver for vehicles for ingress, egress, and parking. Along West King Street, the main concentration of commercial activity, there are limited areas for residents and visitors to park when visiting businesses in the area. With many curb cuts and narrow sidewalks, it is also challenging for pedestrians to access these areas. The observed inadequate and outdated building pattern within the Study Area satisfy the definition for a condition of "blight." **Figure 2**, on the next page, shows the current land use within the Study Area and the outdated building pattern.

Current Land Use	Acres	Percent (%)
Single Family Residential	181.5	31.0%
Conservation	93.8	16.0%
Multifamily	92.2	15.8%
Right-of-Way/Utilities	67.1	11.5%
Vacant	66.4	11.4%
Public/Institutional	45.1	7.7%
Commercial	19.7	3.4%
Industrial	9.3	1.6%
Mixed Use	5.3	0.9%
Office/Professional	4.6	0.8%
TOTAL ACREAGE	585.0 ac	

Figure 2. Current Land Use



Sources: City of St. Augustine, St. Johns County Property Appraiser, FGDL, 2023

5.2.6 *Incidence of crime in the area higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality.*

Based on service calls from the St. Augustine Police Department, the Study Area has more service calls than at least one other zone within the City. The Study Area accounts for approximately 20% of the service

calls but only accounts for 5% of the City's area. Proportionally, the Study Area has a higher rate of service calls for criminal activity than its size would indicate.

6.0 Summary of Conditions (per Florida Statutes)

As stated above, the Study Area is experiencing several conditions of slum and blight. There are dangers and hazards to the community, as well as conditions that prevent economic prosperity and accessibility. A field visit, public records research, and analysis of GIS data of the Study Area revealed the following conditions of slum and blight:

Slum Conditions:

- (1) The existence of conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes

Blight Conditions:

- (1) The predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, parking facilities, roadways, bridges, or public transportation facilities.
- (2) Fault lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness.
- (3) Unsanitary or unsafe conditions.
- (4) Deterioration of site or other improvements
- (5) Inadequate and outdated building density patterns
- (6) Incidence of crime in the area higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality.

These observed conditions have affected private sector investment and depressed redevelopment efforts and taxable income in the Study Area. There is private investment in the Study Area, but it is likely that conditions are suppressing additional investment from the private sector. The deteriorating properties, lack of accessibility to parcels, and unsanitary conditions, coupled with other observed conditions of blight have harmed economic development activity and redevelopment activity within the Study Area. The presence of these conditions within the Study Area qualifies its creation as the West City Redevelopment Area.

7.0 Conclusion of Alternative Tests

The findings of the evaluation of the Study Area satisfy the two tests of Alternative One to determine if an area is qualified to be a Community Redevelopment Area.

Alternative One - First Test

The evaluation identified the presence of "slum" conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other causes due to fire and safety hazards in the area. These findings satisfy the first test of Alternative One.

Alternative One - Second Test

The evaluation also identified the presence of six (6) conditions of "blight" as defined by Florida Statutes. These include:

- (1) The predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, parking facilities, roadways, bridges, or public transportation facilities.
- (2) Fault lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness.
- (3) Unsanitary or unsafe conditions.
- (4) Deterioration of site or other improvements
- (5) Inadequate and outdated building density patterns.

- (6) Incidence of crime in the area higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality.

8.0 Matrix of Slum & Blight Conditions

Florida Statute Reference and Definition	Observation of Conditions		
	Observed	Not Observed	Suspected
"Slum Area"			
<i>Inadequate provision for ventilation, light, air, sanitation, or open spaces</i>		X	
<i>High density of population, compared to the population density of adjacent areas within the county or municipality; and overcrowding, as indicated by government-maintained statistics or other studies and the requirements of the Florida Building Code</i>		X	
<i>The existence of that endanger life or property by fire or other causes</i>	X		
"Blight Area"			
<i>Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, parking facilities, roadways, bridges, or public transportation facilities</i>	X		
<i>Aggregate assessed values of real property in the area for ad valorem tax purposes have failed to show any appreciable increase over the 5 years prior to the finding of such conditions</i>			X
<i>Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness</i>	X		
<i>Unsanitary or unsafe conditions</i>	X		
<i>Deterioration of site or other improvements</i>	X		
<i>Inadequate and outdated building density patterns</i>	X		
<i>Falling lease rates per square foot of office, commercial, or industrial space compared to the remainder of the county or municipality</i>			X
<i>Tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land</i>		X	
<i>Residential and commercial vacancy rates higher in the area than in the remainder of the county or municipality</i>			X
<i>Incidence of crime in the area higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality</i>	X		
<i>Fire and emergency medical service calls to the area proportionately higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality</i>		X	

<i>A greater number of violations of the Florida Building Code in the area than the number of violations recorded in the remainder of the county or municipality</i>			X
<i>Diversity of ownership or defective or unusual conditions of title which prevent the free alienability of land within the deteriorated or hazardous area</i>		X	
<i>Governmentally owned property with adverse environmental conditions caused by a public or private entity</i>			X
<i>A substantial number or percentage of properties damaged by sinkhole activity which have not been adequately repaired or stabilized.</i>		X	

9.0 Legal Description

A portion of Section 12 Township 7 South, Range 29 East, a portion of the Avice & Viel Grant in Township 7 South, Range 29 East, a portion of the Antonio Huertas Grant in Township 7 South, Range 29 East and a portion of Sections 7, 37, 38 and 39 in Township 7 South, Range 30 East, City of St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida; being more particularly described as follows:

Begin at the point of intersection of the West line of the City Limits of the City of St. Augustine, Florida, with the centerline of Ravenswood Drive (George Street), said point lying 137.5 feet West of the West Right of Way Line of Whitney Street, and run thence East, along the centerline of said Ravenswood Drive, 840 feet, more or less, to a point on the southerly extension of the East Right of Way line of Masters Drive (Savage Street); thence North, along said southerly extension, 15 feet to the North Right of Way line of said Ravenswood Drive; thence continue North, along said East Right of Way line of Masters Drive, 822.44 feet to the northwest corner of Parcel One as described in Official Records Book 1311, page 516 of the Public Records of St. Johns County, Florida; thence East, along the North line of said Parcel One, a distance of 300.00 feet; thence North, along said North line, 142.22 feet; thence East, along said North line and along the South line of land conveyed to Eugene I. Howard, as per Deed Book 11, page 184 of said Public Records, 690.00 feet; thence North, along said North line and along the East line of said land conveyed to Eugene I. Howard and the northerly extension thereof, 723.56 feet; thence East, along said North line, along the North Line of Government Lot 8 of said Section 12 and the easterly extension thereof, 1003.00 feet to the meander line along the East side of Government Lot 4 of said Section 7; thence southeast, along said meander line, 21.00 feet to a point on the Mean High Water Line on the West side of the San Sebastian River; thence easterly, southerly and westerly, along said Mean High Water Line, 685 feet, more or less, to a point on said meander line along the East side of Government Lot 4; thence South 22° East, more or less, along said meander line, 367 feet, more or less; thence South 38° West, more or less, along said meander line, 594.00 feet; thence South, more or less, along said meander line, 264.00 feet; thence South 76° East, more or less, along said meander line, 10 feet, more or less, to the Westerly bank of said San Sebastian River; thence southerly and easterly along said Westerly bank, 410 feet, more or less, to the mouth of a creek; thence southerly, along the centerline of said creek, 355 feet, more or less, to a point on the easterly extension of the North Right of Way line of Theodore Street; thence East, along said easterly extension of the North Right of Way line of Theodore Street, 750 feet, more or less, to a point on the West bank of the San Sebastian River; thence southerly, along said West bank, 5000 feet, more or less, to a point on the West Right of Way line of South Ponce de Leon Boulevard (State Road No. 5); thence southerly, along said West Right of Way of Ponce de Leon Boulevard, 4350 feet, more or less, to a point on the northerly Right of Way line of State Road No. 207; thence westerly, along said northerly Right of Way line of State Road No. 207, a distance of 725 feet, more or less, to a point on the West line of the City

Limits of St. Augustine, Florida; thence north, along said West line of the City Limits of St. Augustine, to the Point of Beginning.