



*Florida Department of Transportation*

RON DESANTIS  
GOVERNOR

801 N Broadway Avenue  
Bartow, FL 33830

JARED W. PERDUE, P.E.  
SECRETARY

September 12, 2024

Cody McGhee, Director  
Parks and Recreation Department  
City of Auburndale  
119 West Park Street  
Auburndale, Florida 33823

**RE: Downtown Auburndale Park  
Section 4(f) Statement of Significance / Recommended Determination of Applicability  
Old Dixie Trail Project Development and Environment Study from Auburndale to  
Haines City  
Polk County, Florida  
Financial Project ID 435391-1-22-01**

Dear Mr. McGhee:

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District One is conducting a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide regional connectivity, contribute to safe multimodal access to community and recreational destinations, enhance quality of life and foster economic development in the vicinity of the proposed Old Dixie Trail (ODT). The proposed improvements will generally include the construction of a shared use path, varying in width from 10 to 12 feet with 4- to 5-foot sodded buffers on both sides between the Auburndale Trail to the Haines City Trail in Polk County, for a distance of approximately 13 miles (see **Attachment 1**). Improvements will include crosswalks and pavement markings as needed to facilitate safe usage.

Through its use of federal funding, the ODT project is required to address the provisions of Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Act of 1966. This legislation requires USDOT agencies (and their legally authorized designees) to make specific findings when a USDOT-funded or approved transportation project requires the use of land from a Section 4(f) protected property. These properties typically include publicly owned land of a public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge of national, state, or local significance, or land of a historic or archeological site of national, State, or local significance.

The FDOT has identified the existing Downtown Auburndale Park as publicly owned, officially designated, and managed by your agency, as a Section 4(f) resource. The western half of the Downtown Auburndale Park provides various public recreation functions including hosting

community events, an event center, picnicking, walking paths, and the Auburndale Rotary Butterfly Garden. Based on the current conceptual design, a portion of the ODT will be constructed along the western edge of the western half of the City's Downtown Auburndale Park adjacent to West Park Street through the expansion of the existing 8-foot-wide paver pathway to a 10-foot-wide shared use path. The trail material will be determined during future coordination with the City. **Attachment 2** provides a graphic showing the proximity of this facility to the proposed ODT.

As part of the Section 4(f) process, the FDOT coordinates with the official(s) with jurisdiction (OWJ) to obtain a determination of significance for an applicable resource. In this context, "significance" means that in comparing the availability and function of Downtown Auburndale Park with the recreational, park and trail objectives of the City of Auburndale and Polk County, this facility plays an important role in meeting those objectives. Based the clear investment of resources in acquiring, constructing, and maintaining the park and its amenities, the FDOT understands that Downtown Auburndale Park is a significant recreational resource.

Although there will be minor improvements associated with trail construction (i.e., limited clearing/grubbing, pavement installation, and relocation of lighting, signage and landscaping) within the existing park property, public access to the park will be maintained during the brief period needed for trail construction at this location. Staging of construction equipment and materials within the park is not expected. As such, the proposed trail improvements will require the FDOT Office of Environmental Management's (OEM) approval of a Section 4(f) Exception in accordance with 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 771.13(g) on the following basis:

- 1) The use of the Section 4(f) property (i.e., the existing Downtown Auburndale Park) is solely for the purpose of preserving or enhancing an activity, feature, or attribute that qualifies the property for Section 4(f) protection; and
- 2) The OWJ over the Section 4(f) resource (i.e., City of Auburndale) agrees in writing to bullet (1) above.

With this letter, the FDOT is requesting the City of Auburndale's concurrence with 1) the FDOT's determination that Downtown Auburndale Park meets the Section 4(f) definition of a significant resource, and 2) the FDOT's findings that the proposed improvements will result in an enhancement relative to the public's ability to use this resource. There will be no adverse effects to the activities, features and attributes that qualify the Downtown Auburndale Park for protection under Section 4(f).

If you concur, please sign and date the concurrence block (next page) and return it to me at the address shown in the letterhead or preferably by e-mail to [Emily.Barnett@dot.state.fl.us](mailto:Emily.Barnett@dot.state.fl.us) as soon as possible, or by **September 26, 2024**. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the findings of this letter, please contact me at (863) 519-2805 or at the email address listed above. Thank you in advance for your review and assistance with this request.

Sincerely,



Emily Barnett  
Environmental Project Manager  
Florida Department of Transportation, District One

EB/gsm

CC: Steven Andrews, FDOT D1  
Nicole Selly, KCA (on behalf of FDOT D1)  
Michelle Rutishauser, Earth Resources Inc. (on behalf of FDOT D1)  
Matt Dockins, HNTB  
Gordon Mullen, HNTB

**Concurrence for Downtown Auburndale Park**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

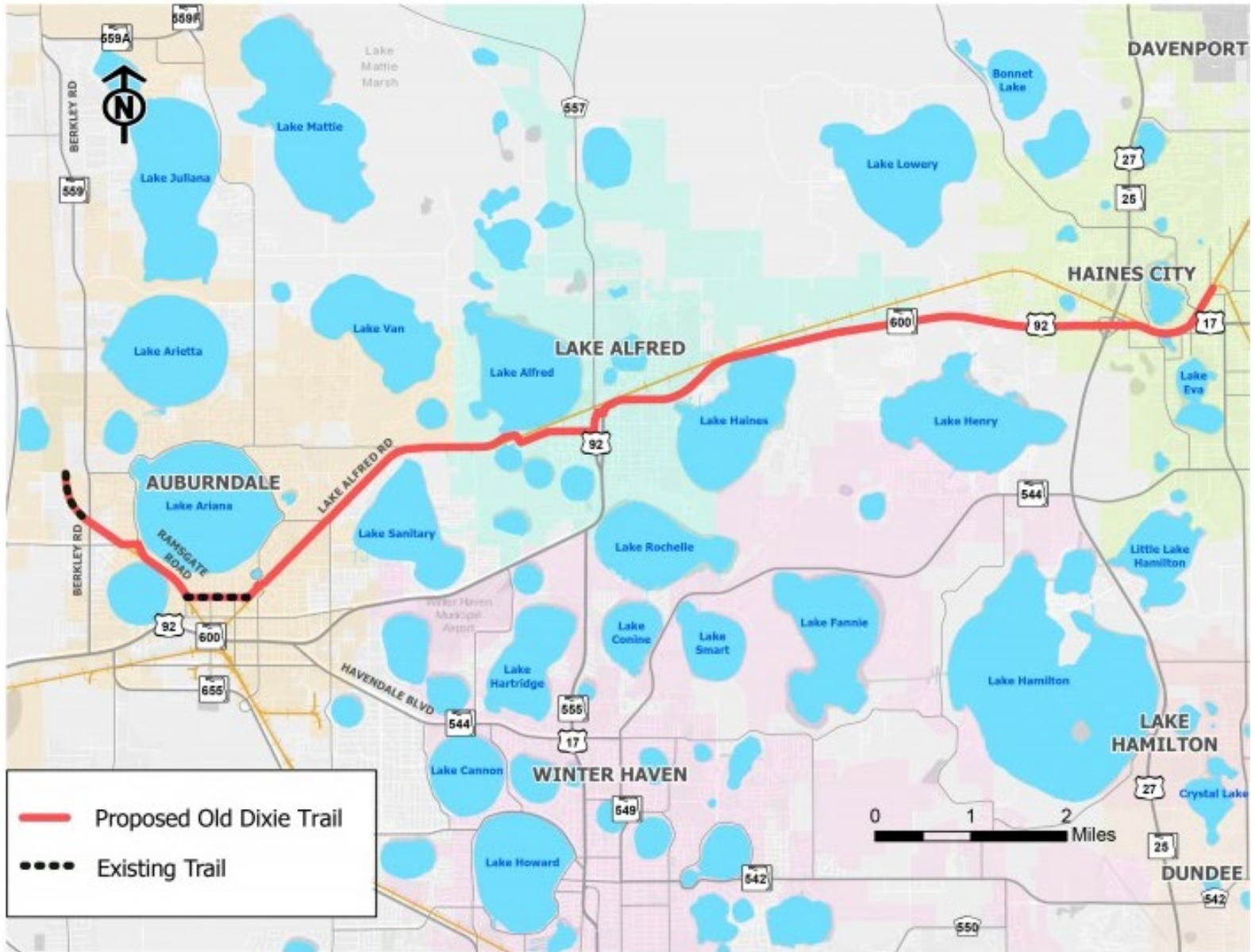
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(Date)

City of Auburndale Parks and Recreation (or designee)

Attachments: 1) Old Dixie Trail Project Location Map  
2) Proximity of Downtown Auburndale Park to the proposed Old Dixie Trail

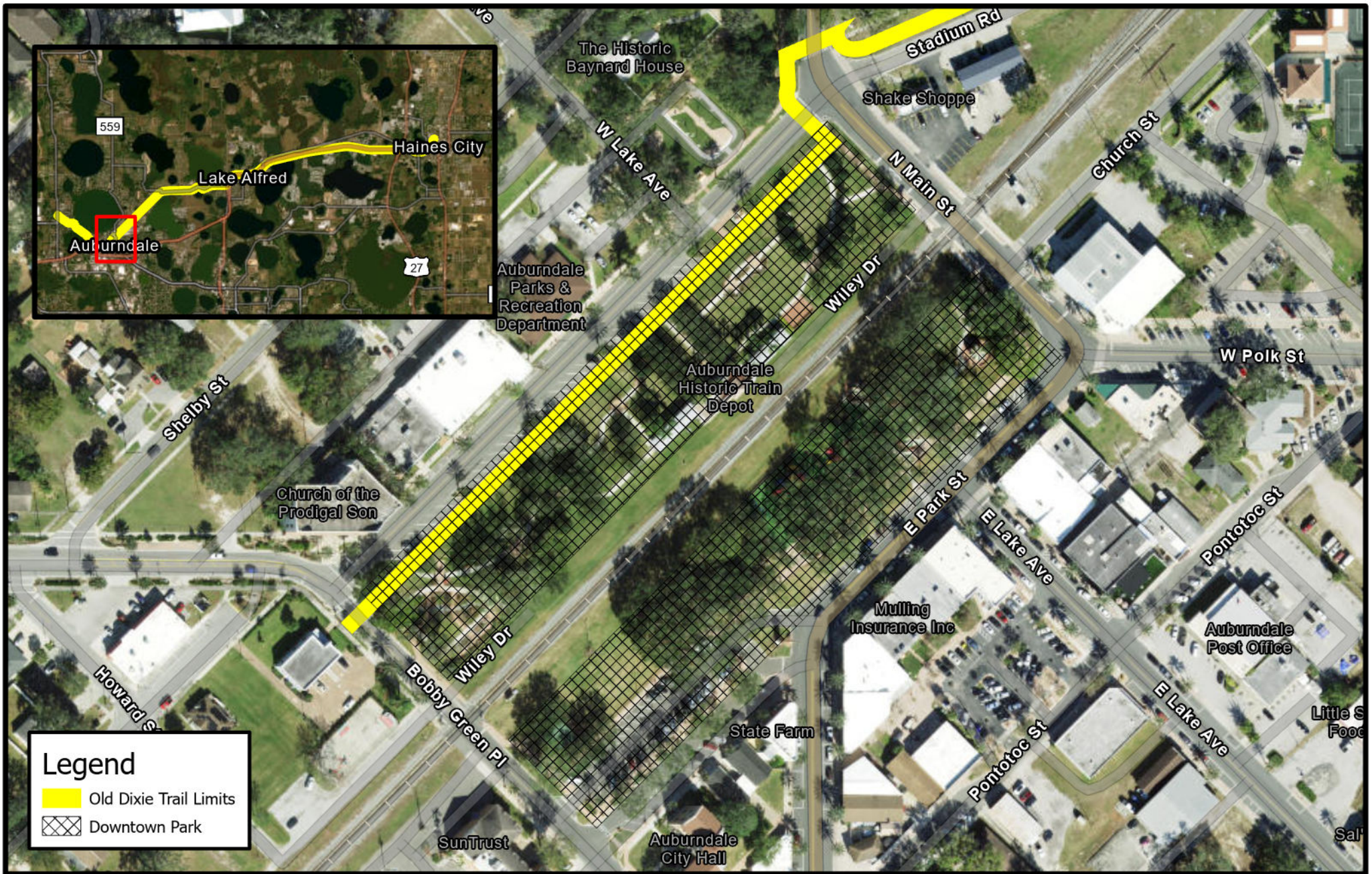
**ATTACHMENT 1.**

**Old Dixie Trail PD&E Project Location Map**





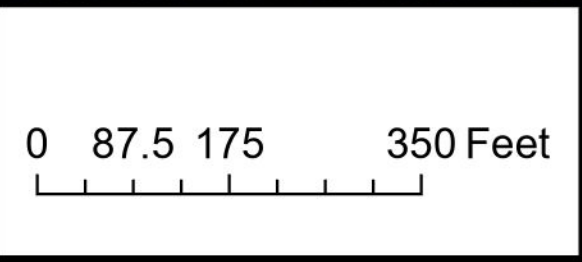
**ATTACHMENT 2.**

**Proximity of Downtown Auburndale Park to the proposed  
Old Dixie Trail**



**Legend**

-  Old Dixie Trail Limits
-  Downtown Park



Downtown Park  
(City of Auburndale)

Old Dixie Trail PD&E  
FPID: 435391-1-22-01  
Polk County, Florida

