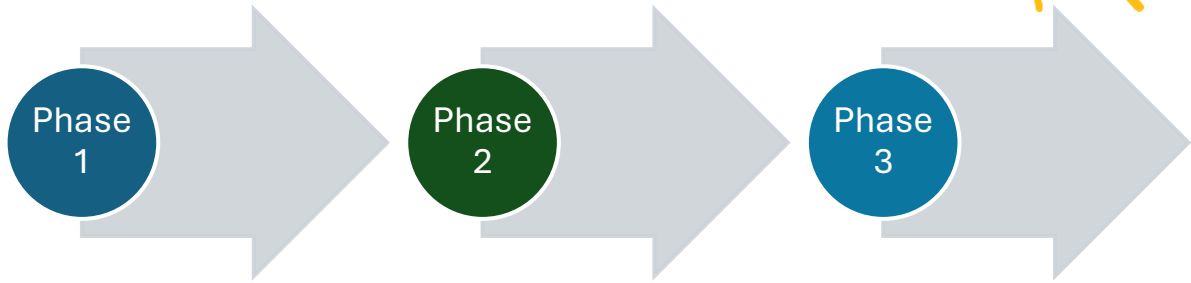


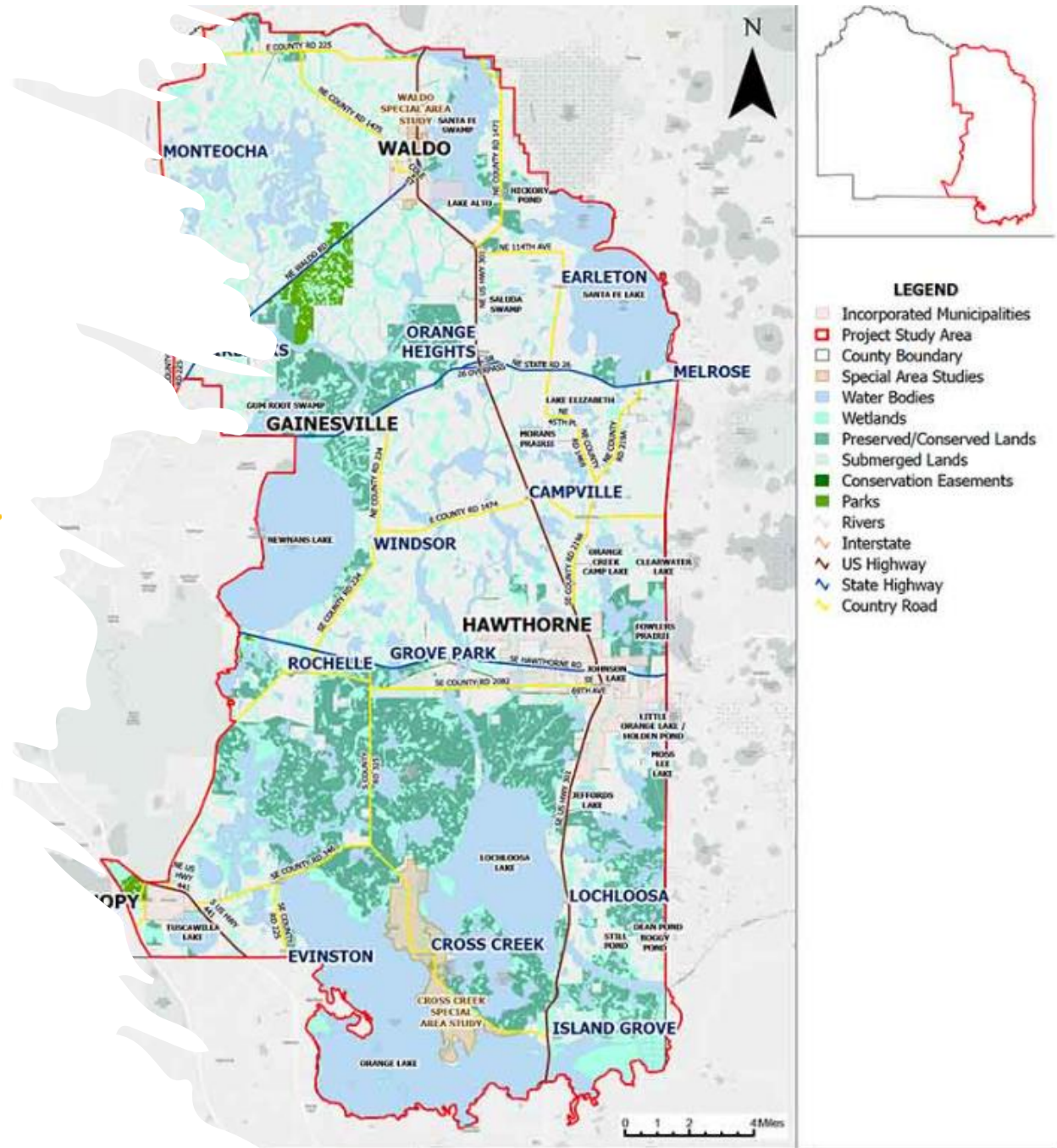


# FORWARD FOCUS

Eastern Alachua County

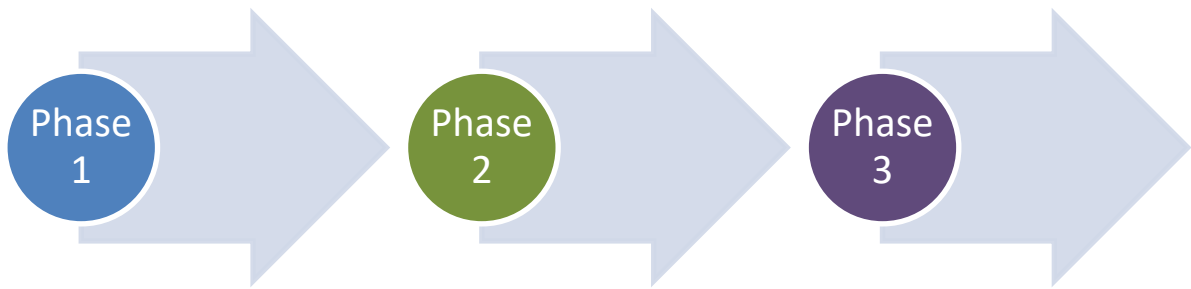


Three Years. Lasting Impact.



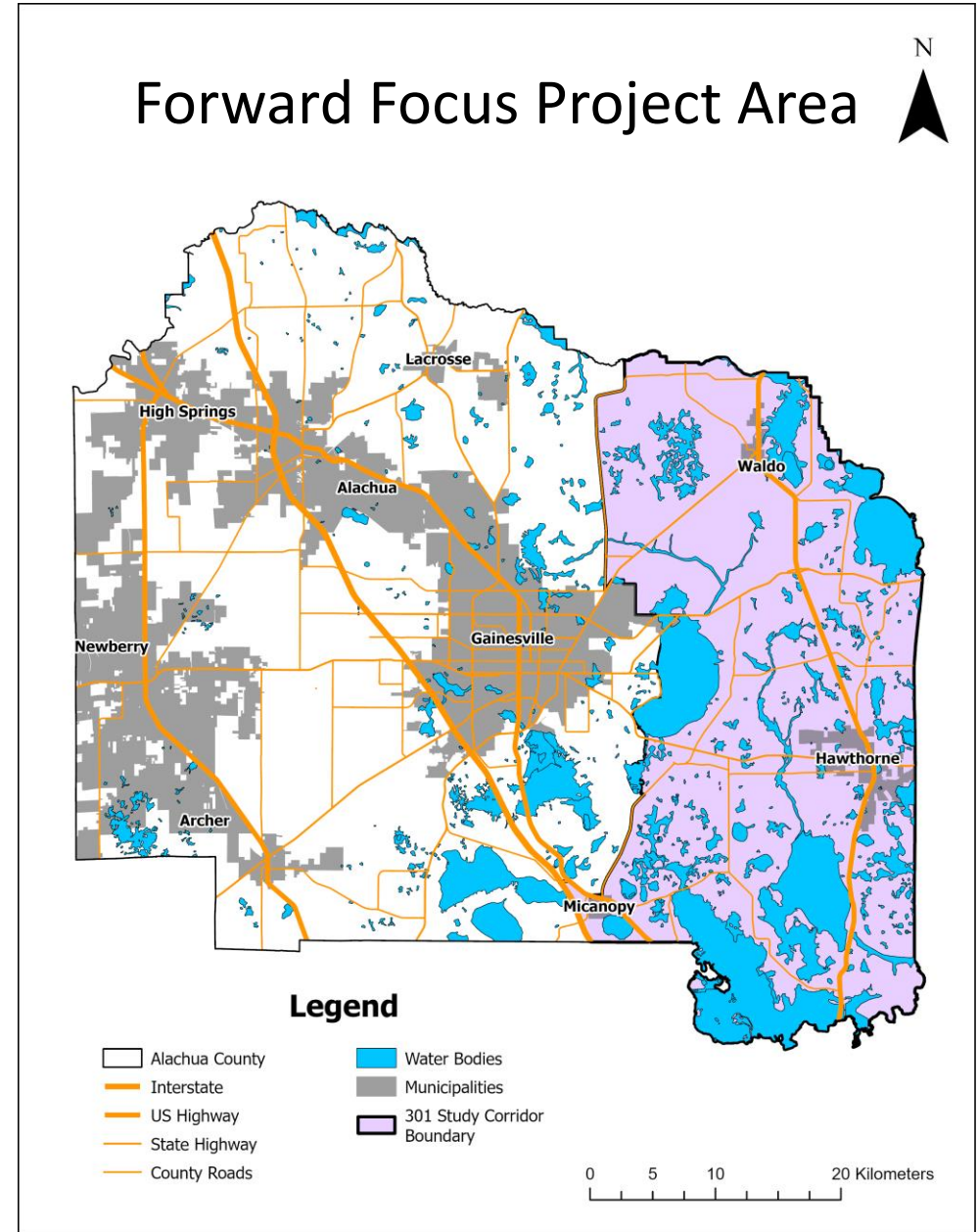
# Project Description and Purpose

This study, divided into three phases, focuses on the unique needs of Eastern Alachua County. This assessment will identify community service needs and economic development opportunities to attract grant funding and inform future County initiatives.



# Forward Focus Project Area

The study area includes, but is not limited to, the municipalities of Hawthorne, Waldo, and Micanopy and the unincorporated communities of Montechoa, Melrose, Island Grove, and rural clusters.



## Study Area

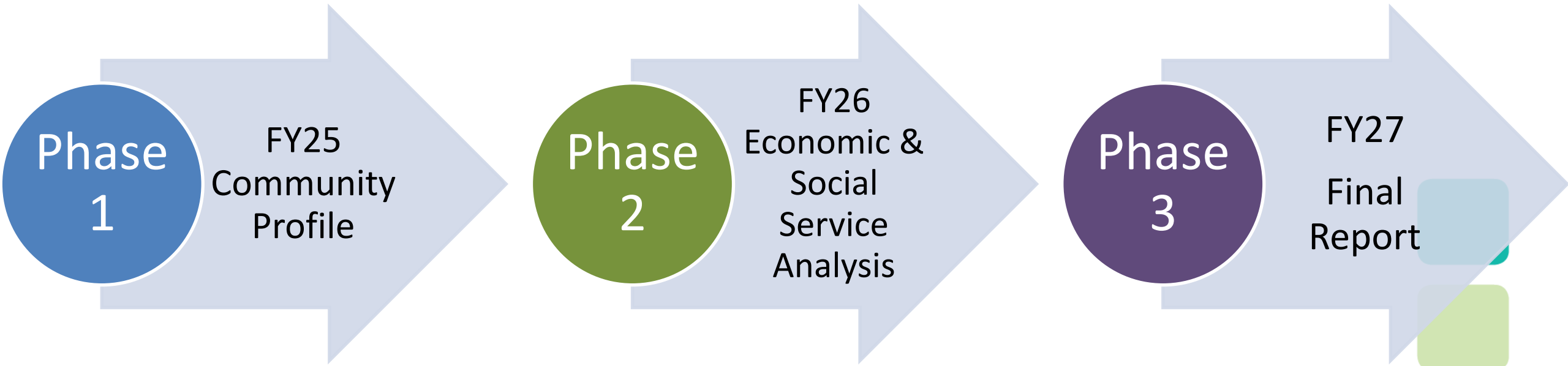
- Total Population – 18,665
- Total Acreage – 210,373
- Square Miles – 594
- Residential Units – 6,799
- Commercial Acreage – 594
- Agricultural Acreage- 134,555



Rochelle Listening Session



# Project Phases



# Phase 1

## Year 1 – Phase 1

- Seven Listening Sessions: 311 Comments
- Community Survey: 2,166 data points collected
- 10 Newsletters
- Zencity Page and County Project Website
- October 25 Year End Summit
- ICMA Economic Mobility and Opportunity Grant - Complete

# Phase 1

## October Year End Summit Overview

- Held October 25, 2025 at Cuscowilla
- Three 1-hour topic discussions with Subject Matter Experts
  - Post-Secondary education and workforce
  - Health and well-being
  - Early childhood and youth



October Cuscowilla Summit

# Phase 1

## Key Survey Themes

- Workforce: limited local programs, transportation barriers
- Health: provider shortages, long travel distances
- Early Childhood: lack of childcare, youth programs
- Infrastructure: roads, internet, food access



# Phase 1

## Workforce Findings - Survey

- 57.78%: lack of relevant post-secondary programs
- 37.78%: limited job opportunities
- 11.11 % transportation barriers



Christine Brown and Bishop Stokes

# Phase 1

## Workforce Key Takeaways

- Expand fiber internet
- Promote trade in schools
- Create apprenticeships
- Support small, local businesses
- Explore Santa Fe College satellite campus – committed!



# Phase 1

## Health and Well-being Findings: Survey

- 56%: barriers to care
- Barriers:
  - Provide availability (7.78%)
  - Long wait times (22.22%)
  - Cost (20%)
  - Transportation (17.78%)
- 80% travel 10+ miles for groceries
- Top Needs: primary care, senior services, dental



Charlie Hochfelder

# Phase 1

## Health and Well-being Key Takeaways

- Bring essential services closer to residents
- Explore mobile clinics, telehealth, local partnerships
- Increase food access through non-traditional models
- Address emergency response gaps



Bishop Stokes and  
Sharron Surrency



# Phase 1

## Early Childhood Findings: Survey

- 57.78%: need childcare for ages 0-5
- 37.78: after-school programs
- 31.11%: teen programs
- 28.89%: teen job opportunities
- Barriers: limited local options and high cost



Simon Suuk and Mia Jones

# Phase 1

## Early Childhood Key Takeaways

- **Childcare Accessibility:** Need for early-opening or neighborhood-based childcare options.
- **Business & Community Partnerships:** Encourage businesses to support employee childcare.
- **Infrastructure & Workforce Needs:** Potential spaces (e.g., churches, community centers) require infrastructure updates, and a critical need exists for qualified, fairly paid childcare workers.
- **Youth Development:** Trade learning, structured after-school programs, and community excursions...staffing and transportation are significant barriers.
- **Family & Housing Support:** Repurpose vacant buildings (like churches and hotels) to create stable housing or childcare facilities, which helps stabilize families and support young adults.

# Phase 1

## Cross-Cutting Themes

- Digital divide affects all eastern Alachua County
- Transportation challenges compound every issue
- Desire for small-scale, community friendly solutions
- Strong preference to preserve rural character



## Phase 2

## Year Two

- Create actionable steps
  - Immediate – continue early/easy actions
  - Intermediate
  - Long-term
- Build partnerships for implementation
- Continue community engagement
  - Create community task force with representation from all communities



Phase  
3

## Year Three: Action Plan

- Approve the Action Plan to Implement Year 2's analysis
- Pursue funding opportunities and partnerships for large scale initiatives
- Continue to engage with and follow up with the communities