

PALM COAST SHOPPING CENTER SITE

19.6 ± acres

Flagler County, FL



DESCRIPTION

Matanzas Pointe is a fully entitled commercial shopping center site positioned strategically between the commercially unserved north Palm Coast communities of several thousand homes and Palm Coast Park which is a fully approved DRI for over 3,000 residential units.

The property is within close proximity to Palm Coast's ocean front resorts including Hammock Dunes and golf communities such as Grand Haven. Despite the onslaught of the great recession Palm Coast has quietly added several national retail stores, a major movie theatre and the expansion of Florida Hospital, and is now poised to retake its position as one of Florida's fastest growing MSA's.

SIZE

19.6± acres

PRICE

\$3,950,000

LOCATION

Commercial development opportunity within 3 minutes of new I-95 interchange at Matanzas Woods Parkway! Located at the northeast corner of Matanzas Woods Parkway and US 1. Neighbored by Florida Hospital owned parcel to the north.

Offering subject to errors, omission, prior sale or withdrawal without notice.

ZONING

Commercial

ROAD FRONTAGE

861 ± feet on US 1

1,139 ± feet on Matanzas Woods Parkway

UTILITIES

On site

LAND FOR SALE

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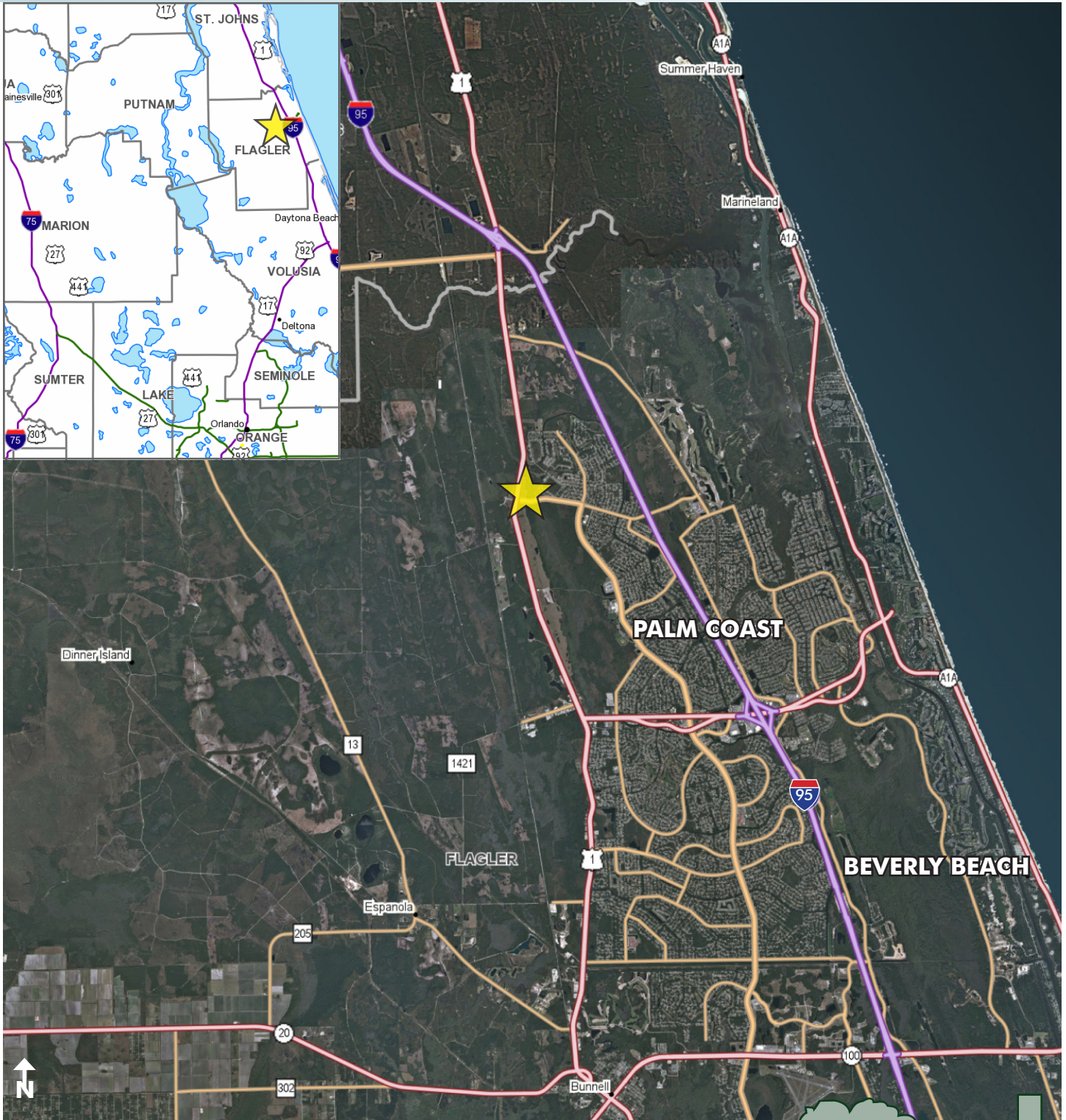
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LOCATION MAP

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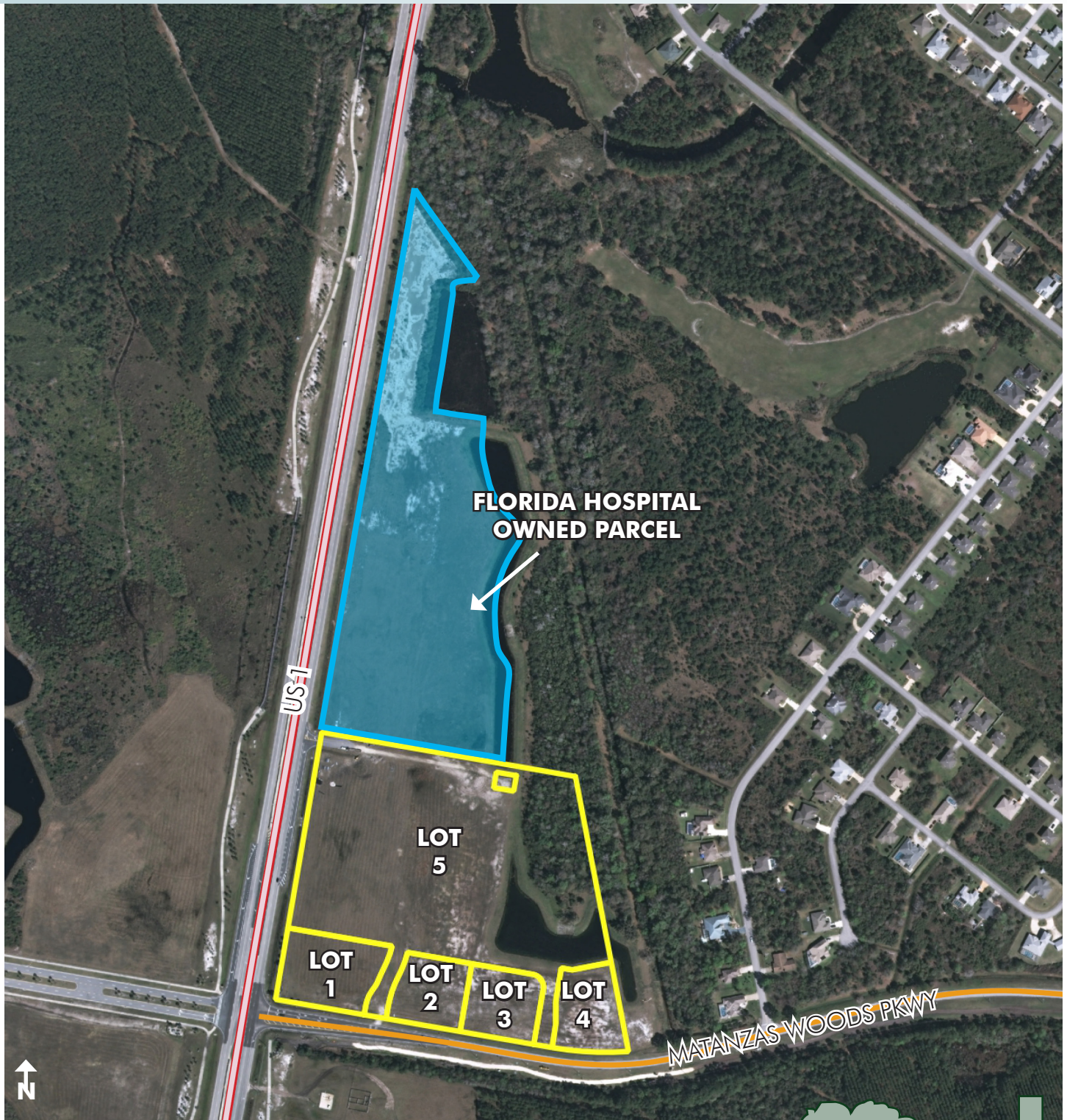
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PROPERTY MAP

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18 years in the making: New Matanzas exit for I-95 in Palm Coast opens today

Connection at Matanzas Parkway nearly 18 years in the making

By [Matt Bruce](#)

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Published: Monday, March 28, 2016 at 5:30 a.m.

PALM COAST — Bob Pickering remembers stepping outside the emergency operations center in Bunnell as wildfires raged across Flagler County in July 1998. He watched helicopters circling overhead while air tankers disappeared into smoke billows as they doused blazing tree lines from above.

"There was a huge plume of smoke to the south, a huge plume of smoke to the north, and another one right on top of us," he recalls. "It looked like a war zone."

Wildfires consumed many forests and homes across the state that year. The fires swelled to more than 84,000 acres in Flagler County at one point, destroying 71 homes and forcing then-Gov. Lawton Chiles to order all county residents to leave on the eve of the nation's birthday — the only such countywide evacuation ordered due to a fire disaster in state history.

It was from the ashes of the 1998 firestorm and mass exodus that the idea to add another junction at Interstate 95 arose. Traffic gridlocked on the county's available roadways in 1998 as residents evacuated, making the need for another escape route apparent.

On Monday, that added route will become reality as county officials have scheduled a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the site of the new I-95 interchange at Matanzas Woods Parkway. The exits and entrances are slated to open for traffic immediately following the ceremony, set for 3:30 p.m. at the parkway's western on-ramp.

"It took a village to get things done," said Flagler County Engineer Faith Alkhatib. "You wouldn't believe how many people worked on this project, and how many hours and efforts to get this done."



Workers race to finish up the Matanzas Woods Parkway-Interstate 95 interchange project last week, with the ramp to southbound I-95 visible in the background. The on-off ramps are scheduled to open Monday afternoon following a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

NEWS-JOURNAL/DAVID TUCKER

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"Alkhatib, who joined the county in 2005 as the overpass was being built, said the interchange project was never far from her mind. She lives near Matanzas Woods Parkway and said she drives past the project site each day on her way to and from work.

"I'm really happy and thrilled it's done," Alkhatib said. "It was a project that, when I got here, I really wanted to see finished, so I'm just so happy to see that it has been completed."

The interchange is the culmination of an effort that took nearly 20 years and cost more than \$25 million when accounting for the \$12.6-million Matanzas Woods Parkway overpass, which was dedicated in December 2006.

The diamond-shaped concourse now includes exits and on-ramps to I-95's northbound and southbound lanes. It will become the fourth access point to the interstate in Flagler County and the first new interchange here since Palm Coast Parkway exits were built in the late-1970s. A Florida Department of Transportation spokesperson said the state's last addition to I-95 was the Pineda Causeway, which opened May 2011 in Brevard County.

Accompanying projects to lengthen Old Kings Road and Palm Harbor Parkway are ongoing. Alkhatib said the Old Kings Road extension will be finished by July. City of Palm Coast officials have slated the Palm Harbor project to be finished by the end of the month. Both roads will be used to help disburse the anticipated influx of new traffic coming off the interstate.

County Administrator Craig Coffey said officials from past administrations had to acquire about 200 acres of land surrounding the interchange so the county could move ahead with the two road extensions.

"Thinking about it, if you look back on projects that you do in your career as an engineer for a county, you have little jewels, with parks and different things like that," he said. "This would have to be up there as one of the crowning ones that this team has done. Makes me proud of them. It's very impressive.

"Lots of counties do new jails and other additions," he said. "Not many counties do this level of a project. You may get some bigger counties, but I challenge you to find a county our size that has done this. I don't think it's been done."

The Matanzas interchange sits roughly midway between I-95 access points at Palm Coast Parkway and U.S. 1, which are about 11 miles apart. County leaders expect it to help alleviate traffic on Palm Coast Parkway, and open up new avenues for economic development.

Some critics, however, question the safety of adding an interchange near Matanzas High School, which sits less than a mile east of the site. Palm Coast Mayor Jon Netts sent School Board Chairwoman Colleen Conklin a letter last week urging the School Board to partner with the City Council to ensure pedestrian and cyclist safety on the parkway near its intersections with the interchange.

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Other residents have complained about traffic being detoured onto residential streets because of the Palm Harbor Parkway extension, saying it has created headaches and safety concerns on those side streets.

LONG TIME COMING

The Federal Highway Administration and FDOT are covering 94 percent of the interchange's \$12.4 million tab, Alkhatib said. Flagler is using impact fees to kick in 5.7 percent, but the state is expected to reimburse the county after the project is complete, according to officials. County spokeswoman Julie Murphy said the county has incurred just 5 percent of the costs or \$1.26 million for the interchange and overpass projects at Matanzas Woods Parkway.

Actual construction off the interchange began last June. But there were nearly two decades of obstacles for local officials to hurdle before getting to that point. Former Gov. Jeb Bush vetoed funding for the overpass three times. County officials credit U.S. Rep John Mica, R-Winter Park, with getting initial funds for the project earmarked.

Flagler officials also had to undergo the arduous process of getting state approval for the I-95 addition, completing traffic and environmental studies as well as reports to justify the new artery. Alkhatib explained that Flagler falls in the middle of two state transportation districts in St. Johns and Volusia counties, and neither district's transportation models fit Flagler's traffic flow. She and other county officials had to travel to Washington D.C. for special meetings and visit FDOT's headquarters in Tallahassee to convince the state officials to reconfigure the county's transportation model.

Flagler County is much different than it was during the 1998 fires. Most notably, its population has swelled to more than 105,000. Yet the need for the Matanzas interchange is one thing that has not changed. It, too, may have grown.

Pickering, who joined Flagler's emergency management team in 1994, spent the fiery days in July 1998 relaying messages to fire crews on the county's communications system. He explained that those brush fires began in early June following a two-month dry spell. They ramped up in June with a huge blaze that tore through Seminole Woods and destroyed 23 homes, and gradually progressed to the first few days of July.

Several fires burned across Flagler, Volusia and St. Johns counties and forest officials predicted that they would come together to form one monstrous wildfire.

Firefighters who'd spent years battling rolling infernos in California flew crosscountry to help subdue the flames in Flagler and said they'd never seen wildfires behave like the ones here, Pickering said.

It took years for the county to fully recover from the 1998 fires, which left scars that remain to this day. Some of those lasting effects persist in the psyche of long-time residents and Pickering admits his mind drifts back to 1998 whenever he sees fog or smells smoke.

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"You couldn't get away from the smell," he said. "There were many mornings where we all woke up to a layer of smoke and fog combined across the whole county ... The people that were here during '98 have a deep understanding of what it was like. It's impossible to fully convey that to someone who wasn't here. And that's why when people smell smoke, some of these people immediately get anxious."

Pickering noted several improvements emerged after the fires, including an expansion to the county's emergency services department, more equipment, upgrades to its public communication system, and the addition of Flagler's FireFlight helicopter. Fire rescue deploys the air unit to all brush fire calls now to extinguish them before they can become unmanageable. The county has not lost a home or structure to wild fires since, he noted.

"We were fighting a war," Pickering said. "But in the end, a lot of pluses came out of it. Unfortunately, people lost homes. That's horrible, that people lose their possessions. I just hate seeing that stuff. But the pluses that came out of it, I think, really have a role in why we've not had any big fires."

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