

# Wildflowers Music Park

*A Proposal for a new Arts and Cultural venue creation in Alachua County,  
Florida, 2024*



Dear Friends,

*I am excited to present to you the enclosed proposal for the development of **Wildflowers Music Park**, a unique venue dedicated to the cultural growth of the citizens of North Florida and beyond. This proposal outlines our vision, strategic approach, and the essential elements that will make Wildflowers Music Park a cornerstone of cultural enrichment in the region.*

## **The Path to Wildflowers Music Park...**

To create a vibrant and sustainable community where music, art, and education empower individuals to live with creativity, connection, and environmental responsibility, inspiring a harmonious future for all.

We will **host a vibrant festival featuring diverse music, art, and dance to inspire creativity and build community**. Through interactive workshops and presentations, we'll **educate on sustainable living and personal growth**. We will prioritize eco-friendly practices to support **environmental responsibility**. Our goal is to create an **inclusive space** where attendees can **connect, learn, and thrive**.

Health & Wellness + Relationships + Creativity + Resources

*With a growing need for and without suitable infrastructures dedicated to Arts, Music, Dance, and Learning, many creative outlets often will not meet their full potential. Wildflowers Music Park is set to address this gap by becoming more than just a venue—it will be a cultural hub where artists, performers, and learners can come together to celebrate and cultivate their talents. The park will feature: performance spaces and stages, camping areas, nature areas and trails, community gathering areas for food and arts exhibition and vending, equestrian infrastructure and trails, and wildlife, creating a rich and engaging environment for all.*

*In the attached proposal, you will find a detailed overview of our strategic plan, including:*

- **Vision:** An articulation of our vision for Wildflowers Music Park and its role in cultural enrichment.
- **Four Founding Principles of the Wildflowers Music Park:** The core values and principles that will guide the development and operation of the park.
- **History:** An overview of GrassRoots Festivals as catalysts for community building.
- **Community Involvement and Partners:** engaging with the local community and key partners involved in the project.
- **Concept & Mission:** An overview of the core concept behind the park and our mission to foster a creative and inclusive community.
- **Securing the Site:** How we will acquire the land
- **Music Park Development & Operations:** Details about building and operating the festival site.
- **Project Financing:** An outline of the financial structure, including funding requirements.
- **Revenue Strategy:** The long term sustainable revenue plan.
- **Investment Details:** ROI and collateralization
- **Estimated Impact of the Festival:** How a festival celebration creates a positive outcome for the community.
- **Alachua County:** information about the site location, including comparative market demographics.
- **Summary:** A concise review of what we will do and how we will do it.

- **Links & Maps:** Resources, links, and site maps, and a Wildflower Festival Site Conceptualization that provide additional context and support for the project.
- **Development Team Bios:** Biographies and backgrounds of the key team members leading the project, highlighting their expertise and roles.

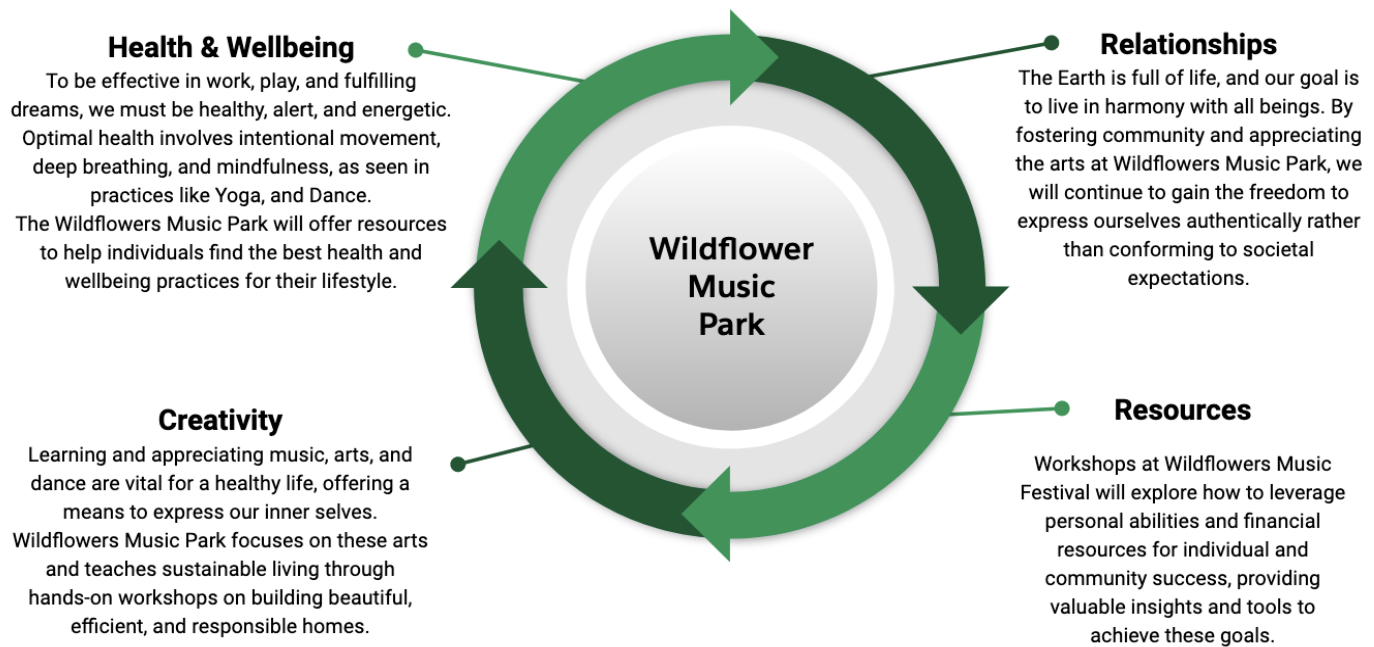
*We believe that Wildflowers Music Park will not only be a significant cultural asset for North Florida but also a thriving center for creativity that offers substantial returns for all stakeholders. We are enthusiastic about the potential for collaboration and welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can work together to bring this vision to life.*

*I, Jordan Puryear, director of Finger Lakes GrassRoots Festival Org. Inc., invite you to participate in the evolution and creation of your dreams and your festival organization. This is an opportunity to put your resources to work. We have a newly founded LLC to gather the funds needed for the Wildflowers Music Park site purchase. Please let me know if you would like to be involved or if you would like more information. You may write to me at [jordan@grassrootsfest.org](mailto:jordan@grassrootsfest.org) or call/txt 607-351-6127 to discuss ideas or ways to be involved. The power of community is huge, and when we chip in together, just about any obstacle can be overcome.*

*Thank you for considering this exciting opportunity. With your collaboration we look forward to the possibility of creating something truly special!*



## Founding Principles



### Responding to a Community Need

*In Alachua County, the concept of community green space access is embraced by both residents and the county government, reflecting a shared commitment to enhancing quality of life through environmental stewardship. Local communities have expressed a strong desire for more accessible parks, trails, and natural areas where families can connect with nature, engage in outdoor recreation, and enjoy the benefits of open space. The county has responded by supporting initiatives to preserve and expand these green spaces, recognizing their importance in promoting public health, fostering social cohesion, and ensuring sustainable growth. The development of this new park will embody all these ideals, providing residents with a dedicated space that includes walking trails, playgrounds, picnic areas, and protected natural habitats, making it a cornerstone for a thriving, connected community.*

*A future community venue for Alachua County, Florida*

## **Wildflowers Music Park**

### *Vision*

Creating a venue for the cultural growth of the citizens of North Florida, and beyond, is the goal of the Wildflowers Music Park development. Without suitable infrastructures for Arts, Music, Dance and Learning, these creative outlets are often unable to reach their full potential. In the search for a winter home for a GrassRoots Festival of Music & Dance we have been led to a wonderful piece of property in Alachua County, on the Eastern edge adjacent to Melrose. The property is 270 acres consisting of a mix of fields, live oak hammocks, nature areas and a small lake, all in pristine and mostly unused condition (find many photos in the link below). Our goal is to be able to use the site for a winter time festival and to facilitate setting up the site for continual community use for events, camping, events with camping, nature walks, nature areas and more... Whatever use people can come up with is a possibility.

We are very excited about this project, though we have challenges ahead to make it a reality, mostly because the land costs a significant amount and so capital needs to be raised. The GrassRoots organization has years of experience in creating festival events and building festival sites and owns portable stages, tents, sound and lighting equipment, food service equipment, point of sale gear, radios, trucks, tractors, mowers, etc. However, what is most important for creating a new festival and building a festival site is community involvement and collaboration, volunteers are a big part of a successful event. Volunteerism is the best community builder we know, especially when it culminates in a community celebration of Music, Dance and Arts!

What follows in this presentation is how the project is planned and how the success of it hopes to be executed. Not all here is written in stone and we welcome, very much, input from the people of Alachua County and Gainesville. We have already met some great folks and we hope to meet all of you that are interested in creating this event space, which after all is for you, the community.

### *A word about the name*

We chose Wildflowers Music Park for several reasons, typically we like to use a name that denotes a geographical area, like Finger Lakes or Shakori Hills but not finding that we came upon Wildflowers in much the same way; looking for a name that gives an insight into the area, after seeing the Tom Petty Wildflowers exhibit at the Cade Museum, we were inspired that people remember the native of Gainesville who brought music to so many and wrote such a beautiful song. We love the idea of people thinking of themselves as “wildflowers in a field” while enjoying wonderful music!

*A Festival for Every Season*

# **GrassRoots Festivals of Music & Dance**

## *Our History*



Founded in 1991 by members of roots-rock band Donna The Buffalo the Finger Lakes GrassRoots Festival has grown from a local benefit music festival for the fight against A.I.D.S. in the Finger Lakes region of New York State to a National organization which produces, or has produced, a festival for every season in three states along the East Coast, USA: New York, North Carolina and Florida– Summer, Spring and Fall, and Winter, respectively. Currently only Spring, Summer and Fall are produced as the organization lost its home in Miami and is now looking for a new home for the winter event, which we believe we have found in Alachua County.

The four festivals in three states annual event has engendered love and support from many thousands of music fans, camping fans, musicians, artist, activists, healers and foodies from all over the world. Here are some of the greatest performers of past GrassRoots Festivals:

Natalie Merchant & 10,000 Maniacs, Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue, Merle Haggard  
Avett Brothers, Oliver Mtukudzi, Lake Street Dive, Old Crow Medicine Show, The Mavericks  
Watchhouse, Nickel Creek, Burning Spear, Steve Earle, Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings  
Taj Mahal, Emmylou Harris, Oumou Sangaré, Toots & The Maytals, Rusted Root, Ralph Stanley  
George Jones, Del McCoury Band, Ani DiFranco, Dirty Dozen Brass Band, DakhaBrakha  
Carolina Chocolate Drops, Hugh Masekela, Solas, Sona Jobarteh, Cyro Baptista  
Mahalatini & The Mahotella Queens, Colorblind James Experience, Keith Frank  
Jupiter & Okwess, The Wood Brothers, The Family Stone and many, many more...

In the 1990s GrassRoots was only among few USA outdoor festivals with camping, held for four days with four stages and up to 85 or so bands. A Kids' Area, Healing Arts Area, Art Barn, Sustainability Fair, and a 10,000 square-foot Dance Tent with wooden dance floor that runs until dawn; these are features brought to festival life by the not for profit organized community event and that are not seen altogether in one place anywhere else. What GrassRoots Festivals have brought to the world are life changing experiences where people have often met their life partners, friends and future community. Four days of Music, Dance and Art creates a world of its own for participants, a world where love and peace prevail.

In 2003 the Finger Lakes Grassroots Festival Organization moved to a national presence with the creation of the Shakori Hills GrassRoots Festival of Music & Dance in North Carolina near Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina. In 2012 the GrassRoots organization founded the Virginia Key GrassRoots Festival of Music & Dance in Miami, Florida.



## *The Project*

# **Wildflowers Music Park**

### *Concept and mission*

1. To establish a community-owned and operated music and arts festival that serves as a platform for musicians, artists, craftspeople, foodies, teachers, healers and builders to showcase their talents and skills.
2. To unite folks from all walks of life, creating transformative experiences in a beautiful natural setting.
3. To preserve and protect a natural environment dedicated to recreation and education that is open to the public year-round.

### *Community Involvement and Partners*

Community Arts & Culture, a Florida based 501c3, with executive director Jose Elias, has presented Afro Roots Festivals in Florida since 1999. The GrassRoots Festival Organization was founded with the mission of helping to support other not for profit organizations and so we are very happy to collaborate in furthering the mission of Community Arts & Culture. As we secure funding, we look forward to bringing on members of the community to support the Wildflower Music Park mission and broaden its reach much as we do in North Carolina with the Shakori Hills Community Arts Center.

See: <http://cacmiami.org/> <http://shakorihills.org>

We invite you to consider being an integral part of the Wildflowers Music Park by joining us as a community partner. Your involvement is crucial in helping build a vibrant cultural hub that reflects the diverse talents and interests of North Florida. Whether you are an artist, educator, local business, or community leader, your unique contributions can shape the park into a space that fosters creativity, connection, and growth. We are seeking partners who share our vision and are eager to collaborate on events, programs, and initiatives that will make the Wildflowers Music Park a true reflection of the region's community's spirit.

### *Securing the Site*

An LLC is being created for the purpose of purchasing the 270 acre site to create the Wildflowers Music Park. The plan is for the LLC to make the site available to a Florida-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization through a lease and purchase agreement. The name of the LLC is Wildflowers Music Park Finance LLC.

### *Music Park Development & Operations*

With a coalition of event producers, artists, builders, governing officials, and community organizations, in

concert with already established festival production crews, the property will be landscaped, roads will be built, and water and power distribution will be installed. In the first iteration of the Music Park portable stages and tents will be utilized for large events; in the future, a permanent stage will be constructed.

Community Arts & Culture, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, will be the presenter of the annual Wildflowers GrassRoots Festival of Music & Dance. It will work in partnership with the Finger Lakes GrassRoots Festival, also a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Trumansburg, NY, to produce the festival as a fundraising event.

## *Project Financing*

The total price of the land is \$2,600,000 for approximately 270 acres. The land owners have agreed to a second position partial owner finance mortgage with a fifteen year term, the owner financing portion of the mortgage is \$1,100,000 with an interest rate of 6%. An LLC is being created with the goal of raising \$2,100,000 in investments to cover the cost of purchasing the property for a five year period before refinancing, *details below*.

The 270 acre site is being offered at \$9630/acre, there are no restrictions to subdividing and resale, many approaches could be taken to monetize the property, a campground probably the most harmonious use for a festival site and since camping locations are premium in Florida.

## *Revenue Strategy*

This will be the largest venue available with camping in the region that could be rented by event producers, non profit organizations, community organizations, etc. Primary revenue will come from event ticket sales, outside organization site rentals, sponsorships, camping, festival merchandise sales, grants and fundraisers. By the utilization of a variety of revenue streams we will ensure the long-term success and positive impact to the community of the Wildflowers Music Park Project.

## *Investment Details*

To support the development of the Wildflowers Music Park, we are looking for investments. This funding will cover the purchase of the land and purchase closing costs.

The investment will involve the following structure:

- **Triple Net Lease:** The LLC will lease the property to Community Arts & Culture Incorporated under a triple net lease and purchase agreement. This means that the nonprofit will cover property taxes, insurance, and maintenance costs.
- **Purchase Agreement:** After five years, Community Arts & Culture will purchase the land from the LLC, allowing investors to enjoy 6.14% yearly income on their initial investment with a return on investment (ROI) of 34.69%.

While there is no guarantee of success for a new festival venture, the property will be enhanced in value by infrastructure improvements and the rising property value in Alachua County, providing investors with strong collateral throughout property ownership. This investment offers a secure return through the collateralization from the increased land value.

### *Estimated Impact of the Festival*

The numbers provided below are our estimates based on our 30+ years of festival and event production experience, rather than specific data sources, the points below attempt to offer a clearer picture of the festival's potential impact:

1. **Community Building:** A well-organized festival at Wildflower Music Park can attract up to 30,000 attendees, fostering connections that could result in hundreds of new partnerships, collaborations, and community projects.
2. **Cultural Enrichment:** Featuring 100+ artists and performers across various genres can expose attendees to diverse cultural expressions, enriching the cultural landscape and significantly increasing local art engagement.
3. **Personal Growth:** Offering workshops on many topics of interest will provide attendees with the opportunity to learn practical skills and knowledge that will help them improve their confidence and enhance self-expression.
4. **Health and Wellbeing:** Engaging in arts and music has been shown to reduce stress levels, and participation in mindfulness and movement workshops can improve overall wellbeing of attendees.
5. **Economic Impact:** The festival would inject significant money into the local economy through tourism, vendor sales, and increased business for local accommodations and restaurants.
6. **Environmental Awareness:** Educating attendees on sustainable practices could result in eco-friendly habits among participants, leading to a significant reduction in their collective carbon footprint.
7. **Creative Expression:** Providing a platform for over 100 artists and musicians can lead to the discovery of new talent and gives performers the potential to secure further work as a result.
8. **Educational Opportunities:** With workshops covering: sustainable building, music, dance, movement, health and wellbeing, nature and wildlife, and more, participants can gain skills that will lead to an increase in adopting sustainable practices at home, contributing to long-term benefits.
9. **Inspiration and Motivation:** Surveys from similar festivals indicate that 60-70% of attendees feel inspired to pursue new projects or hobbies, which could lead to the initiation of hundreds of new creative endeavors and community initiatives.

### *A true story:*

*While driving a truck with GrassRoots sound gear from NY to NC our driver was pulled into the weigh station at the Virginia state line, when asked about what he was hauling the driver informed the VA State Trooper it was Finger Lakes GrassRoots Festival equipment, the officer then told him, "I have been married for over ten years with my wife I met attending the GrassRoots festival!" Well no further questions were asked and our driver continued on his way...*



### *About Alachua County & Comparative Market Demographics*

Alachua County as well as having a vibrant music and arts scene is home to the University of Florida and the City of Gainesville and has a very similar demographic to both Tompkins County in New York State and Orange County in North Carolina which are the home markets to the successful Finger Lakes GrassRoots Festival and Shakori Hills GrassRoots Festival.

Alachua County has 270,000 residents and so is approx 2.5 times the size of Tompkins County and while the Shakori Hills GrassRoots Festival in North Carolina is very close to two major urban centers, the Triangle and the Triad, Alachua County and the Wildflowers Music Park has no such competing influences to the attention of possible audience members for a GrassRoots Festival, which makes it more similar to the market in Tompkins County, NY and possibly an easy to reach audience. With an expected similar market penetration to that of Tompkins County and with 2.5 times the size, the audience potential, with the same degree of market share, is also 2.5 times the size. Similarities also exist regionally, being that Jacksonville, Tampa and Saint Petersburg are all within an easy drive. A full comparison of market demographics is in the appendix. The festival attendances at GrassRoots festivals are approximately 15,000 at the Finger Lakes in Trumansburg, NY and 7,500 for both the Spring and Fall Shakori Hills in

North Carolina. With the larger site and population for a Wildflowers GrassRoots Festival in Alachua County, we believe an attendance of 20,000 or more is possible within three to five years.

A note of interest on festival potential is the success of the Hullaween festival event at the Suwannee Music Park 72 miles to the North West of Gainesville where the attendance grew from a first year of 4,000 to 8,000 in the next year, to 34,000 in its third year. *(see below for link to Wikipedia article on Hulaween)*



## *In Summary*

### **What We Will Do:**

- **Foster Creativity:** We will organize a diverse lineup of music, art, and dance performances to inspire creativity and provide a platform for artists to showcase their talents.
- **Build Community:** We will create spaces for attendees to connect, collaborate, and build lasting relationships, promoting a sense of belonging and shared purpose.
- **Educate and Empower:** Through workshops and presentations, we will educate participants on sustainable living, personal development, and financial well-being, empowering them with practical skills and knowledge.
- **Promote Wellness:** We will integrate practices like yoga, mindfulness, and movement arts to enhance attendees' physical, mental, and emotional well-being.
- **Support Sustainability:** We will demonstrate and teach sustainable practices, from eco-friendly event infrastructure to workshops on building responsible, beautiful homes.

### **How We Will Do It:**

- **Curated Programming:** We will curate a balanced schedule of performances, workshops, and activities that cater to various interests, ensuring there's something for everyone.
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** We will partner with local artists, educators, and environmental organizations to bring diverse perspectives and expertise to the festival.
- **Sustainable Practices:** We will prioritize eco-friendly materials, waste reduction, and renewable energy sources in all aspects of the festival, setting a standard for sustainable events.
- **Interactive Learning:** We will offer hands-on workshops and demonstrations, allowing participants to engage directly with the material and apply what they learn in their own lives.
- **Inclusive Environment:** We will create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, ensuring that all participants feel valued, heard, and supported in their personal and collective journeys.

### **Our Ask:**

- We need your investment to support our vision to create a vibrant and sustainable community where music, art, and education empower individuals to live with creativity, connection, and environmental responsibility, inspiring a harmonious future for all.

By combining these elements and with your support, we aim to create transformative experiences that leave a lasting positive impact on individuals, communities, and the environment.

As a reminder, please reach out to [jordan@grassrootsfest.org](mailto:jordan@grassrootsfest.org) or call/txt **607-351-6127** to discuss ideas or ways to be involved. The power of community is huge and when we chip in together just about any obstacle can be overcome.

## Supporting Links

### Site photos:

- [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1p4QnxXo7CjjYfNbqs7nA4Tuk9Cy1EhEL?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1p4QnxXo7CjjYfNbqs7nA4Tuk9Cy1EhEL?usp=drive_link)

### Site location:

- <https://maps.app.goo.gl/wDJVLPdCfeTZtjcb6>

### Current Festival Websites:

- Finger Lakes Grassroots Festival of Music & Dance: <http://grassrootsfest.org/>
- Shakori Hills GrassRoots Festival: <http://shakorihillsgrassrootsfestival.org/>
- Virginia Key GrassRoots Festival: <http://virginiakeygrassrootsfestival.org/>

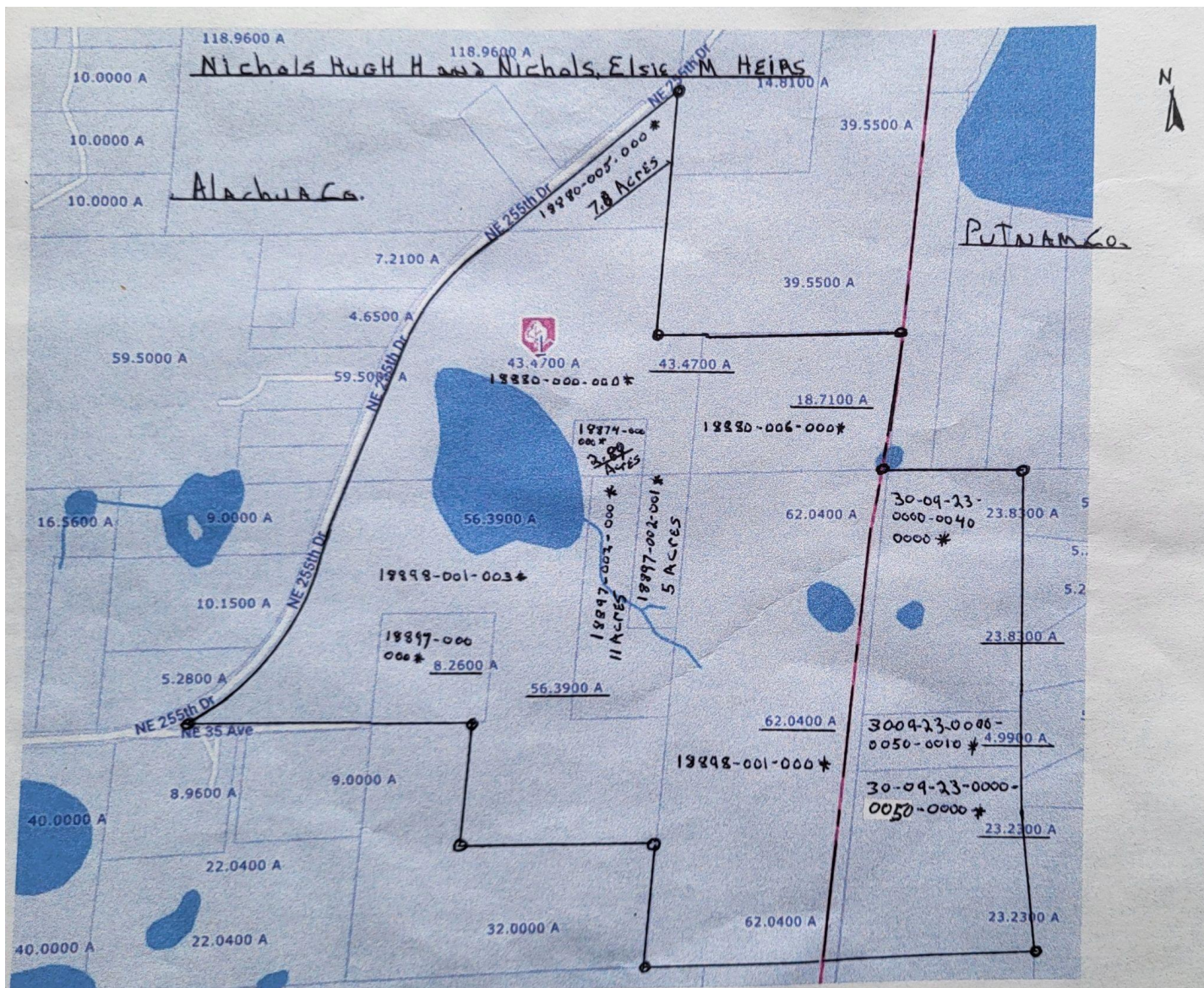
### Market Details:

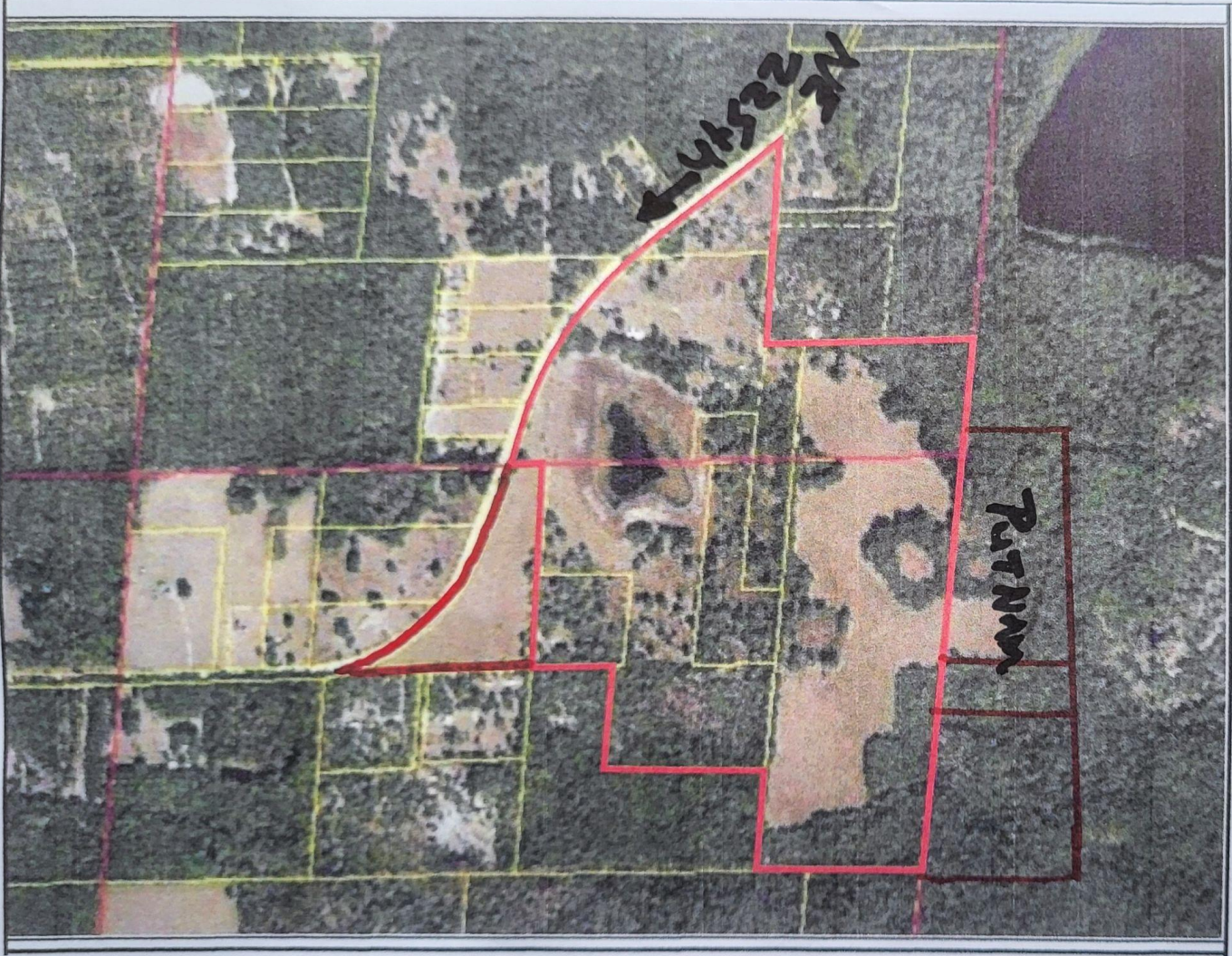
- Hulaween festival: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suwannee\\_Hulaween](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suwannee_Hulaween) - *Information that supports the market potential for music festivals in North Florida.*
- Alachua County, FL info & demographics: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alachua\\_County\\_Florida](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alachua_County_Florida) - *future location demographics*
- Tompkins County, NY info & demographics: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tompkins\\_County\\_New\\_York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tompkins_County_New_York) - *current comparison demographics*
- Orange County, NC info & demographics: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange\\_County\\_North\\_Carolina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_County_North_Carolina) - *current comparison demographics*

**Wildflowers music video by Tom Petty:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2OFxeg4spU> (while GrassRoots is not aligned in any way with Tom Petty or his legacy, he was from Alachua County and is a well respected part of the history and music community there. I find his song Wildflowers to be beautiful and an inspiration, *Jordan*)



## Survey Maps





Alachua County

## Conceptualization of the Wildflowers Music Park



# *The Wildflowers Music Park Development Team*

## **Jordan Puryear, Director of the GrassRoots Festival Organization Inc., Co-Founder**

Jordan oversees nearly every aspect of the GrassRoots Festivals with a concentration on production and infrastructure. His experience includes thirty-one years with the Finger Lakes GrassRoots Festival, twenty years with the spring and fall Shakori Hills GrassRoots Festivals, and ten years with the Virginia Key GrassRoots Festival. Out of the box thinking, lead by example style, and calm demeanor are the hallmarks of his leadership that has guided the GrassRoots Festival Organization successfully for over thirty years. Co-founder of the Shakori Hills GrassRoots Festival. Co-founder the Virginia Key GrassRoots Festival. Co-founder and former member of the GRF host band Donna the Buffalo. Original and active member of the old-time string band Bubba George, which has opened every Finger Lakes GrassRoots Festival since its inception. Lead Designer and build team coordinator of the GRF mobile main stage and Grand Stand Stage, Designer and builder of the all analog PA systems currently in use at the GrassRoots Festivals. Designed and supervised the implementation of the site plans for the GrassRoots Festivals. Inventor , designer and builder of the novel vacuum tube based analog amplifiers used in Grassroots sound reinforcement systems, and Level I certified Tensegrity instructor.

## **Chris Tate, B.S. Biomedical Engineering, CWRU, 85**

Chris has worked on many aspects of the GrassRoots Festivals over the past thirty years. Wrote the business plan for Shakori Hills GRF. Production Manager, Infield Stage FLGRF for ten years. Raised seed money during the early years of the GRF. Responsible for much of the marketing and television coverage during the early years of the FLGRF and the SHGRF. Co-Founder and organizer of the Native American Village Project at the FLGRF. Responsible for inviting Cayuga Nation Members as guests to the FLGRF. Recording Artist, Presenter, Promoter, Producer, Musician, Songwriter for over thirty years. Co-founded the Ithaca Performing Arts Center, Inc. which saved the Historic State Theatre in Ithaca NY from the wrecking ball. Served as Managing Director/Director of Development presenting; David Byrne, Phillip Glass, The Cowboy Junkies, Jimmy Cliff, Malhatini and the Mahotella Queens, Wu Tang Clan, Del McCoury Band, and over 200 others. Co-founded the Finger Lakes CleanWaters Initiative, Inc. to save the pristine waters of NYS from industrial interests. Executive producer of the anti-fracking concert that spawned the film "Dear Governor Cuomo", with Natalie Merchant, John Medeski, Mellissa Leo, Mark Ruffalo, Joan Osbourne and many others. Managed Keith Secola and secured his interview on "Fresh Air with Terry Gross". Invited presenter to Farm Aid in Saratoga Springs, NY. Presented Brain Actuated Music and Light at SXSW and in Weimar Germany. Expertise in Human Machine interfaces.

## **Aubrey Griffith-Zill, Living Arts Collective, Founder, Co-Director**

A seasoned movement artist, educator, steward of innovation spaces and creative ecosystems with over two decades of experience who brings a dynamic passion for the arts to the Shakori Hills Community Arts Center board. Born and raised in NC she deeply connects with the region's cultural fabric, nurturing an appreciation for the ever-changing human experience while fostering connection and reverence for nature and the land. For many years, Aubrey has been sharing her expertise by teaching and guiding intergenerational dances, musical, and movement practices on these cherished grounds while honoring its significance as ancestral territory of the Sissipahaw, Haw, Shakori, and Haw First Nations.

## **Richard Gregory-Allen, PhD Applied Mathematics, MIT, 83**

Before Richard's senior year at Austin College (BA Physics, BA Mathematics, 78), he traveled to the Ministry of Communications' Central Telecom facility in Moscow and to an ITT Intelsat earth station near Lviv, Ukraine as Electrospace Systems Inc.'s sole representative on a field repair mission for 3 racks of satellite telecommunications gear and computer systems. After graduation from MIT, he joined the Physical Oceanography department at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution where he also took up playing fiddle

with the Woods Hole Folk Orchestra. His research at WHOI involved the study of thermoclinic solitary waves and he fielded a doppler sonar experiment to study them at sea. This led to many oceanographic cruises including a 10-week coast-to-coast transit of the North Pacific at 24° N (San Diego to Nagasaki). During that time, he developed an integrated navigation system originally designed to augment his celestial navigation skills for use in his offshore sailing navigation role.

Richard co-founded Laser Plot Inc. - a marine electronics company manufacturing integrated navigation systems and a CD-ROM library of US & international marine charts. Richard was the inventor and developer of their product ChartNav and their Sea-D database.

Creating and growing this high-tech entrepreneurial company brought Richard experience in private offerings and venture capital funding as well as corporate and government development partnerships.

### **Brian Hill**

For the past 35 years, Brian has developed an extensive and practical skill set across a wide range of audio, visual, creative, and technical fields. Beginning at age 16, he was mentored in audio engineering by two technicians from Clair Brothers Audio in Lebanon, PA. This early experience laid the foundation for a successful career in sound production, during which he has managed audio for over 1,000 bands at music venues, festivals, weddings, and various private and public events. His practical experience in the industry far surpasses conventional education, enriched by the relationships he has cultivated throughout his travels in the entertainment business.

In addition to his work behind the scenes, Brian has also performed more than 2,000 concerts of his own music across major cities and college towns throughout the United States. As a solo “live looping” artist and member of the Regatta 69 band, he has taken his talents abroad, performing nearly 500 concerts overseas in countries including Denmark, Holland, England, Wales, France, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, South Africa, Brazil, and the Virgin Islands. Along the way, he has accumulated decades of knowledge, patience, and people skills, allowing him to form deep connections with colleagues and maintain a steady flow of work both at home and internationally.

### **Jes Seaver**

Jes has a diverse range of experiences that highlight her multifaceted talents and interests. She has coordinated numerous events and festivals, including the Ithaca Festival, Cornell Homecoming events, and corporate product release trade shows. In addition to her event management expertise, Jes operates a boutique inn, works as a site and production designer, and develops mini horse ranches. Her creative talents extend to music, where she sings and plays guitar as a member of the all-women old-time string band, The Darling Clementines. Jes is also a licensed real estate agent and home planner, bringing a unique blend of creativity and professionalism to every project she undertakes.

### **Ibe Jonah**

Ibe is a seasoned debate coach who teaches advocacy and debate at Cornell University. He has always demonstrated leadership and vision, and has served in various capacities in multiple organizations. Calm, competent and composed, Ibe revels in organizing individuals, groups and organizations and creating sustaining coalitions to accomplish desired goals. He is also bracingly astute in operational and strategic planning, and has 10+ years of experience in program/project development and management. He has a knack for minutia, an imperative to understand the intricacies of issues, and more importantly, in getting things done either by maximizing positive outcomes or minimizing unintended consequences or both.

Ibe has done substantial consulting work including policy and market research. He is equally skillful in grant writing, fundraising, community outreach, marketing, public relations, advocacy, team building, and event organizing. Ibe runs a national soccer tournament event series in 8 cities across the United States (Gorges Classic) that bring adults together to play the beautiful game of soccer for fun and fitness. He is passionate

about making a difference, and always brings something special to the table both in profit and non-profit organizations. Ibe has a Ph.D. in Community Development from Cornell University, M.A. in Sociology from Queens' University and B.Sc in Sociology & Public Policy from the University of Port Harcourt.

### **Jorge Vera DuBois**

Jorge has extensive professional experience working in nonprofit management, fundraising and community engagement and has held leadership positions serving diverse communities encompassing a variety of missions including the arts, science, faith based, disaster services, environmental conservation, indigenous water rights and grassroots advocacy in the United States and Peru, South America. From 1993 to 1998 he served as Emergency Services Director with the American Red Cross serving Miami and the Florida Keys and later joined Community Counseling Services (CCS) from 1999 to 2003. With CCS he was responsible for providing leadership and management of capital fund studies and the subsequent completion of multi-million-dollar goal fundraising campaigns raising more than \$30 million from individuals, corporations, and foundations in gifts of cash, securities, and legacy endowments. From 2003 to 2006 Jorge joined the Florida Conservation Alliance (FCA) as Executive Director leading the organization's three strategic entities, an IRS 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4) and 527 PAC into the 2005 election cycle advocating for environmental conservation candidates seeking political office in Florida. In 2007 he joined Clima y Cultura (Climate & Culture), a Peru based NGO advocating for indigenous water rights and the preservation of original seed resources in this vastly agricultural nation. Clima y Cultura secured major gifts for "Clean Water" access initiatives, led advocacy grassroots strategies and programs for farming communities and provided legislative agenda consulting services to help curb industrial agricultural interests. Jorge continues to serve his community in the real estate arena and is an active member of the National Association of Realtors, the Florida Realtor Association, and the Gainesville Alachua County Association of Realtors. Additional organizations he has served include the American National Red Cross, Federation of State Voters Leagues, Archdiocese of Miami, Florida-Georgia Lutheran Church, Miami Museum of Science, National League of Conservation Voters, Archdiocese of Syracuse, Mynderse Library-Seneca Falls NY, Score of North Central Florida, Angels With a Mission Foundation, STEM-Hands on Gainesville and Rotary Club International.

### **Lydia Garrison**

During college, Lydia did a study abroad in Bamako, Mali, West Africa where she studied the Jeli Ngoni (juru nani) as well as Bamana language, dance, history, and experienced being a minority in a place far from home. Lydia is a dyed-in-the-wool believer in the power of music, dance, community, and GrassRoots. She practices a healing therapy called CranioSacral Therapy, is studying homeopathy at the School of Health in Stroud, England, is a mother of two sons who she homeschools and is a songwriter and multi instrumentalist (fiddle, banjo, guitar, accordion, scrub board, Cajun triangle). She's also a carpentry apprentice, general laborer, and human resources assistant at Dharma Rd Design Build company in Trumansburg, NY. Lydias as a descendant of William Lloyd Garrison also believes that all people deserve freedom and respect; W.L. Garrison promoted "no-governmentism" and rejected the inherent validity of the American government on the basis that its engagement in war, imperialism and slavery made it corrupt and tyrannical.

### **Kenneth Metzker**

Kenneth Metzker began his musical studies in classical piano from age 4-16. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Music Performance as a Percussionist from the University of Kentucky under the direction of James B. Campbell. He began his Afro-Cuban/Brazilian folkloric studies with Michael Spiro at age 15, which led him to study with many other notables in the Afro-Cuban genre around the United States. He traveled to Matanzas, Cuba to study Afro-Cuban folkloric music with the world renowned Los Muñequitos de Matanzas and Grupo Afro-Cuba. His work has taken him to Cuba, Brazil, Europe, and the Caribbean as a performer, instructor and student. He spent time in the northeast of Brazil collaborating and performing with various musical groups and

dance companies, including Cia. Vata, Caravana Cultural, and Dona Zefinha, with whom he performed in Recife and Olinda, Pernambuco for Carnaval. He was a Percussionist-In-Residence at schools in Guaramiranga, Ceara, Brazil, Fortaleza and throughout the state of Ceara, Brazil (2005). He has taught at the University of Wisconsin, Whitewater summer percussion workshop, University of Tennessee, Martin as a Guest Teaching Artist (2005), at past “Rhythm Explosion” workshops in Bozeman, Montana (2004-2010), and at the University of Alaska, Anchorage, Jazz Week (2005+2013), where he collaborated and performed with Rebeca Mauleon and Jimmy Branley. He has worked as a dance accompanist in numerous settings, including the Florida Dance Festival, New World School of the Arts (2005-2018), NOVA University, Florida International University, Brazz Dance Theatre (2005-present), Young Arts national event in Miami, and Soul to Sole Tap Festival , Austin, TX, collaborating with choreographer Katherine Kramer (2004). Kenneth was a participant in the Third World Marimba Competition in Stuttgart, Germany(2002) and had an original Afro-Cuban composition premiered with the University of Kentucky percussion ensemble at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (2001). He has performed at the Jackie Gleason Theatre in Miami, Florida for the “Annual Brazilian Film Festival” as part of the awards ceremony, with Shakira on the Jimmy Kimmel show and the Bank Atlantic Center in Florida and as a performer and workshop instructor at the Grassroots festivals in New York/North Carolina/Miami. He played in the official music video for the 2014 FIFA World Cup with Jennifer Lopez and Claudia Leitte. Kenneth has taught in the Miami school system with Arts for Learning, Guitars Over Guns, and many other after school programs in Miami-Dade County. Kenneth worked as a free-lance musician in Miami recording, performing and teaching from 2005-2018. During this time he met the Grassroots Organization and performed and taught at all of their festivals. He began working at the University of Florida in the School of Theatre and Dance and School of Music in 2019, where he continues currently as Faculty with the position of an Assistant In Musical Accompaniment.