

Melrose Community Opposition to the Wildflower Music Park



Prepared for: Alachua, Putnam, Bradford, and Clay Boards of County Commissioners

Executive Summary

The proposed Wildflower Music Park presents substantial risks to public safety, the environment, and the quiet enjoyment of nearby homes. Melrose is a small, multi-county community in which most residents live in Putnam County, yet Alachua County controls the permitting decision. This creates a representation imbalance and exposes residents—most of whom cannot vote in Alachua—to the impacts of a large 4-day entertainment venue and other no yet known events thought the year. This report details why the project is incompatible with local infrastructure, emergency services capacity, environmental protections, and adopted plans.

Melrose (ZIP 32666) — Estimated Population by County
Based on ZIP County Area Weights × ZCTA Population

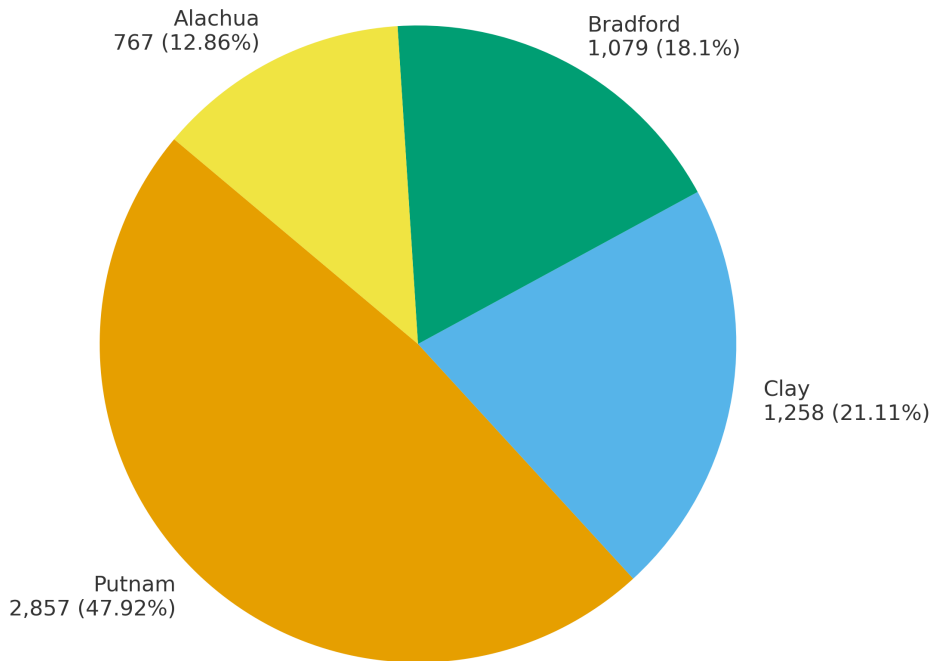


Figure 2.

Estimated

Melrose Population by County – Melrose, FL 32666 (2020 Census Data)

Melrose_32666_CountyShare_Estimates

County	Estimated Population	Share (%)
Putnam	2857	47.92
Clay	1258	21.11
Bradford	1079	18.1
Alachua	767	12.86

Community Impact

- Adjacent homeowners will bear disproportionate burdens:
- sleep disruption from late-night noise
- wide-area light spill
- traffic dust
- litter
- trespass
- safety fears
- Insurers may re-rate nearby properties due to increased fire risk, accidents
- liability exposure
- property values may decline.
- Community facilities—including Melrose Elementary (~2 miles) nearby churches, and a senior physician center—are in close proximity, making this location inappropriate for a high-intensity festival venue.
- The cross-county governance problem further compounds harm: most Melrose residents live in Putnam County yet cannot influence Alachua's permitting decision that will affect them.

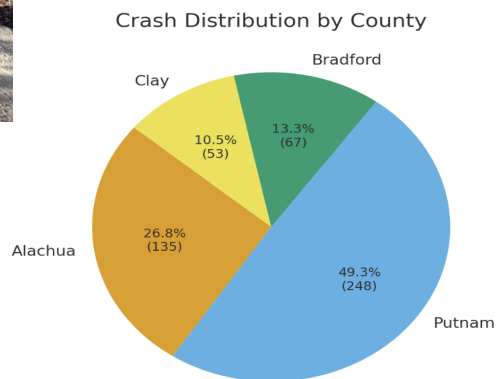
One residents comments during public comment:

"Allowing an organization to utilize our own tax dollars via grants and monopolization of resources funded for by local constituents (such as EMS, police, roadways) as well as leveraging legislative loopholes against us, essentially raping the community for profits, without giving anything back is simply not acceptable. "

Infrastructure & Traffic Safety

Access depends entirely on NE 255th Drive—a narrow, unpaved road with single-lane segments. In dry weather, dust reduces visibility and creates respiratory irritation; in wet weather, rutting and mud make the road hazardous or impassable for standard vehicles. A multi-day festival would introduce heavy traffic surges, on-street parking, and gridlock at choke points, impeding emergency access and evacuation. FDOT data show rural roads in this area experience high crash severity and a meaningful share of alcohol- and drug-related incidents. Concentrating thousands of drivers on a dirt road after concerts magnifies these risks.

NE 255th Dr: width and surface conditions are incompatible with festival traffic.



This data is not complete and does not contain the past 2 months

Traffic set from Melrose 2020-2025 with a 2 mile buffer

Based on data

*Total crashes: 502
Total on county road 219-A: 44
Total on SR 26: 221
Total on SR 21: 141

Fatalities : 17 (3.39%) of crashes- National average as of 2019 is .5%
*Head on collisions : 31
*Temporary Incompassitated :36
*Serious :26

County Breakdown
Alachua 135-
Putnam 248
Bradford 67
Clay 53

Emergency Services

Station 42—the closest fire/EMS unit—already serves a wide rural area and operates near capacity. A large event adds calls for heat illness, intoxication/overdose, vehicle crashes, medical emergencies, and fire risks. Traffic congestion on NE 255th Dr would delay response and transport. These impacts spill across county lines and require mutual aid, shifting costs and risks to residents who receive no benefit from the event.

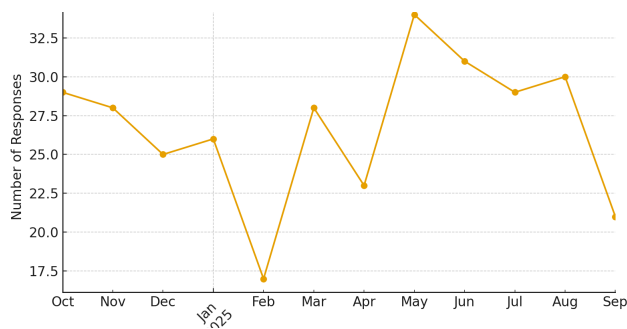


Figure 7. Station 42 responses per month (past 12 months).

Caption

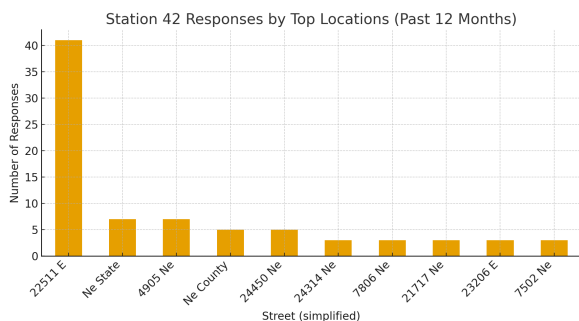


Figure 8. Station 42 responses by location (top sites).

Environmental & Wildlife

The site includes or is adjacent to wetlands and wildlife habitat. Protected species likely to occur include gopher tortoise, bald eagle, woodpeckers, and American alligator. Noise, amplified lighting, and crowd activity fragment habitats, disrupt foraging and nesting, and increase road mortality. Vehicle and foot traffic risk collapsing tortoise burrows. These impacts conflict with state and federal conservation priorities and are difficult to mitigate once habitat is disturbed.



Floodplain & Wetlands

1. Natural Floodplain Functions

Floodplains are low-lying areas that store and slow down floodwaters. When left undisturbed, they:

- Absorb excess rainfall, reducing downstream flooding.
- Recharge groundwater by allowing water to seep slowly into aquifers.
- Filter pollutants naturally as water passes through soil and vegetation.

Building a large festival site in or near floodplains would mean:

- Reduced water storage capacity, increasing flood risk for nearby homes, schools, and churches.
- Soil compaction from crowds and vehicles, which lowers infiltration and makes flooding worse.
- Contaminant runoff from trash, fuel, or portable sanitation units entering the water system

2. Wetlands as Sensitive Habitats

Wetlands around Melrose serve as critical ecosystems:

- Habitat for protected species like gopher tortoises, wading birds, and amphibians.
- Breeding and feeding grounds for fish, insects, and migratory birds.
- Vegetation that stabilizes soils and prevents erosion.

Festival activity in or near wetlands can:

- Destroy nesting and burrow areas through clearing, trampling, or heavy equipment.
- Introduce pollutants (fertilizer, human waste, litter) into standing water.
- Alter hydrology (how water moves across the land) by filling or grading wetland edges.

3. Long-Term Ecological Impacts

- Wildlife displacement: Loud music, lights, and human presence drive animals away from feeding and nesting areas.

- Loss of biodiversity: Once wetlands are disturbed, it takes decades for them to recover — if at all.
- Cumulative damage: Multiple annual events compound soil degradation, vegetation loss, and water quality decline.

4. Legal and Planning Conflicts

- FEMA floodplain regulations and county wetland ordinances often restrict development or require mitigation.
- Comprehensive Plans usually designate these areas for conservation, not intensive entertainment uses.
- Agrotourism exemptions (often cited by developers) don't apply when the primary activity is a commercial music venue rather than farm-based education or tourism.

Land Use, Zoning & Planning

The property's agricultural zoning is incompatible with a multi-day entertainment venue with camping and amplified music. Alachua County code constrains noise, outdoor lighting, and event intensity in rural/agricultural areas to protect public health, safety, and neighborhood character. Using a Temporary Use Permit (TUP) or Special Event Permit (SEP) to bundle concerts, camping, parking, vendors, and staging under one application exploits a loophole and undermines the code's intent. Approving such bundling would set a precedent allowing commercial entertainment uses in agricultural zones county-wide.

Alachua County LDC – Conflicts with Proposed Wildflower Music Park

This table summarizes conflicts between the proposed Wildflower Music Park uses and the Alachua County Land Development Code (LDC).

Proposed Use	Relevant Code / Section	Conflict / Restriction
Tent & RV Camping (overnight)	Sec. 402.85, Agricultural District (A)	Not permitted in Agricultural zoning unless as farm stays or agritourism.
Multi-day Festivals / Concerts	Sec. 402.20 (Temporary Uses); Sec. 407.17 (Noise)	Temporary permits only allow limited gatherings; amplified sound restricted near homes.
Amplified Music & Noise	Sec. 407.17 (Noise Control); Sec. 110.02–110.03	Exceeding noise limits, especially at night, prohibited; festivals running past 10 p.m. violate thresholds.

Event Lighting (stage, parking)	Sec. 407.12 (Outdoor Lighting Standards)	Lighting must be shielded and limited; concert lighting conflicts with dark-sky rules.
Traffic & Parking on Dirt Roads	Sec. 406.21 (Access Management)	Requires safe, paved access for high-traffic events; NE 255th Dr. is unpaved and substandard.
Bundled Special Event Permits	Sec. 402.20 (Temporary Use Permits)	Bundling camping, concerts, vending, parking under one permit undermines legislative intent.

Comprehensive Plan Conflicts – Wildflower Music Park

This table highlights how the proposed Wildflower Music Park conflicts with the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to preserve rural character, protect environmental resources, and ensure compatibility of land uses with existing neighborhoods and infrastructure. The property was purchased for approximately \$2.6 million, which creates financial pressure to host multiple events each year. This scale of use is inconsistent with the intent of the Comprehensive Plan and would change the way the Melrose community functions on a daily basis.

Comprehensive Plan Policy	Intended Purpose	Conflict with Wildflower Proposal
Rural/Agricultural Land Use	Preserve farmland and rural character	Large-scale entertainment uses urbanize the area and disrupt neighborhood quiet.
Compatibility with Surrounding Uses	Ensure new uses protect existing homes, schools, and community institutions	Noise, traffic, and lighting from multiple events harm residents, schoolchildren, and seniors.
Infrastructure Adequacy	Require safe, paved access and emergency response capacity before intensive uses occur	NE 255th Dr. is a dirt road; Station 42 is already at capacity.
Environmental Protection	Protect wetlands, floodplains, and wildlife corridors	Camping, parking, and stages compact soils, increase runoff, and fragment habitats.
Agricultural/Agritourism Support	Allow modest supplemental farm income through farm-related tourism	The \$2.6M purchase price necessitates frequent commercial events, not genuine farm-based agritourism.

References

- Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Crash Data (2020–2024)
- Station 42 Emergency Response Data (past 12 months)
- U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census (ZIP 32666)
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Wetlands Inventory (NWI)
- Alachua County Land Development Code (noise, lighting, temporary uses)
- Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)