"I am I plus my surroundings and if I do not preserve the latter, I do not preserve myself."

-José Ortega y Gasset
I would like to thank my advisor, Kevin Thompson, for his never ending guidance through this ever changing and laborious project.

Another thank you to Mayor Helen Miller for her enthusiasm and investment in this project. White Springs is very lucky to have you.

And finally to my friends and family, thank you for putting up with my nerdy excitement about this project. Thank you for supporting me when things were tough and celebrating with me when I got through them.
table of contents

project introduction ................................................................. 1

history of white springs ............................................................ 4

site aerial study ............................................................................ 7

nature based tourism ................................................................. 17

analysis ......................................................................................... 23

goals & objectives ......................................................................... 37

synthesis ......................................................................................... 41

program ......................................................................................... 45

concept development ............................................................... 51

final concepts ............................................................................... 59

final design ..................................................................................... 65

conclusion ...................................................................................... 84

references ....................................................................................... 86
This project explores and develops a nature based tourism hub in White Springs, Florida that is purposed to excite the 100,000+ people that already pass through the city and aims attract numerous more.

Phase I will be the development of a 1,000 seat conference center and 250 room hotel that will present itself as a gateway and welcome into White Springs.

Phase II will be the restoration of an isolated site that has been deteriorated by lumber farming and will include the development of an eco style lodge and a housing component.

Phase III will be the articulation of a greenway to physically connect the two sites along an existing drainage corridor.

All phases will overlap and work cohesively in the past, present, and future of White Springs.

Kaley Dunlap
Department of Landscape Architecture
University of Florida, 2012
Faculty Advisor: Kevin Thompson
White Springs, Florida

96 miles east of Tallahassee
67 miles west of Jacksonville
150 miles north of Orlando
47 miles south of Valdosta
White Springs, Florida

1. 17 miles southeast of Jasper
2. 12 miles northwest of Lake City
3. 14 miles east of Live Oak
4. 53 miles north of Gainesville
Timucuan Indians reside on the banks of the Suwannee in present day White Springs.

The Suwannee River acts as a barrier between the Timucuan and Apalachee tribes. The White Sulphur Spring was considered a sacred healing ground and place of nonviolence.

C. 1530

Spanish settlers arrive to North Florida.

Bryant and Elizabeth Sheffield bought land for a sea cotton plantation most of which is now the town of White Springs.

C. 1835

The Town of White Springs becomes incorporated.

C. 1840

Minnie Mosher Jackson constructs a concrete and coquina spring house around the spring.

1861-1865

Acted as a refuge for fleeing southerners from battle on Florida’s coasts during the Civil War.

late 1800s

Georgia Southern and Florida Railroad reaches White Springs and its 14 luxury hotels bringing with it floods of tourists.

1885

Lodge and log spring house constructed and acted as Florida’s first tourist attraction.

1903

Fire destroys town business district.

1911

The Town of White Springs becomes incorporated.
White Springs is devastated by the Great Depression and struggles to recover.

First Florida Folk Festival is held.

Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center is opened and museum dedicated.

Suwannee River Bicycle Association is formed and headquartered in White Springs.

1960s

1989

1997

2010

Disney World in Orlando is open to the public.

Stephenson Foster Folk Culture Center reaches 100,000 visitors in one year.

White Springs placed on the National Registrar of Historic Places with 88 supporting structures.

Mayor Dr. Helen Miler appointed mayor of White Springs.

Construction of I-75 allows visitors to quickly bypass White Springs.

Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center is opened and museum dedicated.

1930s

1950

1953

1960s

1971

1997

2010

1989

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WSNB

site aerial study
site aerials (1994)

- headquarters site
- satellite site
headquarters site

satellite site
headquarters site

satellite site
nature based tourism
NATURE BASED TOURISM:

Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well being of local people. (TIES, c. 1990)

- Directly supports local community
- Low impact alternative to commercial tourism
- Harbor appreciation of our natural habitats
- Serves to educate the traveler
- Provides funds for ecological conservation
- Foster respect for different culture (international)
- Offer insight into the impact of humans on the environment
ECOLODGE:

Offers a tourist an educational and participatory experience, is developed and managed in an ecologically sensitive manner, and protects its operating environment.

- Appropriately located for environmental protection and proximity
- Developed in a sensitive manner
- Serves as a crucial link between tourist and nature based tourism
- Connection and proximity to natural attractions
- Variety of types and scales of facilities
- Relaxed and flexible atmosphere
WHITE SPRINGS & NATURE BASED TOURISM:

**context**

Located on the Suwannee River, White Springs is surrounded by natural resources. It was built on a ridge just north of the river flood plains and has undeveloped land bordering it in all four cardinal directions.

**proximity**

To the west of White Springs is the Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park which hosts the beginning point of the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail. A little further west is the Suwannee Valley Conservation Area. To the south in the flood plain is the Bridge to Bridge bicycle trail, an 8 mile bike trail that scales all the unpredictable terrain of the Suwannee River. To the south-east lie two tracts of land, Gar Pond Tract and Little Shoals Tract, both which boast rigorous bicycle trails. From the Little Shoals Tract you can connect to the Florida Trail that runs the coast of most of the Suwannee River. To the north-east is Big Shoals State Park which allows for hiking, biking, and small scale camping. To the north is planted pineland, agriculture, and phosphate mining.

**culture**

White Springs is rich with history and was once known for its healing sulfur spring and luxurious hotel accommodations. Since the 1960s the town has slowly been losing public interest and has had no significant development either physically or economically in the past few decades. This has been both a blessing and a curse for White Springs; the lack of development has allowed the city to preserve its cultural and physical history but the void left by little economic stimulation has restricted growth in all aspects of White Springs. The town is on the National Registrar of Historic Places and most of the 82 historic structures still stand and are used today.
WSNB analysis
a walk through white springs
existing trail facilities

within city limits
- Bridge to Bridge Tract
  - 277 acres
  - 4.5 trail miles

directly adjacent
- Gar Pond Tract
  - 877 acres
  - 7 trail miles
- Little Shoals Tract
  - 400 acres
  - 3.5 trail miles

contextual sites
- Big Shoals State Park
  - 3,772 acres
  - 28 trail miles
- Stephen Foster State Folk Culture Center
trail character

TRAIL TIPS
1. Use open trails only.
2. Leave no trace.
3. Stay on trail.
4. Respect the trail
5. Never speak animals.
6. Plan ahead, do not succumb.
7. Enjoy but don’t destroy.

NOTICE!
Use caution while on these lands. There are natural conditions which may be dangerous.

For more information visit Chipola.org or call the Bureau of Refuge and Wildlife.
For more information visit FloridaGameFISH.com or call the Florida Fish and Wildlife.

White Springs Tract
Adams Memorial Circle Entrance
Open to the public during daylight hours

White Springs Tract
US 41 Entrance
Open to the public during daylight hours

White Springs

Little Shoals

GAR POND

APPROXIMATE DISTANCE

White Springs

Little Shoals

GAR POND

APPROXIMATE DISTANCE
site land use

Headquarters Site - 11 acres
Satellite Site - 123 acres

- agricultural
- public/semi-public
- residential
- retail/office
- recreation
- institutional
- vacant non-residential
- vacant residential
- retail/office
- industrial
overall land use
major circulation

Main entrance into White Springs from I-75
local springs

White Sulphur Spring
out of commission

Unnamed Spring

Unnamed Spring
The general topography of White Springs is relatively flat with the exception of two deep drainage corridors. Development of the town stops at the beginning of the ridge that marks the Suwannee River flood plains. The high point is along the intersection of Spring Street and Kendrick Street. The low point is on the headquarters site in a ravine that drains into the river.
This site has some areas of radical topography, only little of which is too extreme to develop. The low point in White Springs is located within these boundaries at the 65’ contour. The northern and eastern edges are very developable; land closer to the low point becomes less and less developable.
This site is flat on the north-east and north-west boundaries but hosts a gradual drainage corridor down the center. The land drains to the center and down south to the Suwannee.
overall soils

not limited
- chipley sand
- foxworth sand
- alpin fine sand
- blanton sand

somewhat limited
- plummer sand
- wampee fine sandy loam
- pelham sand
- albany fine sand

very limited
- mascotte sand
- bigbee fine sand
goals & objectives
White Springs Nature Base

- Creates livelihood for local residents
- Invigorates the economy of White Springs
- Economic development through cooperative community enterprise planning
- Preserves and energizes community identity
- Return to the principal values of White Springs
- Realizes the value of abundant natural resources and aims to preserve them
1. Provide viable options for economic growth in White Springs.
   - Provide accommodations within the city for the thousands of visitors that pass come to White Springs each year but stay elsewhere due to lack of overnight accommodations.
   - Provide gathering space for large events to be hosted in White Springs.
   - Provide reasons for people to come to White Springs every day of the year.

2. Transform the satellite site to a natural environment and utilize as an economic and educational tool.
   - Restore drainage corridor to a natural state to promote healthy watershed management.
   - Utilize a combination of natural progression and human encouraged restoration to return the site to a natural ecosystem from its former timberland use.
   - Develop ecolodge and housing component in a manner that provides little or no negative impact to the surrounding environment.
   - Include interpretation techniques into lodge to educate tourists of the importance of conservation.

3. Return White Springs to a tourist destination.
   - Expand nature based tourism facilities and reputation of White Springs.
   - Enhance the front-door of White Springs (I-75 and C.R. 136 interchange) to include advertisements for ecolodge and trail heads.
   - Attract tourists who are looking for an alternative to the conventional vacation destinations.
   - Encourage schools to come for educational field trips and offer summer camps for children.
Historic Spring House is a White Springs landmark and has the potential to bring in visitors if restored.

Entrance to Stephen Foster Park is directly adjacent to the site potentially bringing people into the lodge.

Adams General Store is another White Springs landmark and is directly across from the main corner of the site.

Main route into town leads a visitor directly to site. Opportunity to attract visitors.

Already cleared land provides opportunity for development. Corner can act as a gateway/welcome to White Springs.

Existing drainage corridor provides potential for greenway development and passive recreation. Potential greenway connectivity to satellite site. Constrains development.

Gradual slopes provide better canvas for development and potential for unique lodging experience.

Direct adjacency to historic downtown core provides opportunity for retail relationships and historic tours.

Direct adjacency to Stephen Foster State Folk Culture Center provides opportunity for working relationships, overflow parking, and enhanced nature based tourism. Provides minor business competition.
Existing park and boat ramp provides opportunity for connection and easy access to the Suwannee River.

1. Site located on two main circulation routes. Allows for easy access into site and street visibility.
2. On site drainage corridor provides opportunity for restoration and greenway development. Opportunity to connect to headquarters site via greenway. Constrains development.
3. Parcel located directly on Woodpecker Route. Opportunity for social amenities and potential housing component. Opportunity to connect Carver Community.
4. Isolated land parcel provides opportunity for secluded lodging. Timber land provides opportunity for ecological restoration.
6. Existing overflow wastewater management facility constrains entry into site. Provides opportunity for remediation and education.
7. Proposed Carver School site provides connections with eduction world. Opportunity to support housing component.
8. Adjacency with Big Shoals State Park provides opportunity for shared trail amenities. Provides incentive to visit ecododge.
9. Proximity to Bridge to Bridge Trail provides opportunity to connect with headquarters site. Creates recreation opportunity. Generates interest in area.
headquarters site - 11 acres

resource: town of white springs development initiatives master plan (via mayor helen miller)

conference center

1,000 seats
15,000 square feet
roughly 0.34 acres (3% of site)

hotel/lodging

250 rooms
125,000 square feet
roughly 2.87 acres (26% of site)
satellite site - 123 acres

eco lodge
45 beds (58 people)
- (6) 2 person bungalow
- (1) 2 person honeymoon suite
- (3) 4 person cottage
- (2) 16 person bunks
dining facility
spa services
observation tower
social spaces
expansion

housing component
13 acres
expansion of existing Carver Neighborhood

conservation
focus primarily on drainage corridor
connect development to big shoals via conservation
allow natural progression to aid remediation
human phased restoration

expansion
restored landscape available for development
pending success of established lodging integration of green energy uses
**primary purpose**

The White Springs Ecolodge would serve as a homebase for tourists wanting to see the natural resources of White Springs and the surrounding areas. This is where they would store their belongings, fall asleep to the sound of crickets rather than car horns, and enjoy a homecooked meal every night. Here they would find trail maps, information about White Springs and surrounding towns, equipment rental information, suggestions on where to eat, shop, and play, etc. A variety of community spaces will allow for group events or private reflection. The ecolodge will also offer spa services to reflect upon the healing and rejuvenating reputation White Springs once boasted.

**target clientele**

The Ecolodge would aim to attract environmentally aware families, groups, or individuals looking for an alternative to the traditional vacation. Guests should be looking for an experience to learn from and reconnect with nature. Families and children are encouraged to engage in an interactive nature experience. Guests to the White Springs Ecolodge are not looking to spend their vacation in their lodge accommodations but to be enjoying the land on which it rests.

**associated activities**

- Mountain biking
- Hiking
- Wildlife observation
- Canoeing/kayaking
- Swimming in springs
- Exploring surrounding areas
- Massage
- Various spa activities
- Historic audio tour
headquarters site  concept 1

- greenway connection to historic spring house
- drainage corridor protected from structural development
- open space on corner to contrast adams general store
- buffer conference center from lodging with open space
- lodge secluded and tucked into woods
- passive open space between the street and lodging
- green connections into drainage corridor from exterior of site
greenway connection to historic spring house

drainage corridor protected from structural development

conference center on corner to respond to adams general store

provide open event space behind conference center with views into the conservation area

lodge fronting to the street to create low scale urban edge

parking concentrated in garage with retail frontage bottom floor responding to spring house

green connections into drainage corridor from exterior of site
greenway connection to historic spring house

drainage corridor protected from structural development

open space on corner to contrast adams general store

conference center associated with open space to create anchor

provide open event space behind conference center with views into the conservation area

lodge fronting to the street to create low scale urban edge

green connections into drainage corridor from exterior of site
greenway restoration and conservation
connection from greenway through site to big shoals
lodge in seclusion tucked between conservation and big shoals
housing located adjacent to carver neighborhood
expansion area located in clear cut land needed restoration
organic agriculture on already disturbed land
wastewater facility remediated and eventually turned into park/alternate entrance
greenway restoration and conservation
collection from greenway through site
to big shoals

lodge bordering conservation land in
linear arrangement

housing located adjacent to carver
neighborhood

expansion area located in clear cut
land needed restoration

organic agriculture on already
disturbed land

conservation land to buffer housing
from lodge

wastewater facility remediated and
eventually turned into park/alternate
entrance
greenway restoration and conservation

connection from greenway through site to big shoals

lodge in scattered linear arrangement along conservation land

housing located adjacent to carver neighborhood

expansion area located between lodge and big shoals

organic agriculture between lodge and housing

wastewater facility remediated and eventually turned into park/alternate entrance
white springs | conservation concept

white springs surrounded by public conservation land

tourism

tourism

conservation lands
emphasize entrance into white springs

greenway connection to historic spring house

drainage corridor protected from structural development

open space anchors on each major corner of site

integrate conference center with lodging to unite uses

lodge secluded and tucked into woods

passive open space between the street to building and building to building relationships

access to greenway
greenway restoration and conservation
connection from greenway through site to big shoals
lodging situated on greenway to emphasize views and experience
housing located adjacent to carver neighborhood
expansion space to eventually connect to big shoals facilities
wastewater facility remediated and transformed into park
cluster like types of lodging
locate social amenities on waterfront
locate observation tower in location with best view of white springs and suwannee river
After acquiring vacant parcels of land on the outskirts of White Springs, a greenway is proposed to fully contain the growth of the town. If this is implemented, White Springs would be bordered in each cardinal direction by public conservation land. This will regulate sprawl while doubling as a recreation opportunity for visitors and residents. Multi-use trails, mountain biking trails, and a variety of environmental education elements could be installed to educate the public on the importance of protecting our natural resources.
conservation greenway

parcels to be acquired
existing conservation land
study sites
The headquarters to the nature based tourism operation is designed to embrace the beauty of the Suwanee River and engage the historic downtown of White Springs to provide the user a truly unique visit. The drainage ravine through the middle of the site has been protected and all development is outside the 100 year flood plain. The steep topography allowed for a unique architecture to be developed for some of the hotel buildings. All development is sited on the land to cause the least amount of disturbance possible. The conference center is situated on the main corner of the site. It is set back behind a wildflower meadow and grove of young pine trees. This allows the building to blend with its surroundings so as not to compete with the historic nature of the adjacent Adams General Store. The hotel accommodations include 250 rooms as well as a dining terrace and infinity edge pool that overlook the conservation greenway. A plaza is located adjacent to the conference center and can be used for events such as farmers markets, art shows, and festivals. A visitor will hardly encounter vehicular traffic with parking located on the ground level of each building. Stormwater is treated in the passive green space between buildings to be filtered before entering the aquifer. Laundry and cleaning services for both the headquarters site and satellite site are located here as well.
headquarters site

1. entrance sign with wildflower meadow
2. conference center (parking bottom floor)
3. dining terrace and pool
4. terraced hotel lodging (integrated parking)
5. standard hotel lodging (parking bottom floor)
6. greenway conservation
7. event plaza
8. laundry/cleaning services
entrance
view entering white springs
View entering White Springs
terraced hotel lodging
The satellite site houses the White Springs Ecolodge for visitors wanting more natural vacation environment. The 123 acre site is on the outskirts of town directly adjacent to Big Shoals State Park. The entrance is off of Woodpecker Route, a main thoroughfare in White Springs and connects directly to the headquarters site via Suwannee Street. A visitor will enjoy a home cooked meal each night that they will enjoy on a waterfront dining terrace. Spa and massage services are provided to reflect the rejuvenating history of White Springs. Deeper into the site is an observation tower that one can climb to see the miles of natural resources north Florida has to offer. There are plenty of trails on site to occupy a tourist's time; these trails also connect to adjoining trail systems such as Big Shoals and the Bridge to Bridge trail. The existing man-made water bodies on site have been naturalized and utilized as an aesthetic amenity. The ecolodge offers a variety of accommodations including 4 person cottages, 2 person bungalows, and a honeymoon suite with a private pool. There is a girls bunk and a boys bunk on site to accommodate school groups or small summer camps for children wanting to enjoy and learn about nature. The old wastewater treatment plant has been restored and designed into a stormwater treatment facility and environmental education element. The sure to come increased desire for housing in White Springs is addressed with 13 acres of housing just north of the existing Carver Neighborhood.
s a t e l l i t e  s i t e

1. dining hall and spa facilities
2. gravel parking lot
3. 2 bed cottages
4. 1 bed bungalows
5. honeymoon suite
6. boys and girls bunks
7. observation tower
8. environmental education and stormwater park
9. housing component
dining hall & waterfront terrace
2 massage clinic and spa facilities
3 communal fire pit
4 gravel parking
5 existing water body
6 2 bed cottage (typ)
7 nature trails
waterfront dining terrace & spa facilities
satellite site | bungalows & honeymoon suite

1. bungalow site (typ)
2. honeymoon suite & private pool
3. pavilion and fire pit
4. proposed water body
5. nature trails to connect to big shoals
bungalows & amenities
expansion

The cluster of bungalows in the ecolodge provides much opportunity for expansion as the ecolodge grows more popular. Each bungalow has enough land surrounding it to comfortably accommodate two additional bungalows. While this makes this area a little more dense, it allows for more land to be contributed to conservation. The design of the buildings and enough forest integrated into each site will provide sufficient privacy for guests of the lodge. This increases the original bungalow capacity from 12 to 36 guests at any given time.
satellite site | bungalow expansion plan
marketing

White Springs needs to be marketed in a way that will attract the ideal nature loving clients but in a way that will reach all people. A website is the easiest and fastest way to connect with people. Once a person arrives to White Springs they should be presented a variety of White Springs related materials. New trail maps, downtown maps, signage, brochures, apparel, etc. needs to be developed to not only attract but maintain the attention of potential visitors.
white springs + nature base =

stimulated economy
local jobs
united community
established tourism reputation
The main idea of this project is simple: get people to come to White Springs and get them to stay. White Springs is a treasure trove of recreation opportunities. Once its reputation starts to build and return to its once glory, people will come in the masses. This project ensures that White Springs will be ready for them.
references


