

FORWARD FOCUS
Eastern Alachua County
COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER



Dear Eastern Alachua Residents,

For those who are new to our initiative, Forward Focus: Eastern Alachua County is a comprehensive initiative aimed at enhancing the quality of life and expanding economic opportunities in eastern Alachua County, including the communities of Hawthorne, Micanopy, Waldo, and surrounding unincorporated areas.

In this issue of our newsletter, we offer an overview of our most recent community listening session in Micanopy, a preview of our upcoming session in Montechoa, helpful resources, and opportunities to ensure your voice is heard.

Be sure to stay current with our website and future newsletters so you do not miss out on any of our upcoming events.

Here for you,

The Forward Focus Team

-Montechoa Community Listening Session: 3/13-

February: Summarized

Last month, we held our third meeting in our series of community listening events. To continue informing eastern Alachua about our initiative, we met in Micanopy to hear from residents about issues prominent in their community. Following our session, the Forward Focus team has been working to sort

through the feedback and identify similar themes across Hawthorne and Waldo. With this information, we continue to follow up with our communities to enact change and accomplish wins for eastern Alachua.



Micanopy Community Listening Event

Micanopy and its surrounding areas are communities cherished for their small-town charm, rich history, and natural beauty. Residents value the peaceful atmosphere, scenic highways, and the area's commitment to preserving its dark night skies. The community fosters strong engagement, with local centers like the Willie Mae Stokes Community Center providing youth programs and support. Evinston's park is a well-loved feature, adding to the area's appeal. While challenges exist, residents appreciate the balance between maintaining the town's historic character and ensuring future development aligns with their values.

Last month, we asked the Micanopy community how we could help. Here are our highlights:

Transportation

- Speeding issues on 234, Seminary Avenue, and Tusawilla Road.
- Waste dumping along scenic highways (325, 225, 346) and need for better enforcement.
- Improper mowing of Micanopy wildflowers alongside county roads.
- An RTS bus passes through but doesn't pick up residents; no RTS routes are available in Micanopy.
- Request for transportation options to Gainesville.
- A new traffic signal is needed on 234/442 Southbound.

Economic Development

- High-speed internet is needed in Evinston.
- Lack of job opportunities for young people and a call for more business

development.

- Need for a well-priced grocery store to address food access issues and food insecurities.
- Find a balance between developing Micanopy and preserving its charm and nature, with an emphasis on preventing light pollution.

Healthcare

- Limited healthcare services and transportation for medical appointments, especially for seniors.
- An emergency room is not accessible.
- A portion of the population lacks health insurance.

Community Engagement

- Micanopy lacks a building department; county support is needed for code enforcement.
- Need for more youth services and fun opportunities for young people.
- Willie Mae Stokes Community Center offers sports programs for 70+ kids, but more is needed.

Did We Miss Something?

Share opportunities and obstacles in your community you would like Alachua County to be aware of!

Fill Out Our Comment
Form

Our Next Stop



Monteocha Community Listening Session

Thursday, March 13th from 6-8 PM

At the Jerusalem Church of God by Faith Fellowship Hall

1230 NE 156th Ave

We want to hear from you! This session is open to all residents, businesses, and local leaders, providing an opportunity to share insights and ideas about the future of eastern Alachua County. During this meeting, county staff will outline the project's goals and

Forward Focus Spotlight:

Alachua County Public Works Department's Wildflower Program

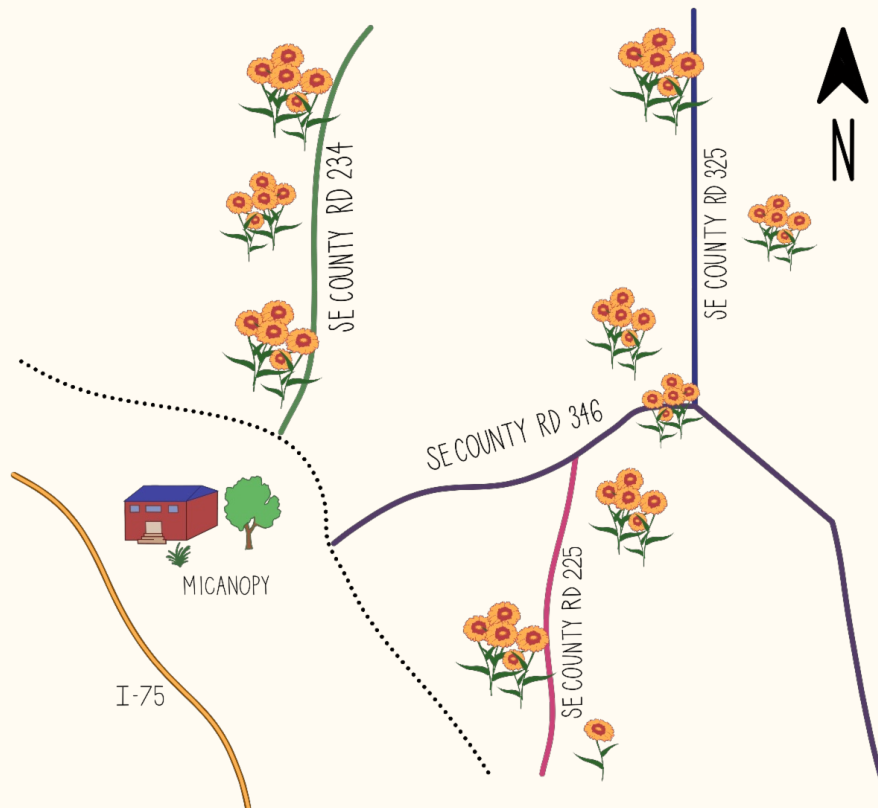
At our recent community listening session in Micanopy, residents shared concerns about the mowing of wildflowers along area roadways. In response, the Forward Focus Team has connected with the Alachua County **Public Works** Department's Horticulturist, who oversees the County's **Wildflower Program** to address these issues and explore ways to improve wildflower preservation efforts.



Protecting wildflowers isn't just about preserving natural beauty—it also supports ecotourism, a vital part of Florida's economy. Ecotourism generates \$20 billion in Florida annually, and Alachua County's scenic roads and landscapes attract nature enthusiasts, photographers, and visitors.

As part of this effort, conservation improvements are being prioritized for key roads in **Florida's Scenic Highway Program** within Micanopy and its surrounding areas, including SE CR 234, S CR 325, and SE CR 346. The county is refining mowing practices, increasing coordination with utility companies, and conducting a comprehensive assessment of wildflower areas this spring in partnership with the Florida Wildflower Foundation. These steps will help ensure better protection of wildflowers while maintaining roadway safety along county roads.

We appreciate East Alachua County's input and will continue advocating for solutions to protect our wildflowers and support ecotourism in Alachua County.



This map highlights the roads in Micanopy and its surrounding areas where the Public Works Department plans to adjust mowing practices along county roads to support wildflower conservation.

Resources



Organization Registration

Complete this form to register your organization to assist in identifying services and programs available in Eastern Alachua County.

Individual Assistance

Please complete the Individual Assistance Form to request household assistance for specific needs and services.



Development Projects

Use this link to see which projects are currently in development throughout Alachua County. To avoid technological issues, we recommend clearing your cache.



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