SCORING LIVE LOCAL

Evaluating Home Location Suitability Under the Live Local Act

Prepared by the Florida Housing Coalition | May 2025
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OVERVIEW

The Live Local Act adopted in 2023 introduced a land use mandate in ss. 125.01055(7) and 166.04151(7) of Florida Statutes permitting affordable housing developments meeting certain conditions on land zoned for commercial, industrial, and mixed use. The Act raised questions on the location suitability of proposed developments taking advantage of this mandate – would the override of local land use controls allowing these developments in non-residential areas promote projects in areas less suitable for homes with regards to proximity to amenities and buffers from potentially undesirable land uses near housing? Or would other parameters and forces guiding development still steer projects to suitable areas? The Florida Housing Coalition undertook a locational scoring analysis to better understand these questions now that this mandate is two years old.

The analysis is based on 89 proposed projects of which the Coalition was aware as of February 2025 that were intending to use the mandate, based on information from media reports, local ordinance proceedings, word-of-mouth, and other public sources.[1] The Coalition analyzed proximity of these projects to a set of amenities (parks, schools, grocery stores, and more) and distance from land uses typically requiring buffers from residential development (industrial uses and other land uses that might create negative impacts on nearby homes). The project team created an overall total location score for each project based on these proximity and distance criteria to determine the general location suitability of these projects.

The remainder of this memo summarizes the preliminary scoring results and additional details on the method of analysis.

PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF RESULTS

OVERALL PROXIMITY TO AMENITIES

More than 90% of proposed projects met standards defined for good proximity for seven of nine total amenities studied. Additionally, 76% of projects and the median overall project distances to transit met standards defined for good proximity. The only remaining amenity where most projects and median/average overall distances did not meet standards of good proximity were for state/federal parks.

[1] The Florida Housing Coalition's online dashboard related to this analysis is available at: https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/5acfd56a2d0c4a3dbe4746b4cd046979

Table 1 indicates the specific amenities used to represent proximity to transportation options (transit), critical but not necessarily regular needs (hospital), important everyday needs (local parks, schools, grocery stores, retail/services), and less important and regular needs (state and federal parks). Distances used as metrics for "good proximity" are

- 0.5 miles for an amenity that may typically be accessed without a car (transit),
- 5 miles for an easy driving distance to amenities that may be relatively more frequent and widely distributed (local parks, primary schools, grocery stores, retail/services), and
- 10 miles for an easy driving distance to amenities that may be relatively less frequent and widely distributed (secondary and K-12 schools with both primary and secondary grades, state and federal parks). **Even if a 5-mile standard were applied to secondary and K-12 schools, the same number of development locations would have met the standard, another indication of excellent proximity to these schools**.

The project team selected these distances in view of the range of development contexts across the state from rural to highly urbanized, as well as to account for the typical contexts in which home building overall is occurring. For example, the project team did not want to apply a 0.5-mile distance across the board for "good proximity," despite this being a typical walking distance. This metric would best apply in a more urban setting; additionally, the project team wouldn't want to measure the Live Local Act projects against a standard that typical residential development across a range of contexts would not meet.

OVERALL DISTANCES FROM DISAMENITIES

Most proposed projects are located outside of 100-year flood zones (71% of total projects) and have a distance buffer from sites with existing land uses that may include uses undesirable near homes (sewage disposal, solid waste, waste land; 96% of total projects were located at least 0.25 miles away). However, less than a third of proposed projects are similarly buffered from existing industrial uses.

The project team also wanted to study whether these projects are typically proposed in or near areas that may pose hazards or nuisances to nearby homes, referred to in this report as "disamenities". *Table 1* shows the three disamenities studied in the analysis: 100-year flood zones, existing industrial uses, and other existing disamenity uses that may have negative impacts on housing. This last disamenity is defined by the Florida Department of Revenue existing land use category for its parcel data that includes "sewage disposal, solid waste, borrow pits, drainage reservoirs, waste land, marsh, sand dunes, swamps." As a result, this definition provides a conservative estimate of potential impacts since certain specific uses in this category may pose potentially greater impacts (sewage disposal) than others (sand dunes).

Avoidance of flood risk exposure is defined as whether a project is outside the 100-year flood zones. A distance of 0.25 miles was used to determine projects very immediately near industrial or other disamenity land uses.

Table 1: Typical Proximity to Amenities/Buffering from Disamenities for 89 Projects as of February 5, 2025

Amenity/Disamenity	Standard for Determining Good Proximity (Amenities) or Buffering (Disamenities) in Miles[1]	Project Distance in Miles		Count of Projects Meeting Good Proximity/ Buffering Standards[1]	Share of Projects Meeting Good Proximity/ Buffering Standards[1]
		Mean	Median		
Amenity					
Transit	0.5	0.8	0.1	68	76%
Hospital	10	3.6	2.3	82	92%
Local Parks	5	1.8	0.9	82	92%
Primary Schools	5	0.7	0.5	89	100%
Secondary Schools	10	0.9	0.7	89	100%
K-12 Schools	10	1.3	0.9	88	99%
Grocery	5	1.0	0.7	87	98%
Retail/Services	5	0.1	0.1	89	100%
State/Federal Parks	10	10.5	11.3	35	39%
Disamenity					
100-Year Flood Zones	Outside of Zones	N/A	N/A	63	71%
Industrial	0.25	0.26	0.15	26	29%
Other Undesirable Areas[2]	0.25	7.84	9.89	85	96%

[1] For amenities where it is desirable for housing to be nearby, this standard is used in this table to show projects within distances listed. For disamenities where it may be desirable to have a buffer from housing, this standard is used in this table to show projects outside of distances listed.

[2] "Other Undesirable Areas" includes other land uses that may have negative impacts on nearby homes. This category offers a conservative estimate since it is based on a broad land use category that includes "sewage disposal, solid waste, borrow pits, drainage reservoirs, waste land, marsh, sand dunes, swamps" as defined for Florida Department of Revenue parcel data, with certain specific uses posing potentially greater impacts (sewage disposal) than others (sand dunes).

TOTAL LOCATION SCORES

Analysis also included creating a total location suitability score applicable for each project location. Locations generally received points for meeting the metrics discussed in the previous section of "good proximity to amenities" and lost points for being in 100-year flood zones (with losses tiered by A and V sub-zones) and not meeting buffer distances of 0.25 miles to 2 miles from industrial and other undesirable uses near homes (losses also tiered by distance, with the closest distance resulting in the greatest point reduction).

The project locations also received additional points to their total score if they met even better proximity standards for amenities than the basic standards already mentioned (e.g., within 0.5 miles of a primary school, signifying potentially being within walking distance, in addition to the 5-mile easy driving proximity standard). State and federal park access, deemed as meeting a less important need to access regularly, received lower weight relative to other amenities (e.g., 0.25 weight for state and federal park within 10 miles of proposed development site versus weight of 1 for local park access within 5 miles). Additionally, the project locations received points based on an employment access score that included nearby absolute number of jobs, job diversity, and jobs per acre (with higher scores for higher metrics). Details on the points and weighting for all criteria are provided in the Methodology section.

The Preliminary Housing Suitability Map of project locations and total scores shows higher scoring areas in darker green. **Most projects are clustered in urbanized metro areas of Tampa Bay, Orlando, and Miami with dark green, high scoring locations.**

We also see this reflected in breaking down the scores by criteria for the highest and lowest scoring projects. **The top 5 highest scoring projects, shown in *Table 2*, received significant additional points available for proximity that goes beyond the standard "good proximity" metric; they also are near transit. These contributions to their scores are likely due to locations in relatively urban contexts.** The first and fourth ranked projects showed notably high employment access scores relative to the average job score for all projects at 0.035 and the median project employment access score of 0.013, but the three others in the top ranks did not. Two of those three projects had notably low employment access scores comparable to the lower employment access scores in the bottom ranks (bottom ranking projects shown in *Table 4*). Additionally, all but one of both the top and bottom projects had minimal flood risk exposure, and all top and bottom projects were located near industrial and potentially other uses undesirable near housing. **These findings suggest that distances from amenities in less urban contexts may be a main driver in score differences between top and bottom projects.**

Total Location Score Map

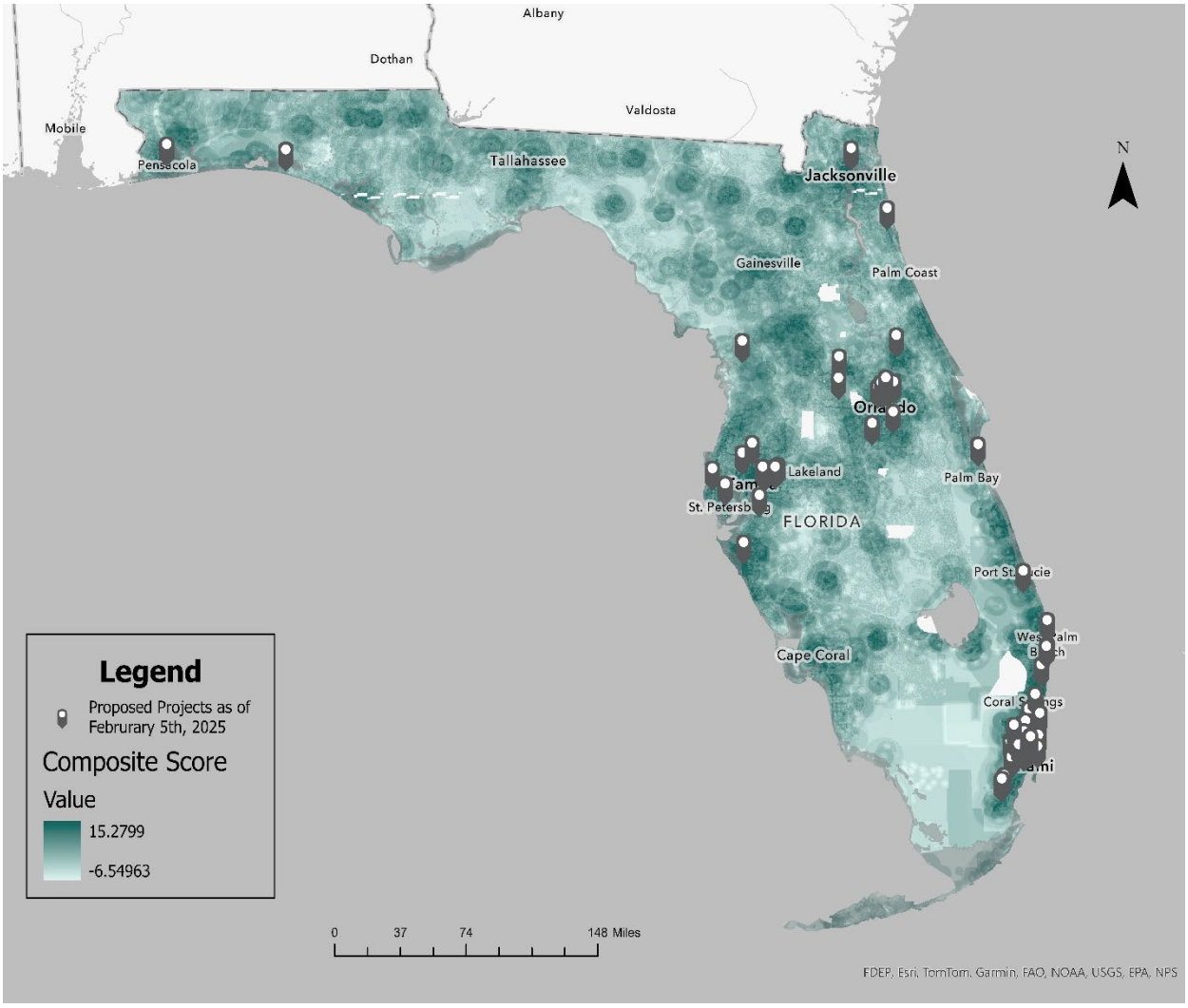


Table 2: Top 5 Projects based on Project Total Location Scores

Rank	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**5th**
Score Breakdown					
Transit	1	1	1	1	1
Hospital	2	2	2	2	2
Local Parks	2	1	2	2	1
Primary Schools	1	1	1	1	1
Secondary Schools	1	1	1	1	1
K-12 Schools	2	2	2	2	2
Grocery	2	2	1	2	2
Retail/Services	2	2	2	2	2
Employment Access Score	0.862	0.004	0.002	0.057	0.019
State/Federal Parks	0	0.25	0.25	0	0
100-Year Flood Zones	0	0	0	0	0
Industrial/Other Undesirable Areas	-3	-2	-2	-3	-2
Total Score	**10.862**	**10.254**	**10.252**	**10.057**	**10.019**

Table 3: Distances from Nearest Amenity/Disamenity by Type for Top 5 Projects

Rank	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**5th**
Categories	**Distances From Nearest Amenity/Disamenity by Type (Miles)**				
Transit	0.06	0.02	0.09	0.12	0.04
Hospital	1.08	1.84	2.27	0.76	2.94
Local Parks	0.26	0.57	0.23	0.46	0.70
Primary Schools	0.24	0.04	0.13	0.18	0.45
Secondary Schools	0.41	0.89	1.30	0.17	0.40
K-12 Schools	0.59	1.86	1.15	0.57	0.98
Grocery	0.27	0.14	0.74	0.32	0.29
Retail/Services	0.06	0.04	0.27	0.07	0.02
State/Federal Parks	12.08	5.10	9.37	12.15	15.36
Industrial	0.07	0.29	0.44	0.02	0.34
Other Undesirable Areas	12.41	0.25	11.45	12.47	15.68

Table 4: Bottom 5 Projects based on Project Total Location Scores

Rank	**89th**	**88th**	**87th**	**86th**	**85th**
Score Breakdown					
Transit	0	0	0	1	0
Hospital	2	2	0	0	1
Local Parks	1	0	1	0	0
Primary Schools	1	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Secondary Schools	1	1	1	1	1
K-12 Schools	0	2	2	1	2
Grocery	0	0	1	1	1
Retail/Services	1	1	1	2	2
Employment Access Score	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.013	0.003
State/Federal Parks	0	0	0.25	0	0.25
100-Year Flood Zones	-2	0	0	0	0
Industrial/Other Undesirable Areas	-2	-3	-3	-2	-3
Total Score	2.003	3.503	3.753	4.513	4.753

Table 5: Distances from Nearest Amenity/Disamenity by Type for Bottom 5 Projects

Rank	**89th**	**88th**	**87th**	**86th**	**85th**
Categories	**Distances From (in Miles)**				
Transit	17.95	3.95	0.56	0.32	11.55
Hospital	3.34	4.24	15.14	16.70	5.28
Local Parks	3.96	7.49	1.40	24.30	11.85
Primary Schools	0.36	2.29	1.29	0.72	2.39
Secondary Schools	3.95	2.74	1.20	1.55	2.39
K-12 Schools	16.59	2.09	1.56	5.24	4.79
Grocery	9.03	12.05	0.57	0.68	2.70
Retail/Services	0.66	1.29	0.68	0.15	0.41
State/Federal Parks	21.87	12.31	1.58	17.90	4.63
Industrial	0.58	0.13	0.03	0.35	0.32
Other Undesirable Areas	0.66	0.70	0.98	1.35	0.17

INDUSTRIAL USES NEAR PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SITES

Given the widespread proximity of proposed developments using the Live Local Act land use mandate to industrial sites, the project team further reviewed these industrial sites within a quarter mile of the top five and bottom five projects. The team set out to determine the specific type of industrial activity, if any still operating, indicated by a Google Maps review; the project team used this information to determine whether these uses would likely cause negative health impacts to potential nearby residents if the proposed development were built. Additionally, the project team reviewed the surroundings of these proposed development locations in Google Maps to see if residential uses were already present nearby, another indication of whether homes would be appropriate near the industrial sites. This analysis indicated that:

There are few large/heavy industrial uses that would likely negatively impact health of potential nearby residents. Of the 75 total nearby industrial sites reviewed, 2 (3%) had potential heavy industrial uses as ready-mix concrete suppliers. Florida Department of Revenue (FDOR) parcel data described activity on these sites as "mineral processing;" since processing activity may have more negative impacts on adjacent sites than just storage, distribution, or sales of the material, these sites were considered potentially heavier uses. Eleven projects (15%) had a lighter industrial or heavy commercial use that would likely have more minimal impacts on nearby sites. Examples of these specific uses include various forms of storage/warehousing, distribution, potential bulk sales, vehicle/boat repair and sales, building trades (e.g., contractor, electrician), and brewing. FDOR parcel data described activity on all these sites but one as warehouse and distribution centers or light manufacturing.

Near certain proposed development locations, there appears to be significant turnover of nearby industrial uses to non-industrial, indicating potential usefulness of the Live Local Act land use mandate to include more affordable homes as part of this conversion activity. These sites that had apparently converted to non-industrial uses also made up nearly three-fourths of the total sites reviewed. Of the 75 industrial sites reviewed, 55 (73%) did not appear to be active industrial uses based on the Google review. These sites typically were vacant (e.g., no business tag in Google Maps aerial and a "for lease" sign in Street View angle of the site) or had a commercial use (e.g., art gallery, restaurant, bar, event venue, etc.). For the proposed development site in the top and bottom five total score rankings with the greatest number of nearby industrial sites (62 in total) based on the FDOR designations, 52 of the sites (84%) did not have industrial uses based on the Google Maps review. For another proposed development site, 4 of the 11 nearby sites (36%) with industrial use designations in the FDOR data did not have industrial uses on the site based on the Google Maps review.

Homes already exist near all the proposed development locations reviewed, suggesting that homes may be an appropriate use at the proposed locations with regards to proximity to industrial uses.

These findings prompt questions for further research:

- Given that many of the lighter uses had warehouse and distribution center or light manufacturing designations, do "light industrial" and "warehouse" categories

encompass similar specific uses across different jurisdictions/contexts? Could these terms be used to define certain industrial categories with minimal impacts on nearby homes?

- What definitions/additional standards are in place where these lighter specific industrial uses are mixed with residential to ensure successful mixing of uses? How might these inform and translate to statewide policy?
- What is the basis for any limitations to mixing industrial uses with residential (e.g., health, placemaking, aesthetics, balance of use mix, etc.)? Those based on aesthetics or use mix may be more flexible than those based on negative health impacts.

METHODOLOGY

AMENITY/DISAMENITY PROXIMITY SCORING FOR TOTAL LOCATION SCORE

Table 4 depicts more details and data sources for each amenity/disamenity criteria used to compute the total location scores. Certain distances are used often in the table below:

- The 0.5-mile distance is used based on a typically comfortable walking distance. This distance is applied to important needs that are frequent and regularly distributed that households typically access on a regular basis (e.g., primary schools, grocery stores) and amount to the highest number of points available in these cases; it also applies as the metric for good proximity for amenities that might typically be accessed without using a car (e.g., transit).
- The 5-mile distance is used to indicate a very accessible distance when using a car. When applied to important needs that are frequent and regularly distributed and that households typically access on a regular basis (e.g., primary schools, grocery stores), it amounts to fewer points than the 0.5-mile distance. When applied to important needs that are less frequent and regularly distributed (e.g., secondary schools), or those that households do not typically need on a regular basis but meet an emergency need (e.g., hospitals), it amounts to the highest number of points available for that amenity.
- Where the 10-mile distance applies, locations receive fewer additional points than the 5-mile distances described above. Yet 10 miles is still considered for the purposes of this report as a good base proximity standard when using a car. The 10-mile distance is also applied for a “good” proximity measure for state and federal parks, considered a less important need to access regularly relative to other amenities, but still good to have nearby.
- Additional distances used are further explained in the description and notes.

Table 6: Summary of Amenity/Disamenity Layers for Total Location Scores

Layer	Distances	Weights	Description	Notes/Sources
Amenities				
Transit Walkshed	0.5 mile	1	Transit is often accessed without a car. People are generally comfortable walking 1/4 - 1/2 mile to a transit stop (but willing to walk further for higher-quality transit)	https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/ped_transit/ped_transguide/ch4.cfm Public Transit Stops were collected from all local public transit agencies in the state as well as from FDOT (2015-2024)
Hospital "Careshed"	5 miles	2	Most patients from recent study (see link in sources) traveled an average of 8 miles for emergency care at a hospital	https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8944092/ 2023 Florida Department of Revenue Parcels
	10 miles	1		
Local Park	0.5 mile	2	City and County Owned Parks data used; considered an important need that households will regularly access, considered frequent and widely distributed.	2023 Florida Department of Revenue Parcels
	5 miles	1		
Primary Schools	0.5 mile	1	All Public & Charter Elementary Schools data used; considered an important need that households will regularly access, considered frequent and widely distributed.	Some schools are solely magnet schools (public but not everyone is accepted); scoring is half of K-12 schools since primary schools and secondary schools each fulfill access for
	5 miles	0.5		
Secondary	5 miles	1	All Public & Charter Middle & High Schools	

Layer	Distances	Weights	Description	Notes/Sources
Schools	10 miles	0.5	data used. 5- to 10-mile distance used here since secondary schools are fewer and more dispersed than primary schools; these distances were used to indicate good access when driving.	part of the K-12 grade levels https://fgdl.org/zips/metadata/xml/gc_schoolsbnd_jul23.xml
K-12 Schools	5 miles	2	All public schools that simultaneously serve grades K-12 data used. See note above on 5- to 10-mile distance.	Most ideal to be near since it fills both primary and secondary school roles.
	10 miles	1		
Supermarket	0.5 miles	2	Florida Department of Revenue Parcels with Supermarket category used; considered a critical need that households will regularly access, considered frequent and widely distributed.	https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5998793/
	5 miles	1		
General Retail/ Services	0.5 miles	2	2023 Florida Department of Revenue Parcels used with shopping centers, stores (11,12,13), and gas station designations; considered an important need that households will regularly access, considered frequent and widely distributed.	https://blog.accessdevelopment.com/research-how-far-will-consumers-travel-to-make-routine-purchases
	5 miles	1		
State/Federal Park	10 miles	0.25	State and Federally Owned Parks – considered a bonus amenity with lower weight since households may visit less frequently than local parks	2023 Florida Department of Revenue Parcels used; 10 miles is the average distance from projects.
Employment Access Score	Within CBG	1	See explanation below.	

Layer	Distances	Weights	Description	Notes/Sources
Disamenities				
100-year Flood Zone	In V zones In A zones In neither	V zones: -3 A zones: -2 Neither: 0	Defined by FEMA; V zones receive greater score reduction due to more exposure to coastal storm risks and wave action.	https://fgdl.org/zips/metadata/xml/dfirm_100_floodzones_apr24.xml
Combined Industrial and Other Potentially Undesirable Areas Near Housing	0.25 mile 1 mile 2 miles	0.25 mile: -3 1 mile: -2 2 miles: -1	2023 Florida Department of Revenue Parcels defined with industrial use codes 041-049 (which excludes vacant category), as well as parcels with category 096: "Sewage disposal, solid waste, borrow pits, drainage reservoirs, waste land, marsh, sand dunes, swamps"	Used 0.25-mile as most proximate buffer to identify adjacent parcels; distance range also captures most proximate areas where exposure to odor pollution is studied based on the literature review conducted here: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8459501/

EMPLOYMENT ACCESS SCORE DETERMINATION

Data for determining employment access scores came from the LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES) Dataset, which was then joined to census block groups. This data is essentially the number of jobs in each job category for each census block group. According to this dataset, there are a total of 9,168,079 jobs in the state of Florida, divided among all categories and spread across all block groups. The 20 job categories from the Workforce Area Characteristics dataset include:

- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting
- Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction
- Utilities
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Wholesale Trade
- Retail Trade
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Information
- Finance and Insurance
- Real Estate and Rental and Leasing
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
- Management of Companies and Enterprises
- Administrative and Support and Waste
- Management and Remediation Services
- Educational Services
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Other Services [except Public Administration]
- Public Administration

The rationale for this analysis is that ideal locations with regards to job access should not just be places with the highest total number of jobs but also places diverse in job categories; the analysis also accounts for the differing land areas of each census block group. *Table 5* shows metrics used to capture these aspects of number and diversity of jobs, normalized via their z-score (a score based on their relationship to the average of their respective data set) so that they could be combined into a single total location score.

Table 7: Employment Access Score Metrics

Metrics	Description	Weight
Total Jobs	Total amount of jobs within the CBG according to LODES data (Normalized)	0.25
Job Density	Total Jobs / Total Area (Acres)	0.5
Diversity of Jobs	Shannon's Diversity Index (assessing prevalence of all 20 job categories per CBG)	0.25

SUMMATIONS & MAPPING

The entire state was divided into cells of 45 meters by 45 meters, roughly half an acre. Each cell was then assigned a value, the distance in meters from the nearest amenity and disamenity. Then, these distances were converted into miles.

This was done for each above-mentioned metric/layer in *Table 4*, except for employment access scores and flood zones. Then, using the specified distances in that same table, the correlated value was assigned to the cells that fall within those ranges.

These layers were then stacked on top of each other and all the overlapping cells were summed together as shown below, with employment access and flood zone scores added, to produce the final total scores shown in the Total Location Score Map.

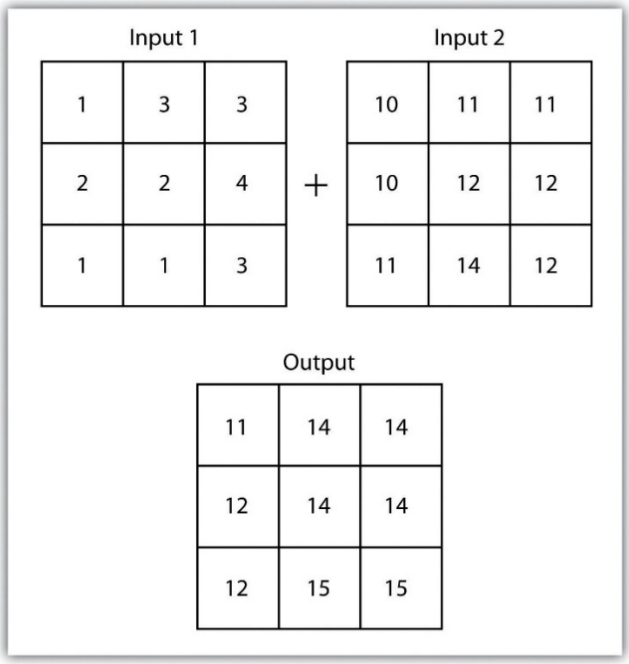
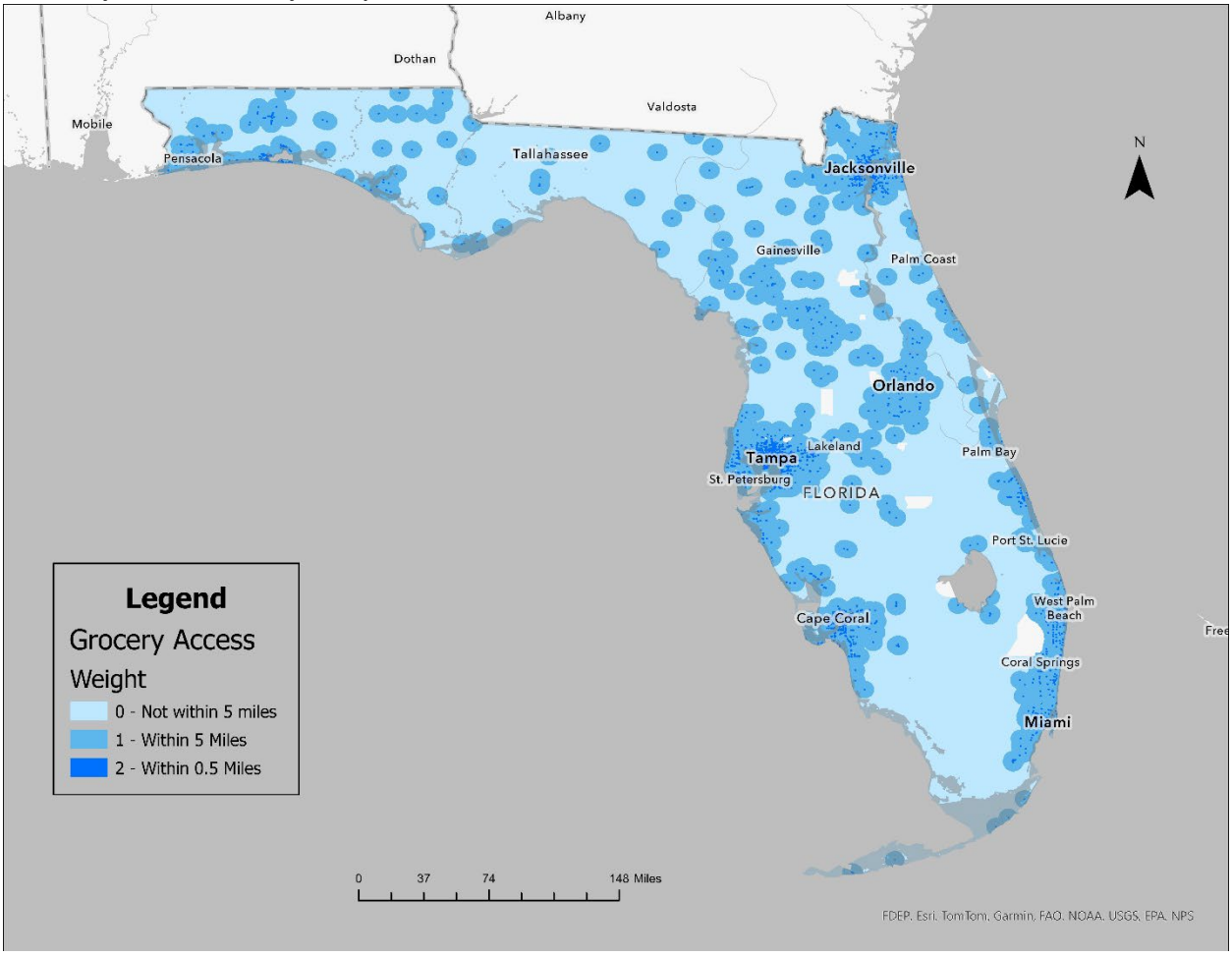


Image Source: Essentials of Geographic Information Systems, Saylor Academy, 2012

The map below offers an example of one of the component maps, the supermarket layer. Essentially, all the maps follow this same style, and their scores were aggregated as stated above to produce the final output map.

Note that the white spaces in the middle of the state represent the census block groups that were excluded from this analysis, due to a lack of key data such as total jobs or other metrics. There are no projects in these areas however, so it does not impact the validity of the results.

Grocery Accessibility Map



INDUSTRIAL USES REVIEW IN GOOGLE MAPS

The project team used 2023 FDOR parcel data to identify sites with industrial use codes within 0.25 miles of the top five and bottom five ranked proposed Live Local Act development sites based on their comprehensive location score. Industrial use codes included 041 through 049, excluding 040 (vacant land) and the 096 code used to define the potentially "undesirable uses" near homes used in the comprehensive score calculation. The project team reviewed the resulting 75 industrial sites (4 of which were near more than one proposed development site) in Google Maps as of March 2025. The project team used both establishment tags in the Google Maps aerial and Street View angles to determine what industrial activity, if any, was operating

on the site. Where a clear use (including vacant) could not be determined from the information, the site was designated as not having a specified use. The timing of the establishment tags and capture of Street View angles varied between sites and may differ from date of FDOR parcel data collection. Uses summarized in report findings reflect those that could be determined.