

**CITY OF
GAINESVILLE**


**INTER-OFFICE
COMMUNICATION**

061050

Date: August 25, 2006

To: Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Commission

Via: Russ Blackburn, City Manager
Tom Saunders, Community Development Director

From:  Jim Hencin
Block Grant Manager

Subject: Downtown "Meters" for Donations to the Homeless

This is in response to the May 8, 2006, City Commission referral. Staff has researched the program that was implemented in Athens, Georgia, and offers the following.

According to Catherine Lacoski, Executive Director of the Athens Downtown Development Authority, their "meter" donation program was started in September 2003 in response to problems with panhandling in the downtown area. It was created to give business patrons, downtown area employees, and others the option of giving to a program that helps homeless persons rather than to an individual who may not be homeless.

The Downtown Development Authority, which is responsible for parking meters in the downtown Athens area, has thus far collected approximately \$200 each quarter using old parking meters that are painted bright white to distinguish them from regular parking meters. The donation meters are also signed so that donors are aware of their purpose. Donations collected by the Downtown Development Authority are given to the Athens Homeless Coalition, which then distributes the funds to member organizations that help the homeless.

Together with Brian Kanley, Transportation Services Manager, we have determined that a pilot donation meter program could be implemented in the downtown area of Gainesville for about \$50 to \$100. This would cover the costs of refurbishing old parking meters by removing their timing and coin mechanisms, painting them, and installing them at selected locations with appropriate signage. We recommend installing the meters at the following locations with high foot traffic:

- NE corner of East University & NE 1 Street, next to the Clock Tower
- SE or NW Corner of SE 1 Street & 1 Avenue
- NE or SW Corner of SE 1 Street & 2 Avenue

Another potential location is in front of City Hall.

If the City Commission decides to proceed with this pilot program, the Transportation Services Division could have the donation meters installed in about two-three weeks. Monies would be collected on a weekly basis, along with other parking meter collections and deposited in a designated account. Once sufficient funds were collected (e.g., \$200), they would be given to the Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless, Inc., for distribution to local homeless providers.

Staff will await the decision of the City Commission on whether to proceed with this pilot program. If members of the City Commission have any questions about this, please let us know.

JH/km