

# 2015 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



## TOP PRIORITIES

### GENERAL LEGISLATIVE POLICY

- Supports Florida League of Cities Legislative Priorities and Key Issues.
- Supports select policies from Alachua County, Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce, Santa Fe College, University of Florida, and Workforce Force.

### GENERAL GOVERNMENT

- Supports local solutions for community concerns and needs for governance of the City utility.
- Supports continued funding of the State University System Concurrency Trust Fund.
- Supports local authority to bargain changes to pension benefits.
- Supports local effort to repeal and replace the Alachua County Boundary Adjustment Act (BAA) with the Alachua County Urban Reserve Act (URA).
- Supports expanded use of renewable energy and reasonable application of EPA Clean Power Plan Rule regarding investments of utilities prior to adoption.
- Supports local small businesses by advocating that craft brewers be allowed to compete on equal basis with mass production brewers. Gainesville supports allowing craft brewers to sell beer in any size container.
- Supports inclusion of public acquisition of land within the watershed of an artesian spring as an eligible activity under the recently approved land acquisition constitutional amendment.

### COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Support state investments, such as the Institute for the Commercialization of Research to encourage development that attracts and retains local companies.
- Supports state financial assistance for a pilot project with community partners to enhance awareness and efficient utilization of employee health benefits.

### JOB TRAINING AND EDUCATION

- Support state funding for Reichert House Youth Academy and programs that provide education and job training and assist individuals seeking employment opportunities.
- Support state investment in programs creating or enhancing apprenticeships and on the job training in critical areas identified by local communities including but not limited to computers, digital and emerging technologies such as solar construction and installation.

### CAPITAL PROJECTS

- Support the continued development of the Empowerment Center Human Services Campus to provide a variety of public services for the community.
- Support state and federal funding regarding SW 62<sup>nd</sup> Boulevard extension for right of way acquisition costs and construction.

# City Commission

Mayor Ed Braddy (At Large)  
Mayor Pro Tem/ Todd Chase (District 2)  
Commissioner Yvonne Hinson-Rawls (District 1)  
Commissioner Craig Carter (District 3)  
Commissioner Randy Wells (District 4)  
Commissioner Lauren Poe (At Large)  
Commissioner Helen Warren (At Large)  
Russ Blackburn, City Manager  
Kathy Viehe, Interim General Manager for Utilities

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## **General Legislative Policy**

### **Preserve the City of Gainesville's Strategic Goals and Interests**

As a general policy, the City of Gainesville seeks to preserve its home rule authority to govern the city, its citizens, and its property. The city supports any legislation that will advance the city's strategic goals, that improves the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens, or that responsibly increases revenues or enhances the city's authority to conduct the public's business.

The city will oppose any legislation that mandates increased costs or loss of revenues, or that would diminish the fundamental home rule authority of the city. The City of Gainesville will oppose legislation by the State of Florida that preempts local authority to represent the interests of our citizens and will support efforts to repeal such preemptions that currently exist.

### **Florida League of Cities Legislative Priorities and Key Issues**

The City of Gainesville is a member of the Florida League of Cities (FLC). Members of the Gainesville City Commission and City of Gainesville staff participate in the FLC legislative policy setting process and legislative policy councils. The City Commission generally supports the legislative priorities and key issue positions adopted by FLC. Through the duration of the legislative session, City of Gainesville representatives will communicate our position on specific legislation and our concurrence or differences with the FLC position. As a Charter City under the Florida Constitution, the City of Gainesville supports the Home Rule Authority of local governments.

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## **GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

The City of Gainesville will seek and support bills and regulatory action during 2015 for the following issues.

### **Governance of Gainesville Regional Utilities**

The City of Gainesville opposes any state legislation that alters the governance of Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU). The governance of GRU is set forth by the charter of the City of Gainesville. Any modification to that governing structure should be by the elected city officials of Gainesville and the voters of the City of Gainesville in accordance with that charter.

### **Campus Development Agreements**

The City of Gainesville supports the continued funding of the State University System Concurrency Trust Fund to fully address the impacts of State University System (SUS) campus development on host local governments and supports maintaining Campus Development Agreements (CDA). Section 1013.30, Florida Statutes, requires that a CDA be formed between

the SUS campus and the host local government. CDAs address impacts on local infrastructure and services that the additional density and development of the university have on the surrounding host community. Historically, these agreements have required the SUS to pay a fair share of the costs associated with impacts to: storm water management; potable water; sanitary sewer; solid waste collection and disposal; parks and recreation; public transportation; and fire rescue services. The SUS has paid for these impacts through the SUS Concurrency Trust Fund which is no longer being funded by the Florida Legislature. In order to maintain the partnerships forged between state universities and their host communities it is important that the Campus Development Agreement process continue unchanged and funding be restored to the SUS Concurrency Trust Fund.

### **Local Government Pension Plans**

The City of Gainesville supports local authority to bargain changes to pension benefits under Statutes 175 and 185 as agreed upon by the city and local bargaining units. The city is supportive of amendments to Statutes 175 and 185 to allow a system that provides realistic minimum benefits, to allow for all excess premium tax revenue to be used to provide these benefits, and to allow more flexibility to local governments is essential to enable local governments to react to the rising costs and current revenue pressures.

Chapters 175 and 185 of the Florida Statutes were established under the pretext of providing a uniform retirement system for Firefighters (175) and Police Officers (185). The statutes authorize the establishment and collection of excise taxes on property and casualty insurance policies sold within a municipalities corporate limits to be used to pay for pension benefits of firefighters and police officers. The Statutes also define minimum benefits and restrict the use of tax receipts above the base year (1997) to be used for “extra benefits.”

### **Alachua County Urban Reserve Act**

The City of Gainesville supports the local effort to repeal and replace the Alachua County Boundary Adjustment Act (BAA) with the Alachua County Urban Reserve Act (URA). The Alachua County Boundary Adjustment Act is an Interlocal Service Boundary Agreement passed in 1990 by the Legislature of the State of Florida to set forth procedures for establishing municipal reserve areas and for adjusting the boundaries of municipalities in Alachua County. The Urban Reserve Act was drafted by the Alachua County League of Cities to replace the Boundary Adjustment Act. The Urban Reserve Act defaults to the Municipal Annexation or Contraction Act (Fla. Stat. §171) for annexation procedures, but retains the urban reserve areas which promote long-term planning for municipal annexations within Alachua County.

### **Support for Expanded Use of Renewable Energy**

The City of Gainesville is seeking funding and/or tax incentives in support of our commitment to increasing our use of renewable energy by Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU). In addition to

being among Florida's leading utilities in the deployment of solar energy, GRU has contracted to purchase approximately 100 MW of clean, local, renewable energy for GRU customers from the Gainesville Renewable Energy Center biomass plant, a privately held company.

GRU's commitments fulfill all elements of Section 10. Section 366.92 of HB 7117 in that they promote renewable energy, diversify the types of fuel used to generate electricity in Florida, lessen our regional and state level reliance on natural gas, minimize the long-term volatility of fuel costs, and improve environmental conditions. The City of Gainesville also advocates for the expanded use of renewable energy across the state of Florida.

### **EPA Clean Power Plan Rule**

Over the last decade, the City of Gainesville/GRU has done exactly what we believe the EPA's Clean Power Rule intends to accomplish - greatly reduce carbon dioxide emissions. We set a goal of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to seven percent below 1990 values by the end of 2013 and, with a concerted effort, exceeded this goal with a thirteen percent reduction by the end of 2012. GRU has invested millions to add renewable energy to our generation mix, use more natural gas and implement aggressive energy conservation programs since 2005. This has not been without a cost to our customers. GRU currently has the highest electric rates in the state of Florida, in part due to our actions taken to reduce CO<sub>2</sub>. With these factors in mind, there are two primary points we offer for consideration in proposed CO<sub>2</sub> rulemaking.

First, the proposed rule does not give credit for the significant investments made by utilities for renewable energy and energy efficiency programs to reduce greenhouse gas CO<sub>2</sub> prior to 2012. We believe that EPA should allow states to incorporate emission reductions made by electric systems prior to the effective baseline of 2012.

A second primary concern relates to the potential for stranded costs from early investments our community made to comply with EPA's Clean Air Interstate Rule (CAIR) and Clean Air Mercury Rule (CAMR). While EPA recognizes the increased costs to the consumers with load shifting to natural gas, it does not consider the stranded costs for those units that still carry considerable debt. We would urge the EPA to fully consider Florida's unique situation with respect to fuel diversity, system reliability, economic growth, technological feasibility, and especially the investments and additional costs our customers already bear and any additional costs that will be forced upon them in the future.

### **Advocating for Craft Brewing to Compete on Equal Basis with Mass Production Brewers**

The City of Gainesville supports local small businesses by advocating that craft brewers be allowed to compete on equal basis with mass production brewers. Gainesville supports allowing craft brewers to sell beer in any size container.

## **Inclusion of Artesian Spring Under the Recently Approved Land Acquisition Constitutional Amendment.**

The City of Gainesville supports inclusion of public acquisition of land within the watershed of an artesian spring as an eligible activity under the recently approved land acquisition constitutional amendment. Glen Springs is located within the City of Gainesville and should be an eligible site for acquisition under the Environmental Land Acquisition program.

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## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **Innovation Square**

The City of Gainesville supports incentive programs available through the State of Florida to encourage the continued development of Innovation Square and the attraction and retention of companies that will utilize Innovation Square and benefit the local and state economy. Innovation Square is a significant redevelopment project located between Downtown Gainesville and the University of Florida campus. This project is a coordinated effort of the City of Gainesville, the University of Florida, and Shands. From being a super incubator to company relocation, Innovation Square will support research and development companies in the physical, engineering, or life sciences. Innovation Square has the capacity to bring huge benefits to Gainesville. The most obvious impacts will be in the areas of economic development and job creation/retention among other benefits such as the redevelopment of the former Alachua General Hospital site and enhancement of the surrounding properties. Economic development programs such as those aimed at job creation/retention, business startup and incubator funds, and workforce training and development will be beneficial to Innovation Square. Additionally, the City of Gainesville and its Innovation Square development partners will actively pursue funding and incentive programs that can be utilized to assist in the infrastructure needs to improve the Innovation Square site and ultimately attract quality businesses and employers.

**Request:** The request is \$700,000 for utility projects and transit service improvements.

### **Eastside Redevelopment Area Initiatives: Former Kennedy Homes & GTEC Sites**

The largest undertakings of the Eastside Redevelopment area are the redevelopment of the former Kennedy Homes site and the Gainesville Technology Enterprise Center (GTEC) property. These redevelopment initiatives will provide new housing stock and employment opportunities within East Gainesville. The City is seeking funding and/or tax incentives in support of these initiatives to spur economic development, livability and sustainable design in the area. Redevelopment will require utility upgrades, road and parking construction, stormwater treatment solutions, community outreach, marketing and recruiting efforts.

The sites are located within a quarter mile of each other, about one mile from downtown Gainesville and two miles from the University of Florida, and are situated among well-established neighborhoods, schools and churches, with additional natural amenities located nearby.

The former Kennedy Homes site which once served as public housing was demolished in order to stabilize and revitalize a significant portion of East Gainesville. The site, 15 acres total, contains a vacant 10 acre parcel and approximately 5 acres of wetlands. The redevelopment project will create a community which demonstrates functional sustainability through its design, its systems and its interactions with future residents. A community that embraces new urban design while placing an emphasis on responsible building construction practices and sustainable living systems that integrate engineering, function, and use in order to maximize the residents living experience.

The GTEC business incubator and its associated amenities are located on part of the 12 acre GTEC site and are a key for its redevelopment. The redevelopment project will leverage on the human capital and tangible resources associated with GTEC to spur economic development in the area. The proposed schematic Master Plan layouts an office and retail focused mixed-use development aiming to retain GTEC graduate companies in East Gainesville and attract additional economic activity to the vicinity.

**Request:** The request is for \$700,000 for capital to go towards the redevelopment of Kennedy Homes site.



## **JOB TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

### **Reichert House Youth Academy**

Gainesville supports the creation of programs and the continuation of existing programs that assists job seekers and the unemployed receive training and education that will allow them to take advantage of existing jobs and jobs that will result from the economic development efforts of the city and its partners. The city supports minority employment programs as well as programs aimed at employment of at-risk populations such those that focus on reducing the recidivism rate of ex-felons.



**Request:** \$200,000 is requested to support continuation of job training program for at risk youth populations.

### **Apprenticeship Programs**

The City of Gainesville supports state investments in strategic community initiatives to provide on the job training and apprenticeship appointments for youth and young adults to develop marketable job skills in key areas. For example a lack of exposure to the use of computers and other innovative technologies create digital gaps for a significant number of individuals otherwise ready to enter the job market. The state should create or modify workforce development programs that would leverage local efforts to identify key job markets and employable skills needed by the business community.

**Request: \$100,000**

## **CAPITAL PROJECTS**

### **Empowerment Center Human Services Campus - Capital Project**

The Empowerment Health Center (EHC) at the former Gainesville Correctional Institute (GCI) location will





provide access to healthcare services for all underserved residents in the Alachua County region. It is the next logical step in transforming the GCI to a true Human Services Campus.

The EHC will be designed and equipped to provide traditional medical, dental, and behavioral health services in a modern setting. The facility will incorporate current best practices for patient management, including electronic health records (EHR) and on-demand access. Professional staffing for medical, dental, and mental health services will be provided primarily by volunteer professionals in the community. Service availability will include evenings and weekend clinics. Additionally, safety net providers may offer access to non-traditional and ancillary healthcare services such as acupuncture, therapeutic massage, specialty medical clinics, and physical therapy.

Alachua County has a long and successful history of healthcare volunteerism and an active and interested Safety Net Collaborative. When fully renovated, the EHC will be available for use by healthcare safety net providers in the community. The EHC supervisor will work closely with Safety Net Collaborative members to offer a meaningful scope of service to all eligible and underserved residents, thereby transforming the former GCI into a model Human Services Campus.

**Request:** \$700,000 to renovate the medical building bringing it up to ADA requirements.

### **SW 6<sup>th</sup> Street Project**

The City of Gainesville identified the SW 6<sup>th</sup> Street corridor on their Capital Improvement Plan to address poor roadway conditions, flooding concerns, stormwater quality issues, inadequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and inefficient lighting infrastructure. The project has recently completed 60% construction plans which include the following:



- Stormwater Treatment through low impact development bioretention facilities. These facilities will provide excess stormwater quality treatment which in turn will allow developers to purchase stormwater treatment credits from the City to meet their redevelopment requirements reducing the capital cost and land required for the developer to treat the water on their site.
- Roadway reconstruction to improve the current Pavement Index Condition score of 24 out of 100.
- Upgrade of a stormwater pipe to provide improved conveyance to greatly reduce current flooding concerns.
- Addition of in-street bicycle lanes and 10-15' wide pedestrian facilities.
- LED roadway and pedestrian lighting.

**Request:** \$500,000 is requested for the stormwater components of this project out of a total of \$2,000,000 construction estimate. A portion of the stormwater costs will be recovered through the aforementioned stormwater redevelopment credit system.

### **NW 14<sup>th</sup> Street Pipe Replacement**

The City of Gainesville completed a watershed management plan (WMP) for Tumblin Creek.



This street and subsequent section of stormwater piping were identified as an area with a conveyance deficiency. This deficiency may result in localized flooding due to the undersized structures and piping. This area was one of three areas of concern that were prioritized. To prevent flooding in these areas and provide the residents and businesses in these areas safe access during severe storm events, the City needs to improve the stormwater conveyance system in this area. The city is actively

seeking funding from grant programs for this conveyance upgrade.

The work ties directly to the storm management systems envisioned with the Innovation Square and District.

The project is conceived of as providing both on-site capacity management, as well as district-wide capacity management for stormwater.

The stormwater upgrades associated with Innovation Square will act as a conveyance point into the larger *Tumblin Creek system*. This work will support the overall goal of the Innovation District as a model for stormwater management.

**Request:** \$350,000 is the initial estimated cost for improvements.

### **SW 62<sup>nd</sup> Boulevard Connector**

The SW 62nd Blvd Connector is a project of regional significance with demonstrated potential to reduce congestion and increase safety on the regional, state and federal transportation systems (including portions of I-75, SR 24, SR 26 and SR 121). This project has strong community support and reflects the joint efforts of public agencies to address mobility needs in the metropolitan area. In addition, it aligns with recent efforts by the Florida Department of Transportation to address mobility needs in the I-75 corridor. The SW 62nd Blvd Connector will enhance system connectivity and expand modal transportation choices increasing mobility and

accessibility to all users. The initiative focuses on the construction of a four-lane multimodal facility that expands the transportation network implementing innovative traffic management techniques and creating opportunity for implementation of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. The project achieves the community's redevelopment objectives by generating employment opportunities, increasing community livability and fostering regional economic growth. The total cost of the SW 62nd Blvd Connector project is \$100,000,000 and \$47,000,000 is paid for through local funding

The City has received federal funding to begin the initial planning and design which is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2015. As such the City will be seeking the remaining \$53,000,000 from a variety of state and federal sources.

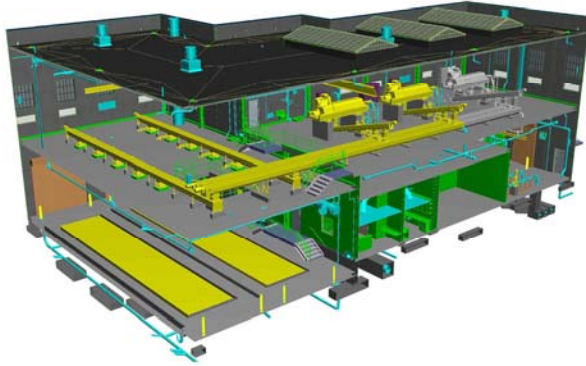
**Request:** The City of Gainesville shall begin initial discussions with the Florida Department of Transportation for inclusion and schedule in the Five-Year Workplan.

### **Paynes Prairie Sheetflow Restoration**

The requested funding will be used for construction of public access facilities at the Paynes Prairie Sheetflow Restoration Project that is currently under construction. The Paynes Prairie Sheetflow Restoration Project is a \$29 million project that the City is currently constructing in order to improve water quality in Paynes Prairie and meet Florida Department of Environmental Protection regulatory requirements. The project will also help to restore 1,300 acres of wetlands within Paynes Prairie and provide a public park for education, nature viewing and recreation. The funds being requested will be used to construct public viewing towers and interpretive signage. These facilities will ensure that visitors will have a greater understanding of the purpose of this investment in water resource improvements. The amount sought is 7 percent of the \$29 million total project cost.



**Request:** The City of Gainesville is seeking \$2 million in funding for a water quality/surface water resource protection project



### **BioSolids Reuse Facility**

GRU provides wastewater service to a population of approximately 185,000 people in the Gainesville area. GRU operates two water reclamation facilities, Main Street Water Reclamation Facility (MSWRF) and Kanapaha Water Reclamation Facility (KWRF), which receive, treat and beneficially reuse approximately 16 million gallons per day of wastewater. The facilities produce biosolids as a byproduct of the treatment process, which are currently

beneficially used as a fertilizer and soil amendment at a local farm. GRU's current biosolids operation has been in operation for over 30 years. However, recent changes in local and state regulations have resulted in costly requirements that have made land application at GRU's existing site in Alachua County infeasible.

GRU is transitioning to a new biosolids reuse program via a multi-phased approach as follows:

Phase 1: Construction of new \$13 million biosolids dewatering facility - currently underway and is expected to be complete in 2016. The newly constructed dewatering facility will reduce the water content of the biosolids to allow hauling and reuse by a variety of alternatives.

Phase 2: KWRF Improvements - \$1.7 million phase is to begin in 2015 and be complete in 2016. This will include improvements to the screens at the KWRF which are needed to ensure that the dewatering facility described above can function reliably.

Phase 3: MSWRF Improvements - \$3.6 million phase is to begin in 2017 and be complete in 2020. This will include improvements to the headworks and screens at the MSWRF which are needed to ensure that the dewatering facility described above can function reliably.

**Request:** Provide \$1,000,000 in state funding for Fiscal Year 2016 to assist in the construction of Phase 1 and 2 of the project. GRU budgeted funds would match the requested amount during FY 2016.