

Memo



To: Mayor Ed Braddy

Via: Russ Blackburn, City Manager *rb*
Paul Folkers, Assistant City Manager

From: Steven R. Phillips, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Director

Date: October 8, 2015

Subject: Proposed referendum ballot language regarding funding for land conservation and recreational improvements

On September 17, 2015, the City Commission heard the attached presentation from the Trust for Public Land (TPL) Conservation Finance Program executive director, Will Abberger.

A summary of steps taken to develop the Master Plan is attached to this memo (Master Plan Action History). Since the Master Plan was approved by the City Commission on November 12, 2012, staff conducted a thorough review of funding options that were discussed over two years in the Recreation, Cultural Affairs and Public Works Committee. In addition, the City Commission directed staff to contract with the Conservation Finance Program with the Trust for Public Land to conduct a Feasibility Study to analyze the various funding mechanisms. Concurrently, the Board of County Commissioners also asked TPL to do the same. In addition, TPL conducted citizen polls to determine how both city and county residents felt about funding for parks, recreation and land conservation.

TPL's findings were presented on September 17, 2015, and a copy of that presentation is attached (09/17/2015 Presentation by Trust for Public Lands). The Commission heard the presentation, discussed the two funding options and urged further discussions with the county regarding the matter. There were numerous citizen comments regarding the matter. No formal motion was made at the meeting, and the item was concluded with a general consensus to continue the discussion.

On September 22, 2016, the Board of County Commission sent a letter to each mayor of the municipalities in Alachua County asking for formal feedback on a 1/2 cent sales tax proposal that would fund 75% of the PRCA Vision 2020 Master Plan, approximately \$60,000,000.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information.

Attachments: 1) 09/17/2015 Presentation by Trust for Public Lands
 2) Master Plan Action History

XC: City Commissioners
Michelle Park, Assistant Director

#130508



**Ballot Measure
Funding Options Research
Gainesville & Alachua County**

**Gainesville City Commission
September 17, 2015**

THE TRUST *for* PUBLIC LAND
LAND FOR PEOPLE

Focus of Research

THE TRUST *for* PUBLIC LAND
CONSERVING LAND FOR PEOPLE

- The Trust for Public Land was contacted independently by Alachua County and City of Gainesville staff in January.
- The City of Gainesville is focused on implementation of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Master Plan, primarily its highest priority projects. Public Opinion Research was conducted for a March 2016 measure.
- Alachua County is focused on re-authorizing funding for its Alachua County Forever land conservation program. November 2016 is the most likely ballot date.
- Other organizations have expressed alternative uses for the infrastructure sales tax.
- The One Mill for School Operations will be on the November, 2016 ballot (approved in 2008, 2012).

Conservation Finance Mission

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CONSERVING LAND FOR PEOPLE

The Conservation Finance Program seeks approval for new public funding for land conservation and parks through the research, design and passage of ballot measures and legislation. Other needs are often included.

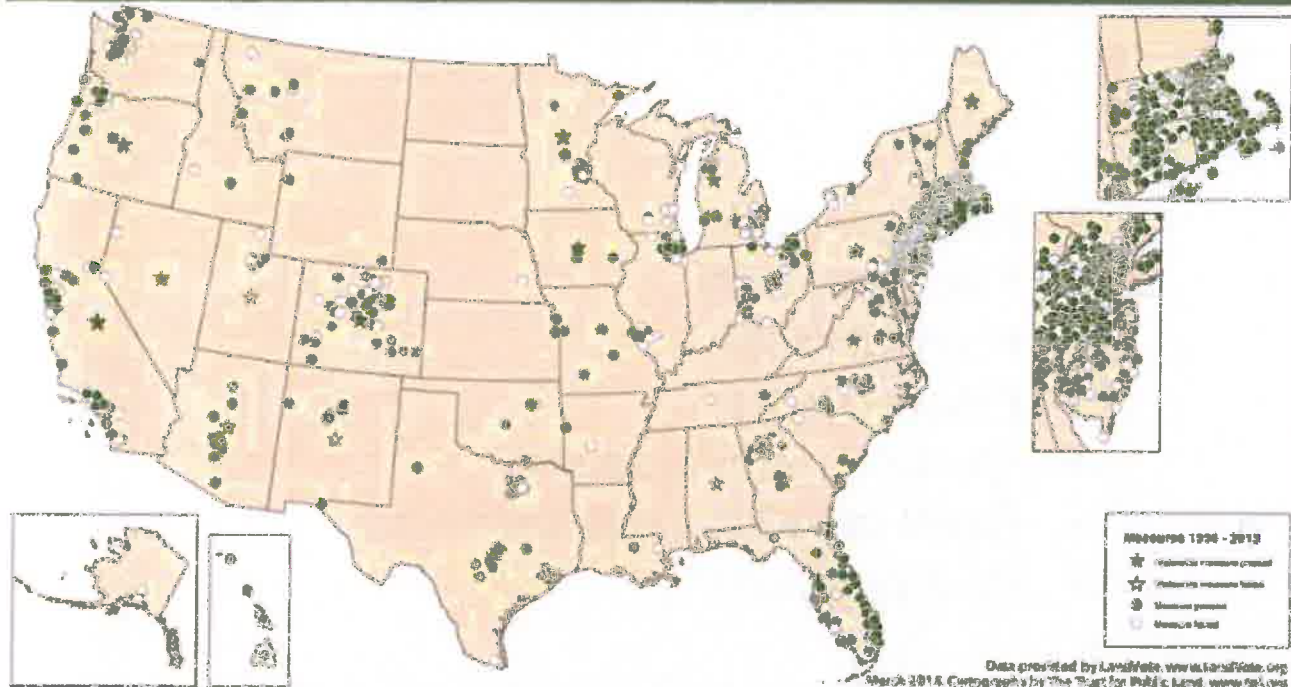
TPL Track Record

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478 ballot measure wins
81% approval rate
\$48 billion voter approved

THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND - LANDVOTE

STATE, COUNTY, MUNICIPAL, AND SPECIAL DISTRICT MEASURES 1998 - 2013



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LAND FOR PEOPLE



TPL Process

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Feasibility Research

Public Opinion Survey

Program Recommendations

Ballot Language

Campaign

Research Includes

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- Finance options
- Fiscal capacity
- Political profile
- Election history
- Election requirements
- Ballot language requirements
- Best practices

Gainesville/Alachua County Research

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CONSERVING LAND FOR PEOPLE

Publicly Funded: Research studies for Gainesville and Alachua County assessing financing mechanism (bond, property tax, sales tax), election history, ballot requirements and so on.

City Contract: Focus on March 2016 to fund the highest priorities of the Vision 2020 Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan. Looked primarily at property tax or bond levied in the city only.

County Contract: Focus on November 2016 to fund continuation of Alachua County Forever. Looked at property tax, bond or sales tax, but sales tax was of greatest interest.

Intent is not for both to go forward, but one or the other, if the decision-makers wish to proceed.

Options, Success Rates

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| Local Conservation Finance Measures in Florida, 1990-2014 | | | |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Mechanism Type | Total Measures | Measures Passed | Percent Passed |
| Bond | 65 | 59 | 91% |
| Property Tax | 13 | 10 | 77% |
| Sales Tax | 21 | 12 | 57% |
| Other | 2 | 2 | 100% |
| Total | 101 | 83 | 82% |

Source: The Trust for Public Land, LandVote database

Fiscal Impact Analysis

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| Estimated Revenue and Costs of Property Tax Increase City of Gainesville | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Mill Levy Increase | Estimated Annual Revenue* | Cost/Year/\$100,000 of taxable property value | Cost/Year/Average single family home** |
| 0.05 | \$282,707 | \$5 | \$4 |
| 0.1 | \$565,414 | \$10 | \$7 |
| 0.25 | \$1,413,534 | \$25 | \$18 |
| 0.5 | \$2,827,068 | \$50 | \$36 |
| 0.75 | \$4,240,603 | \$75 | \$53 |

*Based on 2014 total taxable value = \$5,654,136,790
 **Based on estimated single family home average taxable value for 2014 = \$71,001
 Sources: Alachua County Property Appraiser, 2014 County Tax Roll Data

Fiscal Impact Analysis

THE TRUST for PUBLIC LAND
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Estimated City of Gainesville Bond Financing Costs

| Bond Issue | Annual Debt Service* | Property Tax Mill Increase | Cost/Year/\$100,000 of taxable property value | Cost/Year/Average single family home** |
|--------------|----------------------|----------------------------|---|--|
| \$10,000,000 | \$735,818 | 0.130 | \$13 | \$9 |
| \$20,000,000 | \$1,471,635 | 0.260 | \$26 | \$18 |
| \$30,000,000 | \$2,207,453 | 0.390 | \$39 | \$28 |
| \$50,000,000 | \$3,679,088 | 0.651 | \$65 | \$46 |
| \$80,000,000 | \$5,886,540 | 1.041 | \$104 | \$74 |

*Assumes 20-year bond at 4.0% interest rate; 2014 Total Assessed Valuation = \$5,654,136,790

**Based on estimated single family home average taxable value for 2014 = \$71,001

Sources: Alachua County Property Appraiser, 2014 County Tax Roll Data; Alachua County Property Tax Overview (2014). Florida Department of Revenue

Fiscal Impact Analysis

THE TRUST for PUBLIC LAND
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Estimated Revenue and Cost of Infrastructure Sales Tax

| Sales Tax | Estimated Annual Revenue* | Household Spending on Taxable Goods | Annual Cost/Household |
|-----------|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1.0% | \$29,895,995 | \$11,739 | \$118 |
| 0.5% | \$14,947,997 | \$11,739 | \$59 |
| Sales Tax | Estimated Annual Revenue* | Total Revenue Attributed to Resident Spending*** | % Revenue Generated by Residents**** |
| 1.0% | \$29,895,995 | \$11,274,490 | 37.7% |
| 0.5% | \$14,947,997 | \$5,637,245 | 37.7% |

*Estimates from the Florida Department of Revenue, Office of Tax Research

**Estimate assumes 25% of median household income spent on taxable items. This uses \$46,956 (statewide average), rather than \$42,149 reported by the Census, including students households

***Average household spending multiplied by number of households in county (96,043)

****Remainder is attributed to visitors and business expenditures.

Source: Census QuickFacts <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/12/12001.html>

| Discretionary Sales Surtax Formula and Revenues, 2015 Default and 2008 Negotiated | | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Local Government | 1% Tax Rate – If 2015 Default Formula Were Used | | 1% Tax Rate – If 2008 <u>Interlocal Agreement</u> Percentages Were Used | |
| | Distribution Percentage | Estimated Distribution | Distribution Percentage | Estimated Distribution |
| ALACHUA BOCC | 57.17% | \$17,092,194 | 52.21% | \$15,609,894 |
| Alachua | 2.69% | \$805,118 | 2.75% | \$823,451 |
| Archer | 0.33% | \$97,220 | 0.39% | \$117,279 |
| Gainesville | 35.78% | \$10,697,595 | 40.26% | \$12,035,420 |
| Hawthorne | 0.40% | \$120,248 | 0.49% | \$146,540 |
| High Springs | 1.58% | \$470,951 | 1.55% | \$495,725 |
| La Crosse | 0.10% | \$31,166 | 0.07% | \$20,467 |
| Micanopy | 0.17% | \$51,943 | 0.22% | \$66,635 |
| Newberry | 1.49% | \$445,672 | 1.57% | \$500,745 |
| Waldo | 0.28% | \$83,888 | 0.27% | \$79,842 |
| Countywide Total | 100.00% | \$29,895,995 | 100.00% | \$29,895,995 |

CITY OF GAINESVILLE, FL



Data from a survey of 300 likely primary election voters in Gainesville, Florida conducted July 15-19, 2015.

Lori Weigel



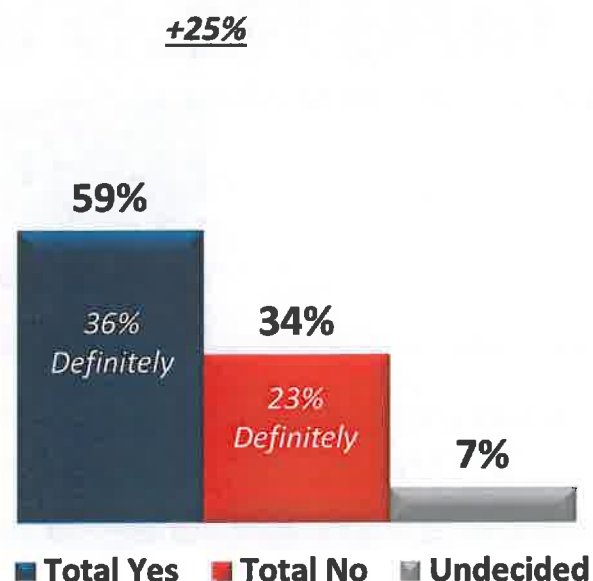
**PUBLIC OPINION
STRATEGIES**

METHODOLOGY

- **Public Opinion Strategies is pleased to present the key findings of a telephone survey conducted in the City of Gainesville, Florida.**
- **The survey was conducted July 15-19, 2015 among 300 likely primary election voters and has a margin of error of $\pm 5.66\%$.**
- **Lori Weigel was the principal researcher on this project. Tom Arnold was the project director and Brian Fraser provided analytical support.**

We tested a close approximation of the potential ballot language. Three-in-five voters indicate support.

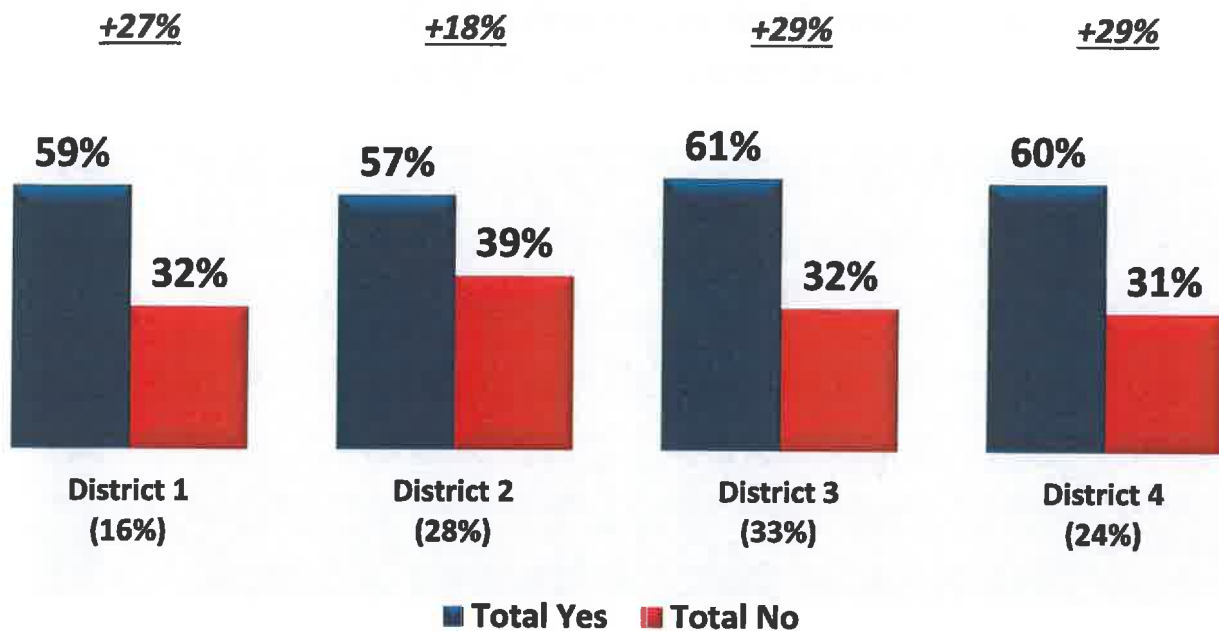
Shall the City of Gainesville establish a trust fund to be used to renovate, improve, acquire, develop, operate, maintain and promote public parks, trails, recreational, cultural and natural areas, facilities, and programs by increasing ad valorem taxes at a rate of one-half mill, that is fifty cents per one thousand dollars of property value, with citizen oversight and public disclosure of trust fund expenses?



If the election were being held today, would you vote Yes in favor of or No against the following question with the title of... Gainesville Parks, Recreation, And Cultural Affairs Trust Fund?

There is almost no geographic difference in support levels.

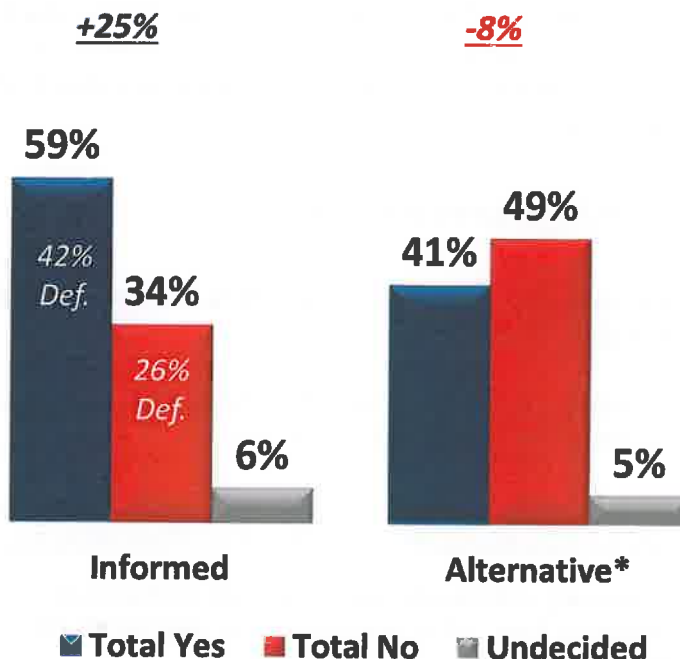
Initial Ballot By Region



At three-quarters of one mill, support is likely much lower.

There's an alternative proposal being considered to provide more funding for parks, trails, recreation centers, fields and other recreational facilities with three-quarters of one mill, which would cost the average homeowner an additional fifty-three dollars in property taxes per year.

If this were the only proposal on the ballot, would you vote Yes in favor or no against this proposal?



* Asked Only of Yes Respondents on Informal Ballot (N=186)

POTENTIAL PROJECTS

In order to determine where voters' priorities lie, we asked respondents the importance of funding 19 potential types of projects/programs:

"I am going to read you a list of projects that could be funded if voters approve this measure. As I read each one, please tell me how important it is to you that each project be funded. Is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important to you?"

Kids, quality of life and access for all are strong themes.

| <i>Top-Tier Projects Ranked By Extremely Important</i> | % Extremely Important | % Extremely/ Very Important |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Allowing more children opportunities for recreation in the outdoors. | 33% | 72% |
| Maintaining quality of life in the city. | 32% | 71% |
| Ensuring more parks have areas where people with disabilities can also enjoy access. | 29% | 66% |
| Increasing connections for trails and bikeways throughout the city to make walking and biking safe. | 29% | 55% |
| Maintaining and improving trails, such as the Waldo Road Trail, the Gainesville-Hawthorne Trail and the Depot Park Trail. | 29% | 50% |
| Improving and maintaining swimming pools such as at Westside Park, T.B. McPherson Center and the Martin Luther King Jr. Center. | 23% | 61% |

Safety, nature education and specific upgrades are middling.

| <i>Middle-Tier Projects Ranked By Extremely Important</i> | % Extremely Important | % Extremely/ Very Important |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Providing safety improvements at trails and parks. | 22% | 56% |
| Providing nature education opportunities for children. | 22% | 55% |
| Improving and maintaining park facilities, such as those at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center and Westside parks. | 19% | 55% |
| Extending the useful life of recreation centers by repairing and upgrading them. | 19% | 51% |
| Increasing energy efficiency by upgrading outdoor lights in parks and ball fields, and interior lights at recreation centers and other facilities. | 18% | 51% |

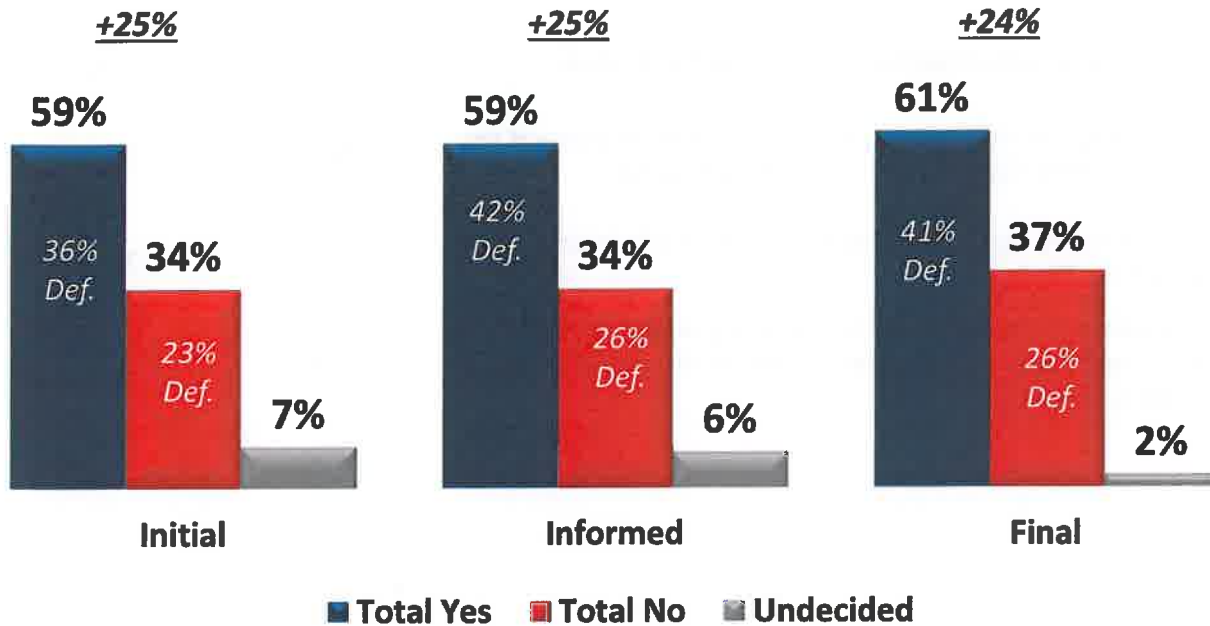
Accountability provisions are very important to incorporate.

| <i>Provisions Ranked By Much More Likely</i> | % Much More Likely | % Total More Likely |
|---|--------------------|---------------------|
| Full public disclosure of all expenditures will be required. | 53% | 75% |
| Decisions about how funds are spent will be based on recommendations made by the citizens advisory committees who studied cultural, parks and recreation needs in our area. | 34% | 68% |
| Conduct an annual independent audit and make it available to the public. | 32% | 69% |
| A sunset or automatic expiration of the tax in 15 years. | 22% | 55% |

The proposal COULD also include a number of provisions, so for each of the following please tell me if you would be more or less likely to vote Yes in support of the measure if it included a provision for...

The measure essentially retains the same level of overall support throughout.

Ballot Movement



Alachua County Ballot Measure

*Key Findings from a Survey of
300 Registered Voters*

Conducted August 28-31, 2015

METHODOLOGY

- 300 telephone interviews with registered voters likely to participate in November 2016 throughout Alachua County.
- Statistically valid sample with an overall margin of sampling error of $\pm 5.66\%$ at the 95% confidence interval for the total sample.
- Interviews conducted August 28-31, 2015.
- Interviews were conducted on both land line and cell phone. Quotas were set for demographic variables including area of the county, gender and age.

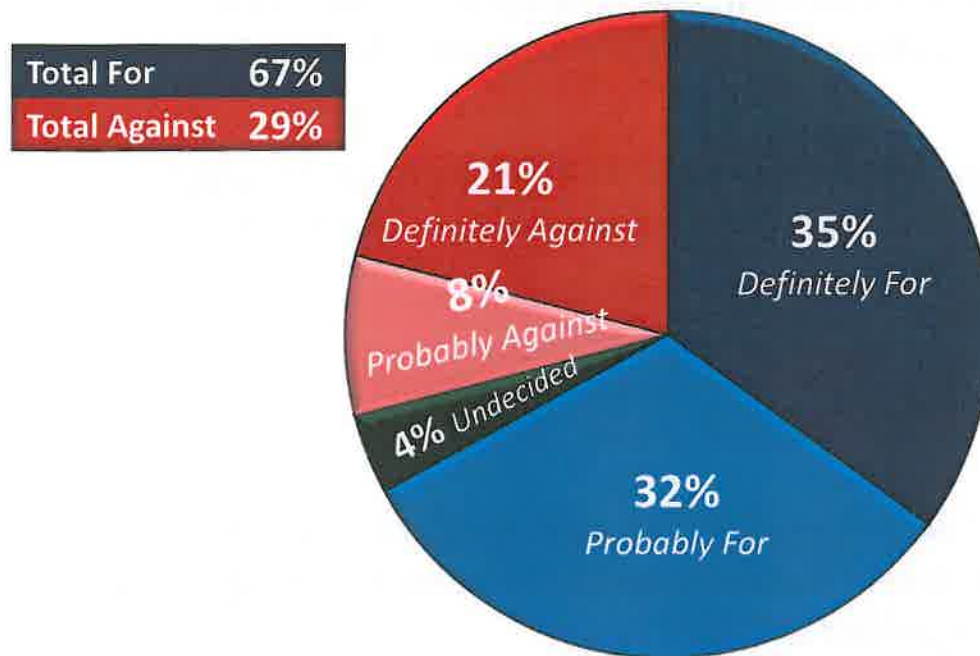
WHAT WE ASKED

Voters were also asked to react to the proposed “Wild Spaces Only” ballot language, with half hearing this language first and half hearing it after the alternative (more comprehensive) proposal:

“Shall Alachua County be authorized to extend the Alachua County Forever Program to acquire and improve environmentally sensitive lands to protect drinking water sources, water quality, and wildlife habitat, and to create, improve, and maintain park and recreational facilities in all cities and the County, with citizen oversight and independent audit, by the levy of a one-half percent sales tax for ten years starting January 1, 2017?”

If the election were being held today, would you vote for or against the following question with the title of... Renewing Wild Spaces & Public Places Environmental Lands, Parks, and Recreation One-Half Percent Sales Tax . The measure reads as follows...

Two-thirds of Alachua county residents surveyed indicate support for this potential half cent sales tax.



"Wild Spaces Only" Ballot

WHAT WE ASKED

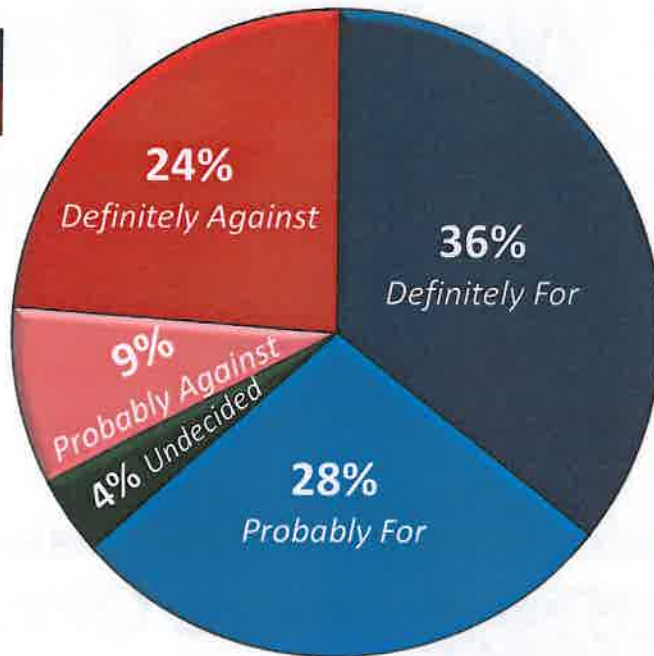
Voters were asked to react to ballot language for a proposed comprehensive measure we are referring to as "Wild Spaces and Roads Measure:"

"Shall Alachua County be authorized to extend Alachua County Forever to acquire and improve natural lands to protect drinking water sources, water quality and wildlife habitat and to create, improve and maintain parks, recreational facilities including early childhood centers, transportation and road maintenance projects in all cities and the County, with citizen oversight and public audits, shall Alachua County be authorized to levy a one half percent sales tax for ten years starting January 1, 2017?"

If the election were being held today, would you vote for or against the following question with the title of... Natural Lands, Recreation, Children's Centers, Transportation and Road Maintenance One Half Percent Sales Tax

Nearly two-thirds support the measure covering not just Wild Spaces but roads and childhood centers.

Total For **64%**
Total Against **33%**

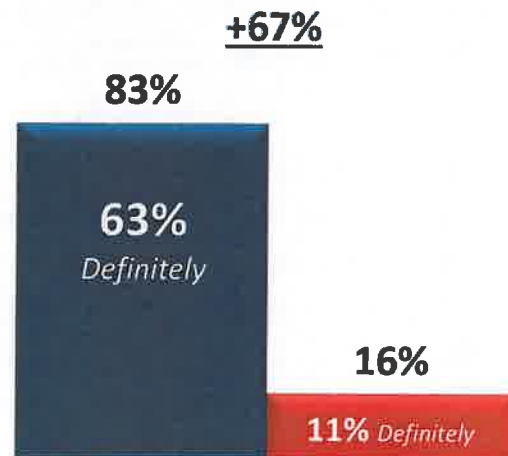


"Wild Spaces and Roads" Ballot

Four-in-five voters would support a one mil tax increase for the schools if provided for these purposes.

School District Funding Ballot

Shall the Alachua County School District's existing one mil tax be renewed for four years to fund school nurses, elementary music and art programs, kindergarten through twelfth grade school library and guidance programs, middle and high school bands and chorus programs, academic, career technical magnet programs and to update classroom technology; with oversight by an independent citizens' committee?



■ Total For ■ Total Against

There may also be a different proposal on the ballot, so let me get your quick reaction to that one as well. The title is ... Renewal of the existing one mil ad valorem tax for school district operating expenses. The measure will read:

Lori Weigel, Partner

Email: Lori@pos.org

Phone: 303-433-4424



**PUBLIC OPINION
STRATEGIES**

Recommendations

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While the city could likely pass a 0.5 mill property tax on the March ballot, chances of success are likely greater on the November 2016 ballot.

The Trust for Public Land recommends that if the County does not move forward with a sales tax option in November and the City wishes to pursue its own funding source, a November 2016 property tax measure would be the option most likely to succeed. A funding source of 0.5 mill appears viable based on available information.

Reminder of Next Steps

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Feasibility Research

Public Opinion Survey

Program Recommendations

Ballot Language

Campaign

Questions?

THE TRUST for PUBLIC LAND
CONSERVING LAND FOR PEOPLE

Will Abberger, Director, Conservation Finance
850-222-7911 Extension 23
Tallahassee, Florida
Will.Abberger@tpl.org

Pegeen Hanrahan, P.E., Consultant to the
Trust for Public Land, 2005- Present
352-377-7960
Gainesville, Florida
PegeenHanrahan@aol.com

Strategic Initiative 6.3: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Master Plan Action History

150378

| Date | Governing Body | Action |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| 11/12/2012 | City Commission | Commission approved the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Master Plan and directed staff to return to the Commission at a later date with funding option scenarios. |
| 7/13/2013, 9/23/2013 | Recreation, Cultural Affairs & Public Works Committee (RCAPW) | Various funding options were presented. Two options were discussed in-depth: a) a dedicated millage increase and b) a county-wide sales tax similar to Wild Spaces Public Places. Commissioners agreed to have discussions with the area municipal elected officials and county commissioners to determine interest in pursuing a county-wide sales tax. |
| 11/25/2013 | RCAPW | Staff presented an economic analysis of the Wild Spaces Public Places initiative on local businesses that were contracted to provide services for design and construction projects. An analysis of Wild Spaces Public Places project expenditures that remained in the city, Alachua County, the region, and the State and outside of Florida was completed. Staff was directed to return to the Committee in January to receive direction on funding options. |
| 1/27/2014 | RCAPW | Staff was directed to return at a later date to have further discussion on the funding options and to prepare a detailed list of projects to be funded by priority. In addition, staff was directed to recommend a policy and procedure for updating the Plan as well as adding projects to the Master Plan. This presentation was originally scheduled for September, October and November but due to other issues, was postponed until January, 2015. |
| 1/8/2015 | RCAPW | The Committee voted to recommend to the full City Commission to place a funding initiative on the ballot in March 2016, to fund a portion of the Master Plan projects. The recommendation was for ½ mill to be collected for six years, generating approximately \$14,000,000 to \$15,000,000. In addition, staff was directed to revise the Prioritized List of Master Plan Projects which reflect the above amount and return to the February meeting to present the revised list. |
| 2/12/2015 | RCAPW | The Committee voted to request the Mayor to send a letter to the Trust for Public Land (TPL) Regional Office located in Tallahassee, Florida, requesting Technical Advice and Assistance with the Commission's Strategic Initiative 6.3 to develop a program to fund the implementation of the Master Plan. TPL provides professional technical services to state and local government executives, boards and public agencies that need to research and evaluate recreation and conservation options. |

Strategic Initiative 6.3: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Master Plan Action History

| Date | Governing Body | Action |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 2/19/2015 | City Commission | The Commission approved a request for the Mayor to send a letter to TPL's Regional Office as recommended by the Recreation, Cultural Affairs and Public Works Committee. In response to the Mayor's letter, TPL has provided a proposal for technical advice and assistance to support the City's efforts. |
| 3/12/2015 | RCAPW | The Committee voted to request that the TPL proposal be brought to the City Commission on March 19, 2015 for acceptance of the proposal and to direct the City Manager to proceed. |
| 3/19/2015 | City Commission | 03-12-2015 RCAPW recommendation was approved. |
| 5/14/2015 | RCAPW | Findings of the feasibility study were presented to the Committee by TPL. The analysis indicated several options for the City that include increasing and dedicating a portion of the ad valorem tax, or issuing general obligation bonds or funding through a county sales surtax that had a portion designated to parks, recreation and cultural affairs. The research indicates that the March 2016 election would be an appropriate election if the City were to decide to place an ad valorem tax increase or general obligation bond on the ballot; or November 2016 would be appropriate for a sale tax issue. |
| 6/8/2015 | Meeting with C/Goston | To provide an overview of the Master Plan Feasibility Study Report |
| 6/9/2015 | Meeting with C/Carter | To provide an overview of the Master Plan Feasibility Study Report |
| 6/9/2015 | Meeting with C/Chase | To provide an overview of the Master Plan Feasibility Study Report. |
| 6/9/2015 | Meeting with C/Budd | To provide an overview of the Master Plan Feasibility Study Report |
| 6/9/2015 | Meeting with C/Wells | To provide an overview of the Master Plan Feasibility Study Report |
| 6/11/2015 | Meeting with C/Warren | To provide an overview of the Master Plan Feasibility Study Report |
| 6/11/2015 | Meeting with Mayor Braddy | To provide an overview of the Master Plan Feasibility Study Report |
| 8/10/2015 | City & County Commissions | Staff presented an overview of the Master Plan at the Joint City/County Commission meeting. To further research, deliberate and make recommendations on the feasibility of a sales tax focused on funding parks, recreation, culture and conservation land acquisition, both commissions voted to establish a Joint Task Force consisting of two commissioners from each body and one representative from the League of Cities. |
| 8/13/2015 | RCAPW | The findings of City poll were presented and discussed and the Committee recommended that the findings be presented and discussed at the September 17th City Commission meeting. |
| 9/15/2015 | Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) | TPL presented the findings to the County Commissioners during their informal meeting. |

Strategic Initiative 6.3: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Master Plan Action History

| Date | Governing Body | Action |
|------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 9/16/2015 | Master Plan Funding Joint Task Force | The task force confirmed its mission: to recommend a funding mechanism to fund the City Master Plan and County Land Acquisition Plan. TPL shared the county results as the City Commissioners had not heard those yet. There was unanimous support for a ½ cent sales tax to be placed on the November 2016 ballot for 10 years for parks, recreation, cultural affairs and land acquisition, as well as for asking the municipalities to weigh-in on this by mid-November. |
| 9/17/2015 | City Commission | City and County poll results were presented by TPL. Several Commissioners requested additional information from staff regarding the Master Plan. |
| 9/22/2015 | City Commission | Mayor Braddy received letter from BoCC Chair requesting the City's position by October 30, 2015 on proposed referendum ballot language regarding funding for land conservation and recreational improvements |
| 10/15/2015 | City Commission | Agenda item #150378 stated for discussion: Proposed referendum ballot language regarding funding for land conservation and recreational improvements |