

CITY OF GAINESVILLE



2013 City of Gainesville State Legislative Agenda

Gainesville, Florida City Commission

- Mayor Craig Lowe (At Large)
- Mayor Pro Tem/Commissioner Lauren Poe (At Large)
- Commissioner Yvonne Hinson-Rawls (District 1)
- Commissioner Todd Chase (District 2)
- Commissioner Susan Bottcher (District 3)
- Commissioner Randy Wells (District 4)
- Commissioner Thomas Hawkins (At Large)

Russ Blackburn, City Manager
Bob Hunzinger, GRU General Manager



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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.

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: stormwater 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.

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.

Local Government Pension Plans

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.” **The City of Gainesville supports local authority to bargain changes to pension benefits under Statues 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.**

Local Government Revenues

The City of Gainesville is benefited by being the host community for the University of Florida as well as many state and federal agencies. These industries bring a multitude of workers and visitors to Gainesville as well as a robust student population. However, Gainesville is unique when compared to other communities in Florida because while the city is fortunate to have these public institutions, Gainesville does not receive ad valorem revenue from these industries. In fact, more than 50% of the property value within the city-limits of Gainesville is exempt from the tax roll. The City of Gainesville supports actions by the Florida Legislature that assists the city to

overcome the financial situation created by the abundance of tax exempt property.

Grant Programs

The City of Gainesville utilizes many State of Florida grant programs. These programs often allow the city the ability to leverage local dollars along with grant funding to make meaningful and beneficial improvements to the community. This includes but is not limited to public infrastructure such as roads, sidewalks, and water / wastewater projects; public transportation projects; park and recreation enhancements; adult and youth programs; crime prevention and enforcement; affordable housing and neighborhood improvement; and environmental / resource conservation programs. **The city generally supports the preservation and enhancement of current programs as well as new opportunities to address the needs of the community that can be addressed through grant partnerships with the State of Florida. The Florida Forever program is a priority grant program for the City of Gainesville and the city supports it being funded at a sustainable level.**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Central City Development

The central city core of Gainesville is experiencing economic growth due in large part to the redevelopment efforts of the City of Gainesville and its partners as well as interest from private developers. This area, including downtown and east Gainesville, has seen significant development and infrastructure improvement which has impacted the economic potential for the central city. The City of Gainesville and its partners such as the University of Florida, Alachua County, the State of Florida and others have worked together to create an atmosphere of economic opportunity and sustainable growth with a goal of revitalizing this part of our community. Gainesville has a unique opportunity to leapfrog ahead and create a new model of community economic development; the community has mobilized with unified goals of establishing a model of community collaboration and innovation and to further enhance its effectiveness as a crucible for developing high-tech companies. Establishing true public/private partnerships and further leveraging research funding and faculty expertise coming into the university of will catalyze growth and spur the creation of creative class jobs.

Current and planned projects include: Depot Park which includes the remediation of a contaminated site; the Southeast Gainesville Renaissance Initiative (SEGRI); Innovation Square and the Power District; historic preservation; mixed use development; economic development; and infrastructure improvements such as streets, sidewalks, street and pedestrian lighting, and utility improvements. **The City of Gainesville would like the support of the Alachua County delegation for these redevelopment efforts. Initiatives that are at the forefront which are essential for the successful revitalization of the central city and the overall economic prosperity of the city are Innovation Square, premium transit services and job training and education.**

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 start up 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. This includes utility projects and transit service improvements.

Southwest 6th Street Improvements

Southwest 6th Street is a vital component of the revitalization plans for the urban core area and the Innovation District. The corridor is located at the eastern boundary of the Innovation District between the University of Florida Campus and the Gainesville Downtown, and extends for approximately one mile from SR 226/Southwest 16th Avenue to SR 26/West University Avenue. The project incorporates sustainable elements that will increase community livability and improve the transportation system; it includes the reconstruction of deficient portions of the corridor enhancing system capacity and safety, and also incorporates complete streets elements to create a dynamic multimodal environment. In addition, the project includes landscaped medians, on-street bicycle lanes, on-street parking, bulb-outs at intersections to improve pedestrian safety, turn lanes, a roundabout at the intersection of Southwest Fourth Ave, and the installation of low impact design elements such as bioswales and rain gardens. **The total estimated cost of the project is \$6,000,000. The project is currently partially funded, with \$1,500,000 allocated in the city's CIP.**

Premium Transit Services

A significant component to the economic success of downtown Gainesville and the surrounding central city is quality and reliable public transit service. Premium transit service typically means a high quality transit, either rail or bus, that reduces transit travel times, enhances regional connectivity, and provides improved vehicle and transit amenities to attract new customers. Quality transit service is a key component to support the planned high density and mixed use development within the central city. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and street car service are two projects that are envisioned to improve Gainesville's transit system and enhance the economic development of the central city core.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Service – BRT is an enhanced bus system that operates on designated travel lanes or other running ways that allows BRT to operate at faster speeds, provide greater service reliability and increase customer convenience. These attributes combined with its use of advanced technologies and operational enhancements such as alternative fare collection methods and Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) create a system with a strong positive image and identity. The City of Gainesville, Alachua County and Metropolitan Transit Planning Organization locally adopted transportation plans all support the implementation of BRT service as soon as 2015. The initial BRT implementation would likely connect a regional shopping mall, the University of Florida main campus, downtown Gainesville, and then terminate at the regional airport. **The funding needs for this project are estimated at \$38 million for infrastructure improvements and over \$3.6 million in annual operating expenses.**

Streetcar Service – Gainesville's streetcar project is envisioned as a key component to stimulating downtown redevelopment, enhancing community livability and promoting infill development. The streetcar would operate on existing streets in existing travel lanes. **Early cost estimates indicate that this project could cost \$128 million for infrastructure and approximately \$2 million to operate annually.** The streetcar is currently in the early planning phase.

Job Training and Education

The City of Gainesville recognizes the importance of a diverse workforce that possesses a variety of talents to attract businesses and spur economic development. For the city to reach its economic development goals and for projects such as Innovation Square and central city redevelopment to be successful it is essential that our citizens have opportunities to receive job training and education. **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.**

Concurrency

The City of Gainesville supports an amendment to Section 163.3180 (6) (5), Florida Statutes, to remove the 80% requirement for local government participation to do school concurrency. Removal of this requirement would allow the City of Gainesville's decision on whether or not to do school concurrency to have no effect on other local governments within Alachua County who wish to do school concurrency. This amendment will benefit other local governments statewide that have large concentrations of population within one or a few municipalities. **Additionally, the city supports an amendment to Section 163.3180 (5) (f), Florida Statutes, to change the statutory language to provide local governments alternatives to transportation concurrency instead of the current language that now states the alternatives "complement" the application of transportation concurrency.** For the City of Gainesville, this would be an extremely positive step towards establishing the city's new Transportation Mobility Program in the Comprehensive Plan.

Advertising Requirements

The City of Gainesville seeks legislative clarification of the requirement of newspaper advertisement of large-scale comprehensive plan amendments included in Chapter 166, Florida Statutes. Current language applies specifically to rezonings and not large-scale comprehensive plan amendments. However, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) has continued to interpret that local governments must advertise large-scale comprehensive plan amendments in the newspaper. Because of the interpretation of the advertising requirement by DEO, the city has continued to advertise large-scale comprehensive plan amendments in the large format which is costly to the City of Gainesville and other local governments.

Internet Gaming Establishments

The City of Gainesville supports efforts by the State of Florida to increase enforcement and strengthen regulation of establishments offering sweepstakes or games of chance.

Establishments offering sweepstakes or games of chance, often associated with internet based games, are regulated by State of Florida Statute. These establishments are quickly being opened throughout the Gainesville community and other communities statewide. While many of these establishments are operating within the provisions in State Statute, many may be offering a product that is not allowable in current regulation. The City of Gainesville will regulate sweepstake and game of chance establishments to the extent of our ability and request adequate support in the form of increased enforcement and enhanced regulation from the State of Florida to aid in this endeavor.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

The City of Gainesville will seek funding through the State of Florida during 2013 for the following projects. Funding will be sought through state agencies, grant programs and other available funding sources.

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 100% of the renewable, waste-wood fueled output from the Gainesville Renewable Energy Center's biomass plant, a privately held company. This will amount to 100 MW of clean, local, renewable energy for GRU customers.

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.

Paynes Prairie Sheetflow Restoration

The City of Gainesville is seeking \$2 million in funding for a water quality/surface water resource protection project. A funding request for this project is also included in the St. Johns River Water Management District Orange Creek Basin, State Funding Initiative. The requested funding will be used as cost-share funding for construction. Restoring sheetflow will result in the restoration of 1,300 acres of Paynes Prairie wetlands and improvements to water quality. As part of this project, the city will also complete improvements to the Main Street Water Reclamation Facility (MSWRF). The project will satisfy the City of Gainesville's obligation to reduce nutrient loading to Alachua Sink, where a total maximum daily load (TMDL) has been established by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. This amount sought is 7% of the \$28 million total project cost.

Little Hatchet/Lake Forest Creek Watershed Management Plans

Both Little Hatchet Creek and Lake Forest Creek contribute surface water to Newnans Lake which is a hypereutrophic lake due to high concentrations of nitrogen and phosphorous. Newnans Lake is also classified as an impaired water body by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). The FDEP (per the adopted 2007 Orange Creek Basin Management Action Plan) has stated that a 74% reduction in total nitrogen and a 59% reduction in phosphorous is required for the lake to not be impaired. The FDEP has also classified Little Hatchet Creek as being impaired for high levels of fecal coliform. Approximately 22% of the nitrogen loading and 28% of the phosphorous loading into Newnans Lake comes from Little Hatchet Creek and Lake Forest Creek.

In order to begin reducing nutrient loading to Newnans Lake and meet the pollution load reduction goals set by the FDEP, the city needs to develop watershed management plans to identify and prioritize water quality improvement projects. This project is going to be included in

the St. Johns River Water Management District Orange Creek Basin, Surface Water Improvement and Management Plan and is a priority for the Orange Creek Basin Working Group. The City of Gainesville is seeking \$200,000 which is 40% of the \$500,000 estimated total cost of developing the updated watershed management plans. Funding will be sought from appropriate State of Florida agencies and grant programs.

Tumblin Regional Wetland

The City of Gainesville completed a watershed management plan (WMP) for Tumblin Creek. This creek discharges into Bivens Arm which is classified as an impaired water body by the FDEP. Bivens Arm has low levels of dissolved oxygen, high levels of nitrogen and phosphorous and high turbidity. A significant amount of the contributing runoff into Bivens Arm is from Tumblin Creek.

The City of Gainesville has identified (through the recently completed WMP for this watershed) a number of projects that can help in improving the water quality in Tumblin Creek and Bivens Arm. One of the projects identified in the WMP is a regional wetland treatment project which includes the following:

1. Addition of a trash trap in Tumblin Creek before it discharges into Bivens Arm
2. Re-hydration of wetlands adjacent to Tumblin Creek's outlet into Bivens Arm to treat runoff before discharge into Bivens Arm
3. Creating of a wetland channel in Tumblin Creek before discharge into Bivens Arm
4. Creating a sheet pile weir system to hold back more runoff in the wetlands adjacent to Bivens Arm before being discharged into Bivens Arm

This project will reduce the biological oxygen demand by 51%, the total suspended solids by 66%, the total nitrogen by 15% and the total phosphorous by 14%. In order to improve the water quality in the Tumblin Creek watershed, Bivens Arm and meet the pollutant reduction goals set by the FDEP, the city needs to construct this regional wetland. The cost of all phases of this regional wetland is \$908,500. The city will seek \$908,500 from sources including State of Florida agencies and grant programs.

This work ties directly into the potential storm water management systems envisioned for Innovation Square as well. On-site treatment is proposed at Innovation Square, before the untreated water reaches the mouth of Tumblin Creek. Through this process, much of the untreated current runoff will be managed in such a way that it supports the revitalization of the watershed and puts better water into the system.

Flooding and Conveyance in Tumblin Creek

The City of Gainesville has completed a watershed management plan (WMP) for Tumblin Creek and has identified areas with severe conveyance deficiencies. These deficiencies have resulted in flooding due to undersized conveyance structures. The WMP identified three major areas of concern and below are these areas listed in priority and their associated costs for improvement:

1. The Innovation Square site: \$820,000
2. The NW 6th Street and University Avenue area: \$250,000
3. NW 14th Street from University Avenue to NW 5th Avenue: \$350,000

To prevent flooding in these areas and provide the residents in these areas safe access during severe storm events, the city needs to improve the stormwater conveyance system in these flooding areas. The city is seeking funding from State of Florida agencies and grant programs for all three conveyance upgrades in the priority set above.

This work also ties directly to the storm management systems envisioned at Innovation Square. The project is conceived of as providing both on-site capacity management, as well as district-wide capacity management for storm water. In addition, the square can act as a gateway into the larger Tumblin Creek system, providing capacity at that point for all upstream runoff. This work will support the overall goal of the district as a model for stormwater management.