



City of Gainesville

2006 State Legislative Statement

November 28, 2005

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City of Gainesville 2006 Legislative Statement

Project Funding Requests

Position

The City requests funding assistance from the State of Florida for the following projects that have either a statewide or an area wide impact.

1. Regional Traffic Management Project - The City requests \$ 16 Million in funding for a Regional Traffic Management System. The Traffic Managements System will have a Regional Impact on the entire Alachua County, including the I-75 Corridor.

This project has been selected by the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization (MTPO) as the number 1 transportation need for the Gainesville Urban Area. It will enhance transportation in the Gainesville Urban Area by:

- Enhancing emergency services by providing for better response times.
- Enhancing mass transit by improving headways.
- Providing for incident management, including but not limited to traffic crashes and vehicle breakdowns, and for special event management.
- Providing motorists with real time information on traffic conditions so they can select alternate routes to their destinations.
- Reducing traffic congestion and vehicular delay, which will reduce fuel consumption and vehicle emissions.

The project will have a regional multi-agency benefit. Regional and local agencies to benefit from this project include the City of Gainesville Public Works Department; Alachua County Public Works Department; Gainesville Fire Rescue Department; Alachua County Fire Rescue Department; Alachua County Department of Emergency Management; Gainesville Police Department; Alachua County Sheriff's Office; Regional Transit System, North Central Florida Regional Planning Council and the University of Florida.

Contact: Teresa Scott, Public Works Director

2. Water Project Requests - The City supports the following regional water projects, and requests funding assistance where appropriate for itself and for its partner agencies:

Sweetwater Branch/Paynes Prairie Pollutant Treatment Wetland Project. (Estimated cost - \$2 Million) The project consist of a 50-acre treatment wetland to remove pollutants from Sweetwater Branch before it flows into Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park and down Alachua Sink into the Floridian Aquifer. The project is included in the City's Watershed Management Plan for Sweetwater Branch and is one of a series of projects designed to address the Alachua Sink nutrient TMDL. The Paynes Prairie Treatment Wetland is also the top priority capital project listed in the SJRWMD Orange Creek Basin 2004 Legislative Initiative.

Watershed Management Project for Sweetwater Branch and its Tributaries. (Estimated cost - \$1.808 Million) This project is a revision of the Watershed Management Plan for Sweetwater Branch and its tributaries so as to include capital projects that will address the nutrient TMDL for Alachua Sink. Results of updated hydrologic and hydraulic modeling using a digital terrain model are being incorporated into the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map for Alachua County. Five top ranking projects were selected to be implemented. These include three sub-regional stormwater treatment ponds, an in-stream trash trap, and a series of grade control structures designed to control excessive erosion and sedimentation.

Duval Stormwater Park Project. (Estimated cost - \$1.2 Million) This water quality improvement project targets a 26 acre site located within the City of Gainesville's Front Porch Community and will be included in the Basin Management Action Plan for Newnans Lake, a nutrient impaired TMDL water body. The park will also facilitate neighborhood revitalization projects. The City is currently working on improving infrastructure and purchasing vacant lots within an adjacent 6 block subdivision. Water quality credits from the park will be applied to roadway improvements. The park will also provide recreational and educational opportunities. A paved fitness trail will meander through the nature/stormwater park. The City of Gainesville's Nature Operations Division is seeking funding for playground equipment, a small education facility and a maintenance residence. The education facility would be used for environmental, nutrition and fitness education programs.

Hogtown Creek Restoration Plan. (Estimated cost - \$3.6 Million) The Hogtown Creek watershed is a highly urbanized watershed that was developed before stormwater regulations were promulgated and implemented in the State. Stream flow within this urbanized watershed rises and falls rapidly in response to rainfall. The altered creek flow has resulting in erosion of the sandy stream bed in the upper reaches of the stream system. The sand is then washed downstream and deposited in the lower reaches. This excessive erosion is a significant threat to infrastructure, including pipe

line systems, roadways and buildings adjacent to the streams. The vast quantity of eroded sediment that is deposited in the floodplains of the lower stream reaches, exacerbates flooding and destroys aquatic and riparian habitat.

Tumblin Creek Wetland Restoration Project. (Estimated cost - \$1.37 Million) Tumblin Creek is impaired for fecal coliforms, and it is anticipated that Bevins Arm Lake will be listed for nutrients during the next TMDL cycle. The project will include stream stabilization in the upper reaches, installation of an in-stream trash trap and restoration of historic flow patterns to the 30-acre wetland. A Wetland Impact Assessment has been completed and the development of a Watershed Management Plan for Tumblin Creek is underway and expected to be completed by December. The Watershed Management Plan will include conceptual designs of all the elements of the Tumblin Creek Wetland Restoration Project. The City has also purchased land where the trash trap will be built and has had conceptual plan discussions with the University of Florida officials regarding their participation and ownership most of the 30 acre wetland area. The City has invested \$344,000.00 in this project to date.

Contacts: Russ Blackburn, City Manager or Teresa Scott, Public Works Director

3. Regional Juvenile Crime Prevention Initiative - The City of Gainesville requests \$150,000 of funding assistance from the State of Florida to assist with construction of a new facility to expand the capacity of the Reichert House Program. This Program, in existence for 10 years, is a nationally unique juvenile crime prevention initiative with an 85% non-recidivism rate. It is part of the "*Regional Continuum of Juvenile Crime Prevention Initiative – Programs and Services to High-Risk Youth*", inaugurated in 1996. This initiative has received Special Purpose Grant funds from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, which recognizes it as a nationally unique and promising approach to reducing juvenile delinquency and crime.

The Reichert House Program now serves 80 high-risk African American youth. A combination of Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development CDBG funds and local commitments and contributions provided the additional \$459,000 to complete this phase of the Reichert House facility. The House is still in dire need of a space for mental health counseling for the youth, and staff development.

Contacts: Russ Blackburn, City Manager or Tony Jones, Community Relations Coordinator

4. Regional Groundwater Monitoring Network and Protection of Water Supply - The City requests \$1,500,000 for establishing a Regional Groundwater Monitoring "sentinel" Well Network around the City's wellfield, and for supporting the City's efforts to pursue cleanup of the Cabot/Koppers Superfund site.

The sentinel monitoring well network will provide the ability to detect the presence of any contamination moving toward the wellfield from the Cabot/Koppers site, or other contamination sources years in advance of it reaching the City's water supply wells. This will provide an early warning system so that, if contamination is detected, the City can take necessary actions to prevent it from reaching the City's drinking water supply. The City also requests support in pursuing funding for this project from the FDEP Water Supply Protection Program.

The City is requesting funding to assist in its efforts to pursue USEPA and the parties responsible for cleanup of the Cabot/Koppers Superfund site. These efforts are necessary in order to ensure that appropriate and timely steps are taken to protect the City's water supply, and that the site is cleaned up in an appropriate and timely manner.

Contact: David Richardson, Gainesville Regional Utilities Assistant General Manager for Water or Wastewater

5. Extension of Centralized Potable Water to Low Income Residents - The City of Gainesville requests \$390,000 for connecting low income families to a centralized potable water system. The City is providing matching funding in the amount of approximately \$275,000, as well as in-kind engineering services which will enable extension of potable water infrastructure to homeowners' properties and cover the costs for connection charges. The funding being requested will pay for on-site plumbing costs necessary for homeowners to convert from private wells to centralized water service. The program is a multi-year program. Funding being requested for fiscal year 2006 totals \$390,000. This amount, combined with funding provided by the City of Gainesville under its ConnectFREE program, will enable 390 low income families to be connected to potable water service free of charge.

Contact: David Richardson, Gainesville Regional Utilities Assistant General Manager for Water and Wastewater Systems

City of Gainesville

2006 Legislative Statement

Public Records Exemption for City and County Prosecutors Enforcing Code Violations

Position

The City of Gainesville supports an amendment to §119.07, Fla. Stat., to create a public records exemption for personal identifying information of city and county prosecutors who are responsible for civil and criminal prosecution of local code and ordinance violations, and their spouses and children.

Key Points

1. City and county prosecutors are responsible for enforcing local codes and ordinances in both civil and criminal proceedings.
2. Some of these city and county prosecutors have received threats to their own life, health or safety, or that of a family member.
3. The potential for such threats may increase due to the recent adoption by a number of local governments of codes and ordinances prohibiting sex offenders and/or sexual predators from living in close proximity to schools, parks, playgrounds and other areas frequented by children.
4. Section 119.07, Fla. Stat., already contains public records exemptions for state and federal prosecutors, as well as local government code enforcement officers.
5. Creating a public records exemption for county and municipal prosecutors and their families would protect information of a sensitive personal nature that, if released, would jeopardize the safety of these individuals. However, because only personal identifying information about these individuals and their families would be confidential, the exemption would be no broader than necessary to accomplish this stated purpose.

Contact

Marion J. Radson, City Attorney

City of Gainesville

2006 Legislative Statement

First Responder Funding

Position

The City of Gainesville supports legislative initiatives amending the process by which the State of Florida distributes federal funds intended to benefit local first responders. The Legislature is asked to amend Florida Statutes to allow efficiency in carrying out the intent of Congress involving Department of Homeland Security (DHS) funds directly and expeditiously into the hands of local first responders and agencies.

Counties have Emergency Management (EM) staff and equipment funded, whereas cities do not. State EM grant funds are overwhelmingly allocated to counties with cities competing with each other for a limited share of grant funds. Counties provide only limited disaster services whereas cities provide the bulk of them without similar funding. To address these issues, the City is proposing a more streamlined process for grant review and funding distribution.

Key Points

1. All emergency responders in the City of Gainesville and Alachua County are dispatched through a single operations center. We have demonstrated a commitment to a system with sustainability as a top priority. This coordination centralization is uniquely positioned to take full advantage of technology that can store and retrieve vital information from a central repository and send it to all responders within the county. The ability of first responders to quickly access accurate data is paramount to successful emergency operations.
2. Congress passes legislation and provides funds intended to benefit local first responders. The DHS has been provided large amounts of funds and directed to get them in the hands of local first responders (after deducting a portion of the funds for administration). This is not working in the State of Florida. The convoluted and circuitous paths in the system by which these funds are to reach local first responders in Florida involves huge delays – even a matter of years and multiple layers of agencies (each of which takes a cut for administration), and is subject to tremendous political maneuvering and micromanagement at the state, regional, and county levels – resulting in very little if any

funds actually arriving in the hands of local first responders, and in virtually no input from them as to what they really need to protect the populations they serve.

3. When DHS funds reach the State of Florida, they are allocated to various State-level departments, which are charged with using the funds for the benefit of local first responders. These agencies often delegate the utilization of funds to regional task forces and or to the 67 counties. The process followed by DHS to identify the cities needs are not conveyed. In Florida, DHS may direct funds to regional task forces or counties bypassing the local first responders.
4. The most efficient means of carrying out the intent of Congress to get the funds directly and expeditiously into the hands of local first responders and agencies is best met through direct grant application submitted electronically to DHS followed by the peer review process. The peer review team may include industry experts and peer agencies. Overall, this methodology works effectively for distribution of funds under the FIRE Act Grant, and includes an unbiased evaluation as it minimizes political involvement, uses professionals who have experience in the equipment and programs, and requires industry participation in the selection and award process.

Contacts

William K. Northcutt, Interim Fire Chief
Russ Blackburn, City Manager

City of Gainesville 2006 Legislative Statement

Encourage a Mix of Incomes in Florida Housing Finance Corporation Programs

Position

The City of Gainesville supports efforts to encourage a mix of incomes in housing developments that are assisted by programs that are administered by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation.

Key Points

1. The Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC) administers a variety of housing programs that benefit tenants and homeowners throughout the State.
2. Although many FHFC programs currently allow for a mix of incomes in program beneficiaries, those projects that have a higher percentage of low- and very low-income beneficiaries tend to score higher and are thus awarded funding and/or tax credits by the FHFC.
3. The City supports efforts on the part of the Florida Housing Finance Corporation to change its criteria to promote a greater mix of incomes through the competitive scoring of FHFC project proposals.

Contacts

Russ Blackburn, City Manager

Tom Saunders, Community Development Director

City of Gainesville

2006 Legislative Statement

Amend Regulations Governing Use of Student Fees by Community Colleges

Position

The City of Gainesville supports Santa Fe Community College's request to amend the regulations governing the use of Community College student fees to permit their use in support of transit service.

Key Points

1. The State of Florida Community College system regulations governing the allowable use of student fees currently do not permit their usage for transit services.
2. The City supports Santa Fe Community College's desire that the regulations be amended so that student fees assessed at its campus may be dedicated to transit services.

Contact

Russ Blackburn, City Manager

City of Gainesville

2006 Legislative Statement

Support Continuation and Full Funding of the Campus Trust Fund

Position

The City of Gainesville supports the continuation and full funding of the Campus Trust Fund.

Key Points

1. The Campus Trust Fund (Fund) now provides funds to the City of Gainesville as a host community to offset the impacts of the University of Florida on the City's revenues.
2. The legislation providing for the Fund is scheduled to sunset in July 2007.

Contact

Russ Blackburn, City Manager

City of Gainesville

2006 Legislative Statement

Use of Cameras for Enforcement of Red Light Violations

Position

The City supports legislative initiatives allowing the use of cameras for enforcement of red light violations. The Legislature is asked to amend Florida Statutes to allow enforcement by citation for violations of red lights identified from photographs produced by certified cameras.

Key Points

1. Though unpopular with segments of the public, studies have consistently shown that in those areas where their use has been allowed, such as New York and Maryland, the number of crashes at those intersections have dramatically decreased - in some cases by over 30%.
2. Red light violation cameras as a tool for the prevention of accidents on Florida's roadways would increase the safety of all the traveling public.
3. Current State law allows the use of red light cameras, however limits enforcement to only a warning. A change to the legislation to allow enforcement by citation is desired.
4. Sarasota County, Florida is soliciting all 67 counties and 410 municipalities to join in creating a Green Light for Red Light Enforcement Coalition to demonstrate local governments' strong support the enactment of legislation authorizing the use of red light cameras at signalized intersections. The City of Gainesville supports this initiative.

Contacts

Norm Botsford, Police Chief
Russ Blackburn, City Manager

City of Gainesville

2006 Legislative Statement

Operations of Radios or Other Mechanical Sound-Making Devices or Instruments in Vehicles: Loud Car Stereos “Boom Box Initiative”

Position

The City of Gainesville supports an amendment to Chapter 316.3045 FSS to enhance penalties for repeat loud car stereo violations. It is currently unlawful for any person occupying a motor vehicle on a street or highway to operate or amplify the sound produced by a radio, tape player, or other mechanical sound-making device or instrument from within the motor vehicle so that the sound is plainly audible at a distance of 25 feet or more from the motor vehicle.

Key Points

1. Noise violations, specifically loud car stereo violations, continue to be an ongoing complaint of residents both in neighborhoods and adjacent to roadways. Surveys of residents have consistently indicated that noise emanating from vehicles is one of their top three concerns. This issue is consistent within virtually every neighborhood in the City of Gainesville.
2. The existing statute has no enhancement for repeat violators. The violation is currently a non-moving traffic violation incurring a fine (e.g. In Alachua County, a violation of 316.3045 results in a fine of \$77.50) and no points; irrespective of how many times the same individual is cited.
3. A recommended fine schedule and enhanced penalties could be patterned after Chapter 318.18, F.S.:
 - The first offense for a violation of Section 316.3045 would result in the same fine currently imposed.
 - The second violation to the same violator within a period of a calendar year would result in the fine being doubled.
 - The third offense for the same violation to the same violator within a period of a calendar year would result in suspension of the

driver's license of the violator for not less than 90 days, and not more than 6 months, and a fine that is triple the original fine.

4. Loud car stereos negatively impact the quality of life not only in Gainesville, but also throughout the State. This is a complaint heard in other jurisdictions. Specific to Gainesville, this is a citizen-based initiative with widespread support amongst citizen District Councils, neighborhood crime watches, homeowner and business associations, and community organizations such as the Black on Black Crime Task Force.

Contacts

Marion J. Radson, City Attorney
Russ Blackburn, City Manager

City of Gainesville 2006 Legislative Statement

Continue Funding for Affordable Housing (William E. Sadowski Act)

Position

The City of Gainesville opposes any reduction in funding for affordable housing and supports the use of documentary stamp collections to increase funding distributed to cities and counties in accordance with the William E. Sadowski Affordable Housing Act.

Key Points

1. The City is a staunch supporter of affordable housing, as it benefits our less fortunate citizens and our local businesses that build and provide such housing.
2. In 1992, the documentary stamp tax was increased to provide affordable housing as set forth in the William E. Sadowski Act. However, this funding was subsequently reduced and capped which negatively impacted affordable housing throughout the state.
3. The State of Florida's Sadowski Act's affordable housing program is nationally recognized.

Contact

Thomas Saunders, Community Development Director

City of Gainesville 2006 Legislative Statement

Support for Community Redevelopment Agencies

Position

The City supports legislation that preserves the home rule powers of municipalities to create and effectively use Community Redevelopment Agencies (CRAs) to redevelop and revitalize their urban area, including the use of tax increment funding. The City supports local control and disposition of any disputes between local government over CRA's and their financing.

Key Points

1. Several cities and counties in the State are struggling with internal issues, and rather than handling them locally the counties are seeking statewide legislation to address their issues.
2. Applying the South Florida, large city solutions to every CRA in the State limits the smaller cities' ability to address its own issues in its own fashion.
3. The Florida Redevelopment Association and the Florida League of Cities support the position stated above.

Contacts

Russ Blackburn, City Manager

Karen Slevin, Community Redevelopment Agency Manager

City of Gainesville

2006 Legislative Statement

Front Porch Florida Program

Position

The City of Gainesville supports continued funding for Front Porch Florida Communities.

Key Points

1. The Front Porch Florida Program is a significant component of the State's urban initiative, designed to involve neighborhood residents in the decision-making process on issues affecting their communities. Like the Front Porch Florida Program, Gainesville has had considerable success through its neighborhood planning program and other coalition-building efforts to involve neighborhood residents in deciding neighborhood level improvements.
2. As a result of neighborhood resident involvement and collaboration among local government and community-based organizations, the Duval Neighborhood was designated by the Governor as a "Front Porch Florida Community" in 2001.
3. In the Duval Neighborhood, as well as in other Front Porch Florida Communities across the state, there is a demonstrated need for additional resources to address critical neighborhood needs. Those needs range from public infrastructure improvements (streets, sidewalks, storm drainage, etc.) to recreational facilities, code enforcement, and improved housing. In recent years, for example, the City has embarked upon the development of a neighborhood stormwater park in the Duval Neighborhood that could not have proceeded as well as it has without resources that the community has been able to access through the Front Porch Florida Program.

Contacts

Russ Blackburn, City Manager

Tom Saunders, Community Development Director

City of Gainesville

2006 Legislative Statement

Voluntary Cleanup Tax Credit

Position

The City of Gainesville supports enhancing the Voluntary Cleanup Tax Credit Program and requests the legislative delegation sponsor or support legislation to a) increase the credit from 35% to 50% of annual cleanup costs and increase the annual per site cap from \$250,000 to \$500,000, b) raise the annual statewide VCTC cap from \$2 million to \$5 million c) broaden the definition of site rehabilitation tasks that are eligible for the tax credit and d) consider expanding the definition of state tax liabilities eligible for the credit. These changes will enhance the usefulness of this incentive and encourage more businesses and communities to rehabilitate environmentally impaired sites.

Key Points

1. The Voluntary Cleanup Tax Credit is a Brownfields redevelopment incentive that has seen significant usage since its inception in 1998. While the number of applications is growing and credits awarded have not yet reached the mandated limit, the annual statewide cap of \$2 million is expected to be exceeded in coming years as applications increase.
2. The City of Gainesville, like other Florida cities, has many potential brownfield sites that could be rehabilitated and returned to productive use. Reuse of these sites has the potential to create long-term employment, increase economic activity, and improve community quality of life. Increasing the availability of the VCTC incentive will leverage private investment in these sites and foster desirable community benefits.
3. Legislative changes are needed to the Program to increase its impact on the redevelopment of brownfield sites. Changes are needed to increase the per-site and overall amount of tax credit available each year, expand the eligibility criteria, and expand the definition of eligible state tax liabilities.

Contact

Matthew Dubé, Projects Coordinator

City of Gainesville

2006 Legislative Statement

Support Conservation Use Property Tax Assessment Classification

Position

The City of Gainesville supports Alachua County's request for a Special Act for Alachua County allowing the Alachua County Property Appraiser to include a "conservation use" assessment classification similar to that provided for agricultural lands.

Key Points

1. The contribution of private land owners in managing lands for conservation purposes is widely recognized. As land values and development pressures continue to increase, so do the need for non-regulatory, financial incentives to encourage private property owners to continue to practice conservation land stewardship. The establishment of an effective property tax incentive for private property owners to continue their conservation land stewardship practices can strengthen Florida's conservation partnerships.
2. Currently, Florida Statutes do not allow Counties the option of adopting a conservation value for qualified properties. Such classifications are allowed for the valuation of agricultural lands and historic properties.
3. Many local governments in Florida have recognized the tremendous benefits afforded by land conservation, including but not limited to recreation, flood and storm protection, wildlife habitat, water and air quality, and soil conservation. Despite the success of Florida Forever and local land acquisition programs, there are practical and fiscal limits to these public land acquisition and management programs.
4. A number of other states, including Georgia, Texas, Tennessee, Maryland, Maine, California, Oregon, and Washington, have authorized a current use assessment classification program for conservation properties.

Contact

Russ Blackburn, City Manager

City of Gainesville

2006 Legislative Statement

Oppose or Amend HB 273

Position

The City of Gainesville joins others, including the Garden Club of America, Scenic Florida, and the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs in opposing HB 273 unless five reasonable amendments are included:

Key Points

1. Any "view zone" should be limited to 250 linear feet along the roadway.
2. A "view zone" should not extend to nonconforming billboards.
3. There should be no "view zone" for billboards in urban areas.
4. There should be no "view zone" that crosses a highway median.
5. There should be no statutory cause of action for damages created for billboard owners to sue local governments and nonprofit beautification groups.

Contact

Russ Blackburn, City Manager

City of Gainesville 2006 Legislative Statement

Lack of Position on Potential Gainesville/ Alachua County Regional Airport Authority Act

Position

The City of Gainesville will be reviewing the proposed legislation in terms of possible implications of some portions of the draft for the City's interests. The City respectfully requests the delegation postpone sponsoring the legislation until such analysis can be performed and any concerns resolved with the Airport Authority.

Contact:

Russ Blackburn, City Manager