

# CITY OF GAINESVILLE



## 2014 City of Gainesville Federal Legislative Agenda

Gainesville, Florida  
City Commission

- Mayor Craig Lowe (At Large)
- Mayor-Commissioner Pro Tem 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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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The central city core of Gainesville is experiencing economic growth due in large part to the redevelopment efforts of the City of Gainesville, the Gainesville Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) 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. Partners such as the University of Florida, Alachua County, the State of Florida and others have worked with the City and CRA 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 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 Florida, along with the City and CRA's extensive outreach and economic development programs 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 and creating a world class public park amenity; 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. Project stakeholders are pursuing funding assistance from multiple sources, including a number of Federal Agencies. We respectfully request advocacy assistance from the City's Congressional Delegation as these funding opportunities present themselves.**

### **Innovation Square and the iDistrict**

The Innovation District (iDistrict) spans roughly 44 acres in the heart of Gainesville's urban core. Development of the iDistrict provides a strong physical link between Downtown Gainesville and the University of Florida. It also represents the symbolic link of a deeply integrated town/gown partnership in which the University, Shands HealthCare (affiliated with the University of Florida), City of Gainesville, Gainesville Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), and Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU) work together in a collaborative partnership to bring investment, growth, economic development, and job creation to the community. The core development is a mixed-use, research-oriented 24-hour live/work/play community that will translate the knowledge developed at UF and elsewhere into commercial and business applications. The iDistrict has the capacity to include up to 6 million square feet of new building space and generate thousands of new jobs to the community. Many of these jobs will be high-wage positions in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. However, a high level of support services in commercial retail, residential, and other fields will

be generated to meet the demand generated by the “creative class” innovation economy centered in this district.

The community has formed strong institutional partnerships in order to proactively establish the necessary framework that will support and cultivate iDistrict development: The CRA has partnered with the City and GRU to streamline and clarify zoning and utility regulations and the development review process and is building two new roadways through the district to provide necessary infrastructure and create greater connectivity. The CRA, GRU, UF, Shands HealthCare, and the City of Gainesville, and private sector have coordinated high-level utility master planning to ensure that capacity, design, and delivery of services are well integrated into development plans. Urban design standards have been adopted to ensure walkability and multi-modal opportunities connecting the iDistrict, Downtown, and the University of Florida. The partnership is developing innovative stormwater systems that will be interwoven into urban design standards in order to address stormwater in a holistic, district-wide manner.

The Innovation Hub research/technology business incubator is now open, and plans for additional buildings are in the permitting process. Plans for major capital improvements are also progressing and include: roadways; stormwater; utilities; parks/public spaces; public/public and public/private partnerships; and more. All stakeholders, both public and private are working together to ensure full integration of plans, with the ultimate goal of creating a vibrant urban area that will create jobs and generate unprecedented levels of urban development. This district will not only benefit the local community, but serve as a national and international model.

**CRA plans to design and construct approximately \$4 million in transportation, stormwater, and utility improvements in 2012-2013. These infrastructure improvements are necessary to support the planned additional buildings and high-tech jobs which are slated for the iDistrict in 2012-2013.**

### **Power District and Depot Park**

Immediately adjacent to Depot Park is the Power District, approximately 12 acres of downtown property formerly utilized as support areas for utility operations. The Power District presents tremendous economic opportunities for the community. It is emerging as one of the city’s most vibrant districts and includes an eclectic mix of industrial, artistic, commercial, and residential spaces. In late 2011, GRU relocated operations away from this district, providing an opportunity for large-scale redevelopment and economic development. The CRA, as lead agency, has coordinated master planning work in order to literally rebuild this section of town, and is working to enable flexible, streamlined zoning regulations that will bolster efforts to attract new commercial opportunities and jobs to the area.

The area will serve as an important compliment to Innovation Square and the iDistrict, as it provides the opportunity for Innovation Economy businesses with assembly/production/manufacturing needs the ability to locate and grow within Gainesville’s urban core. Currently, the CRA lead a partnership with the City and GRU to establish a “catalyst” economic development project in the Power District. The catalyst project, a public/private partnership with Prioria Robotics, will provide an anchor tenant for the Power District, and will afford Prioria the opportunity to expand their growing business within the local community. Prioria

is a locally grown clean tech company which develops and produces unmanned aircraft and other engineering solutions for industrial robotics, medical device applications, and military and homeland security applications. Prioria is bringing its production capabilities to the Power District and is moving into the newly converted and renovated warehouse building in February 2013. The company anticipates adding approximately 40 new high wage jobs over the next five years. The catalyst project incorporated economic development, business retention, and redevelopment initiatives. Funding for the catalyst project included building reuse and renovation and infrastructure improvements. CRA was the lead agency for this project and partnered with the City of Gainesville and GRU. The project is substantially complete.

**Additional funding is needed to continue the master planning, rezoning and additional construction and infrastructure improvements on the balance of the former Gainesville Regional Utilities sites. There is current interest from local technology companies in relocating to the Power District, which will require additional renovations to former warehouses to convert them to the appropriate uses. Cost estimates have not yet been obtained for this work but the City is seeking additional funding to continue its efforts in this important area of Gainesville urban core.**

#### **Southeast Gainesville Renaissance Initiative (SEGRI)**

Directly east of the Power District; the Eastside Redevelopment Area is home to the City's first technology incubator, the Gainesville Technology Enterprise Center. Adjacent to GTEC is the former Kennedy Homes site, a 16-acre site planned for redevelopment. The CRA is working with interested partners to create a sustainable community that will support the growing innovation economy and future expansion at GTEC and surrounding sites. The CRA also completed an infrastructure analysis along Hawthorne Road, a major corridor through the area. As a result of this analysis, the CRA is working with GRU and the City on infrastructure upgrades, rezoning and streetscapes to accommodate future growth.

**The SEGRI area is an important connection to Gainesville's downtown and will compliment growth in the Power District and Innovation Square District, creating a signature east-west Technology Corridor for the City of Gainesville.**

#### **Research and Development Programs**

**The City of Gainesville supports federal funding opportunities that are made available for research and development assistance to local companies engaged in the innovation economy.** These companies, started by entrepreneurs including those coming out of the University of Florida, would benefit from the investment provided by current and future federal grant programs and other federal funding opportunities targeted to innovative research and development. In turn, their success as a result of this investment will allow Gainesville's innovative economy to grow as well as provide an overall positive economic impact to Gainesville and the surrounding area.

#### **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.**



## PREMIUM TRANSIT SERVICES

The City of Gainesville Regional Transit System (RTS) is a mid-sized agency that provides public transit service to the City of Gainesville and the adjacent areas of Alachua County. RTS service area is approximately 75 square miles with a total of 38 fixed routes, including 10 University of Florida (UF) campus shuttles. RTS provided more than 10.7 million passenger trips in FY 2012 and an average of over 55,000 weekday trips. Although RTS faces unique challenges daily as a result of adapting its service to both students and city residents, RTS continues to play a key role in building successful partnerships within the community and is committed to providing a safe, courteous and reliable transportation alternative to the greater Gainesville area.

### **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)**

RTS is requesting **\$38.0 million** in federal assistance to develop a Bus Rapid System (BRT) Project. RTS is currently planning for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service. A BRT feasibility study was complete in March 2010 and RTS is currently conducting an Alternatives Analysis (AA) for BRT. RTS believes that the result of the AA will support implementing a BRT service in Gainesville. The 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.

### **Multimodal Transportation Center**

RTS is also seeking **\$3.3 million** in federal funding for the Multimodal Facility. The past successes of RTS led to an unsafe and crowded transit transfer center located in the heart of downtown Gainesville on the City Plaza. As a result, the City purchased land from Gainesville Regional Utilities to construct a Multimodal Facility. Local, state and federal funds were used to complete phase one of this project, which consisted of design and construction of a transfer station, bus bays and a small ticket and information facility, which RTS wants to expand into a multimodal facility to service other modes of transportation such as intercity bus or shuttle service, taxi service, Bus Rapid Transit, and other transportation modes as part of phase 2 of this project. Additional funds are needed to construct the multimodal facility with covered passenger walkways and any required parking for employees and visitors.

### **SW 62nd Boulevard**

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. Federal funding support in the amount of \$53,000,000 will be sought for the remainder of the project.**

### **Streetcar**

RTS is requesting \$1.0 million in federal assistance for a Streetcar study. 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 will cost \$128 million for infrastructure and approximately \$2 million to operate annually. The Streetcar is currently in the early planning phase and is conducting a conceptual study, but is quickly gaining support from a diverse group of community stakeholders.

### **Purchase Replacement Buses**

RTS is requesting \$8.5 million in federal assistance for replacement buses. RTS currently operates 54 buses that are eligible for retirement but has 20 buses that need immediate replacement. These 20 buses have an average fleet age of 13.9 years (useful life of bus is 12 years), and additional annual maintenance costs of approximately \$35,000 per bus compared to new buses.



## ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES

### **Biomass Carbon Neutrality**

**GRU supports and advocates for the permanent treatment of wood-waste biomass as carbon neutral.** Almost two-thirds of the energy GRU currently produces is fueled by coal, and 25 percent comes from natural gas. In demonstration of GRU's commitment to providing clean and renewable energy, GRU executed a 30-year agreement to purchase 100 MW of Biomass-fueled electric generation from the Gainesville Renewable Energy Center. The EPA's final rule deferring regulation of Green House Gas (GHG) emissions from biogenic sources (issued July 1, 2011) for three years is a step in the right direction toward helping GRU meet the plant's projected long-term cost savings for customers. **As cost projections heavily rely on the cost of carbon, GRU supports EPA's permanent ruling of biomass carbon neutrality.**

### **Carbon Legislation**

Elected officials in the City of Gainesville, Florida have implemented a number of projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and slow global warming. Policy decisions that promote sustainability have covered issues such as transportation, power generation, infrastructure improvements, land use and zoning, building codes, landscaping, waste management and land conservation.

**In alignment with Federal regulatory policies aimed at reducing carbon emissions, the City supports a legislative and regulatory framework at the Federal level that re-affirms the value of environmental improvements already undertaken in compliance with EPA rules, incentivizes the use and expansion of biomass as a carbon-neutral fuel, and promotes the use of diverse renewable energy sources. City Officials and Residents strongly support greenhouse gas reduction on a global scale and view it as a national priority.**

### **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.

## CRIME PREVENTION

The Gainesville Police Department's highest priority is Public Safety for the citizens of Gainesville. As a Community Oriented Policing Agency it is implicitly understood that the origins of crime are rooted in complex societal issues. **Because of that the Gainesville Police Department seeks a variety of opportunities through community partnerships, state and federal funding and service initiatives that will support its Public Safety priorities.**

### **Domestic Violence**

GPD has just begun the second year of a two year grant with the Office on Violence Against Women entitled "Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies and Enforcement of Protection Orders" This grant funds one detective, one Rebuilding Coordinator, one Victim Advocate, mentoring and counseling services, training for law enforcement officers, and an opportunity to upgrade IT systems dealing with Protection Orders. The agency plans to reapply in 2014. The grant award is \$394,327 for the two year period.

### **Mental Health and Public Education for Violence Prevention**

GPD is actively working with Meridian Behavioral Health Services to identify federal resources to provide early identification/training opportunities for family, school, community and law enforcement (School Resource Officers, Officers and Detectives and all non-sworn staff on recognition of mental health illness.

### **Children's Advocacy Programs**

GPD is an active partner with Gainesville's Child Advocacy Center (private entity) and other community agencies to identify a one-stop center for services that will enhance services delivered to children who are victims of abuse, neglect and crime. As a partner agency, GPD will collaborate on identification and preparation of any funding opportunities that will enhance the delivery of these services.

### **Reichert House Youth Program and the BOLD Program**

Federal and private funding sources continue to be sought for these important youth programs. The focus of the Reichert House program continues to be academic support and tutoring, parental involvement, mental health for children and families, nutrition and counseling. The focus of the BOLD program is support with legal issues, mental health counseling and treatment, identifying supportive living arrangements, identifying educational objectives and training, successful job placement and follow-up.