

Executive Summary
April, 2014
History of Merger Discussions for
Merger of Fire/EMS Emergency Services

BACKGROUND

County-wide, two distinct levels of service exist; urban and rural.

Associated with growth in suburban fringe surrounding the City, an agreement for the City of Gainesville's provision of one fire engine to any structure fire occurring in those areas was accomplished in 1974; the terms of the agreement subject to annual renewal.

City opens Fire Station #7 in 1981 to serve areas in the northwest Gainesville and the urban fringe.

In 1984, a "Fire Services Contract" was established between the City and County specifying the terms and conditions in which fire responses into urban areas surrounding the City would be handled and compensated. The County engaged in contractual agreements with other municipalities and volunteer department to provide fire coverage to rural areas.

In the mid to late 1980's, the City sought increased funding for provision of fire response into the urban fringe. In response, the County elected to develop a fire department to provide fire services. The City closed Station #7 ending its presence in the northwest urban fringe. The County planed an Engine into operation from its 441 / NW 34th Street Extension Headquarters located.

A "Fire Master Plan" was constructed in 1989 laying the foundation for a seven year fire and rescue response agreement based upon: closest unit dispatch; standardized response protocols, times, apparatus, and facilities; methodology for compensation of response; and the addition of five County fire stations. The City reopened Station #7 as part of this agreement.

In 1990, the County began planning construction of fire stations in areas surrounding the City in an effort to address fire response needs within the urban fringe through direct provision of services. County Fire Station #19 was opened on SW 20th Avenue and 43rd Street.

Associated with the County's move to provide fire services in areas within the urban fringe, prior discussions involving potential benefits of consolidating these services resurfaced.

County Station #16 was placed into service a 1600 NW Fort Clark Boulevard in 1993. The following year (1994), County Fire Station #12 was opened at 1200 SE 43rd Street.

In 1996, the company Analytica was contracted by Alachua County and the City of Gainesville to complete an assessment of the community's existing fire services; as

provided by the City of Gainesville and Alachua County. As part of the assessment, recommendations were developed for: future service delivery models, personnel and financial considerations, funding issues, model decision making templates for determination of governance as well as transition timelines.

As a qualifier for model development, three major factors were recognized as adding value to any new proposed organizational structure: 1) the ability to ensure institutional self-interests are met; 2) improvement to existing services or addition of new services of value; and 3) reduced costs by reductions or productivity improvements or cost avoidance.

Proposals from Governmental Services Group (GSG) for the purpose of exploring special assessment fee revenue generation for provision of fire services in December of 1999.

Early discussions in 2000 during Joint City County Commission Board Meetings led to development of an Inter-local Agreement between the City and County for Creation of a Combined Emergency Services System which led to establishment of a Combined Emergency Services Transition Board in June.

The Joint City County Commission Board further requested they receive staff proposals for three of the eleven models described in the 1996 Analytica Report: 1) a proposal by the County based upon the Sarasota Florida model with County governance, 2) a proposal by the City based upon the Tallahassee Florida model for consolidation of urbanized emergency services incorporating contractual agreement with the County to serve unincorporated areas along with emergency medical transport services as an optional element, and 3) a model based upon the library district structure with City or County governance.

During 2001, City and County proposals for system oversight were made addressing models 1 and 2 described above; both of which resulted in no specific further action.

Labor Unions for the City and County joined to form a new local – the Gator Fire Council - for the purpose of representing personnel issues and concerns of the labor force as related new governance body. While the group strongly supported merger, no endorsement was made by the Gator Fire Council regarding specific leadership.

The Combined Emergency Services Transition Board continued their efforts under the direction of the Joint City County Commission. The Board continued analyzing global needs related to: staffing, equity of funding, legal representation to the board and for labor issues. A leader was contracted to coordinate the work of the board as its City County membership team began to assemble planning and response information. A presentation of several governance models was received by the group. GFC Union Leadership highlighted the need for a clause within any new contract that would memorialize a "revert-back" path for returning pre-merged employees to their prior labor contracts in the event of a failure of the consolidated system. Legal counsel for labor issues was contracted by the Board. City and County staff were charged with supplying; current station locations, response statistics, and ISO classification. Through contractual relationship, an assessment of a merger on current ISO classification was

requested.

In July of 2002, the Joint City County Commission failed to renew extension of the Combined Emergency Services Transition Board; pending the September 30th expiration date specified within the inter-local agreement. The Board was allowed to sunset.

County Voters indicated in late 2002 through a non-binding referendum their support for merger of Fire/EMS services without the creation of a special district.

In January of 2003, the County Commission initiates dialog during joint City –County Commission meetings to revisit the issue of consolidation of Fire/EMS services.

In 2003, the City Staff delivers a proposal for county-wide merge of Fire/EMS services under governance of the City. County failed to support the proposal; electing to pursue development of a County Fire/EMS Services Master Plan.

In 2004, *Emergency Consulting Services, Inc* was contracted by the County to develop a county-wide master plan for Fire/EMS Services. Specific contents of this plan included: Current System Analysis, System Demand Projections, Future Services Delivery Models, Short and Mid-Term Strategies, and Financial Strategies.

The Fire Services Master Plan states that "An inter-local agreement such as this (FSAA) can reduce redundancy in resources and allow services to be improved through the use of adjacent resources." Additionally, the plan reports that "The unit and station coverage of Alachua County does not include significant overlapping services areas. There are small coverage overlaps of Gainesville; however, there is also significant workload within these areas suggesting the need for multiple resources." This is why the Fire Services Master Plan does not call for a reduction in personnel or fire stations.

In summary the plan called for:

- Addition of five new fire stations; two in the City and three in the County.
- Relocation of six existing fire stations; four in the City and two in the County.
- Vacating two existing stand-alone County rescue stations
- Addition of administration and support space
- Addition of six engine companies
- Addition of four County rescue companies
- Daily minimum staffing of 109 system-wide
- Addition of up to fifteen administrative and support personnel

The plan also identified three organizational strategies:

- Governance by the County or City of Gainesville
- Continuation of autonomous organizations
- Operational consolidation

In October of 2006, both jurisdictions renewed their automatic aid agreement with modification through the Fire Services Assistance Agreement (FSAA) agreeing to follow

the Alachua County Fire Services Master Plan dated 2004 identifying future station locations. The FSAA sets staffing levels, identifies the level of services to be provided, and helps prevent duplication of services.

The County relocated Fire Station 17 in Jonesville and opened a new rescue station adjacent to the County Fire Rescue Headquarters within the City of Gainesville off SE 4th Street and Depot Avenue. The Headquarters station, located within the City houses two rescue (transport) units only.

The City of Gainesville adopted a Fire Assessment Fee in June of 2010 which is currently set at \$78 per factored fire protection unit; that amount being 50% of its potential funding cap. This mechanism provides for 1/2 of the City's cost of operations for the fire service portion of the GFR budget. The remainder of the GFR budget comes from the General Fund. During this time frame, the County considered implementation of a similar special assessment fee for fire services. While their efforts to establish a special fire service assessment were abandoned, the County MSTU was raised approximately 1 mil lowering the projected deficit for the Fire Rescue department to approximately \$800,000.

In June of 2011 the City of Gainesville opened Fire Station 8 in an area consistent with recommendations for station placement found within the 2004 Fire Services Master Plan.

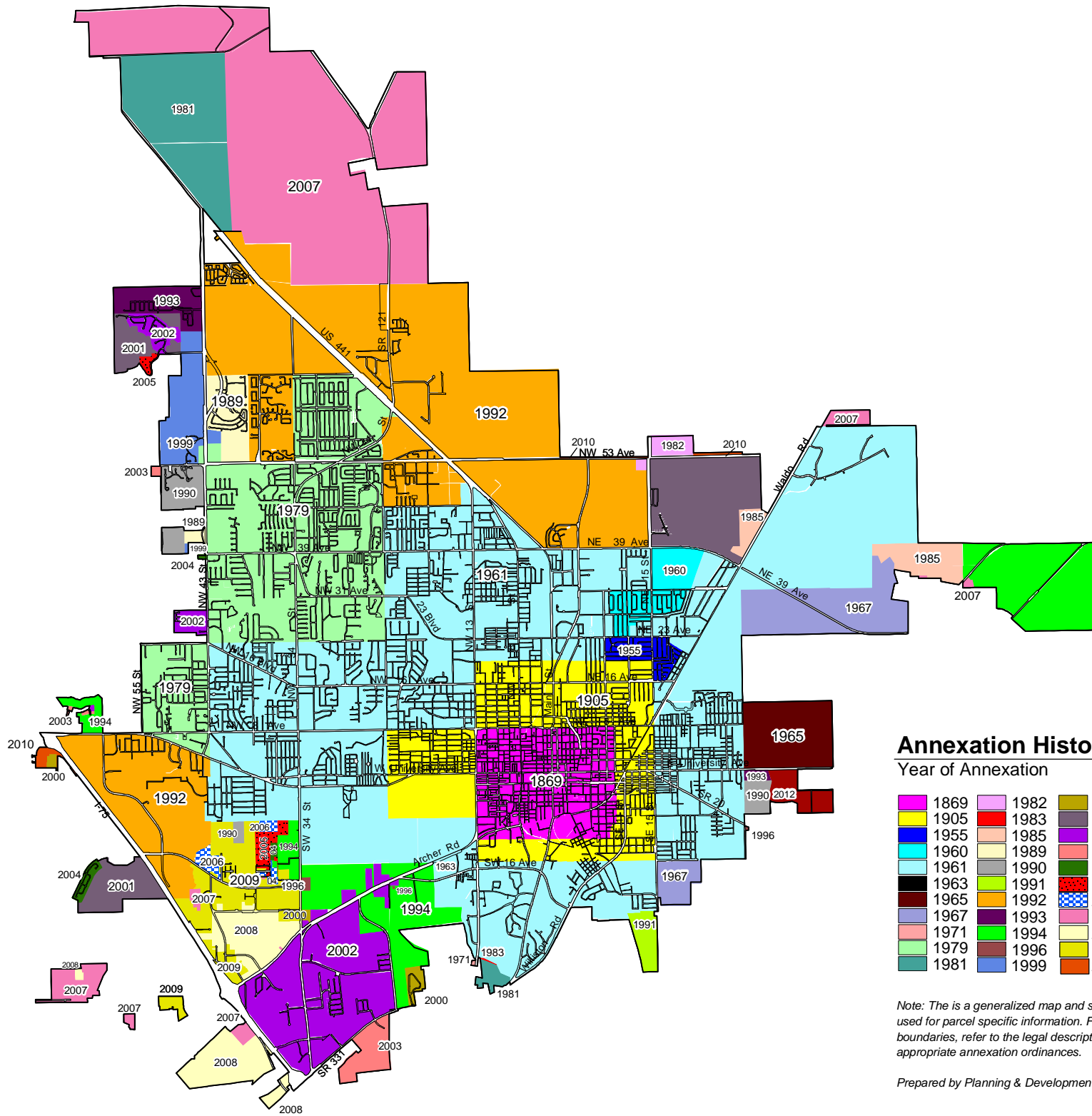
The GFR began its journey toward securing recognition as an Accredited provider of Fire Services. The department completed development of a multipart planning and service level Integrated Risk Management Plan: Standards of Cover document. In December of 2012 results of a community survey revealed high levels of satisfaction of the community for the structure and services provided by GFR.

The County Commission held a special meeting on February 4, 2014 to discuss the Station #19 issue and voted to direct ACFR to negotiate issues related to operation of Station 19 - a County facility located within the City of Gainesville. Additionally, the County Commission asked the City Commission to provide comment regarding their position on consolidation of fire services.

The City successfully was awarded a two year Federal grant covering personnel cost for nine Firefighters to staff a rapid response vehicle that would provide emergency medical and rapid intervention crews in the southwest area of the City. GFR staff anticipates significant savings associated with the financial compensation agreement identified as the Fire Services Assistance Agreement. These discussions resulted in the County Commissions suggestion of revisiting discussions regarding potential benefits for merger of emergency services.

On March 11th of 2014, GFR was awarded accreditation by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International. The City is one of less than twenty departments within Florida that enjoy this honor to date.

A map highlighting dates and areas previously annexed into the City of Gainesville is attached for gaining perspective in discussions related to the merger of emergency services.



Annexation History

Year of Annexation

| | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| 1869 | 1982 | 2000 | 2012 |
| 1905 | 1983 | 2001 | |
| 1955 | 1985 | 2002 | |
| 1960 | 1989 | 2003 | |
| 1961 | 1990 | 2004 | |
| 1963 | 1991 | 2005 | |
| 1965 | 1992 | 2006 | |
| 1967 | 1993 | 2007 | |
| 1971 | 1994 | 2008 | |
| 1979 | 1996 | 2009 | |
| 1981 | 1999 | 2010 | |

Note: This is a generalized map and should not be used for parcel specific information. For precise boundaries, refer to the legal descriptions in the appropriate annexation ordinances.