



MEDIAN ENHANCEMENT GUIDELINES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document has been prepared at the request of the Gainesville City Beautification Board. The objective is to improve the appearance of the medians within the City of Gainesville by creating guidelines that will strengthen the Adopt-A-Median program. While the guidelines are applicable to any sponsorship programs, they have been written to address all medians and the corresponding roadway corridors within the city.

The medians of Gainesville are within the right-of-ways of city, county, and state owned roadways. Along with the varied ownerships come different approaches to design, maintenance, and sponsorship of the medians. The purpose of this document is to facilitate a consistent approach to median enhancement by providing design guidelines to which all entities can adhere.

There are two consistent themes throughout this document. One is that medians are just one element within the overall context of a roadway corridor. Continuity of design is achieved when medians are designed simply and consistently within a given stretch of roadway. The second theme is that trees have by far the greatest impact. Trees should always be given the first consideration when planning and designing medians within the city.

The median guidelines cover a variety of categories. The general design guidelines discuss the opportunities for medians in specific overlay districts, the use of hardscape, and the landscape setback requirements for utilities. Planting design guidelines discuss the importance of plant size, vertical clear zones for visual access, and horizontal clear zones for user safety. The benefits of massing plant material and the use of xeriscape principles are also covered here. Guidelines for specific plant material include discussions on the benefits of using natives, the aesthetic and environmental benefits provided by trees, the appropriate uses for shrubs and ground covers, and a discussion of various turf grasses. A comprehensive plant list is also provided as a recommendation. Another category of the guidelines covers preparation and establishment. These guidelines include discussions on soils, recommendations for irrigation, and direction on the installation and replenishment of mulches.

There are specific maintenance guidelines that focus primarily on frequency of service. However all guidelines have been developed with the reduction of maintenance as a significant consideration. Good design will result in attractive and safe medians over time by accounting for the maintenance issues.

An acknowledgement sign is an integral part of the median sponsorship programs. Sign guidelines address size, color, materials, and content. The objective here is to recognize the sponsors for their contribution to city beautification without the sign detracting from the landscaping or becoming "mini-billboards."

The implementation of these guidelines is the next step. Discussions are needed to decide the best way to coordinate the efforts of all the entities involved. This would include designers, planners, and public works departments associated with the City of Gainesville, Alachua County, and the Florida Department of Transportation.

INTRODUCTION

The medians of Gainesville are within the right-of-ways of city, county, and state owned roadways. Along with the varied ownerships come different approaches to design, maintenance, and sponsorship of the medians. The purpose of this document is to facilitate a consistent approach to median enhancement by providing design guidelines to which all entities can adhere.

This document is a follow up to the “*Gateway Corridor Design Workshop for The City of Gainesville,*” 1998, by Buford Davis and Associates. This was a study to establish conceptual design standards for the landscape and hardscape improvements to the City of Gainesville gateway corridors.

The information presented is intended to provide detailed design guidelines and specifications for the implementation of median enhancements within the city of Gainesville. While aesthetics are a primary goal, safety must always be a consideration when evaluating a proposed plan or program. These guidelines have been developed to facilitate median enhancements that are safe, easy to maintain, and contribute to the overall appeal of Gainesville.

The majority of guidelines included in this report are derived from existing standards and operating procedures currently in use by departments within the City of Gainesville, Alachua County, or FDOT. In some cases, standards are not consistent between entities or may not be consistent with some of the design goals of the City of Gainesville. In these situations, guidelines have been written to best address the interests of Gainesville, while always considering issues of safety and maintenance. Guidelines pertaining to planting and soils are derived from construction specifications utilized by landscape professionals.

The format of this document provides graphic and written justifications prior to each guideline. At the end of the document, all the guidelines are presented again as an independent listing.

Guideline Categories included in the Document

- General Design – Overlay District, Utility Setbacks
- Planting Design - Clear Zones, and Tree Spacing
- Plants – Trees, Shrubs and Ground Covers, Turf Grass
- Preparation and Establishment – Soil, Irrigation, Mulch
- Maintenance
- Signs

Related Areas Outside of the Scope of The Document

- Engineering Design – median width, radii, median cut locations, etc.
- Lighting - highway and landscape
- Stormwater Management - grading and stormwater structures

DESIGN, SAFETY, MAINTENANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Everything is affected by design. In addition to aesthetics, issues of safety and maintenance are all directly connected to each design decision. As well, safety and maintenance guidelines affect the final design. It is important to understand that each set of median guidelines was developed with consideration for its impact on overall design, citizen safety, and efficiency of maintenance.

CORRIDORS AND DESIGN CONTINUITY

This document focuses on medians, but the real goal is to strengthen the appeal of our roadway corridors, of which medians are just one part. When driving down a roadway, the median, roadside, and private buffer plantings, all contribute to the overall impression. There is continuity to the nicer corridors in town, usually derived from a strong repetitive element that ties a section of the corridor together. Many of the design principles to be discussed can be applied to the entire roadway corridor.

Some examples of continuity are: The bald cypress on NW 8th Avenue between 34th Street and 43rd Street, the date palms on NE 1st Street north of University Avenue (figure 1), the canopy on SE 2nd Avenue east of 4th Street (figure 2), and the elms on NE 8th Avenue around 9th Street. Another design strategy that works well is installing the same trees in both the median and the right of way where possible. Some examples of this are the use of white crape myrtles along the 500 block of NE 1st Street (figure 3) and the use of sabal palms on North Waldo road around the 2700 block (figure 4).



Figure 1
Repetition of Palms on NE 1st Street



Figure 2
Oak Canopy on SE 2nd Avenue