

CITY OF GAINESVILLE

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

RECREATION & PARKS

TELEPHONE: 334-5067 FAX: 334-3299

TO: Barbara Lipscomb
Interim City Manager

DATE: June 20, 2005

FROM: David Flaherty, Director
Recreation and Parks Department

SUBJECT: Conservation, Open Space & Groundwater Recharge Element

Under Policy 1.1.4 of the Conservation, Open Space and Groundwater Element of the City's adopted Comprehensive Land Use Plan, It states " The City shall allocate a minimum of \$300,000 per year for the purchase and/or management of the environmentally significant open space and of active and passive recreation sites". Attached please find a copy of that information.

Currently, this policy is being addressed based on the existing Nature and Parks Division yearly budgets for maintenance of active and passive lands. The Nature Operations budget is \$801,608 and the Parks maintenance budget is \$1,945,741. Additionally, the City has acquired new land through donations and City and grant funds, representing approximately 70 acres per year over the last three years. Plans are to continue to acquire land for active and passive recreation (including environmentally sensitive lands) as grant funding permits.

Please let me know if additional information is needed.

Xc: Teresa Scott, Interim Assistant City Manager
Dana Crosby, Assistant City Attorney
Steve Phillips, Interim Assistant Director

(attachment)

Conservation, Open Space and Groundwater Recharge Element

Goal 1

Establish and maintain an integrated and urban-defining open space network that protects and conserves key environmental features.

Objective 1.1

Upon adoption of this Plan, the City shall protect all significant environmental lands and resources identified in the Environmentally Significant Land and Resources map series within the Future Land Use Map Series. The City shall continue to identify environmentally significant open space and recreation sites for acquisition.

Policies

- 1.1.1 At a minimum the following standards and guidelines shall be used to protect environmentally sensitive resources identified in the Environmentally Significant Land and Resources map series within the Future Land Use Map Series. The City shall develop and adopt land development regulations that establish criteria for expansion of the minimum standards addressed below.
- a. Creeks: Between 35 and 150 feet from the break in slope at the top of the bank, there is a rebuttable presumption that development is detrimental to the regulated creek. Development must conform to applicable provisions of the land development regulations which prohibit development within a minimum of 35 feet of the break in slope at the top of the bank of any regulated creek.
 - b. Wetlands: Developments containing wetlands must avoid loss of function or degradation of wetland habitat and/or wetland hydrology as the highest priority. Degradation or loss of function that is unavoidable shall be minimized, and the applicant must demonstrate that the project is clearly in the public interest, with final administrative approval by the city commission on appeal, if necessary. The City shall develop and implement land development regulations that at a minimum:
 1. Establish criteria that are at least consistent with the relevant criteria of Section 373.414(1), F.S. for determining whether the project is clearly in the public interest.
 2. Establish mitigation ratios for wetland preservation, enhancement, restoration and creation. The mitigation ratios shall be at least 5:1 (acreage of mitigation area to impacted area) for impacts to natural wetlands or wetlands created as part of a mitigation project; and shall be at least 1:1 for impacts to created wetlands (e.g., livestock watering

ponds, borrow pits, drainage ditches, etc.) that were not created as part of a mitigation project. Should there be irreconcilable differences between the mitigation required by the City and that required by the state (water management district or FDEP), then the mitigation requirements of the state will prevail where there are irreconcilable differences.

3. Wetland creation is presumed to be the least desirable mitigation strategy.
4. Establish bonding, long-term monitoring and enforceable long-term maintenance requirements for wetland mitigation projects to ensure that all the negative impacts have been mitigated. Monitoring should be reviewed by the Alachua County Environmental Protection Department, the appropriate water management district, the University of Florida, or other appropriate monitoring agency or reviewing entity, with regulatory fees paid by the permitted applicant. The mitigation plan must be approved prior to the initiation of the project.
5. Require off-site mitigation to be performed within the same sub-basin and basin (the basins are depicted on the map entitled Wetland Mitigation Basins that is on file with the Community Development Department and is in the Data & Analysis section of this comprehensive plan element) in which the impact occurred, unless it is shown that mitigation outside the sub-basin is more appropriate. The order of preference for the location of the mitigated area(s) in relation to the impacted areas will be established in the land development regulations (LDRs).
6. Require that development shall not cause hydrological or wetland impacts off-site;
7. A minimum buffer distance of 35 ft. and an average buffer distance of 50 feet shall be required between the landward extent of any wetland or surface water and the developed area. Larger buffers may be warranted. The criteria for buffer expansion will be developed in the land development regulations;
8. Specify that the protections for wetlands shall be extended to all wetlands delineated in accordance with Section 62-340, F.A.C., regardless of whether they are currently mapped by the City of Gainesville;
9. Require review and approval of wetland mitigation projects by qualified professionals.

10. Outstanding Florida Waters, as listed in Section 62-302.700, F.A.C., shall have a minimum buffer of 200 feet. The City shall develop and implement land development regulations that establish appropriate setbacks for wetlands containing listed plant or animal species. Where these distance requirements preclude all economic development of a parcel, exceptions can be made upon approval by a majority of the city commission and with appropriate mitigation of wetland loss .
 11. Wetlands damaged on or subsequent to the effective date of this policy shall either be restored to their original function and condition prior to such damage, at the owner's expense or mitigated for, pursuant to the mitigation requirements of this comprehensive plan element.
 - c. Lakes: Developments containing or adjacent to a natural lake (or lakes) must not adversely impact the condition of the lake. Dredge and fill shall be prohibited. Development shall be prohibited within 75 feet of the landward extent of a lake.
 - d. Wellfields: Development must be consistent with Policies 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 of this Element.
 - e. Major Natural Groundwater Recharge Areas: Development within this area must be consistent with Policies 2.3.3 and 2.3.5 of this Element.
 - f. Upland Areas: Developments within an area identified as Upland must submit an ecological inventory of the parcel. Based on the inventory, development may be allowed on up to the maximum of 75 percent of the parcel.
- 1.1.2 The City shall use the environmentally significant properties inventory/ranking report to identify viable populations of native plant and animal species, environmentally significant areas, and unique geological or historic features that should be preserved, and show connectivity with other public lands and environmentally significant areas that should be maintained.
 - 1.1.3 The City shall keep in force land development regulations that require new developments to dedicate land and easements, within federal constitutional guidelines, particularly for the creation of buffers along and around surface waters and natural reservations and to facilitate the development of greenways and other open space.
 - 1.1.4 The City shall allocate a minimum of \$300,000 per year for the purchase and/or management of environmentally significant open space and of active and passive recreation sites.

1.1.5 The City shall work with local, regional and state environmental agencies (including Alachua County and the St. Johns and Suwannee River Water Management Districts) to develop basin management plans, which shall identify wetlands of special concern, disturbed wetlands, and appropriate sites for mitigation. The plans shall also consider those factors affecting the structure and functions of wetlands.

Objective 1.2

The City shall coordinate with Alachua County on the Alachua County Forever program, and with other potential funding sources for land acquisition for environmental and open space protection.

Policies

1.2.1 The City shall seek to maximize the protection of environmentally sensitive lands through the nomination of properties for acquisition with Alachua County Forever and other relevant funds.

Goal 2

Mitigate the effects of growth and development on environmental resources.

Objective 2.1

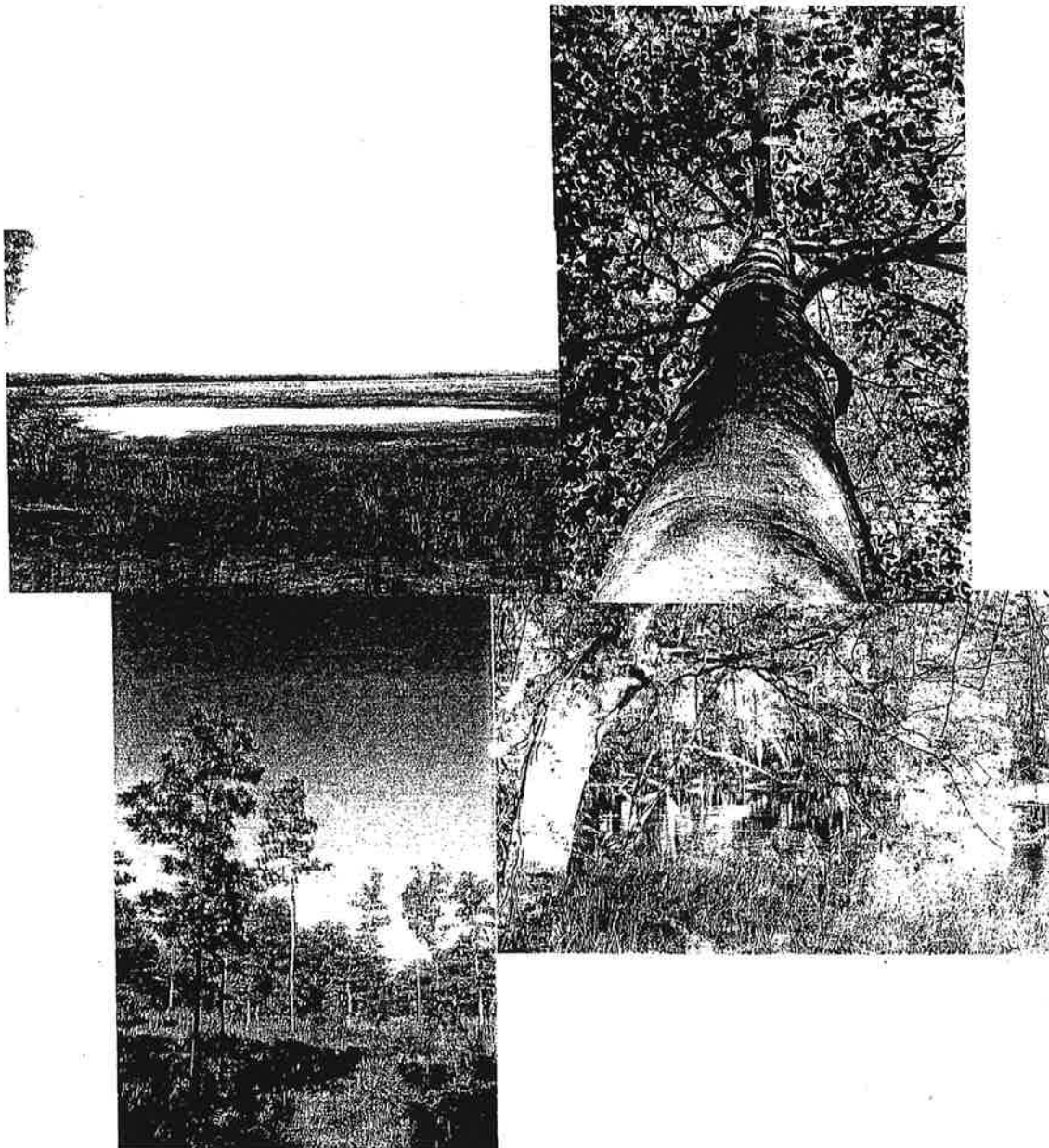
Upon adoption of this Plan, existing levels of wetland acreage and functions within the listed basins (shown on the map entitled Wetland Mitigation Basins that is on file with the Community Development Department and is in the Data & Analysis section of this comprehensive plan element) shall be maintained to the extent feasible through the year 2010.

Policies

2.1.1 The City shall continue to update, augment and maintain an inventory of wetlands, and adopt land development regulations designed to conserve wetland acreage and preserve natural functions within the listed basins (shown on the map entitled Wetland Mitigation Basins that is on file with the Community Development Department and is in the Data & Analysis section of this comprehensive plan element). When wetlands are unavoidably lost to development, mandatory mitigation shall be required to ensure no net loss of acreage and functions occurs. Mitigation location protocol shall follow Policy 1.1.1 b.5.

LAND CONSERVATION DECISION MATRIX

STAFF REPORT



Adopted by the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners
October 23, 2001

Cover Photographs (clockwise from top left):

Ledwith Prairie from Barr Hammock Ledwith Prairie Project

American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) forest Mill Creek Project

Santa Fe River from Poe Springs Addition Project

Sand hill community in the Poe Springs Addition Project

INTRODUCTION

This report is based upon the Land Conservation Decision Matrix Report, developed by the Alachua County Land Conservation Advisory Committee, and adopted by the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners on November 28, 2000. With this report, Alachua County Environmental Protection Department staff and the Land Conservation Board address many of the concerns noted in the original Land Conservation Decision Matrix and those concerns raised since its adoption by the Board.

Ordinance 00-13, which established the Alachua County Forever (ACF) Program, states that "Alachua County shall establish a program to acquire and manage environmentally significant lands to protect water resources, wildlife habitat, and natural areas suitable for resource based recreation by issuing bonds payable from an annual ad valorem tax of one-quarter of one mill for a period of twenty years". The goal of the LCDM is to quantitatively evaluate properties to ascertain whether or not they meet the goals of the Alachua County Forever Program and then to determine if the management and acquisition of the sites are economically feasible. The LCDM should provide a rational basis for prioritizing conservation of specific parcels of land in Alachua County.

LAND CONSERVATION DECISION MATRIX DESCRIPTION

The LCDM is based on the ranking system in the Alachua County Ecological Inventory Project, KBN 1996. The Land Conservation Advisory Committee modified some of the KBN questions and added others to assess the program values and issues. Alachua County Environmental Protection Department staff and the Land Conservation Board further refined the existing questions to clarify their use and applicability.

The 26 questions that compose the decision matrix have been divided into the four categories: Environmental Values, Social/Human Values, Management Issues and Economic/Acquisition Issues. The Environmental Values category has been further subdivided into (A). Protection of Water Resources, (B). Protection of Natural Communities and Landscapes, and (C). Protection of Plant and Animal Species. The Environmental Value and Social/Human Values together make up the first section of the LCDM. This section addresses the adopted goals of the program, and therefore determines if properties meet the intent of the ACF Program. The Management Issues and Economic/Acquisition Issues together make up the second section of the LCDM.

I. ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

I.1. Protection of Water Resources

- A. Whether the property has geologic/hydrologic conditions that would easily enable contamination of vulnerable aquifers that have value as drinking water sources;
- B. Whether the property serves an important groundwater recharge function;
- C. Whether the property contains or has direct connections to lakes, creeks, rivers, springs, sinkholes, or wetlands for which conservation of the property will protect or improve surface water quality;
- D. Whether the property serves an important flood management function.

I.2. Protection of Natural Communities and Landscapes

- A. Whether the property contains a diversity of natural communities;
- B. Whether the natural communities present on the property are rare;
- C. Whether there is ecological quality in the communities present on the property;
- D. Whether the property is functionally connected to other natural communities;
- E. Whether the property is adjacent to properties that are in public ownership or have other environmental protections such as conservation easements;
- F. Whether the property is large enough to contribute substantially to conservation efforts;
- G. Whether the property contains important, Florida-specific geologic features such as caves or springs;
- H. Whether the property is relatively free from internal fragmentation from roads, power lines, and other features that create barriers and edge effects.

I.3. Protection of Plant and Animal Species

- A. Whether the property serves as documented or potential habitat for rare, threatened, or endangered species or species of special concern;
- B. Whether the property serves as documented or potential habitat for species with large home ranges;
- C. Whether the property contains plants or animals that are endemic or near-endemic to Florida or Alachua County;
- D. Whether the property serves as a special wildlife migration or aggregation site for activities such as breeding, roosting, colonial nesting, or over-wintering;
- E. Whether the property offers high vegetation quality and species diversity;
- F. Whether the property has low incidence of non-native invasive species.

I.4. SOCIAL/HUMAN VALUES

- A. Whether the property offers opportunities for compatible resource-based recreation, if appropriate;
- B. Whether the property contributes to urban green space, provides a municipal defining greenbelt, provides scenic vistas, or has other value from an urban and regional planning perspective.

II.1. MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- A. Whether it will be practical to manage the property to protect its environmental, social and other values (examples include controlled burning, exotics removal, maintaining hydro-period, and so on);
- B. Whether this management can be completed in a cost-effective manner.

II.2 ECONOMIC/ ACQUISITION ISSUES

- A. Whether there is potential for purchasing the property with matching funds from municipal, state, federal, or private contributions;
- B. Whether the overall resource values justifies the potential cost of acquisition;
- C. Whether there is imminent threat of losing the environmental, social or other values of the property through development and/or lack of sufficient legislative protections (this requires analysis of current land use, zoning, owner intent, location and market conditions);
- D. Whether there is an opportunity to protect the environmental, social or other values of the property through an economically attractive less-than-fee mechanism such as a conservation easement.

LAND CONSERVATION DECISION MATRIX USE

Staff evaluates projects, or portions of projects, with the Land Conservation Decision Matrix and assigns a numeric score between 1 and 5 reflecting how well the project addresses each criterion. The Environmental and Social/Human Values that make up Section I of the LCDM determine if a property meets the intent of the Alachua County Forever Program. This section is weighted so that the average of the scores in this section equals two-thirds of the total final score calculated by the LCDM. The Management and Economic/Acquisition Issues make up Section 2, which assess a property's vulnerability and the economic feasibility of acquisition and management. This is weighted so that the average of the scores from this section equals one-third of the total score calculated by the LCDM. Total final scores range from a minimum of 2.00 to a maximum of 10.00.

CATEGORY	Criterion	WEIGHTING	Enter Criteria Value Based on Site Inspection	Average Criteria Score	Average Criteria Score Multiplied by Relative Importance
(1-1) PROTECTION OF WATER RESOURCES	A. Whether the property has geologic/hydrologic conditions that would easily enable contamination of vulnerable aquifers that have value as drinking water sources;	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7
	B. Whether the property serves an important groundwater recharge function;		5	5.0	6.7
	C. Whether the property contains or has direct connections to lakes, creeks, rivers, springs, sinkholes, or wetlands for which conservation of the property will protect or improve surface water quality;		5	5.0	6.7
	D. Whether the property serves an important flood management function		5	5.0	6.7
	A. Whether the property contains a diversity of natural communities;		5	5.0	6.7
	B. Whether the natural communities present on the property are rare;		5	5.0	6.7
	C. Whether there is ecological quality in the communities present on the property;		5	5.0	6.7
	D. Whether the property is functionally connected to other natural communities;		5	5.0	6.7
	E. Whether the property is adjacent to properties that are in public ownership or have other environmental protections such as conservation easements;		5	5.0	6.7
	F. Whether the property is large enough to contribute substantially to conservation efforts;		5	5.0	6.7
(1-2) PROTECTION OF NATURAL COMMUNITIES AND LANDSCAPES	G. Whether the property contains important, Florida-specific geologic features such as caves or springs;	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7
	H. Whether the property is relatively free from internal fragmentation from roads, power lines, and other features that create barriers and edge effects.	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7
	A. Whether the property serves as documented or potential habitat for rare, threatened, or endangered species or species of special concern;	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7
	B. Whether the property serves as documented or potential habitat for species with large home ranges;	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7
	C. Whether the property contains plants or animals that are endemic or near-endemic to Florida or Alachua County;	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7
	D. Whether the property serves as a special wildlife migration or aggregation site for activities such as breeding, roosting, colonial nesting, or over-wintering;	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7
	E. Whether the property offers high vegetation quality and species diversity;	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7
	F. Whether the property has low incidence of non-native invasive species.	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7
	A. Whether the property offers opportunities for compatible resource-based recreation, if appropriate;	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7
	B. Whether the property contributes to urban green space, provides a municipal defining greenbelt, provides scenic vistas, or has other value from an urban and regional planning perspective.	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7
(1-4) SOCIAL AND HUMAN VALUES	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CRITERIA SET IN THE OVERALL SCORE	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7
(11-1) MANAGEMENT ISSUES	A. Whether it will be practical to manage the property to protect its environmental, social and other values (examples include controlled burning, exotic removal, maintaining hydro-period, and so on);	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7
B. Whether this management can be completed in a cost-effective manner.	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7	
A. Whether there is potential for purchasing the property with matching funds from municipal, state, federal, or private contributions;	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7	
B. Whether the overall resource values justifies the potential cost of acquisition;	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7	
C. Whether there is imminent threat of losing the environmental, social or other values of the property through development and/or lack of sufficient legislative protections (this requires analysis of current land use, zoning, owner intent, location and market conditions);	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7	
D. Whether there is an opportunity to protect the environmental, social or other values of the property through an economically attractive less-than-fee mechanism such as a conservation easement	1.3333	5	5.0	6.7	
(11-2) ECONOMIC AND ACQUISITION ISSUES	AVERAGE FOR ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT VALUES	0.6667	5	5.0	6.7
TOTAL SCORE	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CRITERIA SET IN THE OVERALL SCORE	0.6667	5	5.0	6.7
TOTAL SCORE		0.6667	5	5.0	6.7

