



Fire Services Merger

Discussion on the Consolidation/Merger of Fire Services

Provision of Fire Services

Prior to any agreements between the City of Gainesville and Alachua County, the City had a career fire-rescue department (since 1925), and the County was mostly volunteer.

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

In the Mid 70s – Agreement for provision of one City fire engine to any structure fire occurring within the suburban fringe. The County creates the Alachua Ambulance Service (1974).

1984 – A Fire Services contract was established specifying terms and conditions for compensation of provided services.

Provision of Fire Services

1985 – The MSTU was created and the County elected to develop a Fire Department.

1989 – Fire Services Master Plan was developed which laid the foundation for a seven year agreement based upon:

- Closest unit dispatch
- Standardized response protocols
- Response times and apparatus capabilities
- Placement of facilities and methods of compensation

Provision of Fire Services

Alachua County begins building fire stations in urban fringe.

1990 through 1994 – County constructed:

- Station #19 @ 4300 SW 20th Avenue
- Station #16 @ 1600 NW Ft. Clark Blvd
- Station #12 @ 1200 SE 43rd Street

1996 – City & County contracted with Analytica for an assessment of the community's fire services capabilities and recommendations for future service delivery models.

As a qualifier for model development, three major factors were recognized as adding value to any new proposed organizational structure:

- *The ability to ensure institutional self-interests are met;*
- *Improvement to existing services or addition of new services of value; and*
- *Reduced costs by reductions or productivity improvements or cost avoidance.*

Provision of Fire Services

1998 – County adds Fire Station 15 at 7000 SW 88th Street

2000s – Discussion of Joint City/County Commissions led to development of an inter-local agreement to explore “Creation of a Combined Emergency Services System.”

- Combined Emergency Services Transition Board established under the direction of the Joint City/County Commissions continued analyzing global merger needs related to: station locations, staffing, response times, equity of funding, and labor issues.
- Legal assistance was secured for the Board to aid in addressing labor issues.
- A contractor was secured for rendering an assessment of a merger on current fire department ISO classification.
- Respective labor unions of the City and County joined to form a new local body for representation of the combined labor force to the new governance body.
- Several governance models evaluated.

Provision of Fire Services

2002 – The Joint City/County Commission failed to renew extension of the Combined Emergency Services Transition Board. The Transition Board was allowed to sunset following the September 30th expiration; as specified within the Interlocal Agreement.

2002 – Annexation in SW Gainesville. Area covered SW 34th St to I-75, Archer Rd. to Williston Rd.

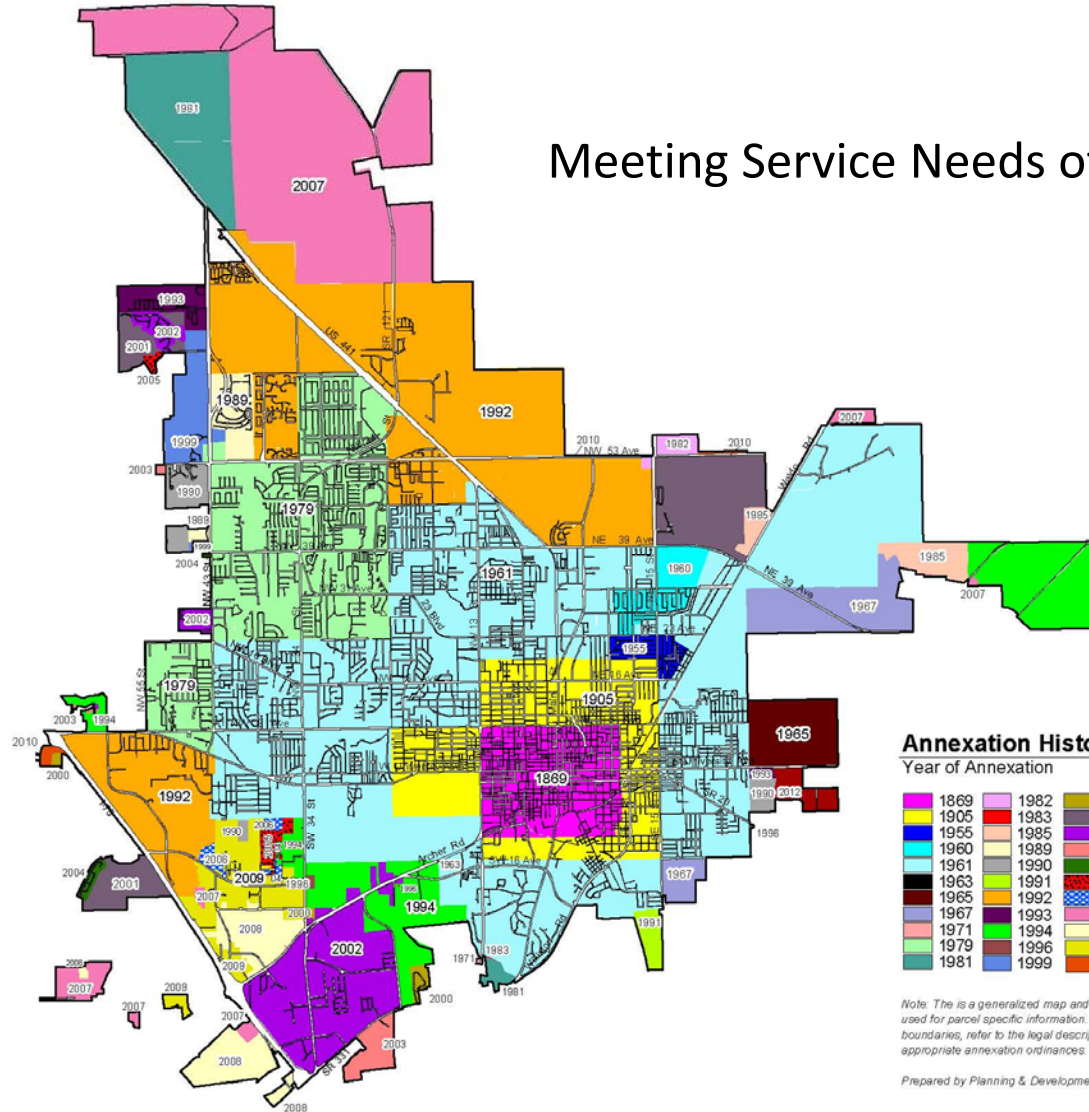
2002 - County voters indicated through a non-binding referendum their support for merger of Fire/EMS services without the creation of a special district.

2003 - County Commission initiated dialog during a Joint City/County Commission meeting to revisit the issue of merging Fire/EMS services.

- City Staff delivered a proposal for county-wide merger 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.

Annexation History

Meeting Service Needs of City Residents



Annexation History

Year of Annexation

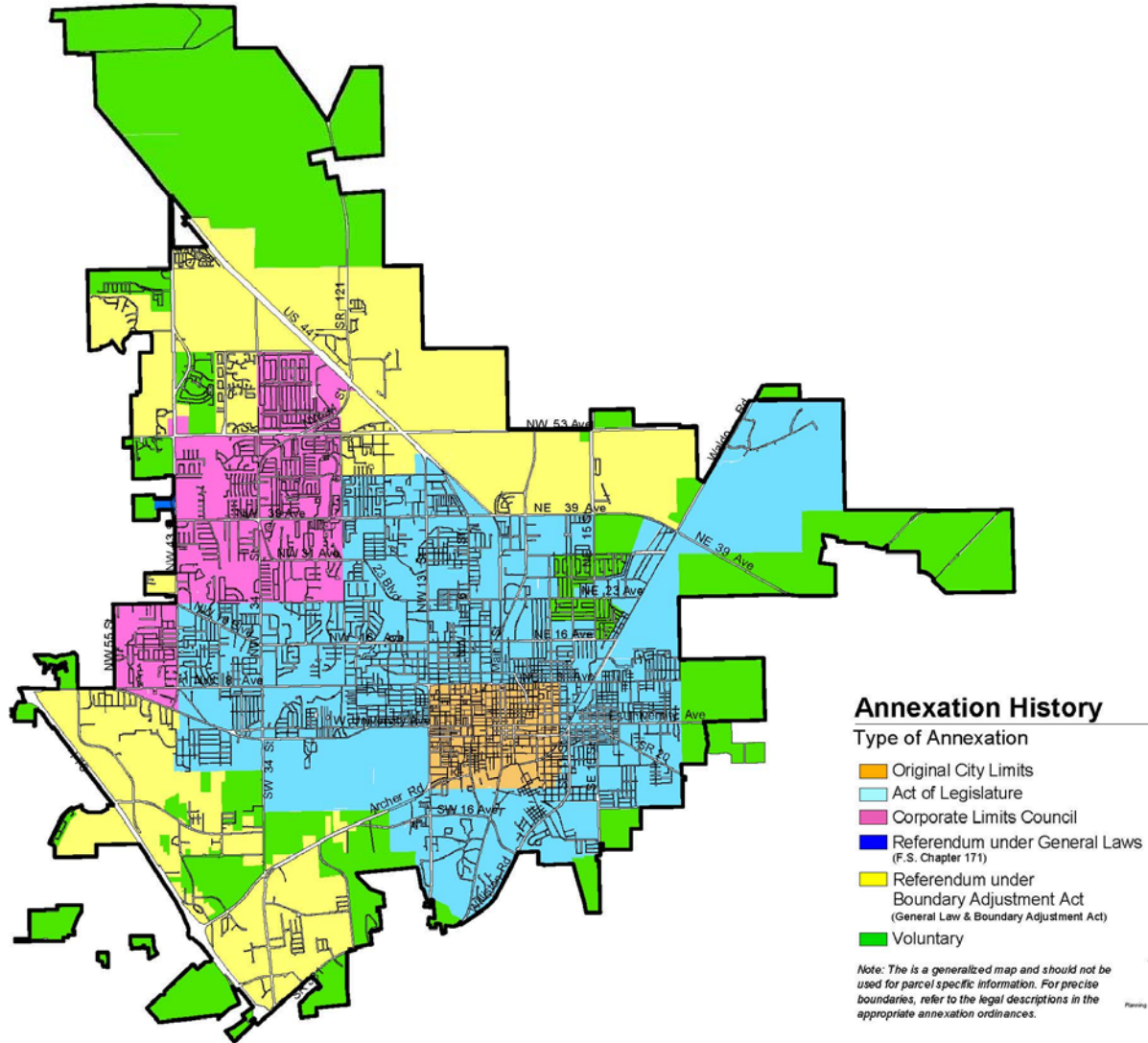
1869	1982	2000	2012
1905	1983	2001	
1955	1985	2002	
1960	1989	2003	
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1965	1992	2006	
1967	1993	2007	
1971	1994	2008	
1979	1996	2009	
1981	1999	2010	

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.



Prepared by Planning & Development Services, 3/12

Annexation History by Type



Provision of Fire Services

2004– *Emergency Consulting Services, Inc.* was contracted by the County to develop a county-wide master plan for Fire/EMS Services.

The 2004 Fire/EMS Master Plan called for:

- 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 four County rescue companies
- Daily minimum staffing of 109 system-wide

The document also identified three organizational strategies:

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

Provision of Fire Services

2006 – Fire Services Assistance Agreement (FSAA) renewed automatic aid and recognized the Alachua County 2004 Fire Services Master Plan’s identification of future station locations, accepted staffing levels, level of services to be provided, and prevention of duplication of services.

- 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 station, located within the City exclusively houses two rescue (transport) units.

2007 – Voluntary annexation of Butler Plaza area

2009 – City Annexation of voter approved SW 20th Avenue Area

2010 – County Commission requests discussion of consolidation of fire services with the City at joint City/County Commission meeting

Provision of Fire Services

2010 – City implemented a Fire Assessment Fee to fund half the cost of the operational portion for provision of fire services.

2011- City opened Fire Station #8 @ 3223 NW 42nd Avenue consistent with the 2004 Fire Services Master Plan.

2012 – County conducted a performance update to the Fire Services Master Plan (2004). The update does not include the City. It identified the needs that remained since the 2004 study.

2004 Recommendations

Add three County Fire Stations

Add four County Rescues

Delete two Rescue Stations

2012 Recommendations

Add four County Fire Stations

Add four County Rescues

Delete one Rescue Station

Provision of Fire Services

2014 – City received CFAI Accreditation

2014 – City received upgrade of ISO rating.

2014 – City receives grant 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.

2014 – County receives notice of award for a two-year Federal grant for 22 Firefighters to increase minimum staffing of units located in Archer, Hawthorne and Waldo to four personnel.

Future of Fire Services

- Determine goals and/or what is expected/hoped to be achieved through a Merged Emergency Services System
- Identify responsibilities and level of services of a Merged Emergency Services System
- Elements of a Merged Emergency Services System
- Funding Considerations of a Merged Emergency Services System (cost/fiscal impact on City residents based on current service vs. merged service)
- Governance of a Merged Emergency Services System

Potential Merger Study

If the City Commission is interested in exploring a potential merger, staff recommends that the City and County jointly select and pay for a consultant to perform a study.

- The estimated cost of a consolidation/merger study could be approximately \$150,000 of which the City would pay half.
- City funding would need to be identified as it is not in the current FY14 budget, or the recommended FY15 and FY16 budget.

Recommendation

The City Commission:

- 1) Hear a presentation from City staff;
- 2) Determine if the City Commission is interested in exploring a potential merger of Gainesville and Alachua County Fire Rescue services; and
- 3) Authorize the Mayor to send a letter to the Chair of the County Commission conveying the position of the City Commission