

**1999 Annual Report
East Gainesville Sprout Project Task Force****HISTORY AND SUMMARY**

The purpose of the East Gainesville Sprout Project Task Force is to provide guidance to staff and the City Commission regarding the development of a stormwater park on a brownfield site. The Task Force was formed in late-1998 with the appointment of citizens from the Gainesville area. By April 1999, the Task Force established meeting and membership guidelines and elected a Chair and Vice-Chair. Members represent several backgrounds and interests such as neighborhood issues, environmental science, banking, urban design, water resource management, and local government. The current number of members is thirteen. The Task Force meets the first Tuesday of each month. Staff support is provided by the City Brownfields Coordinator and a staff member from the City Public Works Department.

In 1999 the Task Force reviewed several initiatives and provided specific recommendations for action. These initiatives can be broadly organized into three categories: property acquisitions, technical issues, and outreach. The Task Force provided guidance to the City on the following items:

- Land acquisition for the proposed stormwater park
- Submittal of environmental reports
- Designation of a state brownfield area
- Execution of a contract for environmental and stormwater services
- Application for supplemental brownfield funding
- Evaluation of uses for the Depot Building
- Creation of an information kiosk

PROJECT STATUS**Land Acquisition**

In April, the Task Force requested that the City Commission direct staff to move forward on acquiring the MCB Oil and CSX real property. The Commission approved the recommendation and directed staff to move forward with this work. The Task Force recommended exercising caution due to the financial and liability risks associated with purchasing contaminated land. Appraisals and surveys were completed on approximately 14 acres owned by MCB Oil. The City secured a right of first refusal agreement for \$10,000 for sixty days. During that time, the City made two purchase offers based on the appraised value of the real property. These offers were rejected by the owner. Purchase negotiations were concluded without a transaction in November. Discussions with CSX in June emphasized the City's willingness to purchase approximately 22 acres south of Depot Avenue. CSX indicated it would consider purchase offers by the City. In September, Florida Communities Trust (FCT) awarded the City \$600,000 to purchase land for the proposed stormwater park. A Conceptual Approval Agreement was executed by the City in December. The agreement specifies that FCT will lead purchase and sale negotiations for acquiring the properties. The Task Force recommended conducting appraisals to determine the value of the property reflecting the current level of contamination. Staff and FCT are currently in discussions to finalize an acquisition plan to determine the exact parcels that will be purchased by FCT.

Submittal of Environmental Reports

The City's environmental consultant ERM prepared a site investigation report on the CSX property in March. This report was presented to the Task Force for review. Comments by the Task Force were submitted in writing and were considered by both the City and ERM. Supplemental sampling was conducted by ERM consistent with these comments. The amended report was submitted to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in May.

The Task Force also received the draft Supplemental Sampling and Analysis Plan (SSAP) developed by Environmental Consultants and Technology (ECT), the City's consultant for environmental and stormwater design services. The plan

describes the sampling and analysis work needed to fill information gaps. Task Force members forwarded comments in writing to staff for consideration by ECT. The SSAP was submitted to FDEP in January 2000.

Brownfield Area Designation

Staff raised the issue of designating the proposed stormwater park site a brownfield area under Chapter 376.77-376.85 F.S. in March 1999. The Task Force reviewed the applicable statutes and discussed the benefits and drawbacks of the designation. One of the main benefits of the state brownfield program is that the City could become eligible to receive voluntary cleanup tax credits, which could be later transferred to another entity. The Task Force discussed possible boundaries, concluding that the proposed stormwater park site would be an appropriate area to designate. In December, the Task Force recommended that staff seek the adoption of a municipal resolution to designate the proposed stormwater park and the former manufactured gas plant site as a state brownfields area.

Execution of a contract for environmental and stormwater services

The City executed a contract with Environmental Consulting and Technology (ECT) to provide stormwater and environmental consulting services for the remediation planning of the stormwater park. A scope of work was developed and presented to the Task Force. Members discussed the various phases of the manufactured gas plant cleanup involving the Poole Roofing site, the CSX property, and Paynes Prairie. The Task Force recommended the downstream impacts should be addressed separately and not delay the work phase approved for the CSX site. The City is planning to develop a separate preliminary scope of work for the downstream impacts in early 2000.

Application for supplemental brownfield funding

The US EPA announced the availability of supplemental brownfield assessment pilot funding in November. Staff presented to the Task Force a draft strategy for conducting additional brownfield assessments in the vicinity of the proposed stormwater park using these supplemental funds. A grant proposal for \$200,000 was developed for conducting additional site identification, creating an expanded brownfield database, and obtaining design services under a special open space development provision. Notification of funding awards is expected in March 2000. The Task Force provided a letter of support for this grant proposal.

Evaluation of uses for the Depot Building

The Old Gainesville Depot is an important part of the Sprout Project. The Depot is located near what will become the northern boundary of the stormwater park. The Task Force evaluated various options for siting the Depot as well as possible uses. Toward the end of 1999, the Task Force recommended moving the building to facilitate environmental cleanup and recommended that a children's museum be evaluated as a potential use. Staff will refer these recommendations to the City Commission in February.

Creation of an information kiosk

The Task Force expressed a need to provide information signage regarding the Sprout Project at the CSX property along Depot Avenue. In response to this concern, staff created a partnership with the UF Center for Construction and Environment (CCE) to develop an "information kiosk". The kiosk design will be selected by a citizen jury in February. The CCE will provide materials and labor to construct the kiosk, for which an Earth Day dedication is planned in April.