

Citizen Commitment
CARE # 2/5/09

Re: Request for Gainesville City Commission Agenda Item

Subject: Proposed Plan ("Plan") for implementation of the self-designation of Gainesville, Florida, as the First Butterfly City.

From: Gabriel Hillel, for the Butterfly Education Project ("Project").

Date: Submission of this Request on or Thursday, Feb. 5, 2009, for consideration of its merits and recommendation for further action at a future Commission meeting

Discussion

In the State of the City Address for 2009, Mayor Pegeen Hanrahan spoke about drive and passion for excellence which "permeates our community and is reflected in the civic engagement of Gainesville's citizens." The Mayor looked forward to "entering our 25th year as a Tree City, USA, our fifth year as a Bicycle Friendly Community, and our first year as a Butterfly City."

The Project, a non-profit entity, and its coordinator Gabriel Hillel, have been credited in *The Gainesville Sun*, and in the meeting minutes of the City with playing a role in the self-designation by Gainesville on Dec. 4, 2008, as the First Butterfly City. The Project advocated that action. In response to a specific request for action, the Project on Nov. 5, 2008, submitted a Proposal. The City also had for its review a White Paper submitted by a consortium of public and private agencies, which are also seeking implementation of a plan for a Butterfly City.

Successes in 2008

The Project based its Proposal in large measure on successes in 2008:

- Children at the Caring and Sharing K-5 Charter Public School visited the Butterfly Rainforest at the University of Florida Museum of Natural History McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity. To get there, they received financial and in-kind support from the Gainesville Leadership Alumni, the Junior Chamber of Commerce, and the Center for Latin American Studies.

- Children used disposable flash cameras to record their impressions. They were taught to edit the photos after they were developed on computers at their school, and to select views used to generate mirror and reverse images.

- About 50 8"x12" Kaleidophotos created by the School's third through fifth graders were displayed first at the Tutoring Zone, then the Discovery Room at the University of Florida Natural History Museum, and most recently at Gainesville Regional Airport. The project likely will be repeated this year.

- Children at Reichert House and other after-school programs may be considered for the same purpose this year.

- The children's artistic journey and the beauty of the Butterfly Rainforest were given their due in news reports and television coverage throughout the year.

During the course of the year, the Project group identified future directions to generate interest in such activities. We conceived of a public private relationship.

Butterfly Fest, Website, More

In the current fiscal year, the Project group wants to further activities at a broad Citywide Butterfly Fest, in support of the main event at the Tropical Butterfly Rainforest on Saturday and Sunday near the University of Florida Museum of Natural History, on the campus' cultural plaza, on Saturday/Sunday, Oct. 24-25.

- The FirstButterflyCity.org website will be up and functional before the next City Commission meeting. The website will be used to promote butterflies, photography, education, and related subjects. The website also will publicize local events, including, in March alone, the Kanapaha Botanical Festival, the Orlando Home Show, and the Santa Fe Community College spring art festival.

- A competition will be held for visual art work, primarily photography, for distribution throughout Gainesville during that time period. The City and the McGuire Center are being asked to contribute that joint venture, to increase public interest in the first Citywide Butterfly Fest.

- Children at the Caring & Sharing School, and perhaps others including the adolescents at Reichert House, will have the chance to go through the same sort of process, from experiencing the Butterfly Rainforest, to the creation and display of photos taken there, or nearby.

- Those children and others will be encouraged to grow plants used by Butterflies for nectar, or caterpillars for survival.

- Butterfly and other forms of urban gardening will be promoted. Kathy Malone, president of the North Center Florida chapter of the North American Butterfly Association ("NABA") has suggested that one or two nectar plants can be sufficient to create small butterfly gardens. Different plants might be grown to attract caterpillars who fatten themselves before they transform into chrysalises.

- A direct mailing campaign is contemplated to involve businesses in display of butterfly images during the Butterfly Fest time in October. In the past, the City has relied on children volunteers to festoon downtown with butterfly decorations. Such activity will be welcomed again.

Businesses also will be asked to sponsor or provide resources to various child-oriented organizations, including the City's own Parks and Recreation Department, to further planting and photograph ventures.

- Another direct mail campaign will target garden clubs, public and private mosquito control, and again recreation centers and schools, to alert them about the dangers of pesticides to butterflies and other insects benefitting the environment.

- A key step will be adoption of standards for Gainesville, Florida, to maintain itself as a Butterfly City, and for others seeking similar status. The Project and Consortium representatives should begin to meet toward that end, under City auspices. Jeff Glassberg, NABA president, has expressed interest in transforming the concept into a national or even international enterprise.

- For Gainesville, the model to follow seems to be the Tree City program. Since joining in 1984, the City has created an advisory board and hired arborist. They have been active in preservation of Gainesville's beautiful canopy. For butterfly activities, neighborhood and group participation will be encouraged.

The Long Range

The Project has a three year plan—FY2009-FY2011 to:

- market the Butterfly City brand for Gainesville, in much the same way that the University of Florida as promoted itself as the Gator Nation;

- show how Gainesville, FL acts as a caring, creative, environmentally-conscious community, and works to bring together art and nature lovers;

- encourage, through photography and gardening, interest among disadvantaged children, in the arts and sciences, first in Gainesville, and, later, elsewhere. A “visual thinking/visual learning” approach will be developed.

The Project group includes: Peter Johnson, business entrepreneur, for communication and marketing; his daughter Jessica Johnson, a graduate student; for Photoshop techniques; Gabriel Hillel, a former journalist; Dr. Susan Schillinger, an education administrator, for editing; Andrei Sourakov, Center collection coordinator, Ph.D., for photography; Nat DeVore, a graphic arts student at Santa Fe Community College, for the website format; Dr. Rick Ferdig, Ph.D., University of Florida faculty, for insight into education applications; Dr. Simon and Verna Johnson, Curtis and Tova Peterson, and other faculty and staff members, at Caring & Sharing, about application of the Project ideas, to learning strategies in English, art, and science, at the elementary school level.

The Project group has relied on Dr. Mary Risner, of the outreach program, at the Center for Latin American Studies, as a liaison between disadvantaged youth and resources in the community and the Butterfly Rainforest, and Kathy Malone, NABA chapter president, for links to knowledgeable butterfly advocates in and outside of academia, locally and nationally. Mark Minno, butterfly book writer, and Bruce Morgan, the original Tropical Rainforest landscaper, have indicated their willingness to make the Project a success. Harriet Ludwig, who frequently writes for the Gainesville Sun, about race and education, has expressed interest in following up on the activities of the children and youth in this venture.

Each step of the planning process is intended to supplement rather than supplant McGuire Center activities. To that end the Project hopes to work closely with Bob Woods, the communications and market manager. He already has proven to be invaluable as a resource. He has suggested various City and other public agencies whose support will be necessary to make the Plan a success. Included are the Parks and Recreation Department; the Nature and Cultural Affairs Office; the Community Redevelopment Agency; and RTS bus advertising component.

Cooperation with the Alachua County Visitors and Convention Bureau is essential. So are connections to local business venues, through the Greater Gainesville Chamber of Commerce.

If the venture is entirely successful, the culminating event would be the creation of a video game tracking the round-trip journey taken annually by several generations of Monarch Butterflies between North America and Mexico, and the environmental and human barriers they have to overcome to complete the venture. An hour long PBS program aired late last month, locally on WUFT-TV. A local tv production about the First Butterfly City also might be possible.

Seed Funding

Ultimately, some funding will be needed to get the Project off the ground. The photo competition seems to be the likely starting point. Insurance may be a major consideration for protection of the materials.

Supplies, and postage also will be needed for direct mailing, not only to promote the overall venture, by making businesses here and cities elsewhere, aware of the campaign to foster creation of Butterfly Cities, including Gainesville. Kaleidophotos will be featured, primarily to attract children to participate in their creation as an in-school or after school activity. Such activities will be carried out as funds become available.

So—fund raising, butterfly displays during Butterfly Fest, promotion of butterfly and urban gardens, and repetition of last year’s success with the Caring & Sharing School and perhaps others are the primary activities envisioned for FY 2009.

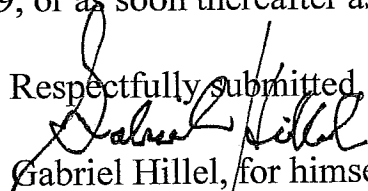
In FY 2010, the activities will be reviewed and altered depending on the first year’s experience. Fund raising would be done on a more systematic level, with applications targeted to the specific interests of government and foundation sources. in education, in promotion of public arts, and in connections between nature and art. The website would be monitored closely, and perhaps regarded as a revenue source.

In FY 2011, the Project should have sufficient revenue sources to turn its attention almost exclusively to making Gainesville known worldwide for its Tropical Butterfly Rainforest and civic activities related to the protection of butterflies.

But what is important now is the extent to which Gainesville will provide written commitment, support by staff time, and seed funding for a matching grant to sustain the visual arts competition and display. Please schedule discussions by appropriate staff and the City Commission itself to determine what level of commitment and endorsement will be given to this unique public-private venture.

We look forward to placement of this issue on the Agenda for the Meeting of the City Commission on Feb. 19, 2009, or as soon thereafter as possible.

Respectfully submitted,


Gabriel Hillel, for himself,
Peter Johnson,
Dr. Andrei Sourakov,
Dr. Susan Schillinger
Nat DeVore