

How We Build

Where We Are & How We Got Here:

The City of Gainesville, like many cities in the United States, has a history of practices that influenced its ability to create opportunities for people of color and minorities to grow and succeed. Government actions and policies such as zoning laws, lending practices, and investment decisions favored those with a vested interest in their own communities and overall has been at the expense of others. This has disproportionately affected members in our community who have not been served by our decision-making process, resulting in a lower quality of life.

For black and minority communities, it means dealing with the consequences of governmental practices and laws that have historically been used to disproportionately affect their ability to enjoy the same quality of life as other race groups. Consequences include the lack of new development in these communities, leading to a lack of access to essential services like grocery stores and healthcare facilities, and the ability to accrue generational wealth (wealth that gets transferred from one generation of a family to the next) based on property value. These consequences have long-lasting impacts on the built environment.

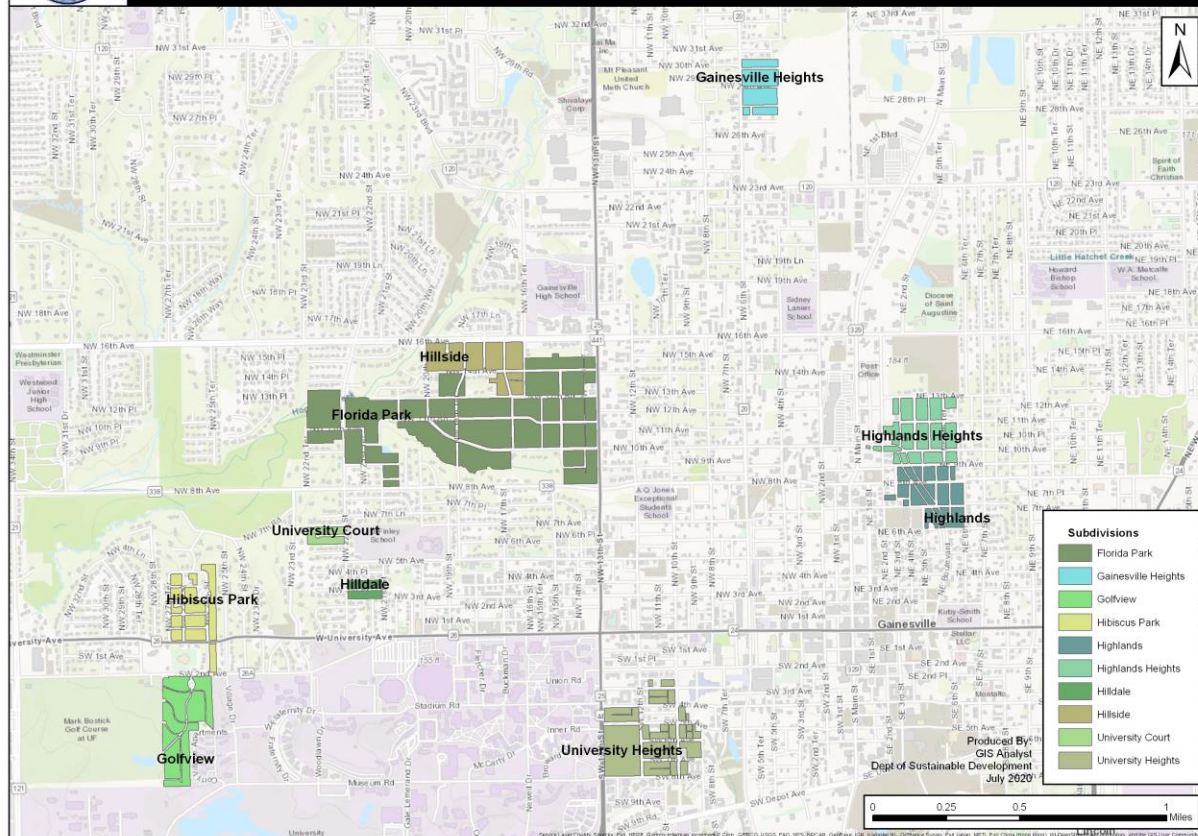
Examples of past policies and tools used to further racial disparities include:

- Discriminatory lending practices, such as federally issued mortgage insurance and infrastructure grants to increase white homeownership leading to appreciating values in those areas.
- Legal segregation through municipal regulations.
- Privately initiated racially restrictive covenants and denying access to financing for homeownership therefore driving investment away from black communities.
- Lack of public investment in the built environment of black and minority communities.

These policies increased racial disparities in home ownership, opportunity (access to jobs and quality education), quality of built homes and housing security. Resolving these disparities in those communities will make for a better city overall.



Sample of Subdivisions with Racial Covenants



The ways that we regulate construction in the built environment affects the quality of life in communities. Laws and regulations such as exclusionary zonings laws, which limit the types of homes that can be built in neighborhoods, contribute to the difficulties that minority groups face in developing housing. Regulations such as minimum lot size requirements, minimum square footage requirements, prohibition on multi-family homes, and excessive setbacks support a legal discriminatory practice that keep lower-income people who are disproportionately black and minorities, out of more affluent middle-class neighborhoods by making the development of homes in these neighborhoods more expensive. The larger lot size requirements also reduce the supply of land available for denser and more compact development which would increase opportunities for more housing and would help decrease the financial burden of single-family home developments. These legal practices have substituted outright discriminatory laws and have helped to create a resulting segregated built environment where black and minorities are kept in neighborhoods lacking the same opportunities as more affluent white neighborhoods.

In addition to the discriminatory laws and regulations that segregated Gainesville, there was a historic disinvestment in the public realms of minority communities. This disinvestment includes elements affecting the quality of spaces and access to important goods and services. In comparison to Gainesville's affluent communities, minority communities experience a lack of sidewalks, bike and walking paths, green spaces and trees, and other elements that contribute to a complete and healthy community. Due to this disinvestment in the public realm, development in these incomplete communities is also more expensive. On the regulatory side, land use and zoning placements also contribute to an incomplete built environment. All Gainesville residents should have the opportunity to enjoy a built environment designed to meet the needs of people by providing access to services, promotes healthy living, and will work on keeping Gainesville residents safe.

Progress to Build On:

The City of Gainesville has begun to take important, incremental steps towards creating a community that meets the needs of all neighbors, regardless of race, culture, or socio-economic status. Changes to the Land Development Code have been adopted in recent years which allow for more diverse housing types across the city. Accessory dwelling units are now allowed within all single-family zoning district, in addition to higher density districts. Additionally, single-room occupancy residences are also now allowed in a variety of zoning districts. This type of housing focuses on individual rooms for rent which may or may not contain individual kitchen units and other facilities.

The introduction of transect zones to the Land Development Code created design standards that were intended to enhance Gainesville's urban environment; these enhancing design standards include landscape and frontage zones, streetscape improvements, architectural and materials regulations, and more. While transect zones and their design standards have contributed to enhancing the public realm, there are opportunities to expand these enhancements beyond transect zones.

Through various City programs, Gainesville is committed to improving and investing in neighborhoods and communities who have historically been left behind. The GCRA currently provides funding and assistance for retrofitting existing houses to improve quality of life. The Rental Housing program through the Neighborhood Enhancement Division strengthened renter's rights and energy efficiency standards in rental units. Beyond these examples, there are more opportunities to support investments in neighborhoods and communities across Gainesville.

What's At Stake:

Addressing city regulations that have historically been used to create a segregated built environment will help create a city that can be enjoyed by all its citizens. More equitable regulations will also help in creating a more complete built environment that is more resilient to economic anomalies, is more environmentally responsible and sustainable; and affords the possibility for all Gainesville residents to live within City limits regardless of race, color, or socio-economic status. Adopting strategies that lead to strong actions now will help to ameliorate the unbalanced lived experience.

Outcome 1: All Gainesville residents can enjoy living in equitable and complete communities.

Urban design standards established in the Land Development Code should enhance the sense of place, improve the urban form, and provide for the safety and comfort of pedestrians, cyclists, transit, and other vehicles in the City. These standards shall reflect a commitment to improve and maintain the vitality of the City and its neighborhoods. Established standards must foster predictable built results and a high-quality public realm with clear distinctions between urban, suburban, and natural areas. Land development regulations shall help steer development throughout the city in order to help create complete neighborhoods where residents have safe and convenient access to goods and services needed in daily life such as diverse housing options, grocery stores, schools, recreational facilities, and any other services needed by communities. Complete neighborhoods shall be built to a walkable and bikeable human scale and meet the needs of people of all Gainesville residents regardless of age, sex, or race.

Indicators

- Community perceptions of urban form and built environment in public spaces and neighborhoods
- Capital improvement and number of built environment enhancements in black and minority neighborhoods
- Development trends within and around black and minority neighborhoods
- Analysis associated with staff reports for land use amendment and rezoning requests
- Walkability score

Strategies

1. **Assess existing zoning, land use, overlay districts, and environmental designations throughout the City to determine their ability to support the basic needs of all residents in a community.** There are communities in Gainesville that do not have access to basic essential services. This strategy aims to meet neighborhood and community needs by allowing and incentivizing development that would support a healthy and thriving lifestyle. This could be accomplished by changing land use and district designations or amending the underlying regulations for these underserved areas to support community needs.
2. **Urban design standards established in the Land Development Code shall create a more interactive development pattern that has a strong relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks.**
3. **Create policies and incentives that enable flexibility for development design to encourage infill development, compact design and discourage sprawl, while considering and addressing the harmful impacts of displacement.**
 - a. Fostering a more efficient use of land that has already been developed is a core principle of compact design. Building within an existing neighborhood can attract more people to the jobs, homes, and businesses already there while also making the most of public investments in things like water and sewer lines, roads, and emergency services.
4. **Create complete communities that incorporate multi-modal transportation choices for new development to enhance connections beyond the project site to other community resources**
 - a. Ensure provision of alternative transportation choices with new residential development and consider opportunities to enhance connections beyond the project site for commercial development.
 - b. The City shall continue to fund public transportation efforts such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and public transit facilities (please see technical document)
 - c. Encourage the establishment of residential, retail, office, health services, and civic uses within ¼ mile of the center of neighborhood centers as an effective way to reduce car trips and promote transit, walking, and bicycling.
5. **Expand opportunity for a diversity of housing types.** Revisions to City regulations have the potential to lower the costs of development and increase the feasibility of creative housing solutions. Neighborhoods should contain a diversity of housing types to support neighbors with a variety backgrounds and income levels.
 - a. Investigate the feasibility to allow nonconventional dwelling types such as mobile homes and tiny homes on wheels in more areas of the city.
 - b. Encourage senior housing near neighborhood centers, shopping centers, public transportation, parks, and greenbelts where compatible with existing uses.

- c. Create policies and incentives that enable flexibility for development design on sites with environmentally significant features to enable conservation of these areas while meeting project goals;
- d. Promote the adoption of zoning districts which allow for a mix of uses
- e. Disallow the adoption of zoning districts which only allow single-family dwellings
- 6. Incorporate language into the review criteria for land use amendments and zoning changes that require an analysis of requests from an equity standpoint.** These review criteria are defined in the Supplemental Strategies section of this chapter.
 - a. Amend review criteria for Land Use and Rezoning requests that requires an equity analysis.
- 7. Continue to require public facilities from developers for new developments.**
 - a. New development shall mitigate their impact on the built environment by continuing to provide public facilities impacted or associated with the development (see Technical Document)
- 8. Support Innovation Economy in the City of Gainesville**
 - a. Collaborate with community partners such as the University of Florida, Santa Fe College, the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce, Alachua County, and the School Board of Alachua County
 - b. The City shall work to establish adequate public infrastructure including high-speed broadband throughout the City
 - c. The City shall work to ensure that pertinent local, state, and federal incentive programs are made available to those seeking Innovation Economy development opportunities.

Outcome 2: All Gainesville residents live in healthy communities that promote physical, mental, and social wellbeing.

All communities and neighborhoods in Gainesville should be designed to provide an enhanced public realm that supports the wellbeing of neighbors. Research shows that the design of buildings, roads, and neighborhoods can have a positive impact on a person's health which includes physical, mental, and social well-being. Development plays an important role in supporting an environment that is sensitive to these health needs and as such, communities in Gainesville should promote a more walkable and safer built environment, provide opportunities for social interaction, and create an environment that is mentally stimulating and aesthetically pleasing.

Indicators

- Results of the community resilience assessment
- Walkability score
- Longevity of buildings and structures within the City
- Number of building permits related to retrofitting existing buildings to improve efficiency
- Number of LEED Certified buildings and projects within the City

Strategies

- 1. Amend the Land Development Code to promote, incentivize, or require standards for building resilient communities so that they can withstand adversity from health, financial, and environmental stressors**

- a. Encourage dense, compact development with transportation options that will support the most efficient use of land, working to combat challenges of climate change.
 - b. Prioritize underserved areas to receive the first enhancements when the City has planned citywide public improvements such as sidewalks, street re-paving, undergrounding utilities, street lights, and public parks.
 - c. Enact policies and change land uses and zoning designations that will encourage residential proximity and access to fresh food sources and health services, and help establish urban agriculture through food markets and other uses
 - d. Promote the development of public green or open space in all City land use and zoning districts to encourage outdoor recreation
 - e. Discourage the abundance of large continuous impervious surfaces in large-scale developments.
- 2. Conduct a community resilience assessment for indicators such as educational attainment, unemployment rate, disability, home ownership, mobility, household income, income inequality, and any other indicator determined as needed for analysis.**
- a. Pursue funding from nonprofits and other sources to conduct a community resilience analysis or City resilience designation/certification
- 3. Ensure that new construction is built with materials intended to last for the long term and are energy efficient. Buildings and structures shall be built-to-last and resilient to extreme weather events and other community stressors.**
- a. Retrofitting existing buildings and enhancements to the urban environment for energy efficiency should be prioritized in areas within the City that have historically received less public investment, are requiring attention, or at significant risk.
 - b. The construction of all development in Gainesville should be built with high-quality materials to ensure that buildings have a prolonged lifespan, support renter's rights, and can reduce utility costs.
 - c. Constructing buildings that are energy-efficient can reduce utility costs for neighbors and business-owners, while reducing the environmental impact.

Outcome 3: All Gainesville residents experience a safe and inclusive urban environment.

In the design of public and shared spaces it is possible to give residents a sense of ownership and therefore encourage investment and a desire to protect shared spaces and enable territorial control of otherwise unsafe areas. Constructing the built environment in a way that maximizes the ability for a neighbor to casually observe semi-public spaces can achieve a greater level of community oversight and safety and reduce the occurrence of crimes of opportunity. Thoughtfulness in the design of lighting, landscaping, sidewalks and streetscapes can all work towards reducing crime and creating a sense of safety. Additionally, thoughtful design into streetscapes and roadways can enable a safer multi-modal experience, reducing conflicts between automobiles, pedestrians and bicyclists.

Indicators

- Perceptions of safety in urban environment
- Crime rates by neighborhood or census block, comparison over specified time periods.
- Number of improvements to the public realm through written design standards and physical additions
- Pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle accident data on streets and especially at major intersections (maintain a map of this type of data)

Strategies:

- 1. Activate spaces in the built environment to create an inviting, comfortable, and livable experience.**
 - a. Identify areas for infill development and promote infill in urbanized areas of the city, while considering and addressing the harmful impacts of displacement
 - b. Encourage smaller block sizes, frequent street connections, narrower streets, and promote access to destinations in compact urban environments that alleviate the need for vehicle travel
- 2. Promote a built environment through design standards that create an atmosphere where all neighbors feel comfortable and confident spending time.** The design of a development should take into consideration the creation of this type of space for neighbors including sidewalks, shaded areas, benches, water fountains, and bathrooms.
 - a. When considering physical interventions to support community safety, lighting and other simple interventions like safe crosswalks, signals, and signage.
 - b. Require design standards that encourage visibility at the street level through front façade windows and doors. Visibility at the street level enhances the sense of community.
 - c. Amend the Land Development Code to require lighting standards to promote personal safety and allow for visual clarity.
 - d. Require design standards that allow for free movement to and obstruction.
 - i. ADA and disability inclusion too, accessible and inclusive
 - e. Shelter from the elements
 - f. Continue maintenance of public spaces including litter cleanup, installation of trash cans and recycling bins, and other elements of the public realm.
- 3. Reduce risk areas in the public realm to increase pedestrian and bicyclist safety**
 - a. New developments shall ensure a safe pedestrian experience.
 - i. Promote pedestrian spaces and sidewalks that are free of unnecessary obstructions such as utility poles or other public utilities
 - ii. Improve under-utilized roads to better serve pedestrians and bicyclists
 - b. Develop and implement design elements to reduce conflict of automobile and pedestrians
 - i. Implement traffic calming measures such as speed humps, curb extensions, and raised pedestrian crossings
 - ii. Arterials and intersections should be designed to reduce conflicts between road users by providing clear crossings, medians and refuge islands
 - iii. Collaborate with the University to strengthen the safety of major intersections and corridors including University Avenue and West 13th Street, SW 34th Street and Archer Road, and SW 20th Avenue
 - c. Dedicate and pursue funding for streetscape improvements.