

HOW WE WORK

Where We Are

How we earn a living is fundamental to our opportunity to thrive as individuals and our ability to support the people and communities around us. Economic development encompasses a broad range of functions, such as helping businesses thrive and grow; attracting new businesses to Gainesville; providing skill training for neighbors; ensuring that everybody can earn a living wage; and ensuring that people who have been unemployed or those from the re-entry community have the support they need to find work.

In Gainesville, who you are impacts your ability to find a job, your income, and the support you receive to grow your business. A 2018 University of Florida study of Alachua County found that Black neighbors were more than twice as likely to be unemployed compared to White neighbors, and Black households earn incomes approximately half that of White households.¹

These disparities can be traced back to historic actions by the Federal, State, and City governments such as legal work discrimination, redlining, and racial covenants, which limited job opportunities for Black workers, created segregated neighborhoods, hindered Black homeownership, and prevented Black families from building generational wealth. More recently, despite City policies designed to support East Gainesville neighbors and entities, the lack of substantial private investment in neighborhoods of color and East Gainesville generally have created gaps in employment opportunities and skills training, as well as the basic support systems that we need in order to work, such as affordable housing, transportation options, access to healthcare, and childcare. Neighbors of color aiming to start and grow their own businesses also may face challenges because of their race: business owners of color may face challenges securing favorable loans from financial institutions due to discrimination and complicated application processes that advantage well-resourced businesses; they may lack support systems that provide technical training to run their businesses; and face barriers to winning contracts with the City and other local organizations/institutions.

While past Comprehensive Plans included actions supporting economic development, most focused on the physical environment such as buildings and infrastructure, or on growing narrower segments of the economy (such as “Innovation”) without regard to the question of who benefits or whether job growth would address existing disparities in the community. Given the critical nature of economic development to the well-being of all Gainesvillians, the City is elevating this topic by creating this new chapter for Imagine GNV. In doing so, the City will support policies and programs that specifically center race and partner with stakeholders in the community to provide support for both neighbors and businesses.

Over the next decade, the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce in coordination with other partners in the community expect five sectors to represent a large share of new jobs in Gainesville, especially jobs that pay a living wage and provide career growth opportunities inclusive of Human Life Sciences; Agricultural Science and Technology; Digital Technology; Distribution and Trade; and Business Support Services. To build an equitable economic future in Gainesville, it is critical to broaden opportunities for employment and advancement in these industries to Gainesvillians of color and to ensure that all Gainesville students, regardless of their color, are prepared to enter and thrive in these industries. The Office of Capital Asset, Planning, and Economic Resilience will pursue this through thoughtful policies and partnerships to support both individuals seeking to work in these industries and firms who are growing active in these sectors.

¹ University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research. 2018. *UNDERSTANDING RACIAL INEQUITY IN ALACHUA COUNTY*. https://www.bebr.ufl.edu/sites/default/files/Research%20Reports/ri1_baseline_report.pdf

In terms of the physical environment, the City will balance robust economic development with ensuring that the impacts on built environment do not hinder neighbors' ability to enjoy streetscapes that are at human scale and maintains the neighborhood character, especially near downtown.

Progress to Build On

In the last 25 years, the City has successfully grown existing industries, incubated businesses in new industries, and attracted businesses from outside the city. The tools at the City's disposal include: a former City Enterprise Zone Program that provides development incentives as well as opportunities to develop City-owned real estate such as the Airport Industrial Park; capital and funding support provided to the Gainesville Technology Enterprise Center, a facility designed to nurture startups; participation with economic development partners in attracting outside industries through the deployment of a local match to State and other incentives when warranted; and a host of related programmatic efforts.

In addition to these City-led initiatives focused on East Gainesville, the City has partnered with other stakeholders in the community to move economic development forward. Partners include the Gainesville Community Redevelopment Area, University of Florida, Santa Fe College, Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce, Alachua County, and the Gainesville Regional Airport, all of whom provide a solid footing for community economic development moving forward.

What's At Stake

Moving forward, the priority for the City is to ensure the benefits of growth are shared by all Gainesvillians and that no neighbor is left behind. Through using the tools available to the City and partnering with institutions and organizations, the City will ensure that all neighbors have what they need to earn a living, grow a business, and support their community's well-being.

Outcome 1: All Gainesville residents will be able to secure a job that enables them to support themselves and their families.

The Office of Capital Asset, Planning, and Economic Resilience will emphasize providing access to job opportunities with a deliberate focus on supporting communities of color and neighbors in areas of the city that have seen disinvestment and lack of employment opportunities.

Indicators:

- Unemployment and labor force participation rates (by race, ethnicity and neighborhood)
- Wage rates (Median wage, Avg. Private Sector Wage)
- % of jobs that pay a living wage by industry
- Number of businesses providing training opportunities in terms of apprenticeships, internships, etc. and number of neighbors attending these trainings.
- Number of neighbors participating in City/partner offered training programs, by race/ethnicity and neighborhood
- Number of neighbors re-entering the work force that are able to find a job within X months, by race/ethnicity

Strategies:

1. **Encourage businesses in Gainesville to pay a living wage, providing necessary support where needed.** This includes:

- a. Making equitable hiring, pay, and HR practices a precondition of City contracting and public subsidies.
 - b. Incentivizing private businesses to increase pay and benefits through tax benefits.
- 2. **Ensure that the City as an organization is modeling the approach to equitable hiring and labor practices.** The City organization will facilitate job opportunities and advancement that assists neighbors in securing jobs that lead to the ability to earn a living.
- 3. **Work with partners in the community to ensure that neighbors have access to adequate job training and career development assistance.** The Office of Capital Asset, Planning, and Economic Resilience will partner with institutions and organizations in the community, including Santa Fe College and others, to make job training and career development pathways available inclusively with a focus on neighbors of color. This includes providing City space for job training and career development forums, providing training and technical support in applying for City contracts, and providing financial support to supplement existing partner programs. Furthermore, the City will work with partners to:
 - a. Provide funds for attendees so that neighbors don't have to choose between their job and training
 - b. Offer training in venues (e.g. churches, schools, etc.) close to neighborhoods of color
 - c. Offer training during accessible times (e.g. night classes)
 - d. Provide career training for High School students who choose to work after graduation (e.g. apprenticeships, career exploration programs, technical credits)
 - e. Conduct outreach to communities and make sure information about City programs and application processes are easy to navigate for people without higher education or internet access, etc.
 - f. Support the reentry community to relax regulations that prohibit people with criminal records from accessing jobs
- 4. **Ensure that businesses receiving City subsidies are required to model equitable pay, hiring practices, and provide workforce training opportunities.**

The City will require incoming businesses receiving incentives to adhere to standards for equitable workforce practices. The Office of Capital Asset, Planning, and Economic Resilience and GCRA will update standards for incentives, potentially through the form of Community Benefits Agreements, which may include, among others:

 - a. Local hiring requirements
 - b. Living wage requirements
 - c. Disclosure requirements for the racial/ethnic makeup of their staff by seniority level
 - d. Requirements for making paid internships available to Gainesville neighbors
 - e. Ensuring employers participate in programs that support re-entry for people who have been impacted by the criminal justice system
- 5. **Coordinate across City departments to support neighbors in accessing and keeping jobs, including affordable housing, reliable transportation, and quality health/childcare.**

Work internally within the City and externally with outside organizations and agencies to ensure that priorities important to facilitating employment are being pursued and/or addressed in the community. This includes coordinating across Departments to ensure neighbors are able to access jobs, such as ensuring transportation access to jobs, access to affordable housing and social services.

Outcome 2: Gainesville will attract, support, and grow businesses, prioritizing employers that pay a living wage and contribute to a more equitable local economy.

The Office of Capital Asset, Planning, and Economic Resilience will support growth in identified sectors (human life sciences, agricultural sciences and technology, digital technology, distribution and trade and business support services) and ensure that this growth benefits all neighbors, including communities of color and neighborhoods that have received less private investment. Developing a diverse business base in addition to the large public employers in the community is crucial to providing a means of earning a living to the City's neighbors.

Indicators:

- Number of employers by industry sector and by geography
- Analysis of available land/building inventory for economic development purposes (e.g. vacant buildings and sites, by neighborhood)
- Analysis of infrastructure for economic development purposes (e.g. availability of sanitary sewer/water, electricity, broadband by neighborhood)
- Analysis of growth in tax base based upon economic development (e.g. assessed value by neighborhood)

Strategies:

1. **Ensure local regulations, infrastructure, and real estate are set up to attract and support the growth of target employers.** The Office of Capital Asset, Planning, and Economic Resilience and the Department of Sustainable Development will review the land development code, other pertinent City regulations, as well as gaps in infrastructure (water, sewer, telecom, roads, etc.), available land, and buildings that would hinder the growth of businesses in focus industries. In the process, the City will conduct outreach to businesses that range in ownership, size, industry, and customer base in order to capture challenges experienced by businesses owned by/serving neighbors of color.
2. **Identify opportunities to attract target employers to neighborhoods that lack quality job opportunities.** The Office of Capital Asset, Planning, and Economic Resilience will incentivize businesses in target industries to locate in areas of the city that lack living-wage jobs. This will include financial incentives, utilizing city-owned land, and investing in real estate and infrastructure to attract businesses, among others.
3. **Identify gaps in skills/training among communities underrepresented in the growth industries, then focus programs that fill these gaps.** The Office of Capital Asset, Planning, and Economic Resilience will review the skills required to participate in the growing sectors identified above, assess the current talent pool with a focus on communities with less access to high-paying jobs, and create strategies to address the mismatch in skills/training among historically underrepresented communities, and then focus talent development efforts on those communities.
4. **Conduct a study to create development incentives to facilitate attraction, expansion, or retention of business.** Currently, developers building properties outside of the GCRA boundaries do not have access to GCRA incentives; the study would design a robust approach to providing incentives Citywide.

Outcome 3: Small and minority business owners and entrepreneurs will have the resources they need to launch, thrive, and grow.

Small businesses are a critical part of the city's economic base. The Office of Capital Asset, Planning, and Economic Resilience will ensure that resources are available to assist those small businesses in their growth and development. The City will devote special effort to identify challenges that small- and minority-/women-owned business face and to tailor efforts that support them to thrive.

Indicators:

- Number of small businesses
- Number of businesses by the race/ethnicity of owner
- Number of participants in small business development and entrepreneurial training programs
- Number of home occupation small businesses
- Number of participants in capital programs directed at small and minority businesses
- Number of engagements with small and minority businesses regarding doing business with the City of Gainesville (e.g. attendance at City webinars)
- Number of participants in mentoring programs serving small and minority businesses

Strategies:

1. Partner with and support community organizations to provide training and technical support for small businesses and minority-owned businesses.

The Office of Capital Asset, Planning, and Economic Resilience will work with and provide support for organizations including Santa Fe College CIED, UF Innovate, SCORE, Small Business Development Center (SBDC), etc. to provide support for small- and minority-owned businesses development. This may include in-kind or financial assistance for organizational capacity building, or materials/City space to host trainings.

2. Ensure that the City's procurement process is transparent and easily accessible by the small and minority business community. The Office of Capital Asset, Planning, and Economic Resilience will ensure that procurement systems do not pose a barrier to entry for small businesses and minority-owned businesses. This will entail:

- a. Better sharing of information about how to navigate the procurement process by using local media, engaging with various community groups in communities of color and providing guidance in multiple languages.
- b. Reviewing the existing procurement process to identify barriers to participation for businesses with less resources or businesses that lack access to financial institutions. This may include simplifying permitting/licensing requirements for ease of application.
- c. Through the procurement office, addressing financial management and overhead concerns that prevent small businesses from taking on contracts (e.g. high levels of insurance and bonding required for City contracts; long payment windows).

3. Remove barriers to neighbors aiming to start businesses from their homes.

The City has a home occupation permitting process that strikes a balance between the conduct of business in residential settings and the preservation of neighborhood values regarding elements including traffic, signage, and noise. In light of the public health crisis, the trends toward remote or hybrid work, and recent State of Florida legislation, The Office of Capital Asset, Planning, and Economic Resilience and the Department of Sustainable Development will assess the regulatory framework governing home businesses and remove existing barriers. This would systematically support entrepreneurs to launch their businesses with lower startup costs.

4. Work with community organizations on building mentoring relationships for small and minority business proprietors and entrepreneurs.

The Office of Capital Asset, Planning, and Economic Resilience will work with partners to develop a mentorship program that partners small and minority-owned businesses with mentors in the community that have been successful in their respective industries and provide additional support for aspiring enterprises. Community builders can assess whether these types of efforts are provided by existing organizations and/or whether they can be supplemented.

5. Identify and address obstacles that small- and minority-owned businesses face in accessing capital. Access to capital is important to the health and sustainability of small and minority-owned business as they grow and develop. The Office of Capital Asset, Planning, and Economic Resilience will create a plan of action to fill the gap. Examples include:

- City guarantee for micro-credit loans to local community banks (Opportunity Loan program)
- Subsidizing retail space to lower the cost of entry (potentially use Community Land Trusts)
- Providing utility assistance
- Creating a “business improvement grant” that supports capital upgrades
- Support non-brick & mortar businesses (e.g. food trucks) that could be points of entry into more permanent business operations. This would require updating the current food truck policy to minimize restrictions to operation, and to provide coaching and support for owners to navigate permitting, licensing, etc.