



## Legislation Text

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### **Land Conservation and Acquisition Program (B)**

**This item involves a request for the City Commission to approve an update to the priority list of the Land Conservation and Acquisition Program.**

This item was referred to the Recreation, Cultural Affairs and Public Works Committee at the January 14, 2008, City Commission meeting for review and recommendation to the Commission as a whole. The item was initiated by the City Commission Goals for FY 07. Under the Goal Infrastructure, a Tier One Objective is "Complete capital projects at parks - improve programs; develop land conservation and acquisition program (for biodiversity and passive recreation)." With this goal in mind, the City Commission approved \$200,000 to be budgeted in FY 07 and \$425,000 to be budgeted each year beginning in FY 08 for land acquisition purposes and directed staff to identify undeveloped land within or near the City of Gainesville that could provide habitat for wildlife and plants, protect creeks and wetlands and that could provide passive recreational opportunities for the public.

The Recreation, Cultural Affairs and Public Works (RCAPW) Committee heard this item on August 14, 2008, and September 11, 2008, and received a final presentation from the Nature Operations staff with input from Alachua Conservation Trust and Alachua County Forever on October 9, 2008. Following discussion, the Committee voted in favor of pursuing acquisition of recommended conservation lands as prioritized. The Committee also recommended staff continue to evaluate and update the priority list as new areas are annexed into the City of Gainesville. On November 20, 2008, the City Commission heard the referral from the RCAPW Committee on this item and approved the Committee's recommendation to accept the priority list for the Land Conservation and Acquisition Program.

Since 2009, the City has been attempting to acquire the top and second priority properties. Some landowners have been willing to sell, but others have not. Since many of the priority landowners are unwilling to sell or are at an impasse on price, staff has reevaluated undeveloped parcels within City limits that are contiguous with existing park land, or that would provide corridor connections for the Hogtown Creek Greenway. Thirteen parcels of interest were identified and added to the land acquisition priority listing under the "2012 Additions" heading.

\$ 2.1 million combined remains in the Greenspace Acquisition Fund and in the Wild Spaces Public Places Land Acquisition Fund, and is available for continued acquisition of conservation and/or passive recreation lands. A land-buying program is viewed favorably by potential partners, and better enables the City of Gainesville to protect more land by leveraging funds from local and state land acquisition programs.

The City Commission: 1) approve the updated priority list for the Land Conservation and Acquisition Program; and 2) authorize the City Manager or designee to negotiate with landowners for acquisition.

Alternative Recommendation: The City Commission not approve the Land Conservation and Acquisition Program priority list and direct staff to reevaluate undeveloped lands within or near the City of Gainesville that could provide habitat for wildlife and plants, protect creeks and wetlands and that could provide passive recreational opportunities for the public.