

Alachua County,
Florida



Gainesville Area
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Business and Economic Growth Action Plan

2015

Alachua County
12 SE 1st Street
Gainesville, FL 32601
352-374-5204



Board of County Commissioners



County Commissioners from left to right:

Robert “Hutch” Hutchinson
Vice Chair

Lee Pinkoson
Commissioner

Ken Cornell
Commissioner

Mike Byerly
Commissioner

Charles “Chuck” Chestnut, IV
Chair

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Last revision: March 2, 2015

Mission Vision and Values

Mission

It is the mission of Alachua County government to provide responsive, quality service to our citizens and to assure the sustainability of our County and its communities by balancing the concerns for economy, environment and social well being within all of our programs.

Vision

Alachua County government is a value-driven organization dedicated to responsive, respectful and courteous customer service. Alachua County is viewed as an innovative and progressive leader in the provision of effective and efficient County services, recognizing the needs of its diverse community.

The County provides an environment that encourages mutual respect, open communication and sharing of ideas in the decision making process. This process includes partnerships with public and private organizations, neighborhoods and employees of Alachua County.

Alachua County government works with the community to effectively plan for growth, with the goal being to balance environmental, social and community development needs.

Values

Integrity

We adhere to standards of ethical conduct.

Honesty

We are truthful, fair and open with our fellow employees and the people we serve.

Respect

We are responsive, compassionate and courteous in all our interactions.

Diversity

We embrace the value and power of diversity in our community.

Innovation

We are committed to the consideration and implementation of new ideas.

Accountability

We are accountable for our behavior and the quality of work performed individually and in teams.

Communication

We encourage open communication and the sharing of ideas to enhance the decision-making process.

Acknowledgments

The preparation of the Business and Economic Growth Action Plan is the culmination of a year of collaborative effort involving the Alachua County Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC), the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce, Alachua County staff and citizens. We are particularly grateful to all the citizens who generously gave their time and input. Their knowledge and expertise contributed greatly to our understanding of Alachua County business and economic conditions.



Special thanks is given to the following:

EDAC Members:

Erik Bredfeldt
Bill Conrad
David Ferro
Marty Goodkind
Dr. Jonathan H. Hamilton
Charles Howe
Dug Jones
Dr. Gunnar Paulson
Tim Treweek
Parker Van Hart
Dudley Wade
Matthew Webster
Janie Williams

Special Recognition:

Former Commissioner Susan Baird

Board of County Commissioners:

Charles "Chuck" Chestnut, IV, Chair
Robert "Hutch" Hutchinson, Vice Chair
Mike Byerly
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Lee Pinkoson

Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce:

Tim Giuliani, President & CEO
Kamal I. Latham, VP of Public Policy
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Leslie McLendon, Development Services Planner
Steve Lachnicht, Director, Growth Management



Introduction

Today, economic development is not only about promoting and creating opportunities that provide people with a greater access to wealth; it is also about enhancing quality of life, increasing per capita wages, workforce training, and enhancing infrastructure that will assist in protecting and enhancing an area's natural assets. This can be achieved by encouraging a strong diversified economy built on industries that provide well-paid jobs accessible to all.

The Alachua County Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) was created in 1999-2003. It is tasked with providing policy recommendations to the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) related to the promotion of sustainable economic development activity. In 2012, the advisory board developed a Strategic Plan for Economic Development, which outlined general strategies for Alachua County to pursue.

In August 2013, the BoCC directed the County Manager to approach the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce to perform an analysis of the County's development review process and requested that EDAC work with the Chamber and return to the Board with recommendations to enhance economic development.

Alachua County and the Chamber then held a



Diverse stakeholder representation was instrumental in understanding of Alachua County business and economic conditions.



“The workshop was an excellent opportunity to have our business community come together with our County government to collaboratively sit down, evaluate the direction we are headed, the policies that are in place, and the things that are working and things that are not working”.

Still frame taken from Alachua County “Take 5 Economic Development Workshop” video.

Business and Economic Growth Workshop on April 16, 2014 at the Alachua County Senior Center. The intent of the public workshop was to obtain feedback on business and economic development conditions of unincorporated Alachua County and make recommendations on how to improve them by answering questions such as:

- **What can the County and the Chamber of Commerce do to facilitate economic development and help foster talent, opportunity and innovation?**
- **What can the County do to be more business friendly?**

The workshop was well attended by the citizens and building affiliates; a total of approximately 60 individuals. Copies of the EDAC Strategic Plan were provided to each participant. Two general topics were discussed:

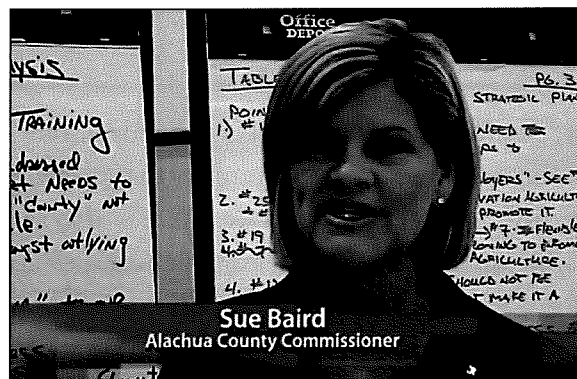
Topic 1: Perceptions of Economic Development in Alachua County

Topic 2: Strategic Plan: What should stay, What should go, What needs to be added?

Several areas of recommendations for economic development emerged from the workshop. EDAC, the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce, and county staff then used the workshop recommendations in conjunction with the Strategic Plan to produce this report. **Collaboration with stakeholders was an essential element of producing this report.**

Building on the April 2014 workshop, the intent of this report is to provide specific, actionable items that the County can do to facilitate economic development and improve the climate for starting and growing a business in Alachua County. It is meant to complement other economic development efforts currently taking place within the County. This report is divided into the following six sections:

- I. Introduction**
- II. Economic Picture** – Overview of Existing Economic & Demographic Information
- III. Background**– Existing Plans and Initiatives
- IV. Focus Areas** – Overview of Each of the Focus Areas Identified by EDAC
- V. Recommendations and Implementation**– Specific Action Items for Each of the Five Focus Areas
- VI. Appendices**



“We did have a great cross-section. I was delighted to see the number of different industries that were here together and that everybody gave really good ideas”.

Still frames taken from Alachua County “Take 5 Economic Development Workshop” video.



“The next steps...will be to take this information and organize it and then working in concert with the Chamber and the County, identify those things that can be acted upon quickly. Then to go through them one at a time, the action steps that are identified, and implement them to improve the economic climate and desirability of doing business here in the County”.

Still frames taken from Alachua County “Take 5 Economic Development Workshop” video.

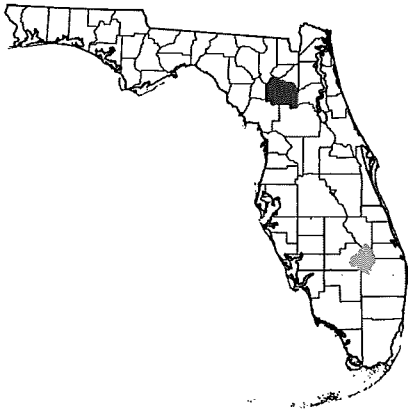
Economic Picture

This section provides an overview of Alachua County's relative economic position as of 2014. It does this by compiling demographic and economic indicators for Alachua County compared to the state of Florida and the nation. The indicators are organized within five categories: Location, Demographics, Employment, Income, and Economy.

According to the University of Central Florida (UCF) *Florida & Metro Forecast 2014-2044* report, the Gainesville MSA is expected to show varying strengths and weakness in the economic indicators. Personal income growth will see an average of 4.8% growth. Real per capita income level is expected to average \$35,200. Average annual wage growth is expected to be 3.5%, while average annual wage level will be at \$46,300. Population growth will average 0.4% annually. Gainesville MSA will see an average employment growth of 1.2% annually, and maintain a low average employment rate at 4.6%.

Location

Alachua County is located in the North Central part of Florida, approximately 85 miles from the Georgia state line, 50 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, and 67 miles from the Atlantic Ocean.



Alachua County is centrally located between major cities including Jacksonville, Orlando and Tampa, and is bordered by eight Florida counties, including Bradford, Clay, Union, Putnam, Marion, Levy, Gilchrist, and Columbia. Alachua County's location within North Central Florida draws from a population base of more than 1 million people, and a labor force of more of more than 469,000 people.

The Gainesville Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is comprised by Alachua County and Gilchrist County. MSAs are county-based definitions developed by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for federal statistical purposes. The general concept of a metropolitan area is that of a geographic

area consisting of a large population nucleus together with adjacent communities having a high degree of economic and social integration with the nucleus.

In 2013, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated the Gilchrist County population to be 16,931. Alachua County is surrounded by primarily rural area. Six of the eight contiguous counties surrounding Alachua County are defined as rural, as designated by the state of Florida Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI).

Distances from Alachua County	
Jacksonville, FL	60 miles
Orlando, FL	102 miles
Tampa, FL	119 miles
Tallahassee, FL	130 miles
Savannah, GA	202 miles
Miami, FL	300 miles
Atlanta, GA	310 miles
Dallas, TX	882 miles

Source: Enterprise Florida, miles are calculated from county seat

North Central Florida Counties Key Indicators

County	Population	Labor Force	Unemployment	Per Capita Personal Income	Poverty Rate *
Alachua	248,002	137,516	4.8%	\$38,393	26.6%
Bradford	27,217	11,922	5.1%	\$31,426	23.1%
Clay	192,843	103,327	5.4%	\$35,706	10.9%
Columbia	67,489	31,244	6.0%	\$29,966	23.4%
Gilchrist	16,880	7,702	6.2%	\$32,846	22.0%
Levy	40,304	16,313	6.7%	\$28,825	22.7%
Marion	335,008	132,152	7.1%	\$35,570	18.6%
Putnam	72,605	30,064	7.9%	\$28,556	25.7%
Union	15,483	5,129	5.6%	\$20,480	26.2%

Sources: Population: Office of Economic and Demographic Research, Florida Population Estimates for Counties and Municipalities, April 1, 2013. Workforce and Unemployment: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Local Area Unemployment Statistics by County, Not Seasonally Adjusted, September 2014. Office of Economic and Demographic Research, Per Capita Personal Income: Office of Economic and Demographic Research, Per Capita Personal Income, 2012. . Office of Economic and Demographic Research, Percent in Poverty, 2012. *

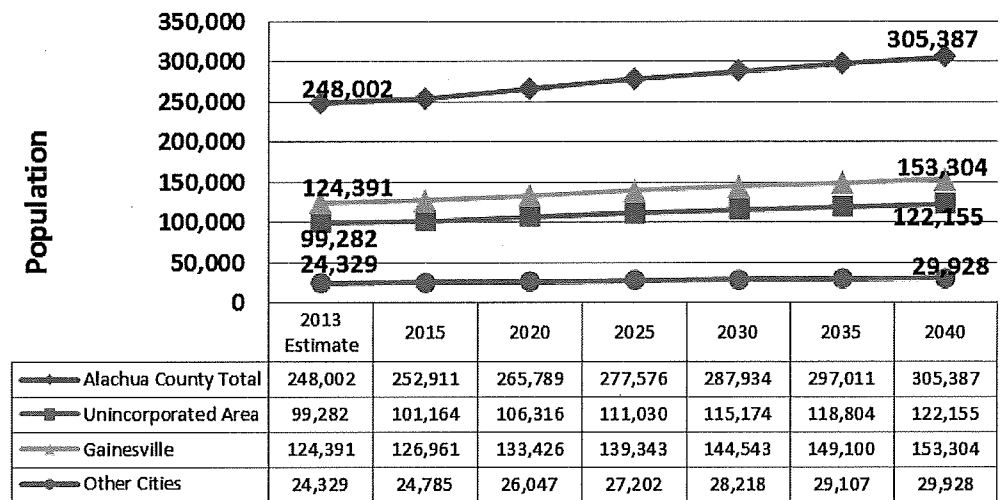
Note: Poverty rates for the counties include college students living off-campus. Alachua County effective poverty rate without college students living off-campus is estimated to be 16.1% according to US Census "Examining the effect of Off-Campus College Students on Poverty Rates".

Demographics

According to statistics from the State of Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research, in 2013, Alachua County's population was 248,002, and it is projected to grow by about 57,000 (growing from 248,002 to 305,387 by 2040). The annual growth rate through 2020 is projected to be about 2,500 people per year, and then decline to about 1,700 per year toward the latter part of this period. This compares to a growth rate of about 3,000 people per year in previous decades.

Annual growth rate in the region will be lower than in previous decades

Alachua County Population Projections, 2015-2040

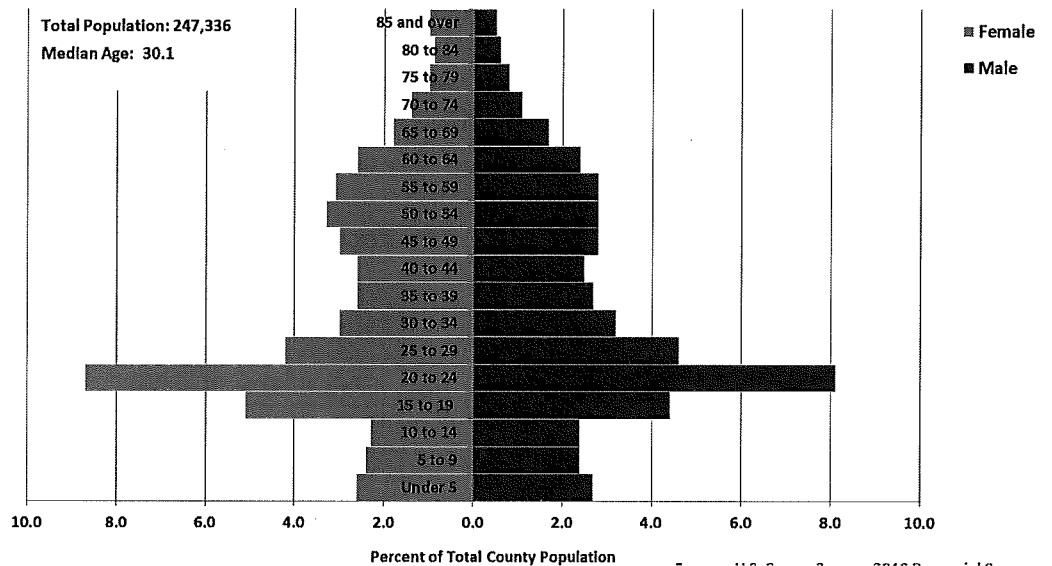


Source: State of Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research, Medium Projections 2015-2040. City and Unincorporated by Based on Constant Share of Through 2040.

Alachua County's population is relatively young. The County is home to a younger population than the region, state, and nation. Specifically, the college age population comprises more than 20% of the County's population, and children under 17 make up about 18% of the population. The population in these age groups is expected to grow modestly through 2040.

Growth through year 2040 in the younger age ranges, including college students and younger is projected to be moderate (about 8,000 or 14% of the overall growth), as population age 17 and younger grows a little less than 20%, and the college age population (18-24) remains about the same. The growth in population age 25-64 is projected to be about 30% (or about 17,000), and the population age 65 and older is projected to almost double from what it was according to the U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Decennial Census, an increase of about 32,000 people in this age category.

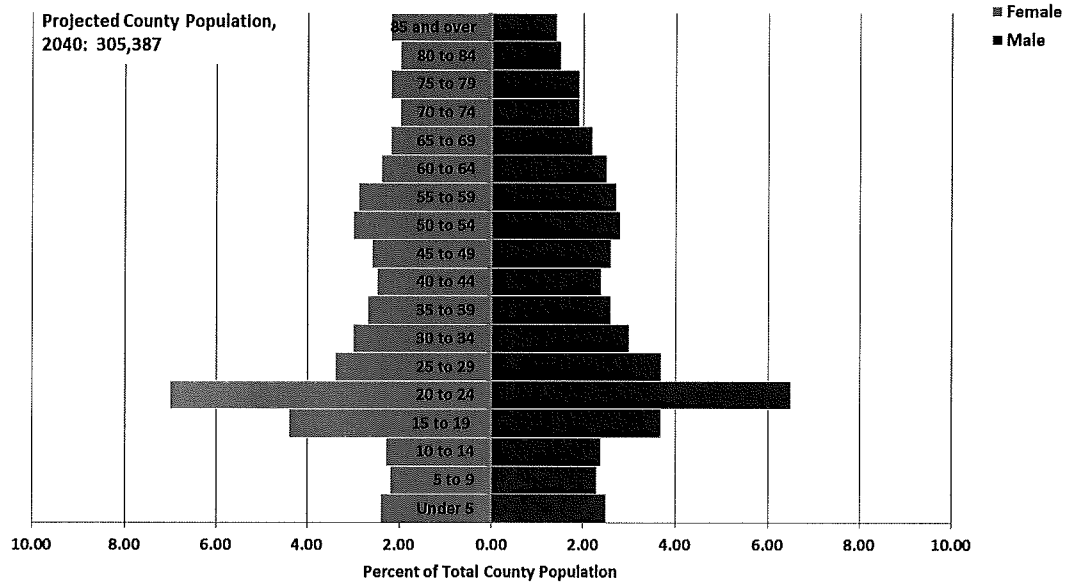
Alachua County Population by Age Range - 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Decennial Census.

County population is relatively young but is projected to get older in the next decades

Alachua County Population by Age Range - 2040 Projections



Source: University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research.

As a result, over the next 25 years, the County's population, like the U.S. population, is projected to get older, with the share of the County's population in older categories, age 65 or older, almost doubling from 10.8% of the County's population in 2010, to 19.4% in 2040.

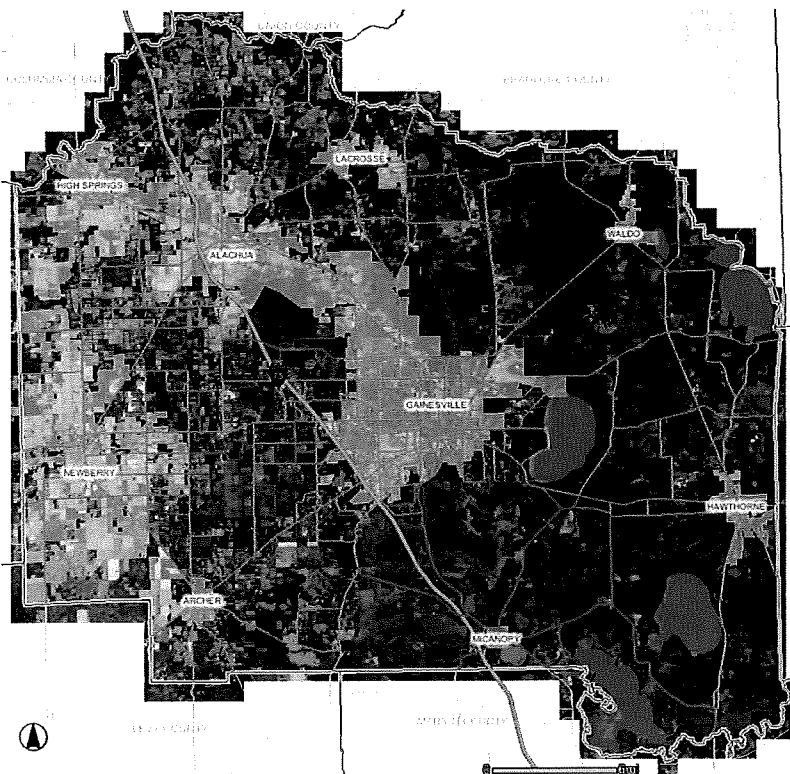
A region's prosperity depends in large part on the productivity of its educated citizens and skilled workforce. Educational attainment in Alachua County exceeds statewide and national level patterns. Alachua County has a higher percentage of residents age 25 or older with a high school diploma than the state and the nation. The County is also ahead of the state and the nation in its share of residents holding a bachelor's degree or higher. According to the U.S. Census American Community Survey 2013, more than 39.6% of the population in Alachua County has a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 27.2% of the population in the state Florida and 29.6% in the U.S.

Population 25 and Over Who Have Completed:

Degree	Alachua County	Florida	U.S.
High school or higher	92.4%	86.8%	86.6%
Bachelor's degree or higher	39.6%	27.2%	29.6%
Advanced degree	18.6%	9.7%	11.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 2013

Municipalities  **New Section**



Alachua County encompasses 969 square miles. The City of Gainesville is both the county seat, and the largest city in Alachua County, which includes the following nine municipalities:

- City of Alachua,
- City of Archer
- City of Gainesville
- City of Hawthorne
- City of High Springs
- Town of LaCrosse
- Town of Micanopy
- City of Newberry
- City of Waldo.

Economic development opportunities exist in each of the nine municipalities as well as the unincorporated County. Businesses must contact the municipality in which they plan to reside to obtain the necessary licenses and permits to operate within that jurisdiction. An overall snapshot view of each municipality and unincorporated area, including maps of development and undeveloped acreage for both Commercial and Industrial Future Land Use follows.

The city of Alachua is a vibrant small-town community located in northwest Alachua County, located right off I-75 with US-441 running right through it.

Alachua is a rural community with strong agrarian roots and a diverse economic structure. The City was incorporated in 1905, and now encompasses 36 square miles. Alachua has a population of nearly 10,000, and a median household income of \$54,263 (Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates) and is home to international corporations and Fortune 500 companies.

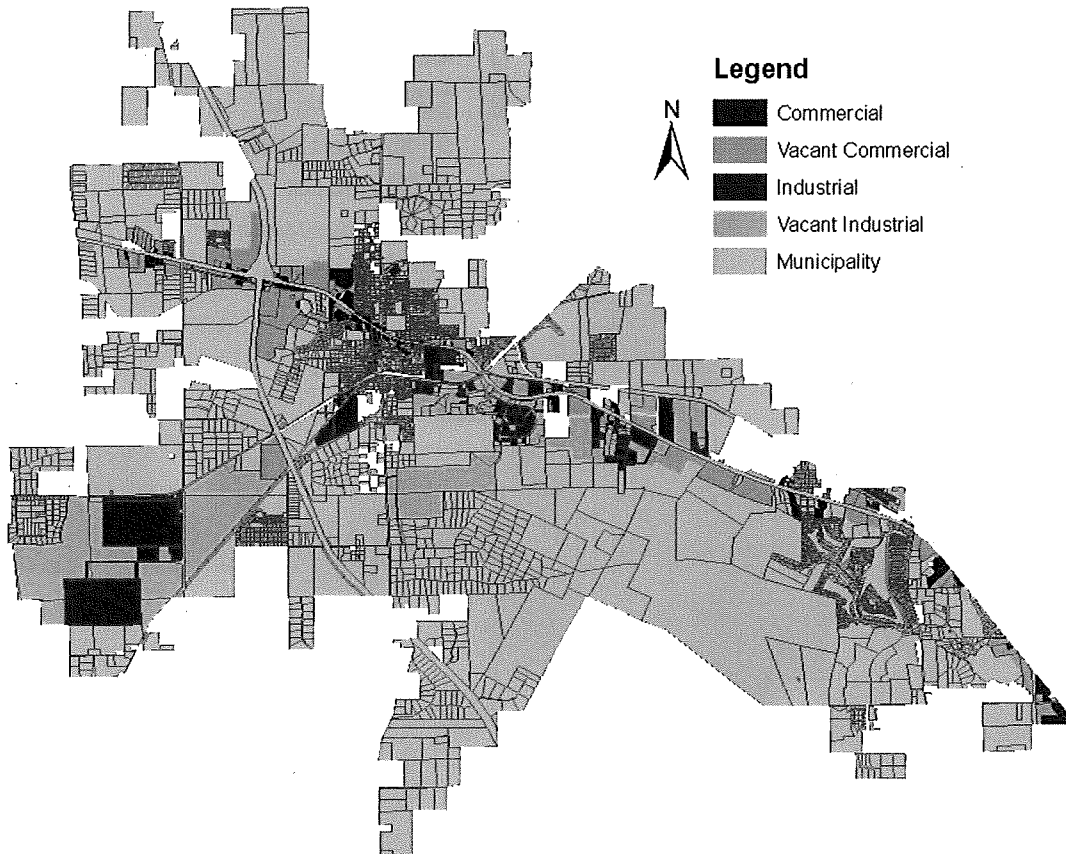
The city is home to San Felasco Hammock Preserve State Park, a 7,350-acre park designed for hiking among mature Florida hammock woodland. The Alachua County Library District operates a branch library in the city that serves the community. Santa Fe College operates the Perry Center for Emerging Technologies that provides residents of northern Alachua County an opportunity for a college education close to home.

Land Use Information

Alachua	Developed Acres	Vacant Acres
Commercial	243.84	908.76
Industrial	948.14	1826.34

Source: Municipal Future Land Use data and Property Appraiser parcel data.

The full map for all municipalities can be viewed in the following link: <http://arcg.is/1zLMXFa>





City of Archer

cityofarcher.com

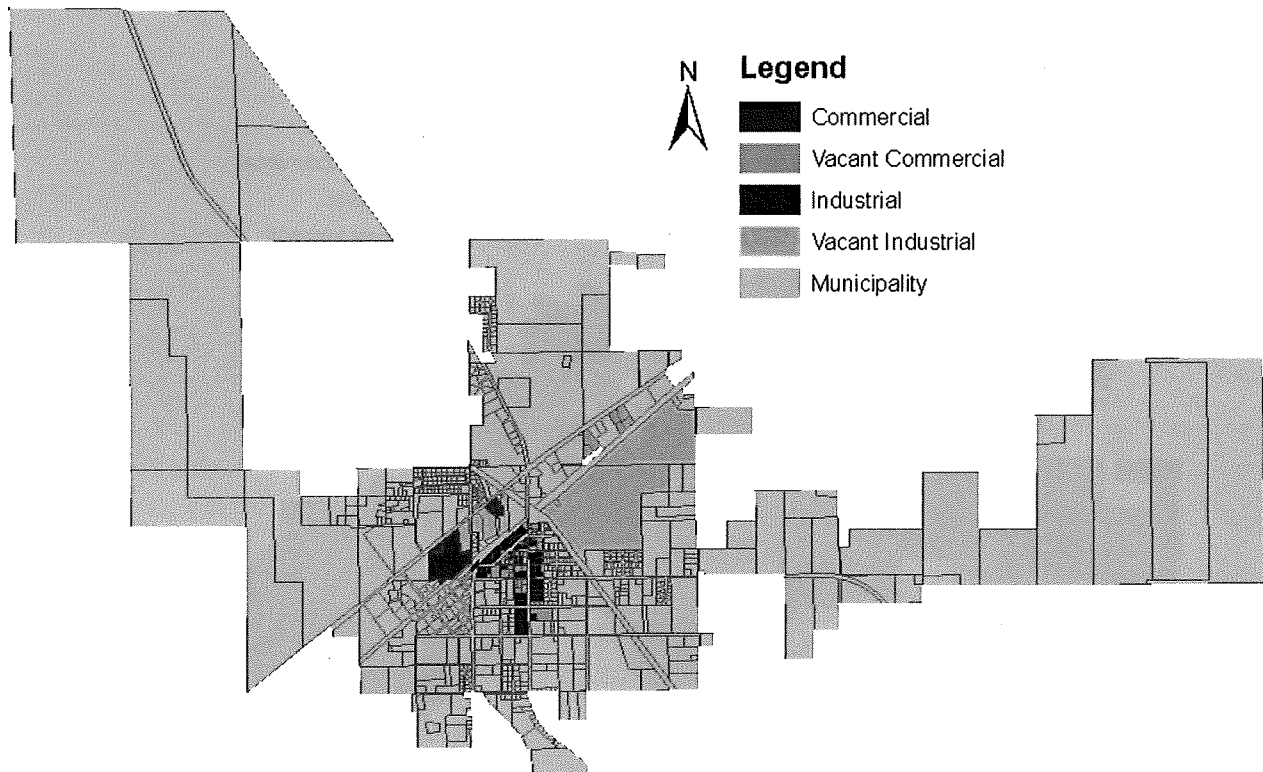
The city of Archer is a community located in the southwest corner of Alachua County. Archer started in the 1840's as a frontier village named Deer Hammock or Darden's Hammock. By 1858, the Florida Railroad reached the village. The site of the town was shifted eastward, and christened Archer, after James T. Archer, Florida's first Secretary of State (1845-49)

The Alachua County Library District operates a branch library in the city that serves the community. Sante Fe College operates a campus extension in the city as well. Attractions include the Archer History Museum and Laurel Hill Cemetery. Archer has a population of 1,060 and a Median Household Income \$32,209 (Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).

Land Use Information

Archer	Developed Acres	Vacant Acres
Commercial	26.90	24.04
Industrial	21.27	158.24

Source:: Municipal Future Land Use data and Property Appraiser parcel data.





City of Gainesville

cityofgainesville.org

The city of Gainesville is the county seat and largest city in Alachua County, Florida. The city serves as the cultural, educational, and commercial center for the north central Florida region.

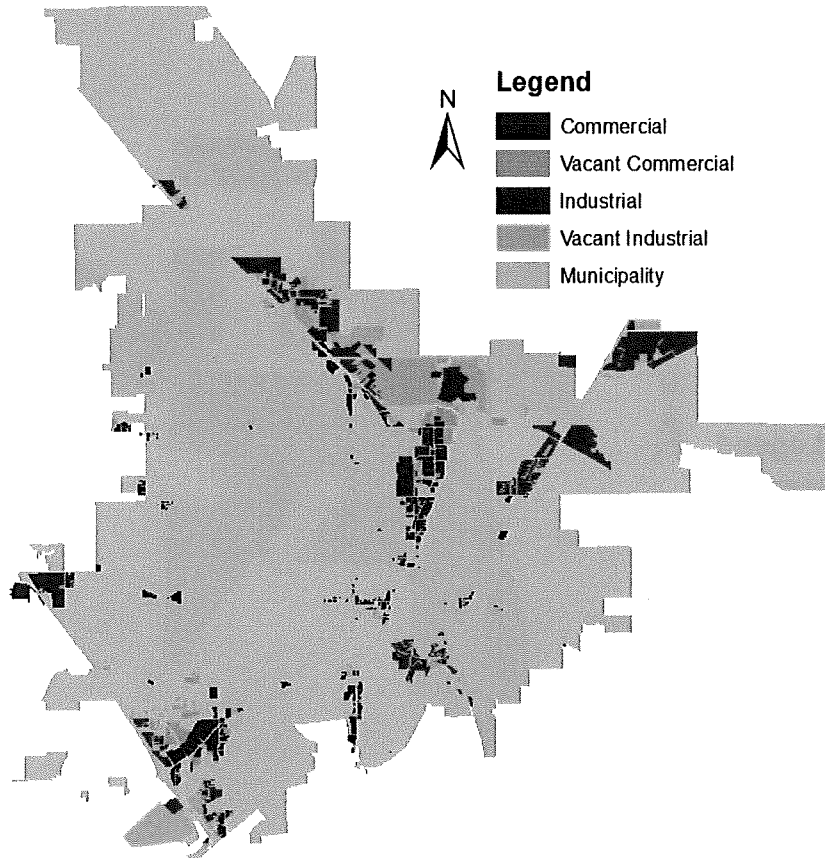
Gainesville is home to Florida's largest and oldest university, and is one of the state's centers of education, medicine, cultural events and athletics. The University of Florida and Shands Hospital at UF are the leading employers in Gainesville and provide jobs for many residents of surrounding counties. Known for its preservation of historic buildings and the beauty of its natural surroundings, Gainesville's numerous parks, museums and lakes provide entertainment to thousands of visitors.

Gainesville has a population of 125,845 and a median household income of \$32,492. (Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).

Land Use Information

Gainesville	Developed Acres	Vacant Acres
Commercial	1546.75	531.54
Industrial	1721.04	1555.33

Source: Municipal Future Land Use data and Property Appraiser parcel data.





City of Hawthorne

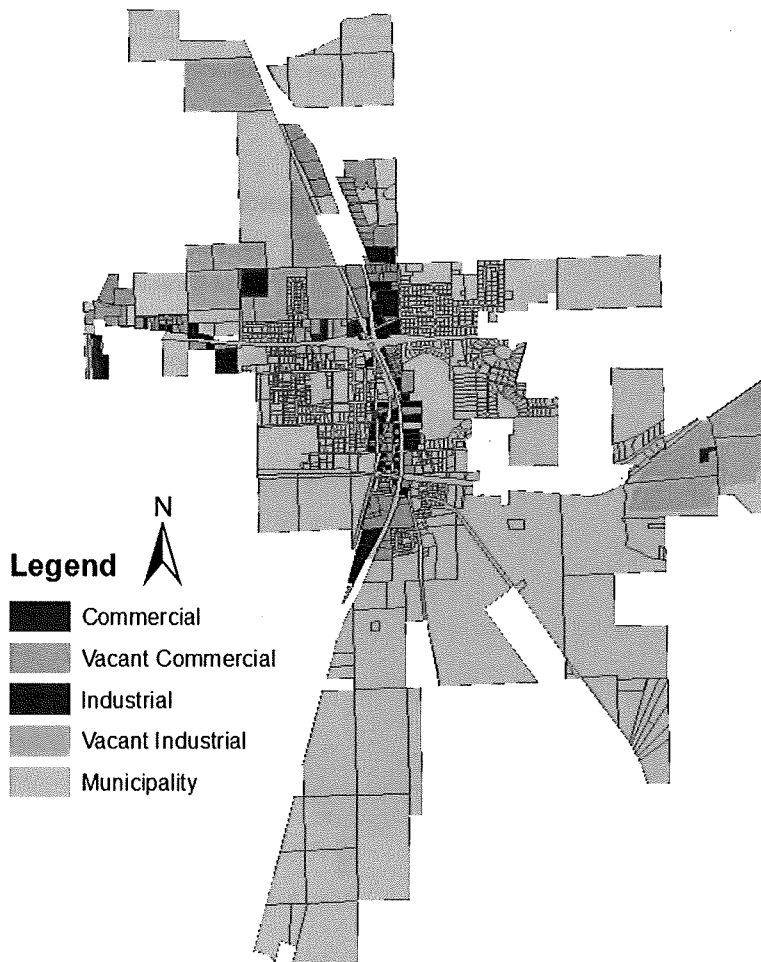
cityofhawthorne.net

The city of Hawthorne is located in eastern Alachua County. Hawthorne is a hub of natural recreation, with 400 lakes in the area and multiple opportunities for hunting, fishing, and biking. The city was incorporated 1881. The Alachua County Library District operates a branch library in the city. Other attractions include the Little Orange Creek Nature Preserve and Nature Park as well as the Gainesville-Hawthorne Trail State Park. Hawthorne has a population of 1,545 and a Median Household Income \$37,240 (Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).

Land Use Information

Hawthorne	Developed Acres	Vacant Acres
Commercial	65.87	162.98
Industrial	35.61	389.01

Source:: Municipal Future Land Use data and Property Appraiser parcel data.





City of High Springs

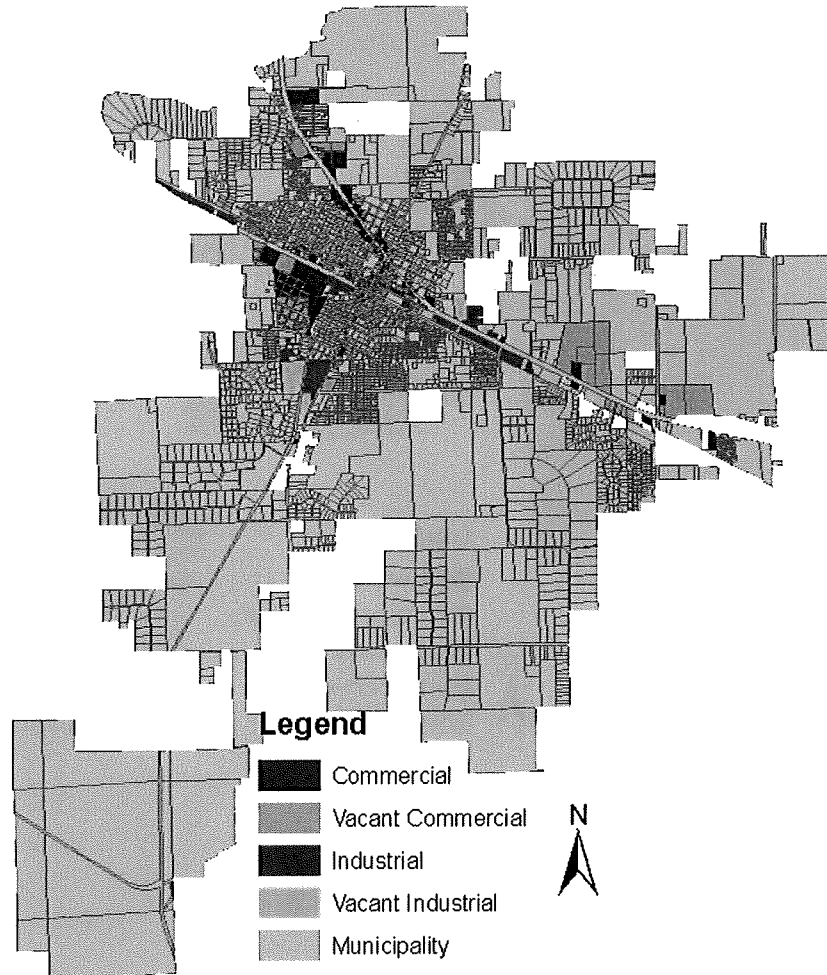
highsprings.us

The city of High Springs is located in the northwest Alachua County. This community is home to the area's largest spring, and it is gateway to the crystal-clear springs that draw visitors for swimming, snorkeling, scuba diving, canoeing and exploring. The Alachua County Library District operates a branch library in the city of High Springs that serves the community. Other attractions include the Old Train Depot, O'Leno State Park, and a variety of restaurants and shops. High Springs has a population of 5,442 and a Median Household Income \$53,295 (Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).

Land Use Information

High Springs	Developed Acreage	Vacant Acreage
Commercial	186.72	296.06
Industrial	112.53	89.77

Source:: Municipal Future Land Use data and Property Appraiser parcel data.



Town of LaCrosse

townoflacrosse.net

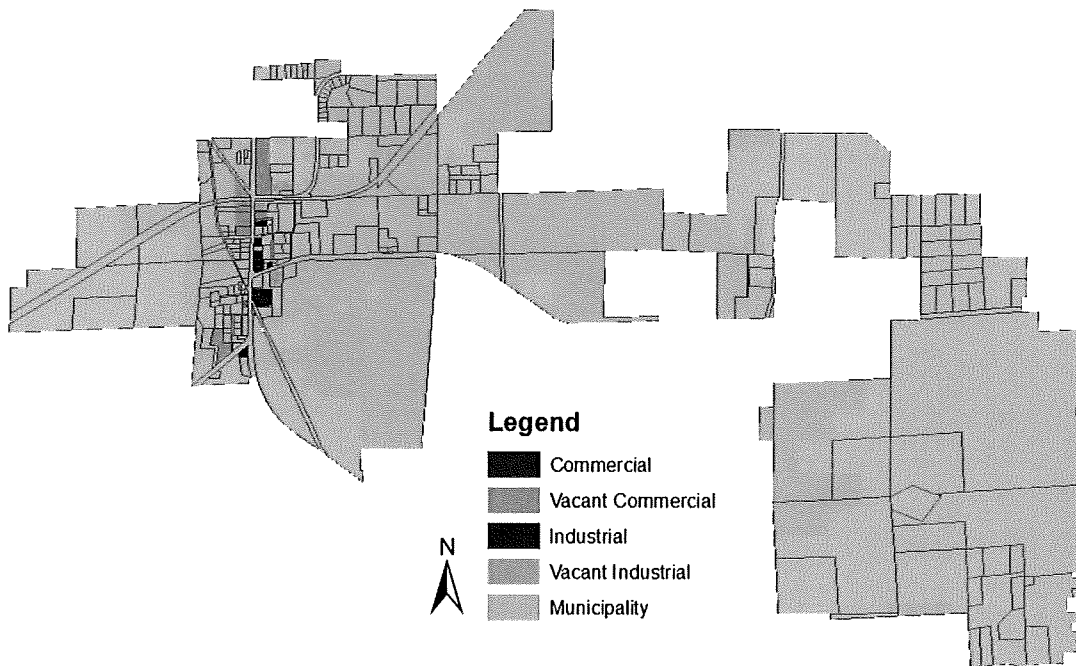
The town of LaCrosse is small rural community situated in the northwest portion of Alachua County, 15 miles north of Gainesville, and within a few miles of both the Union County and Bradford County lines.

LaCrosse provides easy access to the many recreational activities offered in North Florida. The town was incorporated in 1957, and as of the 2010 Census, has a population of 360 citizens. The Alachua County Library District Bookmobile makes a stop in LaCrosse several times a month.

Land Use Information

LaCrosse	Developed Acres	Vacant Acres
Commercial	8.79	24.77
Industrial	0.0	7.70

Source:: Municipal Future Land Use data and Property Appraiser parcel data.





Town of Micanopy

micanopytown.com

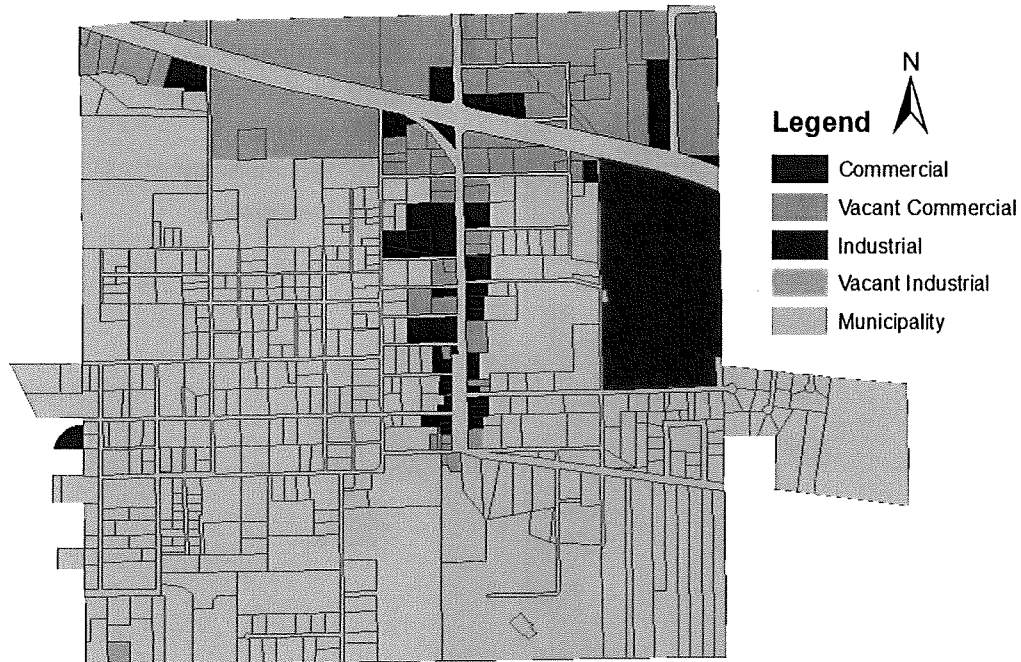
Town of Micanopy is small rural community located in the southern portion of Alachua County near the Marion County line. The town of Micanopy was incorporated in 1889. The town center is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and encompasses 38 buildings. Micanopy's Historic District contains a number of antique stores, as well as a large used book store and several restaurants. The historic home of author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings is in nearby Cross Creek.

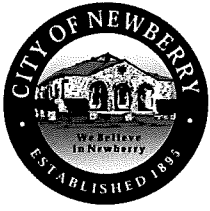
The Alachua County Library District operates a branch library in the city that serves the community of Micanopy. Micanopy has a population of 675 and a Median Household Income \$43,750 (Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates)

Land Use Information

Micanopy	Developed Acres	Vacant Acres
Commercial	25.19	107.04
Industrial	40.13	0.11

Source:: Municipal Future Land Use data and Property Appraiser parcel data.





City of Newberry

discovernewberry.com

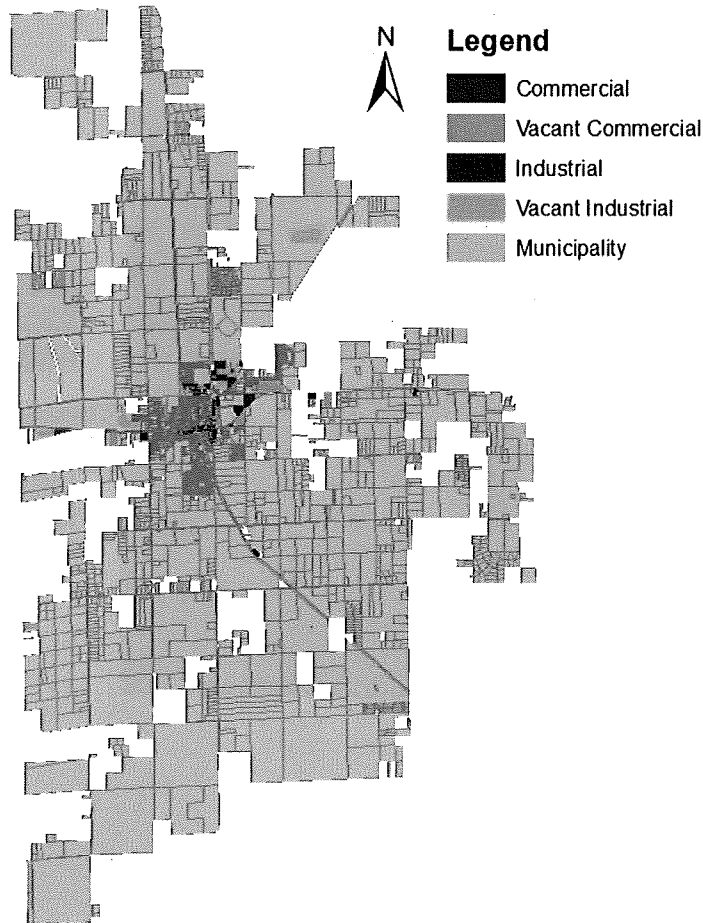
The city of Newberry is located on the southwest side of Alachua County. Much of the city borders the neighboring Gilchrist County to the west. The city is an important hub of agriculture in Alachua County.

The city was officially incorporated in 1895. Newberry Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Alachua County Library District operates a branch library in the city. Other attractions include the Easton-Newberry Sports Complex and the Canterbury Equestrian Showplace. Newberry has a population of 5,083 and a Median Household Income \$51,486 (Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).

Land Use Information

Newberry	Developed Acres	Vacant Acres
Commercial	86.60	118.70
Industrial	71.90	123.10

Source:: Municipal Future Land Use data and Property Appraiser parcel data.



City of Waldo



Established 1859

City of Waldo

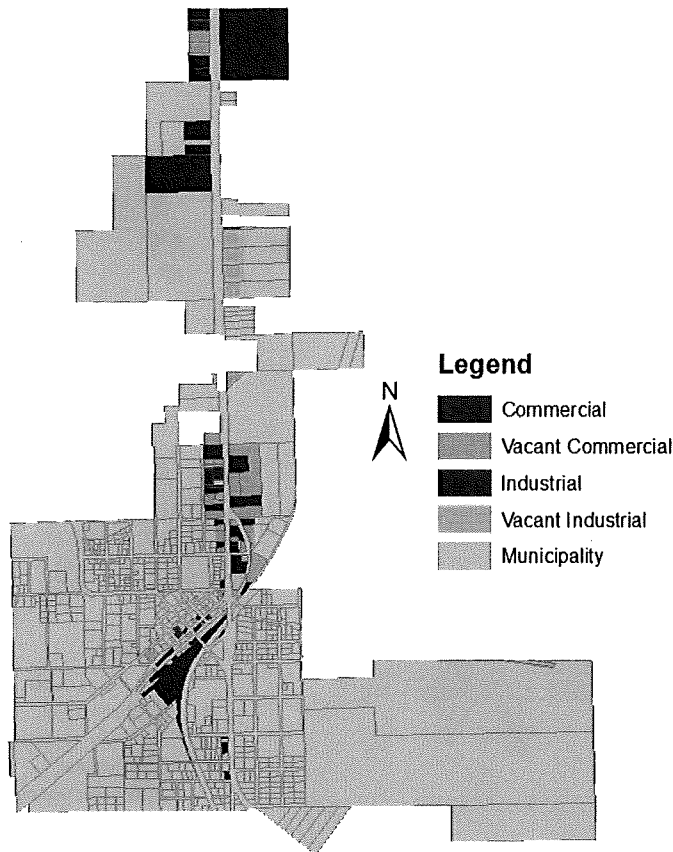
waldo-fl.com

The city of Waldo is a small rural community located in northwest Alachua County. Waldo is one of Alachua County's oldest towns founded in 1820. The Alachua County Library District operates a branch library in the city of Waldo that serves the community. Area attractions include the Waldo Farmer's & Flea Market. Waldo has a population of 1,198 and a Median Household Income \$ 27,837 (Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).

Land Use Information

Waldo	Developed Acres	Vacant Acres
Commercial	101.97	30.91
Industrial	5.13	10.54

Source:: Municipal Future Land Use data and Property Appraiser parcel data.





Unincorporated Alachua County

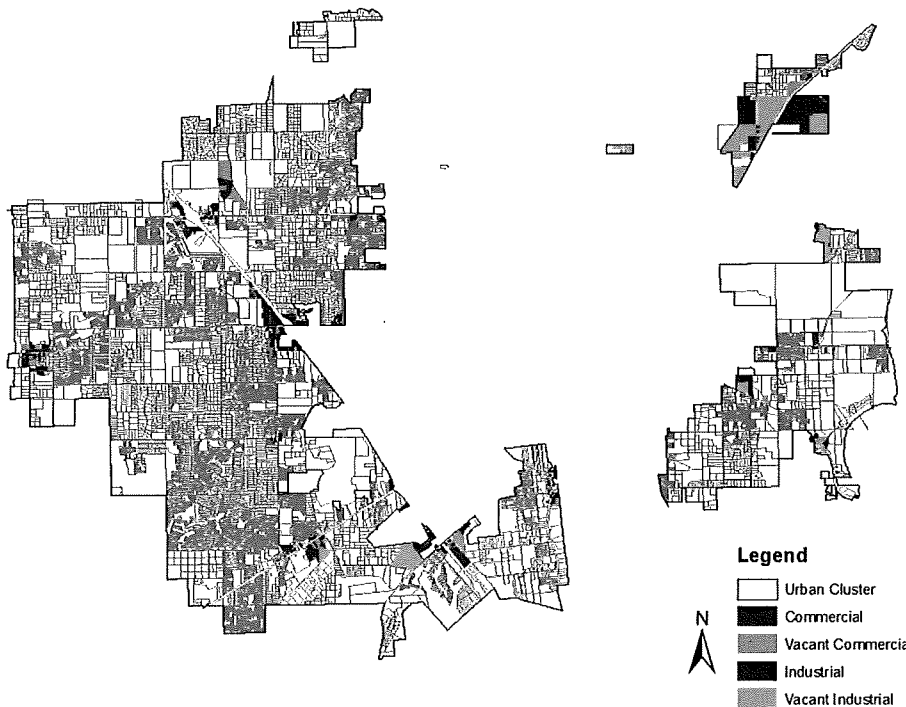
alachuacounty.us

The Urban Cluster portion of unincorporated Alachua County is the area generally surrounding and adjacent to the City of Gainesville. The intent of the Urban Cluster is to direct future urban development to locate within this area in order to maximize efficient use of land, and to protect agricultural areas and natural resources. It is the area where public services and infrastructure are most readily available. The Urban Cluster is shown below with land that is designated as either Commercial or Industrial on the Alachua County Future Land Use Map.

Land Use Information

Unincorporated Area	Developed Acres	Vacant Acres
Commercial	1007.86	851.30
Industrial	744.52	841.98

Source:: County Future Land Use data and Property Appraiser parcel data.



Employment

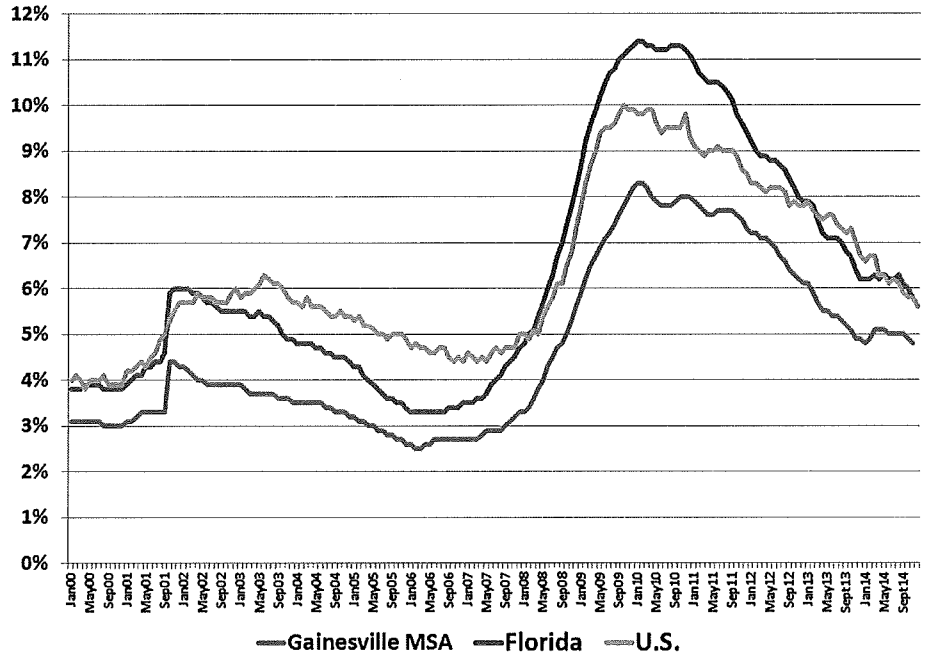
The Gainesville MSA has a predominant institutional economic base with supporting services based industries. The University of Florida and the cluster of medical centers are major economic anchors for the region, and the region benefits from their stable presence.

The unemployment rate in Florida continues to fall and has substantially declined from its peak, after spending several years above the national rate. During the Great Recession in the past few years, unemployment in the Gainesville MSA remained low compared to state and national levels, because of the predominant institutional economic base of the local economy. Gainesville MSA's unemployment stabilized in December 2009, and job growth over the past three years has resulted in declining unemployment rates.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in December 2014, the seasonally adjusted unemployment in Gainesville MSA was estimated at 4.7%. The County fares better than the state of Florida and the U.S. (both 5.6%), a pattern consistent with long-term historical results.

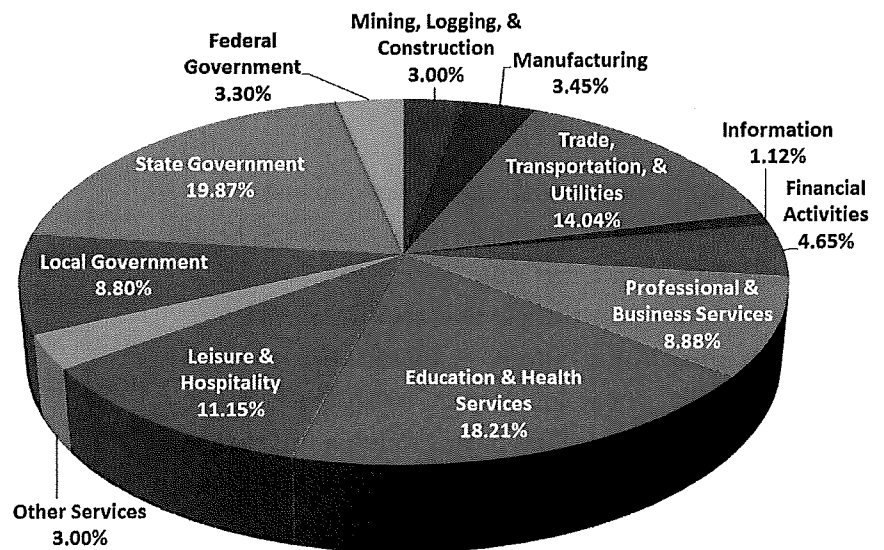
The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in November 2014 shows the largest employers in the Gainesville MSA are concentrated in Government related activities (including local, state and federal government), accounting for almost 32.25% of the workforce; Education and Health Services accounts for 18.21%; Trade, Transportation and Utilities accounts for 14.04%; and Leisure and Hospitality account for 11.15%.

Historically, unemployment rates in the Gainesville MSA have been lower than state and national rates



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistic. U.S., Florida and Gainesville MSA Unemployment Rates, (Seasonally Adjusted) January 2000– December 2014. Gainesville MSA is comprised by Alachua County and Gilchrist County.

Gainesville MSA Employment Distribution by Industry



Source: United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistic. Gainesville MSA preliminary figures as of December 2014. Gainesville MSA is comprised by Alachua County and Gilchrist County.

Gainesville MSA employment is concentrated in relatively few industries, with half of the workforce concentrated in the Government and Education & Health Services sectors.

According to the UCF's Florida's *Institute for Economic Competitiveness Forecast 2014-2044*, the fastest growing sector in the Gainesville MSA is estimated to be the Construction and Mining sector, with an

average growth rate of 7.0% annually. This is followed by the Professional and Business Services sector with an average annual growth rate of 3.4%. The Other Services and Federal Government sectors will experience a decline, with average annual growth rates of -0.1% and -1.7%, respectively.

Of note is the small number of jobs that the high-value manufacturing industry employs relatively to the total workforce in the Gainesville MSA. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of November 2014, the Gainesville MSA manufacturing jobs accounted for 3.4% of the total employment compared to 4.2% in the state of Florida, and 8.7% in the U.S.

Though not as visible as it was a generation ago, manufacturing is still a central component of the U.S. economy ("American Manufacturing Is Alive and Well", Wall Street Journal, 2014).

Manufacturing output and exports have surpassed their pre-recession peaks, and employment has begun to grow again for the first time since 1998. Oxford Economics forecasts project that over the next 10 years, manufacturing output is expected to increase by 3.4% annually, as compared to 2.7% for the U.S. economy as a whole. That means that manufacturing is expected to make an increasingly large contribution toward positive U.S. economic growth. By the measure of output, manufacturing is expected to be an engine of the U.S. economic growth over the next 10 years.

Manufacturing employees earn a higher average salary and receive greater benefits than workers in other industries. The Manufacturing sector typically pays higher wages than other industries and the economy as a whole and provides job opportunities across the skill set spectrum. According to the Brookings Institution's *Why Does Manufacturing Matter?* report, workers at all wage levels (men and women, and those in all racial/ethnic, educational attainment, and occupational groups) earn more in manufacturing, enjoying a compensation premium compared to individuals employed in other sectors of the economy.

The U.S. average annual wage for all jobs was \$47,290 in 2010, while the average annual wage for manufacturing jobs was \$58,485. Similar results are consistent in the state and local level. For the Gainesville MSA, the average wage for all jobs was \$40,218 in 2010, while the average wage for manufacturing jobs was \$48,627. (Brookings Institution's *Locating American Manufacturing*). Therefore, promoting jobs in the manufacturing sector could help raise average earnings in the region. The Council of Economic Outreach has prioritized the growth of advanced manufacturing jobs as one of the most effective strategic opportunities.

The Manufacturing sector multiplier effect is stronger than other sectors of the economy, increasing the demand for raw materials, energy, construction and services from a broad array of supplying industries.

Manufacturing is also an important sector because it is a major source of commercial innovations, investing a far greater percentage of revenue in research and development than other industries. Manufacturing firms are more likely than non-manufacturing firms to introduce new products and new production or business processes.

Manufacturing makes up about 11% of U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but accounts for 68% of U.S. domestic company Research & Development spending, which is a key input to innovation, according to the report cited above.

According to Making Innovation (MIT Technology Review), “the hubs of advanced manufacturing will be the economic drivers of the future because innovation increasingly depends on production expertise.” Advanced industries – those that are heavily involved in research and development and STEM fields – have the greatest economic potential for the U.S. economy and its workers, according to the Brookings Institution.

Manufacturing is also vital to promote international trade and to attract foreign investment. According to the National Association of Manufacturers, U.S. Manufacturing companies are responsible for nearly half of all U.S. exports and foreign-headquartered companies now invest nearly 750 billion in U.S. manufacturing and employ more than 1.6 million people.

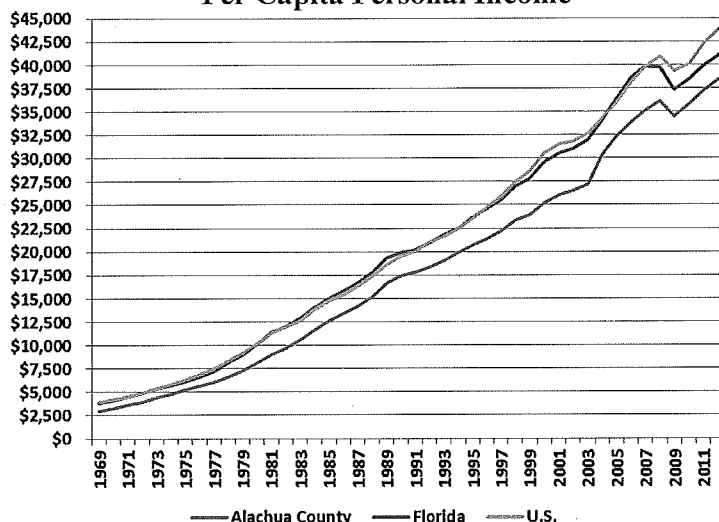
Metropolitan manufacturing plants in the US are relatively small, but vary widely in size. According to the National Association of Manufacturers, companies with fewer than 100 employees make up more than 94 % of all U.S. manufacturers. In 2009, the average manufacturing plant size in the Gainesville MSA encompassed 30.5 jobs, while the average plant in the U.S. encompassed 39.9 jobs (Brookings Institution).

Income

Income levels are an important measure of a County’s economic base, since they relate to housing values, poverty, expenditures, and ultimately government revenues used to support government services and facilities.

According to statistics from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Alachua County per capita personal income was \$38,393 in 2012. Income levels in Alachua County are below average compared to state (\$41,012) and national averages (\$43,735). Alachua County’s per capita money income approximates 90% of the state and U.S. averages, partly reflecting the lower earning levels of the large student population.

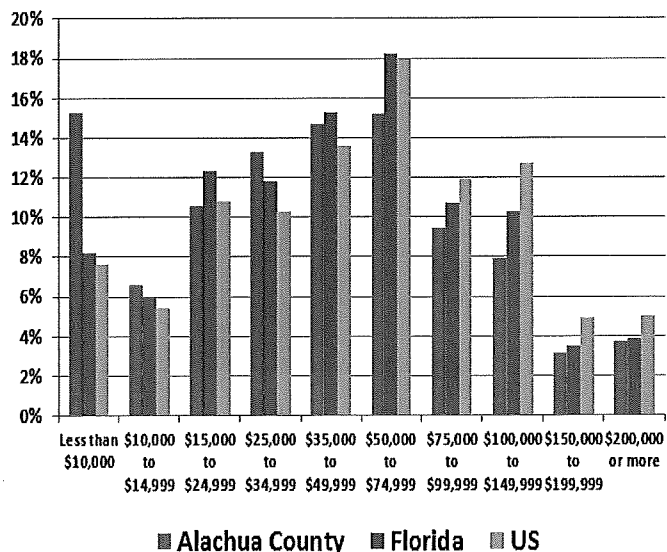
Per Capita Personal Income



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. U.S., Florida and Gainesville MSA PCPI 1969-2013.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2013, median household income in the Alachua County was \$38,454 compared to \$46,036 in Florida and \$52,250 nationwide. As shown in the graph, more than one-third of the Alachua County population earns less than \$24,999 per year. It is also relevant to point out that 15.3% of all households are in the lowest income bracket, less than \$10,000, compared to 8.2% in Florida, and 7.6% nationwide. The spike in this lower income bracket is consistent with the effect of off-campus students on other indicators such as poverty rate, and per capita income.

Distribution of Household Income



Source: U.S. Census, 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, U.S., Florida and Alachua County Household Income and Benefits, in 2013 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars.

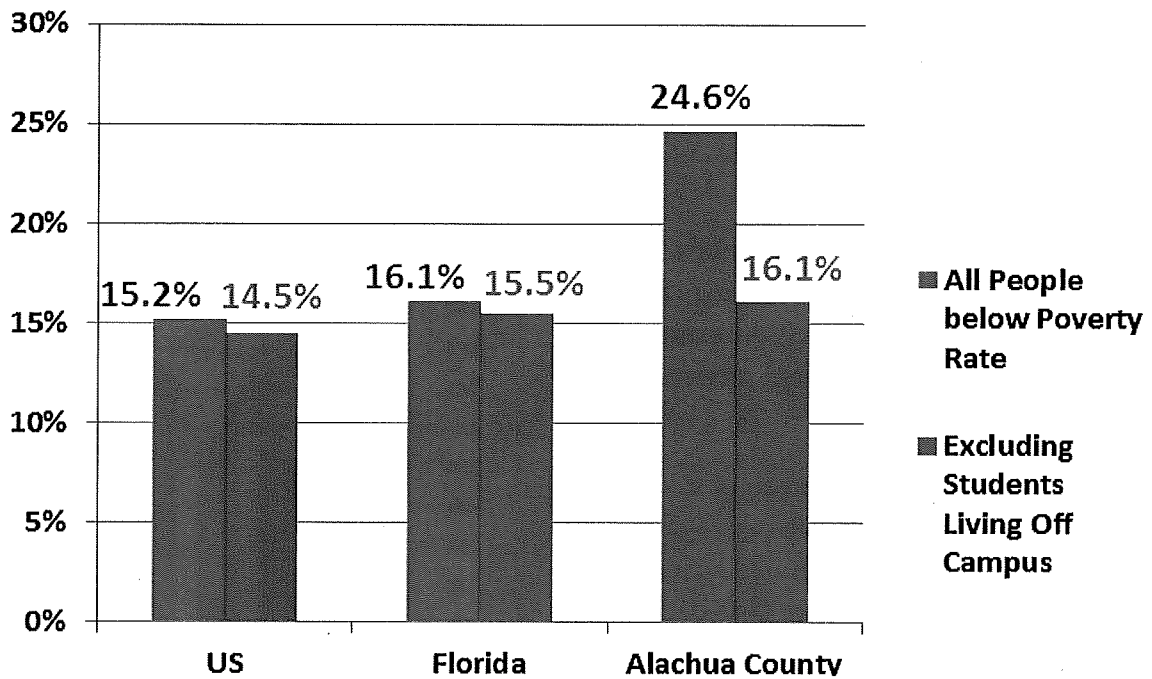
Effect of Off-Campus College Students on Poverty Rate

Off-Campus College students enrolled in undergraduate or graduate programs may noticeably shape the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of local communities. The impact of these students on communities where these colleges and universities are located varies by the size and location of the higher education schools. In smaller communities, where the students comprise a considerable portion of the population, the socio-economic characteristics of the communities are more affected by students.

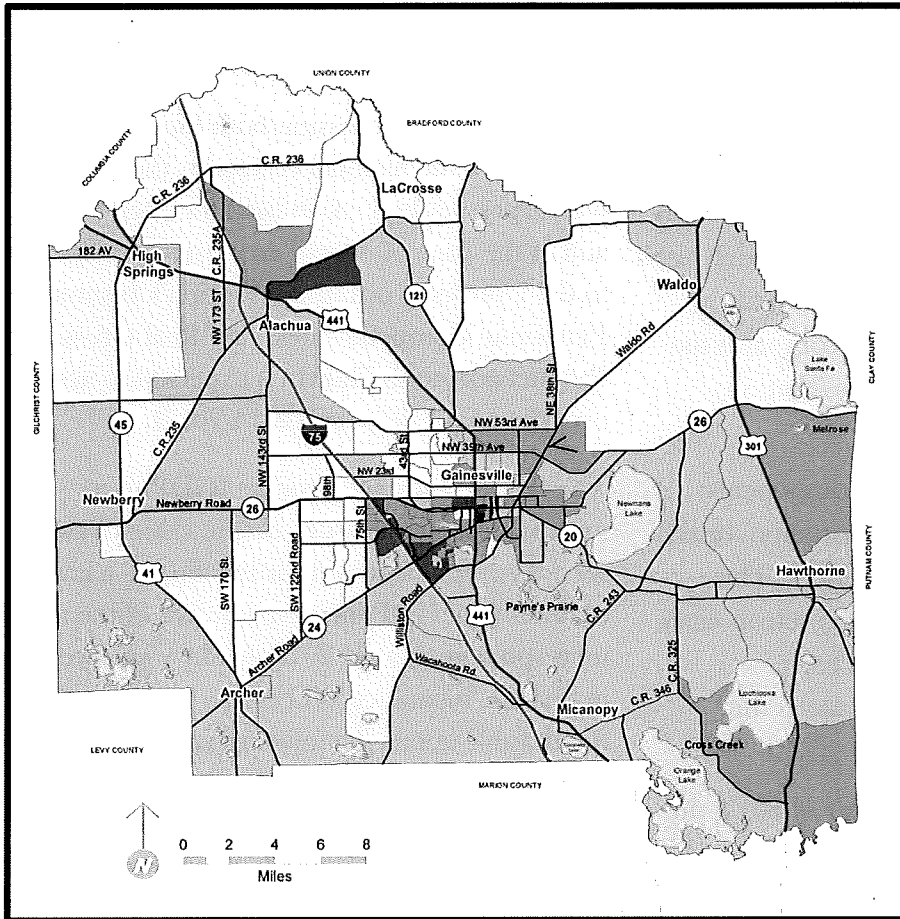
Such impacts are evident in Alachua County. According to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (2009-2011) data, the poverty rate in Alachua County was 24.6% of the population (about 57,000 people).

The poverty rate drops to 16.1% of the population (or approximately 37,000 people), when college students living off-campus are not included in the poverty rate. The County poverty rate excluding college campus is closer to the state of Florida poverty rate of 15.5%.

The Alachua County maps illustrate poverty as percentage of population by census tract from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2011). Most areas with high poverty concentrations are in the region located near the University of Florida campus, with few areas away from campus. This data is consistent with the effect of off-campus college students on the County poverty rate.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Poverty Statistics Branch, U.S., Examining the Effect of Off-Campus College Students on Poverty Rates (SEHSD 2013-17), U.S., Florida and Alachua County.



Poverty as a percentage of population

Legend

Lakes

Poverty as Percentage of Population

- 0 - 10%
- 10 - 25%
- 25 - 50%
- 50 - 75%
- 75 - 100%

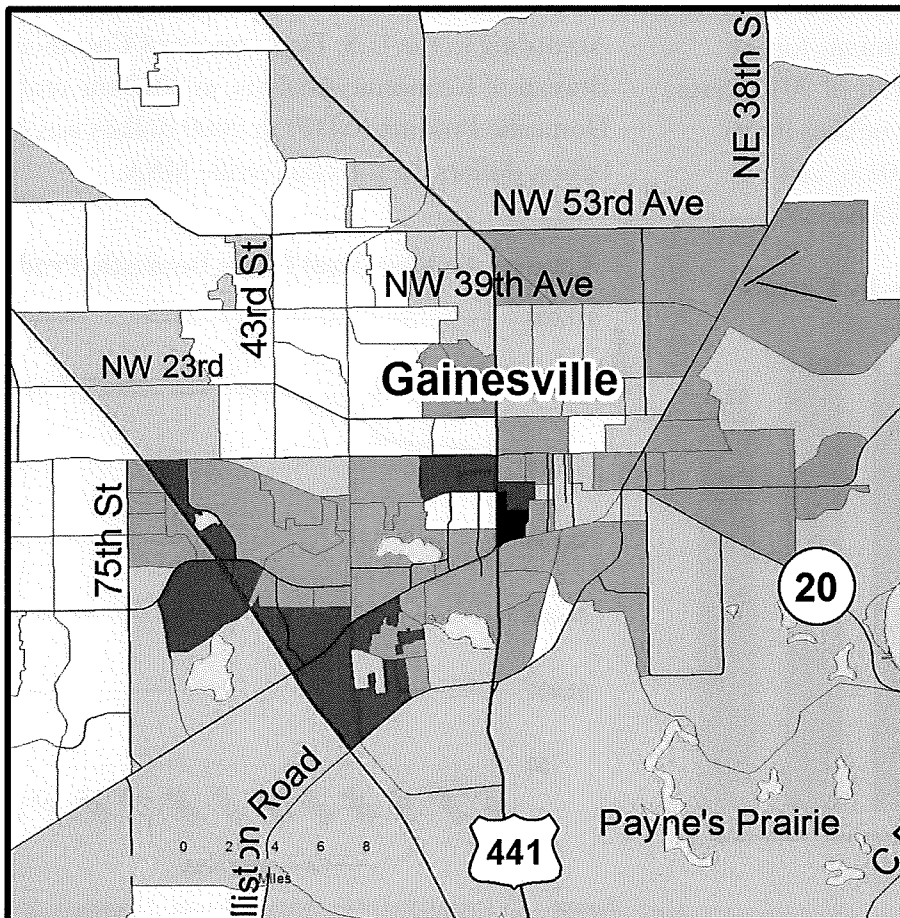
Notes:

Data Sources: US Census 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

Map created 10/24/2012

Prepared by:

Alachua County
 Department of Growth Management
 10 SW 2nd Avenue, Gainesville, FL 32601
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Poverty as a percentage of population

Legend

Lakes

Poverty as Percentage of Population

- 0 - 10%
- 10 - 25%
- 25 - 50%
- 50 - 75%
- 75 - 100%

Notes:

Data Sources: US Census 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Alachua County Percentage of Population below Poverty Rate.

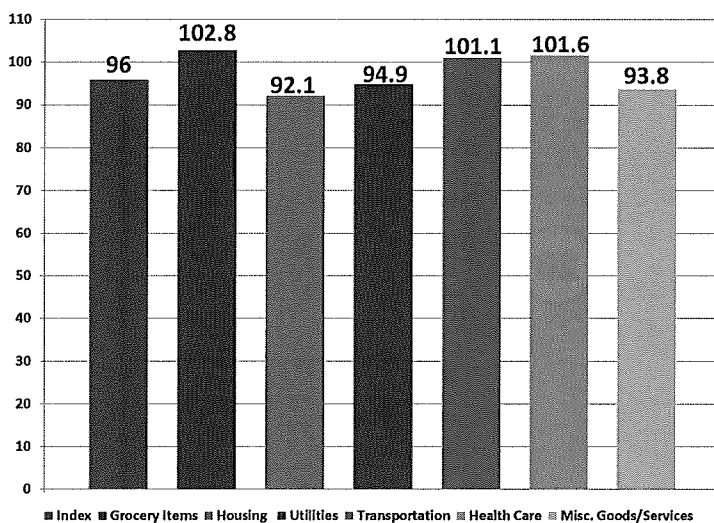
Cost of Living

The ACCRA Cost of Living Index is a measure of living cost differences among urban areas across the country compiled by the Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER). The index is widely used by economists, researchers and corporations to measure the relative cost of living, and compares the price of goods and services among areas that participate in the surveys.

The composite index is based on six components: grocery items, housing, utilities, transportation, health care, and miscellaneous goods and services. The average for all participating places, both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan, equals 100, and each participant's index is read as a percentage of the average for all places.

According to C2ER, in the third quarter of 2014, the Cost of Living Index for the Gainesville MSA (including Alachua County and Gilchrist County) was 96. This is 4% lower than the national average. The six components cost of living measurements for the Gainesville MSA for the third quarter of 2014 were: grocery items 102.8; housing 92.1; utilities 94.9; transportation 101.1; health care 101.6; and miscellaneous goods and services 93.8.

Gainesville MSA Cost of Living by Category



Source: C2ER, ACCRA Cost of Living Index, Q3 2014.

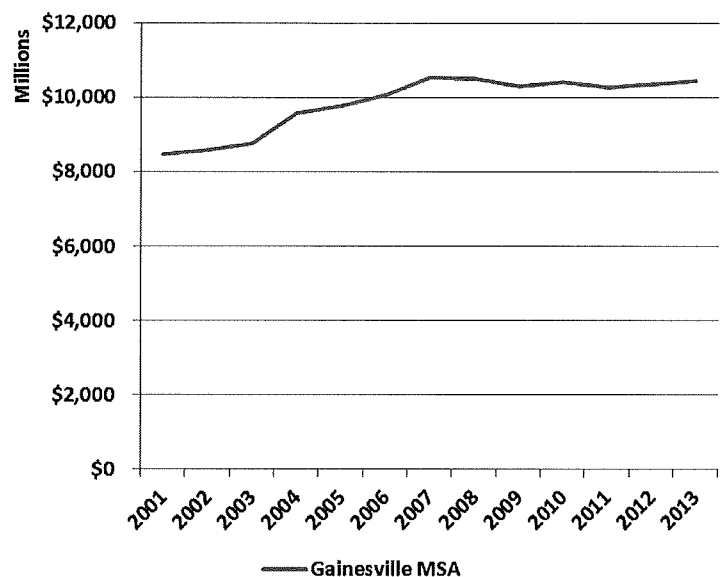
Economy

After enduring a recession both longer and deeper than that of the national economy, the state of Florida has surpassed the U.S. in both the pace of job creation and in the pace of overall economic growth. According to the University of Central Florida's Institute for Economic Competitiveness, the Real Gross State Product growth in Florida is expected to accelerate over the next four years (2014-2017).

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is a macroeconomic measure of the value of goods and services output adjusted for inflation in a given period of time. Real GDP increased in 292 of the nation's 381 metropolitan areas in 2013, led by widespread growth in finance, insurance, real estate, rental, and leasing, nondurable-goods manufacturing, and professional and business services, according to statistics released by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis in September 2014. Collectively, real GDP for U.S. metropolitan areas increased 1.7% in 2013 after increasing 2.6% in 2012.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis, in 2013 the real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2009 dollars was \$10.43 billion dollars for the Gainesville MSA.

Gainesville MSA Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP)



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP). 2001-2013 millions of chained 2009 dollars. Gainesville MSA is comprised by Alachua County and Gilchrist County.

According to the UCF's *Institute for Economic Competitiveness Florida Forecast 2014-2044*, the forecasted Real Gross Metro Product (GDP) average level is expected to be at \$16.3 billion dollars in 2044.

Historically, the region has benefitted from the stable presence of the University of Florida, and the sizeable health care related sectors. Cities and regions with the presences of a university have a certain financial, social, and cultural impact on the area. It shapes not only students acquiring a degree, but the surrounding area as well, ranging from companies, faculty, residents and quality of life. These assets provide economic stability but do not guarantee the region's continued growth and prosperity in the face of intense competition for new investment and jobs nationwide.

The challenging state of the national economy in the last five years has forced economic development stakeholders and local governments across the country to reevaluate traditional tools and programs, and to operate creatively in the new economic reality. Due to this new reality, innovation and entrepreneurship are becoming key drivers of Alachua County's economic development activities and contributors to the growth of the local economy.

In recent years, the region has been experiencing a high level of economic collaboration. As a key example, the strategic initiative, Innovation Gainesville (iG) was launched in 2009 by the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce to promote better working relationships between local government, the Chamber, UF, Santa Fe College, and community leaders in the private and non for profit sectors. These groups are working to develop an innovation ecosystem that promotes the growth of existing businesses, fosters the creation of startup companies, and attracts companies to expand in the region.

These efforts are helping Alachua County become one of the most dynamic environments in the state of Florida, helping in the process to diversify the local economy to a more innovation-based economy. The result of this is making the region take a leap from just fostering entrepreneurship to also become a viable

relocation option for companies in the science and technology area.

Some of the industries that have been experiencing regional growth due to the development of new high-tech startup activities are medicine, biotechnology, engineering, health, and information systems among other fields. Since 2010, 15 companies have been approved under the Qualified Target Industry (QTI) Tax Refund Program, incentivizing 1,690 innovation jobs with a proposed capital investment of \$458,326,538.

An abundant number of business incubators established in the region is part of the success equation to promote entrepreneurship, technology development and business attraction. Business incubators like the University of Florida Sid Martin Biotech Incubator, Santa Fe's Gainesville Technology Entrepreneurship Center (GTEC), Santa Fe College's Center for Innovation and Economic Development, the University of Florida Innovation Hub, Blue Oven Kitchen Incubators, Starter Space, among others, are major contributors to the area's success as an emerging startup hotspot.

For example, the UF Sid Martin Biotech companies and graduates have attracted more than \$1.2 billion in funding activity, and incubator companies have created more than 2,000 high-wage jobs and have had an economic impact of well over \$100 million per year in Alachua County. The Florida Innovation Hub at UF contributed to the creation of 250 jobs in the first 20 months of existence and the affiliated companies have attracted more than \$10 million in private investment. GTEC has made an impact of more than \$12 million in direct impact and more than \$24.5 million in indirect impact to the area, supporting innovative companies such as Sinmat and Optym.

With the region and Florida finally gaining some economic momentum in the economy, the region has a unique opportunity to position itself for private investment by embracing a renewed commitment for business and economic development growth policies.

Background New Section

Several plans and policies have been in place in Alachua County prior to the development of this Report. They include Plan East Gainesville, plans for the Alachua County Fairgrounds and Resource Recovery Park, as well as Comprehensive Plan policies pertaining to economic development. Additionally, the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce has several initiatives with the goal of affecting economic development, public policy, workforce development, as well as programs to facilitate business growth and community progress.

A summary of these various plans and policies are provided below to highlight some of the background that has led to the current Business and Economic Growth Action Plan. Recommendations are also included in the Recommendation section to further implement some the existing plans and initiatives.

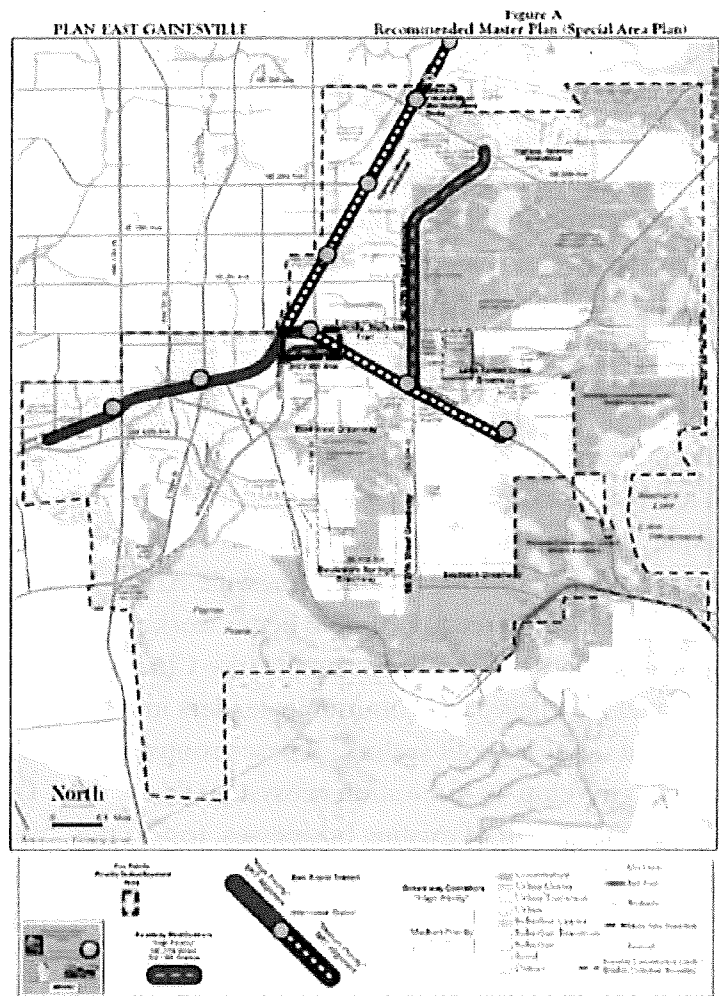
Plan East Gainesville

In 2002, the City of Gainesville and the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization commenced a joint planning effort to address the East Gainesville area, which had suffered from gradual economic decline and lack of private investment, to create a framework to balance desires for expanded economic growth with the preservation of natural amenities.

Plan East Gainesville was adopted in 2003 after substantial citizen input and was subsequently incorporated into the respective Comprehensive Plans for the City and the County. This marked the culmination of an extensive community planning effort among Alachua County, the City of Gainesville, the Metropolitan Transportation Planning

Organization, Gainesville Regional Utilities, and the Florida Department of Transportation. The following vision statement, formed at the April 2002 charrette, served as a guide for the effort:

East Gainesville will preserve and showcase the natural environment through open space conservation and the creation of thriving community centers that support strong neighborhoods, promote sustainable economic opportunity and a well-connected community, and embrace the history, culture and diversity of the area.



Supporting goals were to:

- Reflect the strength, quality and diversity of the people and neighborhoods by investing in the infrastructure and human potential;
- Celebrate and preserve natural resources as a unique, integral feature of the community through compact development, enhanced access and increased awareness of the area's natural amenities;
- Realize the potential for compatible economic opportunity and social interaction through connectivity of neighborhoods with mixed-use centers that bring higher paying jobs and provide services; and
- Enhance the multi-modal connectivity within the East Gainesville community and to regional employment and commercial centers.

The overall plan for community revitalization was developed around the central themes of land use, land conservation, transportation, and infrastructure.

Priority objectives for the Plan included:

- Expand the range of housing choices to attract and retain residents with a variety of income levels;
- Target specific areas for mixed-use development centers that can support and sustain higher levels of employment, commercial and social activities;
- Protect vital natural resources, such as the watersheds, creeks, tree canopy, and scenic vistas that make East Gainesville unique;
- Create opportunities for increased walking, bicycling and transit use through compact development patterns, urban design and development of new facilities and services, and
- Improve the inter-connectivity of the transportation system to minimize impacts to the state highway system and ensure improved accessibility between East Gainesville and other parts of the Gainesville urbanized area.

Progress to Date

The County's comprehensive plan was amended in 2006 to integrate the goals and objectives of Plan East Gainesville and to identify key elements of the County's implementation strategy. Future Land Use Objective 8.5 established the Plan East Gainesville Special Area Plan. "This plan was established in collaboration with the city of Gainesville and other stakeholders and requires collaboration with the City of Gainesville for part of its implementation. Alachua County is committed to implementing the general vision of the plan – both long term and short term, consistent with the implementation strategies outlined in the plan..."

Several of the Plan East Gainesville Comprehensive Plan policies as well as other improvements have been accomplished by both the City of Gainesville and Alachua County, including:

- The existing Alachua County Fairgrounds has been rezoned as a mixed-use employment center.
- Fred Cone Park and Eastside Recreation Center as well as Butler/Chestnut Preserve have been constructed by the City of Gainesville and the Alachua County Library District has constructed a library branch.
- Rosa Parks RTS Transfer Station
- Five Points gateway feature/brownfield remediation
- Rail-Trail connections and enhancements
- Gainesville Airport entryway relocation
- Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) purchase and renovation of abandoned homes for affordable housing rental and sale
- Landscaped medians on Hawthorne Road
- GTEC Incubator
- Cotton Club restoration
- Affordable Housing assisted by SHIP funding

Additionally, after the Plan East Gainesville report, the Eastside Activity Center Master Plan was developed and adopted in 2009 to replace interim guidelines originally established in 1994. The Activity Center Master Plan includes a detailed policy framework including a mix of residential, office, retail, commercial, and institutional uses, as well as transportation, resource protection and urban design (FLU Policy 2.2.10). Following the update of the Eastside Activity Center Master Plan in 2009, the County's Unified Land Development Code was amended to implement the comprehensive plan's activity center policies.

In order to achieve additional goals, Alachua County can research and propose capital improvements in East Gainesville that would improve infrastructure and streetscapes.

Alachua County Fairgrounds and Business Commerce Park

The existing Fairgrounds is located on approximately 102 acres in the northeast quadrant of Waldo Road and NE 39th Avenue adjacent to the Gainesville Alachua County Regional Airport.

In 2000, the Board of County Commissioners recognized that the facilities at the Fairgrounds were outdated and lacked amenities, and initiated a broad-based community effort to develop a plan to redevelop and modernize the Fairgrounds. Initial efforts focused on the existing site, including new fairgrounds facilities and additional venues for expanded economic opportunities. In order to achieve this goal, the county has sought input and direction from the county's residents, agricultural interests, various governmental agencies, and other stakeholder groups.

Per the recommendations of The Plan East Gainesville Study, the Alachua County Fairgrounds Analysis (Phase 2), and the Alachua County Business and Commerce Park Site Location Analysis (Phase 2), the County has proposed a plan to redevelop the site

as a business and commerce park.

The plan proposes the creation of an office and industrial mixed-use center on the current fairgrounds site. The development potential is linked to accessibility to Waldo Road and the site's proximity to the airport. This site represents an ideal location for the attraction of higher wage industrial or technology-sector jobs because of the site's size, location and proximity to the airport and related distribution facilities. Uses could include light manufacturing, service, and office uses, with supporting retail and restaurant uses, and possibly a business hotel.

In order to move forward with a Business and Commerce Park, the Alachua County Fairgrounds itself will need to be relocated. The County has purchased a tract of land known as the "Weisman Tract" north of the Leveda Brown Transfer Station off of Waldo Road as a new location for the Fairgrounds.

Resource Recovery Park

A Resource Recovery Park (RRP) is an industrial park, where operations specializing in reuse, recycling, compost processing, manufacturing, and retail businesses are co-located. Alachua County is in the process to develop a Resource Recovery Park next to the existing Leveda Brown Environmental Park located off NE Waldo Road in East Gainesville.

A RRP acts as way for a community to utilize their waste stream to generate other usable materials. Waste is diverted from landfills and is either recycled or reused, based on the activities taking place at the park. Therefore, waste from one material becomes a major component in the production of a different material.

The RRP will be designed to promote and attract a unique set of private sector manufacturing jobs. The park is planned to host a collection of complementary industries and entrepreneurial companies processing or manufacturing products from recyclable and recovered materials in the regional waste stream. The Park will offer shared infrastructure and services, a convenient location minimizing transportation and fuel costs, and a supportive and innovative network for businesses to thrive.

Alachua County Comprehensive Plan – Economic Element

The goal of the Economic Element of the Comprehensive Plan is to enhance the economic prosperity of all citizens of Alachua County and expand and diversify the county’s tax base. The Economic Element contains several policies pertaining to the objectives of economic diversity and sustainability, economic development strategy, environmental quality and resource conservation, education and employment, expand economic opportunities and reduce poverty.

Policies include the promotion of tourism, including eco-tourism and agritourism, building partnerships with workforce development and entrepreneurial organizations, promotion of a Resource Recovery industrial park, and pursuing funding opportunities for the extension of essential infrastructure to encourage development or redevelopment in economically distressed areas.

Recommendations to implement some of these policies are provided for in some of the initiatives discussed in this report or in the Recommendation section of this Report.

Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce

About

Since 1924, the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce



has been a catalyst for change for Greater Gainesville’s business community and community at-large. Today, they are a 5-star Accredited Chamber of Commerce that works to advance Greater Gainesville as a place of opportunity for more than 1,300 members and, by

extension, many businesses, families and individuals in the region.

Via leadership and collaborative efforts, the Chamber works strategically through economic development, public policy, regional initiatives, workforce development, and membership programs and events, to facilitate economic prosperity, business growth and community progress.

Forging Partnerships, Leveraging Assets, Creating Opportunity

Since 2012, the Chamber has announced more than 1,400 jobs and more than \$396 million in capital investment in its region. But they are just getting started. Their vision is for Greater Gainesville to be the global hub of talent, innovation and opportunity. That vision, by 2020, would add 3,500 new primary jobs, \$218 in new primary salaries, \$250 million in capital investment and \$1 billion in regional investment.

The Chamber’s plan of action includes marketing its region’s business, education and other assets and opportunities to industries throughout Florida, the country and the globe, and enhancing its traditional business-recruitment, retention, expansion, and entrepreneurship efforts. It also includes continuing to build and leverage its organizational and public-sector collaborations—through public policy advocacy, workforce development and regional initiatives—to develop and maintain a strong, regional workforce, create a business-friendly and affordable ecosystem and work regionally on all levels.

There’s no doubt that as a region with around 8,900 businesses, a world-class university with preeminent scholars, the state’s most educated population and a nationally ranked healthcare system—among other assets—Greater Gainesville is in the best kind of uncharted territory. But no single one of us can draw the map.

Together, as business, education and community leaders, the Chamber is charting its course to a transformed Greater Gainesville. The Chamber is helping to lead the charge by promoting game-changing economic development, business-friendly public policies, consensus-driven regional collaboration, cradle-to-career talent strategies and unparalleled member value.

Economic Development

Council for Economic Outreach: Transforming Greater Gainesville

The Council for Economic Outreach is the Gainesville region's economic development entity, charged with assisting existing businesses through expansion, helping new companies in our community grow and attracting new companies to the region.

In 2014, CEO successfully raised \$6 million in commitments from regional businesses to support the "Transforming Greater Gainesville" plan for economic development. It also announced 292 jobs, nearly \$256 million in capital investment, and nearly doubled its project portfolio from 36 to 70. In 2015, CEO embarked on a project to market Greater Gainesville's business, education and other assets on state, national and global scenes. It also has launched industry councils for the advanced manufacturing and technology sectors, and plans to create a new council for the agricultural sciences industry.

Key Industries

Greater Gainesville has the state's oldest and most comprehensive university, its most educated workforce, and a world-class healthcare system, a trifecta for innovation in the Life Sciences, Information Technology, Healthcare and Agricultural Sciences industries. These attributes, in addition to its central location, make it a highly competitive site location for Advanced Manufacturing and Logistics.

Public Policy

Promoting Business Climate Improvements

The Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce is the voice of business and creates programs and partnerships to promote business-climate improvements. In support of its mission to facilitate economic prosperity, business growth and community progress, the Chamber will often establish positions on issues, and advocate these positions before elected officials and staff at various levels of government.

Key Areas of Focus

The Chamber's policy-related efforts in recent years have centered on energy, transportation, innovation and small business growth. These areas—all vital to business growth and the advancement ability of families and the economy at-large—continue to garner the focus of the Chamber as well as stakeholders across the community.

Regional Initiatives

Regional Initiatives: Educating and Empowering the Community

The Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce creates public-private alliances and partnerships to address regional needs, including infrastructure, talent, education and more. Innovation Gainesville, and the first-ever convening of regional infrastructure decision-makers in 2014 exemplified the Chamber's ultimate aim for this division—creating and leveraging regional assets by coordinating existing public and private resources. The Chamber is launching a Dual Career Partner Network to address the employment needs of partners and sources as talent-recruitment around the region grows.

Innovation Gainesville

Innovation Gainesville is a community-wide initiative designed to harness the culture of innovation that has developed across hundreds of Gainesville-area citizens and organizations and direct it toward meeting regional needs. Innovation Gainesville has been an impetus for creating partnerships addressing talent attraction, regional infrastructure and more.

Key Areas of Focus

Because of the nature of the area, the Chamber's focal points relating to regional initiatives are as broad as the area itself. Talent, infrastructure and economic development will continue to be common denominators of work in this area.

Workforce

Workforce: Aligning the Region's Talent Strategy from Cradle to Career

The Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce is working alongside partners in business, education and the community to align today's talent to meet the needs of key regional industries, while preparing tomorrow's workforce to seize opportunity and prosper. In 2014, the Chamber supported efforts that helped to shape the Alachua County Education Compact.

Gainesville Chamber Education Foundation

The Chamber is working to support the Alachua County Education Compact by growing its Education Foundation and rallying support among education and business leaders across the region. The ultimate aim of the foundation is to support the needs of Chamber members and regional businesses in regional education initiatives in 2015 and beyond.

Key Areas of Focus

An ongoing focus for the Chamber's workforce division is supporting the talent needs of key regional industries and collaborating with education and business partners to streamline and align regional

talent development and outcomes. Workforce efforts will continue to be informed by ongoing business community feedback, efforts to transform Alachua County's K-12 education system and other factors.

Business Development

Business Development: Connecting Members to Engagement and Growth Opportunities

The Gainesville Area Chamber provides its 1,300+ members with connection and growth opportunities through innovative, high-value events, benefits and programs that advance the Chamber's mission and impact. Through its Circle of Champions, Media Partners, Leadership Gainesville as well as events including Business After Hours, Business Before Hours and other events, the Chamber provides members countless opportunities for business exposure and growth as well as professional and entrepreneurial development.

A Leading Chamber

Awarded with 5-Star Accreditation by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Gainesville Area Chamber is recognized as being one of the top 1% of Chambers nationwide. The Chamber also is certified by the Florida Association of Chamber Professionals.

Focus Areas

There are several policies and documents that helped to inform the Focus Areas, including the BoCC Strategic Plan and Guiding Vision, the Comprehensive Plan, as well as the EDAC Strategic Plan.

The BoCC adopted a Strategic Plan and Guiding Vision in 2014. It included an Economic Development section that provided desired outcomes including expansion of the economic base, creation of diverse job opportunities, expansion of public infrastructure, and reduction of poverty. It also included the following Visioning Statements related to economic development:

- The County will encourage sustainable economic development through a written economic development plan focusing on strengthening existing small businesses, growing diversified industries locally, introducing economic empowerment strategies, improving public infrastructure as our principle economic incentive and assuring the attraction of new industries and businesses, thereby creating increased job opportunities.
- The County will evaluate these economic development strategies utilizing a comprehensive matrix detailing how each contributes to our quality of life.
- The County recognizes that viable educational and entrepreneurial programs designed to assist in non-college bound youths are needed to break the cycle of poverty.
- The County promotes strong cities that serve as cultural centers which provide seamless service delivery systems.
- The County should work with environmental stewards on policies that promote economic development in East Gainesville while balancing existing environmental concerns and will provide flexibility to the extent possible.

- The County will develop strategy to continue development and redevelopment of the fairgrounds and industrial park.

The Economic Element of Alachua County Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2011. Its main goal is to *enhance the economic prosperity of all citizens of Alachua County and expand and diversify the County's tax base*. The Economic Element has objectives pertaining to the following:

- Economic Diversity and Sustainability
- Economic Development Strategy
- Environmental Quality and Resource Conservation
- Education and Employment
- Expand Economic Opportunities and Reduce Poverty
- Livable Communities

Additionally, EDAC developed a Strategic Plan for Economic Development in 2012. Participants in the April workshop reviewed the Strategic Plan and provided additional information regarding their priorities for economic development. The policies were aspirational and there was a need for more specific implementation steps. It is the intent of this report to expand on previous reports and bring together various goals and strategies of all of these documents into one report.

Based on all of the above, as well as feedback from workshop participants, EDAC and the Chamber of Commerce developed five focus areas from which to establish recommendations for economic development :

- 1. Development Approval Process Improvement**
- 2. Communication**
- 3. Economic Growth and Diversification**
- 4. Quality of Life**
- 5. Infrastructure**

These five focus areas address some important short-term and long-term economic development needs of Alachua County. The following section will provide an overview of each of the focus areas and then the next section will provide specific recommendations to implement improvements in each category. **The intent is to provide recommendations on what Alachua County government can specifically do in each of the areas to further the County's goals for economic development. This report is meant to serve as a complement to other economic development activities from organizations such as the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce and the Council for Economic Outreach.**

1. Development Approval Process Improvement

The category of Development Approval Process Improvement refers to the process of starting a business or constructing a development from inception to occupancy. The development review process can be an economic development tool if done well, according to Michael Blue in an article entitled *Development Review as Economic Development* (APA Zoning Practice 2.14). An unpredictable development review process can discourage development and lead to difficulty in implementing plans. According to Blue:

- The process must be **predictable** to the applicant, elected officials, other departments, and the public.
- Each step must **add value** to the process, the development and the community.
- The process must ensure open and continuous **communication** to all involved.

In order to promote business and economic growth, it is important to understand the impact that local government regulations and policies have on businesses, as well as the type of technical assistance that can be provided. Local governments can work with the private sector to identify factors that impact entrepreneurs, business expansion and new investment in the area and work to streamline the processes and make them easier to follow. Workshop participants made general comments about the desire to have an expedited and simplified

process for building permitting as well as development review. Comments related to regulations were that they can be difficult to understand and are often one size fits all without much flexibility. Workshop participants also cited the desire to have more predictable outcomes and to have a better understanding of the timeframe for development approval. Additionally, allowing some projects to be "fast tracked" through the development review process was suggested.

The intent of Development Review is to examine a project's impact on its immediate neighborhood and on the County as a whole, and to determine consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and Unified Land Development Code. Depending upon the project's size, location, and use, the review may address the impacts on traffic and parking, environmental protection, stormwater, the design character of the area, and infrastructure systems (water, sewer, etc.). Plan review is generally divided into Preliminary and Final levels. Preliminary Development Plans provide a general layout of the proposed project at a lower level of detail than required for Final plans and address open space, tree canopy retention, and general location of buildings and utilities. This stage provides the applicant with an approved plan to follow prior to investing in engineering services and provides time to engineer the final plan set. Final Development Plans provide the detailed engineering or construction drawings.

The types of applications that typically require Development Plan Review are residential subdivisions, commercial or office buildings, and mixed-use developments. Applicants can meet with development review staff free of charge for a pre-application conference to gain an understanding of any requirements specific to their property before a project is submitted. Pre-application meetings have been very popular with applicants and due to the demand there have sometimes been long lead times to schedule these meetings.

Once a development review application is submitted, projects typically take 1-2 months for Preliminary Plan approval and 1-4 months for a Final plan approval. The time for approval depends upon the complexity of the project and the availability of the applicant's engineers to address staff comments. Coordination between several review departments is critical. The timeframe for each round of review is three weeks, which is a very predictable timeline. Whether or not an application could be delayed due to the need for multiple submittals for an applicant to address code requirements is currently not predictable.

In Alachua County, residential building permits are typically issued within one week. Building permits for commercial/business uses are typically issued within two weeks. Many minor repair work permits are issued over-the-counter or within two to three days.

Recent Process Improvements:

- Administratively approving more types of minor plan applications— rather than requiring a public hearing for approving recent code changes, allow more types of applications to be approved by staff rather than requiring a public hearing. These include changing the use of an existing site, small building additions, waivers to section-line setbacks, as well as applications for rural home based businesses. These take approximately two weeks for staff review and approval. Previously it was a minimum of 4 weeks and a Development Review Committee public hearing was required.
- Process improvements such as changes to the Comprehensive Plan and land development regulations to allow for easier approvals for mixed-use developments. Properties eligible for Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TNDs) and Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) can proceed directly to development plan review, rather than going through a comprehensive plan amendment or zoning change. Also, subdivision standards were modified to allow the developer more flexibility. These included eliminating the requirement for minimum lot sizes and a reduction in the required road width. In the past, this additional flexibility required a separate step for Board approval through a zoning change to a Planned Development (PD).

Current Focus Areas to Consider

Electronic vs. Paper Review

Paper copies of building permits and development plans are currently reviewed by staff. This involves the applicant coming in person to the County Growth Management Department with sometimes numerous sets of plans. Electronic review for certain types of projects could help save both time and money and provide greater efficiency. Other communities are beginning to utilize more electronic processes. Alachua County has begun developing an online process. Records retention requirements will need to be reviewed and assurances provided that electronic plans retention meet any State requirement.

An International Economic Development Council (IEDC) article cited that only 21% of city planning departments in the United States offer online permitting applications, according to a survey by Planetizen. Other findings show that 83% provide their zoning codes online and only 10% have a social media presence.

Redevelopment

Redevelopment as well as infill development is an efficient use of land, infrastructure, energy resources, and public services. The Comprehensive Plan and land development regulations were written primarily for undeveloped/vacant sites, which are often called "greenfields". The County is beginning to have more requests for the redevelopment of previously developed sites, and the current code does not always easily address these redevelopment sites. For example, the areas within the Oaks Mall Activity Center that are outside of the City of Gainesville's City Limits as well as various non-residential properties along the Archer Road corridor are beginning to redevelop.

They were originally constructed with more suburban regulations and now the more urban standards of the Land Development Regulations are being applied. Many franchises have better designed and more efficient store models and are redeveloping existing sites to meet current trends such as Taco Bell on Newberry Road. Other recent examples of redeveloped sites include the CVS on the corner of NW 16th Blvd. and NW 43rd Street as well as the Towne Place Suites Hotel and Applebee's on the corner of Newberry and Tower Road.

There are several advantages to redeveloping outdated sites – sites are visibly improved, traffic flow can be improved and existing infrastructure can be used or updated rather than expanding into undeveloped areas. Further, the more that existing properties are redeveloped, then the less impact there is to undisturbed sites and the more natural areas can remain.

The Comprehensive Plan Economic Element Policy 1.1.10 states *recognizing constraints such as location, site access, existing utility infrastructure, or other conditions that may constrain redevelopment in compliance with generally applicable standards, the County shall establish criteria for sites where it would be appropriate to facilitate redevelopment of existing properties based on alternative standards.* A review of the land development code and potential code changes would be helpful to ensure that redevelopment regulations are easily understood and encouraged. Redeveloping sites can be more difficult than developing undeveloped land due to existing development patterns and outdated infrastructure. Incentives may be reviewed in order to encourage redevelopment. Alternative standards may be appropriate.

Utility Coordination

Currently, development plans are often approved by the County prior to receiving approval from Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU). Sometimes GRU requires changes that affect the County's approval. Staff is exploring the possibility for better alignment of both processes with GRU representatives.

Process

Many development review applicants want certainty and flexibility in the process. However, it can be difficult to bridge the gap between providing flexibility as well as certainty. Having a consistent process may help.

Attention should not only be towards streamlining for the sake of expediency, but rather efficiency. Most applicants seem more concerned that the overall timeline is more predictable.

Ways in which the County can improve the development approval process include providing more opportunities for submitting electronically, coordinating the process with utility providers, reviewing redevelopment regulations, ensuring predictable development review process, and developing an expedited plan review.

2. Communication

Clear communication with both internal and external customers is vital to the organization and the public. The County currently communicates via website, press releases, County Update Newsletter, Channel 12, social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube), printed material, and through employees. In general, the following are types of communication that affect the County's perception and can have an effect on economic development.

Communication with new applicants

New applicants and developers wanting to locate in the County need to be able to access detailed information on the requirements and process efficiently as well as know where to go for questions. Communication with prospective land purchasers in the due diligence period needs to include information about any encumbrances or constraints on the property. More information can be added to the County's website in order to assist new applicants and developers with understanding the requirements and process to develop property.

Communication with established applicants.

This can be very detailed level of communication with those already familiar with the development approval process. Efficiency and completeness of communication is essential to avoid repeated turn-around of project reviews.

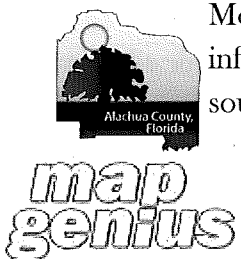
Communication with general public about pending applications and general questions.

Staff has to try to ensure that information is provided in an easy to understand manner for those not familiar with the process or regulations and who typically want to know what is upcoming in the community and how to participate in the process.

Telling Our Story

Communication and perception were widely discussed at the workshop. Participants said there could be ways to widen opportunities to promote access to information on how to do business in the County (“chat” support, media, workshops, presentations, web clips). They also mentioned that the County could do a better job in telling “our story”. Conveying that the County is “open for business” was cited by several people. However, some workshop participants also said that it is actually easy to do business and gain approvals in the County and that this aspect should be communicated more in order to overcome negative perceptions. Customer service comments related to wanting a greater amount of helpfulness and support from staff towards helping customers obtain their goal, which is essentially to be more solution oriented.

Internet Tools



More people increasingly try to access information via the internet as a primary source before calling a company or government department in person. A website should effectively serve its customers and try to ensure that answers to a customer’s questions can be easily obtained. The recent development of the MapGenius mapping system by County staff effectively combined several sources of information into one site

and it has been very successful. Providing a similar service for more aspects of information could benefit both the public and staff.

Customer Service

Regarding customer service, any organization can typically make improvements. According to the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), excellence in local government customer service translates into:

- Greater public confidence and trust
- Support for budgets and other local government initiatives
- Positive image for community

Ways in which the County can improve communication include:

- Providing more information online and in print in an easy to understand format to assist established and new customers with navigating the development review and building permitting process.
- Ensuring that the necessary steps in the process are “linked” in one place. For example, development review and building permitting information is provided on the growth management website, but there is currently no reference to construction permit information.
- Training employees to have a “solution oriented” mindset.
- Enhance and improve internet-based resources and find new ways to disseminate information.

3. Economic Growth and Diversification

Ways in which Alachua County can influence economic diversification include leveraging economic development initiatives in place, expanding collaboration and cooperation with stakeholders, exploring the possibility of providing more flexibility within zoning categories, enacting new business incentive policies, and promoting the local agricultural economy.

Economic development is a means of contributing to the economic vitality of the community to enhance and diversify the local tax base, to increase the number of jobs available to residents of the community, and to improve the local quality of life.

Economic opportunity can be expanded through business creation, retention, and expansion, by keeping existing businesses from moving out of the area, helping existing businesses grow, and nurturing small businesses and entrepreneurs.

A diverse economic framework can generate strength in the community because no single economic sector is relied upon too heavily. The Economic Element of the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan has the goal of enhancing the economic prosperity of all citizens of Alachua County and expanding and diversifying the County's tax base. The Comprehensive Plan implements the community's vision through those policies that achieve and maintain the quality of life desired by residents and business owners in Alachua County. Achieving economic diversity assists in minimizing the vulnerability of the local economy and provides economic opportunity for all segments of the population.

A diverse economic framework can also help to attract and retain high-quality employers and employees within the workforce. The addition of new jobs means increased employment opportunities for local residents or the growth of the community by providing employment opportunities for new residents of the community. New and expanding businesses in a community also fill vacant, possibly blighted property, potentially transforming underutilized property. Improving underperforming property means an increase in property value and rents.

For communities to maintain and boost their economic vitality, they must persuade business or investors to locate, expand or remain in the area rather than in another location. In terms of increasing the tax base, when a new business is established, the

tax burden is eased in the residential community.

The expansion, relocation or creating of businesses means more entities can contribute to the tax coffers to support the local services cost of local governments.

Alachua County Assessment

In the last few years, Alachua County, municipalities and regional economic development partners have been taking a more proactive role in helping existing businesses to expand, pursuing tax base diversification, higher paying jobs, and business vitality.

The Gainesville Council for Economic Outreach is the designated economic development entity for all of Alachua County. Their goal is to assist existing businesses through expansion, to help grow new companies in our community and to attract new opportunities to Alachua County. Achieving economic diversification is part of their mission, and they are in the process of launching a five-year plan that targets growth in specific industries including: logistics, advanced materials, agricultural life sciences, human life sciences, software and information technology, and advanced manufacturing.

The region finds itself in a highly competitive market within the state and nation for new investment opportunities and jobs. Participants attending the Business and Economic Growth Workshop cited the need to diversify the economy, specifically promoting the growth of the manufacturing industry and more low to medium skilled employment opportunities, since jobs in manufacturing typically pay higher wages than in the economy as a whole.

Incentives

Incentives can be an important tool in economic development. Many communities across the country compete to attract new businesses by utilizing various types of business incentives, but incentives are also an important tool in business retention and expansion. Participants attending the workshop cited the need to be competitive with business incentives inducing investment in our community.

In order to be more competitive for new investment, Alachua County could explore the adoption of policies outlining additional incentives and tools to stimulate business investment. Currently, the main business incentive utilized by Alachua County is the state Qualified Target Industry (QTI) tax refund. There are myriad ways that a community can adopt new incentives to attract and retain jobs. However, new incentives should be crafted in a way that works in the local, regional and state environment. It is a best practice to tie incentives (tax-related or not) to performance criteria, such as number of jobs created, quality of jobs, and minimum investment requirements, among other performance measures. It should be also noted that there are limited financial resources and there is considerable debate on government providing incentives to private businesses.

Flexibility

Participants attending the workshop also cited the need to have more flexibility in zoning districts, and to ensure that the land use plan and land development regulations address emerging trends and changes in industry demands while also protecting natural resources and quality of life in the County. Adjustments in regulations could set the stage for further economic diversification in unincorporated Alachua County. This can include amendments to zoning categories, as well as providing more flexibility within zoning categories.

Local Food Economy

Workshop participants identified the need to grow and promote the local agricultural and local food economy. A suggestion mentioned was to assist local food stakeholders to create a regional food hub.

According to the National Food Hub Collaboration, A regional food hub is “a business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand.

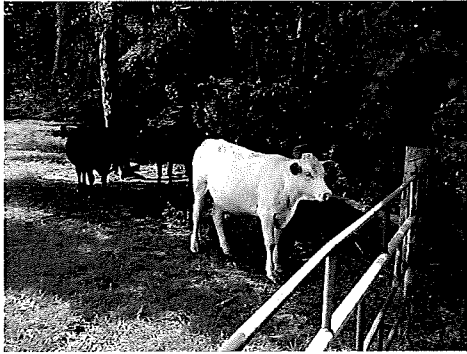
Regional food hubs increase market access for local and regional producers, complimenting and adding value to the current food distribution system. They are also key mechanisms for creating large, consistent, reliable supplies of mostly locally or regionally produced foods.

Alachua County and the state of Florida are well-known as a major agricultural producer with nearly year-round production due to its mild winters and hot summers. Historically, agriculture and food production has been an Alachua County economic pillar. In Alachua County, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and related industries are ranked as the 3rd largest in employment, 4th in total value added of all industries, 5th among all industry groups in output, and 3rd in exports according to the *Economic Impacts of Agriculture in Alachua County* report from University of Florida/ Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension Alachua County.

According to UF/IFAS “Cornerstone of Alachua County's Economy and Land Base: The Economic Impact of Agriculture and Natural”, the agriculture and natural resource based industry group is a large and diverse component of the Alachua County economy.

The total output impacts for agriculture and natural resource industries in Alachua County were estimated at \$592 million.

The forestry and related wood and paper products industry was the largest sector, contributing more than \$132 million in total output impacts, and accounts for more than 22 percent of total output impact in the county from agriculture and natural resource industries.



The food product manufacturing industry with \$116 million in output impacts registered as the second highest agriculture and natural resource industry in the county. The environmental horticulture industry (nursery and greenhouse, and landscape services), with over \$86 million in output impacts and the fruit and vegetable farming and processing industry with \$80 million output impacts, was another key contributor to the agriculture and natural resource sector. The livestock, dairy farming, and animal products industry registered a total of \$54 million in output impacts in 2006.

According to UF/IFAS Extension Alachua County, 54% of land in the County is used for Agriculture, and 98% of farms in Alachua County are small farms, and 88% are individually or family owned. According to the Florida Organic Growers' *Community Vision for Food System Development in Gainesville-Alachua County* report, in 2010 there were an estimated 1,532 farms in Alachua County, and 38% of this farmland is used for crop production.

A wide variety of edible crops are produced in the region including dry beans and peas, vegetables, melons, potatoes, fruits, tree nuts and berries.

Local food production and consumption has increased over the recent years in response to concerns about food safety and quality, local economic development, and environmental benefits. According to the University of Florida study conducted by Dr. Alan Hodges, *Local Food Systems in Florida: Consumer Characteristics and Economic*

Impacts, sales of food grown locally or regionally in the state of Florida accounted for \$8.3 billion in annual economic activity for 2011-12, researchers have concluded after analyzing a statewide consumer survey. Almost three-fourths of the total estimated revenue (\$6.1 billion) was spent on local food at retail grocery stores, according to this University of Florida study. Consumers also spent \$1.8 billion at farmers' markets, roadside stands and U-pick businesses. Restaurants and other food-service establishments accounted for \$320 million, and prearranged farm-to-consumer sales, including Community Supported Agriculture, totaled \$103 million. According to this study, the total spent on local food averaged \$1,114 per household in the state of Florida, and this number was somewhat higher in central and north-central Florida than in South Florida or the Panhandle.

4. Quality of Life

Quality of life" is a term used to describe various, sometimes intangible factors that make a community attractive to live, work, and play. Communities across the country are recognizing the importance of recreation and preserved natural resources in their ability to make themselves more attractive to talented workforce and new businesses.

New businesses are attracted to communities with the most appropriate quality of life factors, and existing businesses will expand for the same reason (American Planning Association).



MindTree officials considered its site location in other southeastern US cities...but ultimately selected Gainesville due to the area's high caliber of innovative workforce talent, community spirit and unparalleled quality of life.

Source: Mindtree.com

Factors include not only wealth and employment, but also the built environment, physical and mental health, education, arts, recreation and leisure time, social belonging, and natural resource preservation. Quality of Life plays a role in economic development because businesses often cite quality of life as a reason for locating a business.

Workshop participants cited Quality of Life factors as economic development drivers. Schools are an important factor for families. Choices in recreation and cultural amenities are business attractors. One participant said “leaders and employees need to *want* to live here.”

Livable Communities

According to the *Investing in Place* research study, there is potential for a new economics of place and place making. **Successful economic development policies will likely need to focus strongly on the qualities that make a community or region attractive.** “When asked what would strengthen their local economy, two-thirds [of respondents] believe that investing in schools, transportation choice, walkability, and key community features is the best way...For both Millennials and Active Boomers, including those living in today’s suburbs, walkability is in high demand.” Additionally, a key finding of the report is that quality neighborhoods that blend access, amenities and affordability need to drive local development actions. There is potential for shifting market and consumer demand that may have a significant impact on the shape of communities and industries such as housing, health, and transportation. The ability to “age in place” is also becoming an important issue. (<https://www.planning.org/policy/polls/investing/pdf/pollinvestingreport.pdf>)

The Alachua County Comprehensive Plan addresses many of the trends towards citizens’ wanting more transportation options, greater walkability, the option to age in place, as well as the preservation, protection, and promotion of natural resources.

Creating livable communities that are attractive to diverse populations and new economic development

opportunities is an objective of the Comprehensive Plan’s Economic Element. Other Comprehensive Plan policies include encouraging expanded and new businesses to locate in well-designed, compact mixed-use communities, promoting reduced commuting distances through encouragement of mixed-use development, preserving natural resources, and including standards in the Land Development Regulations help ensure that new and expanded businesses provide for the health of the community by providing access to public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, as well as roadways.

The main goal of the Community Health Element of the Comprehensive Plan is to “preserve the health of Alachua County residents by facilitating health care delivery, improving the livability of the community, and providing all Alachua County residents opportunities for active living.” One of the objectives is to “develop and maintain ongoing County programs and infrastructure designed to support sustainable community health.” A connected system of walkways and bikeways has community health benefits and affects quality of life.

Additionally, allowing a mix of housing types and housing units that facilitate aging in place can promote a healthy community. With the predicted increase in the over age 65 population, aging in place housing units will likely have increased demand in Alachua County.

According to the recent article *A Healthy Community = A Strong Local Economy*, in the ICMA Public Management P.M. Magazine, “healthy communities and economically vibrant communities are often one and the same.” There are multiple overlapping factors that affect the health of an individual including family and social networks, institutions/schools, community factors, and public policy. “The ability of an individual to make choices depends in part on the individual’s environment, which includes public policy decisions.” (*Public Management, October 2014*).

Current County policies also allow mixed-use development. Several large projects are at different stages of development including three Transit Oriented Developments (Celebration Pointe, Springhills, and Santa Fe Village) which are designed to accommodate transit. The Celebration Pointe TOD has announced plans for a Bass Pro Shop to be located within the development, which is a regional draw. Additionally, policies support multi-use paths and bike lanes within developments to allow for different modes of transportation.

These TOD projects are consistent with the comprehensive plan policies and represent the most active projects currently under development review and construction in unincorporated Alachua County. Mixed-use developments can provide for the more efficient delivery of services, as well as provide a greater amount of value as well as revenue per acre.

Green Infrastructure New Section

The term 'quality of life' has been used to embrace many facets of life, but when it is operationally defined it almost always incorporates green/natural infrastructure such as recreation, parks, open space opportunities, and natural areas.

Green/Natural infrastructure is an essential part of Alachua County's unique natural heritage and economy. It can be defined in many ways, and in its broadest application, natural infrastructure encompasses a strategically planned and managed "interconnected network of natural areas and other open spaces that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions, sustains clean air and water, and provides a wide array of benefits to people and wildlife", according to the Environmental Protection Agency. (http://www.epa.gov/greenkit/natural_infrastructure.htm). Green infrastructure also refers to a stormwater management technique that preserves, restores, enhances or mimics natural hydrology (APA Zoning Practice 9.10)

Green/Natural infrastructure such as recreational opportunities, open space, and natural areas are a very important part of the quality of life that firms and employees seek in a community. Places with such

amenities and recreational opportunities attract taxpaying business in search of a high-quality environment for their employees. This kind of infrastructure also contributes to the economic health of communities by helping to create stable, attractive neighborhoods where people want to live and play. Plazas, parks, open spaces also contribute to place making and community character.

Green/Natural infrastructure in Alachua County contributes to the economy in jobs, taxes, tourism, and other revenues. Preserving parks, open space and working lands creates recreational opportunities for residents and visitors generating revenue and jobs in the local economy. All these amenities make a community special and generate tourist dollars for local governments.

Alachua County's climate provides year round opportunities for hiking, biking, fishing, birding and kayaking. The natural preserves, parks, trails, springs and lakes provide immeasurable natural, recreational and economic values for residents and visitors. It also allows preservation of rare, threatened, and endangered species that are dependent on spring systems for habitat.




Alachua County's Comprehensive Plan Conservation and Open Space Element emphasizes the preservation of natural areas and resources with the goal of *conserving, managing and restoring or enhancing the natural and human-related resources of Alachua County to ensure long-term environmental quality for the future.*

The county government has developed a combination of regulatory and non-regulatory approaches that have led to the protection of over 25,000 acres of green space in Alachua County. The County's Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations are designed to protect critical and sensitive natural areas through the development review process and strong protection standards.

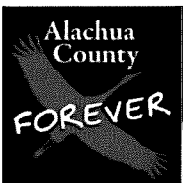
Regulatory tools include mapped strategic ecosystems, upland habitat protection standards, strong wetland avoidance and buffer standards, and incentive opportunities for developers protecting resources. Regulatory tools include both strong resource protection standards in combination with incentive-based land protection options available to land owners and developers.

Some of the incentive based tools include clustering and density bonuses for increased habitat protection, and increased design flexibility (i.e. Low Impact Development design options for storm water management and open space). Strong resource protection standards included up to 150 ft. average buffers for Outstanding Florida Waters and 100 ft. average buffers for wetlands with listed species, upland habitat standards that protection up to 25% of the property and up to 50% of the upland areas within designated strategic ecosystems and required clustering policies for large developments in agricultural areas.

Voter Approved Initiatives  **New Section**

There is strong voter support for the protection and preservation of land for conservation and recreational use. In November 2000, voters approved a ¼ mil property tax to fund up to \$29 million to create a land acquisition program called the Alachua County Forever Program. The mission of the program was to acquire, manage, and improve environmentally significant lands to protect water resources, wildlife habitat, and to provide natural areas suitable for resource-based recreation. Additionally, voters passed the Wild Spaces Public Places half-cent sales surtax in 2008 in order for the County and its municipalities to acquire and improve conservation lands as well as create and improve parks and recreational facilities

Alachua County Forever



The mission of the program was to acquire, manage, and improve environmentally significant lands to protect water resources, wildlife habitat, and to provide natural areas suitable for

resource-based recreation.

So far, Alachua County Forever and its partners have been able to protect over 23,000 acres through a combination of land purchases, conservation easements and land donations.

Acquisition List protected:	23,944
With Direct ACF funding:	19,285
Remaining on List:	27,246
Under contract:	-
Value of land protected:	\$ 105,610,976
County share:	\$ 37,661,732
Partner share:	\$ 67,949,245
Managed by County:	10,662
Managed by Partners:	8,624
Acreage open now:	11,908
To be opened in next 5 years*:	5,602
*Guided group tours can be arranged	
As of 2/5/2015	

Two-thirds of the \$105 million cost was leveraged from our private and governmental partners.

The portfolio of preserves is managed to enhance and maintain its ecological function. We provide compatible outdoor recreation for a wider variety of users. Almost eight dollars for each local dollar invested has been leveraged and half of the acreage the County purchased is managed by a partner.

Alachua County Forever has achieved all three referendum goals:



- Protection of water quality
- Wildlife habitats
- Providing natural areas for resource-based recreation

The success of this program has led to the approval in 2008 of the Wild Spaces & Public Places referendum authorizing an additional \$15 million in conservation funds.

Wild Spaces Public Spaces

The passage of Wild Spaces & Public Places (WSPP) Local Government Surtax spurred much activity in Alachua County. The County and all nine municipalities received a share of the surtax according to an Intergovernmental Agreement approved in 2008.

The County's land conservation program was able to continue land acquisitions uninterrupted primarily because of its established list and processes.

Alachua County's share was split between the Senior Recreation Center (\$1.5 million) and Alachua County Forever (\$12.7 million) to continue the environmentally significant land purchases, as well as the Public Works Division for improvements to Kanapaha Park and the Archer Braid Recreational Trail (together \$1.1 million).

Tourism  **New Section**



Alachua County's unique blend of nature, arts and culture, technology and heritage attracts those visitors seeking that special experience that recharges the

spirit.

A key product for the County is the abundance of nature based sites. The activity ranges from off-road bicycling trails to swimming in cold water springs to just enjoying Florida at its natural best. This blend of attractions adds to the residents' quality of life and makes the area enticing to the business sector. In 2014, the County generated \$3.8M in Tourist Development Tax and \$4.6M in sales tax based on \$76.6M in actual hotel room sales. (Visit Gainesville, 2015)

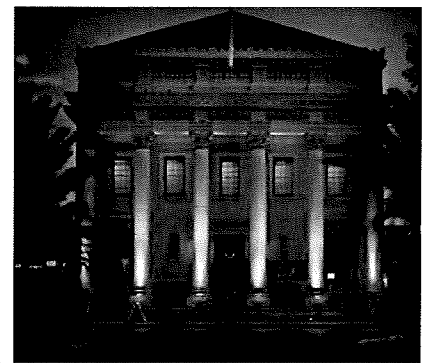
The Tourist Development Department (or Visit Gainesville Office) is creating a Strategic Plan for Tourism that will guide the marketing efforts for the next 2-3 years. The promoting of the natural attractions to visitors, who may not be aware that this area is so rich in product, will continue to be one of the major initiatives of Tourist Development.



Arts & Culture

The Creative Industries are composed of arts businesses that range from nonprofit museums, symphonies, and theaters to for-profit film, architecture, and design companies. Besides cultural

contributions, the creative industries and arts provide an economic stimulus to the community. Arts businesses and the creative people they employ stimulate innovation, strengthen Alachua County's competitiveness, and play an important role in building and sustaining economic vibrancy.



A study profiled in The Atlantic CityLab analyzed art clusters across U.S. metros and concluded that art clusters occur in "urbanized, relatively diverse regions" and are associated with strong economies. The study also delivers good news for smaller cities and towns, noting that "the arts are linked to broad measures of innovation and development...suggesting the arts can play a larger role in economic development irrespective of metro size or geographic boundaries of city and neighborhood."

The Creative Industries Represent 3.7% of All Businesses and 1.9% of All Employees in Alachua County, FL

It is important to understand the scope and economic importance of the arts in the Alachua County area. According to "American for the Arts" Creative Industries report, Alachua County is home to 560 arts-related businesses that employ 2,879 people. The "American for the Arts" Creative Industries report also mentions that the creative industries account for 3.7% of the total number of businesses located in Alachua County, FL and 1.9% of the people they employ.

The University of Florida is a major arts player in the Alachua County area, with UF College of Fine Arts staging many recitals, performances, art shows and concerts a year. UF campus is home to the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art and the Florida Museum of Natural History.

The region is also home to a professional theater company, the Hippodrome Theatre. The theater company, also known as the Hipp, presents musicals, comedies, dramas, and holiday productions. It has been Gainesville's most celebrated performing arts institution, celebrating 40 years of artistic excellence. In the non for profit side, there are multiple ensembles such as the Dance National Ballet, Gainesville Chamber Orchestra, Gainesville Community Playhouse and the Artisans Guild Gallery.

Ways in which the County can influence quality of life include continuing to provide for mixed-use developments, continuing to improve policies that implement Transit Oriented Developments (TODs)/ Traditional Neighborhood Development (TNDs), continuing to preserve and promote the County's natural resources, as well as foster tourism.

5. Infrastructure

An area's infrastructure system can be a key component to promote and facilitate economic development. Infrastructure available in a community such as water supply, utilities (including internet), sewers, roads, sidewalks, parks, public transit, and airports can be critical components of an area's development capacity and long-term competitiveness. According to the American Planning Association, communities with business friendly environments and adequate infrastructure are more competitive than those without these assets.

Many workshop participants said that the general infrastructure needs are crucial for continued economic development. Comments included helping smaller municipalities provide adequate centralized water/sewer, countywide transit, shipping and logistics, desire for spec buildings, or "shovel-ready sites".

Ways in which the County can influence infrastructure include researching or approving funding sources, continuing to pursue multimodal transportation options, and promoting and providing information on existing "shovel ready" sites.

A community's infrastructure is also linked to the community's health and quality of life. The County and municipal governments are responsible for transportation systems and their funding, in addition to state and federal agencies. To achieve effective and consistent leadership for planning, infrastructure investment and the delivery of other public services to support economic development, cooperation among regional stakeholders will be required.

Assets available to businesses in our region include a interstate and regional highway systems, a regional airport, and rail service.

Challenges

In the 1980's, the State of Florida turned over 200 miles of state roads to the County and provided a one cent gas tax to cover future maintenance. The backlog of repair and resurfacing projects has been a growing issue ever since. Currently, approximately 85% of the road network is in need of at least some repair work.

One of the fundamental land use strategies of the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan is to direct future urban development to locate within an urban growth area known as the Urban Cluster to maximize efficient use of land, separate urban and rural areas, and protect agricultural areas and natural resources. Defining a growth boundary is a central principle in land use planning in general. The Urban Cluster is designated on the Future Land use Map and includes about 40,000 acres of unincorporated area generally surrounding and adjacent to the City of Gainesville. The Urban Cluster essentially defines the growth boundary of the unincorporated County and the intent is to direct future urban development to this area. The Alachua County Comprehensive Plan promotes the continued concentration of growth in the Urban Cluster by providing incentives for new development located within the urban residential land use to be designed as Traditional Neighborhood (TND) or Transit Oriented Development (TOD) with higher transit supportive densities and mixed uses.

By focusing development within a certain boundary, there is less infrastructure to build and maintain. Additionally, more efficient delivery of public services creates a fiscally sound pattern of development.

Additionally, the Comprehensive Plan promotes more mobility options and responds to changing demographics and emerging markets by linking long-range multimodal transportation plans with standards and incentives for higher density, mixed-use development. This approach provides for non-residential employment based land uses closer to residential areas, reduces trip lengths, and can also reduce the transportation component of housing costs.

Broadband New Section

Broadband refers to a method of transmitting information using many different frequencies, or bandwidths, allowing a network to carry more data. “For most Americans, however, the term broadband simply refers to a fast Internet connection – whether fixed or wireless,” according to a report issued by the Executive Office of the President entitled *Community-based Broadband Solutions: The benefits of competition and choice for community development and high-speed internet access (January 2015 - http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/community-based_broadband_report_by_executive_office_of_the_president.pdf)*

The report states that “affordable, reliable access to high speed broadband is critical to U.S. economic growth and competitiveness.” A key finding of the report is that competitive markets have helped drive expansion in telecommunications services as strong infrastructure investments and falling prices have opened up a wide range of new communications products and services. Where there is strong competition in broadband markets today, it drives similar improvements. But competition does not extend into every market and its benefits are not evenly distributed. While the U.S. has an extensive network of middle-mile connections with the capacity to offer high-speed Internet to a large majority of Americans, many consumers lack access to the critical “last-mile”.

Gainesville ranks in the bottom 20 percent of mid-sized cities for average broadband speed, ranking 401st out of 500, according to a November 2014 Gainesville Sun Article citing a *BroadbandNow* report. The data used for the report covers all of Alachua County, showing an average speed of 20.8 megabits per second from 12 Internet providers. This is 23 percent slower than the Florida average. However, the report does not distinguish any difference in speed or coverage between the urban core and rural areas.

Wired broadband covers approximately 82.9 percent of the county, according to the *BroadbandNow* report. However, an estimated 57,917 people are considered under-served, with access to one or no providers.

In an article issued by *Broadband Communities Magazine*, “Good broadband is even more closely related to economic opportunity than has been realized.” The analysis of census data and National Broadband Map data found that counties in the bottom half of their state rankings for access to 25 Mbps download speeds had a population growth of only 0.27 percent from 2010 through the end of 2013. The top half had a population growth of 2.79 percent, which is more than 10 times greater. “Counties that lag other counties in their states in access to good broadband are actually losing population; counties with the best broadband in their states are growing quickly.” (http://www.bbcmag.com/2014mags/Nov_Dec/BBC_Nov14_BadBroadband.pdf)

Local governments can play a role in broadband infrastructure, according to the White House report cited above. Some communities have developed a variety of strategies for building locally-owned broadband networks and promoting higher-speed Internet access. “Over the past few years, these municipal networks have emerged as a critical tool for increasing access, encouraging competition, fostering consumer choice, and driving local and regional economic development. Local investments have also spurred the private sector to compete for customers, improving services, increasing broadband adoption, and providing more choice for consumers.”

Recommendations & Implementation

Recommendations for improvements in each of the five focus areas were developed based on EDAC and community input, as well as research into each focus area. An Implementation Plan was then created that assigns each recommendation to a specific County staff member or department and provides a timeline for completion.

EDAC ranked each of the focus areas in the order that the committee would like to see accomplished first. However, items in other focus areas may begin sooner and several will be done simultaneously. Many recommendations are straightforward to address. Others will require additional research, stakeholder input, and reports back to the Board of County Commissioners.

EDAC will be the designated task force to ensure completion of the recommendations. The committee will schedule regular reviews with assigned staff/responsible entities to review the progress of recommendations per the Implementation Plan. A progress report will be presented biannually to the Board of County Commissioners.

Alachua County's Business and Economic Growth Implementation Plan - Last Revision: 3/2/2015

Recommendations		Status of Recommendation	
		Assigned To:	Expected Completion
			Status
Economic Diversification			
	Resource Recovery Park - Develop the Alachua County Resource Recovery Park to attract light and advanced manufacturing businesses into the region: a) Initiate a business recruiting effort in partnership with the Council for Economic Outreach (CEO) to attract light and advanced manufacturing companies to the Resource Recovery Park. b) Develop a communication plan to disseminate information to corporate real estate officials, site selection firms, and companies in the recycling industries.	Public Works (PW); Econ Dev. Coord.	Sept 2015- March 2016
1	Organize and facilitate initial meeting with municipalities and regional partners to refine and strengthen the Council for Economic Outreach (CEO) Business Retention and Expansion program to initiate a coordinated region-wide outreach and assistance program.	Econ. Dev. Coord.; Chamber	Sept 2015- March 2016
2	Research options subject to Florida Statutes for agricultural classification tax policy to promote the growing of organic and sustainable growing methods in Alachua County and present findings to EDAC.	Econ. Dev. Coord.; Growth Management	Sept 2015- March 2016
3	Create a electronic pamphlet targeted to local and aspiring farmers with information describing regulations regarding agricultural land use, zoning and tax structure.	Growth Management; Prop. Appraiser	Sept 2015- March 2016
4	Regional Food Hub: Organize and facilitate initial meeting with local food stakeholders to discuss their plans for developing a regional food hub that would aggregate, process, and distribute regionally grown food from producers to wholesalers and new markets.	Econ. Dev. Coord.; Sustainability Coord.	Sept 2015- March 2016
5	Provide technical assistance to local food stakeholders to inventory and map local agriculture/local food systems assets.	Econ. Dev. Coord.; Extension Service	Sept 2015- March 2016
6	Work with local food stakeholders to help identify federal, state and private grants to fund the initial development of a regional food hub.	Econ. Dev. Coord.; Sustainability Coord.	Sept 2015- March 2016
7			

	<p>Evaluate the adoption of a common Customer Relationship Management (CRM) program by the County, City of Gainesville, Council for Economic Outreach (CEO), and municipal economic development stakeholders, allowing for the development of a comprehensive existing database based upon targeted industry sectors and geographic target areas. Each economic development stakeholder will be able to independently contribute to and update the database, allowing stakeholders to provide more outreach to existing businesses to offer assistance regarding general information and incentives opportunities.</p>	Economic Development Coordinator	Sept 2015- March 2016	
8	<p>Present recommendations to modify County internal policy to encourage the purchasing of local food for County events.</p>	Econ. Dev. Coord	Sept 2015- March 2016	
9	<p>Include the following in the Alachua County Legislative Agenda 2016: 1) Encourage the state legislature to revise Qualified Targeted Industry (QTI) program requirements so that it can be used for promoting the expansion of local businesses. 2) Encourage the state legislature to expand the Enterprise Zone program in the Alachua County region. 3) Work with Alachua County municipalities interest in obtaining Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)</p>	Econ. Dev. Coord; Legislative Affairs	November 2015 - February 2016	
10	<p>Incentives:</p>			
11	<p>Research and present recommendations to EDAC about the adoption of new local business incentives and inducements such as Foreign Trade Zone, local purchase preference, and local job creation incentives.</p>	Econ. Dev. Coord.; Chamber	Sept 2015- March 2016	
12	<p>Research other Florida jurisdiction's incentives targeted toward entrepreneurs and start-ups in order to support new business development and growth in Alachua County and present recommendations to EDAC.</p>	Econ. Dev. Coord.; Chamber	Sept 2015- March 2016	
13	<p>Provide technical assistance to municipalities interested in creating new business incentives.</p>	Econ. Dev. Coord.	Sept 2015- March 2016	
14	<p>Create a comprehensive summary of available incentives on County's website.</p>	Econ. Dev. Coord.; Communications	Sept 2015- March 2016	
	<p>Development Approval Process Improvement</p>			
15	<p>Maintain efficient and predictable timelines for development review. Review opportunities to streamline approval processes for development review and land/use and zoning.</p>	Growth Management	Jan. 2016 - July 2016	
16	<p>Include project status information for development plan review, zoning and land use applications on County website.</p>	Growth Management	Jan. 2016 - July 2016	

17	Provide shorter lead times in the scheduling of pre-application conferences for proposed new development review projects.	Growth Management	Jan. 2016 - July 2016
18	Develop system using in-house resources to apply online/electronically for: pre-application screening, building permits, development plan review.	Growth Management	Jan. 2016 - July 2016
20	Utility Plan Review Process - Coordinate initial meeting with GRU and other utility providers to improve coordination of plan review and approval. Determine if changes can be made to lessen conflicts with landscaping.	Growth Management; private engineers	Jan. 2016 - July 2016
21	In order to encourage redevelopment of previously developed sites, review redevelopment standards/regulations and adopt code revisions as needed in order to streamline redevelopment process.	Growth Management	Jan. 2016 - July 2016
22	Implement a fast track development review process with specific review times for targeted projects such as redevelopment in the Urban Cluster and development in East Gainesville.	Growth Management	Jan. 2016 - July 2016
Infrastructure			
23	Continue to seek opportunities for state and federal funding for County transportation projects.	Public Works/Transp. Planning	On-going
24	Promote the development of the Alachua County Resource Recovery Park by applying for shovel ready site certification to attract light and advanced manufacturing in the recycling industry into the region.	Public Works/Econ Dev Coordinator	On-going
25	Promote the development of the Alachua County Fairgrounds into a mixed-use business center.	Public Works; Facilities	Ongoing
26	Identify and add available land, buildings and site ready locations for expansion in the region to Enterprise Florida sites building database.	Econ Dev. Coord.; Chamber, Regional Partners, EDAC	On-going
27	Work with local governments, educational institutions, and private providers of internet services to improve the speed and reliability of broadband internet, and to expand its availability to the entire community in recognition that an innovation economy and government programs require this basic infrastructure. Research approaches to expand broadband internet service and provide recommendations to the BoCC.	Departments and private providers as needed; Policy	July 2016
28	Identify and fund capital investment projects that support economic development in the Plan East Gainesville planning area including infrastructure and streetscape improvements.	GM and PW; Policy and budget discussion.	July 2016
Communication			

29	Train County staff to maintain a "solution oriented" mindset and ensure County customer service standards are upheld. Engage Office of Training and Development to organize customer service trainings. Results will be monitored via online surveys/public feedback.	All departments; Office of Training and Development	July 2016- December 2016	
30	Work in conjunction with the Gainesville Area of Chamber of Commerce to organize an annual business forum that provides opportunities for local businesses to meet regularly with County, Chamber, and economic development stakeholders, to keep an open line of communication between businesses and public officials.	Economic Development Coordinator	Annually	
32	Update the Alachua County Business Resource Guide and publish a 2015 edition.	Economic Development Coordinator	July 2016- December 2016	
33	Create summary of the Qualified Target Industry (QTI) Program recipients along with the estimated jobs, capital investment and wages for each project.	Economic Development Coordinator	July 2016- December 2016	
34	Participate in the Council for Economic Outreach (CEO) efforts to publish regional marketing material opportunities.	Economic Development Coordinator, VCB	July 2016- December 2016	
	Website Improvements			
35	Add State Enterprise Zone, municipalities' CRA districts, and Federal HUB zone overlays to County mapping tool "Map Genius".	Econ. Dev. Coord.; Growth Management	July 2016- December 2016	
36	Establish an online customer feedback form where citizens can provide feedback on County programs and services.	Econ Dev Coord.; Growth Management; ITS	July 2016- December 2016	
37	Find new ways to disseminate information to citizens, entrepreneurs, and businesses besides communication channels currently in use.	Econ Dev Coord.; ITS; Communications	July 2016- December 2016	
38	Create a Frequently Asked Questions section on the County's website.	Econ Dev Coord.; Growth Management; ITS; Communications	July 2016- December 2016	
39	Create a section with Economic and Demographic Quick Facts about Alachua County on County's website.	Econ. Dev. Coord.; ITS	July 2016- December 2016	
39	Link municipalities and other economic development stakeholders' websites on County's website to expand connectivity by back linking.	Econ. Dev. Coord.	July 2016- December 2016	

40	Develop a user friendly, comprehensive site that provides an overview of process for development review, construction permits, and building permitting.	GM and PW Staff; GM GIS	July 2016- December 2016	
41	Create a County website section with business resource links to connect small businesses with service providers, support organizations, and programs.	Econ. Dev. Coord.;	July 2016- December 2016	
42	Create an "About Alachua County" webpage section with a brief community overview and directing businesses to key economic development organizations in the community.	Econ Dev Coord.;	July 2016- December 2016	
43	Link Enterprise Florida sites building database on County's Website.	Econ Dev. Coord.;	July 2016- December 2016	
44	Create a data section on the County's website where economic data and economic reports about the region are available for businesses, citizens and economic stakeholders, and non-for-profits.	Econ Dev. Coord.;	July 2016- December 2016	
	Quality of Life			
45	Continue to support policies and regulations that promote Transit Oriented and Traditional Neighborhood Developments in order to create communities that are in alignment with future trends as well as being fiscally sound. Recommend code revisions to the BoCC as needed.			
46	Promote healthy communities that promote physical activity with complete streets that include bicycle/pedestrian connectivity by ensuring that standards of street network standards and connectivity are met for new development and redevelopment.	Growth Management	On-going	
47	Implement Tourist Development Strategic Plan to promote the use of area parks and preserves, and eco-tourism destinations located in the region	Growth Management Visitors and Convention Bureau (VCB)	On-going See VCB timeline	
48	Continue to promote image of Alachua County as a "green" community in order to attract innovating businesses that value quality of life for their employees.	VCB	On-going	

Appendix A

EDAC Strategic Plan

Alachua County's Strategic Plan for Economic Development (January 9, 2014)

Economic development is about promoting and creating opportunities that will provide people with a greater access to wealth. This is achieved by encouraging a more diversified and stronger economy that is built on industries that provide well-paid jobs that are accessible to all residents.

Alachua County's Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) developed a Strategic Plan to encourage economic development by identifying keys steps that the Board of County Commissioners can do to transform this vision into reality.

The plan details action-oriented strategies to capitalize on the best economic development opportunities for Alachua County. Fostering coordination with partners, leveraging and strengthening assets, ensuring availability of information, and fostering efficiency in the development process will all assist with creating a diversified and innovative local economy.

INFORMATION

1. Create a combined Alachua County economic development website.
 - Collaborate with other economic development entities to provide a centralized source of economic development information - a "network of networks."
2. Establish a quick response team (mix of private and government employees) to provide information to local businesses seeking to expand or to establish themselves in the community.
3. Lobby the state legislature to revise Qualified Targeted Industry (QTI) requirements to allow for the retention of existing businesses.
4. Participate in review of available grants. Create a clearinghouse with public/private partners to evaluate and facilitate grant applications. Initiate and support efforts of other agencies to obtain grant funding and other funds designed to assist local economic development projects.
5. Research issues with Impact Fees - determine how they are used and what effect they have on development.

DEVELOPMENT READINESS

6. Establish a quick response team for development review. Applicants assigned a liaison (done with current county staff and/or trained private volunteers) who helps provide consistent information and who helps navigate the process with different entities. The liaison and a team of designated County staff can provide opportunity for partnership with applicants to guide them through the development review process.
7. Provide more flexibility in permitted uses within zoning districts in order to allow a broader range of compatible businesses in areas without having to go through the rezoning process.
8. Streamline the development review process so that an applicant can go through the process in 3-6 months.
9. Review redevelopment standards.
 - Infill of existing sites should be encouraged and redevelopment standards should be as straightforward as possible.

COORDINATION

10. Coordinate with partners, including the regional workforce board, to improve workforce training and assist in establishing new workforce training programs that meet the needs of employers. Disseminate information about workforce training programs.

11. Encourage businesses to employ emergent technology graduates.
12. Create a business revolving loan fund to assist with the commercialization of local businesses.
13. Partner with incubators and training providers to help encourage entrepreneurship and community participation.
14. Establish the steps and partners that are needed to create a countywide broadband infrastructure that meets the needs of businesses and citizens.
15. Explore funding opportunities and/or the redeployment of resources and/or redeploy resources for the extension of essential infrastructure to encourage development and redevelopment of strategic areas.
16. Meet with Alachua County Public Works staff and Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce in order to discuss funding for roadways and any plans for future surtax initiatives.
17. Support regional workforce board and education training entities in training and retraining to prepare individuals for skilled employment. Support innovative programs such as Startup Quest and eWITS.
18. Reach out to co-working space entrepreneurs to help economic gardening.
19. Open dialogue with the Chamber of Commerce/GACAR to collectively work on projects/ideas.
20. Continue to participate in Plum Creek's Envision Alachua process.

DIVERSIFIED/INNOVATIVE ECONOMY

21. Promote job skills and training programs that are needed to correlate with employer demand.
22. Encourage and promote incubator growth and success.
23. Create and establish local investment market for trading local start-up companies.
24. Give high priority to local companies in bid process for local government - contract with local companies for goods and services.
25. Promote the local agricultural economy.
26. Encourage the creation of more manufacturing based jobs.
27. Encourage the location and development of businesses that focus on energy conservation, alternative energy, waste-based industry and sustainable food production.
28. Explore the creation of CRA(s) in Alachua County.
29. Expand marketing efforts to promote the local area and workforce capabilities in order to attract external investment capital.
30. Capitalize on state marketing efforts to develop export base.
31. Evaluate the use of county wide incentives for job creation, including property tax breaks for businesses that add jobs.
32. Research using the public libraries as an incubator/economic development gardening tool.
33. Support the creation of Enterprise Zones and Foreign Trade Zones in Alachua County.
34. Provide recommendations to BoCC regarding economic development activities and projects at Alachua County Fairgrounds and Resource Recovery Park.
 - a. Review and provide input on existing fairgrounds and airport property joint master plan.
 - b. Provide recommendations on how to market and generate industry leads for the Resource Recovery Park.

Appendix B

Economic and Business Growth Workshop Summary

The Business and Economic Growth Workshop was held April 16, 2014 at the Alachua County Senior Center. The Alachua County Economic Development Advisory Committee partnered with the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce for the event.

The intent of this public workshop was to obtain feedback on business and economic development conditions of unincorporated Alachua County and make recommendations on how to improve them by answering questions such as:

- What can the County and the Chamber of Commerce do to facilitate economic development and help foster Talent, Opportunity and Innovation?
- What can the County do to be more business friendly?

Approximately 70 people between citizens and business people attended the event. Attendees were directed to 8 tables and each table had a facilitator and scribe. Copies of the EDAC Strategic Plan were provided to each participant. There was a general introduction with several speakers discussing the background and benefit of the Economic Development Strategic Plan. The tables then had time to discuss two general topics were discussed with specific questions as follows:

Topic 1: Perceptions of Economic Development in Alachua County

Topic 2: Strategic Plan: What should stay, What should go, What needs to be added?

At the conclusion of the table top discussions, each table provided a summary presentation.

Summary of Group Discussions

The discussions at the workshop tables covered a wide variety of topics. However, there were a few topics that were mentioned at several of the tables: Process, Communication, Diversification, Quality of Life, and Infrastructure among others.

Comments were provided regarding the County's **permitting, inspection, and development review process**. Some of the comments were about the timeframes for these processes, and some were about general customer service expectations. There were general comments about the desire to have a faster process for permitting (building) and development review and also to have simplified approval process. **Customer service** comments related to the need for a greater amount of helpfulness and support in customers obtaining their goal – being more solution oriented.

However, there were also some comments that the County has a good “big city permitting process” and that the perception of a long process and that Alachua County is not “business friendly” is not always accurate.

Comments related to regulations were that they can be difficult to understand and are often one size fits all without much **flexibility**.

Communication and perception was another topic widely discussed. Workshop participants thought there could be ways to widen opportunities to access information (“chat” support, media, workshops, presentations, web clips). The County could do a better job in telling “our story”.

Several groups mentioned the **revolving loan program**. Conversations were both for and against the idea of a creating a business revolving loan fund to assist with the commercialization of local businesses. Some liked the idea and thought the County could manage a program, but not use government funds. Others did not think the government should be involved at all.

Other topics included the need to **diversify the economy** (manufacturing, availability of low skilled job opportunities); general **infrastructure** comments including water/sewer in municipalities, countywide transit, shipping and logistics, desire for spec buildings and shovel ready sites; **quality of life** factors as economic development drivers (arts/culture, recreation); **Schools/vocational programs** (good schools attract families, vocational programs to help train workforce).

There was also interest in the **Qualified Target Industry Program** in lobbying the state legislature to revise requirements so that it is competitive with other incentives (such as Foreign Trade Zone, local purchase preference, fast tracking, reducing fees, operation, job creation).

Statement about what other groups are already doing from Strategic Plan...

There were also comments about the need for a vision statement/purpose and also to have more action items and measurable goals.

Draft Outline of Action Plan

I. Introduction - history of project, general information on process to write Action Plan

II. Economic Picture

- a. Industries
- b. Workforce
- c. Income/Poverty
- d. Metrics (process, dashboard)

III. Action Plan

IV. Appendices: Strategic Plan, Workshop Summary

Appendix C

Economic and Business Growth Workshop Table Top Notes Transcription

Below is a transcription of notes taken from tables during the April 16 Economic and Business Growth Workshop. Notes in *italics* provides the specific Strategic Plan policy referenced.

TABLE 1

Topic 1: Perceptions

No problems relating
Permitting Issues
We have a big city permitting process (good)
The end process drags on
3 weeks for building permit
Scheduling inspectors difficult
Enough staff? Flexibility, common sense solutions.
Better community communication (we are doing better than the perception!)
Improving perception
Is Alachua County not Business friendly? I hear that but...

Topic 2: Strategic Plan

Better job in telling positive (stories coming out of Alachua County)
Spec buildings
Tie incubators in with open real estate
List of “shovel ready buildings”
How do we deal with uncooperative building owners

Strategic Plan Feedback

#8 Very important- possible bad perception (*Streamline the development review process so that an applicant can go through the process in 3-6 months*).

#3 Lobby QTI for existing businesses (yes!) (*Lobby the state legislature to revise Qualified Targeted Industry (QTI) requirements to allow for the retention of existing businesses.*

#2 and #6 relate (*Quick response team*)

#s 2, 13, 14, 17 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34 are being worked on by Career Source NCF

Flexibility in site code

#23 is happening (some county input) (*establish local investment market for trading local start-up companies*)

#24 Go Local (*priority to local companies in bid process*)

#12 Micro loan - not necessary, tax payer money

#25 Readdress position on restrictions, look at ACFB position (*promote ag economy*)

Easy for farmer to do their job

#27 Future growth areas (*energy conservation, alternative energy, sustainable food industries*)

#28 Targeted CRA, not just beatification , think outside the box, regional target- combine with other areas - see #34 (Resource Recovery Park)

TABLE 2

Development readiness

Streamline process - easy up front

Staff needs culture shift - helpful

Time to permit?

Who is doing it right?

Employees -

Workforce training?

No employment for trades once trained

Topic 2: Strategic Plan

Cultivate opportunity

Support the risk takers!

Impact fees - None!

Revolving loan fund?

Infrastructure improvements

Shovel ready

What is the county mission for Economic Development?

Marketing - message should be we support business growth

Expand Foreign Trade Zone to include all of Alachua County

TABLE 3

Topic 1: Perceptions

Better Communication Public-Gov

Simplify approval process

Lower cost/speed up process

Define Timelines

Topic 2: Strategic Plan

- Need to understand what community needs
- Government not force ideas in business needs
- Expand transit options County wide
- Effective traffic flow
- Government Officials not overreaching
- Lower cost to develop - top high \$
- Slow to get things done
- Perceptions will change when actual policies changes
- Difficult to get things done

Strategic Plan

- Development readiness
- Pre-approved areas (similar to innovation square)
- Eliminate impact fees (example of Gainesville)
- Reduce complexity and time requirement for site plan approval
- Eliminate #20 - Plum Creek Process
- Eliminate #11 (emergent technologies graduates)
- Eliminate #12 (revolving loan fund)
- Eliminate #18 (economic gardening)
- Identify specific needs of employers in terms of educational/vocational skills needed

TABLE 4

Topic 1: Perceptions

- Growth seems greater than it truly is - lots of movement. Growth rate more modest
- Uneven distribution of growth throughout the County. EG. City of Alachua vs. High Springs. Growth vs. not growing
 - Hawthorne inviting growth but little response.
 - Lack of economic drivers in Hawthorne, Archer, but Alachua has promoted growth long term
- Difficult to change perception that growth is desired. Growth comes from within community. Involve younger people with interest.
- UF perceived as primary economic engine
- Economic base needs to be diversified
- To encourage growth - need to engage greater amount of public
- Hi-tech economy sector should be encouraged
 - Need to offer cultural amenities
 - Quality of life important factor
 - Community needs to provide amenities
- Need to be careful about being too selective

Recreational/cultural amenities can promote economic development
Schools important factor in drawing families - leverage economic development
Partnerships between municipalities (Alachua and High Springs)
Infrastructure - water and sewer. Eg. Archer - no sewer; High Springs - more capacity needed
Boundary Adjustment Act -
 Strong negative
 More hoops to navigate
 Only County where required
How can County address perceptions: Actions-
Distinguish Myth vs. Reality
Overcoming inaccurate perceptions of obstructions to growth
 Communication to dispel perceptions
Choices - as business attractors
 Business centers
 Employment
 Recreation
 Concentrations
Communication and customer service to turn perceived obstructions into path that achieves goal

Topic 2: Strategic Plan

Quality of Life factors are economic growth attractors
 Add to strategic plan- or recognize value to community
 Leaders/employees need to *want* to live here
Need simple vision statement for economic development strategic plan so employers can state what vision is
 for Alachua County
More diversified economic base recognizing value of cultural and recreational resources
Widen the opportunities for access to information - active and passive modes. Eg. Media, TV, workshops,
 presentations, web clips
Clearly identify in simple format
 Vision
 Goals
 Strategies
Public entity investment in local business/opportunity
Localize bond issues
 Local purchase - incentivize
 1st priority
 Premium
Promote local insurance pools as alternative to using companies not locally based

TABLE 5

Topic 1: Perceptions

- Tough to be in business
 - Regulation
 - Government delays, impediments, barriers
- High property taxes
- High Utility rates
- Company town - UF. Must be connected to UF
- Economy not diversified
- Codes enforcement - increased cost (time, money)
 - Doubling of late fees
 - Inspections and reinspections
- There isn't much poverty = false perception
- Job growth opportunities are available to all = false perception relative to lower skilled workers
- County doesn't want or welcome business, especially manufacturing
- Regulations hard to understand
- Expensive
- County Commission to staff says what can't be done rather than what can be done and facilitating process =
negativism
- Obstructionist
- Solutions:
 - Highlight diversity
 - Need light manufacturing

Topic 2: Strategic Plan

Points to Discuss:

- #17: Regional workforce - need more training for start-ups to entrepreneurs
 - Add "as directed by employers" see #21
- #25 & 27 - Agriculture = add Innovation Agriculture. take advantage of that and promote it.
- #7 - Flexible zoning to promote agriculture (*more flexibility in zoning districts*)
- #19 - Add builders association (*dialogue with Chamber and GACAR*)
- #12 - (micro-loan) remove it. County should not be making loans, or at least make it a public/private partnership.
 - Educate people how to access \$ in private sector
- #10 - Establish mentorship program for entrepreneurs (*coordinate to improve workforce training*)
 - Educate people financially
- #16 - Add chamber, realtors, public works, African-American community, builders, developers, PTA groups and schools, technical advisory committee., (*discuss funding for roadways and future surtax initiatives*)
 - Dispel myth of highest property taxes, worst roads, highest utility rates

TABLE 6

Topic 1: Perceptions

Provide opportunities (jobs)
Improve quality of life
 Family, safety education, sustaining
Welcome new business, support existing business
 Remove barriers (intentional and unintentional), example County regulations that exceed
 state and federal
Analysis paralysis
Support, mentorship, seamless support regardless of boundary
Contact person should have an authority to act – empowered ambassador
County level fiscal agent example Santa Fe
Customer service – courtesy – Interns from UF?
Implementation of technology, example map genius (thanks Jimmy!)
“Chat” support , FAQ’s
Better accessibility, centralization, 1 stop shop
Access to authority
Collaboration – Private/Public
Adequate public infrastructure

Topic 2: Strategic Plan

Start with yes
Consolidation of governance of urban vs rural
 Joint planning effort
Common sense of flexibility in regulation
Competitive with Incentives
Site plan approval extensions
Shorter site plan approval periods
Incentives
 Fast Tracking
 Reducing Fees
 Reducing impact fees
Strategic Plan
#15 biggest bang for the buck (*explore funding for extension of infrastructure*)
 Target state, federal funds/grants

#6 Quick Response

#8 and #7 (or 2?) Less or a recipe and more of a form, make it linear vs. looped/interactive (*more flexibility in zoning, streamline development review*)

Get a pool of funds that people can submit

#12 RFPs for economic development (*business revolving loan program*)

We want action items and measurable goals

Softball words: Promote, encourage, meet, continue, explore, open dialogue, reach out

Revolving loan fund for startups ad entrepreneurs, angel funds

Categorize the items for example: training/funding

TABLE 7

Topic 1: Perceptions

Trained educated workforce

After hour logistics - deliveries

Customer service mindset - feel welcome

Expedited permitting - Dade County credit system, interagency (DBPR, Stormwater)

Public Investor incubators

Operation and job creation incentives

Grow local companies from the university

Countywide adopted mindset "How can we help you succeed?"

Solutions - interdisciplinary team

Regulatory consistency

Easily environment Overlay

Example of the ground based solar array and tree issue

Seed funding - marketing, packaging, training, leveraging

Topic 2: Strategic Plan

#12 County managed seed funding (*business revolving loan fund*)

#20 ** approach plum creek as a partner (*Continue to participate in Plum Creek's Envision Alachua process*).

#24 (*Priority to local companies for bidding*)

#25 (*Promote the local agricultural economy*)

10 (*coordinate with partners to improve workforce training*)

17 (*Support regional workforce board and education training entities in training and retraining to prepare individuals for skilled employment. Support innovative programs such as Startup Quest and eWITS*).

County mindset of helping businesses, solution oriented, cross trained, top to bottom

- 22 *** add “fund” (*Encourage and promote incubator growth and success*)
- 15 *** (*Explore funding opportunities and/or the redeployment of resources and/or redeploy resources for the extension of essential infrastructure to encourage development and redevelopment of strategic areas*)
- 3 *** (*Lobby the state legislature to revise Qualified Targeted Industry (QTI) requirements to allow for the retention of existing businesses*)
- 26 add “teach” (*Encourage the creation of more manufacturing based jobs*)
- Investing in the infrastructure for start ups 22 and 15
 - Funding
 - Shipping
 - Logistics

TABLE 8

Topic 1: Perceptions

- Create a great business environment for our current business – this environment will make outside business want to be part of it
- Reduce need to incentivize companies to move here
- County needs to have a better marketing
 - Program – better tell the story of our entire County – not just a “visit Gainesville” approach-
 - Regional approach
- Arts and Culture can be economic drivers to our regional economy – needs some focus, needs to be part of the total branding and master growth plan

Topic 2: Strategic Plan

- County too complex
- Emphasize local small business – grow jobs
- Help in Business in County to grow
- Emphasis needs to be on company expansion
- Need to a “welcoming” approach to business and willingness to work with companies, compromise or be willing to re-visit current ordinances – be open to change
- Learn to “mine” UF
- Diversify our economy – Expand private corporations
 - Alachua too dependent on federal funding
- Diversify types of job growth – don’t just focus on small niches
- Get involved in education system earlier – expand emphasis on “trade skill” growth opportunities.
 - Vocational schools
- Alachua County environmental guidelines too stringent for business growth
 - Get more in line with state guidelines
 - Need balance between growth and environment

Make it work for the lower middle class

Look outside Alachua County - around the country for successful areas we can benchmark from

Make Alachua County a great place for our current businesses - this will attract outside business

Strategic Plan

High School & Vocation Training not addressed

The arts and culture not addressed

Marketing -Branding efforts needs to be better addressed as a "County " not just the City of Gainesville

Better tell "our story"

Develop an "Economic Arm" to our tourist campaign

What's here for businesses

What's here for families

Add to #6 hard and fast response element (*quick response team*)

Add readiness-timelines


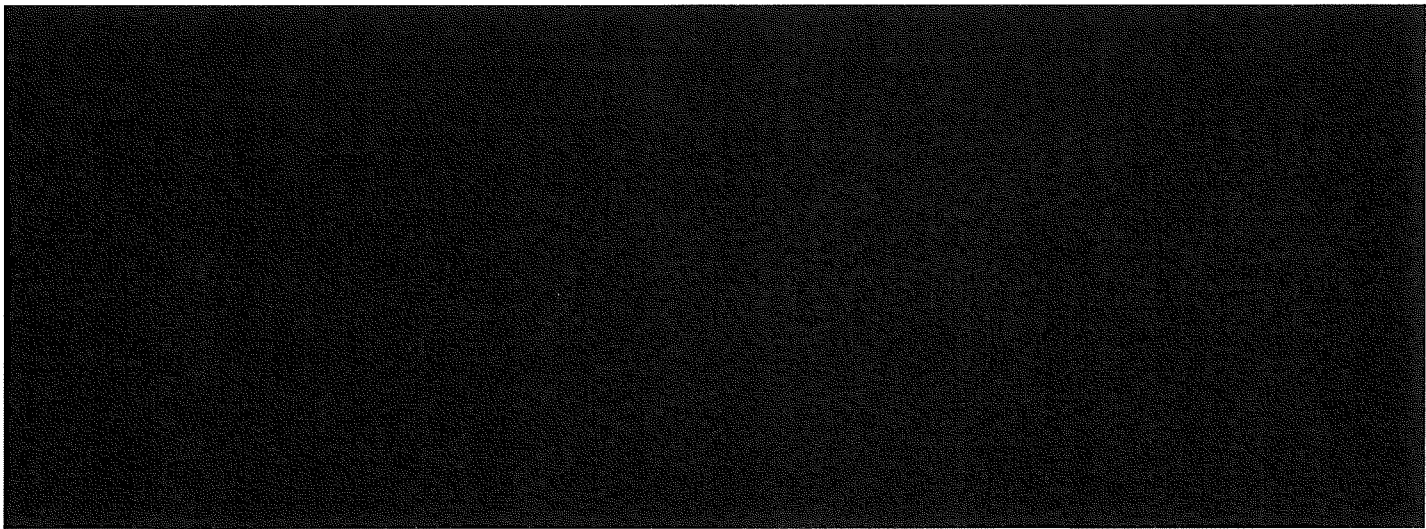
#9 Add incentives to infill (*review redevelopment standards*)

#12 Concern of risk and loss (whose \$ is at risk) (*business revolving loan*)

Rate subsidies

County should not be in the loan or real estate business

Eliminate CRA's in "unincorporated areas" in the County- most is not "redevelopment" anyway.



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