



2017 Alachua County State Legislative Program



Where Nature and Culture Meet



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1. Newnans Lake Improvement Initiative Phase II: \$470,000 Request - \$30,000 Match

This is Phase II of the project that began with the study of Newnans Lake funded by the Legislature in 2016. Newnans Lake is a state designated impaired water body in Gainesville that contributes flow to Paynes Prairie State Preserve, Orange Lake, the Ocklawaha River, the St. Johns River and the Floridan aquifer the source of our drinking water.

The Phase II project includes construction of a permeable reactive weir for Little Hatchet Creek and assessment of Hatchet Creek to locate potential areas for instream nutrient reduction treatment.

2. High Springs/Newberry Rail Trail: \$2 Million Request – \$2 Million Match

This request is to support the acquisition of a railroad corridor running from the Santa Fe River into the City of High Springs, and from the City of High Springs south towards the City of Newberry. This is the first phase of acquisition. The acquisition will support the construction of a multi-use path that will ultimately connect to the Nature Coast Trail in Trenton.

3. New Alachua County Fairgrounds: \$7 Million Request - \$18 Million Local Match

The new Fairgrounds is a \$25 million project. This appropriations request is \$7 million. Alachua County will match this request with an \$18 million dollar local investment. Moving the Alachua County Fairgrounds is an important priority for Alachua County and East Gainesville. Plan East Gainesville, a blueprint for improving opportunities in this economically challenged area, has identified the redevelopment of the current Fairgrounds property as a key component of future economic growth and revitalization in this area. The current Fairgrounds property is in a prime location near the airport and ideal for commercial redevelopment.

4. Modification of the Eligibility for Levying the Local Option High Impact Tourist Development Tax

Section 125.0104, F.S., authorizes five separate tourist development taxes that county governments may levy. Depending on a county's eligibility to levy, the tax rate applied to transient rental transactions varies from a minimum of two percent to a maximum of six percent. Proceeds from these levies are generally utilized by local governments to build tourist-related facilities and to promote and market tourism. One of these levies, the "High Tourism Impact Tax," is a discretionary (local option) one percent tax on transient rental transactions available to counties in which tourism is a significant component of the local economy.

This policy request recommends a statutory revision to allow counties that are home to the main campus of a Preeminent State Research University to levy the High Tourism Impact Tax.