



**Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs**  
A **CAPRA** Accredited Agency

**Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs**

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December 31, 2014

Mr. John Reiskind, Chair  
Wild Spaces Public Places Oversight Committee

RE: Content for Sunset Report

Dear Mr. Reiskind,

The City of Gainesville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Department and the City's Purchasing Department, administered the Wild Spaces - Public Places (WSPP) tax initiative since its passage in 2008. The City of Gainesville received approximately \$12 million for park renovations, improvements and to acquire environmentally sensitive lands. The impact of this initiative had a tremendously positive impact on the City, economically, environmentally and socially.

Almost sixty percent of WSPP funding was spent within the region on project development and Land acquisition, over \$7,000,000. Major construction projects such as the Fred Cone Park Track, Possum Creek Park development, many pool renovations and upgrades, the Senior Recreation Center, all provided jobs to local contractors, engineers, architects, etc. A total of forty-five businesses in Alachua County benefitted and were hired in some capacity. Spending those WSPP dollars locally during an economic downturn was a boost for the Gainesville/Alachua County economy.

The environmental benefits of acquiring over 300 acres of sensitive lands has already provided additional protection to our creeks and drinking water supply; enhanced plant and wildlife habitat; and expanded our opportunity to further the City's environmental programs and greenway system.

The enormous expansion of socialization and health and wellness programs and partnerships that have evolved from the development of the Alachua County Senior Recreation Center has brought to the City and the County the very first multi-service facility for our seniors and is the site of over 200 events serving all ages throughout the year. The Center is enormously popular, and its programs and services have been extremely well received.

The development and improvements at Fred Cone Park with the addition of a lighted Track and Field Complex and /multi-purpose field, additional parking, bleachers, outdoor restroom and more has offered citizens of all ages to be physically active from dawn until 9 pm daily in a safe environment! In addition, this expansion allowed for the development of a new library on park land, another partnership enhancing socialization and educational offerings.

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City of Gainesville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Department is accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA).

**OUR VISION:** To be seen as the keepers and hosts of the places where nature, recreation and culture meet, offering memorable experiences for all.

Improvements to Albert Ray Massey Westside Park included a new restroom and Pro Shop Center, a new pool slide, new pool deck surface, and new pool filtration system.

Extensive renovations to the historic Thomas Center and Gardens occurred, restoring the exterior and interior to its grandeur and increasing community pride and enhancing the cultural and historical presence of Gainesville.

The Possum Creek Park development with its skate and BMX park, off-leash dog areas, nature interpretive panels and boardwalks, perimeter walking path and outdoor restroom filled a gap in our City's service levels for alternative recreation activities and providing a beautiful park in the northwest quadrant of the City where few exist.

In summary, over twenty capital facilities and park improvement projects were completed. The positive economic, environmental and social benefits that have occurred as a result of the Wild Spaces Public Places sales tax initiative are significant. The WSPP signs noting projects that were completed at over twenty facilities throughout Gainesville enable our citizens to be proud that they supported the initiative and that we spent the funds as promised. At Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Department, we are honored both by the trust bestowed on us with the citizens' approval of the ballot initiative, and also by the opportunity to provide substantial improvement to our community's quality of life, health and well-being.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this information. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Steven R. Phillips, Director  
Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs

Copied to: Paul Folkers, Assistant City Manager  
Mark Benton, Budget and Finance Director  
Michelle Park, Assistant Director, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs  
Aleta Cozart, Purchasing Manager  
Patti Jo Davis, Sr. Buyer  
Anthony Clarizio, Executive Director, ElderCare of Alachua County