

GAINESVILLE AND HALL COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



VISION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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GAINESVILLE/HALL COUNTY VISION

The Gainesville/Hall County community will embody the best and most balanced forms of urban, suburban, and rural development. It will balance these three forms to achieve fiscal and economic health, preserve natural and cultural resources and open space, foster community facility efficiency and quality, and provide for a diverse housing stock and community livability. This will be accomplished by promoting a more compact form of growth, with new growth directed towards areas that can be efficiently provided with infrastructure and services. Infrastructure will be used as a tool to help manage growth, with infrastructure provided in support of desired types and patterns of growth, with a particular emphasis on high quality commercial, industrial, and business development.

Gainesville/Hall County will have a strong economy that promotes fiscal health and prosperity for its citizens and as a means to allow local government to provide a high level of public services. Sensitive and compatible infill development that respects the historic fabric of existing neighborhoods will be encouraged as a way to maintain the viability of existing urban areas. In areas that cannot be efficiently served with public services such as sewers, rural densities will be maintained. Rural character, open space, and environmental resources will be preserved through the use of conservation oriented development practices that also acknowledge long term investments by existing land owners.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

LAND USE

Goal 1: Development Quality

Gainesville and Hall County will ensure that land resources are allocated for uses that will accommodate and enhance economic development, protect natural and historic resources, ensure adequate community facilities, and provide a range of housing - resulting in the preservation of a high quality of life.

- Objective 1:** *The economic and fiscal benefits of growth will be maximized, and the negative impacts of growth (i.e. traffic, land use, storm water, environmental, community character) will be minimized.*
- Objective 2:** *The design quality and appearance of new development in Gainesville and Hall County will be significantly improved. High standards for residential and commercial development quality will be implemented and enforced – with emphasis on land use compatibility, landscaping, signage, lighting, access management, traffic impact, and environmental impact.*
- Objective 3:** *The protection of natural resources and the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas will be promoted through a compact development pattern with new growth encouraged to occur in and around existing or planned service areas, and with urban and suburban growth discouraged in rural areas that are not efficiently provided with services.*

Goal 2: Efficient Growth

Gainesville and Hall County will grow and develop efficiently relative to the cost and timing of providing infrastructure and public services.

- Objective 1:** *Growth will be managed on the basis of available or planned public services and infrastructure. Infrastructure will be used as a tool to guide growth, not simply in reaction to market forces.*
- Objective 2:** *Land use will be planned in concert with public services and infrastructure. Low density uses will be planned in areas not efficiently served with public services, and compatible higher densities will be planned in areas that can be efficiently served with public services.*
- Objective 3:** *A compact development pattern will be identified that results in a more cost efficient infrastructure expansion.*
- Objective 4:** *New residential development, other than low density rural development will be directed to areas that are or can be efficiently provided with public services.*

Goal 3: Fiscally Sound Growth

Gainesville and Hall County will grow and develop with a fiscally responsible land use pattern consisting of a balance of housing and jobs that supports the economic health and vitality of residents and businesses.

- Objective 1:** *There will be an appropriate balance targeted between the amount and type of growth of housing and business in order to assure long term fiscal health.*
- Objective 2:** *Land that is suitable for commercial or industrial uses is a valuable resource that will be discouraged from developing as residential.*
- Objective 3:** *The provision of infrastructure in areas with potential to attract commercial and industrial development is a higher short range priority than infrastructure that supports new residential development.*
- Objective 4:** *The costs of growth will be allocated fairly between local governments and the development community. Growth should generally pay its own way.*

Goal 4: Urban and Rural Distinction

Existing and planned urban and suburban areas will be stable, vibrant, and well defined; development in rural areas will reflect low density that maintains true rural character.

- Objective 1:** *Gainesville and Hall County will maximize the use of existing infrastructure by encouraging compatible development or redevelopment of urban sites.*
- Objective 2:** *Sensitive and compatible infill and adaptive reuse that stabilizes and encourages reinvestment in urban areas will be promoted.*

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- Objective 3:** *Downtown Gainesville and the surrounding area will continue to be the traditional focal point of the community, offering a pedestrian friendly range of civic, retail, employment, dining, and entertainment uses.*
- Objective 4:** *New urban or suburban development will be targeted in or around the existing cities and designated major activity areas at densities that promote an efficient utilization of land while being compatible with existing neighborhoods.*
- Objective 5:** *Relatively higher, yet compatible densities will occur in some areas currently designated for lower densities outside current municipal boundaries.*
- Objective 6:** *Development in rural areas will maintain rural character. Lower gross densities will be preserved in rural areas, with conservation subdivisions encouraged to permanently preserve open space, especially environmentally sensitive areas.*
- Objective 7:** *The continuation of agricultural uses is encouraged as long as is feasible, but as such uses are converted to non-agricultural uses, rural density, character, and sensitive environmental features will be preserved.*

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Goal 1: Efficient Public Facilities and Services

In order to foster a fiscally efficient provision of services, development will occur in a more compact form, with growth oriented in and around existing and planned service areas.

- Objective 1:** *Growth will generally be directed toward existing or planned service areas and away from rural areas with low levels of services and dependence on septic systems.*
- Objective 2:** *Infrastructure will be targeted as priorities to areas suitable for commercial, industry, and business uses, but new residential uses (other than low density rural residential) will also be directed to areas that can be efficiently served with sanitary sewers.*

Goal 2: Adequate Public Facilities and Services

Gainesville and Hall County will ensure that public facilities have the capacity, and are in place when needed, to support and attract growth and development and maintain quality of life.

- Objective 1:** *New development will be served with public facilities that meet or exceed level of service standards.*
- Objective 2:** *Fair and predictable standards will be developed for allocating infrastructure costs between the development community and the City or County.*

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Goal 3: Utilities

Gainesville and Hall County will be provided with safe and adequate utilities that are coordinated with the future land use plan and that support economically productive growth.

Objective 1: *Sanitary sewer services will be targeted as a priority to areas with business and industry potential, such as areas along major transportation routes.*

Objective 2: *Sanitary sewer services will generally be provided to new residential development other than low-density rural residential uses, in support of land use goals related to efficient growth and in furtherance of water conservation goals.*

Goal 4: Parks and Leisure

Gainesville and Hall County will provide recreational and cultural opportunities for citizens of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Objective 1: *Gainesville and Hall County will meet or exceed acceptable levels of service standards for parks and recreation facilities.*

Objective 2: *Gainesville and Hall County will promote a linked system of parks and open spaces.*

Objective 3: *Gainesville and Hall County will ensure that all residents have access to cultural opportunities, facilities, and programs.*

Goal 5: Public Safety

Gainesville and Hall County will provide public safety services to all citizens.

Objective 1: *Gainesville and Hall County will maintain an adequate level of fire protection for current and future businesses and residents.*

Objective 2: *Gainesville and Hall County will provide efficient emergency services (EMS) that expands with the growth of the community.*

Objective 3: *Gainesville and Hall County will maintain an adequate level of police protection for current and future businesses and residents.*

Goal 6: Government, Health, and Education

Gainesville and Hall County will provide adequate and accessible government facilities, health care facilities, and educational facilities to all citizens.

Objective 1: *Gainesville and Hall County schools will meet and exceed all state requirements for education programs and facilities and continue to increase quality of education while serving the growth and changing needs of students.*

Objective 2: *Gainesville and Hall County will continue to promote the expansion and strengthening of public and private health care providers and facilities, in recognition of the area's role as a regional provider of medical services.*

Objective 3: *Gainesville and Hall County will provide accessible library services to all residents of the community.*

TRANSPORTATION

Goal 1: Adequate Transportation System

Gainesville and Hall County will provide transportation system to move people and goods with a level of service that supports economic development goals and maintains a high quality of life.

- Objective 1:** *Gainesville and Hall County will establish a goal for arterial and collector roads in all urban and suburban areas of Level of Service E, and for arterial and collector roads in all rural areas of Level of Service D.*
- Objective 2:** *Gainesville and Hall County will develop a land use plan and review development approvals based on the goal of exceeding or maintaining the above levels of service on all roads that currently meet this standard.*
- Objective 3:** *Gainesville and Hall County will take actions to alleviate congestion on those roads that do not currently meet this standard.*
- Objective 4:** *Gainesville and Hall County will place a priority on transportation projects that directly support economic development goals.*

Goal 2: Transportation Alternatives

Gainesville and Hall County will continue to explore and promote mechanisms to alleviate traffic congestion through use of alternative modes of transportation, and better management of the existing road network.

- Objective 1:** *Gainesville and Hall County will develop standards to assure that sidewalks are developed along urban and suburban roadways.*
- Objective 2:** *Gainesville and Hall County will continue to work with Hall Area Transit to provide an appropriate transit system to serve the community.*
- Objective 3:** *Gainesville and Hall County will explore transportation demand programs to alleviate congestion in major employment areas, and continue to support carpooling activities in the County.*

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Goal 1: Conservation and Protection

Gainesville and Hall County will conserve and protect the natural environment, open spaces, and historic resources.

- Objective 1:** *Environmentally sensitive areas such as flood plains, lakes and waterways will be protected from negative impacts of development.*
- Objective 2:** *Gainesville and Hall County will continue to implement and enforce measures designed to protect natural resources such as watershed protection, stream and lake setbacks, and floodplain management requirements.*

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Objective 3: *The preservation of environmental quality, particularly associated with water (including both subsurface and surface water) and air quality will be promoted in planning for new development and public services. The air and water quality of the community will be managed in a manner that will protect their integrity and quality.*

Objective 4: *Practices that return water to the water supply system, such as sanitary sewers, will be encouraged. Practices that consume water, such as septic systems, will be discouraged.*

Objective 5: *Alternative transportation practices and improved circulation systems will be promoted to reduce air quality impacts.*

Goal 2: Open Space Preservation

Gainesville and Hall County will promote the preservation of open space systems throughout the County and City.

Objective 1: *Gainesville and Hall County will continue to identify land through their parks planning efforts that should be permanently preserved.*

Objective 2: *Gainesville and Hall County will continue to develop and implement coordinated plans for a linked system of open space and conservation areas.*

Objective 3: *New development will be encouraged which minimizes the amount of land consumed, with land preserved and set aside as permanent open space.*

Objective 4: *Gainesville and Hall County will encourage open space in individual developments to be coordinated with, and linked to open space in adjacent developments and other community systems.*

Goal 3: Historic Preservation

The preservation of historic resources is recognized as an important contributor to community livability, as well as economic development, and will be promoted.

Objective 1: *The traditional character of the urban neighborhoods and downtown Gainesville will be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas.*

Objective 2: *The City of Gainesville will develop land use regulations and design standards for historic areas or properties designed to ensure compatible new development or alterations of historic properties.*

Objective 3: *Hall County will utilize conservation subdivision practices to preserve historic rural resources and landmarks where practical.*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal 1: Balanced Economy

Gainesville and Hall County will have a growing and balanced economy, which equitably benefits all segments of the population, consistent with prudent management of the County's resources.

- Objective 1:** *Gainesville and Hall County will promote the creation of new employment opportunities, both as a way to strengthen the economic base of the community, and to reduce the loss of revenues and the transportation impacts of regional commuting.*
- Objective 2:** *Gainesville and Hall County will promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses.*
- Objective 3:** *Businesses that generate higher paying jobs with above average wages, will be targeted through economic development efforts.*
- Objective 4:** *Gainesville and Hall County will work to put in place the prerequisites for quality economic development, including infrastructure, quality development standards, education and training, and a range of housing types needed to support desired economic growth.*
- Objective 5:** *Gainesville and Hall County will promote quality retail uses that encourage the capture of sales tax revenue in Gainesville and Hall County by planning for appropriate locations and adequate land for retail uses.*
- Objective 6:** *Gainesville and Hall County will promote tourism as a viable component of the local economy.*

Goal 2: Balance of Housing and Jobs

Gainesville and Hall County will have a fiscally healthy balance of employment and housing.

- Objective 1:** *The relative rates of growth of residential and nonresidential uses will be brought into better balance in order that public service costs of growth and the revenues associated with new development can be more efficiently shared.*
- Objective 2:** *The relationship of tax revenues from residential and nonresidential uses will be improved through increased commercial, industrial, and business development so that the nonresidential uses are the dominant tax generator.*

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HOUSING

Goal 1: Quality and Diverse Housing

Gainesville and Hall County will have a balanced range of adequate and affordable housing, making it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community.

- Objective 1:** *A full and balanced range of housing opportunities will be targeted, with an emphasis on providing support for economic development goals and objectives related to higher wage jobs.*
- Objective 2:** *A better balance of housing price points will be targeted in order to provide a diverse range of housing options.*
- Objective 3:** *Housing diversity will be further pursued to meet the needs of changing demographics, including higher density and attached housing options, particularly targeted at the aging population.*
- Objective 4:** *While Gainesville and Hall County provide more “starter” housing than most cities and counties, affordable housing that meets high quality standards will continue to be an important element of the overall housing mix. Affordable housing is appropriate only where its design has been fully reviewed and evaluated according to standards designed to insure long-term sustainability of high quality and stable value.*

Goal 2: Neighborhood Preservation and Housing Maintenance

Existing neighborhoods will be maintained as stable and desirable places to live and raise families.

- Objective 1:** *Gainesville and Hall County will enforce land use and housing codes in order to promote the long-term integrity of existing neighborhoods.*
- Objective 2:** *Gainesville and Hall County will continue to engage in land use planning and regulation that is designed to promote harmonious land use relationships and avoid land uses that are incompatible with residential neighborhood character.*
- Objective 3:** *Gainesville and Hall County will continue to participate in and support housing programs designed to provide housing that reinforces neighborhood preservation goals.*
- Objective 4:** *Gainesville and Hall County will identify mechanisms and programs to eliminate substandard or dilapidated housing.*

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Goal 1: Regional Coordination

Regional coordination will be emphasized that sets regional priorities, identifies shared needs, and finds collaborative solutions, particularly related to problems that transcend local jurisdiction boundaries.

Objective 1: *Intergovernmental coordination mechanisms and processes will be explored with other jurisdictions within and adjacent to Gainesville and Hall County in order to implement the policies of this Plan, including adjacent local governments, school boards, special districts, development authorities, and other units of government providing services.*

Objective 2: *Gainesville and Hall County will develop mechanisms to coordinate with the applicable portions of plans of school boards and other entities related to the siting of new facilities that affect land use patterns and services, and will coordinate with plans of other local governments.*

Objective 3: *Gainesville and Hall County will develop mechanisms to resolve conflicts with other local governments, coordinate the impacts of development on adjacent areas or communities, share services or information, and identify joint planning areas.*

Goal 2: Coordinated Growth

Growth planning and management will be coordinated between municipal and county government.

Objective 1: *Hall County and the City of Gainesville will mutually agree upon planned land uses around the City boundaries.*

Objective 2: *The City and County will continue to plan for a coordinated system of parks and open spaces.*