

Equity Advisory Board

Date: January 15, 2026
Time: 1:00 pm
Location: County Administration Building - County Manager's Training Room
12 SE 1 Street, 2nd Floor, Gainesville, FL 32601

1. Call to Order

The workshop was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chair Rawls. A quorum was present.

Members Present: Yvette Carter, Gerie Crawford, Alena Lawson-Bennett, Ashton Weber, Ronald Rawls, and Frank White.

Members Absent: Kali Blount, and Jorelle Degan

Staff attending: Ben Chumley, Camisha Alexis, Ivy Bell, and Heather Akpan

2. Welcome and Introduction of New Member - Ashton Weber

The Chair recognized and welcomed Ashton Weber, who introduced himself to the board.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Comprehensive Plan Equity Language Discussion

Heather Akpan advised Kali Blount is still technically on board due to a carryover provision; new board members will be appointed at the next Commission meeting. The Chair read the Board the objectives, goals, and timelines as approved by the Board.

4.1 Transportation

The Board reviewed and discussed previous presentation by the staff and the Equity Audit Form provided by the Staff. the Comprehensive plan in depth in regard to Transportation. The Board's concerns about the Copland and rural areas and the improvements that have been accomplished.

The comprehensive plan included analyses as to how transportation is related to access to employment, social services and housing. Included in the discussion was the equity and inequity of transportation, affordability, and transit services within the outlying communities, i.e. Archer, Newberry and the unincorporated areas of Alachua County for the disadvantaged citizens who live outside of the Gainesville metro area. In summary the comprehensive plan for public transit only serves part of the community well, while leaving other parts of the community in need. The Board discussed a possible survey to look at transportation needs for people in the unincorporated or rural areas.

Currently the plan does not include or mention improving transportation access for low-income residents, the connection of existing neighborhoods with sidewalks and/or paths, EV charging stations/infrastructure which is not distributed equitably across the county, and currently there is no plan to rectify past neglect and imbalances related to the level of service by prioritizing the needs of marginalized communities.

Safe routes to school (specifically SR20), Ben Chumley, County Staff, explained complete streets. He also confirmed that AC has areas that are designated as opportunity zones that offer tax deferrals for developments that create jobs and encourage growth.

Recommendations:

1. Survey be done annually for people who are outside of the normal transportation areas to determine who might need additional services. In addition, to make sure the survey is on various platforms so more people can see the survey with sufficient time frames. The Board also requested that the Board would get a chance to review the survey prior to it being sent out.

Need to look at priorities for underserved areas so they are not pushed to the last project of the current Comprehensive Plan.

4.2 Future Land Use

The Board reviewed the responses and presentation regarding Future Land Use goals and guiding principles previously presented by County Staff. The Board reviewed the Equity Audit Form and the responses from County Staff.

The Board felt the main issue deals with wealth gap and helping it close. Staff responses state that there is zoning to implement the

Comprehensive Plan. The Board did discuss landfills and the issues with the County increasing landfills and the locations that will decrease property value. County Staff, Ben Chumley gave more detailed information on state language that is required related to cell towers and specifically historical communities. He explained that there are policies in the industrial and institutional sections that the County needs to consider environmental justice, equity and the community historical character. They acknowledged a couple of rewrites that show that items are being addressed. Also, that minimum standards are in the Code but are not currently in the Comprehensive Plan.

Recommendations:

1. Clarification to decide if the plan takes into consideration the intersection, impacts of zoning, land use and home value appreciation, or if the plan has policies to discourage or mitigate neighborhood disparities related to concentrations of less desirable land uses in communities where minority and/or low-income residents are the majority (i.e. loan and bonds offices, corrections, fast food restaurants). As well as if there are policies related to the location of designated industrial land uses and is there a requirement to consider its equity implication and/or community impact during the process.
2. To make the rewrite on minimum standards and the requirement for community engagement in Code should be noted in the Comprehensive Plan.

4.3 Community Health

The Chair read the information provided by Staff as it related to community health and the Equity Audit Report. The Board reviewed staff answers to the questions in the audit. The Board discussed “intentional effort” by the County regarding community gardens, and they did acknowledge that there are county staff at various meetings regarding food but that the various groups are disconnected and not specifically changing behavior. The Board is hoping that the County will help coordinating utilizing space, specifically farmers’ markets in order to change food behaviors for health reasons. Ivy Bell advised that Sean McLendon and his staff are trying to establish a local food system - farm to table concept - in Alachua County.

The Board responded to Staff's response to question #9 where people need to be able to get what they need as it relates health. Ivy Bell advised that the majority of community health was handled by the State of Florida Department of Health.

Discussion was held related to mobile health events, asking if the County could potentially help with the promotion of the events that are being held which would help with participation of the community.

Recommendations:

Ask Sean McLendon to possibly develop some plan where the County can play a role in pulling organizations, etc. together related to food issues.

If the County would work on partnering with community organizations to publicize and assist in quarterly mobile site health care.

Encourage the County to pursue partnerships and collaboration with other entities to address public health services in the county.

4.4 Housing

The housing presentation was in July 2024. The Board reviewed the prior presentation and the Equity Audit Form. Discussion occurred regarding inclusionary housing and staff indicates they are interested in learning more about historical neighborhoods. They also referred to including "fair share" in the plan. The Board is asking for more information as to what is meant by inclusionary housing and fair share and how they are going to implement the plan.

Ivy Bell – stated that the percentages are the way affordability is determined and the definitions are definitions that are prescribed by State law, and they are required to be used in the comprehensive Plan. For the inclusionary policy adopted in 2025, the County specify the percentage of units being developed that have to be affordable with households with income at or below 80% of median income. The inclusionary housing policy is tailored to Alachua County, and the percentages will vary based on the location of the development.

The Board felt that a lot of the items they have been discussing are being implemented and they are giving a commendation to the County for implementing their suggestions.

The Board also talked about different ways for people to be able to afford housing.

Ben Chumley, County Staff advised the Board about a family homestead subdivision where citizens can create smaller lots for families to build a home.

The Board continued the review related to other types of housing, units, etc. Ivy Bell advised the County has in addition to partnership with Grace Marketplace, it has purchased three different properties and improved them for transitional housing. Community Support Services handles these projects. She also informed that the housing is a complete wraparound service – that anticipates all needs. She also advised that the hotels purchased by the County will also be handled by Community Support Services and the models are more efficiency type apartments.

The Board wanted a note to add pages 12-29 – Equity Demographic Analysis - needs to put on the agenda for next month.

Recommendation:

That the County develop a tool kit/plan/matrix to ask questions of the developers along with the community engagement. The Board is also asking that staff be more specific about fair share, mixed income and the income floor related to affordable house. Staff commented that the County has adopted an inclusionary policy into the Comprehensive Plan in 2025 and the Plan addresses the dispersal of affordable housing which the Board refers to as fair share.

5. Member Comments

To deal with two of the items at each regular meeting. Possibly have another quarterly workshop and to try and be completed in September. To find a time to make recommendations to the Board. Next month to put Equity and Community Engagement on the agenda.

Heather Akpan advised the position for Equity Manager is still on hold at this point. She is looking at changing the title but they are not anticipating this will change the function of the position.

6. Public Comment

No public comment.

7. Announcements

Next meeting, which is scheduled for February 19, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.