

The Gainesville Candidates



Mason Alley

Office sought: Gainesville City Commission – District 4
Email: mason.alley@gmail.com
Website: www.masonalley.com
Educational Background: B.A. (Studio Art, African History), cum laude, National Merit Scholar, Gaines Scholar, Washington & Lee University (Lexington, VA), 1992



Oswald Angulo

Office sought: Mayor
Email: oswald.angulo@gmail.com
Website: www.voteforozzy.com
Educational Background: High School Graduate/U.S.M.C. Veteran/ Some College



Monica Leadon Cooper

Office sought: Mayor
Email: gvlcoopers@aol.com
Website: monicaleadoncooper.com
Educational Background: Graduated, Gainesville HS, BS in zoology, minor in Environmental Studies, University of Florida, post baccalaureate research in limnology, UF.



Craig Lowe

Office sought: Mayor
Email: Craiglowe4@gmail.com



Don Marsh

Office sought: Mayor
Email: dontwc@gmail.com



Nathaniel Sperling

Office sought: Gainesville City Commission (District 4)
Email: nathanielsperling@yahoo.com
Website: www.nathanielsperling.com
Educational Background: BA (History) from the University of Florida (2008), AA (General Studies) from Santa Fe Community College (2006)
Public offices held or which you were a candidate for: None



Randy Wells

Office sought: City Commission District 4
Email: Randy@RandyWells.org
Website: RandyWells.org
Educational Background: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Accredited

Professional (LEED AP), 2008 M.A., Latin American Studies with concentration in economics, Georgetown University, 1994 B.A., Economics and International Affairs, University of Colorado, 1989
Public offices held or which you were a candidate for: None elective; Following appointive: Member, Gainesville City Plan Board, 2007 to present
Chair, Gainesville Affordable Housing Advisory Committee, 2009 to present, Member and Chair, Gainesville and Alachua County Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board, 2006 to present



Penny Wheat

Office sought: Gainesville City Commission District 4
Email: penny@gru.net
Website: www.pennywheat.us
Educational Background: B.A. Humanistic Psychology, West Georgia College 1976; M.A., Psychology of Family and Human Relationships, University of Northern Colorado 1978; University of Florida College of Law 1995.
Public offices held or which you were a candidate for: Alachua County Commission: 1986-1990; 1990-1994; 1996-2000; 2000-2004

1. What are the three most important challenges facing our city and what is your plan to address them?



Mason Alley

Unemployment/Underemployment, our Budget Deficit and Wrong Priorities are Gainesville's three biggest problems. The solution to all of them is the same: Focus on Jobs and Job-creation. Everyone wants to live in a town with great schools,

safe neighborhoods and clean air and water. Good-paying jobs are the economic engines that make those things possible. We've spent a lot of time and money on luxuries we can't afford. It's time to focus on jobs.



Oswald Angulo

The local economy, unemployment, and the homeless population are three of the most important challenges currently facing our city. I plan to address each issue, along with other challenges, with direct action leadership and dynamic

community dialogue. A property tax break proposal, business development incentives, and aggressive resolution oriented dialogue are just some of the strategies I plan to implement.



Monica Leadon Cooper

a) the economic downturn, creating reduced revenue, a lock on financing for many new businesses, and a tightening of our city revenue. Millage rates are up and property owners are feeling the pinch. We need to have incentives in place for

small businesses as well as larger. b) holding operating costs down for businesses, including the rising utility costs. c) keeping Gainesville green and clean in order to attract new business. Our Koppers Superfund site threatens us environmentally and economically.



Craig Lowe

Continuing to protect single family neighborhoods with programs now emulated by other University cities and improving streets and sidewalks. Further strengthening our position as an energy innovator by further enhancing conservation

strategies that help families lower utility bills and also enhance the solar incentives. Promoting Gainesville as an academic medical community and energy leader to bring businesses that will provide quality higher paying jobs.



Don Marsh

a. Closing Koppers. 27 years is more than long enough to let a Superfund site endanger our water. b. Giving up the biomass debacle and restarting the clean coal plan. c. Getting the city on the same team as business leaders to create jobs right away.



Nathaniel Sperling

Overregulation: I am committed to examining current city regulations and determining which are truly necessary and which are merely bureaucratic in nature. Overtaxation (including the recent hike in property tax millage rates and the "hidden tax" of increased GRU rates

due to the city siphoning funds): I am committed to minimizing the siphoning of funds from GRU and to reducing property tax rates. Overspending: I am committed to cutting unnecessary and wasteful spending.



Randy Wells

Our challenges are 1) Ensuring that every neighborhood is livable, vibrant and green; 2) Attracting quality investment and jobs, particularly to underserved areas; and 3) Maintaining and improving city services in the face of limited

budgets. My plans include a livability court and neighborhood funds (to address specific challenges in each neighborhood); simplified planning and development review for redevelopment projects; and reducing inefficient spending without losing valuable services.



Penny Wheat

a. Controlling municipal and utility costs with genuine innovation and thrift. b. Providing a healthy small business environment through technology incubators, inner-city startups, and completion of city projects surrounding UF. c.

Improving the integrity and character of our urban residential and business neighborhoods.

2. With another budget shortfall projected for fiscal year 2011, what steps would you take to balance the city's annual budget?



Mason Alley

Budgeting 101: Pay for what you need before you pay for what you want. Basic services like police, fire, roads, etc. are necessities and non-negotiable. Golf course renovations, Mom's Kitchen, and a city public relations office are things we might want but can't currently afford. Every business, family, and individual has to make hard choices in hard times. Our city commission needs to adjust its priorities and prove we understand this basic fact of life.



Oswald Angulo

I would implement a set of tax breaks, sales tax increase, and mandate increased enforcement of fines and forfeitures. I would couple those initiatives with necessary departmental and non-departmental decrements. The main objective would be to not cut services that maintain the safety and protection of our city residents as well as not cut into the labor force.



Monica Leadon Cooper

Balancing the budget involves not only cutting wasteful spending (of which there are many glaring examples), but bringing in new business and making sure our regulations don't hinder those and helping our current business owners by not overtaxing them.



Craig Lowe

The upcoming budget must be balanced by elimination and reduction of some programs and reduction in overall personnel costs through furloughs or reduced work hours, as well as cancellation of projected salary increases where contractually possible. Revenue diversification must also be considered. We must continue to seek cost recovery for services rendered to noncontributing entities. These decisions will require experience in the budget making process. There will no time for on the job training.



Don Marsh

a. Sell or lease out Ironwood; whatever it takes to get it off the books. b. Halt the more ambitious but questionable public works projects, like narrowing University Ave. c. Get us out of the Homeless ministry and leave it to the churches and charitable agencies where it belongs.



Nathaniel Sperling

A) Cutting wasteful spending such as the Ironwood Golf Course and Mom's Kitchen initiatives, as well as the City Communications Office and other unnecessary and wasteful measures like the three private health/fitness centers the city runs strictly for city employees and their families. B) Strengthening our tax base by promoting greater business development through intelligent deregulation.



Randy Wells

I support the City Manager's approach of asking all city departments to identify potential budget cuts in excess of the expected shortfall--with a focus on cutting capital costs first rather than staff. I will support giving city staff incentives to propose efficiencies that reduce costs while maintaining or improving services. I will also consider a fire assessment to broaden the base of properties that support fire and rescue services.



Penny Wheat

Support all service delivery and management efficiencies that can be shown to immediately reduce costs without decreasing the quality or efficiency of service for the citizens who pay for them; suspend tax-increment finance districts and their new construction projects, and shift those tax funds to pay for police, fire and emergency services without new fees; collaborate with County government to bulk purchase fuel and other supplies, etc.

3. The final report on Plan East Gainesville was delivered in February 2003. Since that time do you feel significant progress has been made on the plan? Why or why not? What roles do you foresee the City taking in Plan East Gainesville under your leadership?



Mason Alley

"...components of the plan include the creation of a stronger link between downtown and the Five Points commercial area east of Waldo Road; encouraging the development of walkable mixed-use centers with easy access to public transportation; creating civic gateways, higher paying jobs and increasing the diversity of housing..." I'll leave it to the reader to rate our progress. Until jobs and job-creators are a priority for our city commission, this plan and others will languish.



Oswald Angulo

There has definitely been significant progress made in East Gainesville since the implementation of Plan East Gainesville and EGI. There are established businesses thriving and educational opportunities for local residents. There is also, however, a need for improved public transit and an apparent absence of government representation. As mayor, I would provide the direct and engaged leadership needed to thrust East Gainesville into a new level of prosperity and growth.



Monica Leadon Cooper

The framework for Plan East Gainesville is in place and some zoning changes are helpful, but this process will take years to come to fruition. We need to continue to focus on bringing business to east Gainesville, transit service needs to be improved, and we need to focus on helping families, including helping our youth with the health crisis for which my background for 28 years will be invaluable.



Craig Lowe

The city is implementing its portion of the plan, such as reconstruction of the Depot Avenue corridor. The University's east campus is also a step forward. Other elements of the plan involve federal support. I have the needed experience in working with federal elected officials to secure the resources needed to fully implement the public sector portion of the plan. Full realization depends on private business to continue the eastside momentum of economic growth.



Don Marsh

Plans like this have the unintended consequences of causing investment to wait until some undetermined time to see who will get preferential treatment. We need to partner with profitable enterprises now.



Nathaniel Sperling

I believe we must re-examine the entire Plan East Gainesville, concentrating on promoting greater business and job development. While better infrastructure and a more interconnected transportation system are helpful, without strong business development in the area, there can be little true long-term and self-sustaining development.



Randy Wells

Significant progress has been made, but much remains to be done. Private investment has been slow to materialize in east Gainesville (even during more prosperous years), but will be key over the long haul. The City plays a valuable part of building successful public-private partnerships that will attract new business development, particularly small, local businesses and entrepreneurs. I will strongly support a much improved mass transit connection for east Gainesville.



Penny Wheat

With the location of new business, UF and SFC, there has been improvement, but we must work with stakeholders to continue that positive momentum. The to-do list includes a complete redevelopment of Kennedy Homes; addition of market-rate neighborhoods; and funding for dedicated bus rapid-transit (east-west) routes with worker-friendly operating hours.

4. According to the City of Gainesville's projected pavement condition information, only five percent of the city roads are expected to be in "Good" condition by 2013 and thirty-two percent will be in "Worse" or "Poor" condition. How do you plan to address the need for quality road infrastructure?



Mason Alley

Our greatest hope to solve future needs (infrastructure and otherwise) is a diversified economy, increased employment in higher-wage private sector jobs, and a broader tax base. The only way to get there is to develop a reputation as a city

that is "jobs-friendly". That has to start with local government.



Oswald Angulo

I would first want the estimated cost of improvements for the top five roads that support most of our traffic. I would then request financial assistance from the county and the state in order cover some of these repair costs.



Monica Leadon Cooper

We need to take care of roads and infrastructure needs first before we spend money on frivolous projects. Instead of spending available tax dollars on infrastructure (roads, sewer, etc), the Community Redevelopment Agency has

earmarked \$900,000 for an unneeded building on 5th Ave, 1.5 million for a bike overpass upgrade, while ignoring infrastructure needs.



Craig Lowe

The establishment of a pavement management system by the city enabled these forecasts. This is a projection, not current. Increases in maintenance will be needed to avoid this from being realized. We must do this in a manner that does not

detract from other transportation needs such as transit.



Don Marsh

Giving up the biomass debacle and restarting the clean coal plan



Nathaniel Sperling

I intend to use the city's funds more wisely. We must concentrate our resources on core services (which definitely includes road maintenance) instead of wasteful boondoggles (i.e. Ironwood, Mom's Kitchen, etc.).



Randy Wells

Many of Gainesville's major roadways are the responsibility of state and county government. I would focus limited road maintenance funds on those roads that carry the bulk of traffic. I will also favor development that supports improved mass transit,

walking, biking, and shorter and fewer car trips.



Penny Wheat

"Piggyback": avoid mobilization costs by adding worst condition city roads to paving contracts for nearby state and county projects; seek eligibility under the Build America Bonds program to recover 35% of the interest on bonds issued for job-

creating infrastructure projects; reduce wear and tear on roadways by effective alternative transportation.

5. The MTPO is in the process of developing the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). What would be your top three priorities for the LRTP?



Mason Alley

Congestion costs us time and money. We need to focus on opening our city to its citizens which may be as simple as timing traffic lights or as challenging as changing our priorities to increase (not reduce) local road capacities. North-south

corridors and right-sizing our RTS busses are also priorities.



Oswald Angulo

My top three priorities would address the top three modes of transportation utilized by our residents. A more efficient transit system along with safe and secure roads for motorists and bicyclists would be my initial focus.



Monica Leadon Cooper

Land use and transportation must be integrated to improve mobility and accessibility. The county and city must work with the DOT, to create a balanced approach to reducing congestion by providing efficient thoroughfares and alternate travel

modalities. We need planning that provides accessibility to shopping, schools, and other needs close to housing to cut down on travel time.



Craig Lowe

These should be 1) Maintenance of existing eligible roadways in a manner that supports multiple modes of transportation as needed. 2) Greater availability of transit, especially to those areas of greatest need. 3) Ensuring that transportation

plans are consistent with other community goals.



Don Marsh

a. Work on a plan to make RTS pay its own way. If it's subsidized, it's not "sustainable". b. Remove Light Rail from that plan c. Explore connection of existing roads around Gainesville to create a "loop".



Nathaniel Sperling

1) Improving the density and quality of Gainesville's roads 2) Improving the design of the bus routes offered by RTS so that they reach more areas of the city 3) Reducing the local taxes on gasoline which drive up transportation costs for both

residents and businesses



Randy Wells

My top LRTP priorities are 1) Advancing the proposal for a city-wide bus rapid transit system including an electric streetcar between downtown and campus; 2) Making land use decisions that support mass transit; and 3) Cost

effective initiatives that make better use of limited roadway capacity in congested areas.



Penny Wheat

Develop a sustainable future transportation network; plan to move people and goods within and through our community when gasoline again rises in price or becomes scarce; provide safe and reliable non-auto mobility options

for the most dense urban and UF corridors.

6. Do you support Gainesville Regional Utilities' plan to increase its electric generation capacity through a new biomass plant? Why or why not?



Mason Alley

The liabilities of a long-term contract with an untested company, unknown costs (estimates range from -\$100 mil to +\$400 mil), pushback at the state level, and no projected capacity need until 2023 all outweigh the benefits (both real and perceived). Job

creation and a diversified economy are higher priorities.



Oswald Angulo

I support a diversified energy plan. Biomass does fall under that category but, as for all things, my immediate concern is for the welfare of my residents. The majority of residents need to be on board with the plan, not just certain elected

officials and leaders.



Monica Leadon Cooper

I do not support the contract for the new biomass plant. This 100 MW, \$1/2 billion plant is unnecessary. We are at 63% overcapacity and don't need more power until at least 2023. With further conservation, efficiency measures and solar we can push back

this projected date back further.



Craig Lowe

Material currently burned without pollution controls will generate energy while removing pollutants. Commercial forests supplying fuel will have stronger species protections. Construction and operation of the plant will provide

jobs, property tax revenue, and buffer rate-payers against carbon regulation costs and place risk away from GRU ratepayers.



Don Marsh

No. Biomass does not burn cleaner than new coal technology nor does it burn as efficiently. The biomass plant is the result of self-induced panic about a global warming calamity that is not coming.



Nathaniel Sperling

No. The start-up costs will be too high and there will be the risk of the price of fuel ("dead stuff") increasing and/or future deforestation. We have the technology to provide cleaner use of current coal resources.



Randy Wells

I support energy policy based on sound environmental and economic data. On current evidence, the GRU biomass proposal is the most cost-effective renewable energy source available, and can be implemented in a sustainable manner. If approved by

the state, I will insist that we meet the highest standards possible.



Penny Wheat

The entire city commission should review and re-evaluate the proposal, with special attention to the issues raised by the Public Service Commission.

7. What are the top initiatives/policies you would support or bring forth for the City of Gainesville to attract, retain and support businesses?



Mason Alley

Promote laws that are Clear, Concise, and Consistent. No more telling businesses we've misread our own rules, arbitrarily changed our mind, or are holding them hostage for every last dime of concurrency we can squeeze out of them. We want

good-paying jobs and good relationships with job creators.



Oswald Angulo

I would begin with a series of measured tax breaks for property and business owners. I would also try to assist local industry professionals in coordinating an increase in cultural, art, and entertainment events in order to

attract more foot traffic in during the summer.



Monica Leadon Cooper

With the collaboration of the University of Florida and Shands, we should be an attractive incubator for new businesses. We have stellar education, inexpensive land, homes, food, transportation, great climate, arts and music, beautiful natural

resources, and of course, all of the benefits of living in a university town.



Craig Lowe

We need to market our community as the academic medical community and energy innovator that we are to attract businesses that will bring good paying jobs for our residents. We need to identify eliminate useless barriers to the establishment and

expansion of business by streamlining the permitting process.



Don Marsh

Treat business people like they are taxpayers and valuable contributors who bring needed skill sets to add value to our community.



Nathaniel Sperling

1) Intelligent deregulation, 2) Tax cuts (including cutting "hidden taxes" and unnecessary fees), 3) Working with local businesses to promote greater cooperation between local government and business and end the air of unfriendliness to business

that haunts Gainesville's reputation



Randy Wells

I support overhauling "First Step" which is widely understood as "First Stop", particularly for small businesses; reducing the cumbersome development review process for redevelopment and investment in existing commercial

areas; and capturing more value from small, local businesses in city contracting by adopting the state's professional service bidding law.



Penny Wheat

Local business depends on attracting customers. Gainesville is the regional commercial center in NC Florida. We can attract more customers with products and food for local consumption and export; niche products made by an educated

workforce; and leverage and preserve our greatest assets - clean water, clean air, and educated workers.

8. Please describe the role of economic development in our community and what you would like to see developed during your term if elected.



Mason Alley

Economic development is the central driver for a city's well-being. Working families, neighborhoods, schools and small businesses all benefit from jobs and job-creation. Gainesville would be well served to grow and/or attract high-tech,

bio-tech, financial services and other high-wage, low-environmental impact businesses and the jobs they create.



Oswald Angulo

The role of Economic Development is to assist and attract enterprise in order to diversify the existing economic base. During my term, I would like to at least lay down the foundation from which an era of economic independence and

prosperity will rise.



Monica Leadon Cooper

Business is the backbone of our community. We can have good paying jobs in clean industry, for which we are perfectly positioned. We have the intellectual expertise of the University of Florida and the common sense of the local business

people.



Craig Lowe

Economic development provides jobs for our citizens, greater retail and wholesale options for our citizens and businesses, and more vitality for our neighborhoods. No one should have to go to Orlando for their retail option. Neighborhoods, especially on

the east, should have greater access to a full range of opportunities.



Don Marsh

Economic liberty is as essential as free speech. It is not the government's role to guide innovation.



Nathaniel Sperling

Economic development is extremely important to Gainesville since it will strengthen our tax base and provide good jobs—we suffer from horrendous underemployment and a lack of economic diversity. I would like to see greater industrial and commercial development locally.



Randy Wells

Successful economic development ensures that our city is becoming more livable, vibrant and green. I support creating a more diverse employment base and making Gainesville even more of a unique destination. A major focus for me

will be creating more thriving small business districts.



Penny Wheat

Education is the "seed corn" of commerce: As the center of education and commerce we must foster export markets outside our footprint; develop partnerships that add value and reduce costs for locally-obtainable raw materials and

energy sources; and foster entrepreneurship as spinoffs of locally developed technologies.

9. Amendment 4 will be on the general election ballot on November 2, 2010. If passed, Amendment 4 will require citizens to vote on comprehensive plan amendments. According to a study by The Washington Economics Group, Inc., Amendment 4 will cost Floridians more than 267,000 jobs in various industries from construction to retail trade to government to knowledge based services. Do you support Amendment 4? Why or why not?



Mason Alley

I do not support Amendment 4. Direct democracy should be our preference, but this law marginalizes local government and opens the door to special interest groups. A small voter turn-out over land-use allows a few to decide for the many while hiding under the illusion of "the people's vote".



Oswald Angulo

Elected officials are responsible for representing their constituents in government affairs. Limited direct citizenry involvement in government is as important as limited government involvement in citizenry affairs. I currently don't support Amendment 4. A dramatic increase in voter turnout in this country would cause me to reevaluate my position.



Monica Leadon Cooper

Required signatures were collected so this deserves to be on the ballot. There are problems to be addressed so I will look at it in detail.



Craig Lowe

These issues are too voluminous and complex for a referendum. These matters are why we have representative government. The small businesses will not be able to budget for an electoral campaign. The large corporations will be better able to finance such a campaign. I oppose the amendment.



Don Marsh

No. It breeds adversarial NIMBYism.



Nathaniel Sperling

Especially during this economic downturn and high unemployment, I am against anything that will hinder job development. We do need Amendment 4 when we already have the structures in place (i.e. City Plan Board) to develop the comprehensive plan. Instead, we should promote greater citizen involvement in local government instead.



Randy Wells

I do not support Amendment 4. As a member of the City Plan Board, I appreciate the complexity of land use decisions and long-range planning. I am concerned that Amendment 4 will actually impede our community's efforts to make our Comprehensive Plan reflect the needs and values of Gainesville.



Penny Wheat

This issue should be decided by voters, not by government. I believe strongly in the principle of the public's right to vote without intervention or influence by government or elected or appointed officials.

10. Do you support the Innovation Gainesville (iG) Economic Development Initiative to establish Gainesville as an Innovation Hub, particularly focused on green technology and health science? If so, what does that mean to you and what role would you expect the city to play?



Mason Alley

Innovation Gainesville is a good step in exactly the right direction for our city. We need good-paying jobs with opportunities for advancement that come with little or no negative impact to our local quality of life. High-tech, Bio-tech, and Green-tech all fit that bill. The city commission must be a champion and facilitator for tech-transfer out of UF and work hard to make sure we keep the businesses and jobs created right here in Gainesville.



Oswald Angulo

The ideals behind iG are the same ones inherent in my economic platform. I'm confident that the City of Gainesville has the ability and the talent to be a formidable global contender in the arena of green technology and health services. As mayor, I plan to assist the commission in forging the bold and innovative leadership required to support Gainesville's efforts in becoming a hub for cutting edge technology and medicine.



Monica Leadon Cooper

Yes, it's important that we take advantage of the wave towards sustainable, green technology as we move away from fossil fuel-based industry nationally. We are perfectly positioned, and it will help our local economy to promote clean business.



Craig Lowe

I support the Innovation Gainesville initiative and have played a part in bringing Gainesville to the point where we can claim to be an energy innovator adding to our standing as an academic medical community. This makes us an excellent location for businesses that seek such a progressive community to expand to and to bring higher paying jobs with them. The city should identify locations, remove unnecessary obstacles, and assisting in marketing Gainesville.



Don Marsh

I don't think it is the city's business. At best, we should cheer it on.



Nathaniel Sperling

Yes, I support IG Economic Development. Primarily, I think the city needs to step out of the way and stop hindering economic development (i.e. the city is realistically perceived as unfriendly to business and we are very overregulated). We have one of the best universities in the Southern US, we have a good pool of educated and skilled labor and we have access (through UF especially) to grants and funding.



Randy Wells

Yes, I support the Innovation Gainesville initiative as a model framework for building public-private partnerships that bring new investment to our city. I particularly agree with iG's focus on education, training and entrepreneurship. A key focus will be to identify areas of the city which could most benefit from new investment (such as the Cade Museum), and making the development review process as straightforward as possible to support that investment.



Penny Wheat

Yes I support this initiative. It means that we build on our community's notable resources, including health science, technology transfer, alternative energy and transportation, organic and local agriculture, smart infrastructure, and communication technology. The city should serve to educate; facilitate; collaborate - and get out of the way.