

Your guide to the

Downtown Ambassador Program

Gainesville, Florida

OCT 2024

City of
Gainesville



Gainesville
Community
Reinvestment
Area

Coming December 2024

The City of Gainesville is pleased to announce the creation of the **Downtown Ambassador Program** in downtown Gainesville. This three-year partnership with Block by Block, approved unanimously by the City Commission on August 15, 2024, demonstrates the city's commitment to improving the area for visitors, residents, and downtown's business community.

The Downtown Ambassador Program builds on the efforts of the **Downtown Gainesville Strategic Plan**, which was adopted by the City Commission in October 2022 and received a planning award from the International Downtown Association.

This program will place additional eyes, ears, and voices on the streets and meets several of the six transformative themes identified in the plan:

- **Theme 1: Become a Destination**
- **Theme 5: Create a Supportive Local Business Environment**
- **Theme 6: Maintain and Enhance Downtown**

The new program is also a direct response to the July 2024 **Downtown Needs Assessment Survey** that reaffirmed the community's interest in making downtown Gainesville safe, clean, beautiful, and lively.

The survey sought community feedback to identify and prioritize services and needs within the Gainesville Community Reinvestment Area (GCRA) downtown boundary. Many of the community-identified needs are services the Downtown Ambassador Program is uniquely poised to handle.

We look forward to working with the Block by Block team to enrich our downtown area by addressing cleanliness and safety and maintaining its aesthetic appeal and cultural charm. **The program goes live December 2, 2024.**

What Ambassadors Do

Ambassador services will be provided by Block by Block. In Gainesville, they will work in the GCRA's downtown boundary, hence the name **Downtown Ambassador**.

Ambassadors serve as valuable neighborhood helpers, ensuring that neighborhoods stay clean, attractive, and welcoming. They offer various services, including graffiti removal, street cleaning, safety escorts, landscaping, community outreach, hospitality, and more.

Ambassadors can support businesses located in the designated service areas. They can help with safety concerns, cleanliness around storefronts, or other public space services. Business owners can request these services directly from Block by Block via their **helpline at (352) 710-6406**.

Ambassadors will provide and promote a safety escort program throughout their daily operations for the Downtown Gainesville and West University Corridor service areas. Visitors can request help to their cars, transit, or downtown destination by contacting the on-duty staff through their helpline.

They can also build relationships with vulnerable populations and connect them with services offered in the area.

What does the Downtown Ambassador Program mean for my business?

Funded by the GCRA, the Downtown Ambassador Program is a free service for downtown businesses and commercial property owners. Ambassadors will regularly visit businesses during their shifts and can assist with:

- Cleaning public areas in front of a business
- Addressing issues related to the unhoused population
- Providing updates on events, construction, and incident reports in the service area

Businesses can request services by calling (352) 710-6406

Where Ambassadors Work

The Downtown Ambassador Program will be available in two focused service areas in the heart of downtown Gainesville.

Downtown Gainesville Service Area

This service area is bounded by North 2nd Avenue to the north, Depot Avenue to the south, 6th Street to the west, and SE 7th Street to the east.

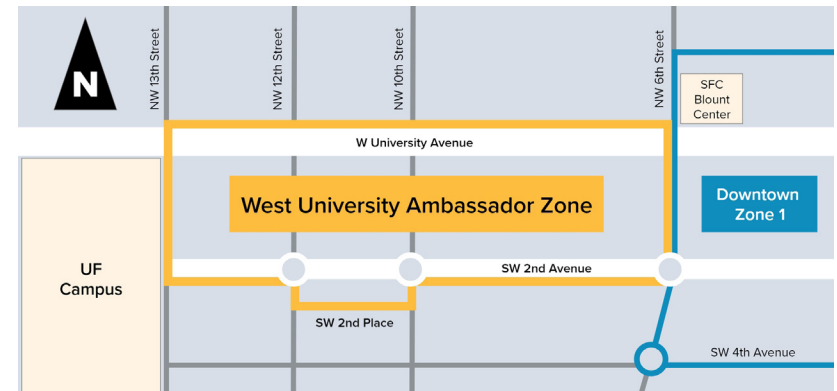
The service area is split into two zones, which evenly distribute and rotate ambassador coverage to support downtown businesses, residents, and visitors.



West University Corridor Service Area

This service area lies just east of the University of Florida campus and extends to the Santa Fe College Blount Center. It serves Gainesville's student community by supporting off-campus life between SW 13th Street and the Innovation District.

Bounded by W. University Avenue to the north and SW 2nd Place to the south, the area runs from SW 13th Street in the west to SW 6th Street in the east, where it meets the Downtown Gainesville service area.



Need a little help?

During their daily rounds, Downtown Ambassadors will provide a friendly safety escort service in both program locations. **Simply call (352) 710-6406.**

Job Opportunities

The Downtown Ambassador Program brings several new jobs to Gainesville. This program will focus on Safety, Clean, and Outreach roles.

Safety

Safety Ambassadors will patrol the service areas on foot and/or bike to deter and be on the lookout for unwanted behavior and activity while providing information, hospitality, assistance, and directions to downtown workers, residents, and visitors.

Clean

Clean Ambassadors provide a high level of visibility at the street level and carry out various tasks to improve the overall appearance of the service area they are assigned to.

Leads

Team Leaders provide an exemplary model of customer service, hospitality, and operational oversight. They ensure quality and adhere to all Block by Block procedures while leading and motivating the team at the street level.

Outreach Coordinator

The Outreach Coordinator focuses on social outreach in the community, with an emphasis on the houseless population downtown. Coordinators approach and assist individuals in need and help connect them with social service resources.

Operations Manager

The Operations Manager is responsible for all facets of the program at the local level. This role will ensure operations adhere to Block by Block guidelines and standards while maintaining customer communication and adjusting services for local needs.

Want to apply for these jobs?

Interested applicants are encouraged to apply directly to Block by Block for employment, as these positions are not offered by the City of Gainesville.

For more information and to apply online visit:

www.bit.ly/bbbapplynow

About Block by Block

Block by Block is the leading provider of Ambassador Services, with nearly 30 years of experience and more than 150 programs across the country.

They provide specialized services, including security, cleaning, hospitality, and outreach, all designed to enhance the quality of life in urban areas. Through partnerships with cities and business improvement districts, Block by Block helps create safer, more vibrant public spaces.

The Need to Knows

What is a Downtown Ambassador exactly? What do they do?

Ambassadors are helpers who keep things clean, beautiful, and friendly – making sure a neighborhood remains in excellent shape. They can provide distinct services in a neighborhood, like graffiti cleanup, safety escorts, landscaping, and social outreach services. In our city, they will work in the GCRA's downtown boundary, hence the name Downtown Ambassador.

Which days and times will Downtown Ambassadors operate?

Ambassadors will be on duty every day in the Downtown Gainesville and West University Corridor service areas. Their schedules will adjust based on demand and seasonality, with more staff during peak, busy times and fewer during quieter periods.

What does the Downtown Ambassador Program mean for my business?

The Downtown Ambassador Program, funded by the GCRA, is free for downtown businesses and commercial property owners. Ambassadors will make regular visits to businesses during their shifts, providing assistance with a range of needs, like cleaning public areas in front of your business, addressing issues related to the houseless population, and providing updates on events, construction, and incident reports.

Why can't the city do all of these services?

The Downtown Ambassadors will provide targeted geographical services such as:

- **Street cleaning and graffiti removal**
- **Safety escorts for visitors of downtown**
- **Building relationships with vulnerable populations to connect them with services**
- **Outreach to downtown businesses to provide real-time information on what is happening downtown**

The City of Gainesville, through different departments, provides those services throughout Gainesville but needs help targeting its services geographically. This program will focus funding, resources, energy, and staff in the downtown service areas.

Where is the funding for the Downtown Ambassador Program coming from?

The program is funded through three special revenue sources, not the city's general fund. Tax increment financing (TIF) from the College Park-University Heights Redevelopment Trust Fund will be used for the West University Corridor. For Downtown Gainesville, funding comes from the Downtown Strategic Plan Fund within the Gainesville Community Reinvestment Area, which receives money from both the City of Gainesville and Alachua County. TIF from the Downtown Redevelopment Trust Fund may also be used.

More Need to Knows

Are ambassadors available to help with my business?

Yes, our ambassadors are here to help! Our team is ready if you need assistance with safety concerns, cleanliness around your storefront, or other public space services. Call (352) 710-6406 to speak to the Downtown Ambassador team and request services.

How long will the city use these services?

Gainesville's City Commission approved the Downtown Ambassador Program in August 2024. The program started on October 1, 2024, under a three-year contract between the city and Block by Block. The city can extend the contract for two more years, one year at a time. If needed, the city can also end the contract at any time with 30 days' notice.

I heard the city was only hiring "homeless people" for these jobs. Is that true?

While the Downtown Ambassador Program will offer outreach services to the houseless population, the hiring focus will not be on that population. Block by Block has a corporate mission to support the employment of formerly unhoused individuals who are now in stable, permanent housing; however, they are also committed to hiring the best-qualified candidates to fill these critical positions.

What if I have an emergency while downtown – can a Downtown Ambassador help me?

You should always call 911 in an emergency or life-threatening situation. Downtown Ambassadors will offer a safety escort service in the program's two service areas during their daily operations. Visitors can request an escort by calling (352) 710-6406.

I am planning a community event (special event) in the downtown area. Can a Downtown Ambassador help with my event?

No, Downtown Ambassadors cannot assist private event organizers as they are focused on their daily duties of keeping downtown Gainesville clean, safe, and welcoming for all visitors.

How can I share my feedback about the program with the city?

After the Downtown Ambassador Program launches in December 2024, the city will survey downtown stakeholders for feedback. These surveys will likely start in early 2025.

About the GCRA

Get in touch

The Gainesville Community Reinvestment Area (GCRA) is a City of Gainesville department operating under a 10-year Reinvestment Plan. Our mission is to invest in previously underserved areas, revitalize the urban core, improve the quality of life of our neighbors, and strengthen the local economy – especially by supporting small, local, and diverse businesses.

The GCRA reports to the City Manager, is governed by the City Commission, and is guided by two Citizen Advisory Boards: the GCRA Advisory Board and the Downtown Advisory Board. The Reinvestment Plan was developed through a public process, including community workshops, stakeholder meetings, surveys, and other outreach efforts.

Our success depends on collaboration and partnerships with other city departments, civic institutions, government agencies, non-profits, and community members.

Request services from a Downtown Ambassador

(352) 710-6406

Contact the GCRA

(352) 393-8200

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