

City of Gainesville

Downtown Ambassador Program Guide for City Departments

Program Owner: Gainesville Community Reinvestment Area (GCRA)

Program Launch: December 2, 2024

This document serves as a guideline for [City of Gainesville - Internal Use ONLY](#).
It contains critical information on the creation and rollout of the new program.

Version: 1.0

Last Updated: November 22, 2024

Downtown Ambassador Program Guide for City Departments

Table of Contents

1. Using this Guide	03
1.1. Introduction	03
1.2. Program Management	03
1.3. Performance Reporting	03
2. Program Background	04
2.1. How the program developed	04
2.2. About Block by Block	04
3. About the Program	05
3.1. What Ambassadors Do	05
3.2. Program Locations (Where Ambassadors Work)	06
3.3. Program Equipment, Office, and Storage	07 - 08
4. Ambassador Job Duties	09 - 10
5. Program Internal Operations (RACI chart)	11 - 13
6. Program FAQs	14 - 15

1. Using this Guide

1.1 Introduction

This document outlines the launch of the Downtown Ambassador Program, detailing timelines, team responsibilities, and coordinated program delivery. It aims to inform departments across the City of Gainesville and serves as a guide to ensure clear understanding, smooth execution, and alignment across city departments. We hope to agree on expectations and services to ensure a successful program launch.

1.2 Program Management

The City of Gainesville entered an agreement with vendor Block by Block on October 1, 2024. The program will launch on December 2, 2024, where Block by Block staff (downtown ambassadors) will be up and running within the agreed-upon service areas that are within the Gainesville Community Reinvestment Area (GCRA) downtown Gainesville boundary.

As program managers the GCRA will:

- Manage the program and report on its progress.
- Collaborate with various city departments to establish program knowledge and internal communication.
- Schedule internal kickoff meetings in October 2024 with city departments to go over the new program operations and its potential effects on their team procedures.
- Serve as a liaison between Block by Block and city departments to address issues and ensure coordination as needed.

1.3 Performance Reporting

The GCRA, in collaboration with other city departments, will monitor and report progress on the Downtown Ambassador Program. As part of its contract with the city, Block by Block will submit monthly reports to the Downtown Advisory Board and quarterly and annual reports to the City Commission. The reports will include but are not limited to:

- Cleaning and safety statistics
- Interactions with first responders and the reasons therein
- Outreach to vulnerable populations
- Ambassador training for new hires and incumbents (courses taken and hours logged)
- Pay schedules

2. Program Background

2.1 How the program developed

The creation of the Downtown Ambassador Program continues the work of the Downtown Gainesville Strategic Plan, adopted by the Gainesville City Commission in October 2022. 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, which 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 GCRA downtown boundary. Many of the community-identified needs are services the Ambassador program is uniquely poised to handle.

Ambassador services will be exclusively provided by vendor **Block by Block** [www.blockbyblock.com] in a three-year partnership approved unanimously by the City Commission on August 15, 2024. These actions demonstrate the city's commitment to improving the area for visitors, residents, and the downtown business community.

2.2 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. Block by Block helps create safer, more vibrant public spaces through partnerships with cities and business improvement districts.

See the cities they serve here: www.blockbyblock.com/places-we-work

3. About the Program

3.1 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, 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.

Ambassadors will provide and promote a safety escort program for the Downtown Gainesville and West University Corridor districts throughout their daily operations. Visitors to each district can request a safety escort by contacting the on-duty staff through a publicized phone number.

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



Above: Block by Block teams from Virginia Beach, Iowa City, West Palm Beach and West Campus-UT Austin

3.2 Program Locations (Service Areas)

The Downtown Ambassador Program will occur within the GCRA's downtown boundary. Ambassadors will work in two main service areas:

1. Downtown Gainesville Service Area
2. West University Corridor Service Area

Downtown Gainesville Service Area

This area is the program's central zone, running north from NW 2nd Avenue to south at SE Depot Avenue and then west from SE 6th Street east to SE 7th Street. The service area is split into two zones, to evenly distribute and rotate ambassador coverage to support downtown businesses, residents, and visitors.

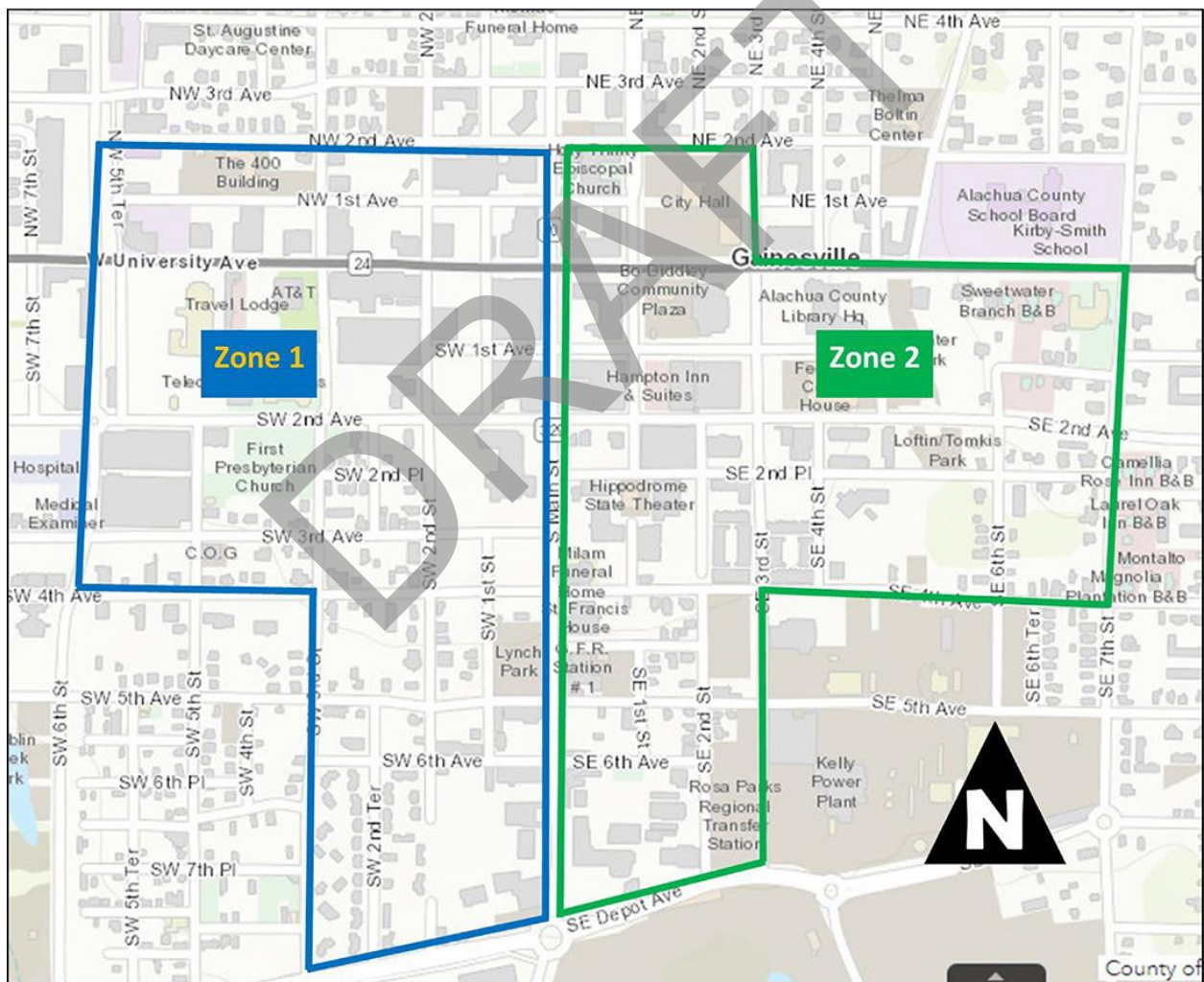


Figure 1. Downtown Gainesville service area map showing Zones 1 and 2.

West University Corridor Service Area

This service area is just east of the University of Florida campus. It will support off-campus life between 13th Street and the Innovation District and provide services for Gainesville's student community.

This service area is between W. University Avenue to the north and SW 2nd Place to the south. It runs east to west from SW 13th Street to SW 6th Street, touching the Downtown Gainesville service area at SW 6th Street.

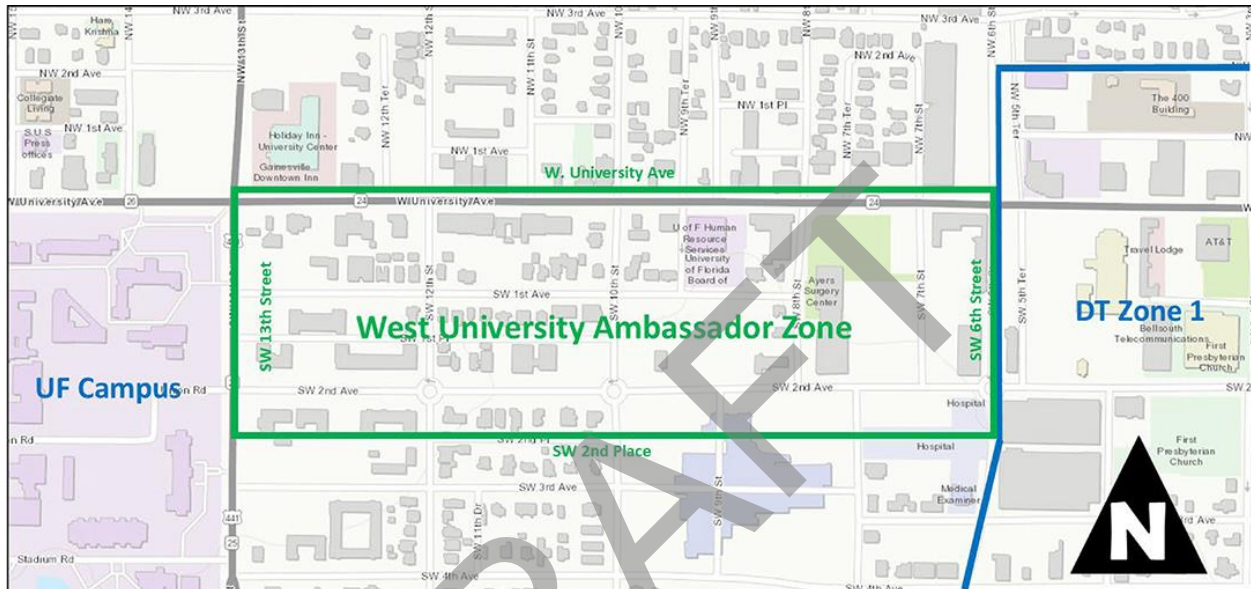


Figure 2. West University Corridor service area map

3.3 Program Equipment, Office, and Storage

Block by Block uses their own capital equipment when in operation. Ambassadors are employees in uniform and have access to:

- e-Bikes
- Info cart trikes
- Mega BRUTE Mobile Collectors
- Vehicle (Ford F-150 Lightning)

Block by Block will occupy the ground floor office in the SW Downtown Garage, located at 105 SW 3rd Street. This office will function as their local Gainesville headquarters. They will also make use of a minimal number of garage parking spaces and designated areas for their service vehicles.



Figure 3. Downtown Ambassador Program uniforms and equipment for the City of Gainesville

4. Ambassador Job Duties

The Downtown Ambassador Program brings several new jobs to Gainesville, Florida. 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 lookout for unwanted behavior and activity while providing information, hospitality, assistance, and directions to downtown workers, residents, and visitors.

- Serve as a visible, friendly presence to promote a safe and welcoming environment.
- Provide information and assistance to residents, visitors, and businesses.
- Conduct safety patrols on foot or bike, focusing on crime prevention and de-escalation.
- Assist local authorities when needed and report any safety concerns or incidents.
- Support outreach efforts and build relationships within the community.

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 district they are assigned.

- Maintain the cleanliness of public spaces, including sidewalks, benches, trash receptacles, and more.
- Remove litter, debris, and graffiti to ensure a pristine appearance throughout downtown.
- Assist with cleaning tasks such as sweeping, pressure washing, and trash removal.
- Conduct tree well care including weeding and mulching, as needed.
- Serve as a friendly and helpful presence to those you encounter while on the job.
- Perform regular maintenance tasks such as graffiti and weed abatement, sticker removals, sweeping with a pan and broom as well as professional sidewalk and curb cleaning equipment.
- Conduct tree well care including weeding and mulching, as needed.
- Dig and plant new greenery as required.

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.

- The Block by Block Team Leader is responsible for the daily supervision of the work being performed in the district and the ambassadors in the field.

Outreach Coordinator

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

- Actively engage individuals in need of assistance through street outreach and relationship building.
- Connect individuals to local social services, housing resources, and health care providers.
- Maintain accurate records of outreach activities and prepare reports for review.
- Collaborate with local agencies and service providers to develop strategies to support vulnerable populations.
- Participate in community meetings and events to foster relationships and build partnerships.
- Promote a welcoming and safe environment in Gainesville's public spaces by interacting positively with residents, businesses, and visitors.

Operations Manager

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.

- Represent the Block by Block Culture and Mission. Coordinate recruitment, selection of candidates, and onboarding and training of all new ambassadors.
- Continual adjustments to the deployment of resources to match changing needs. This includes resources of the "human kind."
- Continual problem identification and solving to improve the quality of the program.
- Procurement and Inventory of supplies and equipment.
- Reporting outcomes through a variety of reporting channels: app-based system, spreadsheets, Kronos Timekeeping, Budgets, etc.
- Hands-on working management in the field to provide coaching, mentoring, and continuous training on standard policies and procedures

5. Downtown Ambassador Program Internal Operations

FOR DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW ** Please note: This chart is to be refined with the GCRA and individual teams during upcoming kickoff meetings.

Program Owner: Gainesville Community Reinvestment Area (GCRA)

Project Team, Role, Role Assignment RACI

(R) = **Responsible:** This person completes the task

(A) = **Accountable:** This person delegates work and gives final approval to ensure work is complete

(C) = **Consulted:** This person provides advice and context based on expertise

(I) = **Informed:** This person is kept updated on the program progress (they are not “in the details”)

Department/ Group	Department Director	Project Team Members	Team Member Roles & Responsibilities
Communications	Jennifer Smart (I)	Rossana Passaniti (R,A) Laura Rawson (C)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media communication to neighbors and community builders by using typical channels for department Media communication to and coordination with local media Help to promote ambassador jobs locally
Gainesville Community Reinvestment Area (GCRA) Program Owner	Rick Smith (R,A,C,I)	Mo Deel (R,A,C,I) Melanie Ling (R,A,C,I) All Team (I)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage the program and work with vendor (Block by Block) Media communication to neighbors and community builders Program communication and reporting to GCRA advisory boards (i.e. Downtown Advisory Board) and area stakeholders Communication with civic partners Participation from this department by responding to general questions from the neighbors, community builders and stakeholders
Gainesville Fire Rescue (GFR)	Chief Roberto Sutton (C, I)	Brandy Stone (A, C, I) Brandy Stone (A, C, I)	<p><u>Community Resource Paramedicine Program (CRP)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with Block by Block on outreach services to vulnerable persons Assist with reporting and follow up on outreach services Participation from this department by responding to general questions from vulnerable communities <p><u>Community FIRST</u></p>

<p>Gainesville Fire Rescue (GFR)</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate and manage Community FIRST managers to dispatch program information and job opportunities to neighborhoods
<p>Gainesville Police Department (GPD)</p>	<p>Chief Nelson Moya (C, I)</p>	<p><u>Special Event Services</u> Hannah Smith (I)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to service requests and/or emergencies within service areas • Liaise with Block by Block on outreach services to vulnerable persons <p><u>Special Event Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IF asked, inform event permittees and organizers that ambassador services <u>are not</u> “purchasable” city services (e.g. Off-Duty Officer hours)
<p>Government Affairs and Community Relations</p>	<p>John Alexander (R,A)</p>	<p><u>MyGNV Program (Finance)</u> Kendall Lambert (R)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist Community FIRST managers to dispatch program information and job opportunities to neighborhoods <p><u>MyGNV Program</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation from this department regarding the myGNV program • Provide historical and adhoc myGNV reporting for service areas • myGNV program to supplement overall program performance metrics
<p>Human Resources</p>	<p>Laura Graetz (I)</p>	<p>All Talent Acquisition staff (I)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed that Block by Block job opportunities are not city jobs, if contacted about roles
<p>Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs (PRCA)</p>	<p>Roxana Gonzalez (C, I)</p>	<p><u>Parks and Park Operations</u> Leslie Ladendorf (C, I) John Weber (C, I) Tiffany Coogan (C, I)</p> <p><u>Cultural Affairs</u> Carol Richardson (C, I) Nigel Hamm (C, I)</p>	<p><u>Park Operations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation from this department regarding park properties (active and nature) within service areas • Liaise with Block by Block on cleanup responsibilities on active and native parks • Coordinate with Block by Block and PRCA - Park Operations to ensure (i) that each department's designated service area in downtown is properly cleaned, and (ii) there is a defined understanding of each department's designated service area to avoid overlap and duplication of service <p><u>Cultural Affairs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise Block by Block on city-produced events that need support

		John Gaunt (C, I) <u>Recreation</u> Adam Bouchard (C, I)	
Public Works	Brian Singleton (C,I)	Jarod Lloyd (R,A) Keith Hampson Michael Barnes	<u>Solid Waste</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with Block by Block and Solid Waste to ensure (i) that each department's designated service area in downtown is properly cleaned, and (ii) there is a defined understanding of each department's designated service area to avoid overlap and duplication of service
Public Works – Transportation	Jesus Gomez (C,I)	Debbie Leistner (R,A)	<u>Transportation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management/coordination of Block by Block office lease agreement Parking and storing of Block by Block's vehicle and equipment Parking effects within service areas
Pending: Sustainable Development	Forrest Eddleton (C, I)	<u>Economic Development</u> Sarit Sela (I) <u>Code Enforcement</u> Peter Backhaus (A, C,I)	<u>Economic Development</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in directing general questions or feedback from the business community and/or developers regarding the program and the Downtown Strategic Plan <u>Planning</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation from this department by responding to general questions from the community and/or developers <u>Code Enforcement</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to ambassador inquiries about possible code violations

NEW 6. Program FAQs

Which days and times will downtown ambassadors operate?

Ambassadors will be on duty every day in Downtown Gainesville and the West University 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 business owners?

The Downtown Ambassador Program is free for downtown businesses and property owners, funded by the Gainesville Community Reinvestment Area. Ambassadors will regularly visit businesses during their shifts and can assist with cleaning public areas in front of businesses, addressing issues related to the houseless population, and providing updates on events, construction, and incident reports.

Someone asked me about applying for an ambassador job. What should I tell them?

Interested applicants are encouraged to apply directly with Block by Block for employment. Please be aware these are not City of Gainesville jobs nor city employees. Block by Block's hiring processes and practices are independent of the City of Gainesville. Block by Block will offer the following wages for Downtown Ambassador positions.

Position	Starting Pay	After 1 Year	After 2 Years
Safety Ambassadors	\$20.00/hour	\$20.80/hour	\$21.63/hour
Clean Ambassadors	\$20.00/hour	\$20.80/hour	\$21.63/hour
Team Leader	\$23.00/hour	\$23.92/hour	\$24.88/hour
Outreach Coordinator	\$30.00/hour	\$31.20/hour	\$32.45/hour
Operations Manager	\$80,000/year	\$84,000/year	\$88,200/year

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 houseless individuals now in stable, permanent housing; however, they are also committed to hiring the best-qualified candidates to fill these critical positions.

Where is the funding for this program coming from?

The City is potentially using three special revenue sources that are not part of its general fund to pay for the Downtown Ambassador Program. For the West University Corridor District, the city will use tax increment financing revenue from the College Park/University Heights

Redevelopment Trust Fund. Funding for the Downtown Gainesville District will be funded through the “Downtown Strategic Plan Fund” allocation within the budget of the Gainesville Community Reinvestment Area (GCRA). This is funding derived from City of Gainesville and Alachua County contributions to the GCRA budget required by the 2019 Interlocal Agreement that created the GCRA. Tax increment financing (TIF) from the Downtown Redevelopment Trust Fund may also be used to fund the Program.

What if I have an emergency while in downtown – can a downtown ambassador help me?

Ambassadors are not a replacement for emergency services, though they will liaise with city’s emergency response teams where necessary.

During their daily operations, downtown ambassadors will offer a safety escort service in Downtown Gainesville and the West University Corridor. Visitors can request an escort by calling their publicized service number (helpline).

Can private event organizers who host community events (special events) request ambassador services in the downtown area?

No. Ambassadors cannot assist private event organizers. Ambassadors are not city employees and thus cannot be requested like city services (for example, GPD providing off-duty officers for a community event).

Can Downtown Ambassadors help with city-produced events?

Possibly, with enough advance planning to meet their staffing load and city needs. City staff can request support from the Block by Block team. The Operations Manager can also meet with event production teams, like Cultural Affairs, to coordinate assistance for city-produced events in the downtown service area.

How long is the city planning to use these services?

After the Gainesville City Commission approved the Downtown Ambassador Program in August 2024, the City and Block by Block executed a contract with a three-year term beginning October 1, 2024. The City can renew the contract for two one-year terms. The City may also terminate the contract without cause with a thirty-day notice.

END OF DOCUMENT