Focus Group Feedback
Phase 2

Thelma Boltin Trailhead &
Sweetwater Loop Trail Alignment Development

Date of Focus Group Meeting:
November 3, 2026

City of
Gainesville
Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs

Focus Group Meeting Presentation

Project Introduction

The City Commission moved to reimagine the former site of the Thelma Boltin Center as a City Park and Trailhead for the Sweetwater Trail Loop system.

The project includes conceptual design for **two main components:**

1. **Thelma Boltin Site: Park & Trailhead**
2. **Sweetwater Greenway Trailhead Alignment**

The trailhead is funded jointly through WSPP (Wild Spaces & Public Places), tree mitigation funds, and stormwater management utility funds.

The conceptual plans for the trail alignment will include a budget projection so that funding can be identified for that portion of the project. Trail construction is not currently funded; however, this project will help establish a construction budget for the City for future planning.





PRESENTATION SLIDES FROM FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

Focus Group Meeting Presentation

Project Scope

Thelma Boltin Site/ Trailhead:

- Approximately 2.2 acre site divided by NE 2nd Ave with Sweetwater Branch Creek running through the site.
- Conduct site survey and ecological analysis.
- Create a Sweetwater Greenway Trailhead and community park that honors Thelma Boltin's contributions, folk art legacy, and the site's World War II history.
- Provide usable outdoor community space and maintain community gardens.

Sweetwater Greenway Trail:

- Study a potential trail corridor alignment using public rights-of-way and existing easements with consideration to the creek, stormwater, parking, and accessibility.
- Propose a shared-use trail that follows NE Boulevard from University to 6th Street Rail Trail.







PRESENTATION SLIDES FROM FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

Focus Group Meeting Presentation

Process

- The public engagement for this project will occur in three phases, each building on community input gathered during the previous phase.
- All three phases include focus group meetings, City advisory board and committee meetings, and 1 community workshop.
- The second and third phase include one City Commission Meeting.
- This project is currently in the second phase, Share Draft Designs + Verify Understanding, which includes focus group meetings, the second public workshop, and a preliminary City Commission presentation.
- Ways to stay involved in this project include attending public workshops, sharing information with the community, and staying in touch with City of Gainesville's Wild Spaces & Public Places Department.



Menti-Poll Word Cloud & "Spirit of the Park" Feedback Board from Workshop #1

PRESENTATION SLIDES FROM FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

Focus Group Meetings

Overview

Focus group meetings were held with the following Advisory Boards and Groups:

Advisory Board/Group	Date	Location
Tree Advisory Board (TAB)	September 9, 2026	Thomas Center
Duckpond Neighborhood Association (DNA)	September 14, 2026	Zoom (Online)
Public Recreation & Parks Board	September 16, 2026	Thomas Center
The Friends of the Thelma Boltin Center	September 23, 2026	Thomas Center
Community Garden	September 28, 2026	Zoom (Online)
Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Board	October 20, 2026	RTS Administration Building
Historic Preservation Board	November 3, 2026	City of Gainesville City Hall



IMAGE OF THE SPANISH COURT AT THE THOMAS CENTER IN GAINESVILLE, FL

Historic Preservation Board

Focus Group Meeting

A focus group meeting was held with the **Historic Preservation Board (HPB)** on November 3, 2026, at the City of Gainesville City Hall Room 16 in the Roberta Kline Conference Room.

The Gainesville **Historic Preservation Board** is a 9-member committee appointed by the City Commission and established to protect Gainesville's historic elements.

Format

- Presentation by Project Team
- Discussion with Board Members
- Members of the Project Team and Cristina Cortez (WSPP) attended





PHOTOS OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD MEETING (11/3/26)

Historic Preservation Board

Meeting Notes – 1 of 3

At the conclusion of the presentation, members of the Historic Preservation Board provided feedback to the project team:

Creek Design & Character

- A more naturalistic, curvilinear creek design was strongly preferred rather than angular or engineered forms.
- Board members felt a natural creek design would better complement the site's historic character and surrounding community.

Historic Character & Interpretation

- Incorporating reclaimed materials would add historic character to sidewalks and other site features.
- Interest was shown in using historically appropriate plantings.
- Board members emphasized the importance of accurately representing the site's historic and cultural significance and offered to assist with determining how to accomplish this.
- Thelma Boltin's legacy, particularly her role as a story teller, was identified as an important element. Suggestions included outdoor storytelling spaces and QR codes linked to archival recordings of Thelma telling stories.





PHOTOS OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD MEETING (11/3/26)

Historic Preservation Board

Meeting Notes – 2 of 3

Parking & Access

- Board members suggested reducing parking only to include required ADA spaces and a drop-off for the community garden.
- Board members noted that a larger parking lot would likely remain underutilized.

Programming & Open Space

- Board members supported maintaining a sense of openness and avoiding over-designing the site.
- Chess tables, shuffleboard, and other amenities that honor the servicemen were supported.
- Removing vehicular traffic on 2nd Avenue and prioritizing pedestrian and bicycle access was supported.

Tree Preservation

- The project team confirmed that the intent is to preserve all heritage trees.
- Repairs to the creek wall will result in impacts to other regulated trees.





PHOTOS OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD MEETING (11/3/26)

Historic Preservation Board

Meeting Notes – 3 of 3

Public Comment

- The Matheson History Museum may have space available that could accommodate some Thelma Boltin elements that may not be appropriate for a park/trailhead site. It also has restrooms available to the public. These comments are in consideration of the budgeted $2M for the site and would help to reduce infrastructure costs.
- Positive feedback was given on the public engagement process.

Implementation & Next Steps

- A letter from the Board will be sent to the City in support of the project and will include board member's recommendations for moving forward.
- A presentation will be given to update the City Commission on the project on December 10, 2026.





PHOTOS OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD MEETING (11/3/26)