
Update to the Downtown Redevelopment Plan

6.19.2011



Redevelopment Plan – Background

What a Redevelopment Plan is:

- Guiding plan for redevelopment
 - All CRA activities must link back to the Redevelopment Plan
- Policy document that outlines the vision for revitalization
 - Identifies large scale goals/vision and high level objectives that support this vision
 - Provides policy support to address these objectives through CRA activities
- Flexible and comprehensive plan that can accommodate known challenges and unknown opportunities

What a Redevelopment Plan is not:

- An implementation schedule
- A list of specific projects to pursue
- Detailed schedule or budgetary info
- A slum/blight study or Needs Assessment
- A planning or demographic assessment
- Extended discussion of the activities of other governmental agencies



Background – Downtown Plan Update

- Downtown currently operates under a Redevelopment Plan adopted in 2001
- As the plan approaches the 10-yr mark, it is time to evaluate and update
 - Align the Plan with current issues/opportunities to support a robust and proactive redevelopment framework
 - Update the plan to address contemporary issues and challenges
 - Restructure and streamline the plan
 - Maximize efficiency and flexibility
 - Provide for robust, proactive, results oriented redevelopment and economic development within the downtown area
 - Ensure all statutory requirements for Redevelopment Plans are met
- For the past 9 months, CRA staff worked with DRAB and stakeholders on a full text revision to the Downtown Redevelopment Plan
 - All work completed in-house
 - 8/11/2011: DRAB approved the draft Redevelopment Plan
 - Structure of the Plan also dovetails with goals identified in the Central & East Gainesville Community Development Committee



2001 Redevelopment Plan

- The current Plan is lengthy, but it is not structured in a manner that maximizes its efficiency or its utility in supporting robust redevelopment activity
- Plan includes a great deal of background information, including: slum/blight data, finding of necessity, demographic data, etc.
 - While important background knowledge, this information does not need to be included in a Redevelopment Plan document
- Current plan has an unusual structure that limits the flexibility of the Plan
 - Rather than considering Downtown holistically, the plan subdivides into four sub-areas. Each sub-area is addressed separately, with varying levels of overlap between the areas:
 - Central Business District
 - Transitional Industrial
 - Downtown Neighborhoods
 - Corridor Commercial

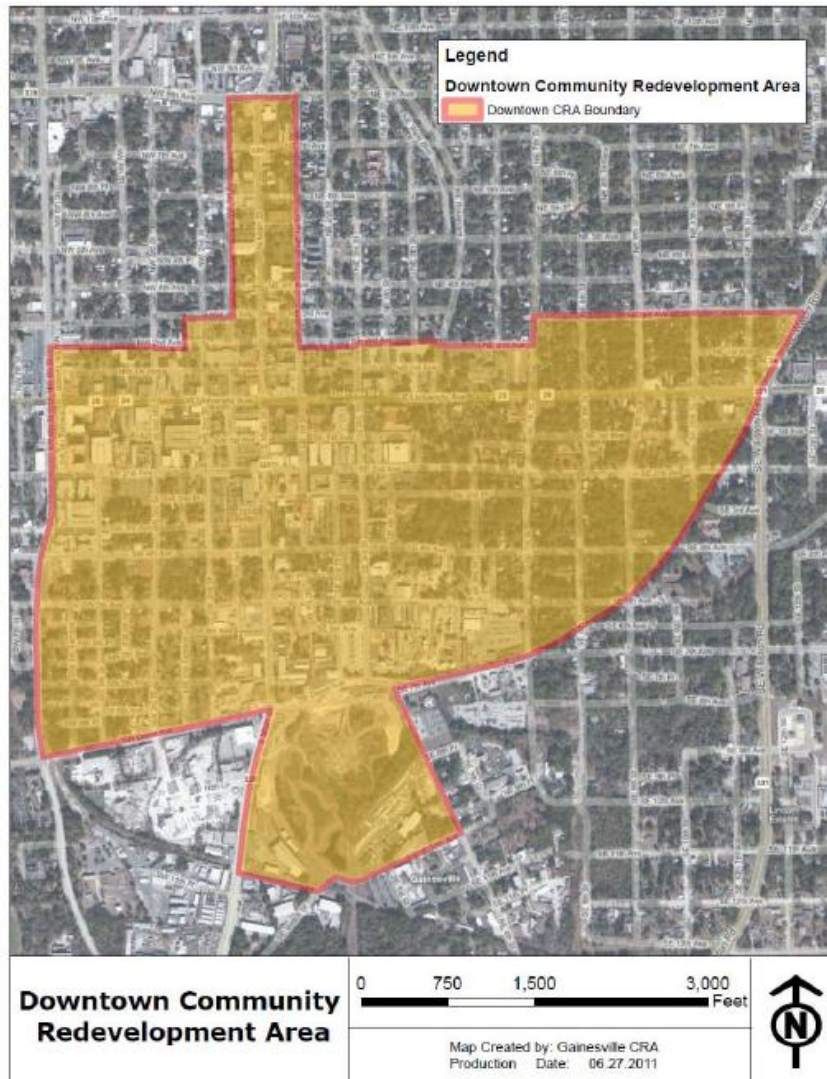


Proposed Changes

- Revised Plan provides a framework for redevelopment that is structured similarly to the recently updated Eastside Redevelopment Plan, and the award-winning FAPS Redevelopment Plan
 - Includes new concepts/tools, and restructures and updates of many of the concepts from the previous Plan, and presenting them in a manner more conducive to redevelopment and project implementation
 - Increased focus on redevelopment, and the CRA's role pursuing redevelopment and economic development activities
 - Defines the CRA's role as proactive, action-oriented, and geared towards achieving meaningful results
 - Provides much greater detail, breadth than previous Plan
 - Comprehensively addresses redevelopment throughout the Area
 - Flexible enough to allow meaningful work on unforeseen challenges and opportunities without requiring a lengthy revision process
 - Structured to facilitate both intra-agency and inter-agency strategic planning for the CRA and other partners/stakeholders



Proposed Structure



- Plan identifies a guiding principle for the Downtown Redevelopment Area and a series of Redevelopment Objectives to achieve this principle
 - Each Objective is further supported by a series of Initiatives, which include strategies and types of projects to implement the Objective

Redevelopment Objectives:

- Economic Development
- Commercial and Business Activity
- Infrastructure
- Housing
- Urban Form
- Sustainability
- Sense of Community
- Funding, Financing, Mgt, Promotion



Proposed Changes – Guiding Principle

Downtown plays a special role in the vitality of the City as a whole. As a nexus for employment, entertainment, commerce, and civic activities, in many ways Downtown represents the “face” that Gainesville offers to the local community and to the world. The CRA is committed to improving the quality of life for all citizens of the Downtown Redevelopment Area; allowing for a dynamic and diverse community where people of all ages, ethnicities, and incomes have opportunities to find quality housing, jobs, goods, services, and cultural amenities. Through creativity, innovation, hard work, and persistence the CRA will bring redevelopment and reinvestment to the community through socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable methods, in order to help create a beautiful and vibrant district which reflects the assets and the character of the City as whole.



Objective – Economic Development

- CRA will support economic development in order grow existing businesses and attract new business opportunities, increase employment levels, and improve the standard of living
- Goal is for Redevelopment Area to be economically self-sustaining in the long term
- Encourage private investment in industry and real estate; eliminate impediments and barriers inhibiting both public and private investment
- Examples of Economic Development initiatives:
 - Support public/private, public/public an other partnerships. Seek opportunities to collaborate with partners such as the City, County, UF, SFC, Chamber of Commerce, etc.
 - Work with industry to support job retention, job creation, job training, and talent development
 - Encourage commercial, office, mixed-use and residential development. Support production/manufacturing where appropriate
 - Develop, implement, monitor and improve incentive programs
 - Assess public and private frameworks and bureaucracies which impact economic development and coordinate with other bodies as appropriate to identify/resolve impediments and barriers to economic development
 - Pursue initiatives such as property acquisition, land assembly, infrastructure improvements, job creation/retention, business retention/expansion, neighborhood development, small biz development, micro-lending, real estate development, marketing, etc.



Objective – Commercial and Business Activity

- Traditionally Downtown was the central hub for business, though it has struggled to compete with on-going suburban expansion
- Today, Downtown is home to many offices, restaurants and businesses, but still needs additional support
- Major new opportunities include the Power District and linkages to the Innovation Square area

- Examples of Commercial Activity initiatives:
 - Continue to support the central business district; simultaneously, support emerging commercial and mixed use areas, such as the Power District and connectivity with the Innovation Square area.
 - Encourage new development and infill redevelopment. Where appropriate, support reuse of existing structures and better utilization of upper stories, particularly in the CBD
 - Support a mixtures of uses and business types, including office, retail, entertainment, service, professional, R&D, production/assembly, etc.
 - Identify vacant/underutilized properties with the greatest potential for commercial redevelopment, and establish programs/tools to encourage redevelopment and to resolve issues (infrastructure, environmental, etc.) impacting commercial viability
 - Assess relevant regulations/procedures to determine if regulatory changes could facilitate infill commercial or mixed-use goals; coordinate with the City as needed to facilitate increased levels of redevelopment and proper development review regulations



Objective – Infrastructure

- Issues include aging infrastructure and service upgrades that will be needed to accommodate infill, redevelopment, and new business opportunities.
- Unique opportunities exist as many upcoming infrastructure improvements to serve the Innovation Square area will need to pass through the Downtown Redevelopment Area, providing important opportunities for coordination of improvements that can benefit Downtown.
- Improvements will require increased coordination and/or new partnerships with GRU, PWD, and other applicable organizations
- Utilization of GIS and other technologies, and increased coordination of strategic planning across multiple organizations is needed to achieve and optimize meaningful improvements
- Examples of Infrastructure initiatives:
 - Encourage Area-wide infrastructure and utilities improvements; coordinate with both public and private sectors. Initiatives may include upgrades to existing infrastructure or totally new facilities such as water, wastewater, stormwater, gas, electricity, high-speed communications, lighting, roadways, sidewalks, curb /gutter, drainage
 - Build stronger relationships with utility providers and pursue coordination of strategic plans and capital improvements with all public and private utilities.
 - Improve accessibility by reconnecting the street grid
 - Encourage replacement of older and/or undersized utility lines where needed to facilitate new development. Coordinate with both the public and private sector to facilitate such upgrade
 - Support co-location of public facilities and infrastructure and consider working towards co-location of public facilities in order to save costs and take advantage of limited resources



Objective – Housing

- A residential base is important to the vitality of any downtown; it is a key support for both the business community and the character of the city center.
- Downtown has the potential to accommodate a wide spectrum of housing opportunities (including infill housing, mixed-use development, single-family homes, multi-family development, etc.)
- Examples of Housing initiatives
 - Provide opportunities for different types of housing to support a diverse residential base; increase the supply of quality housing options and provide a diverse inventory at a variety of price ranges.
 - Strengthen and preserve the established single-family neighborhoods within the downtown area. Support higher densities and mixed use housing options in the central business district and other areas where appropriate.
 - Promote opportunities for vacant, run-down, or nonconforming lots in residential areas to transition into infill housing.
 - Acquire property, engage in real estate development, or otherwise assist in redevelopment of residential sites.
 - Assist with incentives, infrastructure costs, land assembly, disposition and/or land cost write-down, stormwater assistance, density bonuses, and other means to encourage quality housing stock, diversity in housing options, homeownership, etc.
 - Encourage green building practices, where feasible, in order to maximize sustainability and minimize resource consumption/cost



Objective – Urban Form

- The first impression of the overall quality of life Downtown, and by extension in the entire city, is expressed through the visual characteristics
- Public realm and private property contribute to Downtown's viability and its ability to attract new investment
- CRA will support public and private improvements
- CRA will support public spaces and cultural amenities
- CRA should better understand regulations and procedures impacting the built environment
 - Coordinate with City, GRU, other agencies to resolve code conflicts and institutional barriers that can contribute to an undesirable built environment
- Examples of Urban Form initiatives
 - Support the public realm. Encourage investment along corridors, in the right-of-way, in parks, in plazas, and in other public places.
 - Prioritize functional and aesthetic improvements along corridors running through the Redevelopment Area. Emphasis may be given to major corridors or corridors where aesthetic improvements can occur in conjunction with infrastructure upgrades.
 - Support public art and other beautification features throughout the district
 - Encourage an interconnected street grid, walkable blocks and streets, and discourage overly large “super blocks”, dead-ends, cul-de-sacs, etc
 - Create incentives to encourage better design and/or higher quality construction materials
 - Foster the development of Downtown as a destination place



Objective – Sustainability

- While redevelopment's primary focus is encouraging new economic opportunities, high quality projects will be respectful of environmental resources.
- Green building practices, innovation, and the use of new technology are encouraged
- Attention to the environmental, social, economic, and cultural well-being of the Redevelopment Area is very important in ensuring the long term sustainability of the community.
- Examples of Sustainability initiatives:
 - Look for ways to innovatively address energy consumption, water consumption, and stormwater management issues
 - Support thoughtful and sustainable development, land subdivision, and urban design patterns that are not oriented to single, specific uses
 - Consider the full life-cycle impacts of materials and techniques when evaluating environmental technologies
 - Encourage Low Impact Development and similar principles to minimize the ill effects of development on stormwater, runoff, and groundwater quality
 - Encourage opportunities for access to food within the Redevelopment Area. The CRA may support increasing healthy eating options by encouraging new grocery stores, sit-down restaurants, fresh food markets, agriculture, etc.
 - Encourage green building and conservation principles in all development



Objective – Sense of Community

- Community pride and identity are important to the health of the Redevelopment Area
 - Due to the importance of Downtown’s role as the center of civic activity, these factors will also impact the vitality of the City as a whole
- Improvements to the built environment provide an opportunity to engage citizens and renew and promote a sense of pride into the community.
- Downtown should be redeveloped as a modern, inclusive community that welcomes diversity and innovation, while also being respectful of the past.

- Examples of Sense of Community initiatives:
 - Support public places such as Depot Park, the Plaza, and other centers for social, recreation, and education opportunities. Work to create and foster high quality parks and public spaces that will serve not only the needs of Downtown residents and patrons, but those of the entire community
 - Support important historic or cultural amenities in the Redevelopment Area
 - Develop and market CRA redevelopment initiatives as high-profile “signature” projects that can promote eastern Gainesville and instill civic pride
 - Facilitate stakeholder involvement in Downtown redevelopment
 - Pursue maintenance and upkeep activities as appropriate



Objective – Funding, Financing, Mgt, & Promotion

- Creative, efficient, practical and equitable funding and financing mechanisms to properly implement this Plan
- It is perceived that these initiatives will be tied to the tax increment dollars, additionally, CRA may also explore outside funding opportunities such as tax credits, loan funds, grants, etc.
- The CRA will identify and pursue initiatives that have the potential to bring about the greatest impact in transforming the Area and catalyzing additional private investment
- Examples of initiatives:
 - Conduct periodic strategic planning to identify priority initiatives and create work plans from which the CRA can fund and implement budgets
 - Offer incentive programs for redevelopment projects within the Area. Develop programs and identify opportunities for public-private partnerships within the Redevelopment Area.
 - Identify and secure all feasible sources of funding to support the redevelopment initiatives described in this Plan.
 - Encourage reinvestment in the Area by conducting research/studies and maintaining a thorough, up-to-date understanding of the Area.



Fiscal Note & Staff Recommendation

- Fiscal Note:
 - None at this time
- Recommendation:
 - Approve the updated Downtown Redevelopment Plan, which has been amended in its entirety ,subject to approval as to form and legality
 - Recommend the City Commission hold a public hearing to adopt the amended Downtown Redevelopment Plan

