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CITY OF GAINESVILLE

Public Works Department

DATE: March 12, 2002
TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission
FROM: Matthew Dubé, Projects Coordinator
SUBJECT: East Gainesville SPROUT Project Task Force
2001 Annual Report

In September 1998, the City Commission created the East Gainesville SPROUT Project Task Force, a citizen advisory organization tasked with providing input on the East Gainesville SPROUT Project, a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Brownfields Pilot. Since 1998, the Task Force has met regularly to advise the City Commission on a wide range of policy issues encompassing environmental investigations to land acquisitions. In 2001, the Task Force held six meetings. A summary of tasks completed in 2001 is presented below.

Stormwater Park Land Acquisition

CSX: The City and CSX engaged in purchase and sale negotiations culminating in a draft agreement in November 2000. Negotiations encountered difficulty over land use restrictions requested by CSX and disagreement over the purchase price. CSX submitted a counter-offer, which contained several unacceptable terms. The Task Force discussed the CSX counter-offer and advised that the City decline and work toward a more reasonable agreement. In December 2001, the City and CSX concluded purchase and sale negotiations and closed the transaction on 25.92 acres for \$546,000.

MCB Oil: The City attempted to negotiate the sale of the property for two years without success. Realizing the difficulty in negotiating an acceptable price, the Task Force urged the City to initiate eminent domain proceedings to acquire the approximately 13-acre MCB Oil property. In September, the City Commission passed Resolution #001890 determining the necessity and public purpose for the stormwater park project and authorizing the City Attorney to initiate eminent domain proceedings. In February 2002, the Circuit Court granted an Order of Taking, thus legalizing the transfer of ownership of the real property to the City. The determination of a final settlement will be made at a future date.

Rinker: The Task Force discussed negotiating a short term lease with Rinker and relocating the concrete batch plant from the neighborhood upon the termination of the lease. The City and Rinker have executed a lease, which expires June 1, 2002. Rinker is planning to relocate its plant to another location prior to June 1st.

Park Design

The Task Force created and participated in the process for developing the stormwater park conceptual design. The conceptual design describes the redevelopment vision for the park embedded in the remediation plan for the site. The process was structured to gather public input from as diverse a cross-section of the community as possible and constructively utilize the input to identify preferred design alternatives. The Task Force authorized the creation of a Design Symposium to give citizens an opportunity to learn more about park design prior to holding its Design Workshop. The symposium was held at the GRU administration building and prompted discussions on the existing neighborhood context area as well as exemplary park projects in other cities.

The Task Force reviewed three initial park concepts created by Len Buffington of Genesis Group and provided guidance for revisions prior to the January Design Workshop. The Task Force also approved the incorporation of a new skate park into the design. Mr. Buffington, Environmental Consultants and Technology (ECT), and city staff held the park workshop in late January. Over sixty community residents attended and provided comments on the concepts. Mr. Buffington has processed the community comments and generated a single concept, which will be presented to the City Commission in March.

Environmental Issues

The City directed its consultant ECT to proceed with field work to further delineate the impacts of coal tar contaminating the former-CSX property. This work culminated in the Supplemental Site Assessment Report of September 2001. ECT presented extensively on the assessment data and also discussed the unit costs for disposal of contaminated soils. Drafts of these reports were circulated to Task Force members for review and comment.

The Task Force passed a motion supporting Chair Robert Hutchinson in urging the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to expeditiously review all documentation and reports related to the site to keep the project moving forward. Since Chair Hutchinson contacted FDEP Secretary Struhs, FDEP has conferred with city staff from time-to-time to ensure satisfaction with the assistance provided by FDEP.

Depot Building

The Task Force advised that the City secure the crawlspace under the depot when it was learned that benzene vapors could affect the health of homeless individuals sleeping under the building. City staff has since installed a fence around the entrance to the building crawl space, effectively preventing human exposure to potentially harmful substances.

Brownfield Area

The Task Force is the citizen advisory body required under Section 376.80 Florida Statutes for the state brownfield area created in January 2000. The Poole Roofing site was incorporated within a Brownfield Site Rehabilitation Agreement (BSRA) in 2001.

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