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12/17/2012	1	Community Redevelopment Agency	Approved, as shown above (Main Motion)	Pass

Downtown Community Plaza Concepts (B)

In the fall of 2011, CRA staff presented an update on the Downtown Plaza including efforts to date to create a more place-driven approach instead of a project-driven approach to increase accessibility, activity, comfort and sociability. Staff detailed their findings, and summarized the challenges and opportunities of the Plaza, including the significance of the role that a public plaza plays in a downtown and how it both influences and is influenced by the surrounding context. The presentation also analyzed the challenges and opportunities associated with reconfiguring the Plaza, identified specific issues that would impact the future design, and provided imagery to help explain those issues.

The major concept identified for improvement was the importance of site utilization. Essential to fostering activity on the Plaza, great public spaces have regular/daily utilization across the entire site. Since Free Friday concerts, the Farmer’s Market and the Lunchbox Café are all very successful elements; there is strong evidence that the space can be successful as a whole if properly utilized.

Recommendations for better site utilization of the Plaza included an emphasis on the significance of the corners, clearly defining the edges of the Plaza, improving the central gathering space and increasing the visibility into the interior of the Plaza. The ultimate goal is to capture the market of users on a regular basis through better site utilization. The ultimate goal is to continue to support and encourage its successful uses, expand upon programmed events and create places for enhanced activities where connections can be made and successes are shared.

With this in mind and at the direction of the CRA Board, staff began to look at ways to accomplish these goals in a more cost effective way. Staff held meetings with Gainesville Police Department, Regional Transit System and the Parks, Recreational and Cultural Affairs staff to learn more about the internal stakeholders’ challenges with their respective programs and duties on the Plaza. When compiling the comments and wish lists of external and internal stakeholders engaged over the years, it became clear that the priority focus should be on activating the north side of the Plaza. Staff engaged a consultant to contemplate a new “face” for the Plaza that clearly defines the space, activates the corners, improves upon the gathering spaces and increases visibility into the interior of the Plaza. Concepts will be presented for consideration in an effort to gain support for addressing the north side of the Plaza.

None at this time

CRA Executive Director to the CRA Board: 1) Hear presentation from staff 2) provide feedback and 3) recommend approval to move forward into designing of construction documents for the north side of the Downtown Plaza