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GRU Site Redevelopment Update (B)

The CRA last discussed the GRU Master Plan project at the November 2007 meeting. At that time, the Board requested Staff differentiate between the Depot site and the GRU site, focusing separately on each project in two distinct master planning processes. Since that time, the staff has formulated an action plan for Depot Park, and brought that program to both the CRA and the City Commission. Concurrently, Staff has also been pursuing initiatives related to the GRU site.

GRU will be constructing a new operations site on N Main Street, and as that new facility comes online, GRU components from the existing site will transfer to the new location. Concentrating on the soon-to-be-vacated GRU property is important because the final goal of the master planning initiative is to create a comprehensive development program that can immediately translate to implementation. As the GRU property is already controlled by the City, it will be the first component of the area ready for redevelopment and capable of following the “roadmap” created through the master plan process. Other sites in the greater GRU/Depot area would likely not be positioned to immediately move forward with implementing the results of the master plan.

Since the GRU project’s inception, a number of parallels have been drawn between the Technology Square project in Midtown Atlanta and potential redevelopment at the GRU site. Technology Square provides an excellent example of how to create a vibrant urban space by combining economic development, urban design, science/technology industries, and proximity to a major research institution. For these reasons, Staff has met with the creators of Tech Square: The University Financing Foundation, Gateway Development, and Lord-Aeck-Sargent Architecture in order to better understand the financial, development, and design components that have made the project so successful. Based on these discussions, Staff has determined that Lord-Aeck-Sargent, which specializes in science facilities, mixed-use development, and higher education facilities, is uniquely qualified to provide master planning and site layout services for this project. As testified by Technology Square, Lord-Aeck-Sargent has a proven record of providing the type of innovative, successful, and extremely high-quality development that Gainesville is seeking for the GRU property. Lord-Aeck-Sargent provides an exceptional, highly-skilled toolset encompassing the design, economics, phasing, and community involvement components that are integral to redevelopment of this scope and magnitude. Additionally, as their previous work indicates, the firm does not provide “off-the-shelf” deliverables to its clients. Staff is confident that working with Lord-Aeck-Sargent would result in a unique, highly-specialized

solution for the GRU site. The final product would not only be implementation-oriented, it would also be extremely creative, of superior quality, and tailored to the specific strengths, challenges, constraints, and opportunities found in Gainesville.

Planning services from Lord-Aeck-Sargent would cost approximately \$34,000. There is currently \$163,606 budgeted for Depot Area (now GRU Master Plan) as follows: CPUH \$44,222, Downtown \$22,111, Eastside \$8829, GRU \$22,111 and Community Development \$22,111.

Executive Director to CRA: 1) Approve the selection of Lord-Aeck-Sargent for GRU site Master Planning Services, with funding to be evenly split between the CRA (DRAB), GRU, and General Government.