



Legislation Text

File #: 130039., Version: 2

Innovation Square - Agreement for Transfer of Land as Public Rights of Way (B)

This item requests that the City enter into agreement with the Community Redevelopment Agency and the University of Florida Development Council for the construction of a public infrastructure project and transfer of privately owned land to the City as public rights of way and a park at the completion of construction.

During 2010, after the closing and demolition of the Alachua General Hospital, the City of Gainesville, University of Florida (UF), Shands Healthcare, Inc., Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), and members of the private sector collaborated to develop a vision for the redevelopment of the vacated 16-acre property into what is now known as Innovation Square. Innovation Square represents an opportunity for the city to position itself as a leader in the innovation economy and create an ecosystem conducive to attracting and retaining technology oriented businesses to strengthen the local economy. Over the past three years several steps have been taken to lay the groundwork for this redevelopment/economic development effort, including the rezoning of the property as UMU2 (a form based code approach), the construction and establishment of the Innovation Hub, the creation of a comprehensive development framework, and the planning of utility and infrastructure projects to support building developments.

A critical step in development of Innovation Square (i.e., iSquare, iDistrict) is the thoughtful planning and development of the public realm. This act deals specifically with the conversion of land into an urban framework of streets and infrastructure, public spaces and buildings, and block and lot configurations. The urban framework, particularly the configuration of streets and blocks, provides a long-term structure for changing patterns of land use, building form and building occupancies. During 2012, the CRA began developing plans for two major infrastructure projects, SW 9th Street and SW 3rd Avenue, with the purpose of establishing the public realm through the creation of human-scaled streets and blocks. SW 9th Street is proposed to bisect the now super-block on the north-south axis, while SW 3rd Avenue will cross the east-west axis. Small yet easily developable blocks are the key to creating an urban framework that not only allows, but promotes public activity through its walkability. Walkability results in a cascade of activities that gives liveliness to an area. For instance, an active urban area has more exchanges between people, whether intellectual or monetary, and is an important component of a community. Furthermore, the creation of this public realm gives planned space allocations for the establishment of the support systems (i.e., utilities) for future developments. The inner working of what lies beneath the public realm and the interface of what happens within the public realm greatly affects how a community is structured and operates.

The SW 9th Street and SW 3rd Avenue projects have been developed through a series of methodical and collaborative planning steps. Beginning in January 2011, an extensive infrastructure analysis and synthesis was performed to better understand the existing infrastructure within Innovation Square and the surrounding area, and what would be needed to support future development. Then, in June 2011 a workshop was held with planners, engineers, and urban designers to develop utility allocation plans for new development that would support the vision for the area. Later in 2011, the CRA and GRU partnered to fund surveying and utility master planning within the iDistrict. In February 2012 the CRA began developing the vision for the public realm

through the Basis of Design for SW 9th St and SW 3rd Ave. Finally, in July 2012, construction document development started for the creation of these new public corridors.

The City's strategic plan supports the creation of Innovation Square through several of its strategic initiatives. Of those most notable are the fostering of economic development and redevelopment opportunities (Goal #2) and investing in community infrastructure and enhancement of the transportation network and systems (Goal #3).

The CRA's College Park/University Heights Redevelopment Area Plan supports the creation of Innovation Square through several of its redevelopment goals. Most notably of the goals include Infrastructure, Private Investment, and Urban Form; additionally, the Plan identifies both the SW 2nd Avenue corridor and the former AGH site/iSquare area is identified as "Cornerstone Projects" for the area.

The land for SW 9th Street and SW 3rd Avenue is currently owned by the Innovation Square, LLC. As such, an agreement for the transfer of this land to the City as public rights of way has been drafted. The terms of the agreement layout each party's responsibility in the endeavor; the CRA acting as the agent for the City in the development and construction of the public infrastructure project, and the City accepting the deed of the land as public rights of way from the UFDC at the completion of construction. Approval of the "Agreement" by the CRA Board and the City Commission is one of the first steps in allowing the construction of the two new public corridors to occur. The CRA Board approved entering into the agreement on June 17, 2013 and recommended that the City Commission approve the agreement. The "Agreement" is included as backup to this item.

Funding has been budgeted in the Community Redevelopment Agency's College Park/University Heights Redevelopment Area for the construction of SW 9th St and SW 3rd Avenue. Funding for the construction of utilities is to be provided by and coordinated with GRU and the City's Public Works Department.

The City Commission authorize the City Manager to execute the Agreement for Transfer of Land as Public Rights of Way, all necessary supporting documents, and all necessary construction documents subject to the City Attorney's approval as to form and legality.

Alternative Recommendation A

The City Commission does not authorize the City Manager to execute the Agreement for Transfer of Land as Public Rights of Way and all necessary supporting documents. This would result in the projects not going forward for construction.