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Title: Infrastructure Funding Outside of Community Redevelopment Agency Areas (B)

This item requests the City Commission to refer the issue of Infrastructure and Redevelopment Funding Outside of Community Redevelopment Agency Areas to the General Policy Committee for Discussion; and to consider the Northwest Urban Core Area as a "Pilot Program" for future infrastructure projects.

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Attachments: 1. 170573_NW Urban Core Survey Results_20171207.pdf

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Infrastructure Funding Outside of Community Redevelopment Agency Areas (B)

This item requests the City Commission to refer the issue of Infrastructure and Redevelopment Funding Outside of Community Redevelopment Agency Areas to the General Policy Committee for Discussion; and to consider the Northwest Urban Core Area as a "Pilot Program" for future infrastructure projects.

On August 6, 2015, the City Commission considered creating a new Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Area in Northwest Gainesville. At that time, the City Commission voted 7-0 to not create a new CRA Area. On December 17, 2015, the Commission instructed staff to gather additional public input regarding the infrastructure needs of the area.

In addition to reviewing the public comments from several previous infrastructure projects, staff used two information gathering tools-they conducted an Open House in the area and they developed an informational webpage and survey.

The Open House was held on Wednesday, March 15, 2017, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., at Stephen Foster Elementary School. The Open House provided an opportunity for citizens to speak directly with staff from the City's Departments of Public Works; Doing (Planning); and Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, along with Gainesville Regional Utilities. Each of those departments staffed an informational table that provided relevant maps, plans and contacts. In addition, citizens had the opportunity to complete the survey, either online on mobile devices provided by the City, or on paper copies provided by the City.

The City used several methods to notify the public about the meeting. Those methods included sending postcards to all property owners within the study area, issuing a media release and sending emails to addresses gathered from several area projects. In all, 93 citizens attended the Open House.

Additionally, a total of 61 surveys were completed by respondents, with 44 identifying as area residents, 27 identifying as landowners and 2 identifying as business owners (some respondents identified in more than one of these categories) . A detailed summary of the survey results is attached for reference.

When asked to list positive characteristics of the area, some of the most mentioned responses were “quiet,” “neighborly” and “walkable.” Many respondents also mentioned that the area’s centralized location provides convenient access to roads and short commutes to destinations.

Respondents’ concerns generally fall into one of three broad categories. Those categories are Public Outreach Issues, Environmental Concerns (mostly related to the Superfund Site), and Infrastructure Issues.

With respect to Public Outreach Issues, respondents noted concerns about information flow and communication. Examples of areas where public outreach can improve include the status to the Superfund Site, Zoning and Land Development Regulations, and the Status of Parks and other City Infrastructure.

Regarding the Superfund Site, respondents are concerned about the lack of reliable, up-to-date information, particularly related to existing and planned remediation.

On the subject of infrastructure, respondents emphasized two types most often. The first is a desire for a variety of well-maintained and conveniently located parks. The second type of infrastructure respondents requested is upgraded bicycle and pedestrian facilities such as rail-trails, bicycle lanes and sidewalks.

To varying extents, the types of infrastructure projects requested in the Northwest Urban Core are desired throughout the City. Although many such projects have been constructed, present funding levels are unable to keep pace with demand, resulting in a backlog. Currently, new projects compete for limited funds through the City’s Capital Improvement Program which can add projects to an existing queue. The costs of those projects are typically several hundred thousand dollars or more.

Within CRA Areas, however, there is a dedicated funding source known as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) that can pay at least part of those costs. TIF is generated from the appreciation of property within the CRA Area. In other words, the funds are generated by the properties that benefit from the use of the funds.

The City may need to look at alternative ways to fund infrastructure and redevelopment projects. For example, there has been discussion of allocating a consistent amount of money from the general fund each year, even if it may take several years to accumulate enough funds to complete the next project. The Northwest Urban Core Area may be an appropriate “Pilot Program” to test such an infrastructure funding alternative.

As part of the City's annual budget discussions, the City Commission can determine if funding should be appropriated for future infrastructure projects located outside Community Redevelopment Agency areas.

The City Commission: 1) refer the issue of infrastructure funding and redevelopment in areas outside of Community Redevelopment Agency Areas to the General Policy Committee for discussion; and 2) Consider the Northwest Urban Core Area as a “Pilot Program” for future infrastructure projects.