



Legislation Text

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Innovation District - SW 9th Street Southern Extension (B)

In 2010, after the closing and demolition of the Alachua General Hospital, the City of Gainesville, University of Florida (UF), Shands Healthcare, Inc., the 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 collaborate with the University of Florida to position itself as a leader in the innovation economy and attract and retain technology oriented businesses to strengthen the local economy. Over the course of many years several steps have been taken to lay the groundwork for this redevelopment/economic development effort, including master planning, rezoning of the property, construction of Phase 1 of the Innovation Hub, multiple infill and adaptive reuse projects, and the construction of utility and infrastructure improvements to support building developments.

The CRA's College Park/University Heights Redevelopment Area Plan supports the 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/Innovation Square area is identified as "Cornerstone Projects" for the area.

A critical step in development of Innovation Square is the thoughtful planning and development of the public realm. This specifically deals with the conversion of land into an urban framework of streets and infrastructure, public spaces and buildings, and block 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 bisects the once super-block on the north-south axis, while SW 3rd Avenue crosses 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. In 2014, the SW 9th Street and SW 3rd Avenue projects were completed and have set the aesthetic benchmark for future public realm improvement for the greater Innovation District, while also addressing critical stormwater treatment needs.

Per the adopted Innovation Square Master Plan, the CRA continues to collaborate with development partners to help leverage public resources in order to incentivize new investment. One such public private partnership is the SW 9th Street Urban Walkway and Innovation Square Stormwater Upgrade project. This southern extension of SW 9th Street from SW 4th Avenue to SW 5th Avenue helps complete the overall vision for the Innovation District of a contiguous greenway between University Avenue and Tumblin Creek Park by combining public improvements with private developments. The CRA along with the City of Gainesville, has been actively working with Trimark Properties on the planning, design, and engineering of above and below ground public improvements associated with the Southpark Apartment project in order to improve stormwater conditions for the Tumblin Creek watershed as well as aesthetically tie the existing SW 9th Street improvements with new public pedestrian facilities. The SW 9th Street Urban Walkway is designed to seamlessly extend the various

streetscape and aesthetic elements of the existing public realm, such as paving treatments, lighting, landscaping, furnishing, stormwater treatments, and material finishes into this new segment. The Southpark project is envisioned as a 4/5 story apartment project with 65 dwelling units. The construction of the stormwater improvements are expected to begin this Fall/Spring with the Southpark site and vertical construction starting shortly thereafter. The entire project, including the Urban Walkway project, is expected to be completed summer of 2018. At that time, the CRA will review improvements and applicable reimbursable expenses invoices and process payment accordingly not to exceed the amount of \$277,619.00. On July 21, 2016 the City Commission approved a \$784,057.00 General Government contribution to the project for stormwater infrastructure upgrades.

Funding for this project was accounted for in the recently adopted FY17-18 College Park/University Heights Budget

CRA Staff to CRA Board: Approve CRA participation for the SW 9th Street Southern Extension in an amount not to exceed \$277,619