

Neighborhood Workshop Minutes  
Power District Land Use (LSCPA) & associated Rezoning  
CRA Office – 802 NW 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Ste 200  
March 17, 2011 – 6:00 PM

Kelly Fisher (CRA staff) provided a summary of the Power District, and GRU's plans to vacate much of the land currently utilized for utility operations, and explained that the CRA has been designated the lead agency for implementing and coordinating redevelopment at the properties. Ms. Fisher presented an overview of the CRA/City's adopted strategy for the area and explained that obtaining proper land use/zoning is the first step in redeveloping the GRU properties. This activity is now possible because GRU has scheduled relocation of its activities from the area, and plans to vacate by the end of the calendar year. Ms. Fisher also introduced David Green, an urban design expert with Perkins+Will who is assisting the CRA with the Power District, before opening the floor up for questions.

**Question:** What exactly do land use/zoning do? Are there any specific projects happening at this time?

**Answer:** Kelly Fisher explained that the current applications will deal with the underlying land use and zoning classifications. No projects are proposed at this time, but for regulatory purposes, the land use/zoning needs to be cleaned up before any new investment or redevelopment could occur. This is due to the fact that the current land use and zoning are Public Facilities/Public Services, and these classifications are designed to function with the current use, which is related to the operations of the utility company; other uses are not allowed at this time. The CRA is working to progress the land use and zoning applications at this time, because the review process is very lengthy. It is anticipated that the final approvals would not occur until the end of the calendar year, just as GRU finalizes its withdrawal from the area. This lays the ground work for specific projects to come forward in a timely manner once GRU is gone.

**Q:** Are there any environmental concerns with the land?

**A:** That is something that we are looking into. It will be an important point to fully understand in order to move forward. GRU has completed a Phase I environmental assessment, which the CRA has reviewed on behalf of the City. A Phase I is the first level of environmental inquiry, and based on the findings, the CRA has requested that a Phase II study be conducted. The Phase I study did not indicate findings of contamination, but it did indicate where more intensive analysis would be appropriate. GRU has agreed to complete a Phase II environmental assessment, and these findings will provide important information in determining how GRU, the CRA, and the City need to move forward.

**Q:** Will any of the existing buildings be reused? If not, will the buildings be removed?

**A:** That is something that we are looking at right now. There is a possibility that some of the existing structures can be adaptively reused moving forward. We will be requesting that GRU deconstruct and clear the buildings which cannot be reused.

**Q:** Will the regulations you are proposing provide flexibility for the area?

**A:** Yes. This is exactly the goal we want to accomplish with the land use/zoning framework. The MUH land use is found throughout much of the downtown and allows for exactly the types of uses that are currently found in this area: residential, office, commercial, and industrial. We will also be pursuing a rezoning based on the CCD zoning category. Similar to the process that recently took place with Innovation Square, we will base the new zoning on an existing zoning district, but will take the opportunity to streamline and clarify the regulations (including removal of Special Area Plan overlay, and collapsing these regulations back into the base zoning). This will provide better descriptions of what is expected of developers, facilitate better oversight for regulators, and incentivize development that is appropriate for the surrounding neighborhood and the city as a whole

**Q:** How will redevelopment occur? Will the CRA or the City issue RFPs?

**A:** That is a possibility. We are also looking into other options to determine if there are more straightforward approaches that we can utilize.

**Q:** Will there be height restrictions near the existing residential?

**A:** It will be very important that we thoughtfully address the edges where the GRU lands abut the rest of the neighborhood. The zoning will include these types of provisions to make certain the GRU lands are properly reintegrated into the community in a contextually appropriate manner.

**Q:** Will the CRA/City impose any restrictions on the property as a condition of sale?

**A:** We do not anticipate doing that at this time, and based on the regulatory structure we will place on these sites, that should not be necessary. While the zoning regulations will be designed to be very flexible, they will also be structured to be very clear about the requirements for the type, quality, and design of all development.

**Q:** Is Lewis Oil staying? I heard they might expand to the west

**A:** Lewis Oil is a privately owned site, and as far as we know, they will remain at their current location. The land immediately to the west is part of the GRU properties and neither GRU nor the City/CRA has plans to sell this land to Lewis Oil.

**Q:** Will the community garden remain and be expanded to include the entire block?

**A:** The garden will remain. At this time, plans do not show it expanding to include the entire block. However, if that policy decision is made, the framework for the area can easily accommodate the additional garden space. That sort of flexibility is the beauty of reconstructing the street grid and block system throughout the area.

**Q:** Are there plans to open up Sweetwater Creek?

**A:** The creek is currently piped under the GRU lands. In the short term, it is not likely that the creek will be "day-lighted" because a large portion of the creek runs underneath sections of the area that GRU will not be vacating at this time. However,

the system of streets/blocks that is laid out for the area does accommodate the long-range goals of day-lighting the creek. Blocks will be created along/above the path of the creek, and these will serve as a continuation of the existing linear park, connecting the central downtown area to the Power District and Depot Park. Adjacent blocks will all front along this new greenway, reinforcing it as public space. This arrangement will make it possible to daylight the creek as part of the long range redevelopment throughout the area.

**Q:** How long will GRU remain in the area?

**A:** The areas that we are discussing as part of their relocation to the new headquarters will begin to see changes this fall. GRU plans to relocate these activities by the end of this year. The other GRU sites will remain, at least for the time being. The power plant will remain operational, and GRU will retain the administrative office building. They have said that in the long term, they may eventually retire these uses, but currently they do not have plans to do so. We have structured our strategy, through the recreation of the street grid and the block system, to be able to pursue more redevelopment as GRU turns land over in both the long and the short terms.

**Q:** What will happen to the historic brick building near the power plant?

**A:** That building is part of the power plant itself, and will be remaining under the control of GRU.

**Q:** Why go through the trouble of creating multiple blocks and reintroducing the street grid? Wouldn't a very large, uninterrupted site be more marketable?

**A:** Our strategy is based on very simple lessons based on how cities have been developing for hundreds and thousands of years. For example, we looked to Savannah for lessons in urban design. When that city was laid out in the 1700's, people could not possibly have envisioned the changes in uses, technology, and social norms that are in place today. And yet, the city has been able to adapt to and incorporate all of these things as they change throughout time. If you look at cities like New York or Philadelphia, you see the same thing. Properly designed cities provide a public realm where infrastructure can go, and a private realm where development go, and the street grid/block system is incredibly flexible at adapting to changes in use over time. When you ignore these lessons, and instead design a chunk of land based solely around just the current use, you will run into exactly the situation that we are facing today with the GRU lands: eventually the use will change and you will be stuck with a site that is unsuitable for anything else.

**Q:** Will the information provided tonight be available online? How can we keep updated as these issues move forward?

**A:** The CRA will put this information on our website, [www.gainesvillecra.com](http://www.gainesvillecra.com). For everyone who included email addresses on tonight's sign-in sheet, we will continue to provide updates letting citizens know how various issues are progressing, and the schedule for any upcoming public meetings about the area. We know there will be a lot of meetings moving forward, so there will be plenty of opportunities to stay updated and to make your voices heard.

Meeting Close: 6:55 PM