

URA Takes Next Steps on Oglethorpe Property

The City of Brunswick's Urban Redevelopment Agency (URA) announced it would take the next steps on the Oglethorpe Block development project. The URA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a joint consultant group led by Symbioscity, Harper Davis, LLC, and Community Development Partners.

"After careful consideration we chose to engage with this consultant group because of their collective experience in Brunswick and other similar communities," said Michael Butcher, Chair of the URA. "This group has a proven track record of stakeholder engagement that will allow us to ensure the development reflects and benefits the City of Brunswick and the Golden Isles community at large."

Based on the agreement, the consultant group will take on the following activities with the oversight and support of the URA:

- Conduct site visits to review the property and other Brunswick developments
- Conduct stakeholder meetings and outreach activities with various community partners and local stakeholders
- Perform due diligence on the property
- Prepare proposed development program based on its findings
- Document its efforts in a report submitted to the URA

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) allows the URA to work with the group to explore the composition of the multi-use property. It does not commit the City to any specific form or type of development or the sale of the property. The URA expects the consultant group's work to take approximately 6-8 months.

"The URA understands the importance of this property to the City and its citizens," Butcher said. "We want to ensure that the site is developed in a way that is responsive to the needs of the City and local area. To that end, we have been in communication with the Mayor, City Commissioners, and City staff regarding our approach to the exploration of potential uses of the property."

The MOU and the associated work products are the culmination of a years' long process for the Urban Redevelopment Agency. Previously the agency had explored reviving a modern

iteration of the famed Oglethorpe Hotel which stood on the site from 1888 until its demolition in 1958. In response to new development across downtown Brunswick over the last several years, a reinvigorated URA sought to explore a wider range of options for the site. In 2022, the URA posted a request for proposals on the property and received two submissions.

The URA will be announcing the schedule of public stakeholder meetings in the coming weeks. The Agency will also be providing periodic updates on the consultant group's efforts at URA meetings. The schedule for the URA meetings is posted on the City's website.

Symbioscity is an urban planning firm based in Savannah that has extensive experience in Brunswick and Coastal Georgia, including the development of the Glynn Avenue Design Framework and Norwich Street Revitalization Plan, developed in conjunction with the Congress for the New Urbanism. Symbioscity's founder, Denise R. Grabowski, AICP, LEED AP, also provided on-call planning services and development review for Glynn County for over a year.

Harper Davis, LLC, is a project development and management firm based in neighboring Kingsland, GA. The president, Darren Harper has extensive experience in community and economic development, historic preservation, and downtown redevelopment projects. He also served for many years on the Brunswick Downtown Development Authority design committee and was a member of the Old Town Brunswick Preservation Association.

Community Development Partners, Inc. of Stockbridge, GA and their sister company Public-Private Partnership Project Management, Inc. has worked across the state on similar projects and worked previously in Brunswick on amending the Urban Redevelopment Plan, reconstituting and training the URA Board, and in bringing Richland Run to downtown Brunswick.

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About the URA

The Urban Redevelopment Agency provides critical leadership for the strategic redevelopment of property to create housing, business, and public spaces for a vibrant community.