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MEDIA CONTACT:
Jayne Behrle
407-656-4111 ext. 5478
jbehrle@cwgd.com

Historic Dyson's Plaza in East Winter Garden is Slated for Redevelopment
Groundbreaking Ceremony to be held on August 16

WINTER GARDEN, Fla. – Dyson's Plaza, a long-standing commercial property located in the heart of the historic African American community of East Winter Garden, will be revitalized thanks to a grant awarded by the City of Winter Garden Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) under the direction and advisement of the City's Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Board (CRAAB), and with the support of the Orange County Board of County Commissioners. The 2,300-square-foot property, located at 215 Center Street, is considered ground zero for the redevelopment of East Winter Garden. An onsite groundbreaking ceremony will be held on Friday, August 16, 2024, at 10 a.m.

The project's revitalization efforts include a combination of demolition, reconstruction, and infrastructure upgrades to create two separate storefronts out of the current one-unit space, which was constructed in the 1980s. An outdoor seating area and new landscaping will be added, and the parking lot will undergo improvements. Once completed, the building will likely house a restaurant as well as a retail shop or office space. The estimated total cost of the improvements is not to exceed \$704,000, which will be paid for by a one-time Dyson's Plaza Commercial

Revitalization Grant. The grant's intention is to jump start the revitalization efforts in the commercial district of the area (officially designated "Historic East Winter Garden Neighborhood" through a City Commission-approved resolution in February 2024), with funding provided by the 10-year CRA extension approved by the Orange County Board of Commissioners in March 2022.

Ownership of Dyson's Plaza has remained in the Dyson family since 1939, when George Dyson and his wife Annie Bell first purchased it. Originally, it was a Beer Garden/Juke Joint, providing a neighborhood option in the 1930s for the predominately African-American laborers to unwind and dance after a hard day's work. Dyson's Plaza has remained in the family for four generations, housing the Dyson Taxi Service, Dyson Ice House, and Dyson Short Stop Convenience Store through the years. Most recently, Taste of Tasha restaurant, Mr. D's retail store, and A & E Grocery Store were on the site. For 80+ years, Dyson's Plaza has continuously served as the core of commerce for the East Winter Garden community, as well as a place for hopeful entrepreneurs, mainly African Americans, to launch their business.

"This is a landmark first step to bring the pride and glory back to Center Street. My family's longstanding property is the sole remnant of what was once a thriving business district. Its redevelopment will have a ripple effect to improve the aesthetics and quality of life to the residents of East Winter Garden," said Linday Dyson-Smith, George Dyson's granddaughter who currently manages the family's estate. "On behalf of generations of Dyson's that yearned to help their community, I thank the City for their efforts and commitment to preserve my family's heritage as well as the history of this neighborhood."

The City's focus is to revitalize the East Winter Garden commercial district starting with Dyson's Plaza. This will shortly be followed by plans to redevelop the streetscape and the

parcels owned by the City at the intersections of 10th and Center Streets, 10th and North Streets, and 10th and E. Bay Streets. The Dyson's Plaza revitalization project has been in the works since 2021, working in collaboration with representatives from the Dyson family, CRAAB, and City staff and officials.

“One step at a time, we will restore neighborhood pride and sense of community to the residents of East Winter Garden by extending the success of historic downtown toward the east,” said Marc O. Hutchinson, City of Winter Garden Economic Development Director. “It was CRA funds that elevated what was once a downtrodden downtown to the success it is today. With a unified vision, it is our goal to leverage the redevelopment success in downtown to inspire and benefit the Historic East Winter Garden Neighborhood.”

The City Commission/CRA approved the Dyson's Plaza Commercial Revitalization Grant on June 27, 2024, preceded by CRAAB approval on June 11, 2024. Construction will commence in August 2024 with an estimated completion date of spring 2025. Dyson-Smith is currently in conversations with prospects to lease the space.

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City of Winter Garden 300 W. Plant Street, Winter Garden, FL 34787 407-656-4111