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Construction to Begin on Downtown Ballpark

GREENSBORO – April 4, 2003 – The drive for a new baseball stadium in Downtown Greensboro has taken a very tangible step forward. The city’s Building Inspections Division yesterday issued a building permit for the stadium project, allowing construction work to begin immediately.

“After months of anticipation about what a new ballpark will mean to the revitalization of Downtown, we’re excited about having the actual construction get under way,” says Greg Chabon, Vice Chair of the Center City Master Plan Implementation Committee. “The stadium is a key feature in Greensboro’s Center City Master Plan for downtown development, a plan that people from throughout the city helped create. I know those citizens are ready to see some real progress on the stadium project as another step in the growing momentum of downtown revitalization.”

The new ballpark will be built on a tract between Bellemeade, North Edgeworth and North Eugene Streets. The property which will become the stadium site was acquired from Guilford County and private landowners by Downtown Greensboro Renaissance, Inc., a corporation formed to execute the stadium project. Construction of the new stadium will be funded through private financing arranged by DGR.

Progress on the stadium will be rapid, project leaders say. “We are on a two-year timeline to have the ballpark ready for opening day of the 2005 baseball season,” stadium architect Ken Mayer says. “To complete the work in time for the Bats’ first pitch 24 months from now, construction activity at the site will begin right away.”

Samet Corporation of Greensboro is the construction contractor for the stadium project. Samet President of the Construction Division, Ron Rothrock, says, “The first phase of

construction will be completion of the Stadium's maintenance facility. We will begin grading and foundation work for that building as soon as possible. The maintenance facility should be completed within three months from the time we get started."

Chabon says it's critical that construction of the stadium proceed, even though a referendum on a proposed ordinance which would prohibit construction of any stadium facility in Greensboro's central business district is scheduled to take place during this fall's city elections. The referendum question was placed on the ballot as a result of a petition initiative mounted by opponents of the new ballpark. "We're confident that the overwhelming majority of Greensboro citizens recognize the important role the stadium plays in making Downtown a vibrant nucleus that will help energize future economic progress in Greensboro," Chabon says. "I think the investors have made a conscious decision not to allow opposition from a small group of citizens to impede this progress."

Chabon adds, "As the stadium project has evolved, it has been debated openly and fully in public hearings and other forums. Issues necessary for the project to proceed have been voted on and approved by the City Council and the County Board of Commissioners. Dozens of citizens groups are on record in favor of the stadium. The project has overcome legal challenges, and now construction plans have been reviewed and have received the administrative and technical green light from the city. It's time to move forward with this important piece of the Center City Master Plan."

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