



greater omaha chamber of commerce

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**NORTH OMAHA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT STEERING  
COMMITTEE SELECTS STUDY CONSULTANTS -  
RDG PLANNING AND DESIGN, ECONOMICS RESEARCH  
ASSOCIATES AND ALEX GARVIN & ASSOCIATES**

*Chamber, steering committee and consultants reinforce commitment  
to engage community in the planning and implementation process*

**OMAHA, Neb., Jan. 31, 2007** – The steering committee for the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce’s North Omaha Development Project has selected RDG Planning and Design, Economics Research Associates and Alex Garvin & Associates to begin the community development study previously announced in late October. RDG, in partnership with Robert Peters Company, will provide the local leadership while ERA and Alex Garvin & Associates bring national resources to the study. The Schemmer Associates, an Omaha-based transportation and civil engineering firm, will provide engineering expertise. Others on the consultant team include AHL Consultants, an Omaha-based research firm with special skills and experience in opinion research and the development and administration of survey tools.

The North Omaha Development Project is a focused commitment of the Chamber, corporate leaders, elected officials, African American business leaders and the North Omaha community to make strategic investments in North Omaha. It is designed to achieve both a self-supporting private market and a neighborhood setting rewarding to its citizens and businesses. The primary purpose of this study is to define the nature of those actions and investments. The planned three-year implementation period provides a window of opportunity for a program of specific actions and investments. The initial phase will begin immediately with economic/market analysis, community assessments of existing resources and developments and identification of neighborhood and community issues through public meetings.

Former Omaha Planning Director Robert Peters said, “We understand that this project represents a unique opportunity and commitment on the part of the private sector to channel a substantial effort into the North Omaha development

process. This study must provide real, strategic guidance to maximize the impact of this commitment.”

Martin Shukert, principal of RDG added, “We have assembled a diverse team of companies and individuals uniquely qualified to undertake this historic project – one that combines great depth of national experience and extensive local knowledge and commitment to the neighborhood.”

RDG Planning & Design has been involved in innovative community strategic planning throughout the Midwestern region. The RDG team brings an understanding of the long-term, historical awareness of the neighborhood and continued engagement in North Omaha and similar settings in other cities. This awareness will be seen in how the community engagement is to be designed and implemented. Not only will there be community forums, but also an adjunct advisory group to RDG and the partners made up of members of the North Omaha community.

Steering committee co-chairman Dennis O’Neal said, “We are delighted to have selected RDG Planning & Design and this talented team of local and nationally recognized companies to work together on this vitally important community development project. Economics Research Associates, a firm familiar with Omaha and this region, is known for its economic, market, financial feasibility and project development experience. Their role will be to provide project decision makers with an assessment of near-term market opportunities and issues. Alex Garvin & Associates has the reputation of being one of the best firms in the nation at understanding the relationship between community investments and self-sustaining markets.

David G. Brown, Chamber president and CEO, said, “The Chamber is committed to creating an environment that promotes business and community growth throughout the region. The North Omaha Project is one of the most exciting opportunities to create jobs, investment and business development. The Chamber brings our full complement of resources for economic development, minority business development, and education and workforce training to the table. I look forward to the day in late summer 2007 when we unveil a detailed implementation plan. At that time, a full-time North Omaha community development project director will be hired and housed at the Chamber to implement the plan and provide day-to-day communication with the steering committee and the North Omaha residents and businesses.”

Dick Davis, steering committee co-chairman, said, “The Chamber and the business community recognize that the North Omaha project does not stand alone and they are supportive by providing valuable linkages to other community-based economic initiatives as a part of a comprehensive approach. I am pleased

with the process that we have undertaken. There has been full community engagement from all economic spectrums of the community at large.”

“Clearly, if we continue to get the cooperation and collaboration among the diverse groups who are engaged in this process, this will be the most significant economic development initiative to impact African Americans and the North Omaha community. We believe we have selected a consulting team that will lead us to an outcome-oriented strategy for North Omaha. Our steering committee strongly supports the work ahead of us and we are committed to seeing this project through to a successful implementation.”

### **RDG Planning & Design**

RDG maintains major offices in Omaha and Des Moines, and provides a wide variety of design and planning services. RDG serves national markets in the design of retirement communities and sports and recreation facilities, and is a regional leader in urban design, downtown and housing planning, comprehensive planning, enhancement of transportation corridors, and design of educational and religious facilities. It also provides strategic and space planning services to a number of large corporate and public sector clients. RDG was formed in 1989 and has a staff of 150 people at its five office sites. It is dedicated to the mission of creatively influencing life for the better through purpose-driven design. It currently has active projects in over 28 states and in Europe. RDG offers a special expertise in community planning and creative problem solving.

### **Robert Peters Company**

Robert Peters Company is an Omaha-based consulting firm with specialization in project management, financing, land use and development. The firm is headed by Robert Peters, former City of Omaha planning director and a recognized leader in planning, urban development and project management and financial packaging.

### **Economics Research Associates**

Economics Research Associates is an internationally-recognized consulting firm specializing in all aspects of real estate and land use economics, urban planning and development, commercial recreation feasibility, strategic planning for communities and corporations, and management and marketing services. Since its incorporation in 1958, the firm has completed more than 15,000 assignments for a wide-range of public- and private-sector clients in all 50 states and in 90 foreign countries. Since 1981, ERA has been owned as a California Corporation by its principal consultants. The firm is unique in its distribution of responsibility and ownership. Twenty-four of the senior professionals in all offices are shareholders; professional consultant tenure with the firm averages ten years. The firm’s portfolio of national and international clients is served from offices in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Washington, D.C., New York and London.

ERA offers experience in real estate services including real estate market analysis, site selection and market testing, program development and marketing strategies, financing strategies and transactional due diligence, economic and fiscal impact and expert testimony.

Based on a clear analysis of a community's economic base and competitive position, ERA helps cities, states and regions create strong and diverse local economies, vibrant commercial districts and successful public-private partnerships for economic development. This work includes efforts to revitalize existing urban waterfronts, aging downtowns, brownfield sites and older neighborhoods, and plan the development of new residential neighborhoods, communities, town centers, parks, and civic amenities. In both situations, ERA has considerable experience working with both cities and developers to devise pragmatic and realistic development strategies, tied to market derived expectations for financial performance and return on public and private investment. Last, ERA has a long track record of working in multi-disciplinary teams on complex development projects.

### **Alex Garvin & Associates**

Alex Garvin & Associates is a planning and real estate consulting firm that specializes in the development of the public realm. The firm seeks to create successful public realms in order to generate a widespread and sustained private market reaction in the surrounding community. Operating internationally from New York City, the firm works at every scale from small communities to metropolitan regions to produce physically, financially, and politically feasible plans that generate support from local residents, business leaders, developers, architects and public officials. Alex Garvin & Associates serves one mission: to improve the quality of the built environment and, thus, the quality of life for current and future citizens of a community.

Established in 2004, the firm grew out of Alex Garvin's individual practice of more than 35 years in planning, architecture, real estate development, and public service. Building on his philosophy, the firm specializes in an interdisciplinary, market-based approach to planning. Alex Garvin & Associates offers a wide range of service to public agencies, private developers, and non-profit organizations in the site selection, feasibility analyses, land use planning, development programming, design management, public review and sustainable financing.

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The mission of the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce is to increase business, investment and employment in the Greater Omaha area.

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