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**EBR Redevelopment Authority Readying 6-acre Site for Transformation***RDA hires firm that created parish’s master plan to consult on Entergy project on Govt. St.*

The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority has chosen Fregonese Associates to write a request for proposals for developers wanting to return the Entergy site on Government Street to commerce. It’s anticipated that the real estate project will accelerate an upstart revival of Mid City.

Fregonese Associates, based in Portland, will start drafting the RFP for the site within weeks and hand it over to the RDA by December. The RDA board will issue the RFP soon after and select a developer by March 2016. The chosen developer is expected to begin a project next year.

“The RDA is grateful to Entergy for making this iconic site the centerpiece of a rebirth of this area of Baton Rouge,” said RDA Chairman John B. Noland. “Fregonese’s RFP will generate excitement and new life where decay once held sway. We can’t wait to see what emerges from his RFP.”

Entergy Corp. donated the six-acre industrial site to the RDA in 2014. On the property are two iconic red buildings, which are imagined for a mix of uses—retail, residences, restaurants and even a potential train station for a commuter line between Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

“We are excited to be collaborating with Fregonese Associates once more,” said Gwen Hamilton, who leads the RDA. “In the FuturEBR plan he wrote for our parish, John Fregonese highlighted the Entergy site as a catalyst for returning life to Mid City.”

Government Street is an ideal corridor for redevelopment, connecting a rebounding downtown with neighborhoods and retail establishments that stretch all the way to Lobdell Avenue. The recently announced $8 million investment from the state has sparked the imagination of pioneering developers with its plans to trim Government from four to three lanes – one lane each way and a center turn lane – and to flank the road with bike paths. ‘Model Block,’ a block of buildings next to Baton Rouge Magnet High School, has been rehabbed for retail spaces and a local architectural firm. Across the street, a nonprofit that supports Catholic High School has interest from five developers in building a mixed-use

project on four acres that was home to Westmoreland Mall. A beer garden, a restaurant and an outdoor hamburger restaurant are in the works near Government Street and Steele Boulevard.

The RDA applied for and received a grant from the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to underwrite the consulting work and will be entering into a professional services agreement with Fregonese Associates.

The RDA was created as an adjunct to assist local government in rebuilding the city, where taxpayers have already paid for infrastructure. The agency has won and invested $60 million in New Markets Tax Credits, made grants to improve facades, and created blueprints for smaller areas that will be springboards for additional development.

The RDA’s most visible project is Ardendale, situated on 200 acres around North Ardenwood Drive and North Lobdell Boulevard. Thirty acres on North Lobdell are under development for the East Campus of Baton Rouge Community College. BRCC’s high-tech automotive training center is currently under construction and an additional learning facility has been funded. At Ardendale, the East Baton Rouge School System will build a career academy high school that will offer dual enrollment and training with the Community College on site, and teach the necessary skills to allow graduates to immediately enter the workforce. The remainder of the Ardendale property will blend housing with retail and offices.