City of Asheville Staff Report

City Council Meeting Date: August 25, 2026

Staff Resources: Ashley Haire, Transportation Director; Hayley Burton, Urban Planner III

Action Requested:

- Adoption of a resolution authorizing the City Manager to: enter into a contract with HR&A Advisors, Inc., in an amount not to exceed $364,147, for pre-construction activities for the ART Place project that comport with the applicable federal grant program requirements; and sign all documents necessary to effect this resolution.

Background:

- The current Asheville Rides Transit (ART) facility has operated beyond its intended capacity for several years, resulting in operational inefficiencies and impacting the passenger experience. Furthermore, the constrained number of bus bays limits the system's potential for future growth, necessitating the expansion of the ART Transit Center.
- In 2021, the City purchased 50 Asheland Avenue, the property adjacent to the existing ART Transit Center, for $2.5 million. Dogwood Health Trust provided $1.25 million toward the purchase of the property based on the City's commitment to incorporate affordable housing into the property's future use.
- Also in 2021, the City applied for a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Areas of Persistent Poverty (AOPP) Grant, to do planning, community engagement, conceptual design, and financial modeling for the site, calling it the "ART Place Project" with the intention of it becoming a mixed-use, transit-oriented development centered around an expanded Transit Center and affordable housing.
- In 2022, the City was awarded $328,140 in federal funds from the AOPP grant. When combined with the local match (10%), the total project budget equals $364,600.
- On March 6, 2026, the City issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for planning and conceptual design services for ART Place.
- This action seeks to execute a contract with HR&A and their team for those services, which will ultimately deliver conceptual designs alongside action-oriented steps to identify future funding and potential partnership models to bring the ART Place Project forward toward the next phase.

Vendor Outreach:

- The selection process was a qualifications-based selection process.
- Staff received Statements of Qualifications (SOQ) from seven interested firms.
- HR&A Advisors, Inc. was selected by a committee of staff as the best-qualified firm to deliver the requested services.

Council Vision 2036 Focus Area(s):

- Transportation and Accessibility

- Quality Affordable Housing

Council Priority Recovery Area(s):

- Infrastructure & Environment
- Housing

Committee(s):

- N/A

Fiscal Impact:

- In 2022, the City was awarded $328,140 in federal funding through the Federal Transit Administration's Areas of Persistent Poverty Grant Program. The grant is available in the General Capital Projects Fund.
- The minimum federal share for the AoPP/HOPE program is not less than 90 percent of the total project cost. The maximum local match is $36,460, for a total project budget of $364,600. The local match has been budgeted in the General Capital Projects Fund.

Suggested Motion:

- Motion to adopt a resolution authorizing the City Manager to: enter into a contract with HR&A Advisors, Inc., in an amount not to exceed $364,147, for pre-construction activities for the ART Place project that comport with the applicable AoPP/HOPE program requirements; and sign all documents necessary to effect this resolution.

Attachment(s):

- Resolution

City of Asheville Resolution Number 26-___

Resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into a contract with HR&A Advisors, Inc., in the amount of $364,147, for pre-construction activities for the ART Place project.

Whereas, the City of Asheville has authority pursuant to Article 3 of Chapter 160A of the North Carolina General Statutes to enter into contracts with other entities; and

Whereas, the City was awarded $328,140 for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Areas of Persistent Poverty Grant for Pre-construction Activities for ART Place, a mixed-use, transit-oriented development aimed at expanding the existing Transit Center, providing affordable housing, and considering other compatible uses; and

Whereas, when combined with the maximum allowable local match (10%), the total possible project budget equals $364,600; and

Whereas, the City issued a Request for Qualifications for the ART Place project and HR&A Advisors, Inc. was selected by a committee of staff as the best-qualified firm to deliver the requested services.

Now, Therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of the City of Asheville that:

The City Manager is authorized to: enter into a contract with HR&A Advisors, Inc., in an amount not to exceed $364,147, for pre-construction activities for the ART Place project that comport with the applicable AoPP/HOPE program requirements; and sign all documents necessary to effect this resolution.

Read, approved and adopted this 25th day of August, 2026.

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Esther E. Manheimer, Mayor

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Brad Branham, City Attorney

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Magdalen Burleson, City Clerk