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For Immediate Release**

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SECOND GRAD-READY SITE APPROVED IN BARROW COUNTY *360-Acre Market-Ready Site Poised to Create Jobs, Expand 316 Innovation Corridor*

STATHAM, GEORGIA (March 24, 2015) – The city of Statham and Barrow County Economic & Community Development Department announced today that the second Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) site was approved in Barrow County by the Georgia Department of Economic Development. The 360-acre site, owned by Walton Development and Management, has high visibility along the 316 innovation corridor and is located a mile west of historic downtown Statham.

“We are thrilled that Walton submitted this site for GRAD designation and thank the Georgia Department of Economic Development for approving the application,” said Guy Herring, Director of the Barrow County Economic & Community Development Department. “As the connecting route between Atlanta and Athens, the 316 Innovation Corridor has the potential to bring tremendous economic development and new jobs to Barrow County and this GRAD site will help speed up that process.”

Through a public/private partnership, the city of Statham and Barrow County supported Walton in submitting the application for the current GRAD site. This is the second GRAD site in Barrow County. The first site was designated in 2010 and is also located along the 316 Innovation Corridor. As currently envisioned, the property that was just certified will include a mix of office, retail, R&D and residential components.

“There are currently only two GRAD sites in Barrow County and they are both in the City of Statham. With our enviable position along the 316 Innovation Corridor, Statham is poised for growth and this GRAD site designation proves once again that Statham is an ideal place to do business,” said Mayor Robert Bridges. “We look forward to continuing to work together with groups like the Barrow County Economic & Community Development Department, Georgia Department of Economic Development and Walton to bring more high-paying jobs, vibrant retail and innovative businesses to our city.”

Established by the Georgia Allies, the GRAD site program creates shovel-ready sites with advance due diligence. Once they receive approval, these sites are ready for rapid development. To qualify, these sites must include a minimum of 50 acres, ownership security, zoning designation, road and rail accessibility, utilities service and wetlands and stream delineation. GRAD sites receive several tools to help with marketing including program benefits on the Georgia Department of Economic Development website, site awareness for statewide project managers and GDEcD partners and highlighted listings on the industrial site database of major electric utility web sites in partnership with the Georgia Department of Economic Development.

“The GRAD designation for this property along the 316 Innovation Corridor in Barrow County means that it can truly compete on a global stage for new industry and the accompanying jobs,” said Pat Wilson, Chief Operating Officer of the Department of Economic Development. “I fully believe that Barrow County and the City of Statham’s efforts to attain the GRAD status for this site will be beneficial.”

The owner of the new GRAD site, Walton, is a family-owned real estate investment and development group in Georgia.

“We thank the city of Statham and Barrow County for working with Walton to secure this GRAD site designation. University Parkway is well-positioned to be an economic engine for the state of Georgia that drives innovation, and we look forward to continuing to work together to bring even more jobs and economic development to the region,” said Paul Beidel, Regional President, Walton Development and Management, Georgia.

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