

**CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATION 97-602  
DECEMBER 22, 1997 AGENDA**

**SUBJECT:**

**GRAY' S LAKE PARK MASTER PLAN**

**SUBMITTED BY:**

**DONALD TRIPP, PARK AND RECREATION DIRECTOR  
JAMES GRANT, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**

**SYNOPSIS –**

City Council is requested to hear a presentation on the Gray' s Lake Master Plan, and receive, file, and refer the draft Master Plan. The presentation is to apprise City Council of the current status of the Gray' s Lake Park Master Plan and to recommend future staff work on this project.

**FISCAL IMPACT –**

The fiscal impact is unknown at this time, but will be provided in complete detail at the subsequent City Council requests for action. The project anticipates a public-private funding partnership, with City funds coming from Tax Increment Financing bond sales.

**RECOMMENDATION –**

**Receive, file, and refer the proposed Gray' s Lake Master Plan to the Park and Recreation Board, the Plan and Zoning Commission, the Urban Renewal Board, the Neighborhood Revitalization Board, and the Architectural Review Committee for review and recommendation. In addition, it is recommended that Council refer the proposed Master Plan to the City Manager for a detailed feasibility, cost, and funding analysis, including the items outlined in the Background section of this communication.**

**BACKGROUND –**

Gray' s Lake Park has been under the control of the City since 1970. It is 165 total acres, including a 100-acre manmade lake. The lake level fluctuates as the elevation of the Raccoon River changes, due to a river overflow culvert connection between the lake and river. The City owns approximately one-half of the property, and the remainder is controlled through a lease which expires in 2019. Recently, the leased property has been acquired by the Weitz

Corporation. Gray' s Lake Park has been steadily improved over its 27-year public recreation life, through the use of City of Des Moines, State of Iowa, National Park Service, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Land & Water Conservation Trust Fund tax dollars. Some of the funds have brought restrictive covenants as a condition of accepting the grant. Parklands, the City Park and Recreation Comprehensive Plan, identifies Gray' s Lake as one of the highest priority capital improvement needs in the Park and Recreation system.

On July 21, 1997, by Roll Call No. 97-2581, City Council awarded a contract to RDG Crose Gardner Shukert, Inc. (RDG) for master plan and market feasibility services for Gray' s Lake. A Focus Team comprised of City staff, representatives from the Park and Recreation Board and Planning and Zoning Commission, business leaders, community leaders, citizens, high school students, and other representatives identified as stakeholders in the project were assembled on several occasions to work directly with RDG and provide information and ideas to develop the plan.

Initially, the Focus Team developed a vision statement and project goals. The next step was to conduct a thorough analysis of the site, and determine the opportunities and constraints of Gray' s Lake. This involved extensive market analysis of regional demand for recreation and entertainment services. Once completed, RDG and Focus Team members met for a three-day design workshop in November to develop master plan alternatives for the site. The workshop culminated with a public presentation on November 23, 1997, which provided the first opportunity for the public to view and provide input into the proposed Gray' s Lake Park Master Plan.

The Gray' s Lake Park Master Plan is a refined version from the plan presented on November 23, 1997. RDG and staff have also presented the preliminary master plan concepts to the Planning and Zoning Commission, Park and Recreation Board, Architectural Advisory Committee, the South Des Moines Chamber of Commerce, and the Greater South Side Neighborhood Association for comment and feedback.

In addition to City Council receipt of the Master Plan, the following actions are recommended:

- 1) Refer the Plan to the Park and Recreation Board, the Plan and Zoning Commission, the Urban Renewal Board, the Neighborhood Revitalization Board, and the Architectural Review Committee for review and recommendation.
- 2) Begin establishing a change in the Riverpoint tax increment finance (TIF) boundaries to include all of Gray' s Lake Park and adjacent land as is deemed essential.
- 3) Direct staff to appraise adjacent railroad properties, including the marshalling yard and bridge crossing the Raccoon River, and make direct contact to acquire the same.
- 4) Estimate the costs necessary to flood protect lands on the south shore of the lake, suitable for construction of hotel, restaurant, and residential property.
- 5) Provide a preliminary report of the methods and costs to convert federally-funded lands at

Gray' s Lake Park to private, commercial use.

6) Study and report on parking needs associated with proposed concert venue land north of the Raccoon River.

7) Provide a cost estimate of capital needs to include the following:

- Public recreation development at Gray' s Lake
- Land conversion
- Acquisition of the west end of Gray' s Lake (currently under a lease)
- Establish a private development incentive package
- Railroad property acquisition
- Design fees and related development costs
- Annual multipliers of cost escalation
- All proposed public and private funding sources

8) Provide an estimate of operating costs and revenues.

9) Present a proposed time frame for development, including cost/cash flow financing.

10) To present the proposed plan and report on reaction of all groups represented on the Gray' s Lake Focus Team and other stakeholder groups including:

- Citizens Design Advisory Committee
- Des Moines Development Corporation
- Southwestern Hills Neighborhood Association
- Greater South Side Neighborhood Association
- Major Projects Team
- Des Moines Water Works Board
- MLK Design Advisory Team
- Citizens Review Board
- The student councils at all five local high schools
- Des Moines Rowing Club
- Bicycle and Trails Advisory Committee

It is anticipated that this work and public input can be completed by the end of February 1998. Staff will then prepare a comprehensive report and recommendation for Council' s review. Staff anticipates that any City participation will be predicated on an agreement that private development will occur on the south shore of Gray' s Lake, with the Holiday Inn site receiving immediate changes and redevelopment.