

**CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNICATION:**

ITEM _____

**OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER
CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA**

99-394

SYNOPSIS -

AGENDA:
SEPTEMBER 13, 1999

On May 4, 1998, Roll Call No. 98-1468, the City Council voted to receive, file, and approve the recommendations outlined in Council Communication No. 98-185, which included providing "a professional service contract to complete a technical feasibility analysis related to the programming of the Western Gateway." The five buildings included in this study include: 1) Masonic Temple, 1011 Locust; 2) The Investment Building (original AIB) 424 - 10th Street; 3) Aramark Building, 11th and Grand; 4) the Kingston Apartments, 12th and Grand; and 5) the Arlington and Hallet Apartments, 13th and Locust, considered one building due to a shared mechanical system. This analysis has been completed and it is now appropriate to consider the demolition and/or rehabilitation of buildings in the Western Gateway. The Historic District Commission (HDC), Plan and Zoning Commission (P&Z Commission), and others have also questioned the demolition of this and other buildings in the Western Gateway.

SUBJECT:
**BUILDING
DEMOLITION IN
THE WESTERN
GATEWAY PROJECT
SITE AREA
(BETWEEN 10TH &
15TH; GRAND &
LOCUST)**

TYPE:

FISCAL IMPACT -

**RESOLUTION
ORDINANCE
RECEIVE/FILE**

The cost of building acquisition and demolition is included in the Gateway Project budget.

SUBMITTED BY:

RECOMMENDATION -

**RICHARD CLARK
DEPUTY CITY
MANAGER**

It is recommended that, with the exception of the Masonic Temple (1011 Locust) and The Investment Building (424 - 10th Street), the remaining buildings located in the Western Gateway that are currently owned or are to be purchased by the City and/or Des Moines Development Corporation (DMDC), be demolished.

City Council is NOT being asked to approve a contract for demolition, but rather to set policy which will allow the

process to proceed toward preparing the Western Gateway Site for further improvements. Initial demolition activity will be accomplished by DMDC.

BACKGROUND -

On May 19, 1997, Roll Call No. 97-1698, City Council received a Communication, No. 97-263, from the City Manager outlining the buildings to be considered for rehab feasibility.

The contract for Professional Services for a building evaluation and feasibility study of these five buildings (Masonic Temple, The Investment Building, Aramark Building, Kingston Apartments, and the Arlington/Hallet Apartments) was awarded to Herbert, Lewis, Kruse, Blunck (HLKB) Architecture, Des Moines. The final report on building evaluation and feasibility analysis was completed and presented to City staff on August 27, 1999. This consultant report was used for preparation of the staff report, "A Report Regarding Significant Structures in the Gateway Project Area."

The Gateway Steering Committee reviewed the first draft of the HLKB building evaluation/feasibility study of the original five identified buildings at its June 30, 1999 meeting. The Steering Committee approved a process for demolition of acquired properties within the Western Gateway. The properties scheduled for the first phase of demolition include 1021 Locust, the Stivers building; 1201 Locust; 1317 Locust; and 1321 Locust. The Steering Committee also discussed the report and demolition activities at its July 28, 1999 and August 25, 1999 meetings.

The Gateway Steering Committee concurred with the report's conclusions regarding the potential for restoration of each building to sustain new uses consistent with the overall goals of the Gateway Project. The consensus of the Steering Committee is to recommend proceeding with demolition of the Arlington/Hallet Apartments, 1303-1305 Locust Street; Aramark Building, 1102 Grand Avenue; and the Kingston Apartments, 1200 Grand Avenue. The Steering Committee identified the Masonic Temple as exhibiting the highest potential for restoration. The Investment Building is also recognized as having some potential for restoration. Although it should be encouraged, the ability to renovate either the Masonic Temple or The Investment Building will be largely

influenced by economics.

The staff report and HLKB report were presented at the Joint Meeting of the P&Z Commission, Urban Renewal Board (URB), Architectural Advisory Committee (AAC), and the HDC on September 2, 1999 in the City Council Chambers.

The three Boards/Commissions with a quorum (URB did not have a quorum present) voted to oppose staff recommendations which calls for the demolition of all buildings within the Western Gateway Project Site except for the Masonic Temple (1011 Locust Street) and The Investment Building (424 - 10th Street).

The HDC voted 5-0-0 in favor of City Council initiating Landmark status for all five buildings identified in the original list, as well as 1317 Locust; and 1321 Locust, Victorian house behind additions. Furthermore, the HDC recommended that no demolition should occur until the HDC has the opportunity to review and evaluate buildings for Historic Landmark status.

The AAC voted 4-0-0 to cease plans for demolition of the buildings in the Western Gateway area as identified by the HDC as well as pending City-funded demolitions in the Eastern Gateway area until an evaluation and review process is completed. Furthermore, the AAC recommended that the City and Gateway Steering Committee extend resources and explore additional means to adapt and rehab those buildings (listed above in the HDC motion) into the Gateway Master Plan.

The URB did not have a quorum but Board Chair, Bill Dikis, expressed his personal recommendation to recommend the City be more assertive in incorporating rehab opportunities which can contribute to our cultural heritage and offer a rich mixture to the Gateway Project vision, provided they can be made to "fit" into a practical, economic model.

The P&Z Commission voted 7-6 to oppose staff recommendation and recommended further study of the buildings as identified by the HDC, AAC, and Mr. Dikis.

The following information offers additional background regarding the selection of the five buildings originally targeted for rehab feasibility study. The five specifically identified buildings are consistent with those listed in the Contract for Professional Services with HLKB Architecture, Des Moines.

These five buildings are also consistent with the buildings identified by the consultant team, AIJK, Santa Monica, CA, hired by the City in February 1996. The AIJK report, presented in August 1996, identifies these same buildings with one additional building listed. This was the Hanwood Apartments which were demolished in August 1999 due to unstable building conditions causing it to be declared a public safety hazard. The AIJK report was not made an official document but continues to provide useful resource material.

The HLKB report, presented on May 19, 1997, shows two design concepts, "Concept A" with targeted rehab and some new infill construction, and "Concept Z" which promotes more open space development. "Concept A" shows three buildings as possible rehab sites which include three of the five buildings listed. The intent of the "A" to "Z" range is to emphasize the need for flexibility of design parameters to respond to market demands.

Through staff research, meetings with various entities and ongoing involvement with the Gateway Project, staff's consideration of rehab opportunities is basically consistent with the two independent consultant teams' recommendations to explore the identified buildings further for rehab feasibility.

The consistency of the recommendations from three different parties stresses the strong conviction that, of all the buildings within the Western Gateway Project Area, each group considered the same three-five buildings worthy of further exploration. All other buildings are considered suitable for demolition to help further the vision of the Western Gateway Area's landmark quality status.

Factors that assisted in the conclusions of the consultants and staff include the apparent condition of the building; the building's footprint and flexibility to accommodate adaptive reuse development compatible with the vision of the Gateway Project; overall quality of the building design and integrity; historic significance of events or people associated with the various structures; and ease of parking accommodation.

It is critical that the City show a firm commitment to the Gateway Project, and specifically Western Gateway at this time, to move it forward toward the vision of providing a high-quality area of civic improvements which serves as an attractor and stimulant for equally high-quality private development

seeking a "signature address". In order for the City to compete with the lure of suburban development there must be a unique, desirable setting which provides amenities, such as civic plazas with public art, fountains, and gathering spots, as well as necessary conveniences including parking and transportation options.

The City is currently working with developers considering very large business developments for the Western Gateway area surrounding the Project Site (between Grand and Locust). Their interest is in the established vision of landmark quality civic improvements enhancing the urban setting for development as well as offering a more appealing atmosphere for employees to enjoy.

To summarize the discussion of building demolition in the Western Gateway Project Site, the following three points may be made:

1. The feasibility of rehab on a structure-by-structure basis is lacking in part due to loss of surrounding context and in part due to the mediocre quality of the buildings.
2. The concept of scattered building rehab is inconsistent with the larger Gateway Project vision which promotes high-quality, landmark status improvements and surrounding development as a District.
3. Momentum has been established and developer interest expressed in participating in achieving the Western Gateway Vision.

The rehabilitation of older/historic structures is an important element in the City's overall community and economic development strategy. Architectural and historical building restorations can help preserve the "fabric" of the neighborhood, provide a connection to history-making people and events, and can provide an interesting and attractive presence. The Eastern Gateway and Court Avenue Neighborhood areas are considered prime opportunities for two reasons. First, both of those areas have enough fabric remaining to make rehab efforts more meaningful. Second, rehab of existing buildings in both of those areas is more consistent with the areas' development goals and visions. We should be proactive in identifying rehab opportunities, and seeking developer interest to undertake such projects.

The following steps are recommended for proceeding with the Gateway Project:

1. The Masonic Temple (1011 Locust Street) and The Investment Building (424 - 10th Street) are considered worthy of significant effort for their restoration and reuse. These two buildings should not be demolished. Of these two buildings, the Masonic Temple is considered a top priority. The Investment Building is seen as offering a desirable and meaningful contribution to the Gateway Project goals and further study should be conducted to define the most appropriate specific use proposed.
2. The Aramark Building (1102 Grand Avenue), the Kingston Apartments (1200 Grand Avenue), and the Arlington/Hallet Apartments (1303-1305 Locust Street) should be demolished without further review.
3. The remaining buildings in the Western Gateway Project Site (10th to 15th between Grand and Locust) that are owned by or acquired in the future by the City and/or Des Moines Development Corporation (DMDC) should be demolished without further review.
4. Photographic documentation should be promptly carried out for the following buildings slated for demolition in the Western Gateway Project Site: 1) the Kingston Apartments (1200 Grand Avenue); 2) the Arlington/Hallet Apartments (1303-1305 Locust Street); 3) the Stivers Building (1021 Locust Street), 4) 1317 Locust Street showing the original factory/warehouse behind the later additions; and 5) 1321 Locust showing the original Victorian house behind the later additions. This information will then be sent to the Des Moines Central Library to be on file as well as to the State Historic Society for reference.