



Agenda Item:

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COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

City Manager's Office

GENERAL INFORMATION

Agenda Date: 09/26/05
Agenda Item Type: Resolution

Communication No.: 05-544
Roll Call No.: 05-

Submitted by: Richard Clark, Acting City Manager

SUBJECT—

Resolution approving the issuance of a document known as a Request for Information to provide guidance to developers for their submission of informal proposals to redevelop the City-owned property located on the south side of Court Ave. between 4th and 5th Streets. (A location map is at the end of this communication; the Rock Island Depot is not part of this 2.3 acre site.)

SYNOPSIS—

This action approves a Request for Information (RFI) that provides an informal solicitation for developer submission for design and financing concepts for this site. The Council will evaluate the developer responses. The Council may then select a developer to proceed with preliminary negotiations leading to a final development proposal for the purchase of the site or choose to reject all proposals.

FISCAL IMPACT—

Authorizing this RFI and selecting a developer does not incur any financial obligations for the City. However, if a developer is selected by the Council to proceed to the submission of formal proposal to purchase and redevelop the property, it is anticipated that the formal proposal may include financial incentives and potential new public improvements.

RECOMMENDATION—

Approval

BACKGROUND—

History

This property was purchased by the City in 1998-2002 as a result of pursuing an entertainment center-type development to be located on Court Avenue. Since that time, redevelopment of the site has not been successful.

Now, with the opening of the near-by Science Center of Iowa, development of the adjacent property across the street by Hubbell/Bookey as well as continuing housing construction in the immediate area, there is currently strong developer interest in this site.

Site

This 2.3 acre is very desirable:

- It is the only major site of this size in the area.
- MLK Parkway, 2 blocks away from this site, now provides fast access to the airport and I-235
- There has been significant new area development in the past two years with the Science Center of Iowa, the private Market St. Parking Ramp, the Hessen Haus in the former Rock Island Railroad baggage claim building, White Line Lofts, Metro Lofts, Water St. Brownstones, Vine St. Lofts, the DM Union Railroad Bridge conversion, the Principal Riverwalk, Principal Park/Sec Taylor Field improvements and Meredith Trail. In addition, the renovation of the Spaghetti Works Building at 400 Court Ave. and new commercial/housing on the 4th-5th site across the street will start in the next several months.
- It has sufficient size to support an economically feasible development while allowing for a design concept that addresses the historic surrounding fabric with innovative approaches.

RFI Approach

Staff has prepared a “Request for Information” (RFI) document which requests private developer submission of development concepts for the site.

The RFI process provides flexibility for both the developer and the City in pursuing these concepts.

The RFI identifies the general development parameters in terms of uses, design concepts and contains set of criteria to evaluate and select a developer (or developers) to continue with negotiation of more specific terms and conditions to lead to a formal proposal for the purchase of the site.

The Council will have the right to reject any or all developer responses to this RFI.

RFI Schedule

The proposed schedule for this process is:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Action</u>
September 26, 2005	Council Approval of RFI
October 4, 2005 @ 1:30 –3 p.m.	Question session for interested developers City Hall Chambers/ 400 Robert D. Ray Dr./Des Moines, IA
November 14, 2005 @ 1:00 p.m.	Last date for receipt of developer responses to RFI Office of Economic Development/400 Robert D. Ray Dr.
November - December 2005	Evaluation of developer responses
December 19, 2005 <i>or</i> January 9, 2006	Council meeting to select developer(s) to proceed with preliminary negotiations
January –March 2006	City and developer(s) (if selected) negotiate terms of urban renewal contract and finalize design plans
Mid-February	Interim report to Council on progress and review of preliminary terms of agreement.
March/early April 2006	Submission of a formal development proposal, including a contract by a developer
April- early June 2006	Formal offering period (required by state law)
June 2006	End of offering period; execution of development contract with selected developer
Summer/Fall 2006	Developer begins construction

RFI “Vision”

The RFI provides guidance on desirable features for this site.

In the form of a “vision statement,” the RFI sees this site becoming a neighborhood center and an anchor for Court Ave. with high quality design, mixed-use development of 175,000- 200,000 square feet or more, excluding parking, that brings activity and energy to the neighborhood.

This development should also be a catalyst for a vibrant downtown and provide a linkage to major activities such as the Science Center of Iowa, Principal Park/Sec Taylor Field, Principal Riverwalk, and the Wells Fargo Arena

To accomplish this vision, a proposal should achieve design objectives such as:

- Establishes strong physical and visual connections with the Court Avenue Historic District, Science Center of Iowa and the adjacent downtown core.
- Builds and strengthens the 4th St. corridor as a pedestrian retail/entertainment setting that extends from Nollen Plaza at the north to the Science Center on the south

- Integrates into the existing historic and urban character of the setting through use of building massing, scale, detailing and materials.
- Includes multiple pedestrian street-level accesses from Court Ave. and 4th St.
- Promotes the existing street-level pedestrian activity with retail windows and doorways oriented to the street.
- Uses ‘green’ building processes and techniques
- Includes innovative streetscape improvements to update and revitalize the area.
- Creates a development that can be responsive to future needs
- Is ready for occupancy within next 2-3 years.

Uses in the development can be, but are not limited to:

- Commercial/retail space that serves residents and visitors.
- Offices
- Quality hotel
- Rental and owner-occupied housing above the first floor
- If parking is provided on the site, it cannot front 4th or 5th Streets or Court Ave. and preferably is underground.
- Other improvements desirable to the City including public art

Evaluation of RFI

Criteria are provided to further guide the developer in providing criteria that will be used to assess developer proposals include:

- Ability of the developer to finance the project
- Experience of the developer and its team
- Extent to which the developer demonstrates an understanding and commitment to addressing design issues in a high quality manner.
- The proposed design and uses and their impact on the Court Avenue and the downtown.
- Financial and business terms’ impact based on land sales price to be paid by the developer, tax abatement (if any), other required investments by the City and expected project tax revenue and appropriateness of other conditions or limitations incorporated in the developer response.

An Advisory Committee, to be appointed by the City Council, and City staff will formulate recommendations to the Council. (It is possible the Urban Design Review Board may not be able to undertake its review due to a majority of individual members having a potential conflict of interest.)

The membership of an advisory committee appointed by the Council, will include:

- 2 Council members (the ward council member and an at-large council member)
- 1 Downtown Community Alliance member representative,
- 2 Court Avenue Business Association representatives as nominated by the Association
- 2 Urban Design Review Board Members
- 1 member of Downtown Neighborhood Association as nominated by the Association

1 member of the Plan and Zoning Commission

The advisory committee will evaluate the responses to the RFI and may decide not to proceed with one or more of the responses because it does not have enough information, etc. The committee will be staffed by the City's Office of Economic Development in coordination with other City departments.

The advisory committee will submit their recommendation to the City Manager. The City Manager may respond to the committee's recommendations and the committee may revise their recommendations. The Manager will then will submit the committee's *and* his recommendation(s) to the Council.

The Council may request, if needed, additional information, changes to a proposal, etc. prior to selecting a developer(s) to proceed with preliminary terms of agreement or to rejecting all responses.

Location Map

