



Council Communication

Office of the City Manager

Date

August 6, 2007

Agenda Item No. SP-1

Roll Call No. 07-

Communication No. 07-492

Submitted by: Richard A. Clark, City Manager

AGENDA HEADING:

Resolution to receive and file executive summary on downtown plan and to refer to various boards and commissions for review and comment

SYNOPSIS:

Recommend the City Council to receive and file the draft Executive Summary Downtown Plan report and request input from the Plan & Zoning Commission, Parks and Recreation Board and the Urban Design Review Board.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

A special joint meeting of the Des Moines City Council and Polk County Supervisors will be held on Monday, August 6th from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. to receive recommendations from the Downtown Steering Committee and project consultants. (The City and Polk County, in conjunction with the Downtown Community Alliance, have been in the process of undertaking a 12-15 month study of the downtown to identify future projects and development opportunities; Council Members Hensley and Coleman and Mayor Cownie serve on the Downtown Steering Committee.)

The consultants, Mario Gandelonas of New York and Erin Olson-Douglas of Des Moines, will present a plan that will provide guidance on "What's Next?" for downtown Des Moines.

Their plan focuses on strategies to maintain and enhance downtown as a vibrant area for employment, residents and visitors. Recommendations are grouped into two categories: movement and development

Priorities emerging from the plan focus on several key new initiatives based on the idea that movement is crucial in providing connecting elements that link the significant activity areas in the downtown:

Walnut St. Transformation: Use Walnut Street from the State Capitol complex to its 15th St. terminus as the "spine" to connect places in downtown and create a lively urban environment. Physical projects such as transit (a shuttle evolving into a tramway and mass transit transfer point), enhanced skywalk/sidewalk connections, bike lanes, retail, identification of major north-south routes, as well as changes in private and public parking policies are key components of this

initiative. Walnut Street was chosen as the “spine” based on the location of current major activity nodes and potential future major development sites.

‘Skywalks and Sidewalks’: Create new strategic connections through expansion of the current skywalk system, refreshing existing corridors and bridges, building visible and inviting vertical access points between the skywalk and sidewalk levels, and improving the street level experience through sidewalk widening, streetscapes, ground level development and other pedestrian elements.

‘Greening Downtown’: Enhance the current “greening” of downtown with creation of an integrated trail and urban bike lane system with a network of bicycle amenities, provide a unified system for showcasing the unique collection of downtown public art and a network of parks to serve the emerging residential areas as well as the downtown workforce and regional visitors.

In addition to these new projects, the consultants strongly recommend continued focus on the Riverwalk, SE Connector/MLK Parkway, Riverpoint West/Gray’s Landing, Gateway Park and downtown housing as major on-going projects.

In addition, the consultants recommend updating zoning and guidelines, targeting market initiatives for housing and retail, and providing detailed planning for emerging areas.

To assist in gathering information, a number of public and stakeholder meetings have been held in the past year. The Downtown Steering Committee, led by Mayor Cownie, has provided guidance to the consultants in its review of this plan and has endorsed the presentation of the plan. This Committee is composed of representatives of the City, Polk County, the Downtown Community Alliance, downtown residents and businesses.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):

Date: November 7, 2005

Roll Call Number: 05-2719

Action: Economic Development Grant to Des Moines Community Investment Corporation for commissioning a Comprehensive Study of the Downtown Area, not to exceed \$75,000. Moved by Kiernan to adopt. Motion Carried 7-0.

Date: May 8, 2006

Roll Call Number: 06-944

Action: One-year agreement with Erin Olson-Douglas, 3819 Lincoln Place Drive, Des Moines, for a study of downtown development, not to exceed \$94,000 with an option to extend for three months. Moved by Brooks to adopt. Motion Carried 7-0.

Date: December 4, 2006

Roll Call Number: 06-2417

Action: Professional Services Agreement with Mario Gandelsonas of Agrest & Gandelsonas Architects to provide additional creative input and analysis for the Downtown Plan. Moved by Hensley to adopt. Motion Carried 6-0.

Date: June 11, 2006

Roll Call Number: N/A

Action: At the June 11, 2007, at the Council workshop, project consultant Erin Olson-Douglas provided an interim update on the downtown plan progress and the public input that had been received. The Council indicated interest and support on the general direction that plan was taking. Since that time, she and Mario Gandelsonas, the other project consultant, have continued to work with the Steering Committee and other stakeholders on refining the goals and strategies to achieve those goals for the plan document.

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S): NONE

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS:

The roll call receives and files the draft Executive Summary report and requests input from the Plan & Zoning Commission, Parks and Recreation Board and the Urban Design Review Board on or by October 1, 2007. In addition, two public input sessions will be held at the Des Moines Central Library on September 18, 2007.

Upon receipt of the input and comments, the consultants will then complete the plan report and its related documents for submission to the City Council for adoption and to the Polk County Board of Supervisors for its endorsement.