



Council Communication

Office of the City Manager

Date

March 24, 2008

Agenda Item No. 51

Roll Call No. 08-

Communication No. 08-146

Submitted by: Donald M. Tripp,
Parks and Recreation Director

AGENDA HEADING:

Receive and file letters from the Cowles Foundation and Civic Center on “re-visioning” the City-owned Nollen Plaza through re-design and requesting City of Des Moines cooperation and assistance with the re-visioning effort with in-kind services to facilitate, coordinate, and manage the proposed charrette and conceptual design effort.

SYNOPSIS:

The Cowles Foundation, Civic Center, and City of Des Moines are working to create a vision and conceptual design that makes Nollen Plaza a vibrant 21st Century urban public space in the heart of downtown Des Moines. To start the revitalization of Nollen Plaza, the Cowles Foundation and Civic Center have proposed funding a charrette process that produces a conceptual design for Nollen Plaza.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount: The City will provide “in-kind” services with staff and meeting spaces.

Funding Source: The initial funding for the charrette and design services, estimated at \$50,000, are being provided by the Cowles Foundation and Civic Center. The Greater Des Moines Community Foundation will serve as the fund manager, executing the agreements with the design team and managing the funds to support the re-visioning effort. Ken Smith Landscape Architects and San Francisco artist Jim Campbell (recommended by the Des Moines Art Center) will provide design services for the charrette.

It is anticipated that the conceptual design resulting from the Nollen Plaza re-visioning effort will form the basis for fund-raising in the private and public sectors.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Background

Nollen Plaza was dedicated in 1979 as part of the new Civic Center complex which replaced the recently closed KRNT Theater. The area was named after Gerald and Henry Nollen in recognition of their contributions to Des Moines commerce and culture; both were officers of Bankers Life (which has since become Principal Financial) and active in a number of civic organizations.

Nollen Plaza is a block square park containing a tree-lined grassy area on its Walnut Street frontage and the Brenton Waterfall and Reflecting Pool with surrounding steps that provide audience-seating along Locust and 3rd Streets. The Crusoe Umbrella sculpture, designed by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van

Bruggen, stands on the northeast corner of the Plaza; this steel sculpture was purchased with private contributions and a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.



The City acquired properties for Nollen Plaza and the adjacent site (now Capital Square) in the late 1970s and early 1980s as urban renewal disposition parcels. This picture, found on Principal Financial's web site, shows the approved design for the site owned by the City.

In the mid-1990s, a refreshing of the area was undertaken with new light fixtures and benches and major repair of the fountain/pool area

1978 Proposal for Developing Nollen Plaza

Lease with Civic Center

The Nollen Plaza site was leased to the Civic Center with the requirements that the space be "...operated and managed in such a way as to retain its park-like character and promote the recreational and cultural desires of the Des Moines community" as well as "...used in a manner that is consistent with the aesthetic quality and use of the Theater Block (Civic Center) Property." This space may be used for supportive and accessory commercial uses. If the Civic Center desires to construct any building, structure or other improvement on the property, City Council approval is required.

Other key provisions in this lease include:

Term of Lease: 99 years (until 2091) with the City having the right to terminate the lease by giving a 3 year notice. The City owns all improvements, except the Civic Center has rights to retain/remove the Oldenberg/Van Bruggen Crusoe sculpture.

Operations: Nollen Plaza is operated by the Civic Center Board of Trustees which has the right to charge Plaza users a reasonable fee for use of (Nollen Plaza) in an amount not to exceed the costs incurred in connection with the use and has the right to retain discretion as to the use of the Plaza, consistent with the community use of the facility.

The Civic Center is responsible for almost all of maintenance and replacement of the major items as well as operational costs (utilities) on Nollen Plaza. The City is responsible for grounds maintenance (snow removal, grass trimming, etc.)

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):

Date: 12/15/75

Roll Call Number: 75-5636

Action: Approval of the lease of land for private redevelopment by and between the City of Des Moines and the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines for development of the Civic Center and Nollen Plaza.

Date: 1/20/92

Roll Call Number: 92-204

Action: Agreement between the City of Des Moines and the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines for the purchase of leasehold interest in Park Plaza Property which will provide \$1.6 million of City funds for improvements and restoration of the Civic Center facility and Nollen Plaza.

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S): NONE

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS:

The following activities will be undertaken in the next months:

- March 25: Planning and Programming Committee meeting (Cowles Foundation, Civic Center, City, Art Center, Downtown Community Alliance, Parks Board and Urban Design Review Board)
- April 23-25: Nollen Plaza Charrette
 - April 23 noon and early evening: public meetings
 - April 24 all day work session open to public, with Drake Relays high jump in Nollen Plaza at noon
 - April 25 late morning and noon: public meeting for design vision
- May-June: Design concept selection, refinement, and cost estimate with Planning and Programming Committee and stakeholders identified during the charrette.
- Future Plans: Fundraising based on conceptual design produced during this process.

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