

 <p style="text-align: center;">Council Communication Office of the City Manager</p>	Date	May 18, 2009
	Agenda Item No. 51 Roll Call No. <u>09-</u> Communication No. <u>09-316</u> Submitted by: Donald M. Tripp Park and Recreation Director	

AGENDA HEADING:

Authorizing the City Manager to sign a contract in order to apply for the Historical Resource Development Program (HRDP) grant for an Historic Preservation Plan for Fort Des Moines.

SYNOPSIS:

Recommend approval for the City Manager to authorize a contract to apply for the HRDP grant for an Historic Preservation Plan for Fort Des Moines. The Park and Recreation Department is initiating an Historic Preservation Plan for Fort Des Moines, in accordance with the SuperBlock Master Plan. Prior to considering the proposal from Keffer/Overton Architects (John B. “Chip” Overton, Principal & President, 317 Sixth Avenue, Studio 201, Des Moines, Iowa 50309), the Department will be applying for the Historical Resource Development Program Grant (HRDP), in the amount of \$46,776 to help fund the Plan. A legally-authorized representative of the City must sign a contract with the State Historical Society as part of the application.

FISCAL IMPACT: NONE

Amount: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

While there is no fiscal impact for the action of signing the contract or applying for the grant, there will be a future fiscal impact for entering the contract with Keffer/Overton to complete the Historic Preservation Plan. The total contract amount with Keffer/Overton will be \$69,675. There is an additional fee of \$500 required as part of the grant application for the Technical Advisory Network. If we are awarded the grant request of \$46,776, the remaining cost to the City will be \$23,339. Sufficient funds are available in the CIP to cover this expense.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The HRDP Grant is funded through the Resource Enhancement and Protection Program Act (REAP), and administered through the State Historical Society for historical projects including acquisition and development, preservation and conservation, interpretation, training and educational programs related to historical resources. The Park and Recreation department has prepared an application to help fund a Historic Preservation Plan for Fort Des Moines. The required match ratio for governmental entities is 50 cents for every grant dollar requested. Award letters will be issued on July 1, 2009.

The Historic Preservation Plan for Fort Des Moines is an initial step in implementing the SuperBlock Master Plan. Through the SuperBlock planning process, members of the public expressed interest in preserving Fort Des Moines, protecting what remains of the parade grounds and reconstructing the historic gazebo. The SuperBlock Plan also calls for tourist accommodations such as a bed and breakfast, and cultural and residential uses within remaining buildings. Some of the buildings may support expansion of the Blank Park Zoo as well. The remainder of the parade grounds is proposed to become a new city park, as a large open space reflecting its historic use and including interpretive elements and a footpath around the perimeter of the grounds. Trails are planned to interconnect the other facilities within the SuperBlock (e.g. zoo, golf course, parks). Chaffee Road, which leads into the Fort, and is targeted to become the avenue to the Zoo's main gate, is proposed to be improved to reflect its historic grand entrance. In order to implement this portion of the SuperBlock Plan, an historic preservation plan is necessary to clarify the vision for the Fort and identify and prioritize rehabilitation efforts.

The Historic Preservation Plan shall be in accordance with *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* and include at least the following items:

1. Review of existing assessments of historic significance of each building, features of the site, and cultural landscape with updates as needed;
2. Assessment of physical and structural condition and integrity of buildings, infrastructure, and features of the site;
3. Identification of preservation, rehabilitation, and mothballing efforts necessary;
4. Priority schedule of preservation and rehabilitation work;
5. Estimated cost of preservation and rehabilitation efforts;
6. Recommendations for adaptive reuse and connections among the features of the site; and
7. Recommendations for easements or other legal tools to ensure ongoing preservation.

Fort Des Moines is a valuable asset to the City as well as the Country for its significance in black history, women's history, and military history. Originally established as a cavalry post in 1903, Fort Des Moines is one of only two National Historic Landmarks in Polk County and the first to be designated a National Register Historic District. It served as the Provisional Army Officer Training School, which marked both the U.S. Army's first recognition of its responsibility to train black officers and the establishment of a military tradition among African Americans. Fort Des Moines was also the birthplace of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC), later renamed the Women's Army Corps (WAC), during WWII. It was the first and largest such training center during the war, training over 72,000 women, including 3,069 officers--the first women officers in the Army at any level. Since WWII the Army has disposed of major portions of the original 640 acre tract, reducing it to approximately 170 acres. Only 43 of the nearly 350 original buildings remain. The Historic Preservation Plan will address 35 of those remaining buildings.

There are five property owners represented in this study. The City of Des Moines owns 12 of the buildings located in the study area. The Fifth Judicial District Department of Correctional Services owns property comprised of 11 buildings. Tempus Utile, LC, owns property comprised of 10 buildings. Fort Des Moines Community Bank owns a duplex (counted as 2 buildings) and the Blank Park Zoo Foundation owns the historic parade grounds. Ten of the 35 buildings have been maintained and are actively in use, the remaining buildings are either vacant or used for storage while suffering from neglect and deterioration.

After the Historic Preservation Plan is completed, the City will be able to use the Plan to determine funding priorities for rehabilitating the City-owned Fort buildings, while implementing the SuperBlock Master Plan. The Plan will aid in determining acceptable alterations, additions, and repairs for

preserving the character of the historic landscape and buildings. The other property owners will be able to use the Plan as a guide for renovations as well, or it may encourage them to sell to a developer who is prepared to make those improvements.

In addition to furthering the success of the SuperBlock Master Plan and prioritizing rehabilitation efforts, completing an Historic Preservation Plan for Fort Des Moines advances the following City goals:

Entertainment Destinations: Des Moines will be an entertainment hub for all ages and will attract visitors from the metro region and beyond

Fort Des Moines is an element of the SuperBlock Master Plan which is planned to become an entertainment destination. The Blank Park Zoo alone is the number two tourist attraction in the State (second to the Iowa State Fair). As a National Historic Landmark, Fort Des Moines has the potential to attract visitors from a large geographic area. With a rehabilitated and re-purposed Fort, along with the Zoo and other SuperBlock improvements, this area may be able to close in on that number one spot, boosting community pride, spurring economic development, and bringing in tourism dollars.

Pride in Community Assets: The City will set the standard for constructing and maintaining attractive buildings, parks, and infrastructure that represent our world-class city and generate civic pride.

This plan is the first step to restoring these buildings to their original glory and instilling civic pride and military admiration in all those who visit.

A Request for Proposals was issued to find a team of consultants to complete this historic preservation plan for Fort Des Moines. The City received seven proposals from local firms as well as from around the country. The review committee consisted of representatives from the Parks Department, Community Development, Engineering, Economic Development, and the Blank Park Zoo. After thoughtful discussion and careful scoring, the review committee chose Keffer/Overton Architects of Des Moines.

Keffer/Overton has substantial work history with Fort Des Moines. Their predecessor firm was one of two firms that designed and oversaw construction of the 174 WAC buildings constructed in 1942. Since 1997, they have reviewed the conditions of and historically consulted on 30 buildings in Fort Des Moines. They have been directly involved in the historical restoration and/or adaptive reuse of 7 buildings in Fort Des Moines in recent years.

Keffer/Overton teamed with Genus Landscape Architects, who consulted on the SuperBlock Master Plan, and Dr. Penelope LeFew-Blake, who is the leading historian on Fort Des Moines and the author of several papers and books on Fort Des Moines.

A new agreement with Blank Park Zoo Foundation which outlines their commitment to expansion will precede the acceptance of this grant if approved.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):

Date: April 21, 2008

Roll Call Number: 08-743, 08-744 and 08-745

Action: (A) 08-743 Approving Conceptual Plan. Moved by Meyer to adopt. Motion carried 7-0. (B) 08-744 Authorizing Voluntary Acquisition of property. Moved by Meyer to adopt. Motion carried 7-0. (C) 08-745 Recommendation from Plan and Zoning Commission. Moved by Meyer to receive and file. Motion carried 7-0. (Council Communication No. 08-224)

Date: March 10, 2008

Roll Call Number: 08-434

Action: Receive and file SuperBlock Master Plan and refer to various boards and City Manager for review and recommendation. (Council Communication No. 08-112) Moved by Meyer to adopt. Motion carried 7-0.

Date: January 7, 2008

Roll Call Number: 08-077

Action: Update from the SuperBlock Master Plan Committee and request for extension of completion date to April 2008. Sponsor: Meyer. (Council Communication No. 08-023) Moved by Meyer to approve. Motion carried 7-0.

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S):

Plan and Zoning Commission

Date: 04-03-08

Action: Approve the conceptual SuperBlock Master Plan and recommend approval to the City Council.

Park Board

Date: 03-25-08

Roll Call Number: 08-030

Action: Approve the conceptual SuperBlock Master Plan and recommend approval to the City Council.

Date: 2-26-08

Roll Call Number: 08-024

Action: Receive and file the SuperBlock Master Plan

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS:

- Acceptance of HRDP Grant.
- Council acceptance of Keffer/Overton proposal for the Historic Preservation Plan.

- Council adoption of Historic Preservation Plan upon completion.

For more information on this and other agenda items, please call the City Clerk's Office at 515-283-4209 or visit the Clerk's Office on the second floor of City Hall, 400 Robert D. Ray Drive. Council agendas are available to the public at the City Clerk's Office on Thursday afternoon preceding Monday's Council meeting. Citizens can also request to receive meeting notices and agendas by email by calling the Clerk's Office or sending their request via email to cityclerk@dmgov.org.