

 <p style="text-align: center;">Council Communication Office of the City Manager</p>	Date:	October 8, 2012
	Agenda Item No.	36
	Roll Call No.	<u>12-1575</u>
	Communication No.	<u>12-543</u>
	Submitted by:	Richard A. Clark, City Manager

AGENDA HEADING:

Approval of items pertaining to the proposed Nollen Plaza renovation.

SYNOPSIS:

The Civic Center of Greater Des Moines has been leading efforts to renovate Nollen Plaza. On October 4, 2012, the Civic Center Board of Directors approved funding to complete the design and construction documents for renovating Nollen Plaza. To ensure collaboration, cooperation and coordination of this central downtown public space and fulfill the City’s responsibility to approve improvements in the Plaza, review of the design progress and input for future design development is needed.

Staff is requesting that the Council:

1. Receive and file the Schematic Design documents of the proposed Nollen Plaza Renovation.
2. Refer Schematic Design of the proposed Nollen Plaza Renovation to applicable City Boards and Commissions for their review and input to City Council.
3. Direct the City Manager and appropriate staff to review:
 - a) the proposed Schematic Design of Nollen Plaza and forthcoming design work on the Civic Center block for operations and maintenance appropriateness
 - b) the proposed Design Validation Assessment of the Grove Tree Selection and tree selection and coordination of tree planting specifications in forthcoming design work by the City Arborist.
 - c) the current lease agreement for the Plaza area
 - d) options to contribute to the funding of the project
 - e) the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines’ proposed naming of the Plaza and spaces within the Plaza

Key elements of the design include an interactive fountain, an open plaza for large community events, intimate gathering areas, gardens, and public art. Illustrative information pertaining to the schematic design for the renovation of Nollen Plaza is attached to this communication and on file in the City Manager’s Office.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount: Subject to review as directed by this action.

Funding Source: Unknown at present time.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

History

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, designed by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, stands on the northeast corner of the Plaza.

Nollen Plaza was dedicated in 1979 as part of the new Civic Center complex, which replaced the recently closed KRNT Theater. The City acquired the Nollen Plaza and the adjacent Capital Square sites in the late 1970s, as urban renewal disposition parcels. 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. A severe storm destroyed the tree grove on the south side of the Plaza earlier this year.

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).

Present Lease with Civic Center

The Nollen Plaza site is 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. The City owns all current improvements to Nollen Plaza except the Civic Center has rights to retain/remove the Oldenberg/Van Bruggen Crusoe sculpture. 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; expires in 2091.
- Operations: Nollen Plaza is operated by the Civic Center Board of Directors 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.
- Maintenance: The City is responsible for grounds maintenance (snow removal, grass trimming, landscaping, etc.). The Civic Center is responsible for maintenance of site fixtures, furnishings, and the fountain.

Design Process

April 23-25, 2008: Design Charette.

Three (3) public meetings were held over three (3) days to solicit input on the vision and requisite elements for a renovation of Nollen Plaza. Ken Smith, an internationally-known landscape architect from New York City (and ISU graduate), and Jim Campbell, an emerging artist from San Francisco, worked over the three days and provided a design concept to conclude the charette. The designers were hired with funding from the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines and the Cowles Foundation. The charette established the following elements of the vision for renovating Nollen Plaza:

1. Keep the “Umbrella”
2. Keep the diagonal
3. Save as many trees as possible
4. Create a draw; create a new civic icon
5. Utilize water; introduce interactive elements
6. Connect the space
7. Provide creature comforts (ie benches, bike racks, shade, etc)
8. Improve lighting and security
9. Reconstruct sustainably.

November 2009 – current: Coordination with the Peacemakers

Responding to a request by Chet Guinn and an organization he leads, the Peacemakers, staff has been meeting periodically with the group to keep them informed of progress with the Nollen Plaza renovation design. Staff has worked with them to respond to their requests where possible, including coordination of input to incorporate peace themes in the Nollen Plaza design, facilitation of a peace sculpture installation near the intersection of 7th and Day Street north of downtown, and facilitation of interim recognition of the organization and their mission via a “peace marker” installed with landscaping in Nollen Plaza along Walnut Street in 2010.

August 2010 – May 2011: Schematic Design

The Civic Center of Greater Des Moines contracted with Ken Smith Landscape Architects and their local sub-consultants, RDG Planning and Design, to develop the ideas generated at the 2008 design charette into a schematic design.

February 10, 2011: Public Meetings

Two (2) public meetings were held to present a draft of the schematic design for the renovation of Nollen Plaza and gather input from the public and stakeholders. Approximately 160 people attended the meetings; attendees were inquisitive, engaged and supportive of the proposed design.

August, 2011 – current: Fund-raising

The Civic Center of Greater Des Moines has been raising private funds to implement the proposed design.

July – September, 2012: Schematic Design Assessment Study

The Civic Center of Greater Des Moines commissioned a study to review a few key aspects of the Nollen Plaza renovation, including: review of the design of the former south grove area as a result of the loss of the Linden grove including options for tree species selection and topography, incorporation of a major public arts piece, and inclusion of the landscape on the Civic Center block in the scope of the project.

June 2013: Commence construction

Based on fund-raising progress, the Civic Center has set a goal of commencing construction on the Nollen Plaza renovation next year.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):

Date: December 28, 2008

Roll Call Number: [08-2230](#)

Action: [Urban](#) Renewal Development Grant Agreement with the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines for costs related to the construction and installation of improvements to the Civic Center, \$500,000. ([Council Communication No. 08-736](#)). Moved by Vlassis to adopt. Motion Carried 7-0.

Date: March 24, 2008

Roll Call Number: [08-511](#)

Action: [From](#) Cowles Foundation and Civic Center of Greater Des Moines regarding “revising of Nollen Plaza and requesting cooperation and assistance from the City. ([Council Communication No. 08-146](#)). Moved by Vlassis to receive and file the letter. Motion Carried 7-0.

Date: January 20, 1992

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.

Date: December 15, 1975

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.

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S): NONE

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS:

Urban Design Review Board consideration of Schematic Design, 16 October 2012

Access Advisory Board consideration of Schematic Design, 17 October 2012

Plan and Zoning Commission consideration of Schematic Design, 18 October 2012

Parks Board consideration of Schematic Design, 23 October 2012

Urban Design consideration of Boards and Commissions input and recommendation to City Council, as needed (date TBD)

Council Approval of Schematic Design

Council Approval of lease agreement amendment, if needed

Council Approval of City funding, if needed

Council Approval of naming

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