


COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

	Number:	24-203	Meeting:	May 6, 2024
	Agenda Item:	39	Roll Call:	24-0672
	Submitted by:	Cody Christensen, Development Services Director		

AGENDA HEADING:

Communication from the City Manager regarding redevelopment of 602 Robert D. Ray Drive (Argonne Armory), and initiating consideration of the property for designation as a Local Landmark.

SYNOPSIS:

The City of Des Moines owns the property at 602 Robert D. Ray Drive, currently occupied by several City departments, including Neighborhood Services, Development Services, Information Technology, Facilities, and Legal. The City has purchased the property at 1200 Locust Street and will be vacating the Argonne Armory to make way for a new occupant.

Christensen Development (Jake Christensen, President, 215 East 3rd Street, Suite 300, Des Moines, IA 50309), on behalf of the Des Moines Performing Arts organization (Jeff Chelesvig, President & CEO, 211 Walnut Street, Des Moines, IA 50309), has approached the City Manager's Office with interest in the redevelopment of the subject property. The purpose of the redevelopment of the subject property is to create the main facility for the various youth programs offered by Des Moines Performing Arts.

The Des Moines Performing Arts' education and community outreach programs impact over 70,000 individuals annually. However, as they strive to expand their impact, there is a challenge due to lack of adequate physical space. The proposal incorporates the intention for the Argonne Armory building to become part of its tradition of creating meaningful and accessible opportunities for audiences of all backgrounds, while presenting artists and educators that uplift diverse stories and experiences.

The proposed renovations represent an approximate investment by Des Moines Performing Arts of \$15 million, and the expansion of the education program's reach by an additional 20,000 participants per year.

The City Council is asked to direct City staff to work with the developer to refine the projects' programming, design, and financial proposal and present preliminary terms of the developer-initiated proposal to the City Council at a later date. There will also be an opportunity for competing proposals to be submitted and considered by the City Council.

The City Council is also being asked to approve the request from the City Manager to initiate proceedings necessary for the designation of the Argonne Armory at 602 Robert D. Ray Drive as a Local Landmark. The Argonne Armory is eligible for Local Landmark status since the building has historical and aesthetic interest but is located outside of a locally designated historic district. The designation process would include hearings at both the City's Historic Preservation Commission and Plan and Zoning Commission, with final approval by the City Council, to ensure that the designation meets the criteria established in City Code Section 58-58. If the property is designated as a Local

Landmark, any future exterior modifications of the property would need to be reviewed and approved by the City's Historic Preservation Commission in accordance with City Code Section 58-62.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The financial proposal for the project, if selected, will be negotiated with the developer and presented to the City Council at a later date.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- The Argonne Armory is a three (3)-story office building located on a 30,740-square-foot site. The finished area within the building is around 67,000 square-feet.
- The building was built in 1934 during the Great Depression. It is Art Deco style, but similar to the Beaux-Arts style that was used for the other public buildings along the riverfront.
- The priorities for redevelopment selection of this property include the contribution and value-add to the East Village area and Downtown, the proposed programming and use, and the viability of the proposal.
- As a part of the disposition process for this property, there will be an opportunity for competing proposals to be received and considered by the City Council.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S): NONE

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS:

- City Council – Preliminary Terms of Agreement, and opening the opportunity for the submission of competing proposals
- Urban Design Review Board – review and recommendation
- Historic Preservation Commission – Local Landmark Recommendation
- Plan and Zoning Commission – Local Landmark Recommendation
- City Council – Final Terms of an Urban Renewal Development Agreement and Sale of City-owned Property
- City Council – Approval of nomination for the subject property to be designated as a Local Landmark

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