

**CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNICATION:**

02-636

AGENDA:

DECEMBER 16, 2002

SUBJECT:

COURT AVENUE
DISTRICT MASTER
DEVELOPMENT
PLANNING

TYPE:

RESOLUTION
ORDINANCE
RECEIVE/FILE

SUBMITTED BY:

RICHARD CLARK
DEPUTY CITY
MANAGER

ITEM 68

**OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER
CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA**

SYNOPSIS —

In the Fall of 2000, the City and the Downtown Community Alliance began a successful collaboration that resulted in the development of the Vine Street Lofts and Water Street Brownstone housing project on 1st Street south of Court Avenue. This project is now well into construction. In addition, on June 3, 2002, the Council approved a series of actions designed to promote commercial and residential rehabilitation projects, including a year-round public market, in the Court Avenue District.

Many development and rehabilitation opportunities exist in the Court Avenue area. It is critical that the City and the business community reaffirm their commitment to the area. It is recommended that Council:

1. Approve the reconstitution of the Court Avenue Housing Committee to guide the redevelopment planning process in the Court Avenue District. The Committee is comprised of City representatives, business community representatives—including Court Avenue businesses—appointed by the Downtown Community Alliance, and a Polk County representative. It is envisioned that the Committee membership would continue as before; however, the City Manager and the Downtown Community Alliance President may identify other individuals to serve on the Committee as needed.
2. Reconfirm the role of Downtown Community Alliance as the project lead in order to formulate development proposals and identify potential developers.
3. Authorize staff to prepare the necessary developer-initiated proposal assuming the proposed development requires the use of City-owned land acquired through the urban renewal process.
4. Direct staff to proceed with the acquisition of two parcels north of the Rock Island Depot Building by purchase, gift, or condemnation as initially authorized by Roll Call No. 99-3841 approved December 20, 1999 (see attached map).

FISCAL IMPACT —

The Downtown Community Alliance will be responsible for all expenses related to the Court Avenue Development Planning. The City has committed funds in this year's budget to purchase the two parcels. The Real Estate Division, Engineering Department, estimates the acquisition cost to total \$925,000.

RECOMMENDATION —

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Approval.

BACKGROUND —

On September 11, 2000, Council received and filed the Court Avenue District Plan and preliminarily approved public investment in the Court Avenue District. On April 12, 2002, the Council approved several roll calls concerning the financing package for Vine Street Lofts/Water Street Brownstones, the first project in the area resulting from the planning effort.

In the past decade, two significant downtown planning efforts have occurred—Destination Downtown and the Major Projects Task Force. Both of these efforts recommended the creation of a vibrant downtown neighborhood. Spurred by these efforts, the City of Des Moines, with assistance from the private sector, completed the Court Avenue Neighborhood Urban Design Plan. This document developed a set of design guidelines and general development principals that could be used to redevelop the neighborhood to its full potential. This document was approved by the City Council in January 1999.

In July 1999, another public/private effort was undertaken to develop a development master plan for the neighborhood that would encourage significant residential and mixed-use development. The Court Avenue District Plan concluded that the market could support at least 1,000 people living in 700 apartment, condominium, and townhouse units.

Due to the use of an innovative model of public and private participation, construction of the first major housing project in the neighborhood is underway. The district is at a critical crossroads, however. The public and private sectors must again step forward to spur additional activity or the development of the area may stall.

The Downtown Community Alliance intends to retain the services of a consultant to conduct the majority of the required predevelopment activities. It is anticipated that the predevelopment activities will be completed by July 1, 2003.

It is anticipated that the vacant parcels south of Court Avenue between 3rd and 5th Streets (the former Entertainment Center site) will be considered a priority for redevelopment. The City has purchased the majority of the site, but two parcels remain to be purchased. Staff will proceed immediately with the acquisition of these parcels so that the redevelopment site is assembled by the time the predevelopment work is completed.

Attachment

