



Meeting Date: April 17, 2017

Report No. CC-17-51

Agenda Item No. 8-d

Status: General Orders

Purpose: Information to Facilitate Council's Initiatives for Block 34

Background Summary: Following Council's discussion of Block 34 on April 3, 2017, staff believes it is Council's goal to have sales tax generating elements along with public amenities consisting of permanent and short-term sales tax generating business areas, restroom, green space, play area, and an entertainment venue. Staff believes there is consensus on these features.

A desire was also expressed to have this plan meet the goals of the 2005 Puma Plan to incorporate streetscapes and sidewalks into a larger overall plan for downtown. There is also a desire to implement the sales tax generating element in the near future. Unanswered questions regarding the development include specific plans for locating each element and how much space to allocate to sales tax generating areas.

The entire discussion is complicated by the current financial condition of the city's general fund. There are no near-term prospects for city financing of the additional elements. Studies of markets in the United States indicate the venture most probable to provide sales tax generating businesses in this location would be hospitality related such as a coffee shop/breakfast establishment, beer garden, and/or a fast casual restaurant. These businesses with early morning to late evening hours and both indoor and outdoor seating should draw customers to the area and provide year round continuous use.

These factors lead me to recommend hiring an architect to accomplish several aspects of moving this project to reality. The advantages of hiring an architect are:

- Architects are trained in determining space allocation. A professional can provide an accurate assessment of the amenities desired along with the overall vision for use of the block and provide a placement concept.
- Architects have tools to determine the sun's effect on the overall placement of amenities. For instance, placement and orientation of the stage could be arranged to assist in optimum view for patrons.
- Providing the professional with material previously developed in studies of the area can assist in placement of structures and amenities in such a manner to provide visual and actual connection with downtown in the future as streets are upgraded for multimodal transportation.
- A professional could plan for temporary shipping containers or other movable structures for commercial business if desired. These structures could be located in the area planned for a future large pavilion to house a variety of itinerant vendors or other events.

While composing this report, I contacted Gary Sparks, principal in the Sparks Reed Architecture firm in Tulsa. The Sparks Reed firm is a well-respected Oklahoma firm with an outstanding reputation and significant ties to Stillwater. The purpose of my contact was to get an estimate of the cost of the proposal subject matter described in this report. Mr. Sparks told me he would be in Stillwater on April 12 and would like to see the location and some of the material from previous studies of Block 34.

On April 12, John McClenny and I met with Mr. Sparks at Block 34 and made available any or all of the materials from previous studies. Mr. Sparks told me he would be happy to provide site plan concept drawings based on the information provided in this report. Further, Mr. Sparks told me he would provide the site plan concept drawings pro bono.

Once an architect is engaged and background provided, meetings with the Council would be held. Once Council approves a concept plan, staff can develop a Request for Proposals to solicit interested commercial enterprises.

The RFP could be structured in such a way to require the commercial enterprise to provide for public restrooms. The ground lease for the business could be adjusted to amortize the additional investment. Because the restrooms would be for a public purpose, construction fees for that portion of the project would not be levied. Once an enterprise is ready to build, utility infrastructure can be installed for the entire development and leveling of the lot and installation of grass can be completed.

In the interim, the city could attempt to fund a stage and play area in a future budget while concurrently soliciting donations for the remaining permanent structures such as the stage and play area. Citizens have volunteered to actively work to produce what they believe would be significant donations for completion of the amenities. In the meanwhile, events can take place using a city owned temporary stage.

Alternatives: The following alternatives are available to the City Council:

1. Authorize the City Manager to engage an architect to develop a conceptual plan for Block 34 including permanent and short-term sales tax generating business areas, restroom, green space, play area, and an entertainment venue.
2. Provide staff with further direction regarding Block 34.
3. Accept Gary Sparks' offer to provide site plan drawings pro bono.

Recommendation: Staff recommends City Council accept Gary Sparks' offer to provide site plan drawings pro bono for Block 34 including permanent and short-term sales tax generating business areas, restroom, green space, play area, and an entertainment venue.

Prepared by: Norman McNickle, City Manager

Reviewed by: City Manager's Office Staff

Submitted by: Norman McNickle, City Manager