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#26
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MEMORANDUM

City Manager - Council Memo No. MC08-034

DATE: June 12, 2008

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

THRU: W. MARK PENTZ, CITY MANAGER

FROM: MARIAN NORRIS, ASSISTANT TO CITY MANAGER
JODY CRAGO, MUSEUM ADMINISTRATOR

SUBJECT: CITY HALL AND MUSEUM SITE LOCATION

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the site layout entitled "Urban Edge" which incorporates the Chandler Museum on the City Hall site.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION: In June of 2005 RNL Design was contracted to provide programming and site selection services for the new City Hall and Museum. In May 2006, City Council approved the east side of Arizona Avenue and Chicago Street as the site for the new City Hall, and Site 6, as part of a mixed use development, as the location for the Museum.

The City entered into an agreement with SmithGroup, Inc in December 2007 to provide architectural and design services for the new proposed City Hall. Since that time City staff and SmithGroup have been working diligently on the programming and site layout for the City Hall, which will include parking, Council Chambers and administrative offices.

In April 2008 the developer of Site 6 contacted the City to say he was unable to develop Site 6 to also include the Museum. At that time, the City requested SmithGroup to develop site strategies that could include the Museum.

During this time there has been further discussion as to a preferred site for the Museum. The Museums Advisory Board has been deliberating as to whether the Museum should retain a downtown presence or be built at Tumbleweed Park.

In May 2008 the Museums Advisory Board held a special meeting to further discuss the Tumbleweed Park site and the Downtown site. SmithGroup presented their site layout to the Board for their review and comment. Staff also presented their site ideas for the Tumbleweed Park location. On June 4 Planning and Zoning hosted a meeting on the site strategy SmithGroup had developed for the City Hall and Museum site in downtown. Invitations were extended to the Chamber of Commerce, Historical Society, Downtown Chandler Community Partnership, City

employees, and interested parties to attend this meeting. Over 100 people attended this meeting and were given the opportunity to present their comments. As a whole the discussion and comments were positive and insightful.

DISCUSSION: The site layout entitled “Urban Edge” is the proposed layout for the City Hall and the Museum. The site incorporates a series of one-story buildings, a large office tower, parking garage and open, plaza space. This site plan supports a strong synergy between the site and pedestrians. It encourages walking activity along Arizona Avenue, stimulating the streetscape with activity and pedestrians.

The one-story buildings frame the edge of the site along Arizona Avenue and in front of the parking garage. These buildings will provide easy and close access to those city departments that have a high volume of citizen traffic, such as the City Clerk, Neighborhood Resources and Utility billing. These buildings will also serve as a screen around the parking garage. The Council Chambers and video studio will be situated on the public plaza area at Chicago and Washington Streets, with easy access to the parking garage.

The majority of City staff will be housed in the office tower, including Mayor and Council, City Manager, Human Resources, CAPA, Management Services, Community Services, Economic Development, Downtown Real Estate and City Attorney. With the office tower on the northern edge of the site, there will be convenient access from this building with the existing civic campus. It is estimated that pedestrians can reach any location on the Historic Square, as well as the Library and Public Works buildings in a five-minute walk.

The Museum is located on Washington Street, adjacent to the proposed Serrano’s office and retail building. This provides a perfect link with the existing retail establishments on the Historic Square, as well as access to the proposed parking garage across the street. This parking garage is proposed to incorporate art gallery space on Washington Street, right across the street from the Museum.

MUSEUM STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The “Urban Edge” design offers several advantages for the Museum over the Tumbleweed Park site.

- Placing the museum close to the downtown in conjunction with artist spaces, the Vision Gallery, the Center for the Arts and Historic Downtown Chandler’s restaurant and retail core creates the right “mix” of uses that has proven to make cities vibrant and attractive destinations
- The timing of museum construction would be tied to the City Hall construction, thus completing and opening a new museum for the residents of Chandler sooner than any other site.
- The Museum has always been historically and intellectually tied with downtown Chandler. The “Urban Edge” design keeps the museum near the core of the historic downtown, indeed closer than any design explored to date.
- The “Urban Edge” design creates an arts and cultural district by placing artist studios and/or art businesses, the Vision Gallery, and the museum in close proximity. This district then becomes a destination for residents, tourists and visitors valley wide.

- Being located in a potential arts and culture district produces the opportunity for the Museum to serve broad and diverse audience segments by offering sophisticated traveling exhibits on arts and culture in addition to exhibits and programs geared towards traditional family audiences.
- The close location to Serrano's Restaurant and the other restaurants on the square offers museum visitors several places for museum visitors to eat following a visit. Likewise the restaurants and shops provide foot traffic that the Museum could serve with extended evening hours and programming.
- The planned parking garage across Washington will ensure ample parking for Museum users.
- The potential of displaying banners or utilizing an electronic billboard on the core service tower for the main City Hall building allows the museum to have an Arizona Avenue face.
- The "Urban Edge" design activates foot traffic both North and South as well as East and West. This "walkable" design offers improved opportunity for drop in visits to the Museum by both people doing business at City Hall, as well as shoppers visiting Historic Downtown Chandler.
- The museum along Washington Street should expand the public's view of Historic Downtown Chandler beyond the downtown square. It also could serve as an important part in the revitalization of Washington Street.
- The museum would become an important bridge between the restaurants and retail spaces of downtown and the civic uses of the City Hall.
- Locating the museum at the City Hall site would ensure that the Downtown Chandler Community Partnership and the Chamber would be enthusiastic supporters of the museum.
- The outdoor green space to the South of the City Hall in conjunction with the green space to the west of the planned museum building could lead to some compelling programming opportunities for both the museum as well as the City.

MUSEUMS ADVISORY BOARD:

At the June 11 Museums Advisory Board meeting, they voted to recommend to Council the downtown site location for the Chandler Museum, with the following suggestions: 1) utilize a professional museum planner, 2) coordinate the bus drop off and parking, 3) look at best use of Washington Street, 4) Museum should have a distinct architecture, 5) use of banners and signage to advertise the Museum, 6) City should pursue the N/S access to the square through a breezeway, 7) look at expansion possibilities, 8) understand that the operating hours for the Museum will be different from the civic hours of use, and 9) focus on visitor and staff safety for evening events. Vote: 4 ayes, 2 nays.

PROPOSED MOTION: Move to approve the site layout entitled "Urban Edge" which incorporates the Chandler Museum on the City Hall site.