

MEMORANDUM



TO: CLAY PEARSON, CITY MANAGER
FROM: RANDY AULER, CPRP, DIRECTOR PARKS, RECREATION
AND FORESTRY
SUBJECT: STUDY OF POTENTIAL USE OF THE FUERST PROPERTY
DATE: MARCH 24, 2008

In November 2007, Novi citizens approved a bond measure for the construction of a new library to be located just west of the current library building, adjacent to the city-owned Fuerst property. The new, two-story, approximately 55,000 square foot facility will include a state-of-the art computer lab, meeting space, children's activity center, teen area, and outdoor reading space. The facility is expected to open in the winter/spring 2009-2010.

For practical purposes of construction (grading and heavy equipment proximity) plus enhancing usability, construction of the new library necessitates the relocation of the historic Township Hall and presents an opportunity to look at the greatly underutilized 6.5 acres of public property (Fuerst property) to its west. The property has high potential to be a quality community asset as it is on a corner of the much larger Civic Center/High School campus. The City contracted with McKenna and Associates, a consultant, to study the use of the Fuerst property, facilitate community input sessions, and prepare two conceptual plans and recommendations for property use, including the relocation of the Township Hall to the property. The attached report provides a substantive financial and operational analysis of the property, its current use, and potential future uses. McKenna and Associates completed a solid analysis of the costs involved with at least two available options for future planning all within a six week span of time, providing the City with information needed to plan for the future.

Developing the Report

Public participation was a valued component of the analysis of the report and recommendations. Approximately 85 citizens participated in focus groups. Additionally, 55 internet surveys and 12 written surveys were submitted. This input revealed the development of a new Community Recreation Center as the highest priority. However, that the site was too small for such a project. The next two priorities were to restore the site and utilize it as a historic village or to redevelop the site (including restoration or demolition) of existing structures for community use. **Regardless of the end-use, citizens want to see the site developed to be more accessible and usable for people of all ages.**

Conceptual Plan "A," outlined on page 9 of the report, is geared towards restoration of the property in its current configuration. It includes the restoration of the house for use as a museum and small meeting rooms, restoration of the barns to display farm equipment and the renovation of one barn for multi-purpose community use. Additionally, the concept proposes a small amphitheatre and gateway entries to the property. Ultimate estimated development cost for this concept is \$3.3 million.

Conceptual Plan "B," outlined on page 12 of the report, provides a more modern and multiple uses of the property. It includes the creation of a "campus quad" that unifies the high school, the library,

and Municipal complex, a small amphitheatre, multi-use building, and an overlook plaza. At build-out, estimated development cost for this concept is \$2.9 million.

Both plans provide for phased implementation.

Both conceptual Plans A and B include the use of the 1.25 acres of property owned by the Novi Community School District immediately adjoining Taft Road. Concept "C" provides a similar design for the site excluding the school district property. All concepts include the relocation of the Township Hall building to the city-owned Fuerst property at a cost of \$114,000.

Regardless if the restoration or adopted re-use concept plans were selected, the report provided the following recommendations:

1. The property should be used year-round;
2. Pedestrians connectivity and accessibility to the adjacent land uses are important;
3. Have year round multi-purpose indoor space;
4. Acquire the 1.25 acre parcel from the Novi Community School District;
5. Re-locate Township Hall to the site into a more formal park like setting; and
6. Install gateway entry features to tie the "campus" together visually.

Staff Recommendation

Concept "A" requires substantial investment to bring the existing buildings into any kind of serviceable condition. Even after the initial investment, the programming options are limited and the ongoing maintenance costs continue.

Staff Recommends Concept "B", which provides a modern park setting and ties together the adjacent land uses providing multiple use opportunities by the community. Additionally, the plan achieves all of the above recommendations in a more feasible manner, therefore, providing the most effective way to bring the property into community service without straining resources to accomplish City Council priorities of developing a signature park and expanding programs. The implementation of Phase 1, (building removal/salvage) and Township relocation would cost \$59,000-\$149,000. Grading work would also be explored in conjunction with the Library construction over winter/spring 2008/2009 resulting in potential costs savings.

Alternative locations for the barns and house were also preliminary scoped; and if City Council chooses, can establish a timeframe for some entity to secure alternative locations prior to a definitive date in Fall 2008 as an option. In alignment with the goal of bringing this property into community service, Phase 1, including the relocation of Township Hall, would occur in September/October 2008.

Terry Croad, McKenna Associates will provide an overview of the plan at the April 7, 2008 City Council Meeting.