

EXHIBITION CENTER DEVELOPMENTS STATUS APRIL 14, 2011

The last status report was March 1. This update reports on progress with design and costing as well as discussions at several community presentations.

The Design and Financial task groups have had several sessions with Boldt design staff and the latest version of the conceptual layout is included with this update. It was the subject of discussion with several meeting planners this month for some operations-based input. The design includes support space including the skywalk and hotel entry equal to the exhibit hall's 30,000 square feet. This is double the space suggested in the Coalition report. It reflects the site situation which calls for storage on-site of items that normally would travel throughout the hotel as well as an expanded lobby/gathering area. So far the cost range suggested in the Coalition report seems to be realistic. Note that the structure extends east to the west end of the Jones Park ramp; it will rise from the bottom of the west hill 40 feet to street level and then beyond. The exhibit hall is 150' by 200', twice the size of the RPV ballroom and over twice as high.

On the hotel front a question has arisen as to whether the Center would be taxed if owned by a not-for-profit yet rented by a for-profit. If the Center is assessed for tax there needs to be agreement as to how much and who pays. Obviously a \$1 a year rent fee does not cover a tax. Karen Harkness is working with City staff on this question.

On the County front, I have been rescheduled to be on the agenda of the Airport/Property Committee in May.

Karen Harkness is coordinating the journey through the City process, both with respect to staff groups and public meetings. The first of the latter is set for the Economic Development Committee on April 19. By that time I hope we will be able to suggest the scope of the necessary City financial commitment.

The Tourism Breakfast created an opportunity for us to follow up with the questionnaire sent to attendees on the CVB data base. It was drafted by Jennifer Stephany and executed by Brenda Timm in Dave Willems' office. Returns were sparse. As expected, a favorable inclination increased after the presentation, but there was concern about the room tax funding required.

Recently, I gave presentations at Appleton Kiwanis, Appleton Downtown Rotary, Appleton Downtown, and to an event management class at FVTC. The message is compelling and it needs to be told with clarity. WHBY has volunteered air time for spot announcements.

In the discussions many questions have focused on parking. Current Downtown Appleton parking is sometimes perceived as a barrier to economic growth, whether or not an Exhibition Center is built. In its analysis last summer the Coalition considered only the parking issues that are raised by the addition of the Exhibition Center in Downtown Appleton and concluded that downtown parking is adequate for daytime, evening and overnight parking requirements of Exhibition Center patrons.

Parking inventory in the Downtown Appleton area is around 7,800 spaces of which 3,600 are privately or County owned. 3,200 are in City ramps (including about 75 handicapped spaces) and the remainder on the streets. On average weekdays, 1,000 of the ramp spaces are not used. The furthest distant ramp from the RPV is the East ramp, 4 blocks away. Washington and Midtown ramps provide RPV access under cover; the others have only 1 block and some street crossings not under cover. Main access to the Exhibition Center will be through the RPV by skywalk or by crossing Lawrence Street directly from door to door under the skyway. Midtown and Washington ramps accommodate full hotel occupancy.

Considerations with respect to the Exhibition Center and parking include (1) exhibitor vehicles and trucks not used during an event will have designated off-site parking; (2) convention attendees do not expect parking convenience comparable to local citizens and will be happy to find cheap ramp parking for extended daytime hours; (3) for large events with attendees in outlying hotels shuttle service to Downtown Appleton is expected. For future year considerations the Washington Ramp has structural capacity for two more levels and one more elevator bank, the 222 Building's lots can be easily decked, and private lots could be available if the opportunity presents an attractive price option to owners.

Thanks for your continued interest and support of this most compelling opportunity!

WSR April 13