



CITY OF CLEARWATER

COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Jennifer Poirrier, City Manager

FROM: Jesus Nino, Executive Director, Community Redevelopment Agency

DATE: November 15, 2024

SUBJECT: Overview and Plan for the Clearwater Downtown Library Redevelopment

Purpose and Timeline

The deliverable for this initiative, including a recommendation and a high-level scope of work for a potential Request for Proposal (RFP), will be completed within a week from the date of this memorandum. This memorandum provides an overview of the proposal, legal considerations, directives from the November 4, 2024, Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Trustees meeting, and the next steps necessary to advance the project.

Background

The Clearwater Downtown Library has been identified as underutilized and is poised for reimagining for certain sections of the library to better serve the community, attract consistent foot traffic, and contribute to downtown revitalization. A proposal to integrate a Visual Arts Museum or similar arts and cultural experiences has been discussed, emphasizing the following goals:

- **Increased Utilization:** Transforming the library into a cultural hub to draw visitors throughout the week.
- **Economic Development:** Enhancing downtown's vibrancy by creating attractions that complement the park, amphitheater, and other assets.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Securing strong community support (89%) for a high-performing arts and cultural venue to drive foot traffic and foster business synergies.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Leveraging CRA funds and potential partnerships, such as with the Salvador Dalí Museum, or other as discussed by the Trustees, to introduce innovative and interactive experiences.

Legal Considerations and Framework

Adherence to the city charter, CRA guidelines, and Florida Statutes is critical to the success of this initiative.

1. Charter Restrictions:

- The library may be leased for arts and cultural purposes but cannot be sold.

- Any uses beyond permitted activities, such as a hotel, would require voter approval through a referendum.
- 2. **CRA Fund Usage:**
 - Projects must align with the CRA’s Community Redevelopment Plan, focusing on reducing blight, creating jobs, and fostering private investment.
- 3. **Competitive Solicitation (Fla. Stat. § 163.380):**
 - A 30-day public advertisement/solicitation process is required for redevelopment proposals, ensuring transparency and fostering innovation.
- 4. **Private Support:**
 - Community and corporate financial support are vital to achieving long-term sustainability, following successful models like the Salvador Dalí Museum.
- 5. **Prohibition on Financing Certain Projects (Fla. Stat. § 163.370(3)(a)):**
 - Increment revenues cannot fund the construction or expansion of administrative buildings unless taxing authorities agree, or the project supports community policing innovation.
 - **Interpretation for the Library:** As the library is not an administrative building, this restriction does not apply. Renovations or expansions funded by increment revenues must align with redevelopment goals, such as supporting arts and cultural tourism or enhancing the library’s community role.

Directives from CRA Trustees

Following the November 4, 2024, meeting, the CRA Trustees directed staff to proceed with the following:

1. **Focus on Arts and Cultural Experiences:**
 - Explore museum-like, interactive concepts that align with the city charter, drive consistent foot traffic, and support downtown businesses.
2. **Public-Private Partnerships:**
 - Develop proposals to partner with organizations in arts and culture, ensuring innovative and engaging uses of the library.
3. **Competitive Solicitation:**
 - Draft a 30-day RFP and process to attract proposals, complying with statutory requirements while ensuring broad participation.
4. **Alignment with Strategic Goals:**
 - Ensure the project adheres to CRA and City Strategic Plan objectives, focusing on economic impact, community engagement, and long-term sustainability.
5. **Staff Plan Development:**
 - Create a high-level action plan for evaluating proposals and aligning redevelopment goals.

Next Steps and Deliverables

To meet the December CRA Trustees meeting deadline, the following actions will be completed within a week of this memorandum:

1. **Engagement with Key Departments and Stakeholders:**
 - **City Departments:** Library, Planning and Development, Legal, Budgeting, Procurement.

- **Outside Stakeholders:** Clearwater Arts Alliance and other relevant cultural organizations.
- 2. **Recommendation and Scope of Work:**
 - Develop a high-level scope of work for the RFP, ensuring alignment with charter requirements and strategic goals.
 - Compile feedback from stakeholders to refine the project proposal and prepare for presentation at the December CRA Trustees meeting.

Conclusion

This initiative represents an opportunity to transform the Clearwater Downtown Library into a vibrant, multi-functional cultural hub. By aligning the project with legal guidelines, engaging stakeholders, and leveraging partnerships, the CRA will deliver an actionable plan to achieve these goals. Further updates will follow as directed.