



Legislation Text

File #: ID#20-7922, Version: 1

SUBJECT/RECOMMENDATION:

City Hall Site Selection Update

SUMMARY:

In January 2019, the City of Clearwater vacated its City Hall building and temporarily relocated its administrative offices to One Clearwater Tower (600 Cleveland Street) under a five-year lease. During that five years the intent was to complete an already ongoing joint use facility discussion with Pinellas County, and based on that study determine the best path forward for future construction of a new City Hall. The joint use study was completed in August 2019, and while its results showed potential capital and operational savings for the City, it did not provide those same efficiencies for Pinellas County. As a result, the City focused its efforts on a building that would operate solely as a City Hall for the City of Clearwater.

In October 2019, the directors of the CRA, Engineering, and Planning and Development Services departments were tasked with conducting a site selection study for the new building. The study commenced with the development of review criteria deemed pertinent so that staff had the clarity it needed to ensure an objective, well thought out result that was focused on those areas deemed most important. Staff approached the generation of those criteria with the understanding that it had to be guided by Objective 1B of the Clearwater Downtown Redevelopment Plan, which states that “the location, placement and design of a new City Hall needs to reflect the building’s civic importance as a community-gathering space,” while balancing cost factors (real estate, construction and operation), and the building’s ability to act as an economic development catalyst for Downtown. To that end, the following four criteria were developed to recognize the above considerations and points were assigned to each based on their relative importance in the decision-making process.

- **Implementation of Downtown Plan - 4 points**
 - Visibility and civic prominence
 - Location
 - Compatibility with surrounding uses/scale and fit with Character District Vision
 - Economic development catalyst potential (anchor to attract future development)
 - Transportation access (vehicular, pedestrian, transit, trail connection)
 - Proximity to other City services/facilities

(Considerations such high/low visibility, compatible/not compatible with surrounding uses, likely to/not likely to spur redevelopment of surrounding sites; frees up other institutional land for redevelopment; good transportation access for pedestrian, bikes, transit and vehicles/limited access; close to other city facilities)

- **Real Estate - 3 points**
 - Ownership
 - Available for acquisition if not city owned
 - Potential for partnership/joint tenancy and/or public/private partnership
 - Eligible for CRA incentives/opportunity zone

- Construction ready/requires demolition

(Considerations - City/CRA owned; willing/unwilling sellers; high potential/low potential for public/private partnership; in/out of Opportunity Zone; construction ready/requires demolition)

- **Site Characteristics - 2 points**

- Parcel size and configuration
- Parking for facility (on-site or off-site or combination)
- Site conditions - topography, views, environmental contamination, existing trees, etc.
- Infrastructure -adequate utilities availability, stormwater, traffic impacts on surrounding roadways
- Sustainability (opportunities for sustainable infrastructure, etc.)

(Considerations - large/small site; good/awkward parcel configuration; good/poor site conditions; adequate infrastructure; negative impact on surrounding roadways; opportunity for sustainable infrastructure)

- **Cost - 1 point**

- Land acquisition
- Construction costs (renovation/new construction)
- Site preparation
- Operational Efficiency
- Operating costs/ongoing costs

(Considerations - City/CRA owned/not owned - low costs vs. high costs for acquisition; can/cannot accommodate City Hall and MSB operations; requires renovation/new construction;

In an effort to narrow down the properties that would be reviewed in downtown, staff also used data generated by the now completed joint use facility review to determine a minimum lot size necessary to house a facility. The result was focus on sites approximately two acres in area.

At the November 18, 2019 city council meeting, staff then presented the evaluation criteria and nine potential sites for discussion. Council agreed with the criteria and expressed support for staff to consider the possibility of a Government Center option in addition to a City Hall only option. Additionally, Council asked the team to include the Main Library site in the site selection process bringing the total to ten properties to be evaluated. Below are the results of the evaluation and subsequent ranking of the sites in order based on the total assigned points. The location of each site is highlighted in the Potential City Hall Sites Aerial Photograph document and the points assigned for each site and criteria are captured in the City Hall Site Selection Rankings Table document.

1. 9.25 points - Myrtle Avenue West - Court & Pierce Streets, south of MSB
2. 7.25 points - Myrtle Avenue East - Park and Pierce Streets, east of MSB
3. 5.25 points - Walgreens - NE corner Myrtle Ave. & Cleveland St.
4. 5.0 points - PSTA/County Lot - Ft. Harrison, B/W Park and Pierce Streets
5. 4.75 points - CRA Owned - Cleveland Street, B/W Betty Ln. & Lincoln Ave.

6. 4.25 points - Frank Crum Property - Missouri Ave. b/w Pierce Ave. & Gould St.
7. 3.00 points - Main Library - Osceola Ave. and Drew St.
8. 3.00 points - iDatix - Court St. & Gulf to Bay Ave.
9. 2.50 points - Court/Chestnut Triangle - Apex of Court & Chestnut Streets
- 10.2.00 points - Drew and Laura St. - South side of Drew St. (Nall Lumber)

The selection team issued RFQ 10-20 for a new City Hall feasibility study that would include a series of concept studies and sketches for a new City Hall building. Additionally, the consultant was asked to evaluate the practicality of combining the functions of MSB with the proposed new City Hall and evaluating the sites for a new Clearwater Government Center. Five firms submitted qualifications and Harvard Jolly, Inc. was selected. Colliers International was also part of the team and was tasked with evaluating the feasibility of potential redevelopment options as part of the exercise.

Because there was a significant point spread between the top two sites and the other sites, staff engaged Harvard Jolly to provide concept studies only for the top two sites - Myrtle Avenue West - between Court and Pierce and south of MSB and Myrtle Avenue East (Sites B and A respectively on the Potential City Hall Sites aerial photograph). Harvard Jolly developed three main options for each site. Option 1 focuses on the construction of a new City Hall and associated parking. Option 2 includes the construction of a new Government Center with surface parking and use of the MSB garage and Option 3 includes a new Government Center and parking garage for the Center. Because the top ranked site is large and includes two properties, two additional concepts were studied that illustrated partnership opportunities with either PSTA or a private developer.

As part of the feasibility analysis for the City Hall/Government Center, Colliers International also provided an overview of the Clearwater real estate market to provide an opinion on what types of developments would be likely to be constructed if the City sold certain properties. Depending on the final location for a new City Hall/Government Center, the City could potentially have up to three parcels available to sell/lease for private redevelopment. The type of use (multi-family, retail, office etc.) will drive the sales price for the property which in turn could offset the construction costs for the new facility. City redevelopment projects also offer the opportunity to attract projects that meet land use goals identified in the Downtown Redevelopment Plan. Collier's market research indicated that the most likely types of commercial development in downtown Clearwater were retail uses that front Myrtle Avenue, mid-rise apartment development or a limited service hotel.

Based on the findings of the feasibility study, staff is recommending the City/CRA owned property located on the northwest of Court Street and Myrtle Avenue (Site B) be selected as the site for the new City Hall or Government Center. The site provides excellent visibility at the intersection of two state roadways and provides a site of civic prominence. The site has good transportation access, is located along the Pinellas Trail and is in close proximity to other city facilities and is large enough to support a stand-alone City Hall or a larger Government Center with on-site. Because either option can be built on the corner parcel, it offers the most options for public-private partnerships and redevelopment opportunities for other city-owned property.

Staff also did a cursory review of potential cost savings and operational efficiencies to determine if a more detailed study into the Government Center concept was warranted. That review determined that there is a high potential for both long-term capital savings and operational savings by merging departments into a single building.

At the March 2, 2020 Council meeting, direction was provided that consistent with the below recommendation, with staff working towards the generation of an RFP for design services within 60 days. That time period was

intended to allow time for the previous council to consider what location they wish to have the new building designed for and to allow time for the council to be sworn in and receive the same information provided to the previous council. COVID-19 shifted priorities of staff, which has caused staff to delay the follow up presentation to the new Council and with that, the decision timeline for the building location. If the council agrees, staff would anticipate that the RFP would be ready for advertising by July 16th council meeting, and staff would ask Council to provide direction on the site for the new building at that meeting.

Recommendation

Based on the feasibility study and the cost savings and operational efficiency review, staff is recommending that an RFP be issued for design services using a two phased approach. Phase one would include a work order that would provide design services to the 15% level, provide a more in-depth review of space needs both City Hall and MSB, and complete a more robust review of cost savings, operational efficiencies, and the environmental impacts of both the City Hall and Government Center concepts. Staff anticipates that such analysis would include a review of enhanced customer service opportunities such as the creation of development service center, opportunities for energy savings, the future capital impact of replacing the MSB separate from City Hall, the effect of maintaining the buildings separately rather than together, and the impact to the net present value of funds already allocated to various repair and replacement projects associated with MSB as it relates to their planned timeframe for expenditure.

Following phase one, the City Council would be provided the data needed to make a decision to construct a City Hall or a Government Center. Phase two of the design would include a second work order which would be focused on bringing the design to 100%.

An RFP for design services has been generated, however, staff will need formal direction on a site prior to advertising it.

APPROPRIATION CODE AND AMOUNT:

N/A

USE OF RESERVE FUNDS:

N/A