

EUGENE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



Work Session: City and County Partnership

Meeting Date: April 28, 2014
Department: Central Services
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Agenda Item Number: A
Staff Contact: Sarah Medary
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ISSUE STATEMENT

As the City moves forward with a phased City Hall plan, the developing block framework has encouraged creative ideas to emerge around the redevelopment of the full-block site including a possible partnership and property exchange with Lane County. This opportunity could provide a permanent site for the Lane County Farmers' Market, secure a close and prominent location for a future County Courthouse, move forward with Phase One of Eugene City Hall and continue to strengthen the connections between downtown and the river along 8th Avenue, the city's Great Civic Street. This work session will present more details on the concept for council's consideration.

BACKGROUND

In 1915, with land provided by the county and support from the City, the Lane Pomona Grange partnered with Eugene Commercial Club (forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce) to establish a public farmers' market on the west block of Eugene's "public square." The "market in the park" grew to include two covered structures and over 80 vendors. Eventually the market was able to build a permanent facility at Broadway and Charnelton which served the community until 1959. The Lane County Farmers' Market returned to Eugene's Park Blocks in the 1970s and has become a vital source of quality local produce and a cornerstone of downtown activity.

While the Farmers' Market has maximized use of the existing space, the configuration and limitations of the site make it difficult for the market to grow and reach its full potential. For many years, the Farmers' Market has expressed a need and desire to establish a larger and more prominent, year-round market in downtown.

At the same time, Phase One of the City Hall rebuild project continues to move forward. The current design concept includes approximately 25,000 square feet of building area on the existing block set on a public plaza within the context of a larger development framework for the entire site over time. The current development framework was designed to provide the flexibility and adaptability to respond to other potential development opportunities as they arise – including potential partnerships with other public entities that would maintain the civic nature of the block.

The Lane County Courthouse was designed and constructed in 1957-58. The Courthouse has served as the County's primary justice center since that time, housing the State Circuit Court, the District Attorney's Office and the Sheriff's Department. Several independent studies have identified significant deficiencies associated with the Courthouse when measured against current security and building code standards, as well as its limited ability to support modern judicial proceedings. Additionally, annual utility and maintenance costs for the Courthouse have risen steeply as it has aged. The County has previously identified a full renovation or relocation of the Courthouse as an urgent capital improvement priority.

The Butterfly Lot was constructed in 1959 on the County-owned half-block across from the Lane County Courthouse. While the lot has been considered the future site of a new courthouse and has been held for that purpose for decades, it was also identified by the Farmers' Market as a preferred site for establishing a larger, year-round market in downtown.

The City and County have an opportunity to work together to realize their shared vision for this area. By partnering in a property exchange, a portion of the City Hall block could be established as the future home of a new courthouse and the Butterfly Lot could be reclaimed as part of the Park Blocks and serve as a home for the future development of a year-round Farmers' Market. This concept builds on the City and County's shared history that brought about the first public market and supports mutual goals of providing a permanent location for a year-round public farmers' market, supporting a great civic street along 8th Avenue, strengthening downtown's connection to the river, and continuing the momentum of downtown revitalization.

Further exploration of this potential partnership could include a joint public hearing to engage and hear from stakeholders and the community, as well as a more refined timeline and process.

COUNCIL OPTIONS

1. Council can choose to pursue this opportunity and direct the City Manager to work with the County to develop a proposed process, timeline and deal points that (a) would enable the preservation and future development of the Lane County Farmers' Market on the Butterfly Lot and (b) would identify and secure property for the future courthouse development on the City Hall lot, with the first step in that process being a joint public hearing before the County Board and City Council on the concept.
2. Council can choose to pursue this opportunity in a different manner and modify the direction to the City Manager.
3. Council can choose not to pursue this opportunity at this time.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

The City Manager recommends Option 1 – to pursue the opportunity through working jointly with the County to develop a proposed process, timeline and deal points that (a) would enable the preservation and future development of the Lane County Farmers' Market on the Butterfly Lot and (b) would identify and secure property for the future courthouse development on the City Hall lot, with the first step in that process being a joint public hearing before the County Board and City Council on the concept.

SUGGESTED MOTION

Move to direct the City Manager to work with the County to develop a proposed process, timeline and deal points that (a) would enable the preservation and future development of the Lane County Farmers' Market on the Butterfly Lot and (b) would identify and secure property for the future courthouse development on the City Hall lot, with the first step in that process being a joint public hearing before the County Board and City Council on the concept.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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