

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
CITY OF WILLMAR, MINNESOTA  
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2012**

**MINUTES**

The Community Development Committee of the Willmar City Council met on Thursday, November 29, 2012, in Conference Room No.1 at the City Office Building. Chair Dokken called the meeting to order at 4:45pm.

**Present:**

Jim Dokken	Chair
Ron Christianson	Council Member
Bruce DeBlieck	Council Member
Steve Ahmann	Council Member
Bruce Peterson	Director of Planning and Development Services

**Others present:** Tim Johnson - Council Member, Kathy Schwantes, Gary Geiger, Richard Engan, and Tom Amberg.

**1. PUBLIC COMMENTS (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)**

There were no public comments offered at this meeting.

**2. WILLMAR DESIGN CENTER (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)**

Representatives of the Willmar Design Center were in attendance to discuss several items including historic preservation and infrastructure in the Central Business District. Richard Engan said that historic preservation has long been a goal of downtown groups. He said that it would be wise for Design Center representatives to meet with downtown property owners to gauge their interest in establishing a Historic Preservation District. Some buildings could then be eligible for historic tax credits if placed on the National Register. He said many of the buildings are in need of repair and financial investment to preserve or maintain them. A professional historian has encouraged preservation efforts. Legacy Grant money could be a source of funding an assessment of downtown buildings as a first step.

Committee members expressed concern over placing limits on property owners restricting the use of their buildings. It was acknowledged that there could be certain requirements for maintaining properties in a historic district. The Design Center will move forward with exploring the concept of a historic district in downtown Willmar.

Design Center representatives also offered some comments regarding infrastructure concerns in the downtown. It is noted that the parking study and gateways study directly impact infrastructure. Both issues will come back to the Community Development Committee as the processes continue. Council member Ahmann expressed concern about dirty sidewalks and how to deal with maintenance.

### **3. MID-CENTRAL RESEARCH AND OUTREACH CENTER (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)**

Kathy Schwantes, Regional Director of the University of Minnesota Extension, was present to discuss operations at the Mid-Central Research and Outreach Center (MCROC). Currently, seven or eight employees are at the facility, primary working with the Extension Service. MCROC has a full-fledged research lab which is available to the business community. A major focus is for academia to assist business with research and to bring intellectual property and ideas to the market place. The University of Minnesota operates an avian research lab on site, as well.

A test kitchen is also available for public use. Nutrition training is offered to seniors, youth, and food stamp recipients. Obesity education is also offered.

There is a new lower-level conference room that is available for public meetings and teleconferences. It is equipped with the latest in meeting technology.

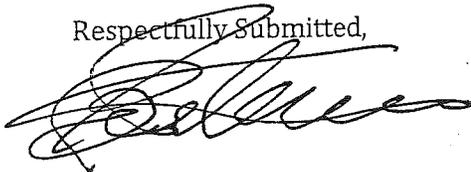
Another service offered by MCROC is internship matching with local businesses. The success of MCROC programs will be measured by the number of companies assisted and the long-term impact on the local economy. The U of M Carlson School of Management is currently developing a strategic plan for MCROC operations.

### **4. HOLIDAY INN SITE REDEVELOPMENT (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)**

Staff presented plans and building elevations for the upcoming redevelopment of the Holiday Inn site. The Holiday Inn Motel will be redeveloped into a Best Western Plus Motel, and the Comfort Inn will be remodeled into a Holiday Inn Express Inn and Suites, with a 3<sup>rd</sup> floor added to expand the number of rooms on-site. Restaurant options will also be increased. The existing Green Mill Restaurant will be remodeled to function more as a primary, sit-down restaurant, and a new entity called Hurricane Grill and Wings will be added to the site to offer more of a bar atmosphere. Staff reviewed changes to parking and traffic flow on the site and pointed out the major facelift the building was going to receive. It was noted that storm water concerns had been addressed in the planning process and there was very little in the way of increased impervious surface that will result from the changes. The Committee stated that they liked the looks of the plans and look forward to the project beginning in early 2013.

5. There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 6:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Bruce Peterson, AICP  
Director of Planning and Development Services