City Council Communication

Department: Community Development CASE #HP-21-010 Owner/Applicant: Pottawattamie County Development Corp d/b/a The 712 Initiative c/o Sheryl Garst 1228 S. Main Street Council Bluffs, IA 51503	Ordinance No. _____	Historic Preservation Meeting: 9/1/2021 Planning Commission Meeting: 9/14/2021 City Council, First Reading: 9/27/2021 City Council, Second Reading: 10/11/2021 City Council, Third Reading: 10/25/2021

Subject/Title

Request: Public hearing on the request of the Pottawattamie County Development Corporation d/b/a The 712 Initiative for local historic landmark designation of property legally described as Lot 'N' of Auditor's Subdivision of Block 6, Mynster's Addition and Block 2, Bayliss First Addition, commonly known as the Council Bluffs Telephone Exchange Building.

Location: 12 Scott Street, Council Bluffs, Iowa

Background/General Information

The applicant, Pottawattamie County Development Corporation d/b/a The 712 Initiative, is in the process of revitalizing the 500 Block of West Broadway into a vibrant mixed-use area that will provide new opportunities for commercial and residential uses within downtown Council Bluffs. Their revitalization efforts include: repurposing 530 West Broadway into a mixed commercial/residential structure and 12 Scott Street into a multi-family apartment building; redesigning/reconstructing the City's parking lot north of 12 Scott Street; and redeveloping the City's parking lot at the corner of West Broadway and Scott Street with a new multi-family or mixed commercial/residential structure. Additionally, the applicant is committed to preserving the historic architecture of properties they own at 530 West Broadway and 12 Scott Street as part of their revitalization strategy.

In December 2020, the applicant received City Council approval to designate property at 530 West Broadway as a historic local landmark (see Case #HP-20-005, Ordinance No. 6433). They are now seeking approval from the City to designate 12 Scott Street as a historic local landmark, and to support their nomination to list said property on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) (see Attachment A). Their request to list 12 Scott Street on the National Register of Historic Places was reviewed and recommended for approval by the Mayor's Office and the City's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) on September 1, 2021. Both recommendations were forwarded to the State Nominations Review Committee (SNRC), who are scheduled to review the NRHP nomination at their October 8, 2021 meeting.

The subject property was originally constructed in 1904 and served as the headquarters of the Council Bluffs Telephone Exchange for nearly 70 years. In general, the building's exterior facades and interior configurations have retained their original architectural integrity. A complete written description of the subject property's architectural design and history is detailed within the nomination paperwork (see Attachment B). An overview of the process for designating the subject property as a historic local landmark is described below:

Local Landmark Designation Procedure

The Historic Preservation Commission shall follow the procedures stated in Section 16.07.020 of the Municipal Code when designating a landmark, landmark site, or historic district. The Historic Preservation Commission's recommendation will then be forwarded to the City Planning Commission who will consider the request in the same manner as a rezoning. The Planning Commission shall forward their recommendation to the City Council. The City Council will consider the recommendation of both City Commissions and make a decision. The designation will become effective at the time of determination.

The tentative review schedule is as follows:

- City Historic Preservation Commission: 9/1/2021
- City Planning Commission: 9/14/2021
- City Council first consideration: 9/27/2021
- City Council second consideration: 10/11/2021
- City Council third consideration: 10/25/2021

Role of the Historic Preservation Commission

When considering a local landmark site designation, the Commission must use the following criteria as listed in Section 16.07.005 of the Municipal Code to evaluate the request.

1. If it has historical or cultural importance, having significant character, interest or value, as part of a development, history or cultural characteristics of the city, state, or nation;
2. If it is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;
3. If it is the site of a significant historical event;
4. If it exemplifies or reflects a cultural, political, economic, social or historic heritage of the city, state, or nation;
5. If it has potential for yielding information or archeological significance;
6. If it embodies distinctive elements of an architectural or an engineering type, style, materials or method of construction;
7. If it is representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influenced the city, state or nation;
8. If it represents an established or familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or city due to its unique location or singular physical characteristics;
9. If it has geographical importance by being part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area and should be developed or reserved according to a plan based on an historic, cultural or an architectural motif;
10. If it has a relationship to a landmark, landmark site or historical district;
11. If it has integrity as a natural environment that significantly contributes to the quality of life in the City.

Based on the information stated in the submitted nomination forms the Community Development Department is of the opinion that the subject property demonstrates the following local designation distinctions as listed above: #1, #4, #6 and #8.

The consultant that prepared the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form found that Criteria 'A' applied to the property. The consultant provided the following statement of significance:

> *As the headquarters of Council Bluffs telephone exchange for almost seventy years, the building at 12 Scott Street is locally significant under Criterion A as representative of Council Bluffs telephone communication history. The building's period of significance begins in 1904, the year of construction. To meet the growing demand for telephone service in Council Bluffs and the surrounding area, several additions were constructed starting in 1912, again in 1940, 1947, and*

1956. The building's period of significance ends in 1971 when the exchange equipment within its walls was phased out and a new company headquarters equipped with modern exchange equipment was constructed elsewhere in the city. Thereafter the building ceased serving as the telecommunication hub for Council Bluffs and the surrounding community.

Criteria A: Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

Planning and Zoning Review

The subject property is zoned C-4/Downtown Business District and is surrounded by like zoning to the north, south, east, and west (see Attachment C). Existing land uses in the general vicinity of the request include a mixture of professional offices, financial institutions, a restaurant, and City-owned parking lots/open space. The future land use plan of the Bluffs Tomorrow: 2030 Comprehensive Plan designates the subject property as Downtown/Mixed-use. Furthermore, the following vision, goals, and objectives from the Bluffs Tomorrow: 2030 Comprehensive Plan apply to the applicant's proposed multi-family project and local historic designation request:

Neighborhood & Housing
Goal – Enhance and maintain the City's neighborhoods to provide the housing, character, and supporting amenities to retain and attract residents to Council Bluffs
Objective #7: Encourage new housing in Downtown through the rehabilitation of historic buildings.

Commercial Areas
Goal – Strengthen the City's commercial areas to better meet the daily needs of Council Bluffs residents, attract patrons from beyond Council Bluffs, and create a positive image.
Objective #4: Continue the revitalization of downtown as guided by the 2003 Downtown Plan and the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

History & Identity
Goal – Recognize, preserve and build upon Council Bluffs' unique history and character by instilling local community pride and defining the way the community is perceived throughout the region, state and country.
Objective #1: Encourage participation in Council Bluffs local landmark designation program.

In general, the applicant's request to designate the subject property as a Local Historic Landmark is consistent with Bluffs Tomorrow: 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

Comments

City Departments and Local Utility Providers Comments: All City Departments and local utility providers were notified of the proposed National Register of Historic Places nomination and the local historic landmark designation requests. No comments in opposition were submitted to the Community Development Department for these requests.

Neighborhood Response: All property owners located within 200 feet of the subject property were notified of the proposed National Register of Historic Places nomination and the local historic landmark designation requests along with the place/date/time of the Historic Preservation Commission's public hearing on the matter. Copies of the complete nomination were made available for public review in the Council Bluffs Community Development Department. No public comments or inquiries were received for the request. Two letters were returned as undeliverable to the Community Development Department.

At the September 1, 2021 Historic Preservation Commission meeting, the applicant provided the City with a copy of the responses they received from an online social media petition in support of the proposed National Register of Historic Places nomination and local historic designation requests. A copy of this online social media petition is included with this report as Attachment 'D'.

Public Hearing – Historic Preservation Commission Meeting – September 1, 2021
The following individuals spoke in favor of the request:
1. Sheryl Garst, CEO, The 712 Initiative, 1228 S. Main Street, Council Bluffs, Iowa
2. Christina Jansen, Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, 1516 Cuming Street, Omaha, NE 68102
3. Christopher Gibbons, Planning Manager, City of Council Bluffs.

No one appeared in opposition.

Historic Preservation Commission Recommendation
The Historic Preservation Commission:
1. Concurs with the Community Development Department that 12 Scott Street (a.k.a. Council Bluffs Telephone Exchange Building) is historically significant based on Criteria 'A' of the National Register of Historic Places and criteria #1, #4, #6, and #8 of Section 16.07.005, ***Procedure*** of the Municipal Code (Historic Preservation) and is eligible for designation as a local historic landmark; and
2. Transmits that determination to the City Planning Commission for review and forward to the Mayor and City Council for approval.

VOTE: AYE – Petersen, Johnson, Dowell, Wilson, and Porter NAY – None. ABSTAIN - None
ABSENT – Cain and Madsen. VACANT – None. Motion carried.

Recommendation
The Community Development Department recommends the City Planning Commission find the property located at 12 Scott Street, commonly referred to as the Council Bluffs Telephone Exchange building, and being legally described Lot 'N' of Auditor's Subdivision of Block 6, Mynster's Addition and Block 2, Bayliss First Addition, as historically significant based on the local designation criteria #1, #4, #6, and #8 as per Section 16.07.005, ***Procedure*** of the Municipal Code (Historic Preservation), and also find the property historically significant based on Criteria 'A' of the National Register of Historic Places, and recommends designation as a historic local landmark to the City Council.

Public Hearing
Staff speaker for the request:
1. Christopher Gibbons, Planning Manager, City of Council Bluffs, 209 Pearl Street, Council Bluffs, IA 51503

Speakers in favor:
1. Sheryl Garst, CEO, The 712 Initiative, 1228 S. Main Street, Council Bluffs, Iowa
2. Caitlin Benton, 5001 Blondo Street, Omaha, NE 68104

Speakers against: None

Planning Commission Recommendation
The City Planning Commission recommended the property located at 12 Scott Street, commonly referred to as the Council Bluffs Telephone Exchange, and being legally described Lot 'N' of Auditor's Subdivision of Block 6, Mynster's Addition and Block 2, Bayliss First Addition, be considered historically significant based

on the local designation criteria #1, #4, #6, and #8 as per Section 16.07.005, ***Procedure*** of the Municipal Code (Historic Preservation), and also find the property historically significant based on Criteria 'A' of the National Register of Historic Places, and recommended designation as a historic local landmark to the City Council.

VOTE: AYE - Bass, Danielsen, Halm, Hutcheson, Opperman, Rater, Scott, Stroebele, and VanHouten NAY - None ABSTAIN - Rew ABSENT – Haner VACANT - None Motion: Carried.

Attachments

Attachment A: Letter of intent National Register of Historic Places nomination
Attachment B: National Register of Historic Places nomination
Attachment C: Location/zoning map
Attachment D: Online social media petition in support of the proposed local historic designation request

Prepared by: Christopher N. Gibbons, AICP, Planning Manager