

ITEM # 23
DATE 4/08/08

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: GREENBRIAR PARK / RIGHT-OF-WAY EXTENSION OF GRAND AVENUE

BACKGROUND:

Randall Corporation, owners of Coldwater Golf Links, requested that the City consider transferring Greenbriar Park to the Randall Corporation so they could address the storm water management issues and the overall appearance of the site that negatively impacts their golf course. In exchange for this transfer of City park land, the Randall Corporation proposed to grant the designated future right-of-way for the Grand Avenue Extension project to the City of Ames, install an adjacent shared use path on South 16th Street, and correct the storm water problem on the site.

The City Council referred the Randall's request to the Parks and Recreation Commission for review and recommendation. **At their meeting on February 21st, the Commission recommended that the City retain the site and address the necessary site improvements (estimated at \$188,000) to make this site a viable green space:**

- Address the storm water run-off issue (\$100,000)
- Transform this property to a viable public green space (\$50,000) and retain the dirt BMX course on site
- Install a Shared Use Path adjacent to South 16th Street (\$38,000).

The Commission based their recommendation for the City to maintain ownership on the following reasons:

- Increased growth in the area dictates the need for a park. Currently, a mobile home court and apartment complex are located south of this parcel, and town homes are being constructed to the east.
- Historically, residents have valued green open space. Commissioners believe that it would be inappropriate to transfer this parcel into private ownership whereby limiting the City's options to enhance residents' quality-of-life in this part of the community, now and in the future.

It should be noted that the Commission's recommendation does not address the acquisition of land from the Randall Corporation needed for the right-of-way extension of Grand Avenue (estimated cost of \$35,000.)

Parks and Recreation staff informed the Commission that one viable funding source to make the necessary improvements to the site is the Park Development Fund (PDF).

After July 1, 2008, the PDF will have an available balance of \$640,000. Commission members questioned if other City funds (i.e. Storm Water Utility Fund) could be utilized since the most costly issue needing to be addressed is related to storm water management problems (estimated at \$100,000). The Public Works Director has indicated that the storm water issues are site specific, and therefore, are related to the park property.

In the event that the City Council accepts the proposal from the Randall Corporation, a written agreement would be required to address the following issues:

1. How much, if anything, should the City be paid for the park property? The condition of the soil in Greenbriar Park is poor due to the disposition of fill material and salts from snow storage over the years. The value of this land could be as low as \$6,600 (2 cents per square foot) based on adjacent agricultural land value and in consideration of the poor quality of the soils. In comparison, land was recently acquired for the Southeast 16th Street Improvements project at 22 cents per square foot. However, this is high quality agricultural land located in an area with high development potential. If this value were applied to Greenbriar Park, the value could be as high as \$71,874.
2. The Randall Corporation would become responsible to address the needed improvements at an estimated cost of \$188,000:
 - Address the storm water management issues (\$100,000)
 - Re-establish the site to private green space (\$50,000)
 - Install a Shared Use Path on South 16th Street (\$38,000)
3. Transfer the land to the City for the Grand Avenue right-of-way project (*estimated value* \$35,000)
4. If the park land is transferred, the zoning of the property will have to be changed as the City Council deems appropriate, since the park area is currently zoned Government/Airport. The draft Government Lands Study shows the site as suitable for low-density residential use. Although property adjacent to Greenbriar Park is used for agricultural purposes, it is zoned as residential high density.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Retain Greenbriar Park as recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission and request staff to report back to the City Council with a recommended funding source and related timeframe to ensure that the following park improvements are addressed:
 - Storm water management
 - Installation of a Shared Use Path along S. 16th Street
 - Development of the property into a viable green space with the dirt BMX course

2. Accept the Randall Corporation's proposal to exchange Greenbriar Park for the Grand Avenue right-of-way, storm water management improvements on the site, and installation of a shared use path along S. 16th Street. This option will require the finalization of an agreement to outline the responsibilities of both parties and the determination of an alternate location for the dirt BMX course.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The City Council should acknowledge the generous proposal made by the Randall Corporation in regards to Greenbriar Park. If you focus merely on the financial aspect of this issue, the Randall Corporation offer will save the City significant out-of-pocket expenses. However, given the limited amount of potential park land to service the needs of our residents within the established areas of our City, it is difficult to support any reduction in park land without identifying a suitable replacement. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council support the position of the Parks and Recreation Commission to retain Greenbriar Park and approve Alternative #1.