

Staff Report

**URBAN REVITALIZATION CRITERIA FOR
ROOSEVELT SCHOOL SITE
921 9TH STREET**

6/11/13

On May 14, 2013, the City Council referred to staff the attached letter from Dean Jensen of Real Estate Service Group Incorporated (RESGI) requesting that the Council direct City staff to prepare a new Urban Revitalization Area designation for the adaptive reuse of the former Roosevelt School building at 921 9th Street. Mr. Jensen had provided written information and a brief presentation describing RESGI's vision for this project at the City Council meeting. The former Roosevelt School building has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since March 2, 2010.

Code of Iowa Chapter 404.1 provides authority for municipalities to establish Urban Revitalization Areas and associated plans as the mechanism for providing tax abatement in a variety of areas. This includes ***“An area in which there is a predominance of buildings or improvements which by reason of age, history, architecture or significance should be preserved or restored to productive use.”***

To address RESGI's request, the City Council must first determine whether the Roosevelt School site meets the criteria described above. If Council determines that Roosevelt School site meets the State criteria, the next step in designating the site as an Urban Revitalization Area is for Council to decide upon a policy establishing qualifying criteria.

Presented below are five options for the City Council to consider as “qualifying criteria” for designating the Roosevelt School site as an Urban Revitalization Area.

OPTION NO. 1: *These criteria include elements that were adopted for the West University Impacted Area. Tax abatement for that area facilitated renovation of the Iowa House Bed and Breakfast.*

An area will be considered for establishing an Urban Revitalization Area and Plan if one of the properties meets all of the following criteria:

- A. The property includes a former public school building that is no longer used as a school; and,

- B. The National Park Service has determined that one or more of the properties has a structure that meets the National Register Evaluation Criteria; and,
- C. Improvements are being made to one of the National Register eligible structures which preserves 70% or more of the area of existing exterior walls of the structure or restores or restores original historic materials and designs.

Greek houses that receive tax abatement are also required to preserve 70% or more of the area of existing exterior walls. This standard is intended to conserve the architectural character of a neighborhood when the neighborhood is not designated as an historic district, as is the case in the East University Impacted Area. It is a simple, measurable standard used where detailed design standards have not been developed.

OPTION NO. 2: *These criteria are the same as those adopted for the West University Impacted Area, except that the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (see attached) replaces Criterion "C".*

An area will be considered for establishing an Urban Revitalization Area and Plan if one of the properties meets all of the following criteria:

- A. The property includes a former public school building that is no longer used as a school; and,
- B. The National Park Service has determined that one or more of the properties has a structure that meets the National Register Evaluation Criteria; and,
- C. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation from the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, are followed. The Standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards are included in Chapter 31 of the *Municipal Code* and must be followed for all historic properties that have been designated as a local historic landmark, or are located in a local historic district. The standards are also required for properties listed on the National Register that receive federal funding and for all properties that receive State or Federal tax credits. They are recommended for all other properties listed on the National Register for all maintenance, repair, replacement, alterations, or additions to the historic structure.

OPTION NO. 3: *These criteria are the same as those adopted for the West University Impacted Area, except that the City's Performance Standard for Adaptive Reuse that specifically deals with essential architectural features would replace Criterion "C" [see attached Section 29.306(3) for the Adaptive Reuse Performance Standards].*

An area will be considered for establishing an Urban Revitalization Area and Plan if one of the properties meets all of the following criteria:

- A. The property includes a former public school building that is no longer used as a school; and,
- B. The National Park Service has determined that one or more of the properties has a structure that meets the National Register Evaluation Criteria; and,
- C. The renovation and remodeling of structures will not destroy or obscure essential architectural features. In addition, such architectural features must be enhanced to the extent that it is feasible and prudent to do so.

OPTION NO. 4: *These criteria were suggested by the owner of the Roosevelt School property in his letter to City Council requesting the URA designation (see attached).*

An area will be considered for establishing an Urban Revitalization Area and Plan if one of the properties meets all of the following criteria:

- A. The building is no longer occupied as a public school, and has not been converted to another use, prior to designation as an Urban Revitalization Area; and,
- B. The building is currently is a blighted condition; and,
- C. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places; and,
- D. A maximum of 23 units will be included in conversion of the building from a school to a residential use; and,
- E. A parking structure (garage) will be provided on site; and,
- F. At least 70% of the existing exterior brick walls of the structure will remain and historic materials will be preserved or adaptively reused.

OPTION NO. 5: *Criteria for this option would be any modification of criteria from the previous four options, as determined by the City Council.*

Process to Establish an Urban Revitalization Area

If the City Council chooses to incentivize the redevelopment of Roosevelt School with tax abatement, following its determination that the site meets the criteria in the Code of Iowa and its selection from the options above, the process would be similar to other Urban Revitalization Areas. The developer would prepare a Plan that meets these criteria established by Council and apply to Council to establish an Urban Revitalization Area. City Council, upon finding that the development proposal meets its criteria, would direct staff to prepare an Urban Revitalization Plan and set the date for a public hearing. After the hearing, the Urban Revitalization Plan can be approved by resolution and the Urban Revitalization Area can be created by three approvals of an ordinance. This process may take from 60 to 90 days.

City Council Direction Needed

In order to proceed further with the requested Urban Revitalization Area (URA) for Roosevelt School, staff seeks City Council direction on two key issues:

- City Council direction is needed to determine whether the Roosevelt School site meets the criteria, in the *Code of Iowa Chapter 404.1*, to establish a revitalization area.
- If so, the City Council must establish qualifying criteria for the proposed URA.

In addressing this last issue, the Council has a number of choices.

If the straightforward criteria utilized in the West University Impacted Area is adequate, then Option 1 should be chosen.

If the more extensive criteria listed in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation seem appropriate, then Option 2 should be chosen.

If the existing criteria for approval of an Adaptive Reuse Plan seems adequate to also serve as the criteria for tax abatement, then Option 3 should be chosen.

If the criteria proposed by the developer seems appropriate, then Option 4 should be chosen.

Finally, if some combination of the above criteria seems most appropriate, the Council should select Option 5.

Ultimately the Council must decide what criteria it desires to set in order to provide tax abatement within this area.

REAL ESTATE SERVICE GROUP, INC.



May 9, 2013

Ames City Council
515 Clark Ave
Ames, IA 50010

RE: Request for Rezoning and Text Amendment

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council,

As many of you know we recently purchased the Roosevelt School located at 921 9th St. from the Ames Community School District. This landmark structure has faithfully served our community for nearly ninety years. It is our hope that we can extend the usefulness and life of the building for future generations of Ames residents.

Due to the unique nature of this adaptive reuse project, we are requesting Council to consider establishing an Urban Revitalization Area Designation (URAD) for the Roosevelt School site. From our review of other URA's it is clear that there is City interest to "support investments that preserve and reuse historic resources through property tax abatement."

There are many benefits to our community through our proposed project and the benefit of tax relief is crucial to the long term success of getting this project going. The City of Ames has not collected any tax money in the history of this school, when the abatement period expires, there will be a significant tax base increase with the addition of 23 single family condominium units in the Ames Community School District.

Some criteria to be considered:

- Age of building 1923, vacant since 2005
- Currently in blighted condition
- National Historic Registry
- Proposed improvements will increase property value dramatically
- At least 70% of the existing exterior brick walls of the structure will remain and historic materials will be preserved or adaptively reused
- Maximum of 23 single family condominium units
- Provided parking structure

Therefore, we respectfully request that the City Council direct City staff to prepare a new URA Designation for the Roosevelt School building.

Thank you for your consideration,



Dean Jensen

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Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of the property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Adaptive Reuse Performance Standards

Section 29.306(3)

- (3) **Adaptive Reuse Performance Standards.** If the City Council determines that a proposed project qualifies for consideration as an adaptive reuse, then the City Council may waive some or all of the applicable Zone Development Standards and General Development Standards set forth in Article 4, so long as the project conforms to the following:
- (a) The renovation and remodeling of structures for adaptive reuse may not destroy or obscure essential architectural features. In addition, such architectural features must be enhanced to the extent that it is feasible and prudent to do so.
 - (b) Where landscaping and public space required by Section 29.403 cannot be provided on site, any area on site that is available for landscaping shall be so utilized. When the City grants permission, the owner or operator of the site must also use areas within the public right-of-way and adjacent to the site to satisfy landscaping requirements.
 - (c) Where necessary parking cannot be provided on site, reasonable provision for parking shall be provided off site.