

## Staff Report

**URBAN REVITALIZATION CRITERIA FOR  
CRAWFORD SCHOOL SITE  
415 STANTON AVENUE**

11/28/17

On October 10, 2017, the City Council referred to staff the attached letter from RES Development and R. Friedrich & Sons requesting that the Council direct City staff to prepare a new Urban Revitalization Area designation for reuse of the former Crawford School building at 415 Stanton Avenue. The developer had provided written information and a brief presentation describing their vision for this project at the City Council meeting in October.

***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. One authority is for ***“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 the developer’s request, the City Council must first determine whether the Crawford School site meets the criteria described above. If Council determines that Crawford 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 two options for the City Council to consider as “qualifying criteria” for designating the Crawford School site as an Urban Revitalization Area.

***OPTION NO. 1:*** *These criteria were suggested by the owner of the Crawford School property in his letter to City Council requesting the URA designation.*

An area will be considered for establishing an Urban Revitalization Area and Plan if the property 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. Structured parking (garage) is provided on site with at least one covered stall per unit; and,
- C. The character of the existing building on the south and east elevations is maintained and preserved. The proposed addition matches the architectural style of the existing building.
- D. 100% of the exterior walls of the south and east façade of the existing building remains brick. The structure will remain, and historic materials will be preserved or adaptively reused when possible.

**OPTION NO. 2:**

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. Structured parking (garage) is provided on site with at least one covered stall per unit; and,
- C. The character of the existing building on the south and east elevations is maintained and preserved. The proposed addition matches the architectural style of the existing building.
- D. 100% of the exterior walls of the south and east façade of the existing building remains brick. The structure will remain, and historic materials will be preserved or adaptively reused when possible.
- E. The site and building substantially conforms to the site and architectural plans approved by the City Council as part of the URA Plan.

**(Note: This additional criterion is being recommended by the Staff to assure the project that is being incentivized is built according to what was portrayed by the Developer.)**

## **PROCESS TO ESTABLISH AN URBAN REVITALIZATION AREA:**

If the City Council chooses to incentivize the redevelopment of Crawford 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 Crawford School, staff seeks City Council direction on two key issues:**

- City Council direction is needed to determine whether the Crawford School site meets the criteria, in the *Code of Iowa Chapter 404.1*, to establish a revitalization area.

**The City Staff believes the proposed project complies with the criteria for establishing a Urban Revitalization Area as required by Section 404.1.3 of the Iowa Code.**

- If so, the City Council must establish qualifying criteria for the proposed URA.

**In addressing the second issue, the Council has, at least, the following two choices.**

- If the criteria proposed by the developer seem appropriate, then Option 1 should be chosen.
- If the criteria proposed **by the City staff** to require Council approval of a site plan and architectural plans as part of the URA Plan, then Option 2 should be chosen.

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