

COMMUNICATION
URBAN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA

OCTOBER 4, 2022 MEETING

Subject:	Recommendation:	Prepared by:
INDIGO DAWN, LLC AND NTONTAN RE 1601 6TH AVENUE (NORTH DES MOINES HALL) FINAL DESIGN	X APPROVE DISAPPROVE NO ACTION OTHER	KATIE HERNANDEZ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT MANAGER KLHERNANDEZ@DMGOV.ORG 515-283-4016
Attachment Listing: https://www.dsm.city/udrb_meeting_schedule.php		

Summary:

Indigo Dawn, LLC, represented by Chaden Halfhill, and Ntontan RE, represented by Kuuku Saah, have proposed a historic renovation of the existing 4,680-square-foot building at 1601 6th Avenue, which will be redeveloped as a mixed-use building, including first floor commercial space and four (4) upper-story multi-family residential apartment units.

The property is located within the City's only designated Main Street community, the Sixth Avenue Corridor. This project will sensitively and comprehensively rehabilitate North Des Moines Hall. Because this project is receiving state and federal historic tax credits, all work will be undertaken following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Rehabilitation. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The project cost is approximately \$3.2 million. The Development Team intends to begin construction as soon as possible and is expected to complete construction by the fall of 2023. *This is an updated timeline and cost from the initial review action in May 2022. The project has not yet commenced, but the site plan has been submitted to Planning and Urban Design for its first review.*

Edward Shannon, AIA, has been selected as the project architect, and the historian of record is Jennifer Irsfeld James.

The following items are considered to be updates since this Board last reviewed this project:

- Material of the addition.
 - o The initial review considered a horizontal metal siding material, but the State Historic Preservation Office gave direction to install a smooth panel system that does not have a historic appearance. The Development Team is proposing a Hardi Stucco panel system in a red color to coordinate with the existing brick.
- Trash enclosure location.
 - o There will be an agreement with the adjacent property owner for the proposed placement of the trash closure.
- Mechanical equipment and screening.
 - o The Development Team is not currently proposing screening for the mechanical equipment, as they do not believe that it will be required due to

the proposed position of the equipment upon the roof of the building.

However, should screening be required by code, the mechanical equipment will be screened appropriately.

- Utility line burial.
 - o The Development Team will request a full waiver of undergrounding utility lines due to extraordinary costs.
- Fencing.
 - o The proposed fencing along the east property line is a four (4) or six (6) foot open picket fence, which would include a landscaping buffer in front of the fence with native plants and a bio-retention area.
 - o The proposed fence-like structure along the west side of the property is to consist of black coated metal, which will serve as a dedicated location for a public art mural that is intended to foster engagement and placemaking within the community, as well as a visual barrier to the courtyard area. The exact design of this fence will be finalized with input from the local arts, but the Development Team is open to suggestions from this Board.
 - o Additional fencing may be required if the commercial tenant wishes to serve alcohol in the outdoor space.

Scope of Review – Board to make recommendation to City Council on:

- Design review of renovation /remodeling/new construction for City-owned or leased project.
- Design review for urban renewal project with specific development requirements.
- Whether a proposed urban renewal project qualifies for funding from tax increment.
- Whether the level of financial assistance funded from tax increment revenues proposed for a specific individual project are reasonable and appropriate.
- The selection of urban renewal sites for clearance or rehabilitation and problems relating to acquisition, clearance or rehabilitation of property, relocation of displaced persons and disposition of acquired property.
- Skywalk System
- Other

Urban Design Review Board Action: The Board is asked to make its recommendation to City Council on the final design.

Staff Recommendation: Approval of the final design, with the condition of undergrounding the wires directly to the building (not including overhead transmission wires or wires within the right of way).

Background:

Constructed in 1888, the building at 1601 6th Avenue, commonly known as North Des Moines Hall and formally known as Perry and Brainard Block, is a 2-story solid brick structure built within the traditions of Victorian commercial architecture, with a rectangular footprint, flat roof, and symmetrical façade. The second floor was originally

used as an opera house and meeting hall for municipal purposes and fraternal organizations. The building served as City Hall for the North Des Moines municipality until 1890, when the community was officially annexed by Des Moines.

This property was purchased by 6th Avenue Corridor in 2016, with the intent of directing the redevelopment of the property. The City granted Community Development Block Grant funds to 6th Avenue Corridor for assistance with acquisition and redevelopment, who selected Indigo Dawn, LLC as the developer for this project. The property was sold to Indigo Dawn, LLC in January 2022.

The property is listed in 'poor' condition on the Assessor's site and is currently declared a public nuisance. A recent fire, which happened in June 2021, has also negatively contributed to the existing condition of this building.

Currently vacant, this renovation will reactivate commercial space on the ground floor and in the large basement and offer four (4) rehabilitated residential units on the second floor. The first floor of commercial space will be home to a restaurant user with local operators.

Because this property is the recipient of a Community Development Block Grant from the City of Des Moines, there is the requirement of 51% of all residential units in the building to be affordable units at the 80% (or lower) area median income level.

Financial sources into this project include: Main Street Iowa Challenge Grant, Community Development Block Grant, and tax abatement.

The Development Team is approaching the 'equity raise' in an untraditional manner. The typical approach is to gather a small group of investors, each contributing a large sum to the project for an equity stake or return. With this project, however, the Development Team is focused on reflecting the neighborhood by recruiting investors who would be considered non-traditional and would be first-time investors as a result of this project. The investor base will be one of the more diverse funding groups in the state, and there has been a fair amount of time spent on educating the investor base about the benefits and mechanics of tax credits and grant funding.

Consistency with Goals and Objectives of Urban Renewal Plan

This property is located within the Metro Center Urban Renewal Plan. The project meets the following goals of the Urban Renewal Plan:

- Preserve and create an environment that will protect the health, safety, and general welfare of city residents, and maintain and expand taxable values of property within the area.
- Encourage the elimination of substandard and obsolescent buildings, blighting influences, and environmental deficiencies which detract from the functional unity, aesthetic appearance, and economic welfare of this important section of the city and establish conditions which will attract new investments and prevent the recurrence of blight and blighting conditions.
- Encourage private or joint public and private investment involving the creation of new quality jobs and/or the retention of existing jobs and income.
- Encourage intensive, coordinated, mixed-use development of commercial, residential, and parking facilities that will help assure the most efficient and effective use of available land and related public and private investments.
- Provide facilities that will help meet the convenience retail, recreation, educational, and cultural needs of persons who work and live in and near the project area.
- Encourage the development, rehabilitation and renovation of affordable and market-rate housing in decent, safe and sanitary conditions in attractive settings to serve employees and other people who would like to live in the downtown area and near-downtown areas.

Support the maintenance and rehabilitation of sound existing structures and the preservation of properties of architectural and/or historic merit.

Project Location/Photo:

