

**COMMUNICATION**  
**URBAN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**  
CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA

FEBRUARY 7, 2012 MEETING

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Prepared by:</b>
<b>INFORMATIONAL REVIEW OF SOUTHRIDGE MALL REPURPOSING</b>	APPROVE DISAPPROVE NO ACTION OTHER (INFO)	RITA CONNER 283-4019
<b>Attachment Listing:</b> <a href="http://www.dmgov.org/government/boards/UrbanDesignReviewBoard/Pages/Meetings.aspx">http://www.dmgov.org/government/boards/UrbanDesignReviewBoard/Pages/Meetings.aspx</a>		

**Summary:**

Southridge Mall, located at SE 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Army Post Road, was constructed in 1975, and has served the City of Des Moines and the Greater Des Moines area as a regional retail center for decades. The loss of several key tenants in recent years has resulted in significant vacancies. The increased amount of competing retail space in the regional market, and changes in consumer habits combined with population shifts, has contributed additional challenges in attracting new retail tenants to these vacant spaces. Nationally, a number of traditional malls have faced similar challenges and some have sought creative alternatives for repurposing the vacant spaces. Injecting new activity and investment by creating unique mixed use districts has been a proposed solution for several malls.

SDG Macerich, L.P., as owners of Southridge, have determined that a new strategy for this mall is in order, and have proposed a multimillion dollar repurposing plan that involves the introduction of reconfigured retail space and the addition of educational, recreational, and housing elements on the site to increase activity and promote new investment. The repurposing proposes to maximize the assets and resources of the site's location, utilize the existing parking lot, retain several of the current anchor tenants, and adaptively reuse parts of the current physical structure in a manner that will be more competitive for attracting retail tenants and patrons.

Urban Design Review Board members provided brief initial comments on the Southridge Mall Repurposing Plan on December 20, 2011. This second informational session has been scheduled to allow additional time for review and comment at this stage of the process. Provided for board review is a map identifying parcels contained in the redevelopment plan area, a conceptual redevelopment plan, future land use plan, planned pedestrian circulation and transit routes, signage detail, proposed exterior elevations for the north entrance, preliminary conceptual detail for future housing and athletic complex development and preliminary landscape plans.

**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 /Informational review

**Urban Design Review Board Action:**

The board is requested to provide design advisement and recommendations to assist the design team. At a future meeting, a final proposed plan will be submitted along with a financial assistance proposal currently under negotiation by staff.

**Background**

The City and southside business leaders collaborated on an extensive market and demographic study of south Des Moines in 2006. The study was conducted by RDG Planning & Design and Economics Research Associates. Market driven recommendations from the analysis included citing a reconfiguration of Southridge Mall as an important component to revitalization of the area. The study recognized that Southridge Mall was no longer the regional retail center that it had been. This is a reflection of the changing retail conditions, several million square feet of new regional retail square footage in the market, the age of the facility, and other market factors. City elected officials and staff have met with neighborhood leaders, business owners, real estate professionals and SDG Macerich representatives to brainstorm solutions that can promote new activity and investment.

In 2011, SDG Macerich representatives and city leadership met with representatives of Des Moines Area Community College and representatives from the Iowa Soccer Association and Iowa Barnstormers. DMACC had been looking at space options for the relocation of several programs and the development of a career academy, in a space that could offer future growth opportunities for additional educational program uses. The Iowa Soccer Association and the Iowa Barnstormers had joined forces to begin fundraising efforts for a State Indoor Training Center capable of hosting state and regional sporting events. All entities saw benefits from selecting Southridge Mall as their future location.

The prospect of introducing a high volume of students, athletes and families to the Southridge area offered an opportunity to initiate plans for a redevelopment of the current space to accommodate the new users, as well as create a new design for over 100,000 square feet of retail space to attract new tenants. There are also several outparcels available for development, which has been discussed as additional retail, a hotel /waterpark, and high density housing. The physical interconnectedness of the site and the diversity of uses create the ability to achieve an active, thriving, mixed use district.

The Southside Economic Development District Urban Renewal Plan and tax increment finance district was adopted by City Council in 2010. The plan was created with the intent to encourage new private economic investment that can assist in revitalizing the area. The plan includes consideration of the following factors for all projects proposed in the Plan area, and these are offered to assist the board in making recommendations:

- Scale, proportion, color, articulation, massing, patterning, setbacks, and exterior materials of buildings
- Permanence and quality of materials and site design
- Details that add character and define depth
- How the project promotes an attractive and appealing physical environment
- How the project can incorporate long term sustainability into site design and building construction
- How the project can incorporate low impact development and best management practices for stormwater
- How the project can provide opportunities for transportation alternatives such as walking, biking, and mass transit
- How the project provides for an effective and sustainable mix of diverse land uses