

Lakefront Development Advisory Commission Request for Review

Milwaukee Art Museum Renovation and Improvements Plan

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General Project Description: The Milwaukee Art Museum proposes to construct an 8,000 sq ft atrium addition to the east façade of the Kahler addition of the Museum. The atrium will serve a five-fold purpose 1) provide Lake Walk access into the Museum through the Kahler addition 2) add required environmental protection for the art by creating a daylight buffer zone that does not now exist at the east end of the Kahler addition 3) create public space for enjoying the lake views and vistas of the lakefront 4) provide War Memorial/Fitch Plaza stair and elevator access to the Lake Walk and Museum and from Lake level to the Mason Street level 5) correct the existing condition of the failed glass east façade and leaking foundation.

The property and buildings are owned by Milwaukee County. The atrium addition will be built with private funds but deeded to the County as part of a new, independent lease agreement between the Art Museum and County.

The atrium addition, estimated to cost \$5 million, is part of a larger renovation and repair project that includes a complete reinstallation of the Museum's collections, the enclosure of an open and unused sculpture court in the Kahler addition converting it to gallery space and resulting in a green roof garden element addition to Fitch Plaza, and \$10 million in County funding to cover deferred maintenance repairs to the War Memorial.

The complete comprehensive project is estimated to cost a total of \$25 million with \$15 million provided by the Museum and \$10 million provided by the County. The Museum intends to work with the War Memorial Center and Veterans Board to develop a master plan for renovating the Memorial Courtyard and Fitch Plaza (Kahler addition roof deck) extending the Memorial experience toward the lake. This plan in concept calls for a greening of the space, urban park or garden in nature, with added memorial elements through an artist commission.

The overall goal of the project is to enhance access to the Museum, provide more opportunities for visitors to the lakefront to spend time on the grounds and spaces of the Museum and War Memorial with opportunities to relax, refresh, and enjoy the experiences and vistas. Adding additional green elements, seating and "pathways" is an important feature of the plan. Whereas the current outdoor spaces are barren, vegetation will be added. Whereas there is no clear and easy access from the lake to the Memorial and vice versa, the pathways will be clear. Whereas there is no access into the Museum currently from the lakefront, access will be restored. Whereas there are virtually no places to invite visitors at the lakefront to stay and enjoy the environment, seating and tables will be provided.

Landscaping: The Museum and War Memorial recognize the importance of landscaping in this location at the lake and have made significant commitments to adding landscaping to the outdoor spaces. Both the plaza resulting from the atrium addition and the Fitch Plaza and memorial spaces will have plant and landscaping elements. Of particular note is the creation of a green roof over the sculpture court as part of the proposed enclosure reducing rainwater runoff. Depending on the final plan for the enhancements of the Memorial, plantings, planters, and green zones will be added to establish a more park like design to the rooftop areas of the Memorial Courtyard and Fitch Plaza.

The plaza component at lake level will also have plantings, planters and seating zones inviting lakefront visitors to relax and enjoy the scenery. We see this component as an important addition to an area on the east end of the Kahler addition that currently is a barren slab of concrete.

In addition, the shipping and receiving ramp deck will be replaced with a green roof if the War memorial Center approves the concept. This replacement will remove an unsightly deteriorated concrete slab ramp and replace it with a sedum roof system that in turn reduces water runoff and adds green space to the area. Funds for repair and replacement of the loading dock roof have been appropriated in the County maintenance plan.

Parking: Though a parking lot currently exists on the north parcel of the property, the plan calls for enhanced wheel chair access to the Museum atrium entrance, elevator and lakefront walk. In addition, handicap access will be improved greatly since currently no pathways from the north parking lot provide wheel chair access to the lake walk.

Under the new agreements reached between the Museum, War Memorial and County, the North Parking lot will continue to be maintained and controlled by the War Memorial Center. Museum visitors will have daily paid parking access to the lot and will park under the direction of the Memorial staff at the parking entrance ticket booth. The Museum envisions the demand for parking to increase with the east entrance reopened. However peak demand time will continue to be on weekends when staff parking is at a minimum freeing up spots on weekends. Overflow parking is directed to the O'Donnell parking garage.

Traffic and Pedestrian Flow: Traffic and pedestrian flow will be greatly enhanced by this project. Current way finding to the lakefront from Mason Street is difficult and disorienting. The existing primary stair system connected to the Saarinen addition on the north turns west as it descends creating a disorienting route back to the lake. The South stair system of the Saarinen addition also turns west and provides no access to the lake. The Calatrava addition to the Museum provided no public access to the lakefront other than through the Café on a very limited seasonal basis. The Kahler addition entrance from the lakefront was closed off years ago resulting in a campus of buildings that literally turns its back on lakefront access. In addition, there is no outdoor elevator access from the Mason Street level of the Memorial or Fitch Plaza other than inside the Memorial. No wheel chair access currently exists.

The proposed changes correct all problems cited above. The atrium addition will have a north and south external stair system, and provide a public east entrance to the Museum and out to the lakefront. Visitors will now be able to intuitively progress from the Mason Street level across the memorial spaces toward the lakefront and down the stairs or elevator to the lakefront. Wheel chair access will be provided throughout the experience from parking lot to lakefront and Memorial deck areas.

Amenities: The Museum intends to add a coffee shop and sandwich service inside the atrium operated consistent with Museum operating hours and programs. Outdoor service during warm weather months is also possible depending on demand.

Impact: The proposed project will greatly improve the current site, building conditions, and access. The site lines and vistas along the lake will be enhanced. The atrium addition will remove an unsightly broken concrete pad replacing it with a landscaped and programmed plaza. The plaza at ground level will encourage lakefront and lake walk visitors to linger and enjoy the sights. Water runoff will be improved with the addition of the green roof elements, plantings, and other greenery absorbing rain water.

The surrounding site includes Juneau Park, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to the north, Discovery World to the south, Lincoln Memorial Drive and Downtown Milwaukee to the west, and Lake Michigan to the east.

Future Expansion: This project is a next generation enhancement providing solutions to longstanding problems relating to building conditions, way finding and access, beautification and the overall lakefront experience on the property. The future expansion of the War Memorial or Art Museum, though a long time away, will likely occur on the tract of land now occupied by the north Memorial parking lot. Such an expansion is likely to be a “buried” parking and building structure beneath a green roof concept, creating a return of the footprint of land to park. This design will also allow for street level access to the lake directly from the Mason Street bridge walk ways.

Business Plan Viability: Museum leadership has committed to raising \$15 million to match the County’s commitment of \$10 million. To date the Museum has raised \$8 million and anticipates completing the campaign in early 2014. The completed project will have a minimal impact on the annual operating costs of the Museum. Increased expenses of utilities, maintenance, and staffing of the atrium entrance will be offset by special event revenue from the rental of the space, and additional visitor admission revenue from lakefront traffic.

The Leadership Committee of the Museum includes Bud and Sue Selig, Betty Quadracci, Donald and Donna Baumgartner, Shel and Marianne Lubar, Chris and Miriam Abele, and Board President Ken Krei. The project is designed by Jim Shields of HGA located in Milwaukee and headquartered in Minneapolis. Mr. Shields is the architect of the Discovery World at Pier Wisconsin and the recently opened Museum of Wisconsin Art in West Bend. The project will be managed for the Museum by Steve Chamberlin of Chamberlin Group in coordination with Milwaukee County Department of Public Works.

The Milwaukee Art Museum has an excellent record of fiscal responsibility, program delivery, and enjoys an international reputation as one of the leading art museums in the nation. The Quadracci Pavilion, designed by Santiago Calatrava and opened in 2001, continues to be one of the most significant development projects in Milwaukee history, enhancing the lakefront, and attracting millions of visitors to the area including the parks and waterfront.