PROPOSED EVANSTON FINE ARTS AND PERFORMING ARTS DISTRICT

Presented to:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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Economic Development Committee
City of Evanston
2100 Ridge Avenue
Evanston, IL 60201

Re: Long Term Economic Development
Proposed Evanston Fine Arts and Performing Arts District

Chairwoman Alderman Wynne and Committee Members,

I requested the opportunity to present the Fine Arts and Performing Arts District proposal because the suggestion has much economic development merit and is time sensitive. The idea was born out of the community budget discussions in the fall of 2009. The fall of 2010 offers significant benefits to advancing this proposal and poses equally significant hurdles.

Timing is an important part of every development. The coincidence of interested parties, funding opportunities, economic pressures, and strong political resolve cause development to take place in a specific period of time.

The current economic climate is particularly depressing for Evanston citizens not only because of how we are affected individually but more so because we are being forced to choose between paying ever increasing taxes and reducing or eliminating social & culture programs we are accustomed to having.

Evanston has arrived at a crossroads. We can choose to remain the kind of community we have always been and find the means to support that lifestyle, or we go down the path of continuing to reduce the cultural and social programs that make us who we are. This year’s budget cuts are the first steps in what could be an annual process of diluting Evanston’s character.

The proposed Fine Arts and Performing Arts District is intended to provide a positive and inspiring counterpoint for Evanston citizens to aspire to. The proposal is realistic not fantasy. This proposal is capable of refreshing the entire North Shore economy.

My concerns about timing coalesce around the following issues:

1. I have read indirect references to comments made by Evanston officials suggesting a new property tax increase is un-avoidable next year. This news raised my blood pressure. The formal budget discussions with the community have not yet begun and it seems some elected officials have already conceded to raise property taxes. Community involvement is needed and community priorities should be established this fall before raising taxes becomes a foregone conclusion.
2. The Mayor’s Budget Committee has not yet concluded its work nor has it issued its budget recommendations to the Mayor and the council. I find it pre-mature to declare property tax increases before all other revenue producing and budget-cutting options have been exhausted.

3. It is my understanding that the federal stimulus fund expires at the end of 2010. Elements of this proposal qualify for stimulus grants and low (or no) interest loans.

The Obama administration is eager to spur the economy this year. The administration seeks to create short-term temporary jobs and long term permanent jobs. The purpose of the stimulus package includes creating jobs, promoting economic recovery, advancing the field of new energy sources, and “To stabilize State and local government budgets, in order to minimize and avoid reductions in essential services and counterproductive state and local tax increases.” This description is applicable to this proposal.

4. Mid-term elections occur during the fall of 2010. Politicians are anxious to listen especially if they are presented with an opportunity to create jobs and they are able to showcase efforts helping their constituents.

The State of Illinois is in both political and economic crisis. Those who want to be in office after this fall’s elections will listen and act on ambitious proposals now, especially if jobs can be championed.

Key legislative support is attainable for this kind of proposal before the November elections, if we can act swiftly. The results of the upcoming elections could not be more uncertain. Political support at many levels could evaporate. This is my concern.

The 708 Church Street tower project, a 500-foot tall mixed-use facility, and other more appropriate developments cannot succeed during the current long term recession. Bringing culturally significant entertainment activities to Evanston would spur the Church Street Tower project and others to begin work.

During the past 10 months I have worked voluntarily to develop this proposal. I ask that the Economic Development Committee give fair consideration to the Fine Arts and Performing Arts District proposal that follows. I am putting forth this idea in hopes all of Evanston will benefit from it.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this matter with you.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Vasilko
Preface - How the Fine Arts and Performing Arts District Concept Came To Be

I am a property tax payer and a citizen of Evanston. I find it unacceptable for the City of Evanston to have no other options available than to raise citizens’ taxes in order to balance our budget. This proposal is another revenue option.

For the past several years I have participated in the budget discussion process; first I was a passive listener, then a common complainer, and now someone who has invested time and resources to offer a legitimate economic development concept for the City of Evanston to consider.

In the fall of 2009 after several months of community budget debate, it struck me that many individual ideas offered by involved citizens did not rise to a level of consensus or a belief that their ideas would put a dent in the long term budget problems Evanston debates annually.

“Let’s put a restaurant along the lake.”
“Let’s build a hotel near the lake.”
“Let’s build a marina.”
“Make Evanston the Santa Fe of the Midwest.” – My suggestion

Admittedly, all of these ideas if considered individually would not solve our budget problem which continues to spiral exponentially out of control.

The city did act on the top community suggestions by reducing city staff, eliminating some non-essential programs, and removing taxpayer funding for the branch libraries among other budget cuts. These cuts appear to have worked for the 2010 budget, but one repeated citizen comment from 2009 remains unanswered:

“Why don’t we plan for a five to ten year budget solution?”

Those discarded individual ideas combined with this forlorn question about our future budgets presents a viable solution that deserves further consideration and research; A new district owned by the City of Evanston, the sole purpose of which is to provide a long term reliable revenue stream that supports the Evanston community’s way of life. Successful development requires assembling the correct formula of uses that supports each other and forms a synergy, maturing to be self-sustaining.

A Fine Arts and Performing Arts District would contain program elements that prove to achieve this goal. Other communities rely upon a variety of specialty facilities for supporting general fund revenues including racetracks, gambling, amusement parks and professional sports teams. Obviously some of these activities would not fit well in Evanston culture. Evanston relies upon retail, wonderful restaurants, a few nice hotels, office buildings, and yes, residential property owners for tax revenue.
Evanston prides itself on being a benevolent community that is committed to the social and economic diversity within our citizenry. Many wonderful social and community programs have evolved in Evanston, the types of programs that may be considered non-essential by some standards.

These commitments, even not-for-profits, require the financial support of the taxpayers.

If we accept certain realities as fact, including..

..benevolence costs money,
community programs cost money, ..
there are functional limits to reducing city staff, ..
the pension system is not sustainable, ..
and taxpayers have no more money ..

..then a reasonable person must conclude that a new sustainable source of revenue is needed. A new culturally significant district planned with facilities to attract national attention will establish Evanston as a point of destination. That is the primary goal of this proposal.

Another underlying theme of this proposal is to select and size (undersize) ancillary facilities such as a restaurant and hotel, in a way that will stimulate the use of all existing downtown businesses Evanston has to offer.

Create a reason for a national audience to visit Evanston and the rest of Evanston will flourish.

The information that follows describes one concept for a fine arts and performing arts district. Other concepts should be and will be investigated. This document is not intended to imply otherwise.

I am asking the Economic Development Committee for constructive criticism, advice regarding how to proceed forward, and assistance from (participation of) city staff during discussions with other governmental agencies such as: the Illinois Department of natural Resources, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the Army Corps of Engineers, all of which share oversight of Lake Michigan and other Illinois waterways.

A formal feasibility study is needed to determine if in fact this concept is viable and what the mix and size of the various program elements (the venues) should be to make the project successful; relieving Evanston citizens of further financial burden and maintaining our community identity.

A comprehensive outline of the program description and other supporting information is contained herein.
PROGRAM STATEMENT

The proposed Evanston Fine Arts and Performing Arts District is offered as a long term budget recommendation in that the earliest possible revenue income could not be realized before 2014. This assumes the city began moving forward to formally study the concept in 2010.

The preliminary proposal that follows describes the concept and attempts to address obvious issues and public concerns. The ideas contained within the program description are a credit to many citizen comments offered during the community budget workshops of 2009 / 2010.

Goals:

The primary goal of this proposal is to create a revenue producing, Evanston owned cultural district on the lakefront that will offset the ever growing increases in residential property taxes. We propose to expand Evanston’s cultural heritage and promote Evanston as a point of destination for visitors interested in the finest of performing art entertainment. Premier performance facilities will attract stage and concert performers of the highest caliber. Celebrity performers will attract a national following of visitors to our community.

For all of Evanston’s charm, wonderful restaurants and retail, and other welcoming aspects of the community, Evanston is not a destination that distant visitors choose. We may attract local visitors for an evening or a day trip but not enough travelers come from other regional cities or other states.

Evanston’s needs a “lure” to attract visitors from across the nation.

The proposed district is not intended as a substitute for or to eliminate any existing downtown restaurants, hotels, retail, and theaters. Rather, an underlying goal is to study the new district’s permitted uses and size them to complement existing Evanston businesses. The theory is that once a visitor arrives in Evanston to attend a convention or a performance, they will have the need and desire to explore all that downtown has to offer. For example, any new hotel and restaurant on the lakefront would be limited in size and substantially below the capacity needed to serve the population of visitors in the new district. Those who cannot find lodging or get restaurant reservations on the peninsula would be warmly directed to downtown facilities, just a few short walking blocks, a several minutes by cab, or a leisurely ride in a horse drawn carriage west.

Location:

Why locate a district such as this, along Lake Michigan? Lake Michigan is Evanston’s most significant visual asset. The property, the lake bottom, is Evanston’s eminent domain, effectively free and belongs to the City of Evanston. In order to attract a national audience, we need to offer the best we have to give. I am not aware of comparable available land in
Evanston that would leave the same memorable impression with visitors who we want to return as often as possible.

Evanston’s Lakefront now offers amenities to the public in the form of beaches, park area, and a boat launch. This proposal does not seek to eliminate any of these amenities, but rather to improve and expand these amenities. Similarly, this proposal strives to limit its impact on the Lake Front Master Plan by minimal encroachment near the boat launch and around the lagoon.

The existing beaches and the boat launch produce some revenue. But from a purely financial perspective, Evanston’s lakefront is underutilized and has not achieved its highest and best use.

The City of Chicago to our south and Northwestern University have both benefited from land expansions into Lake Michigan. Why should Evanston not benefit from the lakefront as well?

**Size:**

The building footprint area shown is approximately 1,200,000 square feet; 940,000 square feet of which is the footprint of the south peninsula building.

Building height restrictions would be imposed. The intention is for low rise buildings to be positioned at the west end of the district, consistent with the heights of existing homes and other lakefront buildings. Buildings that need to be taller to accommodate their uses would be located further east. The larger theatrical buildings proposed are expected to be 80 to 100 feet tall including their fly tower space.

**Revenue Producing Permitted Uses:**

World Class Performing Arts Theatre(s) of various capacities
World Class Opera House
World Class Orchestra Concert Hall (comparable to the Boston Symphony Hall)
Children’s Performing Arts Theatre
Performing Arts Black Box Theatre (the second, “second city”)
Theatrical Venues available to the Public School System and Evanston Township High School
Entertainment Clubs
Omni-max Cinema Theater
Meetings and Convention Hall(s) (mini-McCormick Place)
  - Variety of room sizes up to 3,500 people or more in one venue.
  - State of the art audio video and video conferencing meeting rooms
Potential Site for the Barack Obama Presidential Library and Museum; sustainable energy sources providing 90% of the building’s total energy requirements.
Potential Site for a U.S. Coast Guard Station
Potential Site for National Public Radio
Festival Grounds
Spoleto festival events (like Charleston, SC)
Evanston’s version of Ravinia
Marine Life Habitat (fish habitat)
Boutique Five Star Hotel
Restaurant(s)
Northwestern University performing art events
Two level below grade parking for automobiles (5,000 spaces)
Marina boat harbor for small marine craft (sail boats)
Marina boat storage for small marine craft
Ground transportation vendor leases (taxi-cab, shuttle bus, horse drawn carriage, etc.)
Water transportation vendor leases (boat shuttles to Milwaukee, Chicago, and Gary)

**Non-Revenue Producing Permitted Uses:**
Doubling the amount of public beach area
Expansion of the public park areas (forested and open green spaces)
Lakefront public activities
Additional bicycle paths

**Energy Producing Permitted Uses (for new district buildings):**
Lake Michigan wind farm (Evanston’s separate initiative), and wind turbine technology
Potentially 250,000 square foot of roof area for solar energy green roofs systems
Geothermal heating and cooling systems
Water movement, water turbine technology
Energy Star materials and equipment
Other environmentally friendly energy sources

**Environmental Restrictions:**
Responsible methods and techniques appropriate for construction in wetlands
Protection of habitats, water quality, marine life
Approval from the Environmental Protection Agency
Approval from the Illinois Natural Resources Agency
Approval from the Army Corps of Engineers
Approval from the Coast Guard

**Ownership:**
City of Evanston and its partners in development (other invited communities) will be the owners and beneficiaries of the new district land.

**Development Costs:**

Obviously the type of development contemplated in this proposal will be costly. A formal feasibility study is needed to provide a complete financial model.

This proposal is built around the concept of Evanston as the developer. Like any seasoned developer, Evanston would use the funding of others to achieve its goal. The lakefront offers Evanston the most desirable site possible for this project. Only the City of Evanston can present
such a plan to the State of Illinois. A concept, a specific list of permitted uses, and approval from the state legislature represent the leverage Evanston needs to seek investors interested in building and operating facilities on this land.

RFP’s could be issued to interested investment groups for the work including constructing the site, the buildings and other improvements on leased land. Participating developers would be responsible for their own construction costs, and have a multi-year lease contract, possibly as long as 50 years. Any such arrangement would be at Evanston’s choosing. An investment group would need to agree to the site goals, program, and be under the watchful eye of Evanston’s government. Evanston garnishes a portion of the profits and the entertainment tax revenues.

Developers have a primary rule of thumb, “if the development idea has merit, the funding will follow”. I believe this to be the case for the Fine Arts and Performing Arts District. Any development requires an initial investment of “seed money” for refining the idea on paper, legal costs and other out-of-pocket expenses. In our case, there is a wide range of talent and expertise in the Evanston community and within city hall. Much of what is needed early on can be found in volunteer service or worst case, service provided at some minimal fee. What is needed at the outset is:

- City Council consent to further investigate the idea
- Meeting(s) with other governing agencies to review and approve concepts
- A feasibility study and financial models

The primary principle for funding options is that Evanston citizens are not encumbered in any financial way, shape or form with the cost of this project. A goal I believe is achievable.

Realistically there will be out-of-pocket costs to plan for. There are sources for funding these initial pre-development expenses which may include some or all of the following:

- We will seek out volunteers from the community. Many professional disciplines needed for the feasibility study work, exist in Evanston. Other professional help can be secured on a pro bono basis.

- Tell Evanston citizens that they will be taxed to build this new district, and the project will come to a halt. Ask Evanston citizens if they want to invest in the development of this project (a financial investment with return), and you will find a level of funding.

- There are grants and shared investment opportunities with regional lakefront protection agencies and agencies that promote wetland and habitat preservation. These types of grants should be pursued and can be applicable to this proposal.
• Proposals from independent marketing research firms will be requested. This part of the feasibility study may require funding beyond volunteer services. The cost of these services and the selection of the firm would be discussed with the City of Evanston.

• Federal stimulus dollars in the form of grants or low interest rate (or no interest) loans are applicable to aspects of this project. The Stimulus Package Act passed by congress, outlines the “purposes” of the act including among other uses the creation of permanent jobs; investment opportunities in renewable energy sources; and investments in transportation & infrastructure that provide long term economic benefits. The proposal is consistent with the intended uses for Stimulus Package funding. Stimulus dollars may expire in 2010.

• Approach Northwestern University; they may have interest in contributing to aspects of the project.

• Approach Skokie and Wilmette officials; they could be partners in such a development.

**Benefits:**

The intended benefit of such a development is tax relief for Evanston property owners. Evanston has one of, if not the highest property tax rate in Northern Illinois. Property taxes need to be reduced, not increased.

There will be many types of temporary and permanent full time jobs available, immediately upon proceeding with the study and construction of this project. I advocate the use of volunteer services from Evanston’s wide community of design and construction professionals for the early development of the program and for the feasibility study, to the extent possible. Construction labor for a project of this size would provide jobs for years. Hundreds of full time jobs would be created to operate the facilities on the new property, many of which would be available in three to four years. The new entertainment activities would quickly spread to revitalize other businesses in downtown Evanston and in the region. This kind of activity would generate new demand on housing and spur on the construction of projects now sitting dormant. It is difficult to calculate at this early stage but perhaps thousands of jobs would be created as a result of implementing this proposal.

The City of Evanston has the opportunity to establish a 21st Century model for environmentally friendly construction and the most significant use of renewable energy sources.

There will be many who benefit from implementing this proposal including:

• Established local retail, hospitality, restaurants and related businesses.
• The general fund will benefit from a variety of new entertainment taxes and fees.
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- The lake front master plan would benefit by potentially being able to remove parking lots along the lake and include that parking requirement in the underground plan. This new found lake front land would be turned into additional parks and beach area.
- Evanston’s Fine Art and Cultural Organizations including:
  - Evanston Festival Theater
  - Evanston Ethnic Arts Festival
  - Evanston Symphony Orchestra
  - Re-development of Varsity Theater (originally a motion picture theater)
  - Starlight Concert Series
  - Evanston School of Ballet
  - Piccolo Theater
  - North shore Chamber Orchestra
  - Evanston’s Scottish Country Dancers
  - Northwestern University could benefit should Evanston collaborate on facility types that would be useful to Northwestern.
- Additional demand would develop for use of the existing downtown public parking facilities.
- Sheridan road along the Evanston lake front would be improved.
- Local taxicab and limousine companies would expand.
- Potential development of Bed and Breakfast establishments in existing mansions along Evanston’s east edge.
- Evanston’s Parks and Forestry division would need to hire people, not lay them off.
- Evanston’s Community Development Department would need to hire people, not lay people off.
- Police and Firemen would need to be hired, not laid off.
- There is potential for enough funds to be attained to reconsider the question of re-establishing a more complete branch library system.
- The city’s contribution obligation to the Police and Firemen’s pension fund would be paid ahead of schedule.
- 365 day use of the lakefront rather than only four months during the summer season.

Who is impacted:

The proposed development is an easy target for a number of individuals who may object to it. Every effort will be made to avoid impacting existing property owners in the area. The current Lakefront Master Plan would be interrupted near Church Street to allow a vehicular route into the new district. The entry roadway (tunnel system) will be minimized yet will need to accommodate automobiles, emergency vehicles and bus service.

Views would change for those whose homes are near this location. Rather than a view of the existing boat launch in the foreground, nearby residents would view a landscaped area with expanded beach front shoreline, sail boats in the marina, and architecturally tasteful low rise buildings would recede into the horizon. The design and character of all of these new features
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would be controlled by Evanston. It is also probably that those with lakefront residential property would see property values increase, not decrease.

Transportation:

Evanston is wonderfully positioned to receive visitors from any one of a variety of established transportation routes. The proposed district would be supported by two train lines, Lake Shore Drive, Sheridan Road, the Eden’s Expressway, O’Hare Airport, taxi and limousine services, and hopefully increased marine traffic.

It is intended that there be no motorized vehicles on the surface of the new district land, with the exception of emergency vehicles. Wide paths would be designed to accommodate the expected pedestrian population and the weight of emergency vehicles. The first lower level would be sized to accommodate the heights of all permitted vehicular traffic. Two lower levels of parking are expected to accommodate 5,000 parking spaces.

Prior Contacts:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

I met with a Regulatory Specialist from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with the Chicago District. I was told that such a project is possible, and would follow an “individual permit process”. A number of other agencies would be involved in the review of the proposal including the Coast Guard for navigation issues, the IEPA, and others for review of any fill materials needed to build into the lake. The mitigation of sand “down drift” impact on other beaches is analyzed during the review process. An informal pre-application meeting could be arranged with individuals in the Corps who would comment and critique a conceptual design and thereby minimizing issues later during a formal permit review. A legal representative of the City of Evanston needs to be in attendance at this meeting.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources:

I spoke on the phone with a representative of the Illinois Department of Natural Recourses. The idea of a lakefront development in Evanston had been brought up before as early as five years or so ago. At that time, the concept was to build a marina near Calvary Cemetery. Citizens of Rogers Park were opposed to the development because of its potential impact on their beach property. The current plan is located further north, at Church Street. A public notice would be issued describing the work, and at least one public hearing would take place. The issue most commonly of concern to other communities is the impact of sand drift on downstream beaches. Permits for construction in the lake are contingent upon approval by the Illinois General Assembly.

The agencies I spoke to gave me every reason to believe that the working relationship with their staff would be a collaborative and cooperative effort.
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PROPOSAL’S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CLUES

The proposed district is the type of opportunity Evanston can prosper from. There is sufficient existing financial data available to support, at the very least, embarking upon a formal feasibility study. The study could conclude with preliminary approvals from the State of Illinois and other governing agencies. The following summary identifies financial clues to the success of other similar facilities. More research is needed to confirm this information and to investigate additional project types.

An article appeared in the Chicago Tribune in January of 2010 drawing attention to the downturn in tourism tax dollars. My reaction was that I would be grateful for Evanston to have access to this kind of revenue:

- Woodfield Chicago Northwest Convention Bureau
  - 2008-2009 Budget: $1.6 million
  - 2008 Tax Receipts: $41.7 million

- DuPage Convention and Visitors Bureau
  - 2008-2009 Budget: $1.7 million
  - 2008 Tax Receipts: $83.8 million

- Chicago Southland Convention & Visitors Bureau
  - 2008-2009 Budget: $1.6 million
  - 2008 Tax Receipts: $70.9 million

- Rosemont Convention and Tourism Bureau
  - 2008 Budget: $1.4 million
  - 2008 Tax Receipts: $18.2 million

The Boston Symphony Orchestra, Inc. Annual Report 2008-09 contained a five year summary of revenues, expenses and their endowment. Operating revenues plus members support fell short of operations expenses in 2009 by 1% of the annual operating expenses, fell short by approximately ½% in 2008, but had a surplus of ½% in 2007. The endowment amount was stated to be over $329 million dollars in 2009, which had suffered a fall due to the decline in market value. My reading of this report tells me that the orchestra facility is structured financially to be a break even operation. However, in a companion document issued in 2008, a third party study assessed that the Boston Symphony Orchestra generates more than $166,000,000 annually in statewide economic activity. The study assesses BSO’s role of promoting business in Boston, driving real-estate sales, enhancing cultural vitality, and branding Boston as a work-class city.

The 2006 Annual Report for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra suggests the venue is a major catalyst for economic development and revitalization of the City of Detroit. A $100 million investment in the eight acre Orchestra Place campus has contributed towards the transformation of the neighborhood in five years time. Further the DSO presence has helped leverage over $1 Billion in new investment and 3,200 new or rehabilitated housing units.
Many of the opera companies and symphony orchestra organizations are not-for-profit enterprises, and as such report their current revenues and current liabilities at break even or as a deficit during 2008 and 2009 (based upon information from their web sites). However most make claim to influencing the communities around them by substantial tax revenues from related economic activity. Also consistent are reports of total net assets in $100’s of millions of dollars.

The annual Report from 2008 – 2009 for the Seattle Opera states that the organization has had 17 balanced budgets in 18 years and had a net operating income of $21.5 million dollars in 2009. The report projects a 2010 operating income of over $30 million.

At the outset of design and during construction of the facilities, members and benefactors would be secured to contribute to the funding of these facilities. Among the organizations I reviewed, many use these funds for additional investment purposes.

Skokie was able to freeze its property tax rate to the same level for 18 years which coincides somewhat with the construction of the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie, and the influx of retail facilities in Westbrook Center.

I have no physical documentation yet to support the claim, but I have spoken to several active marine enthusiasts who tell me that marinas are financially profitable especially if year round storage facilities are available. The proposal illustrates off season boat storage.

Some of the data I have collected to date seems too impressive to believe, and therefore more investigation is needed. Going forward, I would like to bring others into the discussion who can better address funding and financing options, construction costs, and operating expenses as they related to the proposed fine arts and performing arts district.

I did find with few exceptions, that the 2008 and 2009 national economy affected the financial bottom line of nearly every facility. What is encouraging is that even those facilities that just broke even financially still influenced their local economies in a positive way.

OPERATIONS CAUTION

I have been following the McCormick Place operations saga over the past six months or more and it is worth mentioning how facilities of this type can become so entrenched in political wheeling and dealing, greed, patronage and to some extent can be excessively burdened by labor rules, contracts and regulations. Quick action by the State of Illinois unraveled the situation, at least for the time being. Chicago was losing substantial business in the convention market which has now apparently stabilized.

In comparison, I would not foresee the same political problems operating a similar but much smaller facility in Evanston. Never-the-less the success of the proposed facilities relies greatly upon how the facilities are managed.
The Buenos Aires Opera Colon is considered one of the best if not the best Opera House among 23 houses rated by well known conductors. This study took place in 2000 by Hidaka and Beranek. Built in 1908, this facility seats 2,437 and is ranked best acoustically. The facility is smaller than most American Opera Houses and larger than most European Opera Houses. Other closely ranked Opera Houses include Dresden-Semperoper, Milan-Teatro alla Scala, Tokyo-National Theater, and Naples-Teatro di San Carlo. One of the most obvious distinctions between an opera house and a symphony orchestra hall is the effort to bring the audience closer to the stage. The relationship between actor and audience should be as close as possible; being opera is as much a visual performance as it is a musical performance. The scale of the building modeled in this document is comparable to these facilities.
Three symphony halls, all of which were built over 100 years ago, are considered by those in the field as acoustically superior to others. Reverberation time is a key measurement in making this ranking. The Grosser Musikvereinssaal built in Vienna in 1870 is considered “...the Mecca of the old halls of Europe”, seats approximately 1,680 people. The Boston Symphony Hall is ranked second in the world. The hall was built in 1900 and is larger than the Vienna hall seating 2,625 people. The hall ranked third is the Concertgebouw built in 1888 in Amsterdam and seats 2,037. The trained ear of an experienced conductor makes adjustments while performing in facilities with less ideal acoustics. The key similarity between these three halls considered acoustically the best in the world, is the rectangular shape of the audience area. The building design is commonly referred to as a shoe box. The scale of the building modeled in this document is comparable to these facilities.
ILLUSTRATION REPRESENTS: SYMPHONY HALL BOSTON, MA, 1880

SOURCE OF INFORMATION: CONCERT HALLS AND OPERA HOUSES: MUSIC, ACOUSTICS AND ARCHITECTURE, SECOND EDITION, LEO BERANEK; PUBLISHED BY SPRINGER SCIENCE + BUSINESS MEDIA, LLC, 2004

SYMPHONY HALL BOSTON - SECTION

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JULY 12, 2010
World class opera and symphony facilities may be the keystones for marketing the new Fine Arts and Performing Arts district. The size and capacity of these two buildings should however be supplemented by other fine theatre buildings in a range of smaller sizes. The proposal suggests that the opera house and symphony hall are designed specific to opera and symphony uses, not as multi-purpose facilities. Smaller theatres would still be expected to provide the highest level of acoustics and unencumbered lines of sight for the audience. A fundamental rule for theatre design is to provide as intimate a relationship as possible between the performers and the audience. A variety of venues suitable for either music or theatre would be desirable; 100 to 200 seats, 400 to 500 seats, and 900 to 1,000 seat venues. It is proposed that the school systems of Evanston make use of these new facilities to the extent feasible. Our understanding is that severe budget cuts in the school system arts programs will reduce our children’s exposure to the performing arts. We encourage the district’s elementary schools, Evanston Township High School, and Northwestern University to take an active role in the development of this proposal. The scale of the building modeled in this document is comparable to these facilities.
This proposal suggests facilities should be planned to provide for the needs of the visiting population we seek to lure to Evanston. We are promoting world class theatres, a symphony hall, an opera house, a specialty convention center and potentially the Presidential Library honoring Barack Obama. One of the goals of this proposal is to attract a national audience and international visitors. A five star resort hotel is illustrated and should be comparable to a Four Seasons, Ritz Carlton, or Peninsula Hotel. An exclusive restaurant either incorporated into the hotel or a stand-alone building should be of equal caliber. The capacity of any supporting facilities such as a hotel or a fine restaurant will be undersized with the intention of driving business to existing downtown retail shops, hotels, restaurants and other businesses. The scale of the buildings modeled in this document is comparable to these facilities.
The proposal includes an illustration of a building site on the east side of the new district. This site should be reserved for an inspirational facility, one in keeping with the cultural aspects of the development goals. The Office of the President of the United States will begin the process of site selection for the Barack Obama Presidential Library and Museum near the end of the president’s term in office. The president alone chooses when the process begins; he chooses the site and the architect for the building. This proposal suggests that the City of Evanston consider offering this site for consideration by President Obama, at the appropriate time. Needless-to-say, a site in Evanston would have considerable competition by what others may consider more obvious sites. Presidents historically choose a home town or other significant personal place. President Obama’s childhood home in Hawaii, Harvard University, the University of Chicago, or another site in Illinois could likely be considered among others.

Evanston may be the one place that best represents what the Obama Presidency stands for. The diversity of our community, our benevolence, the social and economic policies we strive to maintain, and other qualities we have built our reputation on are genuine. Evanston has always endeavored to find a way to stay true to its principles and beliefs. Evanston as the site for the Obama Presidential Library and Museum, for these reasons alone has merit. In addition, the particular site shown on the site plan is by far one of the most prominent sites that could be offered anywhere.

We also propose that consideration be given to establishing a new Coast Guard Station on a portion of the new district property. A coast guard station with a heliport would be a very compatible use with the proposed marina. The scale of the building modeled in this document is comparable to these facilities.
TRANVERSE SITE SECTION ABOVE WATER LEVEL

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JULY 14, 2010
CLOSING STATEMENT

Evanston needs a reliable revenue stream other than annually increasing property tax levies. The proposed fine arts and performing arts district is capable of providing that revenue source. There are many issues to investigate further.

I do not know how much revenue this endeavor will generate for Evanston. I have found reported information that suggests these kinds of performance and convention facilities spawn 10’s of millions of dollars in tax revenue annually in other communities. A feasibility study would provide a high level examination of the potential revenue streams specifically for this project.

I do not know what the exact mix of theatrical venues, convention spaces, and supporting facilities needed to make this project successful. A market study would be part of the feasibility report and provide a snap shot of interest in the types of facilities proposed for the development. The market study would encompass the local region, samplings from other Midwest cities, and distant states. Our market needs to be national.

I do not know if the shape of the land shown in the illustrations is the correct shape. Information from and collaboration with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the IEPA, and the U.S. Coast Guard is needed to examine this question. A representative of Evanston’s Government is needed to join me in these discussions. The concept cannot be developed further without this information.

A formal feasibility report is the next logical step in the process of vetting this concept. I do not want to burden the City of Evanston Staff, nor is it necessary to hire a team of consultants to accomplish the feasibility study. The assistance I need is the participation of a city staff member at meetings with other governmental agencies.

Upon its conclusion, the Feasibility Report will address the lingering questions of cost, funding, revenue, market interest, environmental issues, and schedule. Gaining access to certain types of funding is a time sensitive issue, and suggests the feasibility study must begin in short order.

I am encouraged because I have already been assured by those I have spoken to in the development and construction industry that a project of this type has much potential. A nationally recognized and respected hotel corporation has expressed indirect interest in properties along the north shore. Their portfolio includes resort hotel properties, but they are also interested in high-end retirement communities. I am opposed to using any part of the proposed district for a permanent housing complex. However, a scenario involving a land swap involving a resort hotel on, near or within the new district and a high-end retirement community may lead to a beneficial deal for the city. This is just one example of many possibilities I expect would come forward from interested investors.
Some may question what credentials I have to suggest this scale of project in Evanston is feasible, and it’s constructability in Lake Michigan. In short, I have 30 years of experience in the planning, design, and construction of significant buildings and complex building types. I would be happy to offer a copy of my resume to anyone who would like it. Then a principal with the firm of Lohan Associates, my resume includes being project architect for the McDonald’s Corporation Office Campus in Oak Brook over 20 years ago. The project cost at that time exceeded $200,000,000 and involved working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Experience working in Lake Michigan includes my involvement with the design and construction of the Shed Aquarium Oceanarium. This facility extends beyond the original historical Aquarium building directly into the lake. In this case, a concrete sea wall was built along the building’s perimeter.

Similar construction techniques and waterproofing systems used on these projects are applicable to the proposed fine arts and performing arts district’s below water structures. For comparison purposes, the proposed land mass and facilities illustrated within this document are comparable to the length of Chicago’s Navy Pier, and comparable in volume to the scale of Old Orchard Shopping Center (Westbrook Center).
The proposed convention center is expected to be the single most revenue producing building within the district. Most local meetings and convention facilities I have been able to research prove to be excellent revenue generators. Despite the economy, there also seems to be no shortage of conventions being scheduled by users from across the country. Conventions come in a wide variety of sizes. This proposal does not suggest Evanston compete for those at the larger end of the scale. Rather, Evanston should compete for small groups and conventions averaging two to three thousand people. This is a manageable size gathering for the district as illustrated, as it provides for parking, hospitality, and other support facilities. With conventions come people looking for something to do during off periods. The proposal suggests a variety of performing arts venues that would offer the highest level of entertainment. Evanston’s downtown restaurants and retail and other businesses provide even more offerings.
I have come to understand good facilities for docking a boat, maintaining a boat and storing a boat in the off season are rare. Building a marina as an independent project would be expensive in comparison to building it in combination with other facilities like those described within this proposal. A cost comparison of the two can be part of the feasibility study proposed as the next step in the Fine Arts and Performing Arts District effort. Of interest to me was to discuss the costs charged for boat storage at Chicago’s Marina City Tower building along the Chicago River. A boat of similar size to the 35 to 50 foot long boats illustrated within, would cost approximately $10,000.00 for the season. The proposal suggests as many as 650 boats would fit comfortably in the marina docks. The math is simple and equates a revenue stream of approximately $1,000,000.00 annually, less operating expenses, for every 100 boats using the facility.

This revenue would be in addition to other revenues such as taxes on boat storage, and taxes on the maintenance services, fuel, and a host of smaller but significant costs associated with boating. Other water sports would naturally spin off of an established marina facility.

The scale of the boats modeled in this document is comparable to those found in Chicago’s Belmont Harbor facilities.
PROPOSED EVANSTON FINE ARTS AND PERFORMING ARTS DISTRICT
Evanston has embraced the global effort to use renewable energy resources wherever possible, in lieu of fossil fuels that have proven to negatively affect the environment. The use of renewable energy and environmentally safe construction techniques will be a high priority in building and operating the proposed Fine Arts and Performing Arts District facilities. There are more opportunities that would normally present themselves to use renewable energy techniques with a project situated along and taking land in Lake Michigan. A wind energy farm in Lake Michigan, an ongoing effort by Evanston, will establish Evanston as a leader in the use of renewable energy. The Fine Arts and Performing Arts facilities would use energy generated from the wind farm.

Other sustainable energy techniques are planned to be incorporated into the new district buildings including significant use of solar power, hydro-electric power, geothermal cooling and heat energy, green roof insulation systems and the use of Energy Star building materials and equipment.
The focus of this document is to highlight facilities that would or could generate a source of revenue for the City of Evanston. There are some facilities that I am inclined to incorporate in the proposal because of their educational benefit to the community, specifically those growing up in Evanston. A marine life and fish habitat is proposed and follows in the footsteps of other such facilities Evanston has championed over the years. Evanston’s Ecology Center is an example of the kind of support facility to model a new marine life and fish habitat after.

Depending upon the final shape of land masses, there may be areas of lake water less prone to volatile wave action. These areas of the lake, closer to the shoreline may serve as good habitats for raising native Lake Michigan fish species that are listed as threatened or endangered. A facility such as this would be a proactive initiative towards the betterment of Lake Michigan, and the environment in general. Pre-school students up through university students and other adults would benefit from the educational opportunities of a marine life and fish habitat.
Lake Michigan Food Web

**Forage Fish**
- Lake whitefish (Coregonus clupeaformis). Native found in cold waters. Bottom feeders—diets shifted to include zebra and quagga mussels.
- Yellow perch (Perca flavescens). Native that schools near shore, usually at depths less than 20 feet.
- Bloater (Coregonus hoyi). Native deepwater chub feeding on zooplankton and other organisms near the lake bottom. Harvested commercially for smoked fish.
- Deepwater sculpin (Myoxocephalus quadricornis thompsonii). A native glacial relic that lives at the bottom of cold, deep water feeding on aquatic invertebrates.
- Slender sculpin (Cottus cognatus). Native, nocturnal inhabitant of nearshore areas where it primarily eats invertebrates.
- Rainbow Smelt (Osmerus mordax). Found in both coastal and offshore habitats. Light-sensitive, so prefer deeper, cooler waters during the warmer seasons.
- Round goby (Neogobius melanostomus). Invasive, introduced into the Great Lakes via freighter ballast. Feeds on bivalves, including zebra mussels, crustaceans, insects, and small fishes.

**Macroinvertebrates**
- Chironomids/Oligochaeta. Larval insects and worms that live on the lake bottom. Feed on detritus. Species present are a good indicator of water quality.
- Amphipods (Oropia). The most common species of amphipod found in fish diets that began declining in the late 1990’s.
- Opossum shrimp (Mysis relicta). An omnivore that feeds on algae and small cladocerans. Migrates into the water column at night.
- Mollusks. A mixture of native and non-native species of snails and clams are eaten by lake whitefish and other bottom feeding fish.
- Zebra and Quagga mussels (Dreissena polymorpha and Dreissena bugensis). Established in Lake Michigan in 1989 (zebra); 1997 (quagga). Filter-feeders that remove huge quantities of plankton.

**Zooplankton (Microscopic animals found in the water column)**
- Invasive Spiny water Fleas (Daphnia longispina). Visual raptorial predator that depresses native waterflea populations.
- Native Raptorial water Fleas (Leptodora kindtii). Slow-moving and patchy distribution of small worms at relatively low numbers.
- Cyclopoid copepods (e.g., Oithona dinocepilis). Carnivorous copepods that feed on rotifers and other microzooplankton.
- Native water Fleas (e.g., Daphnia galeata). Filter-feeding water fleas that can be important for controlling phytoplankton.
- Calanoid copepods (e.g., Diaptomus sp.). Omnivores that feed on both phytoplankton and microzooplankton.
- Rotifers. A diverse group of microzooplankton that, depending on species, feed on phytoplankton, detritus, or other microzooplankton.

**Phytoplankton (Algae found in the water column)**
- Blue-green algae (Saxi Cyanobacteria). Often inedible and frequently toxic; blooms in late summer and can look like spilled paint on the water surface.
- Green algae. Microscopic (single-celled) plants that form the main support of the summer food web. Also includes large nuisance species such as Cladophora.
- Diatoms. Cold-loving microscopic (single-celled) plants encased in silica shells that support the first wave of production in the spring.

134 species of fish, including 17 non-natives, make their homes in the waters of Lake Michigan. Eight species of native fish have been extirpated from Lake Michigan. This food web includes only the dominant species.

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EVANSTON NEEDS A NEW SOURCE OF TAX REVENUE
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EVANSTON - A NATIONAL POINT OF DESTINATION

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RE-INVIGORATE EXISTING COMMERCE;
POTENTIAL NEW ENTERPRISES CREATED

PROPOSED FINE ARTS AND PERFORMING ARTS DISTRICT
JULY 28, 2010