City of Bellevue
Parks & Community Services Department

Management Brief

Phone: 452-5377

Date: March 24, 2014

To: Chair Grindeland and Parks & Community Services Board Members

From: Patrick Foran, Director, Parks & Community Services
Shelley Brittingham, Assistant Director
Terry Smith, Assistant Director
Lorrie Peterson, Parks Property and Acquisitions Manager

Subject: Downtown Park – Ballet Arts Center Building

At the March 11, 2014 Parks & Community Services Board meeting, Mr. Maurice Cooper of the Ballet Arts Board spoke about the recent 12-month notice to vacate the City-owned Ballet Arts Building to facilitate expansion of the Downtown Park. He provided a letter from Ballet Bellevue School (copy attached) requesting City assistance to help them develop a long range plan and to provide temporary space in order to meet the February 28, 2015 deadline to vacate the building. This memorandum provides information pertaining to the current status, history of the acquisition, pending park expansion, interim use, and evaluation of options and assistance the City has provided for Ballet Bellevue since 1990.

Downtown Park History:

The majority of Bellevue Downtown Park was acquired in December 1983 with the initial purchase of 17.5 acres from the Bellevue School District. Smaller additions were completed in the next few years, including the 1990 acquisition of the Ballet Arts Building, bringing the park to its present 20-acres. The original park master plan was approved by the City Council in 1984 after significant community involvement. A master plan update was approved in 1997. The basic concept remained the same, including the expansion of the west parking lot in the area of the Ballet Arts Building.

Acquisition of Ballet Arts Center Property/Interim Use:

The purpose of the acquisition was to incorporate the property into the Downtown Park to achieve the adopted Master Plan, which involved removal of the building and provision of additional parking. At the time of the acquisition, funding was not available for the next phase of park development, so the City entered into a series of rental agreements with the ballet group to utilize the building on an interim basis. The agreement has been on a month-to-month basis since 2007. The agreements have included a provision describing intended City use; urged the ballet group to plan for the relocation of its programs; to actively pursue funding; and to seek alternative locations and partnerships. There is no program relationship between the entities, as this is strictly a landlord/tenant agreement.

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Re: Downtown Park – Ballet Arts Center Building

Current Status Park Development:
In 2008, Bellevue citizens passed the Parks & Natural Areas Levy that approved funding to complete additional phases of the Downtown Park Master Plan. The Ballet Arts Building will be removed during this work and the parking lot will be expanded. Work is currently underway to design and apply for permits. Construction is tentatively scheduled to start in the summer 2015.

The City advised Ballet Bellevue that the Voter Initiative passed and that their interim use would end. The Parks Department recommended that they start looking for alternative space. Given the timing of other park projects as well as the Ballet Bellevue's recitals, including their proposed Nutcracker in December, the Parks Department is able to permit Ballet Bellevue to remain on the property through February 28, 2015. This will allow sufficient time for Ballet Bellevue to complete their December recital and relocate to another location.

Review of Ballet Bellevue's Long-Term Needs:
In 1997, Ballet Bellevue provided a list of physical and building needs. The Recreation Division completed a survey of time and space availability at its centers, as well as explored other alternatives that could possibly be used for ballet classes. In a letter dated September 5, 1997, Lee Springgate acknowledged City had reviewed their list of needs for space and time requirements. Although no dedicated space was available, there were some blocks of times at park facilities that would have provided a few of their key classes to continue, by leasing space from the City. Although Ballet Bellevue evaluated renting space at Northwest Arts Center, they remained on the west side of the Downtown Park. A similar survey was recently conducted that indicates some space is currently available that Ballet Bellevue could rent for some of their classes.

Potential Funding Assistance:/Investment Principles:
At the request of Richard Engstrom from PAFE (Performing Arts Festival Eastside), Shelley Brittingham, Parks & Community Services Assistant Director, met with Mr. Engstrom and Mary Ellen Hundley of Ballet Bellevue on March 3, 2014. Mr. Engstrom's request to meet was for Ms. Hundley to describe Ballet Bellevue's future plans and to ask for any ideas regarding spaces or venues, commercial or otherwise for Ballet Bellevue to pursue. Ms. Brittingham also invited Mary Pat Byrne, Arts Specialist for the City, to attend the meeting. The City has a program to assist art organizations seeking funding, and/or assistance for special projects. Mary Pat Byrne manages that program for the City, and will work with the group to see if they are eligible. Ms. Byrne has worked with other arts organizations searching for space in Bellevue.

Closing:
The City has been supportive of Ballet Bellevue's programs by providing interim use of the building since 1990. It has been clear to the tenants that this was an interim use and that they would need to plan to relocate once the City was ready to move forward with park development. Since the passage of the 2008 Voter Initiative, staff have been in communication with Ballet Bellevue about the pending development. The City has worked cooperatively to provide Ballet Bellevue with 365 days prior notice, rather than the 90 days outlined within the agreement. Further, the City has provided Ballet Bellevue through February 2015 so they can complete their recitals. The City will continue to pass along potential sites within the community as they become available, and Mary Pat Byrne will work with them to evaluate their funding request.