

Memorandum

TO: Darrell White, Interim Director – Procurement
FROM: Tameka D. Williams, Director – Recreation & Parks
DATE: January 24, 2025
SUBJECT: 24-000 Unsolicited Proposal: Revitalization of Dyess Park Fire Station

Recommendation:

After careful evaluation of the unsolicited proposal to preserve the historic fire station within Dyess Park, it is recommended that the proposal be denied in favor of adhering to the established Design Plan for the park. This recommendation is based on several critical factors outlined below.

1. Public Feedback and Park Integration:

- Community feedback throughout the planning process has consistently indicated a preference for the removal of the facility rather than its preservation.
- The proposal does not adequately address how the firehouse would integrate with the park's overall design and function.
- The argument that redesigning the park is less costly than demolition lacks a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis.

2. Financial Feasibility Concerns:

- The proposal's estimated restoration costs appear to be significantly underestimated, especially when compared to recent similar projects.
- The proposing entity has not identified a secondary funding source, raising concerns about their ability to complete the project should initial funds be depleted.
- The proposal does not account for tenant leasehold build-out costs, which could further strain financial resources.
- The operating budget is insufficient, covering only insurance costs without addressing other essential expenses such as maintenance, utilities, and staffing.

3. Land Use and Liability Issues:

- The proposed area of land for the firehouse is minimal; however, commercial use would require additional parking facilities.

- A parking agreement with the City would be necessary, introducing potential liability concerns and administrative burdens.
- The lack of clear planning around parking requirements raises doubts about the project's overall feasibility.

4. Vague Project Details and Uncertain Viability:

- The proposal lacks specificity regarding the intended use of the firehouse, leaving uncertainty about the project's long-term viability.
- The project timeline provided is ambiguous, making it difficult to assess the feasibility and sustainability of the initiative.
- Without a defined tenant or type of tenant, renovation costs could far exceed the proposed budget.

5. Public Park Mission and Accessibility:

- Public parks are intended to remain open and accessible to all, providing spaces for recreation, relaxation, and environmental conservation.
- The introduction of private businesses could shift the focus from public benefit to profit-making, potentially limiting equitable access.
- There is a risk that private commercial interests could create conflicts of interest and erode the park's primary mission of serving the public.

Conclusion:

In light of the above considerations, it is recommended that the unsolicited proposal for the preservation of the historic firehouse be denied. Instead, Augusta should continue with the implementation of the Dyess Park Design Plan to ensure the park remains a free, accessible, and community-centered space for all residents. Augusta should focus on park enhancements that align with public interests and long-term sustainability goals.