

Moorhead Power Plant Study Group

Stage 1 Recommendations

January 21, 2009

Stage 1: Collecting Ideas, Exploring Possibilities

Introduction: The Moorhead Power Plant is an amazingly sound historic structure on high ground above the flood plain in Moorhead's central core. Its working life is over and the city must determine its future.

The Moorhead Power Plant Study Group, consisting of David Anderson, Bob Backman, Jana Bye, Mark Chekola (chair), Jeff Hanson, Heidi Manning and Deanne Sperling, was established to solicit broad-based community input with regard to the reuse and redevelopment of the Moorhead Power Plant and adjacent publicly-owned property and to provide a recommendation to the Mayor and the City Council. Its guiding question is "What is the next best use of this site for our city?"

The Study Group sees this as a process that will involve several stages, and desires to seek public input at each stage. An Open House was held on January 6, 2009, and information and a survey have been available on the City of Moorhead's web site. The Study Group is pleased that the Open House and surveys were very successful in eliciting input from Moorhead citizens.

We present these as our initial, first stage recommendations, part of the beginning process of collecting ideas and exploring possibilities.

Points of Agreement: We have found significant agreement on the following, with regard to determining the next best use of the Power Plant site:

- The building should be preserved and adapted for reuse. There is overwhelming agreement that the building should not be destroyed.
- The Power Plant building should continue to be publicly owned and should be devoted to a public use or uses.
- It should serve as a "gathering place," functioning in some way that brings people in the community together.
- It should be a "signature" place, and an amenity in the community that contributes to Moorhead citizens' enjoyment of living in the city, and pride about the city.

- It should make use of its riverfront location and promote enjoyment of the river and appreciation of its ecology and role in the city's geography and history.
- It should fit in with the adjoining neighborhoods.
- The building and any additions should be as environmentally sustainable as possible.
- It should have long-term economic viability, but does not need to have positive cash flow, especially initially. Funding assistance will be needed for startup.
- Work on adapting the existing building and developing other portions of the site might well be done in a number of stages. If conditions and funding require, it is seen as acceptable if this takes some time. The site is a long-term asset to the community, and careful planning should occur, and the process should not be rushed.
- The recommended uses noted in the next section refer to the part of the overall site which consists of the Power Plant Building and the footprint of the newer addition which was sold and dismantled. There seems to be general agreement that **housing** that would fit in with the adjoining neighborhoods is likely the best use of the **adjoining publicly-owned land**. However, it could be that the use determined for the Power Plant building site might suggest other use for all or part of the adjoining publicly-owned land.

Ideas for Adaptive Reuse of the Power Plant Building:

It should be noted that these functions are not necessarily exclusive. There could be several kinds of **mixed use** of the site. It might be possible to combine some of the functions listed below in the use of the site (for example, a library with an adjoining teen center or arts performance venue; or a community center with an adjoining small museum). In addition, a second kind of mixed use might involve some adjacent **privately operated businesses**, such as a coffee shop, bicycle shop and rental facility, boating rental facility, physical fitness shop (selling or renting gear for exercise, cross-country skiing, Frisbee golf, etc.), or a restaurant.

- **Location for a new city Library.** Public input indicates a significant interest on the part of many Moorhead citizens in considering relocating the Library to this site. It is important that there be further consideration of this possibility and that this consideration involve community input.
- **A Community Center of some type.** Input from the Open House and surveys indicated significant interest in the idea of the Power Plant site serving as some sort of community center. Several possibilities have been suggested:
 - A community center devoted to **physical fitness**.
 - A **teen center** providing space for teens to gather during various times of the day and evening with activities available that are of interest to them. (The interest in this expressed in the public input makes it clear that this judged to be a significant

need in the community which should be addressed, if not in the development of the Power Plant site, at some other location).

- An **arts performance center** providing space for small to medium performances by music groups and theatrical groups, designed in such a way as to provide a venue for socializing and well as performances. (The interest in this expressed in the public input makes it clear that this, too, is judged to be a significant need in the community which should be addressed, if not in the development of the Power Plant site, at some other location.)
- There is also some interest in the possibility of the Power Plant site serving as a museum, in particular either devoted to science or to art.

Possible early short-term use of parts of site: We think it might be a good idea to look at using a portion of the site for some activities related to the adjoining Woodlawn Park. In particular, the portion east of Woodlawn Park Drive could be made a temporary small winter activities area. There is the popular sliding hill which is already located there. Perhaps the remaining foundation of the cooling tower could serve for an ice-skating rink. There is a small steel-sided building on the site which could perhaps be turned into a small warming-house. If that is not possible, perhaps a small temporary warming house could be moved to the site. There could perhaps be some sleigh rides offered originating at this site. We believe this would be a nice way to bring people to the site for some activities at an early stage of development.

In addition to winter activities, perhaps the building that serves as a warming house could in warmer weather serve as a place where people could rent Frisbee golf equipment or bicycles, promoting use of the Frisbee golf course in Woodlawn Park and the bicycle paths in the Park and along the Red River.

Agenda and Time Line for Remaining Work

Stage 2: Visions for Future Uses and Development of Site

With the information we have gained from input from the citizens of Moorhead we will take each of the identified uses supported by them and work out in greater detail what each would involve in terms of community needs, functions and activities, and space needs. We will seek help from people and agencies in the community who are knowledgeable with regard to each of those potential uses. In addition, we will seek to have some visual conceptualizations developed to help people in imagining what such a facility or facilities would look like. This will include also looking at the possibility of a multi-use project involving various possible combinations of the suggested uses.

Time line: Late January to May 1. Our goal would be to have our report for Stage 2 done in early April and to have an Open House and online surveys for public input early May.

Stage 3: Final Visions and Recommendations

Stage 3 of the Study Group's work will involve using public input from the second Open House to determine what emerges as the next best use or uses of the site, and also seek some information about cost estimates and possible sources of funding. We will then develop our final recommendations.

Time line: Tentative date for final recommendations: Fall or early Winter, 2009. At that time we would seek public reaction through another Open House and online surveys.

Summary

It is clear that the people of Moorhead would like the Power Plant building to be preserved and adapted for reuse, remain publicly owned, and devoted to a public use or uses, though there is interest in the possibility of some appropriate adjacent privately owned businesses. They want it to be a signature place and a gathering place for the community.

Ideas for adaptive reuse of the Power Plant which have the greatest support from the public input we received include its serving as

- a new location for the public Library,
- a community center focusing on physical fitness, a teen center, or an arts performance center for small to medium performances,
- a museum, particularly devoted to science or art,
- or some mix of these.