



City of Grand Island

Tuesday, May 25, 2021

Council Session

Item I-3

#2021-128 - Consideration of Renaming Kaufman Park to Amur Plaza

Staff Contact: Patrick Brown

Council Agenda Memo

From: Patrick Brown, Finance Director
Jerry Janulewicz, City Attorney

Meeting: May 25, 2021

Subject: Consideration of officially naming the area commonly known as Kaufmann Park or Railside Plaza

Presenter(s): Brian Schultz, Assistant Finance Director

Background

A number of years ago the area currently known by many as the Kaufmann Park or Railside Plaza was updated from a street (N. Wheeler Ave.) to be partially a parking lot and partially a green space area. The green space area has evolved over time from an old gazebo to what it is today, a primarily concrete area with art and seating. The area today is used for various events including the HEAR Grand Island annual concert series.

The area never received an official designation by City Council through review of decades of old minutes and resolutions. The name Kaufmann came from the building in the area owned by a David Kaufmann, 308 West 3rd St. Mr. Kaufmann was a dedicated individual and in 1924 opened the first Five & Dime Store at this location. This was the first of eventually nine stores across the state of Nebraska.

The name Railside started getting used around the year 2018 when the Railside Business Improvement District (BID) adopted their new moniker and rebranded the downtown area. Railside BID office was located in the Harmony Building, adjacent to the plaza, many events were held there over the years and the name also stuck for those new to the area because of the rebranding.

Amur Equipment Finance, founded in 1996 in Grand Island, has become one of the largest independent finance companies in the United States. They recently purchased the old Wells Fargo building downtown and remodeled it to ensure their headquarters stays in Grand Island and Railside for years to come. The plaza is adjacent to their office and they would like to bring some additional green space and beautification to the area.

Discussion

Amur would like to work with the City and Grow Grand Island in a Public/Private partnership to design and construct the existing “Raiside Plaza” and north to South Front Street into an updated park/plaza. The new area would incorporate a permanent stage, permanent bathrooms and new green space (see exhibit). The goal would be to have as much green space as possible and celebrate historic Nebraska including prairie grass. The construction when completed would actually add additional parking stalls to the immediate area. The anticipated cost of the project scope is approximately \$650,000, Amur is looking to pay up to 50% of the project cost, essentially matching any public funds and grants. They would look to additional private entities to make up any shortfalls of the project. As part of their donation they are requesting that the entire plaza be officially named after their company. The new area would tentatively be named “Amur Plaza” or “Amur Park” dependent on which designation if any the City decides to navigate. Currently the area is not an official park, but could potentially be given that designation in the future. Amur is seeking naming rights consideration on the project prior to making a sizeable contribution and being the lead on the project vision/design.

Long term maintenance would be done by the Raiside BID and its staff. The topic has been discussed multiple times at Raiside BID board meetings on how the ongoing expenses could be recouped through event rental fees that take place on the plaza.

Concerns: The largest concern that has been verbalized to date is that parking would be an issue, but the concept design would actually add additional parking stalls upon completion (see exhibit) in that area. Another concern is that the history of the name Kaufmann would be lost. This specific item was discussed with Amur and a plaque or marker was discussed that could have a brief history of the old plaza and Mr. Kaufmann, this idea was met with enthusiasm.

Next steps upon approval would include the following: City of Grand Island Public Works would complete an official vacation of the road right of way that needs to take place. The project would be bid out according to the City of Grand Island procurement code, Public Works employees have reviewed the design concept, but would also be involved in making sure the official changes are appropriate. If the plan stays on track work could start later in 2021. Grow Grand Island is still in a discussion phase internally about its participation in the project.

Project completion is estimated to be done prior to the 2022 summer concert series.

Alternatives

It appears that the Council has the following alternatives concerning the issue at hand.

The Council may:

1. Move to approve
2. Amend the resolution
3. Refer the issue to a Committee

4. Postpone the issue to future date
5. Take no action on the issue

Recommendation

City Administration recommends that the Council approve the resolution.

Sample Motion

Move to approve the resolution as presented.

RESOLUTION 2021-128

WHEREAS, the City Council never officially adopted a name for the area commonly known as the Kaufman Park or Railside Plaza;

WHEREAS, Amur Equipment Finance have designed a plan for an expansion towards W. South Front Street;

WHEREAS, Amur Equipment Finance is planning on contributing 50% matching donation and would be the lead on the project, project estimation is currently \$650,000;

WHEREAS, Amur Equipment Finance is seeking naming rights upon completion of the northern expansion and current plaza updates.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA, that:

Upon project completion and acceptance, the area currently known as Kaufman Park or Railside Plaza will officially be renamed to Amur Plaza or Amur Park.

Adopted by the City Council of the City of Grand Island, Nebraska, May 25, 2021.

Roger G. Steele, Mayor

Attest:

RaNae Edwards, City Clerk

Approved as to Form	☒ _____
May 21, 2021	☒ City Attorney