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Community Service Center

CREATIVE RE-USE DEPOT AND SOUTH ASHLAND COMMUNITY SERVICES CENTER

This is a proposal for review by City of Ashland's Ad Hoc Steering Committee in regard to solutions to problems of hunger, homelessness and joblessness.

PROPOSAL SUBMITTED BY:

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THE ISSUE: PROVIDING A PLACE OFF THE PLAZA, NOT JUST FOR THE HOMELESS OR DISPLACED,

BUT FOR MANY NECESSARY COMMUNITY USES

Having a place where all locals can feel at home away from the Plaza, have gatherings and conduct essential community services would alleviate pressure on the downtown. The arts, agriculture, and eco-tourism are mainstay economic generators for Ashland. We need a place for economic development and a place where food and social services and meaningful jobs and re-entry help can be offered.

THE SOLUTION: CREATIVE RE-USE DEPOT AND SOUTH ASHLAND COMMUNITY SERVICES CENTER

Using Food Angels' non profit, (a registered church, The Congregation of the Angels of Service) a grassroots group will launch a capital campaign to acquire the building and undeveloped property at 2200 Ashland Street. Food Angels will move their operating base to the empty portion of the building. The Food Bank will retain their current space and operations if they so desire. Transient services similar to those provided by IAAC will be offered in the building: showers, postal services, job counseling and mentoring, as well as the opportunity to participate in work related to the repurposing, repair and redistribution of donated materials.

Outside the building on the one acre parcel, a team of builders, artists and conservationists will create a center where reusable items will be dropped off and made available for purchase or for free to community members and organizations. This part of the project would be modeled after Mecca in Eugene (a charter school where the entire curriculum is based on the 4 Rs - recycle,

repurpose, re-use and rot) or, similar to Urban Ore or East Bay Depot, or LA Shares, but on a much smaller scale.

It is expected that groups like Neighborhood Harvest, Siskiyou Permaculture Resource Group (SPRG), Ashland Transition Towns, and other non profits would have a presence on site, and possible that a gardening and soil-building site would be made available, as well as a daily market for growers and vendors. This is needed due to lack of room in existing outdoor markets for all the growers and vendors.

In addition, training and support received at the Center can help the jobless and the homeless by being able to give local recommendations and vouchsafe for individuals who are ready for "re-entry". There is no shelter component proposed, though future consideration could be given to some community supported development on this large site. In addition, this is the preferred site for incubating "creative re-use" and as a potential tourist draw; being situated on the railroad tracks give opportunities to transport goods and people to the site from the downtown*.

A space may be provided for the Fabric Collective, who repurpose clothing and keep fabric out of the landfill (estimated 9% of what's thrown away), giving more job training opportunities.

BACKGROUND ON SUBMITTERS AND PROJECT

Submitters have met and given documents and resumes on this project to the City Manager Martha Bennett, the City Economic Development Coordinator (Adam Hanks), to Mayor Stromberg, Councilperson CarolVoisin and the property owner, John Schweiger. Pamala Joy, Terry Hill and Catie Faryl are all well known, respected, responsible residents. This project has evolved from its initial models (Sustainability Support Center) and Green Man Skills Share. These ideas were incubated at the Bellview Grange and within the Green and Sustainable communities in Ashland and Jackson County. A list of those interested and supporting this project can be provided. The owner of the site in question, John Schweiger of Coming Attractions Theatre, is in support of the purchase of his site, particularly because it is in concert with his support of the Food Bank. We are envisioning the capital campaign as a grassroots effort to create a Community Services Center in the south part of Ashland. This can be achieved by bringing together Southern Oregon University, Recology, the art and drama communities, the growers, the teachers, the 24 green non profit agencies in Ashland and thousands of citizens, who have products to sell, needs to fill and jobs to develop, as well as private benefactors who have offered financial backing.

COSTS AND PROPOSED SOURCES OF FUNDING:

One main consideration is how much it is costing the City and commerce NOT to have a site off the Plaza where human needs can be addressed. We need to continue supporting the services and massive volunteer efforts of the Food Bank, Food Angels, Ashland Food Project and Neighborhood Harvest and more efficiency could be created by having a site where food could be cooked and taken out.** Also housing several non profits with similar programs could create a more stable presence for site management and collaboration.

Negotiations on the price of the site would be enhanced by participation from SOU, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Chamber of Commerce, recipients of the City's Hotel/Motel Tax, and

the business community. As stated previously a Capital Campaign would be launched to acquire the site. Other systems (such as repurposing) would be relocated by their existing operators and expanded on the site at little expense.

The City of Ashland could help by granting a conditional use permit so this group of submitters could negotiate a move-in date, probably starting with a lease agreement with current owner to get operations going during the estimated one year fundraising period. Estimated project cost with purchase and improvements is \$800,000. Plot maps, sketches and preliminary budgets are available.

Also the City of Ashland could be helpful in speaking favorably of the project and help build to confidence in the community's ability to move forward. The City could help resolve ingress and egress issues and contribute to solutions of concerns raised by Oregon Department of Transportation and traffic flow to the property. If the project proves viable, the City could award future grants for the project from the Hotel/Motel Tax.

* Exploration by the group known as The Off Bardway Association has proposed a continuous loop trolley that would visit this and other sites. That exploration has also generated the idea of beginning passenger rail restoration by working with a group of retired train engineers who have an antique steam engine ready to pull a few passenger train cars in a commuter route from Medford to Ashland - another benefit to economic development in our region, and thus indirectly alleviates some pressure on social service safety network to provide food, and other services to jobless and homeless. Could also boost eco-tourism and excitement of visiting Ashland and the Rogue Valley!